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Whither Color-Blind Love? A Foucauldian Discourse Analysis of Love in Black and White

Brian A. McElwain

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WHITHER COLOR-BLIND LOVE?

A FOUCAULDIAN DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF *LOVE IN BLACK AND WHITE*

A Dissertation

Presented to the Faculty

of the Psychology Department

McAnulty College and Graduate School of Liberal Arts

Duquesne University

in partial fulfillment of

the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

by

Brian A. McElwain

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ABSTRACT

Interracial marriage remains one of the most emotionally charged issues in the troubled racial history of the United States. *Love in Black and White: The Triumph of Love over Prejudice and Taboo* is Mark and Gail Mathabane's relatively popular memoir of their interracial marriage. Using this text as a means of access to the discourses surrounding interracial marriage in the post-Civil Rights era, this study applies the key Foucauldian concepts of discourse, power, subjectivity, and critique to an interpretation of this text in relation to its sociohistorical context. Color-Blind Love emerges as the dominant discourse of the memoir and this Foucauldian discourse analysis consists of an explication of: 1) this discourse, 2) the implications of its associated subject positions, and 3) the historical, institutional, political, and ideological dimensions of the context that sustain this discourse—and that this discourse simultaneously helps to bolster. Though the notion of Color-Blind Love was formerly quite radical, this analysis shows that it now helps to maintain racial inequalities. New ways of thinking about and articulating the experience of interracial marriage are needed.

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Most of all, I must thank Raquel—for everything. I was “color-blind” before she opened my eyes to the ongoing significance of race. She was with me when this project was conceived—in a darkened movie theater—and has been by my side every step of the way. Her unstinting support carried me through periods of self-doubt. On so many levels, this project would not have been possible without her. It is to Raquel and to the daily joys—and laughter—of our life together that I dedicate this work.

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CHAPTER I—INTRODUCTION AND LITERATURE REVIEW

Interracial Marriage as an Enduring Taboo in the United States

On November 7, 2000, the citizens of Alabama voted (by a 3-to-2 margin) to repeal the law against interracial marriage that had been written into their state constitution in 1901. In so doing, Alabama became the last state to rescind its anti-miscegenation statutes. Laws against interracial marriage in the United States date to 1661 (Sickels, 1972); at one time or another, 41 states/colonies have criminalized interracial marriage (Pascoe, 1999). However, it should be noted that Alabama's constitutional provisions against interracial marriage had been unenforceable since 1967, when, in the fortuitously-named case of *Loving v. Virginia* (1967), the U.S. Supreme Court's decision invalidated the anti-miscegenation laws that remained on the books in 16 states at that time. In that case, the Court ruled that the conviction—and banishment from the state of Virginia—in 1959 of Richard and Mildred Loving, a White man and a Black woman, for violating that state's law against interracial marriage was unconstitutional. The Court specified that Virginia's anti-miscegenation law was clearly “designed to maintain White Supremacy” as it only prohibited Whites from marrying interracially.

In the years since the *Loving* decision, the rate of interracial marriage has risen (as many Whites had feared) along with an increasing interest in the phenomenon among

researchers, particularly since the 1990s. And the results of a recently published telephone survey suggest that interracial couples are now encountering “widespread tolerance and even acceptance of their relationships” (Fears & Deane, 2001). Further, among a sample of the population at large, 3 in 10 said that they had at some point been involved in a “serious relationship” with a person of a different race (“Race, Dating and Marriage,” 2001). However, in this same survey, many interracial couples reported that at least one set of their parents initially objected to their relationship (65% among Black-White couples and 24% for both Asian-White and Latino-White couples) while 5% said that someone in their families had permanently stopped talking to them. And among those not involved in interracial couplings, large numbers said that it is better to marry within one’s own race (30% of Asians, 21% of Blacks, 29% of Latinos, and 46% of Whites). While it is questionable whether the results of this survey justify the claim that interracial couples currently encounter “widespread tolerance and even acceptance,” I think it would be fair to say that in recent years interracial couples have met with substantially greater tolerance and acceptance than at any time in U.S. history.

Erskine (1973) reported the results of a 1968 Gallup poll in which 72% of those in the U.S. disapproved of interracial marriage. Erskine’s summation of numerous polls on “interracial socializing” dating from the 1940s to the early 1970s led her to conclude that while attitudes toward racial integration were generally improving, the more personal the contact in question, the less acceptance was reported. People have been much more likely to profess tolerance for racially integrated workplaces, schools, and even neighborhoods—though their behavior may belie their statements in all three cases—than that they would have no problem with their children marrying someone of another race.

Even so, Romano (1996) noted that along with greater racial integration and increased contact between Blacks and Whites in the post-WWII years there has been a significant shift in **reported attitudes** toward Black-White interracial marriage, however, there has been much less change in **actual marital choices**—there is a limit to what polling can reveal, especially in regard to sensitive racial issues.

The connection between interracial marriage and a wide variety of racial issues has long been made by people ranging from social scientists to White supremacists. Yu (1999) noted that intermarriage has long been used as the most encapsulating representation of the state of interracial and intercultural relations in the United States. Interracial marriage thus occupies a key role in a wide variety of racial discourses. For example, given the limits of self-report, sociologists have long considered rates of interracial marriage (along with residential patterns) to be a prime indicator of levels of racial integration. Relying on similarly assimilationist premises, arguments among Whites about civil rights for people of color—especially Blacks—have often been cut short by the question “Would you want your daughter to marry one?” (Romano, 1996) A strongly negative answer to this question is assumed along with the implication that any degree or kind of public racial integration will inevitably lead to the most intimate of contact and, thus, to the “pollution of our bloodlines.” This conversation-stopping question is clearly connected to White supremacist discourse in which, according to Ferber (1998), interracial sexuality occupies a key position as the greatest threat to the maintenance of racial boundaries. White supremacists invoke images of “racial purity” as being threatened by the “mongrel monstrosities” that result from interracial sexuality; thus, within that discourse, “border maintenance” becomes paramount. But fanatical

White supremacists are not the only ones for whom such images hold sway. Ferber's (1998) study is based on the assumption that explicitly White supremacist discourse is contiguous with our mainstream discourse of racial differences—and to the extent that our anti-miscegenation laws (and behaviors and attitudes) have played a role in establishing and maintaining racial boundaries (Moran, 2001), Ferber's assumption is valid. Indeed, the mythology of “racial purity” is implicit in any invocation of the concept of race (Scales-Trent, 1997), but the very existence of interracial married couples and their children threatens to expose the falsity of the American ideology of race. Thus, given the role that Whites have played in establishing and maintaining the American racial regime, it is no stretch to suggest that all parties to interracial marriages—wives, husbands, children, indeed anyone who provides aid, comfort, or support of any kind to such marriages—are guilty of transgressing Whiteness.

Race, Racism, and Whiteness

Omi and Winant (1994) contend that race has always been—and will always be—at the center of the American experience. However, Whites tend not to see the ways in which race structures everyone's experience in the United States; Whites tend to see race as an issue that touches only the lives of people of color (Ferber, 1998; Frankenberg, 1993). Further, within the context of many considerations of race and racism in the United States, the ideology of White supremacy is—consciously or unconsciously—elided and marginalized. I realize that, at this point, some readers may find my invocation of the motif of White supremacy rather extreme, even inflammatory, but the discourses of race and racial differences as they currently exist—and in their past

forms—cannot be understood apart from this theme. Allow me to provide an outline of a case to support these contentions.

First, the eminent sociologist and founder of the NAACP, W.E.B. DuBois, famously declared a century ago that the problem of the 20th century would be the problem of the “color line”; more recently, the historian John Hope Franklin has written that the problem of the 21st century will still be the problem of the “color line” (cited in Page, 1996). Popular commentators tend to agree as race is often referred to as our “national obsession” (e.g., Cose, 1997; Terkel, 1992). Aside from the racial dimensions of various political issues (which I will address momentarily), in regard to how we see one another, racial distinctions seem to be among the most fundamental that we make on a moment-by-moment basis in everyday life—though this often goes unrecognized and unacknowledged. Consider, for example, the problems posed and the whispered questions provoked by those who cannot easily and neatly be racially categorized. Such people are sometimes accosted by complete strangers and asked to identify themselves racially in order to relieve the questioners’ confusion—and to reconfirm the questioners’ simplistic racial typologies. Whatever the answer given by the racially ambiguous subject, the urgency that prompted the question of the stranger—along with the fact that the racially ambiguous one understands the question being asked—testifies to the everyday significance of racial distinctions. This is but a simple example of how race and racial distinctions play a central role in the ways that we see and understand one another.

Second, the political and social history of the United States is littered with issues and events with glaring racial dimensions, from the importation of the first African slaves

to what was then a colonial outpost to the recent successes of various efforts to eliminate affirmative action programs. Allow me to cite but a few more of the most prominent racially structured and significant issues and events in U. S. history. Beyond the war for independence from England, most would agree that the Civil War remains the central episode in U.S. history. Profound conflicts over the issue of slavery threatened to lead to the dissolution of the Union and the Emancipation Proclamation destabilized the precarious system of racial subjugation that had prevailed for centuries. Subsequently, the failed Reconstruction of the South was followed by the institutionalization of Jim Crow segregation, which reestablished White racial domination over Blacks. This material reaffirmation of White supremacy was elaborated through legislative, executive, and judicial actions over the following century. It was not until the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s began to take hold that the federal government began to act systematically to provide formal legal guarantees of the most basic civil rights for Blacks throughout the country.

While relations between Whites and Blacks have been very problematic and have attracted the most attention in history books, the relations between the White majority and other racially defined groups have hardly been models of acceptance and inclusive harmony. The first English settlers initiated a process that was eventually formalized in the doctrine of Manifest Destiny that led to the decimation of the indigenous population of North America and their eventual marginalization on “reservations.” In regard to those of more recent Asian ancestry, the internment of all Japanese Americans living on the West Coast during WWII stands as a particularly ignoble episode. Additionally, though all Whites necessarily trace their ancestry to immigrants to this land, this fact is

often forgotten by those who have railed against the prospect of being overrun by non-White immigrants to “our” country. The Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 stands as but one example in a long series of eruptions of “nativist” fervor which provides historical background and context for contemporary concerns about the immigration of “illegal aliens” who, significantly, are inevitably conceived of and portrayed as non-White. The thread of White supremacy ties each of these events and issues together from slavery through Manifest Destiny to concerns about illegal immigration as Whites sit at the top of the racial hierarchy. Thus, however morally objectionable they may be, the enslavement, killing, and systematic exclusion of various Others, who have been regarded as inferior—explicitly or implicitly—on the basis of racially defined differences, are integral aspects of U.S. history, the U.S. being, in Omi and Winant’s (1994) words, a “racial dictatorship.” Indeed, James Baldwin (1998) contended that the price of admission, the price of becoming White in America has always been participation—active and/or passive—in the subjugation of non-Whites.

Third, numerous scholars have argued that the concept of race as we know it is a relatively recent construction which began developing alongside European colonization of various lands and peoples (e.g., Omi & Winant, 1994; Zack, 1993). They have suggested that our modern conception of race initially provided moral/religious justification for European colonial domination and exploitation of Others who were seen as inferior. Subsequently, scientific explanations were developed to account for the “natural” racial hierarchy in which Whites were “found” to be superior to all Others. Obviously, the kind of historical analysis provided by scholars like Omi, Winant, and Zack contends that our contemporary conceptions of race have been socially constructed.

And, in this light, race, racism, and White supremacy (in both their material and discursive aspects) can be seen as of a piece.

Fourth, the growing field of “critical Whiteness studies” sharpens this line of argument and focuses attention on the ways in which this historical legacy manifests itself today by affording a wide variety of material and psychological benefits to Whites who, thus, have a vested interest in maintaining the racial status quo (Ansley, 1997). Lipsitz (1998) refers to this as “the possessive investment in Whiteness” on the part of those who can parlay this identification into access to resources, power, and opportunities at the expense of non-Whites. The assumption of a White identity is based upon the experience of dominating Others and a sense of entitlement to material advantages over those Others (Roediger, 2002). However, years, generations, even centuries as members of the hegemonic group have left most Whites assuming the privileges of Whiteness rather unself-consciously and, often, without conscious malice toward anyone. But while Whiteness has most often been invisible as such to those who have successfully fashioned themselves as White, the meanings of Whiteness have been maddeningly clear to those who have found themselves marginalized by White exclusivity (Brander Rasmussen, Klinenberg, Nexica, & Wray, 2001). The critical contribution of Whiteness studies has been in illuminating and locating Whiteness as a very particular racial identity with a history—rather than taking Whiteness as the unquestioned norm against which all Others are judged and found lacking (Chennault, 1998; Dyer, 1997; Roediger, 2002). The hope of those with anti-racist commitments is that this kind of critical attention to Whiteness will lead toward the deconstruction of both the discursive and material aspects of Whiteness and, indeed, to the collapse of the edifice of racism which is secured by the

keystone of Whiteness. One caveat: Whiteness and White people are not identical. Thus, despite the pressures upon White people to invest themselves in Whiteness, for a variety of reasons, some resist complicity. And, conversely, non-Whites can become agents of White supremacy and receive some of its rewards by, for example, participating in the exclusion of other non-Whites (Lipsitz, 1998). Despite the weight of history and our lack of control of our skin color, each of us bears responsibility for her/his personal and political investments in regard to race, racism, and Whiteness as these are manifested in our current cultural situation.

Strands of Racism and Anti-Racism in Psychology

Insofar as the discourses of race and the practices of racism are central elements of the American experience, it should not be surprising that several writers have argued that American psychology has been and continues to be thoroughly racist (e.g., Goldberg, 1990, 1993; Howitt & Owusu-Bempah, 1994; Richards, 1997; Thomas & Sillen, 1972). This, of course, will be heard as an offensively extreme statement by many U.S. psychologists as most would presumably like to think of themselves and of their profession as progressive in regard to a wide variety of social issues. And, indeed, sensitivity to and competence in regard to cultural diversity and avoidance of “unfair discrimination” are among the general ethical standards that the profession has established for itself in its *Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct* (American Psychological Association, 1992). If pressed, some psychologists might point to works such as *The Bell Curve*, Herrnstein & Murray’s (1994) book which recycled old arguments about supposed Black intellectual inferiority, as the work of the few remaining

racist pariahs within the field of psychology. But, these psychologists would hasten to argue, such vestiges of old-fashioned “scientific racism” have been thoroughly discredited and have not been taken seriously by the vast majority of psychologists for many, many years. Psychologists, among other mental health professionals, have long assumed that their specialized training, their use of the scientific method, and their humanistic values enabled them to transcend the racism that, at one time, was pervasive in the U.S. (Thomas & Sillen, 1972). Further, many psychologists would likely point to psychological research on stereotyping, prejudice, and discrimination, for example, as having played an important role in creating a more tolerant and inclusive society. So, many psychologists would say, clearly the notion that strands of racism are thoroughly woven into and throughout the fabric of psychology is unfounded.

These denials of the possibility that psychology continues to harbor racism do not, however, very effectively counter charges that point to more subtly systemic forms of racism. Among psychology’s problems in regard to racism is the lack of a clear, meaningful, and consistently used definition of race. Betancourt and Lopez (1993), for example, pointed out that race, culture, ethnicity, and nationality are often used loosely and interchangeably by psychologists. Further, since the notion of race as a scientifically valid means of categorizing people was long ago thoroughly discredited, the frequent use of racial categories as “grouping variables” in psychological research involves simply accepting and enshrining “folk taxonomies” as biological givens (Yee, Fairchild, Weizmann, & Wyatt, 1993). Another kind of problem that has been noted involves inconsistent attention to racial issues. For example, Morawski (1997) noted that race is habitually ignored in studies of cognitive processes such as memory, but, in contrast, race

is often focal in explorations of school achievement—though these domains of research would presumably be closely related. However, on a more fundamental level, Richards (1997) argues that psychologists necessarily participate in and are shaped by the society that provides the context for their research (i.e., it is impossible for people to transcend their own sociohistorical situation—however skilled their implementation of the scientific method), so their work will inescapably share and reflect their society's racism. He goes on to ask how a psychology produced, for the most part, by White people in pervasively racist contexts could be other than racist. Similarly, Howitt and Owusu-Bempah provocatively suggest that instead of looking to identify racist individuals within psychology, a more enlightened question would be: "Who is not racist in psychology?" (1994, p. 3) Clearly, from their perspective, the answer to this question is "no one."

Psychology's "single-minded" focus on understanding isolated individuals prevents the discipline (and most of its members) from even seeing, let alone conceiving or countering, the multidimensionality of racism in the U.S. Incidentally, there are some "postmodern" and interdisciplinary exceptions to psychology's conventional form of solipsism (e.g., the cultural psychology of Cole (1996) and Shweder (1991), Gergen's (1994) social constructionism, and Sampson's (1993) dialogical psychology), but the mainstream of psychology remains individualistically stunted—especially in regard to issues of race. When psychologists have attended to racism, their focus has consistently been on individual level phenomena such as stereotyping, prejudice, and discrimination, and on the problems of identifying and understanding racist individuals. However, such efforts lead us only into the blind alley of diagnosing the "pathology" of a few of the more blatantly racist individuals among us, but these efforts would seem to be misplaced

in society wherein racism is the norm. Attempts by psychologists to connect analysis of the individual dimension of racism with the institutional, cultural, or historical aspects of racism have been few and far between. An interesting recent example is that of Waller (1998), a social psychologist. Unlike most psychologists, Waller makes it clear early in his book that he sees race as a social construct and he discusses both institutional racism and cultural racism—along with individual racism which, significantly, he sees as the “foundation of racism.” Not surprisingly, then, despite nods to a more inclusive and sophisticated way of conceiving racism, Waller refocuses on the individual level and argues that the goal of a “color-blind” society is unrealistic since the “mechanisms” of our “minds” force us to both see and make decisions based on social categories such as race. So while Waller indicates an awareness of multiple, mutually reinforcing dimensions of racism, he fails to integrate the non-psychological into his account and leaves us with the pessimistic conclusion that we are “hardwired” for racism. This serves as a vivid example of Goldberg’s (1993) contention that the social sciences (including psychology) are deeply implicated in the reproduction and legitimation of the racial status quo.

I will not attempt to argue that there is no place for strictly psychological research or theory on race and racism, but I think it is quite clear that a more sophisticated, multidimensional approach would be more likely to do justice to the material and discursive complexities of race and racism as they are lived. Further, such an approach would be much more able to provide a solid foundation for efforts to combat racism—though some, perhaps many, would say that such “political” goals have no place in a self-respecting academic discipline such as psychology. However, I would point to a few

voices within psychology that have called for a multidimensional understanding of race and racism as part of their anti-racist thrust. In 1970, Kovel (1984) published the first edition of his widely cited book, *White Racism: A Psychohistory*. In a determined effort to escape psychologism and to contribute to theory that resists complicity with a racist society, Kovel's method drew upon cultural studies, history, psychoanalysis, and sociology. Kovel argued that racism is a fundamental element of U.S. society which is woven into the fabric of our assumptions about ourselves, about others, and about the world and which thoroughly structures our social lives. According to Kovel, racism is always subject to human choices and can be transcended, but it is also always being transformed. A less well-known book from the same era is Thomas and Sillen's (1972) *Racism and Psychiatry*. Therein they argue that scapegoating a few "sick" racist individuals distracts attention from the racism that pervades our society. Thomas and Sillen contend that individual expressions of racism are consequences—not causes—of racism and that sociohistorical analysis of racism which leads to institutional critique and change is necessary, if we are to move toward a more just society. Similarly, Howitt and Owusu-Bempah (1994), in *The Racism of Psychology: Time for Change*, hold that psychology's approach to understanding individuals (which they characterize as "decontextualized universalism") serves to entrench cultural and institutional racisms. Thus, Howitt and Owusu-Bempah assert that anti-racist efforts in psychology require that an exclusive focus on individuals be replaced with approaches that attend also to the institutional and social structures that shape the individual. Finally, Richards (1997), in *'Race,' Racism, and Psychology: Towards a Reflexive History*, argues that psychology's

tendency to see racism as an individual-level psychopathology serves significantly to divert attention away from more pertinent social and economic factors.

Racism has psychological, ideological, social, political, historical, economic, and cultural dimensions that are co-extensive with the entirety of the American experience. And because discourse, as a multidimensional construct, cuts across and connects these various dimensions of racism, it should be a particularly productive focus for analysis. Discourse plays a part in the production, legitimation, and reproduction of racism in multiple ways, on multiple levels, and in relation to a variety of phenomena. In keeping with this understanding of the complexity of discourse, the broad aims of this research project are: 1) to identify the principal racial discourse(s) used by an interracially married couple to articulate their experience as an interracially married couple and 2) to explore the multidimensional significances of the identified discourse(s)—for interracially married couples and for contemporary U.S. society. But before we get to the relationships between these discourses and the experiences of interracially married couples, I will elaborate the most prominent aspects of what I take to be the currently dominant discourse of race in the U.S.

The Discourse of “Color-Blindness”

In contrast to the blatant racism that prevailed throughout much of the history of the United States, a new form of racism has developed in reaction to the racist nationalism of Nazism and in the wake of the Civil Rights Movement. According to van Dijk (1993; 1998), modern forms of racism are characterized by, on one hand, emphatic denials of racism along with endorsement of the ideals of tolerance and egalitarianism in

the abstract and, on the other hand, various forms of indirect, subtle derogation, marginalization, and problematization of Other races. The emphatic denials of racism, that one does not “see” the color of an Other—or take it into account in one’s dealings with them—that characterize this modern form of racism have led to the euphemism of “color-blindness.”

This notion of “color-blindness” is problematic in multiple ways. First, it is misleading. Of course, it is not the case that those who claim to be “color-blind” do not perceive the skin tone of those whom they encounter. Further, as Burns (2000) notes, the discourse of “color-blindness” involves the dubious assumption that people have fully conscious control over how they see Others. But, as Devine’s (1989) research illustrated, racial stereotyping and prejudices have both “automatic” (i.e., mostly involuntary, unintentional, “unconscious,” and inescapable) and “controlled” (i.e., mostly voluntary, “conscious,” and malleable) aspects. And the automaticity of racial stereotyping and prejudice that results from being socialized into a racist society was demonstrated by even Devine’s least prejudiced subjects. In another, particularly illuminating and aptly titled study (“I am not racist but . . .”), Bonilla-Silva and Forman (2000) examined the racial ideology of White college students via comparisons of their responses to survey questions, their statements in the context of in-depth interviews, and relevant self-reported behaviors. They found much greater evidence of racism in the interviews and behavior of these students than in their survey responses. This would help to account for the existence of general support among Whites for the principles of racial equality and integration, on one hand, alongside opposition to specific programs to reduce racial inequities (e.g., affirmative action) and opposition to desegregation of schools and

neighborhoods. The “I am not racist but . . .” formulation is commonly employed as an introductory clause to avoid being labeled as racist before expressing racial generalizations—or, perhaps, it’s a kind of mantra invoked in an attempt to reassure oneself that one is a good, unprejudiced person. However, as Bonilla-Silva and Forman (2000) point out, if they were truly “color-blind,” Whites would not see Blacks, Asians, and Latinos as Others, but in their interviews the students were continually rearticulating “we-they” racial dichotomies.

A second major problem with this notion of “color-blindness” is its political use to justify maintenance of the racial status quo. While many have found the hope of one day living in a “color-blind” society powerfully appealing, the current discourse of “color-blindness” suggests that we have accomplished that ambition and now simply need to stop stirring up trouble by talking about race. In a comically, yet bitterly ironic move, neoconservatives now invoke Martin Luther King’s “dream” of a “color-blind” world as providing a kind of moral authority for their efforts to eliminate affirmative action and school desegregation initiatives, for example, in King’s name (Cose, 1997). In this neoconservative view, affirmative action becomes a kind of “reverse discrimination” in which White males are the unfortunate victims who now have to overcome great obstacles in order to get ahead. Dissent from this currently dominant discourse of “color-blindness” leads to charges that one is racist. But while the virtues of “color-blindness” are trumpeted, race continues to profoundly influence the life chances and opportunities of everyone in this society (Page, 1996). And, perversely, the discourse of “color-blindness” serves to entrench racism by undermining efforts to combat racism, since none of the problems associated with race can be remediated without reference to race (Haney

Lopez, 1996). Indeed, as Cose (1997) contends, attempts to ignore race serve only to exaggerate its significance, as racism becomes easier to enact because it cannot be recognized, discussed, or countered as such. We cannot end racism by simply refusing to acknowledge it, but this is exactly the political move that the discourse of “color-blindness” enacts.

Having described “color-blindness” as the dominant, though thoroughly problematic, contemporary discourse about race in the United States, it must be said that there are many who subscribe incompletely or not at all to this way of speaking about race. For example, Blacks and other people of color are much less likely than Whites to claim that either they themselves or the society that they live in is “color-blind.” The experience of people of color often leads them to awareness of the numerous ways in which racial categories shape everyone’s life on a daily basis—whether or not they agree with the goal of “color-blindness.” In contrast, Whites tend to have much less (if any) awareness of the ways in which their skin color affords them a wide array of privileges and improved life chances in the United States (McIntosh, 1998) or of the continuing use of race in the oppression of people of color.

Additionally, while the discourse of “color-blindness” currently prevails, it is not the only kind of discourse about race that has currency. Frankenberg (1993), in her fascinating study of White women in the San Francisco-area in the mid-1980s, articulated three contemporary “discursive repertoires,” or competing paradigms, of race. First, in order of historical development, is the “essentialist racism” in which racial differences have been understood in terms of a supposedly scientifically validated hierarchy of biologically-determined and immutable qualities—with Whites at the top of the hierarchy

and Blacks at the bottom. Second is the discursive repertoire of “color-blindness” which contends that all people are really the same, regardless of race, and we all need to just stop making such a fuss about race—Frankenberg emphasized the color- and power-evasiveness of this currently dominant paradigm. The most recently and least systematically developed of these three discursive repertoires is a kind of “race cognizance” which sees racial differences and the material inequities that accompany them as socially constructed and maintained. In contrast to the first two paradigms, the discourse of “race cognizance” has been articulated primarily by racial minorities and is a marginal, non-mainstream mode of discourse. Frankenberg contended that elements of all three of these discursive repertoires could be found, in a variety of combinations, in the contemporary literature about race. Further, Frankenberg asserted that “essentialist racism,” given its historical precedence and duration, remains the context within and against which later discourses continue to be elaborated. The hierarchy of racial differences established by “essentialist racism” cannot be unilaterally abolished by later discourses. Later discourses must engage with the previous discourses in order to move forward in productive directions. Although Frankenberg concluded the interviews upon which this tripartite formulation of racial discourses was developed in the mid-1980s, I do not think that its contours have changed significantly in the intervening years. Thus, these three discursive repertoires provide a useful framework within which to consider the variety of contemporary accounts of interracial marriage.

Contemporary Accounts of Interracial Marriage

Broadly characterized, most contemporary accounts of interracial marriage fit rather easily into either 1) the problematizing portrayals of outsiders (i.e., those who do not identify themselves as being involved in an interracial marriage) which tend to incorporate “essentialist racism” in significant ways or 2) the defensive counter-portrayals of insiders (i.e., those who identify themselves as involved in interracial marriages) which eagerly accommodate the dominant discourse of “color-blindness.” Let’s consider the outsider accounts first since they have historical priority and thus set the context within which the later insider accounts must be understood. According to Henderson (1996), the vast majority of the theoretical and empirical studies of interracial marriage have been informed by a “deviancy model” in which same-race marriage is seen as unquestionably “normal” and interracial marriage is cast as a problem to be explained. In a careful survey of the existing social scientific accounts, Henderson describes three basic categories: social-structural perspectives, cultural perspectives, and social-psychological perspectives. The social-structural accounts attempt to explain rates of interracial marriage in terms of demographic characteristics of populations such as unbalanced sex ratios within racial groups, relative sizes of racial groups, and residential propinquity with other racial groups. An additional social-structural perspective invokes the notion that interracial marriages may often be explained in terms of an exchange of status; for example, a White woman might “trade” upon her higher racial status in a marriage with a high-achieving Black man. Cultural perspectives have attempted to explain the increasing rates of interracial marriage as resulting from weakened social

barriers between racial groups. Such accounts have utilized the theoretical notions of reduced “social distance” between groups and increased “assimilation” of racial groups into the great American “melting pot.” The social psychological perspectives have focused on the psychological characteristics of those who break taboos and marry outside their own racial groups. These kinds of accounts have typically portrayed individuals in interracial marriages as acting out a variety of psychopathologies, such as hostility toward one’s own or the other race, sadomasochism/self-degradation, feelings of inadequacy, neurotic self-hatred, alienation from one’s own race, rebellion against parents and/or society, a need to be different, sexual attraction to the forbidden “Other,” and pathological sexual adjustment resulting from failed resolution of the Oedipal complex. A common feature of the array of outsider theoretical accounts of interracial marriage is their focus on explaining such marriages as significant aberrations. Thus, there tends to be an exclusive concentration on understanding the exceptional circumstances or personality characteristics that may lead to interracial marriage. All other aspects of these marriages drop from consideration as the underlying question comes to the fore and demands an answer: “How could this possibly happen?”

The outsider perspectives of non-academics have also been explored to some degree. Frankenberg (1993) noted that the narratives of the White women whom she interviewed tended to be organized around concerns about the welfare of the interracially married couple and/or their children, e.g., that they wouldn’t be accepted by society and that that would lead to significant problems for them. However, she also found that these women frequently slipped back into “old-fashioned” narratives of essential biological differences and racial hierarchies as they talked about interracial couples. Similarly,

Bonilla-Silva and Forman (2000) found that while many of the White students that they interviewed were careful to say that there was nothing wrong with interracial marriage, they also said that they would not consider entering such a relationship and expressed concerns about the children as well as the reactions of family members and the larger community. Additionally, Bonilla-Silva and Forman elaborated an interesting example of an interviewee who had been particularly articulate throughout the interview—until the issue of interracial marriage was broached. Then, as he proclaimed a color-blind approach to love and his support for interracial marriages, he began stuttering and made it quite clear that he was not attracted to Black women. Very few of the students in their study were able to unequivocally say that they had no problems with interracial marriage. Despite their repeated claims of color-blindness, they clearly demonstrated their color-consciousness.

In contrast to the numerous outsider accounts of interracial marriage that have dominated the discourse for many years, insider accounts have been marginalized and have, with few exceptions, only been heard since the 1990s. Interracially married couples have begun the struggle to define themselves in the face of pervasive academic and popular portrayals of them as abnormal, neurotic, and doomed to failure (Romano, 1996). Given the rather hostile climate of the prevailing discourse about interracial marriage, insider accounts have tended to enter the discursive fray in a rather defensive mode and to—almost without exception—eagerly adopt the discourse of color-blindness. More specifically, the discourses of “color-blindness” and “romantic love” are melded such that the recurring refrain—and indeed the entire song, in most cases—is that “love is color-blind.” Porterfield’s (1978) classic ethnographic study of Black-White interracial

marriages in both the Midwest and South provides the earliest example of this kind of insider account as only 2 of 40 couples failed to cite “love and compatibility” among their reasons for marriage—78% of them specified these as the sole motivations for their marriages. Similarly, in his study of the “legitimation techniques” of U.S servicemen married to (or about to marry) Filipinas, Buttny (1987) found “romantic love” to be by far the most commonly cited motive. The operative ideology, as Buttny, a scholar in the field of communication, articulated it, seemed to be that “love conquers all.” Among the more recent studies, Rosenblatt, Karis, and Powell’s (1995) interviews with Black-White couples in the Minneapolis-St. Paul area are easily the most frequently cited. These interviews (conducted by the latter two authors who are themselves a Black-White couple and who are psychotherapists) found the interracial couples repeatedly emphasizing that their relationships were ordinary and that race made no difference to them—though some did say that they think about race when outsiders make it an issue for them. Though Rosenblatt, Karis, and Powell (1995) took great pains to avoid interpreting anything that the couples said, they did hesitantly suggest that claiming ordinariness might be a way for the couples to think of themselves as having triumphed over racism. Similarly, Wehrly, Kenney, and Kenney (1999) reported that their research, their professional counseling experiences, and their personal experiences show that interracial marriages are essentially the same as intraracial marriages and that race is not an issue for interracial couples—except externally insofar as others make it an issue for them. Rangel (1999), in her qualitative psychological research which bears the notable title *Crazy about Each Other*, cited “transcendence” of racial issues as the major theme of her interviews with interracial couples; she explicitly invoked the notion of “color-blindness” in her

commentary. Finally, in *Love's Revolution*, a book based on extensive interviews of interracial married couples, their families, and their children, Root (2001), a clinical psychologist, fairly screams that interracial marriages are no different from same-race marriages and that love alone provides the motivation for these couples to come together.

While there seems to be an appealingly noble intention behind such “love is blind and conquers all” accounts of interracial marriage which give a voice to a long marginalized group, a few accounts which display more nuance and sophistication have been published. A common theme among these studies is that the White partner is likely to be permanently changed as a result of the interracial marriage. Many of the White women who Frankenberg (1993) interviewed found that their intimate connection with someone of an Other race led to a heightened awareness of societal racism and affected the internal dynamics of their relationship (e.g., by creating the feeling that a great deal rested on the success/failure of their relationship given society’s hostility toward both people of color, generally, and interracial marriages, specifically). In a similar vein, Wehrly et al. (1999) suggested that the development of racial/cultural empathy by White partners (including an awareness of White privilege) seems to be crucial to the success of interracial marriages. In reflecting on her own experience as a White woman with a Black husband and Black children, Reddy (1994) wrote of learning about the meanings of being Black and of being White. Before meeting her husband-to-be, Reddy had studied Black literature and history and was deeply committed to the ideal of Black liberation, but she had not yet “understood” that she was White or what that might mean on a material level. As her own Whiteness began to become visible to her, Reddy developed a constant consciousness of race that changed her life fundamentally. While many of the

previously cited accounts can be characterized as having defensively, unreflectively, and/or naively adopted the dominant discourse of “color-blindness,” the accounts cited in this paragraph seem to be reaching toward a more sophisticated kind of discourse which is “race cognizant.”

Both the previously dominant discourse of “essentialist racism” and the currently dominant discourse of “color-blindness” are problematic. Each is inadequate, naïve, and simplistic in various ways while also effectively encapsulating some part of what we all know about race. “Essentialist racism” points to the racial differences that we all recognize, but then explains those differences in terms of an inherent and immutable racial hierarchy. In sharp contrast, “color-blindness” says that because we should not treat people differently on the basis of race, we must stop thinking and talking about race. In response to these deficient discourses, “race cognizance” might be considered a surprising kind of synthesis of these opposed discourses which takes forms that could not have been anticipated, but which will, hopefully, move both discourse and practice forward. The conditions that would help cultivate this kind of “race cognizance” might be summarized in the following way: we must start talking about the racial differences that we all recognize in order to free ourselves from the racial hierarchies that have shaped our common history.

I was overtaken by an immediate sense of recognition when I stumbled upon the following analysis:

Most [interracial] couples have chosen to deemphasize or even ignore the racial difference in their relationships. By ignoring rather than discussing race, most have refused to use the knowledge they have gained from crossing racial boundaries to analyze racial identity, cultural differences between the races, or the construction of race. This is somewhat ironic, since individuals involved in interracial marriages are perhaps most aware of the salience of racial boundaries

in American society. Many whites have discovered, for example, that their interracial marriages forced them to confront their own racial identity and racial position in society for the first time. [...] Whites who reported that they had “never thought about race” before found that their marriages compelled them to be aware of racial nuances. Yet by arguing that race was unimportant or insignificant, interracial couples to some extent limited their ability to criticize America’s racial mores. (Romano, 1996, pg. 322 & 323)

This analysis animated this research project. That interracially married couples have, for the most part, glossed over the issue of race in their relationships is not surprising, given the ways race has been used to problematize and marginalize their experiences. Further, at this point in the history of our society, discussion of race is typically avoided because of both the overwhelming anxiety it provokes on the part of most Whites and because the discourse of “color-blindness” makes no place for such talk. However, it is unfortunate that interracially married couples have mostly not talked publicly or openly about race—indeed, many may not have access to the discursive resources to do so even privately. The partners in an interracial marriage have presumably accomplished something that is relatively uncommon in our society, i.e., they have established one of their most intimate relationships with someone of an Other race. In the process, they have likely learned things and developed skills that they could have neither anticipated nor learned in any other way. I suspect that the effects of interracial marriage on many couples may be much broader than the example cited above of developing awareness of Whiteness by the White partner. However, there has been little or no discursive space for partners in interracial marriages to talk about any aspects of their experiences in a “race cognizant” manner.

Again, given the pervasive pathologization of their relationships, the embrace of the discourse of color-blindness by so many interracial couples is entirely understandable

as a defensive move. But a major consequence of this escape into the protective arms of color-blindness has been an avoidance of opportunities to talk directly about race and racism along with the stifling of critical engagement with those issues. It is worth looking more closely at how this discourse works for interracially married couples and with what consequences. Further, sensitivity to alternative discourses that might be close at hand—though overlooked—may lead to opportunities to wiggle free of prohibitions against engaging directly with race and racism. This might enable interracially married couples to better understand their own experiences, to teach us all something about how race and racism operate in the contemporary United States, and to broach new prospects for engagement in anti-racist practices.

CHAPTER II—METHOD

A Foucauldian Discourse Analytic Approach

Gill (2000) wrote that “there are probably at least 57 varieties of discourse analysis” (p. 173) that have sprouted in divergent theoretical and disciplinary contexts. Thus, to say that one is pursuing a discourse analysis is only slightly more specific than saying one is doing qualitative research. This broad array of approaches to the reading of texts provides a rich range of resources to a researcher, but it also means that decisions must be made about which discourse analytic method (or blend of methods) will likely be most fruitful given particular research aims and questions. (Wetherell, Taylor, and Yates’ (2001b) *Discourse Theory and Practice: A Reader* provides a particularly helpful collection of theoretical pieces and its companion volume, *Discourse as Data: A Guide for Analysis* (Wetherell, Taylor, and Yates, 2001a), presents lengthy exemplars from a variety of discourse analytic traditions with an emphasis on methods.) To name only a few, the assortment of discourse analytic approaches includes conversation analysis, critical discourse analysis, discursive psychology, and Foucauldian discourse analysis—or critical discursive psychology as its manifestation within psychology is called by Ian Parker (2002). Some are quite distinct, while others share much in common. For example, conversation analysis pursues a fine-grained explication of the “structure and sequence of everyday conversation” (Wood and Kroger, 2000, p. 200) that focuses only

on the immediate context of the conversational partners and aims for a kind of technical objectivity that disdains the political (Wetherell, 2001). Meanwhile, in his version of critical discourse analysis, Fairclough (1989; 1992), a linguist, has developed an elaborate system of analysis that involves both close textual readings and politically engaged, trans-disciplinary analyses of the broader social contexts of texts.

Within the discipline of psychology, Willig (2001) describes discursive psychology and Foucauldian discourse analysis as related yet distinct approaches.

Discursive Psychology asks how participants use language in order to negotiate and manage social interactions so as to achieve interpersonal objectives (e.g. disclaim an undesirable social identity, justify an action, attribute blame). Foucauldian Discourse Analysis seeks to describe and critique the discursive worlds people inhabit and to explore their implications for subjectivity and experience (e.g. what is it like to be positioned as ‘asylum seeker’ and what kinds of actions and experiences are compatible with such a positioning?). (p. 91)

In ways that echo conversation analysis, discursive psychology tends to ignore the broader social context, but Foucauldian discourse analysis is similar to critical discourse analysis in its interest in situating texts within sociohistorical contexts. Further on, Willig writes:

The Foucauldian version of discourse analysis is concerned with language and language use; however, its interest in language takes it beyond the immediate contexts within which language may be used by speaking subjects. Thus, unlike Discursive Psychology, which is primarily concerned with interpersonal communication, Foucauldian Discourse Analysis asks questions about the relationship between discourse and how people think or feel (subjectivity), what they may do (practices), and the material conditions within which such experiences may take place. (p. 107)

Thus, given my understanding of racism as a phenomenon with psychological, ideological, social, political, historical, economic, and cultural dimensions, a Foucauldian discourse analytic approach is better suited to the dual tasks of 1) identifying the principal racial discourse(s) used by an interracial couple to articulate their experience as

an interracially married couple and 2) exploring the multidimensional significances of the identified discourse(s)—for interracially married couples and for contemporary U.S. society. As a point of discursive access, I chose the published memoirs of an interracially married couple. I will introduce the specific text that I “read” after elaborating the major contours and concepts of the Foucauldian discourse analytic approach that I employed.

First, as may already be clear from both the content and process of the introductory literature review, I envisioned this project as an interdisciplinary one. I used literature from the disciplines of history, sociology, and psychology in both situating and justifying this project. This is consonant with both the ways in which Foucauldian ideas have been put to use over the past two decades (e.g., Best & Kellner, 1991; Burr, 1995; Carabine, 2001; Henriques, Hollway, Urwin, Venn, & Walkerdine, 1998; Kendall & Wickham, 1999; Mama, 1995; Parker, 1992; Weedon, 1997; Willig, 2001) and with my reading of Foucault’s published work (e.g., 1972; 1978; 1980; 1983; 1988; 1998). In capsule form, the corpus of Foucauldian work upon which I am drawing is concerned with the sociohistorical situatedness of subjectivity.

Second, there is no consensus in the literature about how to conduct a Foucauldian discourse analysis. Foucault did not produce a coherent, easy-to-follow statement of his methods of historical research, leaving those who seek to follow in his footsteps to find their own ways to apply his ideas. (This “problem” places Foucault firmly in Nietzsche’s lineage as Nietzsche famously wrote: “The will to a system is a lack of integrity.” Additionally, Nietzsche—and his Zarathustra—repeatedly required his “followers” to find their own ways.) Thus, I was left to develop my own particular approach to the research problems that I set out for myself. In the broadest terms, I

proposed an approach to reading texts that would produce a “reading”—that is, an interpretation from a particular perspective that is only one among a variety of possible interpretations. (Again, echoes of Nietzsche’s “perspectivism” can be heard here.)

Third, while Foucault did not systematically outline his approach to research, this should not be taken to suggest that he had no discernible methods. Indeed, some commentators (e.g., Best & Kellner, 1991) have identified three successive phases of his work: the archaeologies of knowledge associated with Foucault’s work in the 1960s, the genealogies of power he developed in the 1970s, and the concern with the aesthetics of existence which became his focus in the 1980s. These are rough distinctions in terms of Foucault’s primary focus during these successive periods of his work, but which I see as cumulative—his aesthetics were built upon the ground of his genealogies just as his genealogies had added new dimensions to his archaeologies. Significantly, Foucault’s work is often seen as being composed entirely of his archaeological and genealogical methods as numerous commentators seem not to have either read or integrated his later works and methods into their understandings of the theoretical resources that his work provides. This can be seen in accounts which articulate a concern about a totalizing “discourse determinism” which can be read into Foucault’s archaeologies and genealogies (e.g., Henriques et al., 1998). In contrast, the conceptual resources that I have drawn upon were realized most fully in Foucault’s genealogical and aesthetic “periods.” It is to an introduction of the major conceptual tools that I employed that I now turn.

Discourse, Power, Subjectivity, and Critique: Key Foucauldian Concepts

In framing a significant Foucauldian study of subjectivity as racialized and gendered, Mama (1995) articulates the interrelationships among discourse, power, and subjectivity with particular clarity. She writes:

I define discourses as historically constructed regimes of knowledge. These include the common-sense assumptions and taken-for-granted ideas, belief systems and myths that groups of people share and through which they understand each other. Discourses articulate and convey formal and informal knowledge and ideologies. They are constantly being reproduced and constituted, and can change and evolve in the process of communication. A discourse is a shared grid of knowledge that one or more people can “enter” and through which explicit and implicit meanings are shared. This use of the concept is derived from Foucault [...]

Discourses [...] position individuals in relation to one another socially, politically and culturally, as similar to or different from; as “one of us” or as “Other.” They exist within and transmit networks of power, with dominant discourses exercising their hegemony by resonating with and echoing the institutionalised and formal knowledges, assumptions and ideologies of a given social and political order. On the other hand, subaltern discourses also exist in contradiction to hegemonic ones, which subvert the dominant symbolic order and empower oppressed groups through their resonance with alternative ideologies and cultural practices. In other words, discourses do not only transmit cultural content but also power relations, both relations of oppression and subordination and relations of resistance. [...]

Individuals have many discourses and discursive positions available to them, and the positions they take up are momentary, changing with the different social contexts and relations they find themselves in. [...] Subjectivity is therefore taken to be a process of movement through various discursive positions, as something which is constantly being produced out of social and historical knowledge and experience. (pp. 98-99)

I have listed these concepts—discourse, power, subjectivity, and critique—roughly in the order they came to the fore in Foucault’s work. And since Foucault’s later work builds upon his earlier work, I will elaborate the significance of each in this order.

Discourse is perhaps the foundational concept for Foucault from his early “archaeologies of knowledge” to his final series of “histories of sexuality.” Wherever

there is meaning there is discourse and discourse is historically bound. Parker's "working definition" of a discourse is "a system of statements which constructs an object" (1992, p. 5), but he goes on to add that a discourse is realized in texts, contains subjects, refers to other discourses and to itself, is historically situated, supports institutions, reproduces power relations, and has ideological effects. A variety of discourses may link up with any given object—each of which "constructs" the object in varying ways and with differing implications for what can be seen, said, and done in relation to the object—yet each discourse claims to represent the "truth" of the object (Burr, 1995). It would be a mistake to dismiss discourses as merely ideational—or ideological—since, for Foucault, discourses are integrally linked to material practices that enact and reproduce them along with institutions which anchor them in a given society. Discursive practices that are pervasively reproduced and institutionally supported establish hegemony and marginalize competing discourses.

Power comes to the fore and occupies a central position—along with discourse—in Foucault's genealogical studies of the 1970s. As Burr put it: "To define the world or a person in a way that allows you to do the things you want is to exercise power" (1995, p. 64). Foucault's (1980) analysis of power involved "decapitating the monarch" and "taking to the streets." In contrast to sovereign- and state-centered conceptions of power, Foucault's is a radically decentralized, bottom-up understanding of power's workings. Thus, he was concerned with power's circulation throughout the social network and the many forms in which it operates—including at the everyday, micro, and/or "capillary" levels. Further, Foucault contended that "power is tolerable only on condition that it mask a substantial part of itself. Its success is proportional to its ability to hide its own

mechanisms” (1978, p. 86). Like discourse, power is omnipresent—but power is not omnipotent (Best & Kellner, 1991); there is always the possibility of contesting, of resisting, of countering power and therein exercising power—but not exorcising power. Points of resistance can be found throughout any given network of discursive practices and material power relations (Foucault, 1978).

Subjectivity figures prominently in much of Foucault’s work. Indeed, Foucault (1983, p. 209) contended that despite the characterization by others of his work as focused upon issues of power, his primary concern was with the subject. However, he consistently took pains to distinguish his understanding of the subject as discursively positioned from the “transcendental subject” of phenomenology (e.g., Foucault, 1972, pp. 54-55, 122). As Weedon put it: “To speak is to assume a subject position within discourse and to become *subjected* to the power and regulation of the discourse” (1997, p. 116). Being positioned as a subject in discourse is no mere issue of “playing a role,” but rather of being both constrained and incited to see, think, feel, and do certain things—and not others—as expressions of one’s “true self” (Burr, 1995). We tend to become invested in and emotionally committed to the subject positions we inhabit—even as those same positions inhabit us. Our identities consist of the subject positions that we identify as our “own”—typically without recognizing that we have been called into being as such by discourses that we have most often had no part in shaping. Additionally, subjectivity is necessarily multiple and conflictual as a result of being positioned in relation to multiple and conflicting discourses.

Given the common view of Foucault as a kind of apostle of “discourse determinism,” many have not recognized the power of critique in the “aesthetics of

existence” he began developing in the last phase of his published work. In this regard, Foucault said:

“My role [...] is to show people that they are much freer than they feel, that people accept as truth, as evidence, some themes which have been built up at a certain moment during history, and that this so-called evidence can be criticized and destroyed. [...] All my analyses are against the idea of universal necessities in human experience. They show the arbitrariness of institutions and show which space of freedom we can still enjoy and how many changes can still be made.” (Martin, 1988, pp. 10-11)

Foucault was careful to be clear that he had not come to believe in a “sovereign, founding subject” (1988, p. 50) and that he continued to hold the position that subjectivity is constituted in the sociohistorical matrix of discourse and power. However, he emphasized that radical criticism—criticism which illuminates the fragile, historically-contingent discourses that ground our taken-for-granted practices—is integral to any kind of transformation. This is to say that if we know that and how our discourses and practices were made, then we can unmake them (Foucault, 1998). Thus, radical critique opens onto unforeseen possibilities for transformation, even a kind a “situated freedom.” It is in this context that Foucault spoke of an “aesthetics of existence” that involves less following of impersonal moral codes and more seeking after “beautiful lives.”

Positioning of an Interpretive Researcher

Before turning my attention to the specific text at the center of this research, I must explicate the position(s) from which I approached this research. No final, transcendent, or unquestionable reading of this particular text is on offer here. Like all others, I remain a subject of the vicissitudes of the material circumstances and discursive regimes that shape both my experiences and my understandings of all that I encounter.

Thus, in order to facilitate my readers' evaluations of this research, I must articulate my perspective and something of the personal significance of this research project. Indeed, if this work is to go beyond mere journalism, then, among other things, articulating a disciplined reflexivity on my part is essential.

The most obviously relevant aspect of my position in approaching this research is that I am a White man who is married (since 1996) to a Chinese-Jamaican(-American) woman. I was born to working class parents and raised in a relatively small town in central Ohio where there were very few racial minorities of any kind. I remember a few Black and Asian students at the public school that I attended, but I was not particularly close to any of them. Thus, my most frequent "contact" with racial Others was via television, e.g., *The Jeffersons*, *The Cosby Show*, and athletes on the various sports teams that I followed. Significantly, however, one of my uncles married a mestiza woman who was originally from Guatemala; I did not see them often, but I enjoyed their company. My travels through higher education have subsequently led me to live several years in each of the following places: a very small town in northeastern Kentucky where the only people of color I remember were a few international students, the north side of Chicago, the east side of Pittsburgh, and north suburban Cincinnati. My experiences in Chicago, Pittsburgh, and Cincinnati have included increased levels of exposure to and interaction with racial minorities, but I have never lived, worked, or played anywhere where I found myself, as a White man, in the minority on any kind of regular basis.

However, despite my traveling in thoroughly White-dominated circles, I somehow managed to meet, fall in love with, and marry Raquel. And my relationship with her has profoundly changed my perspectives on issues of race and racism. In her

Chinese-Jamaican immediate and extended family, which includes people currently living in Jamaica, Great Britain, Canada, the United States, and Singapore, interracial marriages are as common as intraracial marriages. And the interracial marriages include a variety of racial combinations, so when I am with Raquel's family, I find myself in the minority, but in no way feeling unwelcome. Indeed, I am sure that my being one of a few Whites in the family is much more personally significant for me than for anyone else. Before I met Raquel and became a part of her family, nothing in my experience led me to think much about issues of race or to see myself as White. In fact, we were several years and many frustrating conversations into our relationship before I began to be able to see and speak from positions outside of the individualistic discourse of "color-blindness" into which I have been so thoroughly socialized. Now I find myself increasingly committed to articulating and enacting an explicitly anti-racist discourse and practice in my own life.

Text to be Read: A Jointly-Written Memoir of Interracial Marriage

The use and possibilities of autobiographical forms of writing as politicized "resistance narratives" have been noted by a variety of scholars (e.g., Mostern, 1999; Perkins, 2000; Smith & Watson, 1998; 2001). Indeed, we can look to the American slave narrative as a classic genre that gave—and continues to give—a critical voice to marginalized and oppressed people. In recounting the trajectory of their lives in written form, from their survival under the regime of slavery through their attempts to become participants in free American society, former slaves intervened against a dehumanizing system on behalf of many whose voices had been profoundly silenced. Given that slaves were generally forbidden from learning to read and write, the significance of attaining

literacy in a logocentric culture cannot be overstated as literacy afforded a subject the tools to produce a lasting and legitimized record of her ideas—even her very existence—from her own perspective (Perkins, 2000; Smith & Watson, 2001). Obvious parallels can be drawn from slave narratives to the memoirs of the marginalized group that is the focus of this research project, interracially married couples. Both have the potential to engage the dual tasks of articulating critiques of oppressive racial regimes and defiantly claiming the space to give personal testimony to the existence of the silenced. I do not mean to suggest that autobiographical writing done by the racially marginalized—or, conversely, none of that done by the racially centered—is necessarily oriented to counter-hegemonic critique. It is certainly possible for those who are positioned in the racial margins to write memoir in ways that reproduce hegemonic discourses of race. However, it was the counter-discursive possibilities of autobiographical forms of writing that led me to this reading of the published memoir of an interracially married couple. Further, a book-length text provides a sustained account which, even if hegemonic discourses prevail, will offer more opportunities to mine gaps and fissures for counter-discourses would shorter texts of whatever sort.

Before giving a brief description of the specific text I read, I want to clarify my reason for preferring the more specific term “memoir” to the more generic “autobiography.” According to Smith and Watson (2001), memoir is a “mode of life narrative that historically situates the subject in a social environment...[and]...directs attention more toward the lives and actions of others than to the narrator” (p. 198). While substantial portions of this text are more focused on “interiority” than “exteriority,” my

reading of this text in light of Foucault's conceptions of discourse, power, and subject positions resonates with the "sociality" of memoir as a subgenre of autobiography.

The text I selected is Mark and Gail Mathabane's (1992) *Love in Black and White: The triumph of love over prejudice and taboo*. Mark is a Black man from South Africa while Gail is White woman who grew up in Ohio, Texas, and Minnesota. They had two young children and were living in North Carolina at the time that they wrote this most popular memoir of interracial marriage. The fact that theirs is also an intercultural marriage complicated my reading of this memoir, but it is so widely cited in work on interracial marriage that it was an obvious choice in order to gain access to a text that plays a substantial role in shaping the discourse about interracial marriage. (See the appendix for a chapter-by-chapter summary of the narrative of this text.)

Outline of a Foucauldian Discourse Analysis

Up until this point, I have contended that Foucault's work provided me no clear, systematic outline of a research method, but that did not prevent me from selecting and introducing four key concepts from his work—discourse, power, subjectivity, and critique—to apply to my reading of the Mathabanes' memoir. So the question remains: What did the process of this research project look like? While I did not pursue a strictly linear, step-by-step approach, I can identify three general phases of this project that I initiated in the following order. First, I explored and sketched the historical background of race, Whiteness, and interracial marriage in the United States. Second, I completed a close reading of the selected memoir in light of the Foucauldian concepts outlined above. Third, I returned to a consideration of the historical context in which this text currently

participates in order to explicate its sociohistorical significance. I will elaborate each of these aspects in turn.

The first aspect of this research project—exploring and sketching the relevant historical background—was presented in Chapter I of this manuscript. Throughout the research process, I continued reading relevant literature on race, Whiteness, and interracial marriage drawn primarily from the fields of history and sociology, but including some work done in the fields of psychology and philosophy. The purpose of this literature review is to articulate the historical context—in both its discursive and material aspects—out of which this specific text (i.e., *Love in Black and White*) arises and, thus, against which it must be understood.

In conducting the second aspect of this research project—a close reading of the memoir—I closely followed the “procedural guidelines for the analysis of discourse” developed by Willig (2001) and I present my direct textual analysis in Chapter III—Textual Analysis of *Love in Black and White*. Sections 1-3 focus on Discourse while sections 4-6 address the Subject Positions made available within the dominant discourse of this memoir.

1. **Discursive constructions**—In a series of close readings of the text, I highlighted both explicit and implicit references in the text to the discursive objects of interest. Thus, I took note of all references to race, Whiteness, and interracial marriage as I read the texts toward identifying the various ways that the Mathabanes wrote about race, Whiteness, and themselves as an interracially married couple—not simply by looking for these as keywords, but also considering related constructions that helped to frame the principal constructions of interest.

2. **Discourse**—Next, I began to piece together the recurring discursive constructions in the text into broader systems of meanings that could coherently include the most prominent discursive constructions.
3. **Action orientation**—I considered both the functions of and the relationships among the various discursive constructions within the text. I repeatedly asked: how is this discursive construction being employed at this point and what is gained by its use? For example, is responsibility of some sort being assigned to someone? Is one account of events being promoted over others? Are subjects being positioned in a particular moral order?
4. **Positionings**—As I shifted to focus on the subject positions made available within these discourses, I sought to specify the discursive locations that were being offered from which subjects could speak and act. These are positions within networks of meaning that subjects can take up—and place others within—with strong implications for subjectivity, not mere roles to be played and set aside.
5. **Practice**—Here I explored how subjects’ opportunities for action were both opened up and closed down by the identified positions. What possibilities for action are fostered by these subject positions? Discourses limit—and legitimate—what can be said and done, while such practices, in turn, reproduce their legitimating discourses.
6. **Subjectivity**—Here the task was to explore the possibilities for what could be felt, thought, and experienced from the identified positions. What ways of seeing and being in the world come to the fore from these perspectives? What “psychological realities” are constructed by this discourse? What are the experiential implications of taking up these particular subject positions?

While Willig's (2001) guidelines were quite helpful in providing an organizing schema for the textual analysis, they do not include explicit attention to the third aspect of this research project—connecting the reading of a specific text to its sociohistorical context. Thus, I drew upon Parker's (1992) outline of the analysis of “discourse dynamics” for guidance in formulating the questions that I posed in order to integrate my readings of text and context, i.e., sections 7-10. This aspect of the research is presented in Chapter IV—Sociohistorical Context of the Discourse of Color-Blind Love and begins the process of bringing the dominant discourse of this memoir into dialogue with some of the issues elaborated in the literature review—and with some additional problems.

7. **Historical location**—As the first step in situating this discourse, I focused on the historical dimensions of its inception and evolution. The task at this point was to illuminate what this discourse meant in the specific context in which it emerged and how its significance has changed given the evolving historical context.
8. **Institutional support**—Given that discourses sustain practices that reproduce the material bases of institutions, I worked to identify the institutions that are linked to this discourse and that this discourse helps to preserve and reinforce. The question here was how this discourse is implicated in the structure of specific institutions.
9. **Political significance**—Given that discourses reproduce power relations, I sought to identify the categories of people that gain and lose as a result of the use of this discourse. Thus, who would want to promote and who would oppose this discourse? What political interests are implicit in the use of this discourse?
10. **Ideological effects**—As a final aspect of situating this discourse sociohistorically, I sought to identify how this discourse connects with broader discourses that sanction,

mystify, and protect the bases of oppression. Thus, how do dominant groups protect their interests without appearing oppressive?

Given that any book-length text—even the most monolithic—will necessarily show internal evidence of competing discourses in its production, I conclude my analysis and begin my formal discussion of the significance of this research by identifying and amplifying some bits and pieces of a potential counter-discourse that are in tension with the dominant discourse of the text in question. Of particular concern here is the question of whether and how such an alternative discourse might empower oppressed groups.

These are the three broad aspects—along with ten more specific “steps”—of my particular Foucauldian discourse analytic approach to this research project. I place “steps” in quotation marks to remind the reader that I did follow a strictly linear approach in the midst of the process of this project. For example, there were numerous times when I found myself needing to return to earlier steps in the process to elaborate my analysis or more carefully define particular subject positions. Similarly, at times, I found myself racing ahead with inspiration in regard to later steps of the analysis that I subsequently had to articulate in greater detail. The point is that each of the broad aspects and specific steps that I have outlined is integrally related to every other aspect and step of the analysis. Thus, theoretically, the analysis could have been started at a variety of points and followed through in a different order. But I did write my initial drafts of each of the ten steps sequentially as they are listed above. And I have presented the aspects of my subsequent analysis in a linear fashion from the most elemental and concrete to the most abstract and general in the hope that this format will aid the reader.

CHAPTER III—TEXTUAL ANALYSIS OF *LOVE IN BLACK AND WHITE*

1) Discursive constructions

In regard to the discursive objects of interest (i.e., race, Whiteness, and interracial marriage), the recurrent use of the terms “human being,” “humanity,” and simply “human” is particularly striking in this text as their constant reiteration seems to a certain extent incantatory. The emphasis is on the notion of universality, the “common humanity” that everyone in the world shares with her/his “fellow human beings” as “one people.” Thus, the Mathabanes write of “skin color” as “biologically irrelevant.” However, they use the racial terms “black” and “white” throughout the book without otherwise problematizing them by, for example, marking these terms with scare quotes or initial capitals. In contrast, throughout this dissertation I will follow the guidelines of the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (2001) regarding the naming of racial and ethnic groups, i.e., treating them as proper nouns. I will consistently capitalize *Black* and *White*—except in the case of direct quotations wherein I will preserve the authors’ designations intact. But because the APA guidelines are not widely followed, the reader will note that the racial terms included in the vast majority of direct quotations herein—including those of the Mathabanes, but also those of most secondary sources cited—will be in the form of *black* and *white* (i.e., lowercase and without scare quotes). This form is very problematic in the context of a study such as this one in which

racial categories are seen as social constructions that stand in constant need of problematization lest the reification of those categories be allowed to proceed unnoticed and unchallenged. Despite the fact that for decades the scientific consensus has been that racial categories have no biological basis, *black* and *white* continue to be used as simple adjectives (as in “black person”) and as simple nouns (as in “whites”) in ways that continually, subtly reinforce the longstanding notion that these are unproblematic, empirical categories. Some authors use scare quotes (e.g., “black” and “white”) to problematize racial categories, but I prefer capitalization’s emphasis on these as proper names with symbolic—even mythic—status in our society. (The reader may want to pay attention to how the use of these contrasting approaches to racial signification affect her/his reading of what follows.)

It is worth noting at this point that Whiteness as such is never explicitly mentioned in this text—though many people are explicitly or implicitly marked as “white.” Generally speaking, race and racism as such are not given positions of explicit prominence in this text. The Mathabanes frequently invoke the notions of “stereotypes” and “prejudice,” but as a rule they steer clear of racism’s broader institutional, cultural, and historical dimensions. Indeed, “racial” terms are explicitly avoided, for example, as the Mathabanes demonstrate a strong preference for the term “mixed couple”—with a few uses of “interracial love”—while avoiding the term “interracial marriage.” This is striking given that all—or nearly all—of the couples to whom they refer in the book are married Black-White heterosexual couples and that use of the “mixed couple” formulation allows them to avoid making direct reference to racialized groups. In this spirit, the Mathabanes write that “it is the color of one’s heart that matters” (p. 22), and

that people should be judged “as individuals, by the contents of their character, rather than by the color of their skin” (p. 25). These quotations illustrate another common way that the Mathabanes avoid discussing race and racism directly, i.e., by consistently employing the trope of color. So, in this text, issues of race become matters merely of skin color and racism is used to refer only to individual-level phenomena such as stereotyping, prejudice, and bigotry.

Gail mentions having written a magazine article (accompanied by a photograph of the couple and their first child) entitled “Color-Blind Love” and though this formulation is not explicitly used beyond the single mention of this article, it does effectively capture the Mathabanes’ portrayal of their relationship throughout the text. They quote approvingly from others who said of their marriage: “True love knows no color” (p. 199) and “love needs no justification” (p. 158). And many of the tropes of romantic love are on display in this text as Gail and Mark are characterized as “soul mates” who “belong together.” As Gail writes, “in my heart I knew I would never meet another man like Mark in all the billions of this world” (p. 100). As they write of their book in the preface, “It is simply the story of two individuals who fell in love” (p. xii).

Their life together is not simple, however, as they as face a “society” that continues to harbor “stereotypes and misconceptions” about “mixed couples”—“militant blacks” are particularly prominent among those who oppose their relationship. So in contrast to the idyllic private space that Mark and Gail share as color-blind “soul mates,” when they venture into the “outside world” they find their relationship under special scrutiny and “pressure.” For Gail in particular, this contributed to her feeling a conflict between her “head” and her “heart,” but she eventually resolved this struggle by deciding

that she must be “true to herself” and “follow her feelings.” There were frequent references to one or the other’s “true feelings” and to that which was “truly felt” in connection with their “convictions” and the stirrings of their “conscience” to “overcome” whatever “obstacles” the “outside world” might place in their path. As people who were ultimately up to the challenge of meeting these “obstacles,” the Mathabanes cast themselves as “independent,” as “nonconformists,” and as committed to the seemingly lost “idealism” of the 1960s when “racial harmony” and “integration” seemed not only possible, but on the verge of becoming reality.

2) Discourse

While any given text is constructed using resources drawn from multiple—sometimes conflicting—discourses, *Love in Black and White* draws very consistently from a discourse that I will call “Color-Blind Love.” The Mathabanes put two particularly clear, concise statements of the fundamental content of their dominant discursive resource in the mouths of two different Black people who initially objected to their relationship. These are:

“Now I see that you two really care about each other, and love needs no justification. It doesn’t have to be aware of race or prejudice or what other people may think. You two have set an example, an admirable example, of how we *should* see each other—as human beings.” (p. 158)

“But after reading your book [*Kaffir Boy in America*], I understand. You and Gail are truly soul mates. It just so happens that one of you is white; the other black. True love knows no color.” (p. 199)

In essence, this discourse of Color-Blind Love says that in matters of love, race is irrelevant. The old saws that “love is blind” and that “love conquers all” are at the heart of this discourse. Thus, drawing on this discourse involves claiming transcendence of

race and racism on an individual/interpersonal level in the context of a profound romantic relationship that requires no explanation.

While the discourse of Color-Blind Love will be the focus of the remainder of my analysis of this text, the broader discourses of Liberalism and Romantic Love warrant some brief consideration here as the sources from which Color-Blind Love draws sustenance. And both of these broader discourses can be seen clearly in this text. For example, the discourse of Romantic Love is on display from the beginning as Gail confides to her diary—on the night of their first date—that she has fallen in love with Mark. And Mark wrote to Gail in the early days of their relationship: “I’m madly in love with you....You possess me wholly, you know me deeper than I know myself, I hide nothing from you” (p. 57). And when Gail worried that their relationship might not withstand the pressures they would face, Mark replied, “We must make it work. It won’t be easy. But our love is something worth fighting for, worth dying for.” After toasting to that sentiment and slow dancing around their kitchen, Gail said, “I’ve never felt this happy....We don’t need anybody or anything else, as long as we have each other” (p. 84). Similarly, as Gail imagined getting married at City Hall: “It would be just the two of us. And that’s what it’s all about, after all, isn’t it? It’s a promise between two people, not a social event” (p. 112). Further, toward the end of the text, they quote an interracial married acquaintance as saying, “If you love each other you never have to worry about problems or what people will say....Your love will be strong enough to get you through” (p. 253).

As for Liberalism, the final paragraph of this text demonstrates this discourse as it applies to issues of race and racism with crystal clarity:

Racism is essentially a problem of the heart. Pervert the human heart, which was made to feel and to love and to care, and you get cancers like racism and injustice. If in our hearts we truly accept one another as fellow human beings, many of our intractable problems would have solutions, and there would be no limit to the good we could do in making our world a better place for all. (p. 262)

Going a bit further, three aspects of this fundamentally modern Western philosophical discourse are evident in this text: individualism, the notion of universal humanity, and color-blindness. The doctrine of individualism is voiced emphatically by Gail: “To *hell* with the world! I don’t care what anyone thinks of us! I don’t care that I’m white and he’s black! I have to follow my feelings!” (p. 102) It is voiced with resolve by Mark: “I vowed that, just as I had done in South Africa, I would never allow America’s racial politics to shape my destiny by determining my values, where I should live, what I should believe, what work I should do, whom I should befriend and whom I should marry” (p. 216). And it is voiced by a reviewer of Mark’s second memoir: “We are part of a group, a family, but most importantly, we are individuals and it is to this that we must be true no matter how out of step we may be with others” (p. 207).

In terms of the theme of universal humanity, differences of all kinds—whether attributable to biology, history, society, culture, or any other extra-individual forces—are effaced as superficial and irrelevant. As one of the Mathabane’s interracial married (White) friends says, “To me everybody is the same, they only look different....Your blood is red whether you’re green, red, polka-dot, or whatever” (p. 165). And they write in their preface that this book is about “their undying conviction that humanity is one, that human love can be and should be shared with everyone, regardless of color or creed” (p. xiii). Thus, Mark writes:

The most important thing I wanted our firstborn, Bianca, to know was that she was first and foremost a human being. Her worth and identity should derive

from that fact and no other. Whatever she does in life should be toward helping her become a better human being—feeling, caring, tolerant, giving, loving. That way, no label can diminish her humanity nor contaminate her soul.

“Your father is black,” I often tell her. “And your mother is white. You unite the best in both of us. You’re a testament to our belief in the oneness of humankind. Never allow society to force you to choose between one or the other.” (p. 216-7)

Similarly, another friend is quoted as follows: “By your marriage you are saying, ‘We are all one humanity, and we can grow closer together, even to the point of marrying. And our children will be the fruit of that common humanity that brought us together’” (p. 234).

The liberal theme of color-blindness can be seen as a simple application of the trope of universal humanity in the arena of racialized discourse. Several of the previously excerpted segments illustrate the trope of color-blindness, but a few more can be added. For example, Gail reaches a point at which she writes, “I didn’t care anymore that we were different colors. I loved him and wanted to commit myself to our relationship” (p. 57). And they quote interracially married friends saying, “We are all human beings. What does race have to do with who we are?” (p. 211) And, finally, “Life gets simple when we don’t look at the color and culture of a person” (p. 251). This, then, is the essence of the discourse of Color-Blind Love. However, one must ask what it means to say that someone is color-blind and whether it is even possible for anyone in a thoroughly racialized society such as the contemporary United States to be truly color-blind. Does being interracially married provide evidence of color-blindness on the part of the spouses involved? Do the Mathabanes show themselves to be color-blind? But before digging more deeply into questions regarding the “truth value” of the claims of the discourse of Color-Blind Love, I will consider how this discourse functions in the

Mathabanes' memoir, how it positions various kinds of subjects, and some aspects of the sociohistorical context out of which it has grown.

3) Action Orientation

The discourse of Color-Blind Love, as employed by the Mathabanes in this text, aims toward the accomplishment of at least four major—and intertwining—purposes. First, this discourse provides a simple, direct response to the racial stereotypes and prejudices that have long dominated both popular and professional discourses about interracial marriage. Second, the discourse of Color-Blind Love normalizes interracial marriage by enabling interracial couples to present themselves in terms of hegemonic discourses of liberalism and romantic love—this is especially significant given the profound transgression that interracial marriage represents vis-à-vis both extremist and more moderate versions of White supremacist discourse. Third, the Mathabanes use the discourse of Color-Blind Love to argue that when people hear the stories of the individuals who have interracially married—and get to know these people as individuals—then stereotypes and prejudices are overcome and the interracially married couples find acceptance. Fourth, the Mathabanes use this discourse to encourage other interracial couples to marry (i.e., to “choose love” and disregard outside pressures) by recounting examples of their own—and of other interracially marrieds—wherein the reactions of others were not as bad as they had feared.

Given their continual confrontation with racism in a society where their relationship violates taboos and provokes both overt and covert reactions on the part of a wide range of people, it is hard to overestimate the importance for interracially married

couples of having a simple, direct response to the wide variety of negative reactions they encounter—this may be especially significant from the position of the White partner who has likely not been the object of anti-Black racism in the way that this relationship will lead her to be. In this context, the discourse of Color-Blind Love serves as a defense against the pathologizing implications of many portrayals of interracial couples that circulate in U.S. culture—from representations in the products of popular culture to the “expert” discourses of mental health professionals. The Mathabanes were quite cognizant of these portrayals as they cited and disputed them numerous times. For example, early in the text Gail writes:

Many whites believe that a white woman would only stoop to loving or marrying a black man if she were too ugly, too ignorant, or too poor to find herself a white mate. This could not be further from the truth. I've met dozens of bright, attractive white women from respectable families who have fallen deeply in love with good men who just happen to be black.

Another popular theory is that white women who date blacks have low self-esteem and want to degrade themselves as much as possible by prostituting their hearts, souls, and bodies to black men, who will supposedly take them for granted and treat them like trash. This, too, is a racist stereotype. Most white women I've met who date black men are more confident, self-assured, and independent than average. They are strong-willed and open-minded individuals who choose to go against the social grain rather than give in to pressure from parents, friends, coworkers, and society to break up with men they admire, respect, and love.

In my case, my friendship with Mark has been an uplifting experience, not a degrading one. Mark has been unstinting in his support of me as a writer. He constantly encourages me to do my best without fear of criticism or rejection...Mark was all the things I had ever hoped for in a man--an intellectual, a lover of books and philosophy and classical music, an athlete, a fellow writer, a sensitive and compassionate human being, and a loyal friend. To be honest I had not expected my ideal man to be black, but the fact that he was did not keep me from falling in love with him. (p. 17-18)

And in the days immediately before their marriage, Gail went:

...to the New York Public Library to do research on mixed couples. The main questions in my mind were: Do interracial marriages last? Are they common? How do mixed couples feel about their marriages?

I did not find much, and most of what I found was negative. So-called experts on interracial relationships had a plethora of absurd theories and explanations about white woman-black man marriages. The woman was too fat and ugly to get a white man, was acting out against a racist parent, had already been ostracized by white society, or had such low self-esteem that she felt like trash that belonged in a black ghetto.

The black man was denying his skin color and attempting to be white. He was trying to avenge himself against white oppression by defiling a white woman. The children of such mixed up marriages suffered the cruel fate of being caught, trapped between two worlds, rejected by both races, traumatized by a perpetual identity crisis. Anger and disgust made me slam shut each book I read. Where was the human story? Why were mixed couples constantly analyzed? When will they finally talk openly about who they really are and what they truly feel? (p. 116)

But even more emotionally significant for Gail was her long struggle to win her father's acceptance of her relationship with Mark.

I recalled my father's reaction when he met Carol's biracial boyfriend....He seemed to think that interracial love should be addressed by textbooks on abnormal psychology. He was so absorbed in his career as a psychologist that his conversations were peppered with words like *schizophrenia*, *manic*, *incestuous tendencies*, *latent homosexuality*, *biofeedback*, *repressed anger*, and *psychotic behavior*. (p. 59)

Thus, Gail wept with joy when her father finally met Mark and—literally—embraced him. Years later she asked:

“Why did you think I'd have all sorts of problems if I married Mark?”

“I specialized in marital therapy, babe, I should know,” he replied. “I've counseled mixed couples before. Being an interracial couple adds external stress to a marriage, and marriage, by nature, has a lot of stress already built into it. Coming out of a failed marriage myself, I'm very aware of the stresses and strains involved in any marital relationship. Then there are additional strains between the couple and the enviroing society. The stress placed on mixed couples in a racist society is considerable, at times intolerable. And when a couple becomes socially isolated, that really creates stress.”

“Then why did you embrace Mark?”

“It was a spontaneous act of admiration. I had some worries and concerns at first, but that doesn't mean your father is a bigot. Why shouldn't I have embraced my future son-in-law?” (p. 125-126)

Interracially married couples find themselves explicitly and implicitly pathologized and marginalized in the discourses articulated by family, friend, and foe. So it should come as no surprise that many such couples would want to resist this kind of rhetoric. And the discourse of Color-Blind Love arms them with a down-to-earth defense.

The uncomplicated response that the discourse of Color-Blind Love provides draws much of its power from its normalization of interracial marriage by incorporating mainstream discourses—i.e., liberalism and romantic love. As hegemonic discourses, these allow interracially married couples to present—and understand—themselves in terms of discourses that essentially go unexamined and unchallenged in Western society. These discourses, then, lend legitimacy to an act (i.e., interracial marriage) that is highly transgressive in relation to other mainstream discourses—namely, White supremacy and racial separatism/segregation. For example, Gail makes the first blush of her budding relationship with Mark sound so wonderful that most anyone would wish to have what they have/had—or be prompted to remember the early days of her/his own love relationships and, thus, to feel that that improbable interracial relationship is/was much like her/his own. Indeed, the book—especially the earlier sections written by Gail—are so incredibly melodramatic at times that it reads like a romance novel. It is difficult not to get pulled into the intensity of the conflicted feelings that Gail articulates.

Another aspect of the normalization of interracial marriage that is articulated in this text relates to the frequently articulated “concern” about the special problems that multiracial children will face. The Mathabanes argue that “Despite society’s hang-ups, children of mixed couples, contrary to popular belief, grow up with a healthy sense of

who they are, a fact which, interestingly, the combatants in America's race war find hard to accept" (p. 213). And further on:

Most opponents of interracial marriage make the same arguments over and over again: "The children will suffer. They'll be caught between two worlds. They won't fit in anywhere. They'll be lonely and isolated." But speak to any biracial child or their parent, and you'll most likely hear a different story.

"When I read articles about the problems biracial kids supposedly have, I have to laugh," Williams [an interracially married father in a racially integrated New Jersey community] said. "I look at my own children and the biracial kids I coach. I mean, these kids are ready to take on the whole world. They feel so sure of themselves. They hold their heads up. They've learned to be strong from their parents." (p. 214)

Mark later adds his reflections on their nineteen-month-old daughter, Bianca:

As the weeks passed I began to see that Bianca was comfortable in all four worlds that make up her identity: white, black, American, and South African. She was growing up without stereotypes against race or culture, completely open and trusting of new people and kind strangers, unafraid and self-confident, candid in her expression of feelings.

For months her favorite phrase was "I love you," and she says it not only to Mommy, Daddy, Grampa, Grandma, Uncle George, and her aunts Linah and Diana but also to her little girlfriends at play school, her teachers, and other relatives who call and ask to speak to her. She's been maturing into a beautiful, trusting, tolerant, nonjudgmental, happy child popular among the neighborhood children, both black and white. I have no fear that she will be "caught between two worlds," as so many opponents of interracial marriage argue. Instead I'm confident she will be a much better person from growing up amid so much diversity. (p. 221)

And the Mathabanes cite a Black woman friend who is interracially married and who enjoys the stares that she encounters when she's out with her White husband:

I love having attention, because I feel it's an opportunity for me to provide a fresh, more wholesome, healthy perspective. We're setting a good example. It's a chance to say, "Yes, we're a mixed couple and we're healthy and happy, we're not suffering and crazy and weird. We're not hiding. We're not freaks." (p. 232)

Thus, the discourse of Color-Blind Love is an integral part of the efforts of many interracial couples to present themselves as normal, as "just like everyone else," in a society where they continue to attract a lot of attention.

And, optimistically, this discourse of Color-Blind Love is part of an argument that when other people get to know the partners to an interracial marriage as individuals—and their children—they will accept them as such. Racial stereotypes, prejudices, and taboos will be overcome and interracially married couples will find acceptance. Thus, Gail writes that in response to the magazine article she wrote entitled “Color-Blind Love”:

I received numerous letters from the sisters, mothers, and friends of mixed couples as well as some from mixed couples themselves thanking me for writing the article. Those letters in themselves were enough to negate all the ridiculous criticism the article provoked and convinced me that we mixed couples, if we ever want to be fully understood, accepted and respected by society, have to be willing to tell our human stories in order to combat stereotypes about us; we have to speak out against bigotry, black and white, wherever we may live. (p. 190)

And Mark alludes to another possible reason for writing this book, i.e., to explain his relationship with Gail and thereby help combat the view that some Blacks have had of him as “another black man who, on becoming successful, marries white” (p. 193). At the same time, he tries to console Gail after she is shocked to find herself confronted with the idea that she is “‘the white woman’ who stole a black man” (p. 200).

“Didn’t you know?” Mark asked. “Of course black women are going to be upset at you, at us. I know it’s unfair. But we just have to get used to it. Maybe someday, when they get to know you as an individual, they’ll think differently about us.” (p. 201)

And the Mathabanes go on to provide several examples of people who initially opposed interracial marriages—including that of the Mathabanes—but who, on getting to know the couple and thinking more rationally, come to accept their interracial marriage and see them in terms of the discourse of Color-Blind Love. For example, this text includes the story of a Black woman who approached Gail at one of Mark’s book signings and admitted that she had been “stark raving mad” when she found out that Mark’s wife was

White, but then came to accept their relationship and within a year began dating a White man. A very similar arc is traced in a previously cited review of Mark's second memoir:

For days I was angry. I refused to buy the book and I felt that I had learned as much as I wanted to know about Mark Mathabane. I hate racism and its simple-minded tenets and those people who uphold them, but I am not a black racist. I do not hate white people. So why did I feel betrayed? Because after luring me into the unutterable horrors of apartheid and making me weep and angry and determined to fight racism and all its ugliness until the day I die, he seems to turn around and embrace the Nordic ideal. He seems to be saying white South Africans are right. The blonde ideal is superior, it is the one worthy of his love, not the lowly black, kinky-headed race.

All of this simplistic thinking soon gave way to a more complex view. We are not simply black or white, we are human beings with thoughts, emotions, and spirituality that make us who we are. Indeed, we are part of a group, a family, but most importantly, we are individuals and it is to this that we must be true no matter how out of step we may be with others. (p. 207)

Another recurring theme in this text is that of the estranged White father who later embraces the Black son-in-law he initially rejected. To illustrate, the Mathabanes describe the story of a White woman whose father threw her out of the house when she was nineteen because she was dating a Black man. In fact, when her father initially learned of his daughter's interracial dating, he said "I'll shoot the nigger" (p. 237).

However:

In the wedding photographs, Connie's father beams proudly, apparently delighted by the way everything turned out....

"Nine years into their relationship and four years into the marriage, James and Connie now have three children and a home of their own. James works for Connie's father, and the two of them have become good friends." (p. 241)

As a less extreme example, the Mathabanes relate the story of a White American man who sought his parents' permission to marry a Black South African woman.

Instead of arguing with his parents, Bill planned dinners and events during which each of them could become better acquainted with Tahirih. This forced his father to interact with Tahirih and the barriers between them gradually came down. Tahirih ceased being a stereotype and became an individual. When Bill's parents finally gave their consent to the marriage, it was given unreservedly. (p. 257-258)

And near the end of the text, the Mathabanes add their own variation on this theme:

“After all the pain and misunderstanding Gail and her father had been through over our relationship it is heartwarming to see him affectionately and unreservedly embracing his biracial grandchildren” (p. 261-262). So it is that, in various iterations, the Mathabanes use the discourse of Color-Blind Love to argue that interracial married couples—and their children—will be accepted by family, friends, and society at large once they are known as individuals.

Given the optimism on display in this text about the acceptance of interracial married couples and their multiracial children, it should come as no surprise that the Mathabanes are quite explicit about one of their reasons for writing this book, i.e., to encourage other interracial couples to stay together and get married. In reflecting on a point in the narrative when Gail and Mark have reunited after a period of several difficult months when it seem all but certain that their relationship had ended, Gail writes: “We talked excitedly about writing a book that would encourage mixed couples to choose love and disregard the world around them” (p. 104). And the reactions of Gail’s relatives were more positive than she had expected—the message here seems to be that the reactions will not be as bad as interracial couples might fear. So it is not surprising that they cite multiple examples of interracial married couples who report few or no problems that they attribute to being interracial married. Two of these couples report enjoying the stares that they receive—and the implication seems to be that other interracial married couples can/will have similarly positive experiences. And the Mathabanes present themselves as an example of one of these happy couples. The ending of their book is very tidy and very joyful. There are no loose ends and they

present themselves as having achieved happiness, peace, and color-blindness. This text concludes with a fairy tale ending in which, against all odds and in a world gone mad with racism, they have created heaven on earth. This is the gospel of Color-Blind Love.

4) Positionings

The discourse of Color-Blind Love as it is manifest in *Love in Black and White* offers three subject positions from which subjects can speak and act. These are those of a Color-Conscious Society, a Rational Person Coming to Color-Blindness, and a Color-Blind Couple—an ancillary position here is that of the couple's Multiracial Child.

Those who are positioned in this discourse as part of the Color-Conscious Society are frequently referred to by the Color-Blind Couple—the Mathabanes and others they cite—as part of the “outside world.” This position is occupied by those who are portrayed as a largely undifferentiated group of bigoted people—including friends, family, and strangers, Blacks and Whites—who irrationally place human beings into racial categories and expect members of each racial group to “stick to their own kind” when it comes to dating and marriage. Blacks who are positioned as part of Color-Conscious Society are frequently characterized as “bitter and militant” while Whites in this position are sometimes described either as “rednecks” or in denial about their own prejudices. Mark relates his experience with each of these racial groups in the following way:

Militant blacks wanted me to prove my solidarity with their cause by disassociating myself from whites and confining my friendships to the black community....Some whites, on the other hand, also victims of the racism and intolerance that pervaded society, were unable or unwilling to deal with me on my own terms, as an individual, rather than as one of the many stereotypes about blacks they had imbibed growing up self-segregated from black America. (p. 9)

And, as Mark tells it, his experience in the United States in this regard was essentially the same as his experience in South Africa, since there, too, his willingness to associate with friendly Whites earned him the enmity of “militant” Blacks who, on one occasion, attacked him with a brick and knocked out one of his teeth. One difference between Mark’s experiences in these two racially segregated countries was the strength of the criticism that he faced from Black women in the United States when his marriage to Gail became widely known. For example, he describes his participation as a guest on a popular New York City radio show during which “angry calls from black women poured in” with verbal assaults such as “How dare you marry a white girl?” and “Your marriage to a white woman is an insult to your mother and every black woman in this country” (p. 196). Mark also described the mistaken assumptions of many that one of his younger sisters was his wife—even as Gail stood by his side—for example, as they greeted people after church services that they attended together.

The experiences that Gail describes in relation to a Color-Conscious Society include her protracted struggle to gain her father’s acceptance of her relationship with Mark—despite his longstanding “liberal” credentials as a minister who had been criticized for being too pro-Black in the early 1960s. Gail’s effort to win his approval consumes more of her emotional energy than any other aspect of the text and provokes her to write a very angry letter to which he responds tearfully with the question “Do you think your father is a racist? Me? What do you take me for?” (p. 79) Gail further recounts experiences with Whites who have difficulty accepting that Mark is her husband and that Bianca is her (biological) daughter. For example:

One little boy tugged insistently at his mother's skirt, pointed to us and shouted, "Hey! Look! That's a white lady and that's a brown baby! Mommy, how come that white lady's got a brown baby?"

The mother bent over her child and whispered, "Don't point! How many times do I have to tell you—"

"But how come there's a white lady with a—"

"Some children are adopted," the mother explained. She looked up and, seeing that I had heard everything, asked, "She *is* adopted, isn't she?" (p. 163)

The text also includes accounts of White parents—in both the North and the South—who come to accept their children's decision to marry interracially only after a long, painful process that takes many years, along with the story of one White woman who remains estranged from her parents after twenty-two years. Thus, near the end of this text, the Mathabanes make this statement about Color-Conscious Society in the decades since the progress made toward greater tolerance and inclusion in the 1960s:

Many Americans seem to have given up on the ideal of an integrated society. Two segregated, opposed, and hostile camps have emerged. More and more, blacks and whites are hurling accusations of racism at each other and arguing rancorously over civil rights, affirmative action, and racially motivated violence. (p. 259)

The Mathabanes, however, are hardly without hope as their discourse of Color-Blind Love includes a position for a Rational Person Coming to Color-Blindness—situated here, of course, are many parents of interracial couples. Such a person emerges from Color-Conscious Society and overcomes her stereotypes and prejudices—often after getting to know each of the partners in a Color-Blind Couple as a "human being." This Rational Person experiences a process of personal growth in which, after overcoming her initial shock, she becomes increasingly tolerant, accepting, and understanding based on exposure—whether direct or indirect—to an interracial couple. Regarding such Rational People, the Mathabanes quote an interracially married Black friend as follows:

Reasonable people of all races feel comfortable with a mixed couple, because they know they're in the presence of people whose relationship is a testimony that color doesn't substitute for character, that prejudice can be overcome, and that people of different races can find common ground in mutually respectful friendship. (p. 258)

But with the exception of Mark's mother—who is presented as having always been color-blind—those situated in this position are consistently portrayed as moving through a process from absorption in a Color-Conscious Society toward color-blindness. Among these are Oprah Winfrey's (Black) boyfriend and various Black women who read Mark's second memoir, *Kaffir Boy in America*. Two excerpts from the text are particularly direct in this regard:

Some wrote to me and said that after initially being angered and embittered at learning that I had married a white woman, they later, after their visceral reactions had subsided, found it in themselves to accept us and respect our feelings for each other. (p. 199)

June Steward, a black woman living in Oakland, wrote a review of Mark's second book for the *San Francisco Post*, a black newspaper, and sent him a copy of the published piece:

I was delighted to see Mathabane's timely sequel, *Kaffir Boy in America*, displayed among the new arrivals in the bookstore. I immediately scanned the photos and saw...to my amazement and, I must admit, horror, a photo of his wife, Gail, a white woman. Stunned, I turned through the pages thinking, "It just can't be." But there she was, blonde and probably blue-eyed as she could be. I put the book back on the shelf feeling betrayed. How could he have done this to us? How could he, in the most intimate sense, take up with the very race whose brutality he described so clearly and convincingly in *Kaffir Boy*? (p. 206-207)

As noted in a previously cited part of this book review, June Steward remained angry for days because she felt that Mark had betrayed Black women and, by marrying White, had made a kind of public statement that Black women are inferior to White women. But she soon overcame this kind of "simplistic thinking" by reminding herself that we are all, first and foremost, "human beings" whose most essential loyalties should be to ourselves—not to racial groups. Similarly, the parents of interracial couples

who—whether relatively quickly or much more gradually—come to accept their child’s marital choice and partner are situated in this discourse as Rational Persons Coming to Color-Blindness. Likewise, the interracially married partners may be portrayed as having moved through a process from color-consciousness to color-blindness—especially the White partner—and this is a prominent theme in this text. As Gail writes:

The white partner in an interracial relationship usually has ample, if subconscious, stereotypes to overcome. I did. Like Mark, I believe that these stereotypes began in my childhood, as did my battle against their influence on my life....I was afraid of blacks. For the first ten years of my life I had lived in lily-white communities in Cincinnati and Springfield, Ohio, and knew nothing about the people my Texas girlfriends casually called “niggers.” (p. 26-27)

Mark is also positioned as having moved from color-consciousness to color-blindness during his years living in South Africa, but less attention is paid to his process of doing so in this text.

The essential subject position in the discourse of Color-Blind Love is, of course, that of the Color-Blind Couple. This is an idealized position that the Mathabanes claim to reach eventually after varying degrees of struggle on the part of each spouse. In their epilogue, the Mathabanes write: “When our second child was born, the unease and self-consciousness we had felt at Bianca’s birth was gone. Color, finally, no longer mattered to us” (p. 260). Neither Gail nor Mark would claim to have been born and raised “color-blind,” but their movement toward this ideal enabled them to recognize each other as “soul mates” and to marry despite societal taboos against interracial love and marriage. The partners of the Color-Blind Couple are positioned in this discourse as two who have transcended race and racism on an individual level, as individuals who no longer take account of race in their dealings with each other or with others they encounter in the world. The partners of the Color-Blind Couple must be strong individuals as they are

trailblazers at the forefront of efforts toward racial harmony with much to teach those still mired in the racial stereotypes and prejudices of a Color-Conscious Society. In such a society, to be interracially married is to be in a position that is potentially very uncomfortable, to say the least. At the extreme, it may lead to being targeted for verbal abuse or physical violence along with risking the possibility of being disowned by one's family, as some cited in the text have been. Returning to the experience of the Mathabanes, they write in their preface:

With the publication of *Kaffir Boy* and *Kaffir Boy in America*, our relationship came under the spotlight. It was misunderstood, criticized, praised, and subjected to all the stereotyping that America's lingering and pervasive racism could conjure up. (p. xii)

In particular, Mark describes being misunderstood by "militant blacks" who have sometimes called him an "Uncle Tom." On the other hand, along with citing examples of interracial couples who have been murdered by White racists in various parts of the United States, Mark writes: "Though we behaved normally in public, Gail and I were not reckless. We knew that many people were opposed to our union and that some of them were capable of showing their opposition in violent acts" (p. 173). Later in the text, Mark sharpens this point as he recounts an incident in which he had to slam on the brakes in order to avoid hitting a White man displaying a Confederate flag in the rear window of his pickup truck. The other driver had kept pace with the Mathabanes for a while and grinned at them before swerving in front of their car and slowing suddenly. Though Mark told Gail not to let this bother her—since that is what such people would want—neither of them could simply forget it as they knew that there were others who felt similarly hostile toward them and their relationship. But while overtly threatening and/or physically dangerous expressions of hostility are not described as daily experiences by

the Mathabanes, the feeling of being “on display” as an interracial couple in a Color-Conscious Society is a fundamental part of being a Color-Blind Couple. Gail writes of a chatty young nurse who, after inspecting the newborn Bianca in the maternity ward and commenting on her “brown tinge,” became suddenly anxious and left the room when Mark arrived to visit Gail and Bianca only to return a few minutes later with a group of nursing students under the pretense that she was providing a tour of the ward: “I felt the three of us—Mark, Bianca, and I—were on display like some curiosity exhibit at a fair” (p. 161). Similarly, they relate the experience of a young interracial couple in South Africa who became local celebrities as Black South Africans would drop by their home just to watch them kiss; however, because they were living together before apartheid officially ended in South Africa, this interracial couple also lived in fear of the police and was harassed by anonymous callers. Thus, given the entrenched taboos that interracial couples find themselves breaking, they must possess an uncommon degree of strength and independence from society—without it interracial couples would not survive as such. For support of this aspect of their positioning of Color-Blind Couples in the discourse of Color-Blind Love, the Mathabanes cite interracially married friends in the United States:

“It takes a very strong-willed, independent person to be part of a mixed couple,” Richard told me. “One has to be confident in one’s self and one’s feelings. You have to have the firm conviction that what you’re doing is right and that anything against that is ‘their’ problem. I don’t think a lot of people have the individual strength it requires to be part of a mixed couple. To be an individual in America is very difficult.” (p. 189)

Of all the girls in the family, Connie was the only daughter who fought back against her father’s violence and rebelled against his authority. Her friends believe that, because of her defiance, Connie is now much stronger than her sisters. (p. 238)

And Mark writes of his own experience:

I knew it wouldn't be easy. Race consciousness was deeply ingrained in the psyches of most Americans. The strength of the tide I had to swim against to fully realize my individuality, to acknowledge, respect, and share in the cultures of others, was daunting. (p. 216)

So, from this perspective, it helps to have something of a rebellious streak, and upon reuniting with Mark after several months during which she tried to sever her emotional attachment to him, Gail was cheered by a friend who had dated interracially several times: "Hooray! Gail's being a rebel!" (p. 105) To summarize their position as a Color-Blind Couple (with Multiracial Children—an ancillary position that is inadequately distinguished from that of the Color-Blind Couple in this text, such children are characterized as representing the unification of humanity as the fruit of Color-Blind Love) in a Color-Conscious Society, the Mathabanes write:

With such tension and acrimony, it is not surprising that individuals who dare to fall in love across the color line find themselves caught in the cross-fire. They're doubly detested because they are proof that racial harmony can become a reality, that the misunderstanding, suspicions, fears, and hatreds between black and white can be replaced by trust, cooperation, mutual respect, and even love. (p. 259-260)

5) Practice

In the context of the discourse of Color-Blind Love, the actions of those who are situated as undifferentiated members of a Color-Conscious Society are constrained by their propensities to put people into rigid racial categories and to expect each racial group to maintain rather strict self-segregation from other racial groups. And if/when some people stray from this self-imposed racial segregation, the members of a Color-Conscious Society stand ready to apply varying kinds and degrees of pressure on the offending member in order to get them back in line. Some of the pressures that Mark faced from other Blacks in this regard have already been mentioned, e.g., facing charges that his

interracial marriage was an insult to all Black women—including his own mother—as he was, in effect, “sleeping with the enemy,” being called an “Uncle Tom,” someone who was tearing the Black community apart, and being physically attacked. One caller to a radio show said: “Your marriage to a white woman is an insult to your mother and every black woman in this country” (p. 197). And Gail came to think of the following as “the inevitable question” when Mark spoke publicly and the audience was aware of his relationship with Gail: “How could you have married a white woman after all you’ve suffered at the hands of whites?” (p. 208) Nevertheless, despite his openness to Whites, Mark found that many of them were “unable or unwilling” to deal with him as an individual—they continued to see him only through the distorting stereotypes of Blacks that they had uncritically absorbed over their years of living in a racially segregated society (p. 9).

Similarly, Gail and other Whites married to Blacks are confronted by pressures from other Whites to get themselves back in line and find White partners. An attorney friend of the Mathabanes in South Africa relates her own experience and tries to explain as follows:

“White hostility against mixed couples is based on protecting ‘our women,’” Susan said. “A white woman and black man walking down the street are subjected to verbal, and sometimes physical, attacks by white men. It’s happened to me lots of times, even when I’m just walking with one of my defendants and discussing preparations for a trial. I’ve been called a *Kaffir boetie* [‘nigger lover’] many times.” (249)

However, this kind of response from a Color-Conscious Society is not limited to South Africa as the Mathabanes cite the following as prototypical examples of verbal abuse in the United States:

One day as Connie drove down a major boulevard in Greensboro with her children, the driver in the next lane leaned out of his window toward her and yelled repeatedly, "You goddamned nigger lover!"...Another time I was sitting in my car at an intersection, waiting for the light to change, and a pickup truck pulled up in the next lane. I heard someone say, "Look at the nigger lover and her baby niggers!" Then I heard a second voice, "I think I'm going to throw up."(p. 165)

Perhaps more troubling to the Color-Blind Couple, though, are the reactions of family members that manifest the attitudes of a Color-Conscious Society. These responses include the worried ruminations of concerned parents, as cited by Gail:

"Dad is very concerned about you," she said. "We both are. He thinks that if you marry Mark, the chances of divorce are high. And he asked, 'What are her chances of remarrying when she has black children?'"

"Why does he think we would divorce?"

"Because it's so common, and mixed couples have to endure extra pressures. He's counseled a few mixed couples and wasn't able to save the marriages." (p. 94)

And, more directly expressed, the fears of the parents of a White American man who sought his parents' permission to marry a Black South African woman: "Where will you live? What about the children? You won't fit in. You won't be accepted. What do you have against white girls?" (p. 257) As a brief aside, it is worth mentioning, at this point, that apparent concern about the welfare of the interracial couple's children is a recurrent refrain among the seemingly well-intentioned of those opposed to interracial marriage.

Most opponents of interracial marriage make the same arguments over and over again: "The children will suffer. They'll be caught between two worlds. They won't fit in anywhere. They'll be lonely and isolated." (p. 214)

Additionally, "children of mixed marriages are often accused, mostly by blacks, of trying to deny their black roots and 'pass' for white" (p. 215). Mark compares this pressure upon multiracial children to identify with a single racial group to his experience in South Africa of feeling pressured to choose between his parents' ethnic groups.

Interestingly, apartheid, in pursuit of its divide and conquer strategy, wanted me to believe that the Vendas and Tsongas were sworn enemies, that I had nothing to gain and everything to lose by claiming to belong to both, just as the purveyors of racism in America want biracial children to believe that the black and white cultures are antagonistic. (p. 217)

Returning to the issue of familial reactions to interracial marriage, while some White parents came to embrace their children's Black partners, others become estranged from and even disown their interracially married children. This was the case for Sarah, a White New Englander who remains alienated from her parents after twenty-two years and three children. She described her parent's reactions to her interracial dating as follows:

“They freaked out....They forbade me to see him. They ordered me to come straight home after school. They threatened to take away my car, but they knew I needed it to get to my classes. I was living at home to save money so I could afford to transfer to Mount Holyoke, but I decided to put that goal on hold and move out.”

Her parents told her, “You'll end up in the gutter. You'll be on welfare. You'll have lots of children. No one will accept your children. All blacks are in the gutter. Are you going to pull this whole family down into the gutter with you, after we've worked so hard?”

Desperate to put an end to their daughter's relationship with Amil, Sarah's parents took her to a Catholic priest and explained the whole situation. The priest counseled Sarah to Honor thy mother and father, and told her that this commandment was more important than caring about people of different races. (p. 242-243)

Sarah's parents quickly—and permanently—severed all contact with their daughter. In a similarly extreme—yet quite illuminating—vignette wherein interracial marriage is framed as a religious transgression, the Mathabanes cite the heated debate that followed the publication in the *Greensboro (NC) News & Record* in 1990 of a photograph of a Black teenage boy holding the hand of a White girl as she danced. The newspaper received a flood of letters demanding an apology for this “distasteful” promotion of race mixing. While a few readers defended the publication of the photograph as a portrayal of racial harmony, the following was apparently a more typical response:

Interracial marriages are unbiblical and immoral...God created different races of people and placed them amongst themselves. To abolish racial separatism and promote interracial marriages is to do away with God's workings....If mixed marriages are necessary for racial harmony, count me out. I will not sing or dance to that tune. There is nothing for white Americans to gain by mixing their blood with blood of other peoples. There will only be an irreversible damage for us. (p. 186)

Shifting attention to the subject position of the Rational Person Coming to Color-Blindness, remember that this is a color-conscious individual who overcomes stereotypes and prejudices after getting to know each of the partners in a Color-Blind Couple as “human beings.” A hint of this position can be seen in Gail’s account of her father’s response to an angry letter that she wrote to him in which she accused him of undermining her relationship with Mark:

“If you love Mark, go after him!” my father said. “I’ll never stand in your way. I never wanted to interfere with your relationship with Mark. Mother was very impressed with him. She said he is another Gandhi. If you love him, go after him. GO AFTER HIM!!” (p. 78)

While her father had yet to meet Mark at this point in the narrative, her mother had met him and apparently had described Mark in terms evoking the very highest examples of universal humanity—not in terms of common stereotypes about Blacks. Thus, Gail’s father seems eager to say that Gail is mistaken in her perception that he is unsupportive of her relationship with Mark and that her love for Mark is the only thing that matters. Even so, the question of whether her father will be truly supportive of their relationship resurfaces repeatedly long after this statement of support. And, thus, among those who are positioned as Rational People Coming to Color-Blindness are Mark and Gail as they continue to struggle to free themselves of the powerful prejudices of society. Thus, Mark recalls saying to Gail, shortly after the publication of his first book:

We were attempting to satisfy society's impossible demands. We were obsessed about what people thought of us. You longed to please your family and I wanted to protect my public image. But we can't hope to change society if we suppress or hide or compromise what we deeply feel. (p. 83)

And Gail writes later: “My feelings for him were so real, so genuine. I now saw that all my desperate struggles to break away from him had been artificial, based on a fear of what others would think, say, do” (p.104). However, eventually Mark claims to have overcome the last vestiges of the stereotyping and prejudice that had kept him from being fully color-blind:

It was not until 1989, with the publication of my second book *Kaffir Boy in America*, that I finally proudly made my marriage to Gail public knowledge. I insisted that my publisher, Scribners, include in the photo section several pictures of Gail and me, including our wedding photo. I devoted one chapter of the book to the essentials of our relationship. The back flap of the book mentioned that our first child, Bianca, had just been born. (p. 195)

So this interracial couple had previously been concerned—even at times preoccupied—with what a Color-Conscious Society thought about their relationship and, thus, found themselves inhibited from living proudly and openly as an interracial couple. But Gail and Mark were Rational People who in time freed themselves from the grasp of societal prejudices and came to live together as a proudly Color-Blind Couple.

Within the discourse of Color-Blind Love in a Color-Conscious Society, from the position of the Color-Blind Couple among the most essential actions are those involving resistance to pressures to conform to societal stereotypes and prejudices. And, in practice, the specific form that this resistance takes in this discourse is the refusal to consider race to be significant in any way. Thus, Mark frequently reiterates the position that we must—and that he does—judge people only on the basis of their character as individuals—not on the irrelevant basis of their skin color.

Having witnessed firsthand the bitter fruits of racism, intolerance, and separateness under apartheid, I vowed that, just as I had done in South Africa, I would never allow America's racial politics to shape my destiny by determining my values, where I should live, what I should believe, what work I should do, whom I should befriend and whom I should marry. (p. 216)

In judging...I look not at skin color, but at who people are. One of the things I find disturbing, having grown up in South Africa and then coming to this country, are its contradictions. We blacks say to white South Africa, "You are monstrous and evil" for denying the humanity of black people. Yet simply in the name of black solidarity, we begin to enforce the same criteria. If you are black you cannot marry or befriend a white person. It's the same thing I experienced in South Africa—in reverse. (p. 209)

I was again called on to defend my conviction that there were among whites, as among all people, both good and bad, and that to realize fully my own humanity, it was my duty to acknowledge and respect the humanity of others. This meant judging people as individuals, by the contents of their character, rather than by the color of their skin. (p. 25)

In the immediate context of the relationship of the Color-Blind Couple this means that they are continually disclaiming—both explicitly and implicitly—any possible significance of race in their dealings with one another. Thus, Mark recalls:

We convinced each other that our relationship would endure, no matter how vilified or isolated or misunderstood we might become. We did our best to shun the frenzy of the outside world, its materialism, its rewards for conformity....We vowed to resist, with all the strength our love could furnish us, the pressures and prejudices of such a world. Our spirits yearned to breathe free, to mingle with each other and with all that was True, Beautiful, and Good in life. (p. 83)

And when Gail wonders worriedly if their "relationship will withstand all the pressures," Marks replies: "Of course it will....We must make it work. It won't be easy. But our love is something worth fighting for, worth dying for." Gail responds with a toast and says: "I've never felt this happy....My cheek muscles are sore from smiling. We don't need anybody or anything else, as long as we have each other" (p. 84). And in this same spirit of the privacy of their relationship, with the sense that their marriage is nobody else's business, Gail at first decides to keep their marriage a secret—including from her

parents. But when her mother called from Minneapolis and asked how she and Mark were doing, Gail told her that they were engaged. This was after she and Mark had been married, somewhat impulsively, at City Hall in New York.

Gail said, "Let's just do it...Like my grandfather and Grandma Sue did, back in the 1920s when they took the subway from Columbia down to City Hall. Wouldn't that be a great way to marry?...I've always thought of my grandparent's marriage as being romantic, unconventional. Just think of it: It would be just the two of us. And that's what it's all about, after all, isn't it? It's a promise between two people, not a social event. I was sitting in my office today, making a list of guests to invite to our wedding. Then I stopped and tore it up. I don't want anyone else to be there, just the two of us." (p. 112)

This sense of the privacy of their relationship is also reflected in their consistent framing of all aspects of racism and of their relationship in exclusively individualistic terms. For example, Gail reads a selection from Frantz Fanon's classic study, *Black Skin, White Masks*, in which Fanon presents a kind of psychoanalytic interpretation of sexual relationships between Black men and White women that includes attention to social, historical, and political dimensions of such relationships. Specifically, Fanon suggests that Black men involved in interracial sexual relationships seek to be proven worthy of White love after having suffered the degradations of White racism. In response, Mark declares Fanon's interpretation to be "absolutely ridiculous" and wonders why people so often "search for hidden motives when a black falls in love with someone white" (p. 85). And when the issue of the castration of Black men found with White women (in both colonial Africa and the American South) becomes part of this conversation, Gail can only ask: "But why?...What if they both loved each other?" (p. 86) Another example of the Mathabanes' single-minded individualism can be seen in Mark's response to a Black woman in his audience at North Carolina A & T University in November 1990: "She wanted to know how Mathabane, who grew up under codified white racism, could

possibly have married a white woman” (p. 209). To this Mark responded as quoted above: “In judging...I look not at skin color, but at who people are” (p. 209) and he went on to argue that in order for Americans to overcome their stereotypes, they must begin talking to one another in order to better understand one another. While this makes sense on an individual/psychological level, Mark’s response to this question that specifically indexed “codified white racism” seems to reflect an inability—from the position of the Color-Blind Couple—to “hear” this question as implicating systemic, societal dimensions of racism that are unlikely to be resolved via improved social skills. And yet, Gail concludes that she’s done all that she can do once she’s become more sensitive to the feelings of Black women who have objected to her relationship with Mark; she then emphasizes the Black women need to make an effort to understand her feelings, too (p. 208). Gail’s position here reflects a recurrent rhetorical move in this text, i.e., casting Black and White opposition to their relationship as equivalent forms of simple bigotry. Thus, while operating from the position of the Color-Blind Couple, the Mathabanes cannot distinguish between the ways that Blacks and Whites have been positioned—and affected—very differently in the context of a society with a long and deeply entrenched history of anti-Black racism. So, from this position, there is fundamentally no difference between the opposition to interracial marriage of White supremacist groups and that of the Black women who read Mark’s memoirs and felt betrayed by what seemed to be his embrace of the ideal of the “blonde goddess.” Mark, in particular, faced a lot of pressure from Black women, but he persistently articulated the position of the Color-Blind Couple as his own:

My open-mindedness in relating to whites incurred me the resentment and enmity of militant blacks. My motives were often misunderstood and I was sometimes

called an Uncle Tom. Though these accusations hurt, I had come a long way from the days when rage and hate had consumed and almost destroyed my life. I had acquired values and convictions that my conscience told me had to be defended at all cost, because they were a part of my soul and formed the essence of my humanity. One of these convictions is that neither blacks nor whites have a monopoly on racism or love. Anyone with a feeling heart is capable of love and anyone who is blind to the fact that his humanity is inextricably tied to his respect of the humanity of others is capable of racism. (p. 25)

Thus, in response to an angry call from a Black woman that Mark received during an appearance on a radio show, he writes:

I told the caller that all whites were not my enemies and that I judged them as individuals. Failure to do so, I added, was not only wrong, it was racist. It made it easy for white racists to rally whites behind their pernicious agendas in the name of us against them. (p. 197)

From the perspective of the Color-Blind Couple, an interracial marriage is an act of simple human love that should not be politicized by any group—whether Black or White.

And the Mathabanes point to South Africa as a place where Blacks rarely oppose interracial marriages as interracial “marriage is seen as a celebration of love between two human beings, seldom complicated by questions of racial politics and power” (p. 253).

From their perspective, this is as it should be and they are hopeful that American society will follow the example of Black South Africans; but the Mathabanes were determined to maintain their relationship despite the opposition that they knew they would face in this

Color-Conscious Society:

We appreciate the kind words from initially skeptical family members and friends, though we long ago agreed that whether society accepted us or not, as long as we had each other and faith in our love, we would find ways of being happy and fulfilled. (p. 262)

Further, they contend that beyond simply hanging on to their soul mates in the face of prejudice and taboo, interracial couples have an essential role to play in helping

Americans to recover and realize Martin Luther King's dreams of racial integration and harmony.

While a new era of hope in race relations has dawned in South Africa, many in America believe that the best days in racial cooperation and harmony are past. Some have even given up on the dream that visionaries like Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., died for. Appropriately, in these trying times for race relations, interracial couples have begun speaking out against racism and feeling proud of the racial harmony their union reflects. (p. 260)

And consonant with the well-worn notion that "the children are the future," the Mathabanes and other Color-Blind Couples hold out great hope for their multiracial children and the more tolerant world they expect their children to both inherit and help create. As specific evidence of the progress to which multiracial children are contributing, the Mathabanes note that:

Children of mixed marriages, fed up with being labeled and forced to identify with the race of one parent and reject the other, are forming support groups at universities across the country....There are twenty chapters nationwide of the Association of Multi-Ethnic Americans, based in San Francisco, which is fighting for the creation of a 'multiracial' classification on standardized forms. (p. 260)

But more broadly—and thus more in keeping with the apolitical spirit of the Color-Blind Couple—the Mathabanes cite an eighteen-year-old who emphasizes his pride in being biracial.

I was taught to be proud of who I am, and who I am is mixed....I don't try to avoid the fact that I'm mixed and say, "Yo, I'm black," or "I'm white." I tell people with pride, "I'm mixed." I don't really care how other people see me because I have a strong personal identity from having been raised in different parts of the country by strong individuals.

I think I've had the best of both worlds with my mother being black and my father being white....I have black grandparents and white grandparents, so I've gotten to know both cultures. I was raised to believe that obstacles become problems only if you let them. My parents gave me a lot of their strength and prepared me to confront prejudice. They were nonconformists, pioneers. They empowered me. (p. 213-214)

This is a multiracial teenager articulating the hopes of the Mathabanes and other Color-Blind Couples exactly. His own position is that with strength and pride multiracial families can meet the challenges of life in a Color-Conscious Society and, further, they can help to transform such a society one individual at a time. Thus, the Mathabanes end this text with the following statement of the credo that undergirds their memoir:

Racism is essentially a problem of the heart. Pervert the human heart, which was made to feel and to love and to care, and you get cancers like racism and injustice. If in our hearts we truly accept one another as fellow human beings, many of our intractable problems would have solutions, and there would be no limit to the good we could do in making our world a better place for all. (p. 262)

6) Subjectivity

Color-Conscious Society

Returning to those who are positioned amidst and identified with a Color-Conscious Society, it will be remembered that these are people who are seen as irrationally putting human beings into racial categories *and* unquestioningly expecting members of each racial group to “stick with their own kind”—especially when it comes to dating and marriage. And because they have been socialized into a thoroughly racialized and racially segregated society with little direct contact with those they see as racially different from themselves, the views of many—but especially Whites—in a Color-Conscious Society consist largely of the crudest of racial stereotypes. Further, given the ignorance that this lack of exposure breeds, they have most often internalized a wide variety of fears about people of other races. So when such people unexpectedly encounter interracial couples, their emotional reactions range from shock to disappointment to fear and anger—or some combination thereof. When the Mathabanes

were in public situations, they thus encountered a lot of people who turned to look—or stare—at them, e.g., it sometimes seemed to them that half of the audience turned around and stared while they found seats in theaters. And Mark recalls passing two young Black men as he and Gail hurried along Fifth Avenue in New York City: “‘Hey, look at him,’ one young man shouted to his friend. ‘He got hisself a white girl. She be damn good lookin’ too’” (p. 45). Similarly, Gail recounts her experience at their apartment complex’s pool in North Carolina: “As I entered the pool with Mark’s sisters, I always felt the eyes of white strangers on me, filled with what I imagined was curious disdain or disgust, as they grabbed their towels and left” (p. 134). And Gail remembers the startled reaction of a young White maternity nurse who seemed to have difficulty understanding that Mark was the father of Gail’s “brown tinged” infant:

When the door swung open and Mark entered the room, she seemed petrified. She leaped backward a little.

“Are you looking for someone?” she inquired.

“Yes, my wife,” Mark replied.

“Have you checked at the front desk to see which room she’s in?”

“Here I am,” I said, smiling at Mark, who came toward me, took my hand, and leaned over to kiss me. The nurse, trying to mask her surprise, hurriedly excused herself and left the room. (p. 161)

Further, in trying to understand the Southern mindset in regard to race, Gail solicited the opinions of older Whites:

“What do most white Southerners think of my being married to a black man?” I asked a middle-aged white woman who had spent most of her life in Kernersville.

“Oh, that’s easy,” she replied. “They think you’re a whore.”....

On another occasion I asked a balding but vigorous white man, raised in Virginia and the Carolinas, what Southerners thought of my marrying a black man.

“They pity you,” he said without hesitation. “They feel sorry for you because a black man raped your mind and brainwashed you into marrying him, against all your best interests and every remnant of reason and good sense.” (p. 183-184)

Given this environment in which “race mixing” is considered at best unwise by most Whites—and sinful by many of those who identify themselves as Christians—it is not so surprising that interracial couples become outcasts and subjected to verbal abuse and threats of physical violence by Whites, as noted previously.

As for the reactions of Blacks positioned as part of the Color-Conscious Society, Mark describes these as less coarse, but still quite angry in many cases—and uniformly disappointed. Such color-conscious Blacks were often very angry with Mark for having betrayed his race by marrying a White woman. With his sudden prominence based on the success of his first book, a book in which he decried the inhumanity of South African apartheid, Mark came to be seen by many Blacks as kind of leader, as an outspoken critic of White supremacy.

Some black male friends who knew of my relationship with Gail and were eager to see my career as a writer blossom, bluntly told me that my credibility as a black spokesperson would be seriously undermined if it were known that I was married to a white woman.

“The careers of many black leaders have been ruined by such relationships,” a black friend said one afternoon....“Your relationship with Gail, especially given what you and other black South Africans have suffered under apartheid at the hands of whites, will be seen as the ultimate betrayal of your blackness. I know the origin of your relationship with Gail, but many people don’t. They’ll simply conclude that you’re another black man who, on becoming successful, marries white.” (p. 193)

The warnings of these Black friends were borne out as articulated by June Steward, a Black woman who reviewed Mark’s second book:

I was delighted to see Mathabane’s timely sequel, *Kaffir Boy in America*, displayed among the new arrivals in the bookstore. I immediately scanned the photos and saw...to my amazement and, I must admit, horror, a photo of his wife, Gail, a white woman. Stunned, I turned through the pages thinking, “It just can’t be.” But there she was, blonde and probably blue-eyed as she could be. I put the book back on the shelf feeling betrayed. How could he have done this to us?

How could he, in the most intimate sense, take up with the very race whose brutality he described so clearly and convincingly in *Kaffir Boy*?

For days I was angry. I refused to buy the book and I felt that I had learned as much as I wanted to know about Mark Mathabane. I hate racism and its simple-minded tenets and those people who uphold them, but I am not a black racist. I do not hate white people. So why did I feel betrayed? Because after luring me into the unutterable horrors of apartheid and making me weep and angry and determined to fight racism and all its ugliness until the day I die, he seems to turn around and embrace the Nordic ideal. He seems to be saying white South Africans are right. The blonde ideal is superior, it is the one worthy of his love, not the lowly black, kinky-headed race....

The female ideal in this country has always been the nubile blonde, girl-woman. Black women always took a back seat to this image. Our beauty, no matter how spectacular, could never stand up to the blonde goddess. So for Mark, one of the most inspiring black writers of the decade, to embrace that ideal was for me, and apparently other black women, an insult. It took a bit of personal grappling for me to get over it. (p. 206-207)

Thus it was that Mark and Gail faced angry Black audiences as they traveled together in supporting his newly released second book. A group of Black students who invited Mark to dinner after he spoke at their college in Virginia was shocked and offended when he introduced Gail to them as his wife. And on a trip to Philadelphia with Mark, Gail recalls that she:

realized that I—an individual—was regarded as ‘the white woman’ who stole a black man. I was made to feel that I had committed some sort of unspoken crime against the black community, particularly against black women, by marrying Mark. I felt it as soon as I followed Mark into an all-black radio station. The faces I saw did not greet me with smiles but stared at me coldly, with an air of revulsion....The term *militant black* took on a threatening new meaning for me. For the first time I felt like an intruder, an enemy, who had wandered into hostile territory, surrounded on all sides by people who hated the color of my skin and all it represented. (p. 200-201)

But it was not only strangers who embodied the attitudes and perspectives of a Color-Conscious Society. Indeed, Gail was particularly troubled by the color-consciousness of her family—most especially that of her father, a Presbyterian minister and psychologist who, ironically, “had a history of being criticized for being too liberal

and pro-black in his sermons” (p. 125). In fact, he had sermonized in favor of residential desegregation as early as 1961 arguing that “whites should not worry about their children marrying blacks...because it seldom happens that a girl marries ‘the boy next door’” (p. 125). On the other hand, when confronted with contemporary examples of interracial couples, Gail’s father relied on the pathologizing language of his psychological training.

He seemed to think that interracial love should be addressed by textbooks on abnormal psychology. He was so absorbed in his career as a psychologist that his conversations were peppered with words like *schizophrenia*, *manic*, *incestuous tendencies*, *latent homosexuality*, *biofeedback*, *repressed anger*, and *psychotic behavior*. He and my brothers, who are also psychologists, seemed to speak a foreign language. (p. 59)

And when Gail told her mother that Mark had asked her to marry him—coincidentally, this was at the point that her parents’ thirty-five-year marriage was ending—her mother’s reply was:

“Dad is very concerned about you,” she said. “We both are. He thinks that if you marry Mark, the chances of divorce are high. And he asked, ‘What are her chances of remarrying when she has black children?’”

“Why does he think we would divorce?”

“Because it’s so common, and mixed couples have to endure extra pressures. He’s counseled a few mixed couples and wasn’t able to save the marriages. Besides, honey,” she said, reaching across the front seat to touch my arm, “you should wait and be sure. You don’t want to go through a divorce. It’s a living hell.” (p. 94)

This was not the first time that the Mathabanes had heard grave concerns expressed by a minister about the viability of theirs as an interracial relationship. A minister in whose home they stayed on Long Island during the early days of their courtship—in separate rooms and under the pretense that they were just friends in hopes of avoiding being confronted by prejudice—assumed a fatherly stance toward them as he confided:

“I had a good friend once, a black man like yourself,” the minister said. “He wanted to marry a white woman. Oh, I assure you I warned him against it. But no, he wouldn’t listen to me. He went ahead and married her. And you know

what happened? They're divorced now. I knew it would happen all along." He looked hard at me, then at Gail, then back to me, as if to say, "Don't make the same mistake." (p. 46)

Ostensibly because of her father's opposition to the possibility of her marriage to Mark and because of her fear of commitment sparked by her parents' divorce, Gail pulled away from Mark—indeed she precipitously decided to cut off all contact with him for five months. Then when she later changed her mind and decided to marry Mark, her family and many of her friends were "shocked" and "disappointed." In the days before the public wedding, Gail received phone calls from "concerned" relatives reminding her that she could call it off if she had any doubts. One cousin, an Ivy League graduate to whom she had been very close, warned her:

Mark went through some horrific experiences at the hands of white people...He must have a deep, latent rage against everyone white. His book is very angry. I just hope his anger doesn't erupt against you...I'm concerned mostly about the fact that he's South African, from a totally different country, and that his father was totally dominant and controlling...He must be *so* angry at whites. And now that he has a white woman under his control— (p. 138)

But much more than the concerns of extended family members expressed in the days immediately before the public wedding, it was Gail's fear of her father's disapproval that constantly weighed on her mind. In the early weeks of their relationship, Gail awoke in Mark's arms one morning feeling "warm and full of love. Then doubts crept in. 'What would my parents say if they saw me now, lying in the arms of a black man?...Isn't it every white father's worst nightmare to find out his only daughter loves a Negro?'" (p. 42) She then left Mark's dorm room in a panic. The Mathabanes reiterate this theme later in the text.

Few things can be more difficult for the average white American than to see his daughter marry a black man. It places even the most loving and liberal white father in an emotional quandary, as it did Spencer Tracy in his role of the white

father in *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner?* The desperate despair of a daughter over losing her father's love and her father's agonizing disappointment are the painful themes that often surface whenever a white woman marries outside her race. (p. 235-236)

Thus, from the perspective of both the Black and the White members of a Color-Conscious Society, it seems that nothing good can come of an interracial marriage.

Rational Person Coming to Color-Blindness

However, all is not lost as the perpetually hopeful Color-Blind Couple knows that, given the opportunity to get to know—directly or indirectly—a Color-Blind Couple, Rational People will grow to be color-blind by overcoming their stereotypes and prejudices. For the Rational Person, in the context of the discourse of Color-Blind Love, exposure to an interracial couple inevitably leads to increased tolerance, acceptance, and understanding. This is articulated most plainly by June Steward, a Black woman cited previously as a reviewer of Mark's second book who, upon discovering that Mark's wife was White, felt betrayed and angry. However, in her published review, she described her change of heart as follows:

All of this simplistic thinking soon gave way to a more complex view. We are not simply black or white, we are human beings with thoughts, emotions, and spirituality that make us who we are. Indeed, we are part of a group, a family, but most importantly, we are individuals and it is to this that we must be true no matter how out of step we may be with others. (p. 207)

And among those with closer relationships with Gail and Mark, the initial sense of shock and disappointment on the part of many of Gail's friends and family members gave way to the kind of supportive understanding that Rational People feel toward interracial married couples. Thus, Gail describes her experience during the stressful days immediately preceding the public wedding:

Over the next few days several people told me they admired my courage and were proud of me. In spite of the negative stereotypes about white women who date and marry black men, I realized that most of my friends, family, and acquaintances truly admired me for what I was doing, for my courage in marrying interracially. And yes, it did take courage for me to marry a black man, just as it took a lot of courage for Mark to marry a white woman, but we knew the bond between us was strong and true. (p. 140)

Then, during the public wedding itself, Gail experienced a rapturous affirmation of the inherent goodness and rationality of humanity, of the movement from ignorant prejudice to enlightened acceptance to which contact with Color-Blind Couples inevitably leads.

Through my tear-filled eyes the wedding guests appeared to be one huge mass of smiling humanity as I walked down the aisle arm in arm with Mark. It was not until we were standing in the reception line that I was able to look around me. What I saw overwhelmed me: every single one of my relatives, except those who had sent gifts and notes of apology, had come to the wedding—that is, all but one uncle.

My cousin, the one who had plagued me with his concerns over the phone, threw his arms around me, hugged me tight, and whispered in my ear, “You look beautiful.” Later he apologized to both me and Mark for the phone calls, said that he had overcome his reservations and wished us happiness. Those words, coming from someone who grew up with me and who had to struggle so desperately with his own prejudices and fears in order to accept my decision, meant a great deal to me. It showed me that the prejudice of some people is not inborn but the result of ignorance and unfounded fears. (p. 141)

However, the anticipated movement from color-consciousness to rationality on the part of Gail’s avowedly liberal parents was, from Gail’s perspective, much more troubled and troubling for her. Indeed, as noted previously, Gail began worrying about her father’s reaction to her relationship with Mark very shortly after they started dating. Gail first specified Mark’s racial identity in a private conversation with her mother on a trip home from New York City to Minneapolis. The previous evening she had told both of her parents about the South African man who had invited her to move into his apartment, but the possibility that Mark was not White did not seem to cross their minds. The next morning Gail’s mother asked more questions about Mark and slowly came to realize that

Mark was Black: “My mother’s eyes widened with amazement but she quickly smoothed over her surprise and, speaking rapidly and nervously, told me that Winnie Mandela and Nadine Gordimer were to be awarded honorary degrees by her alma mater” (p. 74). But after a few initial moments of discomfort, Gail’s mother asked more questions about Mark and, later the same day, checked out a pile of library books by Nadine Gordimer, the South African Nobel laureate, saying that she needed to read them in anticipation of meeting Mark.

I knew then that I had won my mother’s sympathy. I joyfully threw my arms around her neck and laughed. Mom laughed too, and hugged me in return. Still embracing her I said, “I was afraid you wouldn’t understand.”

“Love is complex,” she said. “Sometimes it doesn’t need to be understood. It needs only to be accepted.” (p. 74)

Gail did not, however, tell her father that Mark was Black on that visit home; she rationalized that since she had told her mother and her brothers, her father would know soon enough. Gail continued to avoid the issue with her father, but her mother relayed the message that her father disapproved of her relationship with Mark. When this news led Mark to begin distancing himself from her, Gail became furious with her father and wrote him a letter in which she lashed out at him for his lack of “emotional support” for her over the years and his attempts to control her. A few days later she received a phone call from her father; he was tearful and apologetic:

“That letter hurt me very deeply. I feel like there’s a huge, red, gaping wound between us...If you love Mark, go after him!” my father said. “I’ll never stand in your way. I never wanted to interfere with your relationship with Mark. Mother was very impressed with him. She said he is another Gandhi. If you love him, go after him. GO AFTER HIM!!” His voice faded, he sounded emotionally exhausted. “Do you think your father is a racist? Me? What do you take me for?” (p. 78)

This was not the end of Gail's struggle to feel that her father truly accepted her relationship with Mark, but by the time that he finally visited New York City to meet Mark, Mark felt anxiously hopeful:

How would this complex man receive me? What were his true feelings about my love for his daughter?

Was his tearful response to Gail's letter genuine, or was there latent racism in him, carefully masked by his intelligence and urbanity?

But Gail had had lunch with him the day before and told him of our engagement and showed him the ring. He had responded not angrily and suspiciously, but with congratulations and he seemed ready, enthusiastic, to meet and to accept me as a future son-in-law. (p. 123)

In this text, however, it was not only readers, acquaintances, friends, and family who were depicted as having been Rational People who journeyed from color-consciousness to color-blindness. In important ways, the partners of the Color-Blind Couple also needed to overcome their own color-consciousness in order to fully and comfortably settle into their interracial marriage. For example, as a Black man in the United States, Mark felt pressure from other Blacks to unequivocally align himself with the Black community and his relationship with Gail raised doubts for many about his loyalties. This was a pressure that Mark felt even before he met Gail, but it became much more pointed when he found himself attracted to her.

What made me uncomfortable about my attraction to her was that she was white. My predicament was this: Since coming to the United States I had come under increasing pressure to choose sides in America's racial battles. Militant blacks wanted me to prove my solidarity with their cause by disassociating myself from whites and confining my friendships to the black community. My refusal to adopt the attitude that all whites are racist by abandoning white friends who had earned my trust and respect led me to be labeled an Uncle Tom. (p. 9)

However, relatively little attention is paid in this text to Mark's movement from color-consciousness to color-blindness. There are several potential explanations for this, including the fact that, as a Black man whose life in both South Africa and the United

States has made him a constant target of racism in White-dominated societies, he is necessarily more accustomed to thinking about and dealing with racism. Further, though his name appears first on the title page and he has the first word whenever they divide the chapters into “Mark’s View” and “Gail’s View,” it could be said that this is more Gail’s book than Mark’s. (And while he’s written several books, this is her only title.) She writes at much greater length than he—both in terms of numbers of pages and in terms of the detail and emotional depth of her confessions. And her perspective is much more troubled than Mark’s. As a White woman in the United States, Gail has largely been privileged to decide if and when she will think about and deal with racism. Thus, being involved in an interracial relationship has meant being confronted with racism in much more intimate and troubling ways than she had ever previously been—because the man she loves is a direct target and their relationship is as well. So in approaching her relationship with Mark, as a longstanding (though likely unconscious) beneficiary of White privilege, she is accustomed to operating from a protected position, but she now finds herself being targeted and feeling vulnerable in ways that are completely unfamiliar to her, i.e., the emotional dimensions of racism become real to her in ways that she had never previously imagined. This shakes her and leads to a great deal of soul-searching from which she emerges into a color-blind position.

As a child in Texas, Gail lived in a racially divided neighborhood with the Whites on the hill and the Blacks in smaller homes in the valley though Black boys sometimes came up the hill to play basketball with the White boys. Gail recalls that the Black boys had “strange”-sounding names and that she had difficulty understanding their manner of speaking.

I was afraid of blacks. For the first ten years of my life I had lived in lily-white communities in Cincinnati and Springfield, Ohio, and knew nothing about the people my Texas girlfriends casually called “niggers.” In the halls between classes at Pearce Junior High School I clung to the walls and tried to be as inconspicuous as possible, tiptoeing away from gang fights with my eyes down and my books pressed against my flat chest...Pearce was, in the early 1970s when I attended and when busing first began, a racially torn and violent public school circled by fourteen portable classrooms and a parking lot that glittered with broken glass smashed during rumbles--massive fights between white and black students. The student body was 55 percent black, 25 percent Mexican, and 20 percent white. (p. 27)

However, Gail’s feelings at the time, as she recalls were more complicated than simple fear:

My fear of blacks was mingled with admiration. They could braid their hair in neat rows from their faces to their napes; they could sprint so much faster than whites that the track team was virtually all black; they were tough and confident and had the temerity to tell a teacher to shut up; and they could dance so well I dared not even try a single step for fear of being laughed at.

My admiration developed into a mild envy. Perhaps it was simply a minority’s desire to fit in, but I sometimes wished I were black. All the popular girls in school were black and had names like Felicia and Rhonda and Janelle and Paulette. All the cheerleaders were black... (p. 28)

So while Gail here acknowledges some of the fearfulness of Blacks that is a hallmark of White racism, she is also careful to note that she admired—even envied—a variety of things about her Black classmates. It is perhaps of some interest that she locates this fearfulness in the safely distant past of her childhood, but this does not mean that years later when she meets Mark that she has no thoughts of race nor that she sees him simply as a man. She seems to be hyperaware of his Blackness and their marginal status as an interracial couple. Thus, she is bedeviled by concerns about what others (especially her father) think about her and about their relationship. For example, one morning early in their courtship, she awoke next to Mark and lovingly studied his features, but soon began

to worry about what her parents would think if they saw her “lying in the arms of a black man.” She left Mark’s dorm room in a panic, but upon returning to her own room:

I immediately missed Mark and became upset with myself. “Why do you care so much what Dad thinks of you?” I said angrily to my reflection in the mirror. “When will you free yourself of your mental enslavement to this patriarchal, bigoted society? Follow your heart and forget about the rest! Think of yourself for once. You’ve fallen in love with a man. If people disapprove, that’s *their* problem.” (p. 43)

But, for Gail, this was easier said than done and she was “paranoid” about being seen when she visited Mark’s room. She tried to leave without being observed and she carried her shoes in order to walk silently down the hallway.

Sometimes I would get exasperated with myself. “Who am I hiding from? My parents? Myself? A society that sees mixed couples as morally unfit to appear in public? It’s all in my head. I’ll say it now and I hope it sticks: I don’t care what anyone else thinks!” (p. 43)

Later, while visiting an interracial couple who were friends of Mark, Gail was “deeply troubled.” She heard that Claudia, the White wife, had been disowned by her parents and that “a mixed couple is viewed as a black couple” (p. 50). Gail admired Claudia’s strength and the depth of her love, but as she lay awake that night she recognized that she wanted a White child, one who would not face discrimination.

I fell asleep fantasizing about traveling through Finland and Russia, meeting strong, blond men with blue eyes. In another dream I stood in a group of tall blond Russian intellectuals on the steps of the University of Moscow. (p. 51)

But when she awoke in Mark’s arms the next morning, she embraced him passionately “and shut my eyes tight against his shoulder, trying desperately to force out all thoughts of race and society and blue eyes. I loved Mark, the human being, and that was all that mattered to me” (p. 51). Throughout this text, Gail struggles unsuccessfully to obliterate all thoughts of race and all of her concerns about being accepted by others—especially

her father. Near the end of her account of their relationship, after the birth of their first child and the publication of Mark's second memoir, Gail finally began to feel fully comfortable in their interracial marriage.

The more I grew to know and love my baby, the less skin color and hair texture mattered to me. In fact, I began to envy Bianca for her beautiful year-round tan, big brown eyes, and dark little curls. (p. 166)

My faith in my relationship was strengthened not only by the birth of Bianca but also by the publication of *Kaffir Boy in America*. Suddenly our marriage was public knowledge, and I no longer felt a need to hide the fact that I was married to a black man from anyone, ever. (p. 167)

And she noticed that Mark seemed newly at ease, too—"even before a crowd that included bitter and militant black students" (p. 208). This, then, is Gail's account of the troubled reality of their movement from color-consciousness to color-blindness.

However, this aspect of the narrative is downplayed in favor of the idealism of their ultimately color-blind position. Gail's struggles with her own color-consciousness create conflict and dramatic tension in the text, but this book most likely would not have been written had she not felt herself to have transcended race and racism. Everything in this book seems consciously intended to serve the discourse of Color-Blindness to which the Mathabanes are thoroughly wedded. So while Gail's struggles with her own color-consciousness serve to make the text more dramatic and believable, these are carefully disciplined and subordinated by, to, and from the position of the Color-Blind Couple, the position from which this book was written.

Color-Blind Couple

Within the discourse of Color-Blind Love and from the position of the Color-Blind Couple, the content of subjectivity is dominated by the broad theme of the absolute

necessity of following one's heart, of being true to one's feelings of love. But because this romantic idealism constantly confronts the reality of widespread disapproval, disdain, and sometimes unexpectedly virulent opposition, the Color-Blind Couple may vacillate between—as the Mathabanes do—on the one hand, wanting to leave “the outside world” behind, to escape into a private world where it's “just the two of us” and, on the other hand, proudly wanting to display their relationship to all the world as a successful example of racial harmony. This, in a nutshell, is the psychological position from which the Mathabanes wrote *Love in Black and White: The Triumph of Love over Prejudice and Taboo*. I will return to elaborate the Mathabanes' ultimate romantic idealism after first detailing, from their perspective, the ugly realities of prejudice that affected their views of themselves and their world and contributed to their ongoing ambivalence about “going public” with their relationship.

The opposition that the Mathabanes faced from so many quarters led to tension within their relationship and competing desires to, on one hand, escape—both as a couple from a hostile society and, especially for Gail, from their interracial relationship itself—and to, on the other hand, proudly display their relationship as evidence of the possibility of racial harmony—or better, from their perspective, the possibility of transcending race altogether and living in a race-free world. Among their initial reactions to confronting the harsh realities of racial prejudice was puzzlement. They (naively?) wondered why others would so often stare at them in public, forcefully express opposition to interracial couples in general, and look for hidden, pathological motives to explain interracial couplings in ways that same-race couples would never face. Indeed, both Gail and Mark seem completely unable to understand why some Blacks might be opposed to their

marriage as they constantly invoke the theme of simply judging people as individuals.

For example, Gail writes:

When Mark and I first married, I knew nothing about the shortage of available black men or the pain my love for and commitment to Mark might cause some black women. I thought the most vehement opposition to our relationship would come from whites. Once I convinced my family that I was doing the right thing by marrying Mark, I believed I had overcome the greatest hurdle I'd ever have to face. Having been warmly and lovingly received by Mark's family, I assumed the African-American community, too, would see and judge me as an individual.

It was not until I accompanied Mark on a publicity trip to Philadelphia that I realized that I—an individual—was regarded as 'the white woman' who stole a black man. I was made to feel that I had committed some sort of unspoken crime against the black community, particularly against black women, by marrying Mark. I felt it as soon as I followed Mark into an all-black radio station. The faces I saw did not greet me with smiles but stared at me coldly, with an air of revulsion. (p. 200)

From Mark's perspective, this kind of attention was perhaps a bit less puzzling, but similarly disturbing.

I felt completely natural around Gail when we were alone together, but as soon as we stepped out the door I became acutely sensitive to the way people regarded us. It was difficult for me to regard our love as an aberration in social norms. Only when people stared did I remember how deeply race as an issue still permeated American society. (p. 47)

Even in the presumably cosmopolitan and tolerant context of New York City, it often seemed that half the audience turned around when they were seated in theaters and they found themselves being seated next to the swinging doors of the kitchen in elegant restaurants—after walking past multiple empty tables in better locations. While it sometimes seemed to Mark that Gail was oblivious to the reactions of others, he “was hyperaware of people staring at us” (p. 44). Mark recalls hurrying along Fifth Avenue with Gail on his arm and passing two young Black men:

“Hey, look at him,” one young man shouted to his friend. “He got hisself a white girl. She be damn good lookin' too.”

Such comments upset and saddened me. They reminded me of the pervasive stereotype that all black men are, at least subconsciously, out to “get a white girl.” What did those two young men know about our relationship? Nothing. All they saw was black man, white woman. (p. 45)

However, despite Mark’s sense of Gail as unself-conscious about their racial differences, Gail does summarily describe her sensitivity to the uncomfortable attention they attracted in public:

Though I felt completely at ease with Mhani [Mark’s mother] and Bianca, I became a bit self-conscious whenever the three of us went out in public. It seems an interracial couple has to adjust to stares three times: first, when seen with one’s spouse, then with one’s child, and third with one’s in-laws. People would stare at us—a white woman, a black woman, and a brown child—trying to figure out the connection between us. (p. 226)

For the Mathabanes, then, living as an interracial couple involves attracting attention that is unwanted, uncomfortable, and genuinely bewildering.

While the opposition of many Whites to interracial marriage is well-known and perhaps taken for granted, neither Mark nor Gail anticipated the opposition that they would face from Blacks. On an abstract level, Fanon’s interpretation, in *Black Skin, White Masks* (1967), of a Black man’s desire to be proven worthy of the love of a White woman, seemed to the Mathabanes an inexplicable example of racial prejudice on the part of Blacks. Mark responded with incredulity:

“That’s ridiculous,” I said. “Absolutely ridiculous.”

Gail went on. “The majority of them tend to marry in Europe not so much out of love as for the satisfaction of being the master of a European woman. And a certain tang of proud revenge enters into this.”

I was astounded by what I heard. “Why do people search for hidden motives when a black falls in love with someone white? No one tries to psychoanalyze why same-race couples fall in love. Yet there are endless theories and psychological studies to explain interracial love.” (p. 85)

Gail was dumbfounded. She could only ask: “What if they both loved each other?” (p. 86) (Of course, it is not literally true that no one delves into the psychology of the

attraction of same-race couples—though I am not aware of examples of the psychoanalysis of same-race couples as such. That is to say that race is not deemed an issue of any significance in the attractions of same-race couples to one another; no one asks why two people of the same race should fall in love. So what Mark is saying here is that it is unfair/prejudicial that race is considered an issue of any significance in understanding mixed-race couples.) And Mark was surprised when Black male friends counseled him not to jeopardize his growing stature as Black spokesperson in the United States by letting it be known (as he ultimately did in his second memoir, *Kaffir Boy in America*) that he was married to a White woman. Thus, he wrote, defiantly:

Gail is my wife. I married her because I love her. Surely people will understand that....Gail fell in love with me when I was dirt poor, unknown, and repeatedly rejected by all the compatible black women with whom I sought to have serious relationships.” (p. 193)

However, the fact that sometimes such unwanted attention and opposition came from Gail’s friends and family, people who knew them “as individuals” and who Gail had hoped would respect and treat them as such was even more unsettling. She recounted one example in detail:

There was only one thing more difficult than planning the wedding, and that was handling calls from “concerned” relatives, people I had grown up among, respected, admired, and loved....

One of my cousins called, twice in one week, to vent his strong opposition to my impending marriage to a black South African. These calls hurt me deeply, because I had been very close to my cousin....

“Mark went through some horrific experiences at the hands of white people,” he said. “He must have a deep, latent rage against everyone white. His book is very angry. I just hope his anger doesn’t erupt against you.”

“He’s never laid a hand on me,” I said. “And if he did, I’d leave instantly.” I was shocked at the very suggestion that Mark would ever use violence against me. I felt my cousin’s “concerns” were unfounded and rather racist. My cousin, an Ivy League graduate who lived in Boston, was admirably tall, handsome, and blond with a classic WASPness about him. *He’s probably*

afraid of blacks and doesn't know any, I told myself. You should try to allay his fears.

“I’m concerned mostly about the fact that he’s South African, from a totally different country, and that his father was totally dominant and controlling,” he said. “He must be *so* angry at whites. And now that he has a white woman under his control—”

“Hey, wait a minute!” I cried angrily. “Wait, hold on! I’m not under anybody’s control.”

“Yeah, all right, but he’s from a patriarchal society and has an incredibly strong will.”

“And he saw his mother and grandmother stand up to that male dominance and win. He admires strong women. He’s not looking for someone to control. Far from it. He’s looking for a friend, a woman who is her own person, whom he can respect, trust, and love.

I felt beaten down by the conversation. I said I was tired and had to go to bed. I could have refused to answer his questions, hung up, told him to mind his own business, or simply made an excuse to get away from the phone, but I decided to stand firm right on the firing line, and as he hurled his concerns at me, I did my best to shoot them down one by one. I wanted to prove to him that I wasn’t afraid to answer his questions, that I wasn’t avoiding serious issues, that I fully understood what I was getting into by marrying a black foreigner. I only hoped he got my message and would learn to accept my decision.

“This is a difficult but strengthening process,” I wrote that night in my journal. “I’m glad I did not turn and run from talking to him. I want my family to understand me, and the only way to do that is by communicating with them.” (p. 137-139)

So beyond the sense of confusion on the part of the Mathabanes that accompanied much of the unwanted attention and opposition that they faced from abstract or distant others, here the hurt and anger Gail felt in reaction to those closer to her can be seen quite clearly. But, as a coping mechanism, in the days immediately preceding their “public wedding,” Gail suppressed all thoughts of the opposition to their marriage—and the potentially ugly consequences of such hostility.

As my last day of work and the day of the official wedding approached, I tried to erase from my mind all thoughts of black and white opposition to interracial relationships. I wanted it to be a beautiful wedding, a celebration of the love that different cultures and races can have for each other. I did not want to reflect on why the KKK lynched black men accused of raping white women or on black militants’ opposition to one of ‘their men being snared by a white Circe’ or on

mixed couples being victimized by the growing racial polarization of Northern cities. (p. 137)

Similarly, when spending time with Mark's sisters in the swimming pool of their apartment complex in North Carolina, Gail attempted to banish the unpleasant feelings linked to attracting unwanted attention as a White woman who was presumably intimately associated with Black people.

As I entered the pool with Mark's sisters, I always felt the eyes of white strangers on me, filled with what I imagined was curious disdain or disgust, as they grabbed their towels and left.

But I tried not to let such things bother me. I was part of a new family now.... (p. 134)

By that point, Gail and Mark had stopped trying to preempt opposition by pretending to be "just friends," as they often had in the early days of their relationship. For example, Gail often accompanied Mark on trips he made to Long Island to lecture on South African apartheid.

During these trips, we would never let on that we were anything more than friends. We wanted to keep our relationship private and, therefore, kept it a secret. It was easier to pretend to be platonic friends than to deal with people's prejudices. When we spent the night at a white minister's home, we requested separate rooms, despite his wife's attempt to coax us into revealing the true nature of our relationship.

"You *do* want to stay in the same room, don't you?" she said insinuatingly. "It would be fine with *us*, you know. *We* understand."

We insisted we were just friends and wanted separate rooms. In the morning at breakfast the minister spoke to me, in a confidential and fatherly tone, about the problems mixed couples confront and how difficult it is to stay married.

"I had a good friend once, a black man like yourself," the minister said. "He wanted to marry a white woman. Oh, I assure you I warned him against it. But no, he wouldn't listen to me. He went ahead and married her. And you know what happened? They're divorced now. I knew it would happen all along." He looked hard at me, then at Gail, then back to me, as if to say, "Don't make the same mistake." (p. 46)

Thus, the conviction of so many others that their relationship—like any and all interracial relationships—was fundamentally problematic, pathological, objectionable, and doomed

to failure continued to shadow them. Indeed, from their perspective, it was this attitude in itself that created all of the problems that Mark and Gail faced as a couple.

Gail seems to have felt the weight of others' opposition to their relationship much more keenly than Mark. Indeed, her anxieties about the antagonism she felt were never far from the surface and she sometimes resisted Mark's optimistic attempts to convince her that they had made progress toward living in accord with their ideals of Color-blind Love. Gail says:

“I hated the way we had to hide our relationship from others.”

“I hated it too. But we had begun to change that. We were becoming ourselves. You remember how many times we pledged to live as we desired and not as society dictated.”

“But it's so hard to fight society,” Gail said. “I can't help it—I'm still dependent on the opinions and approval of others. It's difficult not to be.”

“I understand that,” I said. “But I know that with time, if we remain true to our convictions and to each other, enough people will come to accept us on our own terms. Remember the progress we had already made. We started by denying our relationship, then we tried hiding it from the public. But that's all changing. You know, some mixed couples continue to act like strangers to each other for fear of losing their jobs or meeting with public disapproval.”

“You see?” she cried. “I don't want to live that kind of life.” (pp. 91-92)

Gail continually casts “the outside world” as the principal—even the only—obstacle in the way of their happiness together in a relationship that she feels is the right one for her. Thus, she nurtures the fantasy of somehow escaping into a protected place where it's just the two of them and where they will never face disapproval, opposition, or prejudice. (For all of their talk about color-blindness, it seems that they have difficulty holding on to the belief that such a world is emergent—or perhaps even possible.) At times, this escapist fantasy seemed to Gail to be the only place wherein there was hope for their relationship since she was not confident that she had the strength to surmount the obstacle that social opposition represented to her. This led her to pursue a different kind of escape

from social disapproval, i.e., distancing herself from Mark. Gail rationalized her self-protective withdrawal of her energy and commitment to their interracial relationship fatalistically.

I was not convinced I had the strength to stand up to the social pressures against interracial couples. I decided it would be best for me to search for a place of my own and let my commitment to Mark grow at a more gradual and natural pace, if it was meant to. (p. 76)

However, from the early days of their relationship, the prospect of marrying Mark was on Gail's mind and the thought both delighted and troubled her: "I feared that I might someday hurt him if I could not muster the courage to marry across racial lines, and I also feared that if we married I might alienate my family" (p. 41). The tension between her private affection for Mark and her fears of going public with their relationship can be seen in her recollection of waking in his dorm room one morning:

In the dim light I saw Mark's face inches away from mine, nestled in the downy pillow. I stared with curiosity at his wide nose, his little ears, the tiny eyelashes that curled rather than lay straight, the contrast between his unblemished black skin and the white blanket draped across his shoulder. I felt warm and full of love.

Then doubts crept in. "What would my parents say if they saw me now, lying in the arms of a black man?" (p. 42)

When they were alone together, they drew strength from one another and they let their romantic fantasies run wild, as Mark recalls:

We convinced each other that our relationship would endure, no matter how vilified or isolated or misunderstood we might become. We did our best to shun the frenzy of the outside world, its materialism, its rewards for conformity....We vowed to resist, with all the strength our love could furnish us, the pressures and prejudices of such a world. Our spirits yearned to breathe free, to mingle with each other and with all that was True, Beautiful, and Good in life.

"Before, we were trying, without realizing it, to fit in," I said to Gail one evening as she sat across from me during a candlelight dinner at my Staten Island apartment. "We were attempting to satisfy society's impossible demands. We were obsessed about what people thought of us. You longed to please your

family and I wanted to protect my public image. But we can't hope to change society if we suppress or hide or compromise what we deeply feel."

Gail looked up suddenly and asked, with a slightly worried expression, "Do you think our relationship will withstand all the pressures?"

"Of course it will," I said. "We must make it work. It won't be easy. But our love is something worth fighting for, worth dying for."

Gail raised her wineglass and said, "I'll drink a toast to that." (pp. 83-84)

Despite the warm feelings associated with such private moments, however, Gail's fear of her father's disapproval was rarely far away. Indeed, Gail's fears of losing her father's approval seem to have been the single greatest obstacle in the way of their living "happily ever after." For example, on her flight home to New York after a three-month internship with a German newspaper, Gail reread some of Mark's letters to her and

wondered how we would combat the prejudices many people have toward interracial couples. Above all I wondered how my father would react if I ever mustered enough courage to tell him about Mark.... I closed my eyes and imagined my father's probable reaction to the news that I was living with my boyfriend, who happened to be black. Would he rant, rave, question, pry, fume, apply pressure in all the right areas to make me leave Mark forever? (pp. 58-59)

By this point in their relationship, Gail was spending most of her time at Mark's apartment in Staten Island—though her parents thought she was living with her brother on the Upper East Side. But in what she describes principally as an effort to establish a greater sense of independence, Gail decided that she needed to find her own apartment. However, she lasted only a single night in the room she rented in a rundown in a rough neighborhood before she found herself back at Mark's apartment. He recalled her silently eating a sandwich on the morning she returned.

Finally she said, "I'm so afraid of living with you." She looked up at me with tears welling in her eyes. "I'm terrified of what my parents will say when they find out. I mean, they don't even know about you yet. I told my brothers not to reveal anything to Mom or Dad about you, and they haven't. I haven't mustered the courage to tell them."

"You'll have to find the courage, Gail," I said, "if you believe in our relationship."

Gail started crying.

“What's wrong?” I asked.

“I love you very much,” she said. “But I also love my family. My heart tells me I should move in with you. It also tells me that I have to confront my family soon, for the sake of our relationship.” (pp. 65-66)

Gail settled back in at Mark's apartment, grew comfortable living in a Black neighborhood, and began feeling a certain degree of confidence that their relationship would last. However, there was still the troubling issue of telling her parents that not only was she in love with a Black man, she was also living with a Black man whom she had not married.

The only disruption of our happiness was the nagging knowledge that I had not yet found the courage to tell my parents about Mark. Telling them over the phone seemed inadequate, so I decided to fly home to Minneapolis and have a heart-to-heart talk with them. During the four nights before my flight, I was awakened several times by the image of my father's angry face. (p. 71)

In Minneapolis, at her parents' home, she nervously rehearsed various ways of telling them about her relationship with Mark, “but the news always sounded shocking, no matter how I worded it” (p. 72). And she wondered how her mother's family—who traced their ancestry to the Pilgrims—would react to the thought of their pure line of descent being “stained” by “Negro blood” (p. 72). Gail told her mother of her relationship with Mark on this trip and was relieved to receive her apparent support, but she did not directly tell her father—despite her intentions to do so. She rationalized that she did not want to broach a topic that would make him uncomfortable and thus spoil the brief time they had together on her visit. She further rationalized that it was not necessary for her to tell him since her mother certainly would. Upon returning to New York, however, Gail found herself feeling uncomfortable with the growing intensity of her relationship with Mark and renewed her earlier efforts to find her own apartment.

But when Mark failed to visit her new apartment and pulled away from her saying that they could not continue pretending that her father approved of their relationship (indeed, her mother told her directly during a recent visit to New York that he did not approve of their relationship), Gail began despairing that she was losing Mark and became furious with her father. She was unable to sleep and got up at four in the morning to write a letter to him in which she raged about his lack of support for her and his ongoing attempts to manipulate her into being the kind of daughter he would want to show off to his neighbors. She referred to her mother's recent visit and the relayed message that he did not approve of her relationship with Mark writing: "I have to respond in the only way I can—in pure hate" (p. 77). She mentioned remembering times when he had been a "good father" to her, but these memories now serve principally to leave her feeling a sense of having been betrayed by him. Within a few days, however, Gail received a phone call from her father during which he expressed his pain at receiving her letter and said that he would not stand in the way of her relationship with Mark. They cried together and reconciled, but by this point she feared that Mark had left her behind.

Both Gail and Mark seemed to accept at face value her father's claim that his initial objections to their relationship reflected no bigotry on his part, but only a desire to protect his beloved daughter from the additional stresses he knew they would face as an interracial couple. However, her father's blessing did little in the short-term to reassure them as Gail continued to feel that he was sending mixed messages.

"My father calls once in a while to express his 'concern' about me, as if I were throwing away my life by loving you. He's been sending me books. One of them was *Women Who Love Too Much* and the other was *Women Who Love Men Who Hate Women.*"

"Why would he send such books?"

“He read *Kaffir Boy*, probably with a red pen in one hand, searching for your behavioral patterns and trying to psychoanalyze your childhood. He thinks that anyone raised in such a brutal environment will inevitably become brutal, and that anyone with a father like yours will definitely become a controlling tyrant. I didn’t let him finish. I hung up on him and then screamed at the phone, ‘Bastard!’”

“But why would he think I hate women? My book flows with praise and admiration for my mother and grandmother....”

“I don’t know. I think he’s just trying whatever he can to make me question my relationship with you.”

“Don’t let it bother you,” I said, drawing her toward me by the hand. She was trembling. “Let go of your anger. He’ll grow to understand. He hasn’t even met me yet. And we don’t need to rush into anything. I don’t want you to have to choose between me and your family. I don’t want you to marry me out of fear that someone might convince you to stop loving me.”

“It’s not out of fear,” she said. “I’m sure of my feeling for you. I just want to protect those feelings from the pressures of the outside world. I want it to be just the two of us. At least for a while. You see, everyone in my family seems to know what’s best for me, and I know I feed their malleable image of me with my words, my timid smiles, my hesitations, my silences. I have to be bold in making my own decisions. The future seems so vague and a bit frightening. I’ve been so afraid of making the wrong choice that I’ve made no decisions at all. I want to change that.” (pp. 113-114)

But such boldness did not come easy for Gail and they married in a private, civil ceremony (the caption to the photograph included in the book refers to this as their “secret wedding”) in the New York’s City Hall a full five months before their “public” wedding in a church on Long Island. So they protected themselves by keeping their marriage a secret. Gail rationalized this decision as follows:

Because I was in no hurry to upset my family and friends, I let the marriage remain a secret. Being legally married prepared me mentally for confronting life as a mixed couple and standing up to the opposition of family members, which I knew was inevitable. (p. 120)

Gail did, however, confide in her roommate (Carol, a friend from college who had a history of dating interracially) that she had married Mark. This friend knew Mark well and offered congratulations, but Gail was uneasy even in this private moment.

“The idea of saying I’m married makes me uncomfortable,” I said. “I’m afraid of what people would think.”

“But you married because you love the man!”

“Yes, of course.”

“What then are you afraid of?” Carol asked.

I was afraid of my father. I could not even imagine telling him that I was married, let alone to a black man. He had never even met Mark. Yet he was flying to New York to visit me and my brothers in one week. I realized it was an issue of honesty. How would I feel if I found myself in the position of having to lie? Wouldn’t it be easier to be honest, proud of the marriage, proud of my husband? The only thing I needed was courage. (p. 120)

But Gail did not yet have the courage to honestly and publicly declare her love and commitment to Mark in the presence of her family and friends. Her fear of their disapproval on the basis of their color-consciousness prevented her from living up to her creed of color-blindness. She capitulated to the cultural prejudices and taboos that she considered groundless. As she continued to hide her marriage to Mark, her fears left her feeling weak and dependent. She claimed that she was certain of her love for Mark, but she was without the courage of her convictions, without the strength to affirm her love for the man she considered to be “the one.” So she resorted to marrying in secret in order to protect herself—and their relationship—from the hostility she expected from family, friends, and strangers who remained color-conscious. Nothing could be more disappointing for one given to the ideology of color-blind romantic individualism, thus, she was quite angry with herself for caring what anyone else might think about her relationship with Mark.

For Gail, another troubling aspect of being in an interracial relationship was the unexpected hostility she faced from Black women. She had been so consumed with her worries about the reactions of her family, friends, and other Whites—and she was so thoroughly ensconced in the mindset of White privilege and White superiority—that she

had never stopped to consider how Blacks might see her marriage to a Black man. And if she had reflected on the likely Black perspective on her marriage to a Black man, she would almost certainly have thought about it exclusively from an apolitical, ahistorical, individualistic perspective wherein Blacks would receive her with open arms as her love for a Black man would be all the evidence they would need to confirm her worthiness as a Color-blind human being, one who had transcended prejudice and racism. So it was a rude awakening for Gail when she began to encounter Black women who were angry with her for having stolen a successful Black man, a published author who had taken strong public stands against South African apartheid.

“Didn't you know?” Mark asked. “Of course black women are going to be upset at you, at us. I know it's unfair. But we just have to get used to it. Maybe someday, when they get to know you as an individual, they'll think differently about us.”

Knowing that I was loathed by black women made me feel miserable. Since my days as a minority white student at Pearce Junior High in Austin, Texas, I had admired black women. At Pearce, where I felt insecure and lost, I envied the black girls for their strength, confidence, toughness. They had the courage to challenge teachers, make demands, and speak their minds. I envied them for their hair, which looked different every day: cornrows, Afros, pony tails, braids, all knotted up with colorful beads and transparent colored balls.

I watched in awe and admiration as they danced down the long tables in the cafeteria, where a jukebox belted out Motown tunes in the corner. They made up the cheerleading squad, the basketball team, the track team. They were full of life and laughter, while I, on the other hand, felt stifled by the puritan streak that deprives so many whites of their vibrancy and emotion, riddling them instead with guilt complexes that make them go through life perpetually in need of shrinks.

When I got to Columbia Journalism School I was sent, along with most of my classmates, into rough New York neighborhoods, often alone, to cover story topics ranging from teenage pregnancy to prostitution and drug addiction. While reporting in such neighborhoods I met some incredibly strong women—all of them black and determined to survive in a cruel, unpredictable world of violence, poverty, and desperation. (pp. 201-202)

So here we see Mark rather startled by Gail's naïveté in this regard while she withdraws and makes a private argument about how it is unfair that Black women should be angry

with her since she has long admired them—both from a distance as an adolescent and, more recently, as her poor interview subjects when she was a journalism student. (It is worth noting that she does not cite any close personal relationships which might have given her truer access to complicated “real life” Black women who would be more difficult for her to see in terms of easy stereotypes.) Gail is hurt because she, an open-minded White liberal who has always accepted—even envied—Black women and their strength, finds herself the target of their race-based anger. She judges herself to be one who has transcended race and racism, so she should be treated as such, i.e., as a raceless individual. Further, she argues that she knows what it is like to be a racial minority (based on her junior high school experience), so she understands their experience. But she has no hard feelings toward Blacks based on that experience, so, she implies, neither should they have such feelings toward her. Still, in an attempt to better understand the anger of Black women toward her, Gail solicits an explanation from a Black woman (June Steward) who was initially angry when she discovered that Mark was married to a White woman, but who soon came to affirm the discourse of Color-Blind Love. This safe, reasonable Black woman apologized to Gail saying that she had done nothing to deserve the hatred of Blacks and, as an explanation, offered a few words about Black women never being able to measure up to White standards of beauty.

The female ideal in this country has always been the nubile blonde, girl-woman. Black women always took a back seat to this image. Our beauty, no matter how spectacular, could never stand up to the blonde goddess. So for Mark, one of the most inspiring black writers of the decade, to embrace that ideal was for me, and apparently other black women, an insult. It took a bit of personal grappling for me to get over it. (p. 207)

Armed with this new insight into the psychological sense of inferiority felt by Black women, Gail became more tolerant and understanding of the position of Black women.

I learned to be sensitive to the feelings many African-American women have when they see me with Mark. But I did not feel right forcing myself to feel guilty for having fallen in love with him. After all, Mark is far more than a black man and I am not simply a white woman. Black women, I realized, would have to make an effort to try to understand *my* position, too; I can't spend my life apologizing to black women who are upset with me. (p. 208)

But while this new perspective may have helped Gail to soothe her own sense of pain at the injustice she felt she was suffering at the hands of Black women, some defensive, self-righteous anger seems to remain in her assertion that Black women need to make an effort to understand her position—as she had come to understand theirs. Gail writes that she “did not feel right forcing [herself] to feel guilty for having fallen in love with [Mark].” She does not question whether feeling guilty and offering an apology to Black women would be desirable to them—or whether it would make any sense to do so—she only says that she cannot do that indefinitely. What purpose is served by Gail’s forcing herself to feel guilty? This certainly provides little relief to Black women who continue to suffer the manifold daily insults of racism. Perhaps it is a matter of relief for Gail. If Gail feels guilty, then she’s “one of the good ones”—a sensitive liberal who is emotionally affected by the indignities that Black women have endured. But in this Gail seems very much stuck in her own perspective. It is thus questionable whether she had taken any substantial steps toward genuinely understanding the anger of Black women toward her and other interracial couples—despite her liberal-minded claims to have done so.

In comparison to the detailed and profoundly ambivalent account of Gail’s subjective experience of trying to develop and maintain a position consistent with the ideology of Color-Blind Love, the description of Mark’s experience in the face of societal opposition is spare and straightforward. An important aspect of this is that Mark never

seems to have had any question about whether his family would accept his relationship with Gail. A year and a half into their relationship Mark wanted to ask Gail to marry him, but he was concerned about her “fear of commitment” and that she would withdraw from him if he asked her to marry. About this time Mark received a phone call from his mother and the first thing she asked was when he was getting married—and when she realized that in the United States there was no requirement that Mark pay Gail’s parents for the privilege of marrying their daughter, she became even more insistent that Mark not delay asking Gail to marry him.

My mother knew from previous conversations that Gail was white, but not once did she make her color an issue. This hardly surprised me. Her judgment of people had always been based on one criterion: their character. As long as Gail was a good human being, was not lazy, did not smoke or drink, was respectful and compassionate, and loved me as much as I loved her, my mother unreservedly approved of our relationship. Each time I spoke to her on the phone she kept reminding me that there was no longer any “apartheid in marriage,” by which she meant that the Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act had been repealed. (p. 87-88)

Thus, it seems that the color-blindness of his mother contributed to Mark’s comparative comfort with the prospect of marrying interracially. However, just two weeks before Mark’s proposal of marriage, Gail had learned that her parents were divorcing and she decided to go to Minneapolis to discuss Mark’s proposal with them. A week later he received a letter from Gail in which she described how upsetting her parents’ divorce was to her and her need for “time, space, and solitude in which to think clearly, heal, and reflect” (p.89). Thus, she decided to cut off all contact with Mark for five months. Mark was shocked, confused, and hurt. He became depressed and thought about Gail constantly, but decided to move to North Carolina.

My agent and publisher kept urging me to write a sequel to *Kaffir Boy*, but my mind was distracted. I could not force myself to be productive or attend to

the simplest household tasks. I let bills lie unpaid on the table, and would then take a check to the telephone or utility company only after my phone or power had been cut off. I felt restless, aimless, gloomy. Life became insipid and meaningless. What used to give me pleasure no longer did. I would pick up a book, start reading it, then immediately drop it and reach for another, then another.

Always my thoughts were on Gail. I wondered what she was doing and whether she had met someone else....I would not give up hope. I waited. (p. 90)

After two months of complete silence from Gail, Mark was miserable so he decided to fly to New York and wait for her outside her building in which she worked. When she emerged from the office building, he began telling her about North Carolina and that he thought she would like it there, but she was curt and cold. He managed to engage her in a brief conversation as they walked along the street. He tried to convince her that they because of the strength of their love for one another they could overcome all obstacles, but she remained firm in her decision to continue a five-month separation from Mark. He returned to North Carolina feeling defeated, but a month later he returned to New York to give an invited lecture—hoping that Gail might attend. She did and soon they were back together.

Hanging on during Gail's waffling was clearly the biggest challenge that Mark faced in their relationship, but he was not completely impervious to the prejudice they faced as an interracial couple. Of course, there was the anxiety Mark felt about meeting Gail's father as he wondered what this man's true feelings were about the prospect of his daughter marrying a Black man—but Mark's anxiety in this situation is relatively uncomplicated and straightforward in comparison to Gail's wildly conflicting fears and desires. And when Gail became pregnant Mark began wondering how they would respond to the attention they would receive as parents of a biracial child.

I spent a good deal of time wondering what our child would look like. Would it have a big blond Afro and blue eyes? Or would it look more like I did as a child, with chocolate brown skin, nappy hair, and large brown eyes? How would Gail feel carrying around a biracial child? How would I feel carrying a child lighter than myself? What kinds of stares and comments would we get when we appeared in public with our baby? (p. 156)

Incidentally, Gail had some similar questions, but hers were focused on the issue of how their biracial child would look.

As if my subconscious mind could not decide whether my child would be black or white, I dreamed I bore a little panda bear: pitch black in parts and snow white in others. Besides a mother's natural curiosity to know whether she will have a boy or a girl and whether it will have all ten fingers and toes, I was dying to know what strange combination of pigments and facial features was forming within me. (p. 156)

Given Gail's sense that their child would appear freakish or unnatural, Mark's concern about Gail's response to being seen as the parent of a biracial seems warranted.

However, his own anxieties in regard to parenting a biracial child are left unexplored.

Also, like Gail, the opposition of Blacks to their relationship was particularly troubling for Mark, but having a child seemed to strengthen his resolve to ignore the criticism they faced—from any and all quarters. For example, when Bianca was five months old, the three of them traveled to New York as Mark was to appear on “The Today Show” as he began a publicity tour for his second book. He was also a guest on a popular radio talk show during which he received a barrage of calls from angry Black women.

“Your marriage to a white woman is an insult to your mother and every black woman in this country,” [a] caller said.

I responded that the last person to blindly hate whites or anybody because of the color of their skin was my mother. She valued her soul too much to harbor hatred in her heart.

My forthright answers surprised many. But I was fed up with playing games with my emotions, with hurting a woman whose love of me was unqualified, with apologizing for a friendship that was above reproach and that people had no business prying into. Just as I had opposed tribally arranged marriages in South Africa, I opposed racially arranged marriages in America. I

could never live with myself knowing I had married someone not because I loved that person, but because society approved of the match and it was the politically correct thing to do. (p. 196-197)

This seems to be a kind of turning point in the text for Mark as he decided that he would no longer hide or carefully neglect to mention his marriage to a White woman in settings where Black members of his audience might take exception. And, again, he returned to the rhetoric of romantic individualism and the final necessity of being true to his feelings as justification.

The strength to take the position that one must, regardless of the consequences, be true to one's feelings—the ultimate stand of Color-Blind Love—does not come easily or quickly to most of the other couples cited by the Mathabanes. Indeed, these others are couples mostly like the Mathabanes in that on one level they had always known that their love for one another was “right,” but the hostility of a Color-Conscious Society often made it difficult for them to live their dreams of a truly Color-Blind Love. Eventually, however, they reach a point at which they no longer concern themselves with the misguided opposition they face. But given the virulence of some of the antipathy that interracial couples encounter, this is no small feat. Gail was particularly interested in learning about the experiences of other interracial couples and she recounted some of the experiences of a White friend of hers, Connie, who had also married a Black man.

One day as Connie drove down a major boulevard in Greensboro with her children, the driver in the next lane leaned out of his window toward her and yelled repeatedly, “You goddamned nigger lover!”

“I was in shock,” Connie said. “Tears gushed down my face. Long after the man stepped on the gas and took off, I was still in shock. Another time I was sitting in my car at an intersection, waiting for the light to change, and a pickup truck pulled up in the next lane. I heard someone say, “Look at the nigger lover and her baby niggers!” Then I heard a second voice, “I think I’m going to throw up.”

“How does it make you feel when you hear things like that?” I asked.

“Angry. I hate it. My motherly defensiveness makes me want to beat the crap out of them. I know it’s their problem, not mine, but they’re saying something about my family. But if I’ve had a really good day, I just feel sorry for them and pray for them. God forgive them. They don’t know what they’re doing...”

“To me everybody is the same, they only look different....Your blood is red whether you’re green, red, polka-dot, or whatever.” (p. 164-165)

Gail’s interest in other interracial couples led her to propose an article on interracial couples for *Winston-Salem Magazine*. In doing research for this article, she found a pervasive fear on the part of such couples, most of whom wanted to keep their interracial relationships as quiet as possible.

What I discovered startled me: Mixed couples were hard to locate. Of the handful I found, most refused to be interviewed. Others agreed to be interviewed but wanted to remain anonymous for various reasons: fear of losing their jobs, fear of losing respect, fear of disappointing members of their family who did not yet know about the relationship, and even fear of losing their lives. One white guidance counselor at a Forsyth County high school spoke of death threats from his black girlfriend’s former black boyfriend....Most of the mixed couples I interviewed for the article lived in fear that their superiors at work would discover that they had fallen in love across racial lines and fire them. Thus loving human relationships are transformed into “dirty little secrets.” (p. 186-187)

But the Mathabanes are careful to make the point that opposition to interracial marriage is not strictly a Southern phenomenon. And they cite their New England friends Sarah, a White woman, and Amil, a Black man, as an example. Sarah was disowned by her parents when she was seventeen and twenty-three years later they were still estranged.

“It *did* hurt to be rejected by my parents,” Sarah said. “For me it was like going through a divorce. I went through the same phases: hurt, anger, resentment, fighting, grief, sadness. I wrote letters to them at certain points in my life; I showed an openness to reconcile. They never responded. It’s been such a long time, I don’t even cry about it now.” (pp. 241-242)

But as Sarah continues talking about her estrangement from her parents, it becomes clear that there is a much greater emotional charge associated with the loss of her relationship

with her parents than she wants to acknowledge when she emphasizes the years that have passed and suggests that her wounds have healed.

Sarah sent her parents a note announcing the birth of her first child. For weeks she was hopeful that her parents might be gladdened by the news and have a change of heart. When she received no response she went through another period of grief over the rift between her and her parents. When their second child was born, a daughter, Sarah hoped that perhaps the thought of a little girl might make them want to visit. Still, no response, followed by another period of sadness for Sarah.

“It doesn’t matter to my parents that time has proved them wrong,” Sarah said. “They know we don’t live in the gutter. They know I’m a college graduate and a schoolteacher. They know my husband is a successful businessman. They know we own our own home. Yet they’ve shunned their grandchildren. They’re racists. They just don’t like children of different races.

“It’s not sad to me anymore,” she continued. “Time heals the wounds. It’s as if my parents died a long time ago. I regret having fought with them so much. I don’t like fighting and anger. But you can’t divide yourself to please your parents. My parents have a negative world view and no respect for my husband or children. It would be more damaging to have a relationship with them now than not to. They would have to change.

“You have to make what you can of your life,” she said. “If you please racist, intolerant parents, does that mean you would then have a happy and successful life? No! You should make a better world with your husband and the family you create. It’s far more important to really love the person you marry than to please others. You need that rock to make it through the storms of life.” (pp. 244-245)

Sarah’s story, then, is the realization of Gail’s original and ultimate fears about what it would mean for her to marry a Black man, i.e., her parents would disown her. Similarly, Sarah faced criticism from Black women, but ultimately she decided that their love was true—and more important than anyone else’s view of it.

“When you care deeply about someone and you believe in a world of interracial harmony, it’s not pleasant to be told you’ve stolen a man,” Sarah said.

“Sometimes the pressure would make me pull back from the relationship, and we’d let things cool off. We wanted to make sure we weren’t wrong for each other. But we were never wrong for each other.” (p. 243)

The final example of an ultimately triumphant interracial couple cited by the Mathabanes are Tahirih and Bill, a Black South African woman married to a White American man, a

couple for whom their Baha'i faith with its explicit emphasis on racial harmony and encouragement of interracial marriage played an important role.

When they had been dating three or four months, it suddenly dawned on Bill that the relationship might fall apart. He started feeling self-conscious with her in public. He wondered how strong their commitment would have to be to weather the obstacles they would inevitably face. He knew his parents would not be happy about it.

"Without realizing it, I started wondering what people were thinking about us," he said. "And the fact that some might disapprove bothered me...."

"I became aware that I had been worrying too much about other people's opinions and had overruled my own feelings, so I told myself, 'I don't care what they think.' Getting past that threshold changed the relationship for me. It became my conviction that, 'This is the right thing for me.'"

"Before they decided to marry, Bill and Tahirih talked to other mixed couples about their experiences. They learned it would be a challenge, but that with patience, persistence, and love even difficult situations could be resolved. (pp. 256-257)

From the perspective of the Mathabanes and from within the discourse of Color-Blind Love, then, the moral of all these stories is that although interracially married couples will inevitably face opposition from a Color-Conscious Society—it may be dramatic and truly heart-wrenching or it may be relatively mild, but it is inevitable—even the worst nightmare can be survived and, indeed, the truly Color-Blind Couple has no choice but to be true to their feelings. It is the only right thing to do. And, for Gail, the response to the publication of her article on interracial couples in *Winston-Salem Magazine* served only to confirm the importance of standing up against the hostility of a Color-Conscious Society. The article, entitled "Color-Blind Love," appeared in early 1990 with a large black-and-white photograph of Gail, Mark, and Bianca. The magazine received a barrage of angry letters and phone calls from readers who asserted that this was "disgraceful" and that the magazine should not be "advertising" interracial couples. Readers grilled Gail's editor at the magazine about Gail's credentials as a writer and questioned whether she

(i.e., the editor) had read the Bible and knew that God did not approve of race mixing. Another reader asked if the publisher was from South Africa. When the reply was that, actually, the publisher was Italian, this reader contemptuously responded that, of course, the publisher must be a “foreigner.” Despite the controversy Gail’s article aroused, her editor remained supportive and defended its publication against all of the critics. As for Gail, she concluded that this was exactly the kind of thing that needs to be done in order for progress to be made.

I received numerous letters from the sisters, mothers, and friends of mixed couples as well as some from mixed couples themselves thanking me for writing the article. Those letters in themselves were enough to negate all the ridiculous criticism the article provoked and convinced me that we mixed couples, if we ever want to be fully understood, accepted and respected by society, have to be willing to tell our human stories in order to combat stereotypes about us; we have to speak out against bigotry, black and white, wherever we may live. (p. 190)

From the perspective of the Color-Blind Couple, the solution to the prejudice, bigotry, and discrimination they face is straightforward. They must simply humanize themselves in the eyes of their opponents by sharing their personal stories. When interracially married couples are seen as individual human beings who have simply fallen in love with one another—rather than through the distorting, dehumanizing lenses of racial stereotypes—then we can say that we have achieved the ideal of Color-Blindness. Until then, however, Color-Blind Couples have some work to do; they must speak out about their experiences.

Despite the prejudice and taboo that they face and the sometimes difficult situations they confront, Color-Blind Couples have some very positive experiences to share. Fundamentally, theirs is the heartwarming story of the triumph of romantic love over all obstacles—a staple trope of Western society that is thus compelling for so many.

And this is what the Mathabanes most want to emphasize in their memoir. This is the point toward which the entire text has been aiming. They want to shout from the rooftops that regardless of race (or “color,” as they prefer) everyone must follow their heart when it comes to love. This means that sometimes people of different colors will fall in love, but if they act in accordance with their “true feelings,” then everything will work out just fine. No amount of opposition from a Color-Conscious Society will diminish the happiness of the truly Color-Blind Couple who do the right thing and marry for love.

Of course, as we have seen, it took the Mathabanes a while to get to this point—especially Gail. Still, relatively early in the text, she begins to express her commitment to the ideal of Color-Blind Love: “I didn’t care anymore that we were different colors. I loved him and wanted to commit myself to our relationship.” (p. 57) She felt the disapproval, however, of her family and her romantic convictions about her ability to transcend race were repeatedly tested and found lacking. Gail’s investment in their relationship waned at these points, but again and again she found herself drawn back to Mark. And upon reuniting with Mark, they would share blissful evenings, days, weeks together convincing one another that regardless of the difficulties they would face as an interracial couple, their love was strong enough to survive. As Mark recalls saying to Gail one evening:

“We must make it work. It won’t be easy. But our love is something worth fighting for, worth dying for.”

Gail raised her wineglass and said, “I’ll drink a toast to that.” Our glasses clinked.

We slow danced around the kitchen to Fleetwood Mac, talking and laughing as we spun around the room.

“I’ve never felt this happy,” Gail said. “My cheek muscles are sore from smiling. We don’t need anybody or anything else, as long as we have each other.” (p. 84)

Thus Mark and Gail clearly articulate a very conventional romantic narrative: their love is worth whatever it may cost them as they have never been happier in their lives than they are in their moments together. Indeed, they find it questionable whether life is worth living without one another. And their relationship is so profound that they need nothing else in life. (It should be noted here that, as they see it, race plays no role whatsoever within their relationship. More on that in a moment.) Even so, Gail waffles in her commitment to their relationship and goes so far as to unilaterally decide not to see Mark for five months. But when she finally decides to marry Mark she feels that she has at last seized control of her own life:

“I knew that for once in my life, I had made a choice, alone, that it was my own, and that it made me happy....The struggle to overcome my need to be guided, led, controlled, taught, and protected had been long and difficult, but I finally felt I was out there on my own, a free woman, at last.” (p. 106)

She feared continuing to allow her father to influence her decisions about her relationship with Mark, but she was certain of her love for him and she felt a surge in her sense of her own power when she finally and fully committed herself to her relationship with Mark.

Gail’s decision to marry Mark was the crucial step toward enacting her ideals regarding Color-Blind Love, but she continued to find herself haunted by the intolerance of the Color-Conscious Society and her fears of its members. She recounts experiencing such prejudice in the form of contemptuous stares from White strangers who encountered her with Mark’s family. She tried to ignore such incidents and focus on the sense of warm acceptance she experienced as a new member of Mark’s family. And these warm feelings were amplified by the loving reception she and Mark received from her friends and family at their church wedding. As they drove away from the church, Gail recalls thinking:

Why was I so afraid to have a public wedding? I asked myself. Look at them, waving and wishing us happiness. Perhaps there's little to fear as long as you follow your heart and stand by your convictions. (p. 142)

This was a tremendously affirming experience for Gail. To have the friends and family who she feared would disapprove of her decision to marry a Black African—or even disown her—attend her wedding and actually celebrate her marriage was both a great relief and a boost to her belief in the power of the Color-Blind Love. In the months and years that followed, Gail settled into a married relationship with Mark—and the role of a White woman in a Black family as some of Mark’s siblings moved in with them—with increasing comfort. Still the rudeness of incredulous Whites occasionally pierced into the experience of this Color-Blind Couple and thrust an unusual sense of self-consciousness upon them, if only momentarily. For example, while still in the hospital after having given birth to their first child, Gail encountered a nurse who had great difficulty realizing that Mark was the father of Gail’s baby. When this nurse met Mark and finally understood why Bianca had a “brown tinge,” she left hurriedly and returned with a group of nursing students to whom she was giving a tour.

I felt the three of us—Mark, Bianca, and I—were on display like some curiosity exhibit at a fair. But I was too absorbed in Mark, my new baby, and my own happiness to care what strangers thought of our black-brown-white family. (p. 161)

According to the Mathabanes, they only become aware of the differences in their skin colors when others stare at them or otherwise treat them rudely because of their prejudices—and even then they are mostly too happy together to care what anyone else thinks about them. They have moved beyond being concerned about issues of race between themselves. Their races are only of significance to color-conscious others looking at them from the outside.

So as this text reaches its conclusion, the Mathabanes have resolved any lingering concerns about color that had dogged them and they appear poised to live “happily every after.”

When our second child was born, the unease and self-consciousness we had felt at Bianca’s birth was gone. Color, finally, no longer mattered to us. With tears of joy filling our eyes, we hugged and kissed each other in front of the entire hospital’s childbirth staff the minute our son Nathan Phillip arrived January 20, 1991. (p. 260)

The Mathabanes cite their lack of inhibition at this euphoric moment as evidence of how far they have traveled, as they feel that they have completely transcended all issues of race and racism—conceived narrowly as psychological, individual-level phenomena. And they want to display their relationship as evidence that all people can overcome racial stereotypes and prejudices. As Mark had reflected earlier:

It was easy to see how both sides in the racial conflict could turn their venomous arrows of hate and anger and fear at us. After all, we were a reminder of the ideal of racial harmony they had abandoned; we were a reminder of how much work still had to be done, on both sides, before racial concord could truly exist. But also, and most important, we were a reminder that it could be done. That Americans, despite their racial and cultural differences, can find common ground, can treat each other with respect if not with love. (p. 124)

However, despite what anyone else thought about them or how anyone else dealt with issues of race in general, the Mathabanes were prepared to go it alone. They were ready to test their conviction that they needed nothing but their love for one another and fully confident that they would thrive together.

We appreciate the kind words from initially skeptical family members and friends, though we long ago agreed that whether society accepted us or not, as long as we had each other and faith in our love, we would find ways of being happy and fulfilled. (p. 262)

And the writing of this book was part of their plan to affirm their love for one another and to put forward their optimistic vision of Color-Blind Love and its power to trump racial

taboos and prejudices. But, as they conclude their memoir, the Mathabanes assert that writing this book together surpassed even their high expectations.

Writing this book has meant far more to us than merely telling a story about interracial love. Reading each other's versions of our early relationship led to a greater understanding of one another and our past, strengthened our love, fueled our dedication to fighting bigotry, and made us hopeful that blacks and whites can relate as human beings, can reduce and even eliminate the tensions and barriers that now divide them. Meeting and interviewing other mixed couples inspired us, made us proud of our relationship, and confirmed our belief that we are not fugitives from the 'real' world or social outcasts, but living proof that blacks and whites do not have to hate each other. (p. 262)

Thus, they offer their personal story of Color-Blind Love as evidence of the hope they have for humanity, i.e., that individuals can come to know and love one another without regard to superficial differences in skin colors and transcend the taboos of our ancestors.

As I conclude my close consideration of the autobiographical text produced by the Mathabanes and move toward situating the discourse of Color-Blind Love in its sociohistorical context, I offer here a few brief reflections on the Mathabanes and their enthusiastic embrace of the subject position of the Color-Blind Couple. In this text—and especially for Gail—the “psychological action” is to be found in the tension between their impulses to escape the ugly realities of racial prejudice and to display their relationship as an example of racial harmony. And it is Gail's ongoing ambivalence about her relationship with Mark that sustains the narrative and makes the book read like a conventional romance novel with a slight racial twist. But the book's ultimate triumphalist romantic individualism and its “happily ever after” ending require that an idealistic veneer be applied to cover any remaining troubling feelings. For example, the Mathabanes assert that the opposition they face does not bother them and that they simply ignore it; nevertheless, there is plenty of evidence throughout the book that suggests that,

in practice, they have not been able to do so. Though they would argue that they eventually reached the point of being able to do so, I think this is questionable. It seems to me that this is a rather precarious façade and that they are not really as independent of our Color-Conscious Society as they would like to be. Our prevailing cultural individualism provides unquestioned ideological cover for—and celebration of—this rhetoric of the noble individual who triumphs over society’s attempts to prevent one from living one’s own truth. This is especially true in the realm of romantic love as, for example, Romeo and Juliet serve as cultural icons reminding us all that we must follow our hearts in such matters, regardless of the anticipated consequences. And given the contexts in which they were born and raised, Mark and Gail Mathabane are perhaps especially well-situated to adopt the ideology of Color-Blind Love. He escaped legal apartheid in South Africa and arrived in the United States in the post-Civil Rights era. Thus, in comparison to what he was leaving behind, the institutionally racist structures remaining in the United States would have appeared minimal. As for Gail, she grew up as a privileged White liberal, so, in regard to issues of race and racism, Color-Blindness is her “native tongue.”

CHAPTER IV—SOCIOHISTORICAL CONTEXT OF THE DISCOURSE OF COLOR-BLIND LOVE

The preceding chapter was a direct textual analysis of Mark and Gail Mathabane's *Love in Black and White* that explicated the discourse of Color-Blind Love as manifested in that particular text. What is to come in this chapter is an analysis of the sociohistorical context of this discourse in terms of how it has arisen and how it functions in the contemporary United States. So if the preceding chapter was a close reading of what the Mathabanes "said" in their memoir, then what follows is an elucidation of what they left out. And they left such things out of their account because it is impossible to include every potentially relevant item in readable text; further, they did not have to include everything in order to be understood by their audience. As with any discourse, the discourse of Color-Blind Love only makes sense in a particular historical, institutional, political, and ideological context. And when a discourse has reached hegemonic status—as I hope to demonstrate Color-Blind Love has in regard to interracial marriage—such a discourse comes to seem "natural," "right," and unassailable because it is deeply rooted in its particular sociohistorical context. Thus, the following is an illumination of what the Mathabanes did not need to say in order to be understood, of the taken-for-granted foundations of what they say that make their memoir so appealing for so many. This context is like the air that we breathe, absolutely essential to our sustenance but most often invisible. Because what follows is, strictly speaking, not an analysis of either the

Mathabanes or of their memoir—but of the discourse of Color-Blind Love as such—there is no conceptual reason to include any direct reference to this memoir in this chapter.

Thus, the reader can expect this chapter to have a very different feel than the preceding one, but I will make occasional reference to the Mathabanes' memoir in order to illustrate the very limited ways in which they do address issues of sociohistorical context.

7) Historical Location: The Post-Civil Rights Era—Martin Luther King's Dream?

Love in Black and White: The Triumph of Love over Prejudice and Taboo is an autobiography unburdened by references to its historical context—or that of the lives of its authors. There are occasional, typically undeveloped allusions to particular points in time that creep into the storyline; for example, Gail mentions seeing a young Prince perform in Minneapolis around 1979 and being embarrassed by the explicit sexuality of the performance. At another point, Gail writes that her parents were “liberal Democrats who had voted for George McGovern in 1972” (p.42), but this passing reference is employed in the context of her worries about her parents' reaction to her dating a Black man. Thus, for the most part, the story seems intended to be heard as one that is timeless, i.e., a universal morality tale about love's eventual victory over narrow-minded bigotry. Somewhat ironically, then, the Mathabanes write quite narrowly about their own personal experiences (and those of several other interracial couples), but seem to have little interest in relating these stories to a broader context. They largely fail to consider the sociohistorical circumstances in which they produced this text, to reflect on their own lives as historically-situated, or to consider the situatedness of those occupying the other subject positions in their preferred discourse of Color-Blind Love.

The kind of timeless appeal that the Mathabanes make here can, at times, betray an apparent ignorance of historical context. For example, they approvingly cite the work of an organization called the Association of Multi-Ethnic Americans (AMEA) that, at the time they were writing this book, was working to create a “multiracial” category on standardized forms generally and the U.S. Census in particular. (Incidentally, the 2000 U.S. Census was the first one in which respondents were allowed to check multiple racial categories.) Like AMEA, the Mathabanes decried the objections of opponents (usually people of color) who claimed that the effort to institutionalize a “multiracial” category was essentially an attempt to enable light-skinned people of color to avoid the stigma associated with being a person of color without addressing the stigma itself. The Mathabanes write:

Children of mixed marriages are often accused, mostly by blacks, of trying to deny their black roots and “pass” for white. Critics say they do so for economic, social, or career gain. A biracial adult who refuses to choose between the white and black within her and prefers to be called “mixed” is unfairly accused of denying her “true race,” that is, the black race. (p. 215)

They go on to cite several popular musicians with some acknowledged African ancestry who are “fair-skinned” who had been criticized for attempting to pass as White, but who the Mathabanes claim see themselves not as Black or White but “as human beings first” (p. 216). What is striking here is that the Mathabanes seem to lack awareness of the historical precedent and significance of light-skinned Blacks attempting to “pass” as White. For those who were successful in “passing,” there was tremendous “economic, social and career gain” to be had, but for the communities from which they had to sever all ties in order to maintain this pretense, there was—and remains—the ongoing loss of talent, resources, and solidarity.

A similar kind of avoidance of the significance of the past in shaping the present moment can be seen in Mark's suggestion that racism is merely a relic of the Old South as he mentions somehow being oblivious to—while also citing—“the stares, shocked expressions, and raised eyebrows of elderly Southern belles and disapproving Confederate gents” (p. 112) that greet him and Gail in North Carolina grocery stores. The intended implication here seems to be that the only people who continue to harbor prejudices against interracial couples are a generation of Southerners who are dying out. Even so, the Mathabanes are well-aware that:

Not long ago across the South, interracial relationships were not only forbidden by law but black men were often lynched by white mobs on the slightest suspicion of being involved with a white woman. Even after passage of the 1963 Civil Rights Act, the Ku Klux Klan and its sympathizers continued terrorizing interracial couples and families. (p. 171)

And they cite numerous friends and acquaintances who have suffered varying degrees of discrimination because of their interracial marriages at the hands of a wide variety of people. So Mark's identification of racism with elderly Southerners seems misleading even in relation to their own experience.

However, on a more upbeat historical note, the Mathabanes point out that their book is being published in 1992, the 25th anniversary of the U.S. Supreme Court's *Loving v. Virginia* decision to overturn all the anti-miscegenation laws that remained on the books in the South. And this is the kind of history that they want to include, the hopeful significance of the 1960s. Though they fear that many Americans have given up the integrationist ideals of that time and will thus view them as quaint, Martin Luther King's dream of an integrated, color-blind society remains their own. Indeed, Mark writes of “judging people as individuals, by the contents of their character, rather than by the color

of their skin” (p. 25). This is a clear allusion to King’s (2001) famous “I Have a Dream” speech at the March on Washington in 1963: “I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character” (p. 85). There is no higher moral authority to which to appeal in validation of the Mathabanes’ vision of what interracial marriage means—for them and for the world.

In contrast to the general avoidance of historical points of reference in relation to which the events recounted in this text can be situated, there are two that are fully developed and to which the Mathabanes repeatedly return in this text. So perhaps it is not presumptuous to suggest that these two historical points of reference are foundational for the story that they intend to tell. The first of these is Gail’s elaboration of her experience of attending a newly desegregated middle school in Texas in the early 1970s. She had previously lived in all-White communities and even while attending this school she lived in a racially segregated neighborhood. It was a tense time and the fear of violence shaped her experience at that school, but throughout this text Gail invokes her memories of the confident, popular Black girls she so admired during those days. The second major historical anchor in this text is Mark’s escape from the brutality of South Africa’s apartheid regime—along with his worries about his family’s safety as all of them remained in South Africa until after Mark and Gail had married. This looms very large in this text as Mark’s efforts during the 1980s and early 1990s to educate Americans about South African apartheid consume all of the time that he doesn’t devote to Gail; the final decade of apartheid in South Africa is the most consistent historical reference beyond the “inner life” of their romantic relationship. Thus, the historical perspective of this text, if

the Mathabanes were concerned to articulate it as such, might be summarized as follows: “We left segregation behind—in the past of both the United States and South Africa—and together we found true love.”

The history-averse approach of the text leaves readers to either glide along with the Mathabanes’ timeless love story or to do the work of historically situating the text themselves. Thus, in the following pages I will offer a brief sketch of the historical context in which this text was produced. King’s “I Have a Dream” speech is a crucial point of reference, to be sure, but in order to understand what King was saying and what his words have meant in the intervening years, we need a better understanding of the historical context. I will thus present a quick, racially-inflected, decade-by-decade sketch of the latter half of the twentieth century in the United States. In this consideration of the broad contours of the last half century, the guiding question lingering in the background will be: “In the post-Civil Rights era, have we realized King’s dream of a color-blind society?”

World War II was profoundly significant in many ways, not the least of which was the impact of The Great War on race relations inside the United States. In the decades leading up to WWII, scientific racism was quite prevalent and often intertwined with the eugenics programs that had wide support in both the United States and Western Europe; in fact, the state of California sterilized more people in the late 1920s than all other countries combined—though not primarily for explicitly racist reasons (Coontz, 2005). The costly but ultimately successful struggle against Nazi racism and its theory of a “master race” undermined the ideological basis for the racial and ethnic divisions within the United States. By the end of the war, the divisions between various White

ethnic groups had effectively been blurred—if not erased—and the problematic status of Blacks gained increasing attention in light of the contradictions between the patriotic rhetoric of equality and the profound racial inequities that had been institutionalized (Foner, 1998). The war helped forge a much stronger national culture as radio became a newly national mass media and, economically, the mobilization for war helped integrate the South into the national economy. Further, the migration of Blacks to Northern cities to work in defense industries gave Blacks a taste of mobility and opportunity that began to fuel demands for equal treatment under the law. And as the United States began to cast itself as the champion of freedom on the world stage, ideologically speaking, racism became un-American (Romano, 2003). A first major step toward overturning the broadly and deeply institutionalized racism of the United States came in 1948 when Truman issued an executive order desegregating the armed forces.

As the postwar era dawned and the baby boom began to take off, the United States entered a long period of unprecedented affluence and global influence. And as the Truman Doctrine committed the United States to a position of supporting “freedom” around the world by opposing the spread of communism, the Cold War began. While the “freedom” to be defended and expanded during the Cold War was, in terms of the realpolitik, essentially “free market” capitalism, flying this banner of “freedom” made the ongoing racial subjugation of large portions of the United States’ population an international embarrassment.

The Eisenhower administration of the 1950s was the last in which White men born in the preceding century remained at the helm of power, but these were also the years during which the Jim Crow doctrine of “separate but equal” facilities for Whites

and “Coloreds” faced its first successful legal challenge. While the concept of “separate but equal” was enshrined in law, the reality was far from the official rhetoric. For example, the South spent four times as much on school facilities for White children as for Black children and \$86 million dollars on White colleges but only \$5 million on Black colleges (Halberstam, 1993). Thus it was truly a turning point, when on May 17, 1954, in the unanimous decision in the case of *Brown v. Board of Education*, newly appointed Chief Justice Earl Warren declared: “We conclude that in the field of public opinion the doctrine of ‘separate but equal’ has no place. Separate educational facilities are inherently unequal” (cited in Halberstam, 1993, p. 423). While the issue of compliance with this new federal stance was left for later, everyone was put on notice that things were about to change and White Southerners in particular started to worry, but Eisenhower was sympathetic. The President took the Chief Justice aside at a White House dinner and said of the Southerners opposing desegregation of public schools: “These are not bad people....All they are concerned about is to see that their sweet little girls are not required to sit in schools alongside some big black bucks” (cited in Halberstam, 1993, p. 421). Similarly sexualized White resistance to the newly articulated principle of desegregation was on display in August 1955 when a 14-year-old Black boy from Chicago, Emmett Till, was brutally murdered because he had flirted with a married White woman in Mississippi. The affronted woman’s husband and his brother-in-law were quickly acquitted by a jury of White men, but later sold their story to a journalist. One of the men was quoted as follows:

As long as I live and can do anything about it, niggers are going to stay in their place. Niggers ain’t gonna vote where I live. If they did, they’d control the government. They ain’t gonna go to school with my kids. And when a nigger

even gets close to mention sex with a white woman, he's tired of livin'. (cited in Halberstam, 1993, p. 435)

The murder of Emmett Till and the ensuing trial was the first big media event of the Civil Rights Movement and when his mother insisted on an open-casket funeral, Whites across the country who found themselves confronted for the first time with such grisly evidence of the brutality of Southern racism were shocked, while Blacks were energized to take action (Halberstam, 1993).

Later in 1955, on December 1 in Montgomery, Alabama, Rosa Parks, a well-respected Black woman, was arrested for failing to give her seat on a bus to a White man. A year-long bus boycott by Black riders ensued under the leadership of Martin Luther King, Jr., a young Black minister who was elected president of the Montgomery Improvement Association. King was arrested and his house bombed during this period of time, but the growing movement found strength in the nonviolent approach he advocated and in December 1956 the boycotters won the right to return to racially integrated buses—and the sympathy of Whites outside the South:

King, always aware of the need to include rather than exclude people and the need to be magnanimous in victory, spoke at a mass rally to point out this should not be viewed as victory of blacks over whites but as victory for American justice and democracy. (Halberstam, 1993, p. 562)

And it is significant that the name of the organization responsible for the boycott, the Montgomery Improvement Association, includes no reference to the racial basis of the struggle in which these boycotters engaged. From their name, it would seem that their objective was to improve the city as a whole—not simply the status of its Black citizens. This was King's introduction to the national spotlight and the country's introduction to a

charismatic leader with a vision of racial integration that would benefit every citizen, regardless of race.

A final national media event of the Civil Rights Movement in the 1950s was the integration of Little Rock Central High School in September 1957. The nation's attention was riveted by images of mobs of Whites assaulting nine Black students as they attempted to enter the school for the first day of classes, but the students were turned back by members of the Arkansas National Guard. Governor Orval Faubus played the situation in order to win re-election (which he did, repeatedly) by energizing the support of segregationists while Eisenhower initially remained uninvolved as he was not particularly interested in enforcing the *Brown* decision since he had numerous friends among the conservative Southern elite who objected to integration (Halberstam, 1993) and he himself felt personally uncomfortable in the presence of Blacks who were not in inferior status positions (von Eschen, 2004). Eisenhower sent federal troops to escort the nine Black students to school only after Faubus failed to keep his promise to back down and allow the integration of the school. This angered Eisenhower, but it served Faubus' purposes as it allowed him to claim the old mantle of the embattled South, i.e., the abridgement of "states' rights" by federal military occupation (Halberstam, 1993). Nearly a full century after the Civil War the themes of a South misunderstood and victimized by arrogant Yankees championing the rights of Blacks were alive and well. Ironically, even as these battles were being waged in the Jim Crow South, the U.S. State Department was organizing and sponsoring worldwide tours by racially integrated groups of jazz musicians to serve as goodwill ambassadors to project a positive image abroad of American freedom. But the images of racial strife in the South were seen around the

world and they fueled criticism both internationally and on the part of touring musicians such as the preternaturally sunny Louis Armstrong (von Eschen, 2004). As the 1950s ended, the Civil Rights Movement and its critique of American apartheid were just beginning to have an impact on the affluent complacency of White America. And these national media events provide a sense of the unreconstructed recalcitrance of the White South.

Forty countries won independence between World War II and 1960 as the tide turned against European colonization and White supremacy (von Eschen, 2004). So at the outset of the 1960s, in the face of entrenched opposition, the way forward for the Civil Rights Movement lay in humanizing the Black protestors—and their White allies—in the eyes of sympathetic national and international audiences. Waves of demonstrations swept through the South leading to thousands of arrests and the media maintained its focus on these events, so the consciousness of Southern inequality along with dramatic evidence of police brutality kept building. Thus the Movement grew and reached its rhetorical high point with King's soaring "Dream" speech on August 28, 1963, at the Lincoln Memorial during the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom. (Indeed, this is one of the most famous speeches of all time. The size of the racially integrated crowd was estimated to be from 200,000 to 500,000 making this the largest political demonstration of any kind in the United States to that point in time (Kasher, 1996).) King's (2001) rhetoric on that day in 1963 invoked themes of color-blindness, "militant" transracial solidarity, "the American Dream," and the need for the nation to live up to its creed of freedom for all its citizens. And with a new civil rights bill in the works there was great optimism about the end of Jim Crow segregation, but as the

attention of the leadership of the Movement began to turn more fully toward the necessity of seeking economic justice for Blacks, cracks began to appear in the Movement (Gitlin, 1987).

The debacle at the 1964 Democratic National Convention in Atlantic City, New Jersey, led to an increasing fragmentation of the Movement as the national Democratic leadership refused to officially acknowledge the largely Black delegation from Mississippi that had been formed in response to being completely shut out of the party's official, all-White state delegation. (Incidentally, this all-White Democratic delegation from Mississippi had already pledged its support to Barry Goldwater, the arch-conservative Arizona Republican whose presidential candidacy provided ideological fodder for Republicans through the ensuing decades.) Thus, the Atlantic City convention came to symbolize the liberal establishment's betrayal of the Civil Rights Movement and of the concerns of Blacks in general. It provided strong impetus to the feeling within the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee and beyond that Blacks could not depend on White allies in the Democratic Party for support; thus an increasingly radical Black nationalism began to develop in the wake of the split between the establishment and the various marginalized movements for the rights of people of color (Gitlin, 1987; 2005). The broad coalition politics of liberalism were later effectively "decapitated" in 1968 with the assassinations of Martin Luther King—who had remained a symbol of the best possibilities of transracial alliances even as his staunchly nonviolent efforts had decreased in effectiveness since the Selma, Alabama, campaign resulted in the 1965 Voting Rights Act—and Bobby Kennedy—who as a symbol of the liberal establishment represented the last hope for peaceful change (Gitlin, 1987). Riots broke out in over 100

cities in the immediate aftermath of King's assassination leaving 46 people dead (Kasher, 1996).

Later in 1968, violent conflict between anti-Vietnam War protestors and police broke out during the Democratic National Convention in Chicago as many previously devoted practitioners of nonviolent protest lost their earlier faith and began acting out their desperate lack of confidence in the institutions of American politics. During 1968 and 1969, campuses across the country erupted with demonstrations, bombings, and arson while the Black Panthers battled police in several cities. The rhetoric of revolution proliferated and the Black Panthers became the most prominent symbol of the anticipated revolution; while the Panthers welcomed White allies, the distance between the Black poor they represented and most middle-class White radicals remained deep and wide (Gitlin, 1987). Lyndon Johnson's War on Poverty pushed the stalled New Deal agenda forward for a brief period in the mid-1960s, but the vast expenditures on the war in Vietnam made it impossible for the federal government to maintain efforts to eradicate poverty. Simultaneously, the growing awareness on the part of SNCC and others of the disproportionate numbers of Black soldiers dying in Vietnam fueled an embrace of Black Power while organizations of left-leaning Whites mostly focused their attention on opposition to the war in general (Foner, 1998). Thus the 1960s ended with a wide variety of left-leaning groups energized against the war in Vietnam, but with the hopes for nonviolent change that had created the broad coalitions of the early 1960s a distant memory.

The dreams of a massive, peaceful movement for fundamental change in the structure of American society were always more motivating aspirations than dreams that

were about to be realized. The widespread discomfort—if not revulsion—that Whites around the country felt when initially confronted by images of the ugly brutality of Southern racism made limited legal reform possible, e.g., measures to eliminate poll taxes and “literacy” tests that had been used for decades to prevent Blacks from registering to vote. Further, the Supreme Court, under the leadership of Chief Justice Earl Warren (1953-1969) had consistently acted to expand individual rights, protect unpopular dissent and the civil liberties of those most likely to suffer discrimination, and to establish a right to privacy (Foner, 1998). (Indeed, the *Loving v. Virginia* decision can be seen as one of the Warren Court’s final decisions along this trajectory.) However, at no point can it be said that there was anything approaching broad agreement in the United States about the kind of substantial economic reform that would have been necessary in order for Blacks and other people of color to begin to overcome the vast racial disparities in the distribution of wealth that have always been endemic to American society. Moreover, Steinberg (1997) asserts that a fundamental feature of the post-Civil Rights era has been the avoidance of explicitly racial issues by liberals. He points to King’s (1998) famous “Letter from a Birmingham Jail” (written in 1963) as evidence that the civil rights leader considered not the overt racism of the KKK or White Citizens’ Councils, but the concern for order—rather than justice—on the part of moderate (i.e., liberal) Whites as the greatest obstacle to the progress of Blacks. King’s letter was written in response to a group of eight religious leaders in Birmingham who publicly counseled him to reduce his demands for civil rights for Blacks and to accept a much more gradual pace of change. Similar moderation of demands has long been the counsel of the White power structure to Blacks seeking equality and justice. Steinberg (1997) describes the role of the liberal

establishment in this process as serving as the “left wing of the backlash” (p. 20). In the post-Civil Rights era, the position of the Democratic Party has essentially been that Blacks should relinquish efforts to organize against racial oppression as such and throw their support behind the Party’s programs of universal uplift. This position is informed by an acceptance of White racism as a given.

The liberal retreat from race was rationalized in terms of *realpolitik*. The argument ran like this: America is too racist to support programs targeted for blacks, especially if these involve any form of preference, which is anathema to most whites. Highlighting racial issues, therefore, only serves to drive a wedge in the liberal coalition, driving whites from the Democratic Party, and is ultimately self-defeating. That this reasoning amounted to a capitulation to the white backlash did not faze the political “realists” since their motives were pure. Indeed, unlike the racial backlash on the right, the liberal backlash was *not* based on racial animus or retrograde politics. On the contrary, these dyed-in-the-wool liberals were convinced that the best or only way to help blacks was to help “everybody.” (Steinberg, 1997, p.19)

Given that the “party of Lincoln” had effectively ended its support of the cause of Black civil rights with the end of Reconstruction in the 1870s (Foner, 1991), the fact that this retreat from race has become institutionalized in Democratic Party politics has hamstrung all subsequent efforts to explicitly and progressively address issues of race in the context of electoral politics. Consequently, political groups focused on racism have been consistently frustrated and marginalized.

As the 1970s dawned, both the Civil Rights Movement and the largely White youth movement, as represented by Students for a Democratic Society, had passed their peaks and fragmented into a variety of competing groups. Opposition to the Vietnam War remained an important point of agreement among the various politically engaged, left-leaning groups, but as the intensity of U.S. involvement in Vietnam decreased so did political activism in general. For many on the left who had been so energized by their

dreams of fundamental political change in the 1960s, the realities of institutional inertia along with the strength of the conservative forces they faced left them feeling increasingly burnt out. Thus, during the “Me Decade,” many gravitated toward the “human potential movement” in search of personal revolutions after their efforts to create political revolutions ultimately failed (Gitlin, 1987). Additionally, the Watergate scandal, the end of the long post-WWII economic boom, and the loss of the war in Vietnam contributed to a growing sense of disillusionment and depression on the part of Americans more generally. Many lost faith in the institutions that had sustained them during those flush decades and began viewing politicians and the government in general with increasing suspicion, even cynicism. The anti-authoritarian legacy of the 1960s manifested itself in this newly disengaged, inward-looking environment in a resurgence of spirituality (from evangelical Christianity to New Age groups) and cultural nationalisms across the spectrum (Schulman, 2001). Black Power evolved such that there was less focus on revolutionary political change and more emphasis on the distinctiveness of Black culture to be displayed by embracing “authentic” African names, clothing, hairstyles, art forms, etc. Other racially marked groups such as Asians, Latinos, and Native Americans organized along racial lines and sought to recover—or create—authentic cultural expressions. Simultaneously, Whites began reclaiming the various ethnic identities that they had cast off during the fighting of WWII even as Whites increasingly began to tire of talk about race and to invoke a sense of White victimization in the form of “reverse discrimination” (Porter, 2004).

In terms of racial politics, the most significant movement of the 1970s was the growth and consolidation of an organized White backlash against the Civil Rights

Movement of the 1960s that claimed the rhetoric of “color-blindness” as an argument against “preferential treatment” for people of color (Porter, 2004). (Incidentally, KKK membership tripled during the 1970s [Porter, 2004].) While the university enrollment of Blacks increased dramatically along with the rise of the Black middle class, schools and neighborhoods remained very segregated as Whites fled to the suburbs at the prospect of court-ordered busing to integrate city schools (Schulman, 2001). And on the level of national politics, the ardently segregationist governor of Alabama, George Wallace, a third party candidate, had the support of nearly 25% of voters nationally in the run-up to the 1968 presidential election (Schulman, 2001). This did not escape the attention of Richard Nixon as he rode the conservative White backlash to victory in 1968 and 1972 with his famous “Southern strategy” by targeting White Southerners with hints that he would slow desegregation while also appealing to blue-collar Whites generally alarmed by social issues such as crime, drugs, and antiwar protests. Indeed, Sun Belt candidates have won every presidential election over the past forty years, but a rightward shift featuring historically Southern political themes of low taxes, minimal public services, military strength, and the assertion of state and local authority became ascendant under Nixon’s administrations (Schulman, 2001). The 1970s also saw a Sun Belt that was booming economically and demographically while the industrial North faded; with the broadening distrust of the federal government along with rampant inflation, the time was ripe for a movement toward smaller government and “tax relief.” However, these apparently “color-blind” political thrusts were not without racial—if not racist—dimensions, as Schulman (2001) writes:

The tax revolt also provided a more acceptable outlet for some brands of racial hostility. In the racially polarized United States of the 1970s, it allowed

conservatives to tap into the fears and resentments of some white voters. Without even mentioning race, Republican candidates and New Right demagogues could exploit the pervasive feeling that the liberal welfare state unfairly benefited blacks and racial minorities—the sense that OUR tax money was being spent on THEM. Welfare, public housing, and urban services became the most frequently stigmatized examples of waste and the preferred targets for cuts. (p. 216)

So after the embarrassments of the overt and brutal racism broadcast worldwide in the 1960s, an apparently more moderate South asserted itself very successfully on the national political scene with appealingly “color-blind” rhetoric serving essentially reactionary ends—insofar as established federal policies and programs aiming toward racial justice (however imperfectly) found themselves increasingly de-funded.

In an increasingly conservative cultural climate, the title and popularity of the long-running television comedy set in the 1950s, *Happy Days* (1974-84), seem indicative of the widespread disenchantment with the 1960s and their legacy. Viewers could escape with the Cunninghams, Potsie, and the Fonz to those gentle, “happy days” before the turmoil of the 1960s. Thus, it should be no surprise that Jimmy Carter, a president beleaguered by inflation and a hostage crisis, lost in 1980 to Ronald Reagan with his genial smile, good humor, and promises to turn back decades of Democratic policies, thus returning America to its former glory. As Troy (2005) articulates it, the continually repeated, three-part Reagan storyline was as follows:

The first part tells the sad tale of America in the 1960s and 1970s, a country demoralized, wracked by inflation, strangled by big government, humiliated by Iranian fundamentalists, outmaneuvered by Soviet communists, betrayed by its best educated and most affluent youth. The result was four failed presidents: Lyndon Johnson, Richard Nixon, Gerald Ford, and Jimmy Carter. Part two has Ronald Reagan riding in to save the day, with a mandate for change. Reagan’s relentless, eloquent, often soaring rhetoric reshaped American horizons, building on century-old ideals, responding to decades-old frustrations, utilizing the challenges of the moment. His revolution, in his telling, lightened the tax burden crushing Americans, cut many regulatory shackles handcuffing American business, and revived America’s military....The result, part three, was Morning in

America—the great party known as the 1980s, when the stock market soared, patriotism surged, the Soviet Union crumbled, and America thrived. (p. 12)

Economically, the Reagan years were marked by tax cuts, budget cuts for social programs, corporate deregulation, massive military expenditures, and budget deficits of such magnitude that spending on new social programs subsequently became unthinkable. It was a time when the rich got much richer and the poor got poorer as Wall Street boomed and support for liberal reforms evaporated. Social Darwinism became respectable again. Greed was good in the “Mine All Mine Decade,” the economic boom was read as evidence of the superiority of American “freedom,” and CEOs became heroes of “the American way” (Troy, 2005). Indeed, these trends have continued and even accelerated over the intervening years and Reagan’s legacy has shaped each of his successors such that it can be said that we now “live in a Reaganized America” (Troy, 2005, p. 6). And despite Reagan’s nostalgic rhetoric of restoring America to its “glory days,” Americans’ sense of community and citizenship were undermined by the unfettering of the market economy and the celebration of radical individualism that accompanied it. Even as Reagan railed against the 1960s as the symbol of all that was wrong in contemporary America, his policies contributed to the communal fragmentation produced by the growing materialism and consumerism that had developed in an increasingly affluent America throughout the twentieth century (Troy, 2005). The 1980s saw the ascendance of “yuppies,” the ultimate young “power” consumers, even as the birth of MTV helped to nurture the next generation of image-obsessed, attention-challenged, celebrity-worshipping consumers. With so much to buy, most youth had little time or attention to devote to politics.

For those who still cared what was happening politically in the 1980s, Reagan touted “economic recovery” as his universal social program for all Americans—whether women, people of color, or White men (Troy, 2005). The article of faith behind “trickle-down” economics was that economic growth would ultimately benefit all Americans—not only the newly wealthy who were consuming so conspicuously, indeed that very consumption was deemed part of the process of sharing the wealth. (Unfortunately, despite our continued allegiance to this economic dogma, the gap between the rich and the poor in this country has grown dramatically since the late 1970s.) A rhetorical flourish of universality in the sense of color-blindness was key to several aspects of Reagan’s policies, not only economic growth as a program of universal social uplift. For example, Reagan opposed affirmative action as a kind of “reverse discrimination” and initiated new efforts to get tough on crime and drugs by enhancing law enforcement in regard to individual offenders rather than focusing on prevention and treatment. However, though these are superficially color-blind initiatives, each of these exploited and pandered to White prejudices and fears about people of color as lazy, irresponsible, violent, and unqualified for employment—yet expecting special favors from the government while hardworking Whites were victimized by both the government and people of color. Given this kind of cynical rhetorical manipulation and the fact that Blacks suffered disproportionately from the budget cuts of the 1980s, it is not surprising that Blacks felt disregarded by and alienated from the Reagan administration as “Dr. Feel Good” presided over social decay (Troy, 2005). The Black middle class, however, was welcomed into living rooms across the nation as *The Cosby Show* was the most popular television show from 1985 to 1990 (Troy, 2005). Significantly, though, this show mostly

avoided addressing issues of race and racism while celebrating the virtues of an emotionally close and good-humored middle-class family. Now that is something that White viewers could get behind—as they patted themselves on the back for embracing a Black family in the spirit of color-blindness.

So this is my account of the historical context out of which the discourse of Color-Blind Love arises and in which the Mathabanes wrote *Love in Black and White*. World War II had done much to shake up the established racial and ethnic order in the United States as the nation had mobilized to defeat the racist genocide of the Nazis. The 1950s saw the efforts of a newly energized Black Civil Rights Movement gaining attention and sympathy nationally and internationally along with support from the U.S. Supreme Court toward ending Jim Crow segregation. These efforts culminated in the 1960s with successful initiatives to gain formal legal protection of basic citizenship rights for Blacks. Significantly, these civil rights were endorsed by the White establishment under the rubric of color-blind integration during the final decade of liberal hegemony. During the 1970s and 1980s, the White backlash against the changes wrought by the Black Civil Rights Movement consolidated and moved the political discourse significantly to the right. Ironically, the rhetoric of color-blindness that had helped dismantle the legal basis for segregation was, during this extended period of backlash, co-opted by conservative forces to undermine support for efforts to realize racial integration. So the discourse of Color-Blind Love, as employed by the Mathabanes in the early 1990s, must be seen against this background of color-blindness as a conservative tool to prevent movement toward the very kind of racial integration that the authors explicitly support. Despite the irony of this contradiction, it is not surprising that the Mathabanes couch their

defense of their interracial marriage in the discourse of Color-Blind Love as this discourse has deep institutional, political, and ideological support in American culture. It is to an illumination of these structural supports of this discourse that the following sections are devoted.

8) Institutional Support: Love-Based Marriage, Psychologization, and Autobiography

In common usage, specific organizations (e.g., IBM, Duquesne University) are often referred to as institutions, but in the context of this analysis I use a more precise, sociological definition of the term. “Institutions are normative patterns embedded in and enforced by laws and mores” that involve “particular historical pattern[s] of rights and duties, of powers and responsibilities”; institutions are inescapably tied to a culture’s moral values as they “create us: they educate us and form us—especially through the socially enacted metaphors they give us, metaphors that provide normative interpretations of situations and actions” (Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swidler, & Tipton, 1992, pp. 10-12). In a highly individualistic culture such as our own, it is hardly surprising that many people have great difficulty understanding what institutions are—let alone thinking about how we have developed our institutions, how they shape our lives, or how we might change them in order to live better. Thus, it should come as no surprise that the Mathabanes do not engage with institutional questions as such in any kind of depth in their memoir of interracial marriage, a text that aims to present interracial couples in a way that appeals to a mainstream audience.

The Mathabanes' failure to meaningfully address institutional questions, however, does not mean that such "normative patterns" of life in the United States are irrelevant in understanding their memoir. (Incidentally, Mark does use the word "institution" twice in the text: once to refer to the institutionalization of racism under South African apartheid and once to say that "laws and institutions" have changed in the United States with legal desegregation, but few "hearts" have changed as a result. I will return to questions of racism in the subsequent section on the political dimensions of the discourse of Color-Blind Love.) Of particular significance in regard to the institutional dimensions of this discourse is the Mathabanes' continual refrain that their marriage—along with marriages of so many other interracial couples—is based on love alone. In their appeal to love-based marriage, the Mathabanes invoke "modern" mores that have been widely accepted in the United States since the early to mid-1800s during a period (i.e., the early 1990s) in which social conservatives continued to fret about the drift away from "traditional family values." Mark and Gail cite a friend's experience of being counseled by a Catholic priest to "Honor thy father and mother" by ending her interracial relationship; this can be seen as an example of adherence to long-since abandoned traditions in which parents, the Church, and others played a decisive role in arranging marriages. (Coontz (2005) notes that over the course of millennia, family member, neighbors, judges, priests, government officials, and others have often been involved in arranging marriages.) But the Mathabanes respond to attempts to prevent or pathologize interracial marriages by appealing to contemporary norms of love-based marriage and put themselves forward as an example of a couple who have followed their hearts and thus created a little bit of heaven on earth. Beyond the institution of marriage, the notion of the importance of

being “true to oneself” clearly connects this discourse to the institution of psychology. Psychology shows up in various ways in this text as, for example, Gail’s father and brothers are psychologists and she strongly believes the psychological dogma that she must make peace with her father in order to have a healthy relationship with a husband. But, most prominently, psychological concepts (e.g., stereotypes, prejudice) litter the text and shape it throughout. *Love in Black and White: The Triumph of Love over Prejudice and Taboo* is a thoroughly psychologized text. While the Mathabanes make passing reference to sociological and historical aspects of racism and interracial marriage (e.g., residential segregation and anti-miscegenation laws), within their completely psychologized discourse such phenomena have no significance beyond their role in fueling stereotypes and prejudice. So the institutions of love-based marriage and psychology are absolutely crucial to the discourse of Color-Blind Love and I will sketch their historical development and contemporary significance in the following pages. I will conclude the institutional aspect of this analysis with a brief consideration of the form of this text, i.e., autobiography as an American institution in which an exemplary life is put on display.

Historians such as Coontz (2005) and Yalom (2001) have demonstrated that the modern Western notion that marriage should only be entered into by partners who are in love with one another is rather unusual. Though modern Westerners broadly agree that a successful marriage depends on the partners choosing one another free of any outside influence, each making the other their highest priority, not allowing other family members to interfere in the relationship, being best friends and sexually exclusive, and, of course, being deeply in love, this set of expectations is historically rare—and the

realization of them even more uncommon (Coontz, 2005). Among the great mythical lovers of the Western world are Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet. This is quite significant since attitudes toward marriage were evolving during Shakespeare's lifetime (1564-1616) toward the belief that youths should choose their own partners based on mutual attraction; indeed, as the practice of secret love marriages became more widespread, a recurrent dynamic in his work was conflict between parents and youthful lovers (Yalom, 2001). As Yalom sees it, there are two morals to this quintessentially tragic love story; first, "one cannot force a person to marry someone she doesn't love," and second, "no parental (religious, ethnic, national) barrier should interfere with the natural inclinations of youthful lovers" (2001, p. 118). Thus, the story that serves as a kind of founding myth of romantic love involves partners who would give up their lives before their love.

Even as the mores of marriage were contested among the gentry in Shakespeare's day, marriage was too important economically and politically for many to consider entering into it on the basis of the emotional, unstable foundation of love; while it would be a lucky break if love developed between husband and wife, love-based marriage was a threat to the existing social order (Coontz, 2005). (Coontz notes that even today: "In many peasant and working-class communities, too much love between husband and wife is seen as disruptive because it encourages the couple to withdraw from the wider web of dependence that makes the society work" (p. 18).) Indeed, links between marriage and issues of sexuality, gender roles, social class, private property and more have led societies throughout history to enforce laws regarding marriage to stabilize the prevailing social order. For example,

Ever since ancient Rome, class-stratified and estate-based societies had instituted laws against intermarriage between individuals of unequal social or civil status, with the aim of preserving the integrity of the ruling class....But the English colonies stand out as the first secular authorities to nullify and criminalize intermarriage on the basis of race or color designations. These laws did not concern all mixed marriages. They aimed to keep the white race unmixed—or more exactly, to keep the *legitimate* white race unmixed—and thus only addressed marriages in which one party was white. (Cott, 2000, p.41)

After Lincoln's emancipation of the slaves and during the period of Reconstruction, miscegenation became a key state's rights issue as many states passed and/or strengthened their anti-miscegenation laws. And as the Great Migration of Blacks to the North proceeded before and after the turn of the twentieth century, the possibility of increased numbers of interracial marriages became a national concern—on the part of Whites. Then, in 1912, Jack Johnson (the great Black heavyweight boxer who had recently defeated the “great White hope” in a match widely seen as a battle for racial supremacy) married a White woman and made national headlines; the following year a flurry of new anti-miscegenation bills were introduced in state legislatures—42 of 48 states restricted interracial marriage—and a federal constitutional amendment was proposed (Coontz, 2005; Cott, 2000). The trend toward protecting the existing racial order by tightening restrictions against interracial marriage continued until 1948 when, in the case of *Perez v. Sharp*, the California Supreme Court became the first court to strike down an anti-miscegenation law since Reconstruction. Several other states followed California's lead before the U.S. Supreme Court overturned the remaining anti-miscegenation laws in the South, declaring that “the freedom to marry has long been recognized as one of the vital personal rights essential to the orderly pursuit of happiness by free men” (*Loving v. Virginia*, 1967). The Court's long-delayed guaranteeing of the rights of citizens to marry without regard to racial categories worried many Whites with

its implications for the existing racial order while, at the same time, enabling interracial married couples across the country to make legally unchallengeable claims that their marriages were the same as every other marriage.

While the Supreme Court referred to a “vital personal right” to marry free of state influence (or, implicitly, the influence of any outside the prospective partners) as if it were a long-recognized route to happiness, this assertion involved substantial historical revisionism. Indeed, the Court was formalizing a newly color-blind understanding of marriage that had been broadly inconceivable before the successes of the Civil Rights Movement, but the antecedents of which can be traced to the transformation of Western Europe by the Enlightenment and the spread of the market economy during the 1700s. Traditions of arranged marriage encountered the corrosive effects of Enlightenment ideas about reason and justice as the basis of social relationships led some to begin thinking of marriage as a secular, private contract between equals rather than a “miniature monarchy” even as the growth of wage labor made children less economically dependent on their parents; in this new view of marriage as a relationship between two individuals rather than part of a system of economic and political alliances, mutual obligations of love and companionship in marriage came to the fore (Coontz, 2005). During the colonial period of U.S. history, the family was central to the economic, educational, political, and religious dimensions of society, but as many of these functions have been taken over by institutions outside the home, the American family has become increasingly focused on the socialization of children and providing emotional support to all its members (Mintz & Kellogg, 1988). Between the time of the American Revolution and around 1830, a new middle-class nuclear family structure developed in which

marriage became more egalitarian and intimate along with a new specialization of roles with husbands as breadwinners and wives devoted to homemaking; this new family was a sentimentalized refuge from the amoral marketplace (Mintz & Kellogg, 1988). And though, practically speaking—and especially for women since most needed to marry in order to survive—property, family, and social status continued to play significant roles in marital decisions, love became the most highly esteemed reason for choosing a mate (Coontz, 2005; Yalom, 2001).

By the early decades of the twentieth century, the institution of marriage was changing again and many feared the implications of the rising divorce rate, the declining birthrate among native-born Whites, and a sexual revolution which saw increasing numbers of women pursuing education and employment outside the home (Mintz & Kellogg, 1988). The notion of “separate spheres” for women and men was challenged and there was a tremendous surge in the emphasis placed on sexual fulfillment in marriage such that good sex came to be seen as the essential “glue” holding marriages together (Coontz, 2005). However, despite the sentimentalization and sexualization of marriage during the 1800s and 1900s, respectively, it was not until the 1950s that a single earner could support a family; this new affluence contributed to the post-WWII “baby boom” that briefly reversed a century-long trend toward lower birthrates and created what is now seen nostalgically as the “golden age” of “traditional family values” (Coontz, 2005; Mintz & Kellogg, 1988). This brief aberration gave way in the 1960s and beyond to a resumption of trends toward lower birthrates and higher divorce rates as sustained affluence led to the widespread pursuit of love and self-gratification, with family ties often seen as obstacles to personal growth (Coontz, 2005; Mintz & Kellogg, 1988).

Coontz summarizes the situation of the institution of marriage in late-twentieth century America as follows:

This unprecedented marriage system was the climax of almost two hundred years of continuous tinkering with the male protector love-based marital model invented in the late eighteenth century. That process culminated in the 1950s in the short-lived pattern that people have since come to think of as traditional marriage. So in the 1970s, when the inherent instability of the love-based marriage reasserted itself, millions of people were taken completely by surprise. Having lost any collective memory of the convulsions that occurred when the love match was first introduced and the crisis that followed its modernization in the 1920s, they could not understand why this kind of marriage, which they thought had prevailed for thousands of years, was being abandoned by the younger generation. (2005, p. 228)

Whatever threats the institution of marriage may seem to be facing in the decades since the 1950s, heterosexual marriage retains a privileged legal status along with its position as the highest vision of what a good life looks like for most Americans. And it is in a period in which this privileged institution seems endangered—at least in the eyes of moral conservatives panicked by “the sexual revolution”—that the Mathabanes write a tribute to love-based marriage offering theirs as an example of what marriage should be. In this the Mathabanes are following a well-worn path as:

Aspiring minority groups (ex-slaves during Reconstruction are a good example) have often tried to improve their social and civil leverage with conventional marriage behavior, recognizing that the majority has an investment in the sanctity of marital roles, whoever holds them. (Cott, 2000, p. 5)

The irony here is that the version of “traditional marriage” to which the Mathabanes appeal is the thoroughly modern, Western love-based form in which the rights of individuals in all respects supercede the interests of outside authorities—be they parents, extended family, the state, or religious organizations.

The individualism inherent in love-based marriage is similarly inherent in the discipline of psychology. Indeed, the development of love-based marriage shares

important historical precedents with psychology, such as the Enlightenment emphasis on secular rationality in opposition to Church authority and Romanticism's veneration of emotional depth and expression (Jansz, 2004). And the individualism that is so characteristic of modern Western societies has been turned toward, among other things, what van Drunen and Jansz term "psychologization: the development of a sense of 'inwardness,' presupposing that every individual possesses some form of private 'inner space' of motives, thoughts and feelings, constitutive of his very being as a unique person" (2004, p. 7). This process had advanced to the point, by the late 1800s, that Wilhelm Wundt founded the first psychology laboratory in Leipzig, Germany, in 1879, thereby conferring scientific status on the field. (As Cole (1996) has pointed out, the widespread use of this conventional "birth date" for scientific psychology conveniently neglects Wundt's insistence that experimental psychology be supplemented by a "second psychology" focused on the cultural dimensions of psychological phenomena.) Shortly thereafter psychology was seeing practical applications to education and child-rearing, for example, in various Western countries (Jansz, 2004). Psychology was to experience rapid growth as a profession (e.g., as seen in the widespread application of psychological testing and psychotherapy) and in terms of cultural influence throughout the twentieth century as psychological concepts such as IQ, introversion-extroversion, and repression were adopted by the mainstream (van Drunen & Jansz, 2004). Psychology became so popular that significant public expenditures were made to create a mental health system while self-help titles by psychologists frequently became best-sellers making their authors into celebrities sought for the broadcasting of their expert advice on a plethora of psychologized problems of daily life. Thus, psychology may be seen as a key modern

institution given its role in supporting other institutions by reinforcing social norms in the dispensing of advice about how best to live in the modern world. For example, from a position critical of the modern Western configuration of “the self,” Rose writes in the past tense about this historically-specific, thoroughly-psychologized phenomenon: “And our lives were meaningful to the extent that we could discover our self, be our self, express our self, love our self, and be loved for the self we really were” (1998, p. 4). Certainly, it is no exaggeration to assert that psychology plays a crucial role in the regulation of behavior by providing conceptual schemas with which modern Westerners understand their experiences and, thus, indirectly encouraging the internalization of particular sets of social norms (van Drunen & Jansz, 2004). And psychology’s privileged status is enhanced, mystified, and protected by its claims to understand the hidden, inner causes of human behavior.

The ethos of the autonomous self is fundamental to Western modernity and psychology as an institution has emerged in this climate while rising to prominence and serving to sustain this “regime of the self” (Rose, 1998). In his introduction to a collection of Freud’s papers on technique, Rieff (1963) offered a particularly incisive interpretation of the psychologization of American culture. Rieff described four competing “character ideals” of Western civilization: 1) “political man”—the responsible citizen who from classical antiquity on has thoughtfully engaged public life and governance, 2) “economic man”—an individualist who matured during the Enlightenment and has avoided public life under the assumption that if all take care of their own “business,” then all would be well, 3) “religious man”—the Christian who has survived by incorporating ancient Greek philosophy and later accommodating the privacy

ethos of economic individualism, and 4) “psychological man”—this “uniquely American type” evolved from “economic man” and, with the help of Freud’s scientific approach, perfected its predecessor’s individualism. Rieff writes:

With Freud, individualism took a great and perhaps final step: the mature and calm feeling that must keep the individual a safe distance from the mass of his fellows can now, in therapy, be so trained that the individual can withdraw an even safer distance from his family and friends. (1963, p. 21)

Rieff’s (1987) “psychological man” is the “supreme individualist” for whom “interminable” analysis liberates by undermining all loyalties. “For, in the era of psychological man, the self is the only reputable and effective god-term” (Rieff, 1963, p. 23). While Rieff’s formulation may strike some readers as rather extreme, he is not alone in seeing psychology and psychotherapy as particularly representative of the individualism of twentieth-century life in the United States (e.g., Cushman, 1995).

The psychologization of U.S. culture is consonant with a third American institution that shares Enlightenment and Romantic roots: autobiography. Smith and Watson (2001) note that the form “celebrates the autonomous individual and the universalizing life story,” calling autobiography a “master narrative of ‘the sovereign self’”(p. 3). And Sayre (1980) wrote that “autobiography may be the preeminent kind of American expression” (p. 147) while noting that American autobiographies have often linked their authors’ lives with nationally significant ideas, giving their works ideological resonance. In regard to the Mathabanes’ autobiography, it is most obvious that they present themselves as embodying the post-Civil Rights ideal of color-blindness. Although Gail engages in extensive psychologizing confessional, the text ends on the upbeat note of the realization of marital and familial bliss that is attributed to their *Color-Blind Love*. The Mathabanes offer their autobiography as a kind of exemplary life

narrative, a love story of two individuals who refuse to allow others' prejudices to keep them apart. So given its use of a canonical form (i.e., autobiography) and articulation of their story in thoroughly psychologized language while constantly appealing to notions of love-based marriage, this text can hardly be considered transgressive in relation to these contemporary American institutions. This essentially conservative stance is interesting given the authors' marginalized status as an interracial couple. Commenting on the prominence of the autobiography in Black literature, Gordon writes:

It is no wonder that the autobiographical medium has dominated black modes of written expression. The autobiographical moment afforded a contradiction in racist reason: How could the black, who by definition was not fully human and hence without a point of view, produce a portrait of his or her point of view? (2000, p. 23)

The transgressive potential of the autobiographical form has been recognized and exploited by many racially marginalized subjects (e.g., in immigrant, native, and slave narratives), but the form in itself is hardly transgressive. Thus, **that** the Mathabanes use this form is of less interest than **how** they use the form and to what ends. Simply by articulating their perspective as an interracial couple the Mathabanes humanize themselves and contravene the racism that had broadly excluded the voices of interracially married couples from the public arena. What, however, is the significance of their rather conservative embrace of contemporary American institutions and what are the consequences for their engagement with racism as such? Perhaps they employ appeals to convention strategically in order to make themselves seem normal. Or maybe they are simply and straightforwardly using the language and appealing to the mores that are most comfortable for them. It may also be that the Mathabanes know of no other way in which to speak or act as an interracially married couple. Whatever the reasons for their

effectively conservative discourse, it is to a consideration of the racial significance of the discourse of Color-Blind Love that I now turn.

9) Political Significance: White Privilege and the Racial Status Quo

The Mathabanes make no mention of contemporary U.S. politics in this text. They do mention that Gail's parents voted for the liberal Democrat, George McGovern, in the 1972 presidential election and, significantly, they make several references to the politics of apartheid in South Africa. But the effect of these references paired with their neglect of contemporary U.S. politics is to suggest that racial politics happen elsewhere—in apartheid South Africa or decades ago in the U.S.—not in what is for them the immediately relevant present or recent past. And to be fair to the Mathabanes, it must be admitted that their book is essentially a love story. So it is legitimate to ask whether political issues are at all relevant in such a text. Further, would the intrusion of such issues prevent this text from reaching the broad audience made possible by securing publication by HarperCollins—or perhaps from being published at all? Given that this was an “early” first-person account of interracial marriage (i.e., early in the 1990s’ mini-boom of attention to interracial marriage and multiracial children in both the popular and academic literature), one that has become a kind of “classic,” perhaps it deserves a pass. After all, they wrote a book that was accessible to a wide audience, one that humanized interracially married couples at a point in U.S. history at which most accounts of such couples were thoroughly pathologizing—and fundamentally racist. So to the extent that they succeeded in portraying themselves as just like any other couple in love, they effectively countered the prevailing view, a view that obviously has had very negative

consequences for interracial couples. And as others followed their lead in publishing and circulating first-person accounts of Color-Blind Love, the position of the interracially married changed during the 1990s. But now we come to the animating question of this research project: “Whither Color-Blind Love?” Given that this research project is a Foucauldian discourse analysis, the proper object of study here is the discourse of Color-Blind Love (of which the Mathabanes’ memoir is but one manifestation), so the critical edge of this analysis is directed at this discourse—not at the Mathabanes, their character, their intellectual acuity, or any other aspect of their lives as flesh-and-blood “human beings.” Thus, this is an analysis of a discourse that necessarily constrains, limits, and shapes the articulated experience of the Mathabanes as an interracially married couple in this text (and the experience of others who find themselves using—and used by—this discourse). So where does the discourse of Color-Blind Love with its universalizing emotional appeal take us? What are its implications for us now and in the future? In particular, what is its racial significance? What is its political significance?

In what follows I invoke politics in the broad sense of that which relates to issues of relative power—rather than in the more limited sense of governmental politics, though such formal politics are certainly included here. And in this broad sense issues of race are thoroughly political as different racial groups are able to exercise varying levels of power. Further, despite the Mathabanes’ aloofness from formal U.S. politics in this explicitly apolitical autobiography, their text arises from and participates in a racial, political context. At the very least, disengagement from racial politics allows the status quo to escape comment and critique, so such disengagement, at a minimum, implicitly affirms the broader racial status quo. The fundamental political move of the discourse of

Color-Blind Love, then, is to explicitly depoliticize interracial marriage, to cast interracial marriage as apolitical in a context wherein race is always political. Rhetorically, this depoliticization is accomplished by framing interracial marriages solely in individualized, psychologized terms. Those who marry interracially do so simply because they love one another and those who oppose them do so because of their individual prejudices. But this depoliticizing move must be understood in the context of the systemic racism of the United States that is, on some level, apparent to all—including those who constantly pledge allegiance to the doctrine of color-blindness, despite its status as a rather thin veneer.

Importantly, color-blindness was formerly a radical political vision. Under Jim Crow segregation and the myriad dehumanizing supports of that system (including a substantial heritage of “scientific racism” with which psychology was complicit for a time), it was a revolutionary stance to claim a right to equality under the law for people of color. However, now that formal legal equality has been established, color-blindness has morphed into a conservative political tool that serves to bolster the racial status quo. Ironically, Martin Luther King’s “Dream” speech serves as a key text for conservative, self-satisfied visions of color-blindness as it is argued that we have achieved the dream of the greatest civil rights leader and we can justifiably be very proud. As Romano (2003) notes, the idea that “love is the answer” has been embraced most enthusiastically by political conservatives because it serves to mask ongoing systemic racial inequality by focusing on individual relationships. Such people are inclined to cite increasing rates of interracial marriage as if they are conclusive evidence that we have realized Martin Luther King’s “dream”—and then proceed to argue that any remnants of programs

originally intended to counter White racism now constitute “reverse discrimination” against Whites. In this view, widespread racism—understood as individual prejudice—is a thing of the past with perhaps a few retrograde racists such as would be drawn to the KKK. While the Mathabanes see prejudice against individuals who are interracially married as being much more widespread than such conservatives do, their differences are essentially a matter of degree since both focus on the extent of individual prejudices rather than racism as a political system. Among the places in this text where it is quite apparent that the Mathabanes are operating from a thoroughly individualized, psychologized understanding is a moment when Mark is asked by a Black woman how he, as a Black man who grew up under a system of “codified white racism” (p. 209), could marry a White woman. In response, Mark asserted his own personal color-blindness, and then moved to equate the oppression of Blacks by Whites under South African apartheid with Black opposition to interracial relationships in the United States. Mark sees these as equivalent forms of “dehumanization” in which misguided racial solidarity leads to a failure to recognize individuals as such. However, Mark seems not to have heard the woman’s question about “codified white racism” and his equation only makes sense on an abstracted psychological level. As soon as any consideration of the relative power of Blacks and Whites in both countries is admitted, his analogy falls apart. How can the exploitative actions of Whites under the institutionalized structure of apartheid be equated with the self-protective choices of Blacks who have endured centuries of subjugation? Only by completely ignoring the overwhelming political dimensions of past and present racism can this be accomplished, but this same move is repeated throughout this text as the Mathabanes equate Black and White opposition to

interracial marriage and as they equate the experiences of Black and White partners who are interracially married. Thus, in this depoliticizing, individualizing discourse, the institutional, systemic, and cultural dimensions of race and racism that have for centuries served the interests of Whites throughout the world are effaced by talk about sadly persistent stereotypes: “If people will just start talking to one another as individuals, then this little problem will be solved on a one-to-one basis.” Furthermore, in this view White people who can convince themselves that they harbor no racial prejudices are off the hook as there is nothing more to be done than make an acquaintance of a Black person as evidence of their freedom from bigotry. The political significance of this discourse is depoliticization.

Another aspect of the depoliticization inherent in the discourse of Color-Blind Love is that on the level of explicit content, interracial marriage is not a transgression of Whiteness as such—or, more accurately, this discourse admits no sense in which interracial marriage violates long-established standards of behavior on the part of Whites. Since Whiteness as such cannot figure in the discourse of Color-Blind Love, this discourse cannot critique or challenge Whiteness. Color-Blind Love personalizes its analysis so completely that the historical, institutional, political, sociological, cultural, and ideological are eclipsed, elided, and ignored. Thus, in the grip of this discourse, the Mathabanes cannot connect the personal with the political. They are sensitive to the stereotypes and prejudices of individuals, but these are cast as merely those of misguided, ignorant, or even hateful individuals. The Mathabanes cannot situate these in a broader context of racism as a system of oppression and exploitation that creates and sustains individual-level discrimination, so they see ongoing racism not in laws or institutions but

only in the attitudes of discrete individuals. They can see only individuals in the grip of silly prejudices and irrational, pre-modern taboos. Thus the discourse of Color-Blind Love effectively blinds its users to the multidimensionality of racism. Indeed, the Mathabanes clearly prefer not to use the word “racism” at all. Instead they continually transmute racism into a matter of mere “skin color.” If all racial issues are only a matter of skin color and some vestigial beliefs about its significance, then racism is a matter merely of the irrationality of a few ignorant bumpkins. And the historical, institutional, political, and ideological structures that lead to vast differences of experience for those positioned differently in terms of race are evaded, avoided, and trivialized.

The depoliticization intrinsic to the discourse of Color-Blind Love effectively undermines broader efforts to oppose racism. Not only does a doctrinaire insistence upon color-blindness make it impossible to get traction against effectively racist practices that avoid invoking race explicitly, it also militates against initiatives that take account of the social and economic realities of racial inequality. So in the context of old-fashioned, overt racism such as Jim Crow segregation or South African apartheid, a color-blind approach represents a meaningful step forward. But once formal legal equality is enacted, a color-blind approach loses its anti-racist thrust and is easily co-opted by conservatives aiming to limit societal change to the relatively theoretical realm of legal rights. Further, once the rhetoric of color-blindness is mastered, it can increasingly serve to provide ideological cover for not only essentially conservative politics, but also truly reactionary efforts to deprive racial minorities of any semblance of material equality. At the extreme, as long as race—or “color”—is not explicitly invoked, then a color-blind approach has no objection; on the other hand, any mention of race, regardless of context

or purpose, is deemed old-fashioned and nefarious. Thus color-blind rhetoric enables subtle—and not-so-subtle—racial inequities to fester since it is helpless in relation to individuals, institutions, and cultures that learn that it is impolite to mention race. Meanwhile, such rhetoric is used to chastise any whose attempts to address racial inequalities involve taking account of material differences between racialized groups.

In this context, the Mathabanes' story of Color-Blind Love is a heartwarming one for those inclined to believe—or who pretend to believe—that because of the victories of the Civil Rights Movement we have realized substantial racial equality in the United States and that the only remaining problem is that of a few racist pariahs. From this largely White mainstream perspective, since Whites now report much less prejudice to survey-takers, if racial inequities continue to exist that must be attributed to people of color who fail to take responsibility for their own lives and seize the abundant opportunities available to all in our color-blind democracy (Brown, Carnoy, Currie, Duster, Oppenheimer, Shultz, & Wellman, 2003). But as the editor of a collection of articles critical of the racial status quo writes:

Central to the existence of racism is the politics of its denial. It is in the best interests of the right to assert the nonexistence of racism except as a manifestation of individual pathology—a matter simply of individuals with bad attitudes. But it is the shame of liberals who think of themselves as guardians and witnesses of corrective concern and conscience that they too have elected to treat racism as a problem of individual social relations and not the systematic operation of power at work throughout our political economy. These essays call into question and to account a liberal majority that trivializes racism by turning its attention to individual remedies, to attitude adjustment, to “color-blind” legal adjudication. (Lubiano, 1997, p. viii)

As color-blindness has become hegemonic, the political center (including the vast majority of those on both the left and the right) has enshrined as unquestionable an individualized, depoliticized understanding of race and racism. Under the hegemony of

color-blindness, taking race into account is disallowed; so, to the extent that race continues to have material consequences, we must blind ourselves to them, we must turn away and pretend that we do not see them—or call them something else. The only opposition to the rhetoric of color-blindness comes from the margins, from White supremacist groups, from Black nationalists, and from committed anti-racists who echo Supreme Court Justice Harry Blackmun’s dissent in a landmark case that undermined the basis for a strong application of affirmative action in higher education: “In order to get beyond racism, we must first take account of race. There is no other way” (*Regents of the University of California v. Bakke*, 1978).

Those within the (White) mainstream tend to see “racism as something tacked onto an otherwise healthy America society” (Feagin, 2000, p. 5) that is fundamentally sound in its adherence to its founding ideals of equality and justice—with recent strides made by various minority groups to claim their constitutional rights trumpeted as evidence. But critics of the racial status quo in the United States articulate a contrasting view of deeply systemic racism: “the central problem is that, from the beginning, European American institutions were racially hierarchical, white supremacist, and undemocratic. For the most part, they remain so today” (Feagin, 2000, p. 5). In this view, contemporary racist ideologies and practices are traceable to their use in justifying and bolstering European colonization, imperialism, and exploitation since the 1400s; Whiteness and its privileges are embedded in the rise of capitalism and the rational subject of Western modernity (Bhattacharyya, Gabriel, & Small, 2002). In the United States, more specifically, the political and economic significance of Whiteness is intimately connected to slavery, genocide, immigration restriction, and racial segregation.

An imaginary community of the European-descended has been forged based on notions of White superiority that has real advantages for those able to identify as White, thus “White Americans are encouraged to invest in whiteness, to remain true to an identity that provides them with resources, power, and opportunity” (Lipsitz, 1998, p. vii). In this light, touting the “progress” of Western civilization requires deliberate disregard for the lives and societies of indigenous and enslaved peoples who have been pillaged—and who continue to suffer under the combined weight of ongoing oppression and the consequences of historical exploitation. Economically, White accumulation of wealth has been directly tied to Black deprivation (with slavery as only the most obvious and sustained example) and there is abundant evidence of persistent racial inequalities in income, wages, and wealth that show no sign of substantial change over decades of recent history—despite the growth of the Black middle class (Brown, Carnoy, Currie, Duster, Oppenheimer, Shultz, & Wellman, 2003). It should not be surprising, then, that de facto racial segregation remains firmly entrenched in schools, workplaces, and neighborhoods across the nation a full half century after the Supreme Court declared that segregated schools are inherently unequal and thus unconstitutional (*Brown v. Board of Education*, 1954). And though the rhetoric of color-blindness has been accompanied by an improvement of Whites’ reported attitudes toward people of color and a reduced acceptance of overt displays of bigotry in public, structural and institutional racial inequality remains such that race continues to be a reliable marker of relative privilege and disadvantage (Romano, 2003). The rhetoric of color-blindness is clearly at odds with the reality of contemporary life in the United States and some doubt that the ideal will ever be realized. Thus, historian Roger Wilkins (2002) asserted that:

The United States is not now and probably never will be a color-blind society.... Over the course of 375 years, whites have given blacks absolutely no reason to believe that they can behave in a color-blind manner. In many areas of our lives—particularly in employment, housing and education—affirmative action is required to counter deeply ingrained racist patterns of behavior. (p. 434)

Of course, under the constraints of color-blind discourse, any kind of affirmative action is anathema.

Going back at least as far as 1903 with W.E.B. DuBois' (1997) often-cited articulations of the "double consciousness" of Blacks and of the problem of the twentieth century as that of the "color-line," it has been common for critics to speak of two Americas. Though Blacks and Whites have long occupied the same national space, they have always experienced America differently. Given their very different positions in the racial hierarchy, Blacks have rarely believed the myths about the untainted virtue of the United States that White America holds dear, e.g., about freedom, justice, equality, benevolence, and purity (Wilkins, 2002). Where Whites have seen noble ideals and righteousness, Blacks have seen hypocrisy and cruelty. Further, the experience of racial segregation—whether de jure or de facto—cannot help but lead to divergent experiences and perspectives. Gail provides illustrations of some of the consequences for privileged Whites of living in racially segregated communities. Of settling into a White suburb of Minneapolis after her experience of the constant racial tension of an integrating middle school in Texas, Gail writes:

Everywhere I looked I saw whiteness: white people, white snow, white sidewalks, Scandinavians with hair so blond it looked white...Suddenly there was no 'color problem.' I forgot about race. It was taken for granted that whites went to the Dinosaur roller-skating rink on Saturday night and blacks on Friday. I knew there were sections of Minneapolis where blacks and Native Americans lived, but I was in the suburbs where it was easy to forget inner-city problems like poverty, violence, and racial strife. (p. 35)

Gail had spent her earliest years in all-White communities and upon returning to a similarly homogenous suburb for high school, she came to see racial segregation as “only natural” given that “people were more comfortable among their own kind” (p. 35). She developed her own personal “separate but equal” philosophy as she saw no conflict between the ideal of racial equality and her belief that segregation was natural. So it was a welcome relief for her, as a privileged White teenager living in a White suburb, to withdraw into a kind of bubble where issues of race and class were of no apparent concern. While Gail’s sense of relief and withdrawal from such concerns might be explained in individualizing psychological terms of various sorts, her experience seems emblematic of a much broader eagerness on the part of Whites to avoid engagement with people of color on an experiential level. And from within a White bubble where there is little or no equal-status contact across racial lines, it is extremely difficult for most Whites to develop any depth of understanding regarding the experiences of racial “others” in a racist society (Feagin & O’Brien, 2003). For example, Whites consistently overestimate the employment situation of Blacks: 50% of Whites say that Blacks and Whites are, on average, in the same situation, but, in fact, Blacks are twice as likely to be unemployed and to hold low-paying jobs (Brown et al., 2003).

So it seems that, apart from any overt displays of racial prejudice and White supremacy, many Whites are able to accept the disconnect between the national rhetoric and the reality on the ground with the rationalization that racial segregation is “only natural”—and to do so untroubled by meaningful contact with or understanding of the experiences of people of color. The racial isolation of Whites has profound implications

across levels of analysis from the individual to the institutional, as Feagin and O'Brien (2003) write:

White Americans frequently have a difficult time looking at the world from the perspective of those who are not white. There may be occasional sympathy for some, but strong and sustained empathy across the color line is relatively uncommon. For most white Americans, including those who are relatively liberal, the framing of important racial issues, from the extent of racism in the society to the multiracial future of the society, is generally done from the white-interested point of view. (p. 18)

Because Whites continue to occupy the vast majority of positions of power throughout American society—as has always been the case—it should surprise no one that interpretations and analyses of the social world preferred by the White majority are dominant. White views are enshrined as virtually unquestionable “common sense.” Thus, for example, because White interests are served by a narrow interpretation of racism as necessarily involving malicious intent on the part of one individual against another, it is not enough for a person of color to demonstrate injury or loss of opportunity in order to win a discrimination case in court; evidence of harmful effect is not enough, a plaintiff must show conscious intention to discriminate on the part of the defendant (Brown et al., 2003). Indeed, Lipsitz (1998) argues that even as antidiscrimination laws have sparked an extended backlash by Whites, those laws have—from the outset—been structured such that they are largely ineffective and unenforceable. This critic continues: “White resistance and refusal has led to renegotiation of antidiscrimination law to such a degree that efforts to combat discrimination are now considered discriminatory” (Lipsitz, 1998, p. 45). Such is the investment of Whites in defending the exclusivity of Whiteness and its privileges.

Clearly, then, in the real world it is no simple matter of laying out the White perspective, the Black perspective, the Native American perspective, etc., then rationally evaluating each on its merits. Given that only relatively recently have Whites relinquished the first bits of the dictatorial control over all aspects of institutional, political, and ideological power that they have held throughout U.S. history, the historical legacy of total racial domination remains strong. And Whites continue to frame discussions of race and racism in ways that serve their group interests.

Defining racism is not a semantic or theoretical issue. Narrowing the concept to purposeful individual bigotry is highly advantageous for whites. It locates racism in America's past. It labels black anger and white guilt as equally inappropriate. It renders most whites innocent. It blocks most governmental efforts to reduce racial subordination and isolation. And, most important, it protects and naturalizes the racial status quo. Advocates of color-blind policies do not address these issues. Nor do they admit that their conclusions mainly express the white perspective that comes naturally to them and to many other Americans. They ignore the possibility that different racial perspectives could exist. Yet only by acknowledging these profound differences in perspective can one begin to address the durable racial inequality of American society. To assume that a color-blind perspective is the remedy is to be blind to color. It is to lose sight of the reality that in contemporary America, color has consequences for a person's status and well-being. (Brown et al., 2003, p. 64)

Employing the rhetoric of color-blindness, Whites effectively invoke the “all men are created equal” strains of the Declaration of Independence along with Martin Luther King’s “dream” in a bid to maintain the marginalization of the perspectives and experiences of people of color. In this political context, virtually any effort to oppose or criticize racism in its contemporary forms—or that ventures beyond a focus on individuals who exemplify the most obvious forms of retrograde racism—is cast as itself racist, as resurrecting the most odious of racial distinctions, and as betraying everything that America stands for. But why do so many Whites get so riled up in defense of the racial status quo and the rhetoric of color-blindness? Given that Whites have retained

near total control over virtually every aspect of the contemporary United States, why do Whites react so fearfully in the face of dissenting perspectives and critical analyses that take a broader view of racism?

One possibility is that most Whites realize—on some level—that their color-blind rhetoric is but a pretty veneer that serves their interests but has little to do with the current realities of race in the United States. Whatever the merits of color-blindness as an ideal, it is, for Whites, a self-serving façade. How, in a society as deeply racialized as the United States has been throughout its history, could anyone who claims not to “see” race be taken seriously? Perhaps it’s a matter of Whites looking to one another and attempting to convince themselves that they deserve congratulations since they have come so far from the bad old days of overt racism. In their criticism of color-blind discourse, Feagin and O’Brien (2003) write:

This discourse primarily changes the way in which whites can view themselves and the society itself. Whites are able to adhere to sincere beliefs about themselves, and their country, as nonracist, while Americans of color continue to be impacted heavily by continuing problems with racial animosity, discrimination, and inequality. (pp. 229-230)

Significantly, despite his commitment to the discourse of Color-Blind Love, Mark articulates an awareness of the façade worn by Whites in the United States. He suggests that “sometimes” the attitudes of Whites toward Blacks in the United States are not much different from those of White South Africans under apartheid. About the more insidious racism of White Americans he writes: “Crude, apartheid-style racism was not their preferred weapon of keeping the black man down. It was in the subtle kind of racism, often hidden by a veneer of liberalism and tolerance, at which they excelled” (p. 124). Thus, when their elite White male subjects were probed in interviews conducted by

college students, many demonstrated an awareness of the advantages they have as White men—even as they maintained their commitment to an overtly color-blind position that they were able to show to be false (Feagin & O'Brien, 2003). Among this same group of elite White men, most were opposed to or ambivalent about interracial dating and marriage (especially if it involved a close relative), but they bolstered their misgivings by appealing to apparently color-blind concerns such as a lack of “common ground” for the partners and quality of life issues given the opposition the couple would face from others. However, as Feagin and O'Brien point out, these are only apparently color-blind concerns as the former assumes that racial differences are unbridgeable. In regard to the latter, it is interesting to note that none of the White men who were concerned about the racism that an interracial couple might face went so far as to condemn such racism or suggest that we should act aggressively to stamp out the racism that interracial couples encounter. So, ironically, these White men downplayed the existence of racism in their color-blind rhetoric, and then turned quickly to highlight the persistence of racism as a major reason to avoid getting involved in an interracial relationship.

Indeed, the strong feelings about interracial marriage that surface on the part of so many betray the emptiness, the superficiality of much color-blind bombast. Concerning the early post-WWII context of the 1940s and 1950s, Romano writes:

No doubt in many cases whites' fear that marrying interracially would lead their children to lose status and racial privileges were justified, but their concern did not lead them to criticize societal intolerance of interracial relationships. Whites generally took their racial privilege for granted, yet they well understood the handicaps black people faced in American society. They recognized racism and its workings in postwar America and did not want their children or grandchildren to have to suffer what black Americans faced every day. (2003, p. 81)

And the perspectives of the elite White men cited in the previous paragraph suggests that relatively little has changed fundamentally in terms of concerns about maintaining White privilege for one's children—though by the 1990s and 2000s a slicker, more polished pretense of color-blindness seems to roll off the tongue of most Whites with relative ease. Thus, though many Whites are quick to deny and/or minimize the existence of contemporary racism, they seem well aware of the advantages of being White. (Chris Rock's infamous quip comes to mind here: It's so good to be White that no White man in the room would change places with even a rich Black man like himself—including the one-legged busboy who's thinking he's going to ride the White thing as far as it will take him.) And for the White partners in interracial couples, whatever their previous level of denial about racism, their new level of intimacy with partners of color is very likely to put them in situations that suddenly illuminate some of the privileges of Whiteness they had previously taken for granted. This may unexpectedly shake the foundations of a White partner's commitment to notions of color-blindness—particularly if s/he had previously been inclined to close her/his eyes to the everyday consequences of systemic racism. Alternatively, it may be traumatic enough for some that it leads them to rethink their willingness to remain in an interracial relationship. In either case, the potential loss of some aspects of White privilege shines a light on contemporary racism and provokes reactions that belie any efforts to maintain a veneer of color-blindness.

Considered more broadly, Whites generally seem much more committed to notions of color-blindness in the abstract than in practice since a substantial commitment to color-blindness would entail more than mere mouthing of platitudes. It would require true vigilance and consequential action to ensure that racial distinctions lose—and never

regain—all significance. Clearly, on a practical, material level, race continues to matter in American life. For some it provides advantages and for others, disadvantages. It is difficult to counter Feagin's (2000) contention that the persistence of racism is attributable to the social, economic, and political interests of Whites as the privileged group and that their interest in maintaining this system of oppression has consistently proven to be greater than their commitment to broadly egalitarian values. Yes, formal equality before the law has been affirmed, but Whites generally resent race-conscious efforts to move toward social or legal equality, thus the privileges of Whiteness remain entrenched (Brown et al., 2003). Whites have been much more supportive of the principle of desegregation than its tangible implementation by government (e.g., widespread opposition to busing to integrate public schools leading to both an acceleration of "White flight" to suburbs and the creation of numerous private academies serving the privileged), thus metropolitan areas throughout the country remain racially segregated (Feagin, 2000). Most Whites remain wary of—or opposed to—aggressive efforts to fight racial inequalities; they may accept limited intervention toward integration (e.g., an increasingly constrained version of affirmative action in higher education), but large-scale intervention is seen as somehow unfair to Whites. As Feagin and O'Brien write:

One contradictory aspect of the contemporary racial ideology is the way in which those who adhere to it often express verbal commitment to racial tolerance and color-blindness, while still being opposed to serious and aggressive attempts to eradicate ongoing discrimination and inequality. Historically, the country's prominent leaders and founding documents have emphasized the values of liberty, justice, and equality. At the same time, racial oppression and inequality have long been basic features of U.S. society. (2003, p. 16)

Thus, the historical evidence shows Whites—regardless of rhetoric—time and again acting to protect the racist system that advantages them. And there seems to be little change in this regard in the post-civil rights era with Whites consistently demonstrating their desire to maintain the privileges of Whiteness—though few frame it so explicitly.

Because of the way that racism is most often framed by Whites today, to say that someone is not racist is merely to say that s/he is not overtly bigoted, that s/he is not inclined to throw the “N-word” around carelessly. However, such “nonracist” Whites may be very supportive of various forms of institutionalized racism. For example, they may: oppose race-based affirmative action, support draconian visions of “immigration reform,” support racial profiling by police along with various other policies that lead a marked over-representation of people of color being unfairly entangled in the justice system—ranging from drug possession to capital cases, and/or insist on the immediate assimilation of immigrants in English-only schools. Each of these “color-coded” concerns and policies has differential effects upon various racialized groups and is regularly used by politicians to play upon White fears without explicitly mentioning race. In this way Whites attempt keep themselves at arm’s length from racial issues—and Others—while “paying” the authorities to keep Them in line (or out of the country or on the other side of town). Thus do Whites convince themselves that they are color-blind, that they are not racist. But, with bitter irony, it may be closer to the truth that they do not “see” the “coloreds” because they have effectively segregated themselves. And when some of Them do slip through the barriers and their treatment by Whites exposes uncomfortable realities, blindness to racism can only be maintained by willfully turning away or closing one’s eyes. Given that people of color confront such callousness day

after day, a certain skepticism, even cynicism, about the motives of Whites would seem natural, if not healthy. In the words of Lewis Gordon: “people of color know what to expect when we hear conservatives and liberals declare that they are going to be ‘color-blind’ and disregard racial designations in their response to the current conditions of racial injustice. It means for sure that they will use racelessness to *preserve* racism” (2000, p. 113). And given the systemic nature of racism in American society, it should be no surprise that White privilege is bolstered by discourses as manifestly universal and race-neutral as those of the “free market” (Bhattacharyya, Gabriel, & Small, 2002). It is to a brief consideration of the broader ideological supports of the discourse of Color-Blind Love that I now turn.

10) Ideological Effects: The “Free Market”—Corporations, Consumers, and Individualism

Martin Luther King’s “Dream” speech opened with a statement about racial segregation and how Blacks had been stranded “on a lonely island of poverty in the midst of a vast ocean of material prosperity” (2001, p. 81). King went on to say that Blacks had come to Washington, D.C., that day “to cash a check” only to find it returned by the “bank of justice” marked “insufficient funds” (p. 82); even so, he refused to believe that this bank was truly insolvent, thus he retained his faith in the American Dream. Interestingly, this reference to economic injustice is rarely mentioned by those conservatives so eager to cite this address to validate a disingenuous version of color-blindness, but the significance of the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom (those

last four words are most often conveniently omitted) is substantially distorted when shorn of its economic dimension.

Bellah et al. (1992) note that America's self-image is that of "a land where essentially equal individuals can make their way unencumbered by ancient traditions or large institutions" (p. 70), a "free market" meritocracy that is the envy of the world. In this vision, freedom is defined almost exclusively in abstract economic terms with a focus on the rights "of those with capital to use it freely" (Herman, 1995, p. 232) and little regard for inequality or fair competition; ironically, labor unions and even democratically-enacted taxes and regulations are often seen as threats to this kind of freedom. And, certainly, this vision was central to the ideological clash of the Cold War that was cast as a contest between "freedom" (i.e., "free market" capitalism with a side of democracy) and communist totalitarianism. (It is perhaps worth noting here that the Mathabanes wrote and published their memoir in the late 1980s and early 1990s as the communist regimes of Eastern Europe were collapsing, since this was widely trumpeted as definitive evidence of the superiority of the "free market" over communism—and its little sister, socialism.) Significantly, from the 1920s on, the American Communist Party has been actively anti-racist and it was common for Blacks as well as Whites who spoke out in support of Black civil rights to be branded as communists, i.e., as anti-American. This conflation of communism with support for Black civil rights is quite revealing in its implication that both causes were widely seen as fundamentally opposed to everything America stood for; thus, under a regime of explicitly White supremacist capitalism, criticism of either the racial or the economic status quo was cast as anti-American. Crenshaw effectively captures the intertwining of the racial with the economic as "free

market” ideals have been consistently applied by the U.S. Supreme Court (e.g., in *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896), *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954), and *Richmond v. Croson* (1989)):

The heart of *Plessy*, in my view, was its admonition that law could not be looked to in order to bring about social equality....If social equality were to be achieved, blacks would essentially have to earn the respect of whites within the private social sphere. I call this racial marketplace ideology. In this market the state cannot interfere to redistribute racial value. Such redistribution is an illegitimate end that would upset the natural outcomes of the market. If blacks wanted social equality, they would have to get in there (in the market) and work for it. (Crenshaw, 1997, p. 283)

In the contemporary “racial marketplace” under the sway of laissez-faire ideology, formal legal equality effectively protects the racial status quo as governments cannot legitimately interfere for any purpose.

In this social Darwinist vision of the “survival of the fittest,” the principle of non-interference with the marketplace receives the religious devotion of a “first principle.” Though the consequences of economic “natural selection” may be troubling for some upon reflection, adherents quickly point to a few magnificent “success stories” to divert attention from the ultimate impoverishment of the many. Analogously, the existence of a few interracial married couples serves as evidence that governments need not interfere with the racial status quo even as racial inequality grows. But as the gap between the haves and have-nots has grown increasingly pronounced as a result of the tax cuts, deregulation, and privatization of the past few decades, the social fabric of American society is threatened on multiple levels as the viability of multiple systems that serve the public at large is undermined (e.g., public education, health care, and social security). In the words of one commentator who acknowledges very “un-American sentiments” in the

form of an admittedly unrealistic desire to see limits on the ratio of CEO to worker pay (currently at 500 to 1):

Measured by assets—the aggregate of property, savings, and investments, a more accurate yardstick than income—the level of inequality in America today is staggering: The top 1 percent now own 38 percent of the nation’s wealth, while the bottom 40 percent own 1 percent. In other words, the richest 3 million Americans put together are nearly 40 times richer than 113 million of the rest of us....Great gaps in wealth are not only morally repellent, but incompatible with the social cohesion a healthy democracy requires.... (Packer, 2003, p.30)

Yet the ideology of the “free market” remains firmly entrenched as the political center continues to shift rightward and anything “socialized” (e.g., socialized medicine) is seen as fundamentally un-American—even without the bogey of Soviet communism. Despite the fact that the vast majority are not especially well-served by the “free market,” many hold out hope that they will “win the lottery”—so they are compliant with tax cuts for the wealthy. But because “it takes money to make money,” most are effectively excluded from the game while the lucky few capitalize on their good fortune and become ever richer. Bellah et al. pointed out that unregulated capitalism follows the pattern of the long-popular board game *Monopoly*: “A game that begins with equality of resources among all players ends with only one winner and all the rest dispossessed” (1992, p. 83). The rules of the game necessitate this as the final result. A bit of luck with the dice along with some strategic pressing of the advantages based on such luck and anyone can get rich at the expense of her/his opponents.

In the real world economy, the true titans are corporations. Legally, the participation of corporations in the marketplace has been boosted by the extension of many constitutional protections granted to persons such as freedom of speech (including the right to lobby for and against legislation), freedom from unwarranted search and

seizure, protection from “double jeopardy” and self-incrimination, and “due process” and anti-discrimination protections without the flesh-and-blood limitations of death and imprisonment, for example (Hartmann, 2002). Ironically, shortly after the 14th Amendment was passed in 1868 to grant newly freed slaves the rights of “due process” and “equal protection” under the law, railroads began filing suits against state and local governments that had passed laws regulating them; the corporations argued that they should not be required to pay local taxes as these affected each corporation differently—because most had local monopolies and the taxes imposed varied—and this created “different classes of persons” and thus amounted to illegal discrimination (Hartmann, 2002). The railroads had the resources to repeatedly appeal unsuccessful suits all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court over the course of nearly twenty years before finally winning the case of *Santa Clara County v. Southern Pacific Railroad* (1886). (Incidentally, a Supreme Court justice noted that during the first half-century after the passage of the 14th Amendment, the period during which Jim Crow segregation was institutionalized, less than one-half of one percent of cases in which it was invoked dealt with the rights of Blacks while over fifty percent sought the extension of its protections to corporations (Hartmann, 2002).) The deep pockets necessary to maintain this kind of persistence clearly illustrates an essential advantage that corporations have over individuals in our “free market” economic and political system. Indeed, such unequal access to resources throws into question the fundamental fairness of the “free market” since there is no way for an individual to compete over the long term against corporations without government intervention. The relative positions of corporations and individual entrepreneurs are analogous to those of Whites and Blacks under “free market” conditions. That is, Whites

and corporations both resent government interference and both employ their greater resources to ensure that government intervention is favorable to their interests. It is thus rather disingenuous—if not intentionally misleading—for corporations to sing the praises of the “free market” and non-interference; likewise, Whites who insist upon governmental color-blindness effectively protect the group advantages they have garnered over centuries of institutionalized racial exploitation.

Despite the impossible odds that actual individuals—as opposed to “corporate persons”—face in unregulated competition in the context of the so-called free market, individualism amounts to the civic religion of the United States. Indeed, the dominance of corporations is, on the ideological level, attributable to their success in winning many of the legal rights of individuals. The founding documents of the United States enshrine the Enlightenment commitment to individual rights as the essential basis of the social contract by which individual citizens agree to be governed. Bellah et al. (1985) describe the basic ethos of the United States as follows:

Individualism lies at the very core of American culture... We believe in the dignity, indeed the sacredness, of the individual. Anything that would violate our right to think for ourselves, judge for ourselves, make our own decisions, live our lives as we see fit, is not only morally wrong, it is sacrilegious. (p. 142)

And the elevation of the individual as civic dogma has, not surprisingly, been reinforced by distinctly American traditions of literature.

A deep and continuing theme in American literature is the hero who must leave society, alone or with one or a few others, in order to realize the moral good in the wilderness, at sea, or on the margins of settled society. (p. 144)

Implicit in this kind of individualism is a negative view of society and of tradition. Thus, Cushman (1995) noted that the individualism that developed during the Enlightenment was a response to the oppressive constraints of life in feudal Europe; but as the ongoing

tension between the individual and the collective has played out in the West, the liberation of individuals has, inevitably, been accompanied by losses in the senses of community and of historical continuity that were strengths of prior societal forms.

The classic work, *Democracy in America* by Alexis de Tocqueville (1969), a French aristocrat who visited the United States in the 1830s, retains its status as its insights into the American character hardly seem dated. As a visiting aristocrat, he was particularly well positioned to comment on the differences between Old Europe and the New World experiment in democracy to which the Enlightenment had given birth. And Tocqueville's use of the word "individualism" in this classic text is among the earliest listed in the Oxford English Dictionary, so his use of the term carries some of the weight of its original sense. Tocqueville contrasted egoism," a passionate and exaggerated love of self," with individualism:

Individualism is a calm and considered feeling which disposes each citizen to isolate himself from the mass of his fellows and withdraw into the circle of family and friends; with this little society formed to his taste, he gladly leaves the greater society to look after itself. (1969, p. 506)

In contrast to the depravity and "perversity" of egoism, Tocqueville considered individualism to be "based on misguided judgment" and "inadequate understanding" but he feared that, ultimately, individualism "destroys" all "public virtues" and "merges" into egoism (p. 507). From his aristocratic perspective, Tocqueville's expectation was that:

As social equality spreads there are more and more people who, though neither rich nor powerful enough to have much hold over others, have gained or kept enough wealth and enough understanding to look after their own needs. Such folk owe no man anything and hardly expect anything from anybody. They form the habit of thinking of themselves in isolation and imagine that their whole destiny is in their own hands. Thus, not only does democracy make men forget their ancestors, but also clouds their view of their descendants and isolates them from their contemporaries. Each man is forever thrown back on himself alone,

and there is danger that he may be shut up in the solitude of his own heart. (p. 508)

There is a strong sense here of American individualism as involving a withdrawal from the public life of the citizen to a private sphere in which one imagines oneself to be completely independent of (and superior to?) all others. The individual is set against the collective, against society, against government. Necessarily, then, from within this framework, questions of morality, of how one should live, are framed in terms of self-interest. Thus, in his classic American essay, "Self-Reliance," Ralph Waldo Emerson wrote in 1841:

Nothing is at last sacred but the integrity of your own mind....What I must do is all that concerns me, not what the people think. This rule, equally arduous in actual and in intellectual life, may serve for the whole distinction between greatness and meanness. (2000, pp.135 & 136)

Emerson elevated nonconformity as a virtue in itself to the degree that he wrote of his embarrassment at being persuaded to contribute to the well-being of others beyond his intimates by donation to popular charities. This, he felt, revealed him to be less than the man he aspired to be. In his words:

Do not tell me, as a good man did to-day, of my obligation to put all poor men in good situations. Are they my poor? I tell thee, thou foolish philanthropist, that I grudge the dollar, the dime, the cent I give to such men as do not belong to me and to whom I do not belong. There is a class of persons to whom by all spiritual affinity I am bought and sold; for them I will go to prison if need be; but your miscellaneous popular charities; the education at college of fools; the building of meetinghouses to the vain end to which many now stand; alms to sots, and the thousand-fold Relief Societies; though I confess with shame I sometimes succumb and give the dollar, it is a wicked dollar, which by and by I shall have the manhood to withhold. (pp. 135-136)

In a similar vein, in another classic American essay, "Civil Disobedience," published in 1849, Henry David Thoreau wrote: "I am not responsible for the successful working of the machinery of society" (1975, p. 801). Thus both Emerson and Thoreau strenuously

denied that individuals had any binding personal responsibility for the well-being of others—neither for other individuals nor for society as a whole. The individual is the only legitimate arbiter of right and wrong. This fits with Thoreau’s dim view of government; he found all governments to be problematic, in principle, and argued that governments should be subordinate to “the individual.”

The authority of government...to be strictly just, it must have the sanction and consent of the governed. It can have no pure right over my person and property but what I concede to it. The progress from an absolute to a limited monarchy, from a limited monarchy to a democracy, is a progress toward a true respect for the individual....There will never be a really free and enlightened State until the State comes to recognize the individual as a higher and independent power, from which all its own power and authority are derived, and treats him accordingly. (Thoreau, 1975, p. 808)

The argument of this essay is that individuals always have the right to disobey governmental authority since that authority derives only from the consent of the individual. Thus these eminent American proponents of individualism, Emerson and Thoreau, venerate the individual and denigrate the collective. They are especially laudatory toward individuals who they see as resisting pressures to conform to societal norms. There are strong echoes of this spirit in the Mathabanes’ portrayals of interracial couples as noble nonconformists with the strength of their convictions, the strength to be individuals and thus to defy illegitimate social conventions. As the Mathabanes tell it, only strong-willed, independent people can disregard what others think about interracial couples and find love according to their own truths.

Elevating the individual at the expense of the collective to such an extreme effectively undermines any kind of coordinated political action or critical analysis of institutional dimensions of politics or economics as such. There is no place for Rieff’s (1963) “political man,” the public citizen, in purely individualistic visions. All things

collective are seen principally—if not exclusively—in light of the threats they pose to the liberties of individuals. On the ideological level, then, the “free market” doctrine of governmental non-interference seems to fit very well with individualism. However, the radically apolitical vision of individualism leaves its adherents ill-equipped to critically consider encroachments upon individual liberties that operate at broader, systemic levels. This is what makes the success of corporations in winning the legal rights of individuals such an insidious threat to the “free market.” Since individuals cannot survive in economic competition against corporations on the production side of the equation, the realm of actual freedom for individuals is largely reduced to consumer choices. On the individual level, then, within the “free market,” freedom equals freedom of choice as a consumer—and certainly, if nothing else, Americans “enjoy” a bewildering and unprecedented level of consumer choice in the marketplace due, in large part, to the productive capacity of corporations. The legal recognition of “corporate personhood” in the closing decades of the nineteenth century consolidated corporate dominance and forever altered the economic and political “playing field.” Subsequent efforts to limit the influence of corporations have, when successful, been piecemeal at best. Thus, Cushman (1995) writes of the emergence of a new phase of capitalism around the turn of the twentieth century: “consumer capitalism.” With the development of this new phase in which corporate dominance in the realm of production is fundamentally unchallenged, the roles of most individuals in politics and the economy shift from those of active citizens and hard-working entrepreneurs to those of relatively passive, isolated consumers. Further, the ongoing growth of corporations can only be sustained by ever-greater consumption; thus, we see constantly increasing sophistication in the advertising

and marketing of nonessential, quickly obsolete goods along with the extension of the credit necessary to maintain the purchasing power of consumers that fuels economic growth (Cushman, 1995). The political consequences of the entrenchment of consumer capitalism are devastating; in Cushman's words:

We have difficulty solving our political problems today in part because we do not experience ourselves as political beings. Our cultural clearing is configured in such a way as to exclude the social connectedness of the commons, the public meeting place where citizens exercise their political obligations to their community and experience a sense of common purpose and group solidarity. The only place available for us in our current terrain is one that defines us as discrete, isolated individuals who have few loyalties and identities beyond our individual selves and families, and few available activities beyond acquiring and consuming. We cannot develop communal commitments because we cannot think of ourselves as citizens—as active, involved, caring political beings. (pp. 339-340)

Thus, under the sway of consumerism, there is a crippling of political imagination since individuals do not—and are not encouraged to—think of themselves as citizens with responsibilities beyond spending money in order to “contribute” to the economy. As an example of this, consider the shocking terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, and the guidance of President George W. Bush regarding how Americans should respond. One commentator noted that Americans were not asked to make sacrifices such as contributing to a reduction of oil consumption so that the nation could potentially disentangle itself from Middle Eastern politics:

But of course the president said nothing of the kind. Here's what he said instead: “Americans are asking, ‘What is expected of us?’ I ask you to live your lives, and hug your children. I ask your continued participation and confidence in the American economy.” That is, I ask you to behave as individuals—most of all as consumers. That is your pre-eminent role in our national life. (McKibben, 2004, p. 39).

Thus, individuals are discouraged from thinking about themselves in any role but that of consumers. If you and I maintain adequate levels of consumption, then everything will

be alright. The best way to defy and defeat terrorists is to maintain one's "consumer confidence."

In addition to the aspect of individualism that sets the individual against the collective and thus militates against the possibility of solidarity, another depoliticizing facet of this ideology is its insistence that everyone is fundamentally the same as everyone else. Both the veneration of the individual and this appeal to notions of universality are part of the classical liberalism that is fundamental to Western modernity.

Goldberg summarized this philosophical tradition as follows:

Liberalism is committed to *individualism* for it takes as basic the moral, political, and legal claims of the individual over and against those of the collective. It seeks *foundations* in *universal* principles applicable to all human beings or rational agents in virtue of their humanity or rationality. In this, liberalism seeks to transcend particular historical, social, and cultural differences: It is concerned with broad identities which it insists unite persons on moral grounds, rather than with those identities which divide politically, culturally, geographically, or temporally. The philosophical basis of this broad human identity, of an essentially human nature, is taken to lie in a common rational core within each individual, in the (potential) capacity to be moved by Reason. (1993, p. 5)

This vision of a supremely rational, universal Subject is part and parcel of the elevation of the individual above all else such that history, institutions, and politics fall away and are, within this paradigm, seen as insignificant. For devotees of the universal Subject, then, race, among other socially significant categories, is a "morally insignificant difference" (Goldberg, 1993). The universal Subject is a disembodied and, thus, depoliticized Subject. Within the discourse of classical liberalism wherein all individuals are simply "human beings," there is no space for consideration of the consequences of the social realities of race and racism that result in people being positioned differently and, thus, having divergent experiences, perspectives, and power. So-called racial differences are held to be merely superficial and utterly irrelevant, irrational, pre-modern fictions.

This is exactly how the Mathabanes write about race in *Love in Black and White*. Thus, the individualism of classical liberalism can be seen as the ideological foundation of the discourse of Color-Blind Love.

CHAPTER V—DISCUSSION

An Anti-Racist Counter-Discourse? Hints of a Transgressive Position beyond Color-Blind Love

My analysis of the sociohistorical context of the discourse of Color-Blind Love as employed in *Love in Black and White* demonstrates that this discourse is hardly a marginal, transgressive, or subversive one. While it is true that the perspectives of interracial married couples had been largely ignored and/or excluded from the public conversation until the 1990s, it is striking to see how thoroughly conventional the discourse used by the Mathabanes is on so many levels. Historically, the ideal of color-blindness in regard to race harks back to the heyday of the Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s and was soon fully incorporated into the rhetoric of both the liberal and the conservative branches of the White mainstream. Institutionally, the discourse of Color-Blind Love is built upon and reinforces the centuries-old paradigm of love-based marriage while also speaking the language of the now firmly-entrenched discipline of psychology. Politically, the rhetoric of color-blindness has become so compromised because of its hypocritical use by the White majority that it poses absolutely no threat to White privilege, the status quo of contemporary racism that dare not name itself. Ideologically, color-blindness fits neatly into the economic hegemony of the “free market” as well as the individualism that springs from classical liberalism. The discourse of Color-Blind Love is fully consonant with multiple firmly entrenched aspects of

American culture—and Western modernity more broadly. Thus it has very broad appeal as it seems so natural, so right in so many ways to so many. Given that theirs is so completely a discourse of the status quo, at first blush it may seem surprising that the Mathabanes see themselves as leading the way toward the solution to all racial problems. How do they envision going in a new, anti-racist direction using such conventional tools? Perhaps a big part of their sense of making progress is a reflection of the onward and upward bias of classical liberalism—but not to be overlooked is the real significance of being among the first interracial married couples to gain a broad hearing by the public, i.e., having their joint autobiography published by a major publishing house. However, I find it disappointing that despite the transgressive possibilities that their position provides them as they straddle the color line together, they, like so many other interracial married couples, seem to have almost completely adopted the thoroughly sanitized, brilliantly White discourse of Color-Blind Love as their one and only language. Indeed, the Mathabanes are so disciplined in staying “on message” that, especially upon rereading, their memoir begins to seem almost deliberately simplistic.

However, there are bits and pieces of the text of *Love in Black and White* that do not fit neatly within the discourse of Color-Blind Love. Some of those ill-fitting, counter-discursive kernels are sadly regressive in their implications, but others are transgressive and may contribute to an actively anti-racist position. Both the regressive and the transgressive can be seen most clearly in sections of the text written by Gail, but I first want to mention a tantalizing reference made by Mark in passing as he was discussing raising biracial children and the fact that most American Blacks are multiracial and quite American in their cultural values and perspectives. Mark writes that few

American Blacks have much of an understanding of African culture or, specifically, of “African humanism” which “affirms the universality of the human experience and maintains that a rejection of the humanity of others is a rejection of oneself. This has been the principle behind my condemnation of both white and black bigotry” (p. 217). This is the only explicit reference Mark makes to this seemingly very fundamental aspect of his worldview, but, certainly, this notion of “the universality of the human experience” is a note that they repeat throughout the text and it fits unproblematically in the discourse of Color-Blind Love. However, the equation of dehumanizing others with dehumanizing oneself is a bit more intriguing. African humanism is associated with, among others, the perspective and work of Archbishop Desmond Tutu and, indeed, Tutu uses almost exactly the same words to articulate the sense that the humanity of oppressor and oppressed are inextricably linked (Battle, 1997; Tutu, 1999). In contrast to the individualism of Western humanism, African humanism places much greater emphasis on community and social harmony along with the notion of a collective African identity; further, it is historically associated with the African socialism of the movements for national independence during the decolonizing post-WWII era (Bell, 2002). In some respects, then, African humanism would likely echo criticisms of the discourse of Color-Blind Love that I articulated in previous sections of this analysis. And to the extent that this autobiography is based on Mark’s African humanism, the foregoing critique might be revealed as misguided and serve as evidence that I have fundamentally failed to understand the text or the authors’ perspectives and intentions. But there’s the rub. This is not an analysis of the Mathabanes’ “true” intentions or “where their hearts are”—indeed, I have no reason to doubt their integrity or to cast aspersions on them. Rather, the

issue here is the text, the discourses employed therein along with the subject positions made available, and the significance of those in this particular sociohistorical context. It should be noted that this text would likely be read, interpreted, and discourse analyzed differently in contemporary South Africa. This, however, is an analysis of what this text means and how it participates in the contemporary United States.

In that light, then, let us turn to consider some of the bits of this text in which Gail strays from the script of Color-Blind Love in ways that echo old-fashioned racism. I earlier highlighted many examples that she puts forward as evidence of her growth from a color-conscious to a color-blind woman. However, there are several moments when she seems to unintentionally let slip some old-fashioned anti-Black racism. For example, relatively late in the text, in the midst of her recurring perplexity about why Black women are angry with her for “stealing” a Black man, Gail returns to the topic of her admiration for the confident Black girls at her integrated middle school. In her comments, however, she seems to invoke old stereotypes about Blacks being happily uninhibited in contrast to Whites. She writes: “They were full of life and laughter, while I, on the other hand, felt stifled by the puritan streak that deprives so many whites of their vibrancy and emotion, riddling them instead with guilt complexes that make them go through life perpetually in need of shrinks” (p. 202). And Gail’s being so completely surprised to discover that Blacks might have reason to be suspicious of her and to be opposed to interracial marriage seems to reveal that she had never previously felt any need to consider what Blacks might think—about interracial marriage certainly, but perhaps more broadly, too. This kind of obliviousness is a consistent consequence of life within the narrow confines of White privilege. Continuing, an apparently unintentional allusion to long-standing

White fears of Blackness and of Africa comes in the context of Gail's recollections of a "strong" young Black woman she met while reporting on Manhattan's night court. They rode the subway together as they headed home that night, but Gail's stop was first, so she exited the train while her acquaintance "remained on the train, bound for the darkest reaches of Harlem" (p. 203). This last turn of phrase strikes me as rather peculiar in its echoes of "darkest Africa" and the White fears of primitive danger that notion implies.

Another preoccupation for Gail is the question of what her children with Mark might look like. This was on her mind from the early days of their relationship when she realized that she might not have the child with blond hair and blue eyes that she had always imagined. Later, when she was pregnant for the first time, she dreamed of giving birth to a panda with black and white spots; she "was dying to know what strange combination of pigments and facial features was forming within [her]" (p. 156). Finally, she came to the point that "having friends in situations similar to [hers] helped [her] to accept the fact that [her] daughter did not look like [her] and never would" (p. 165). Despite her constant denials that race is of any significance, then, the racial features that she sees in her own child seem to be so overwhelmingly significant to Gail that she feels her daughter looks nothing like her. The "one-drop rule" seems to be alive and well in this instance. Finally, I was particularly struck to find Mark recounting an incident in which he "accused Gail of a gross lack of knowledge of African-American history, of an inability to truly understand what it is like to be discriminated against all your life just because of the color of your skin" (p. 194). He reports that this hurt Gail profoundly, that he was ashamed of having said this, and that he "tearfully apologized," but his accusations likely had some basis in his experience of Gail. Indeed, to varying degrees,

these charges are true of all Whites. Accordingly, it seemed very appropriate that the Mathabanes quote an interracial married White man saying, “When you live in the United States you breathe in racism every day. It’s so deeply ingrained that most whites can’t even recognize the extent to which it affects their lives” (p. 254). I am left wondering how well Gail understands the degree to which she has been and continues to be affected by the racism of American society.

On the other hand, there are several moments in the text during which Gail seems to briefly break free from both the remnants of old-fashioned racism and the constraints of the discourse of Color-Blind Love. Such momentary transgressions of current and past hegemonies point toward the possibility of what I would consider to be a truly anti-racist discourse. Given Gail’s surprise, hurt feelings, and sometimes even apparent resentment in response to the anger of Black women who object to her marriage to Mark, it is significant that she occasionally seems to have flashes of understanding of their positions. While looking through a book of photographs of the Civil Rights Movement, an image of one particular angry Black woman caught Gail’s eye and she experienced a bit of insight into how the historical legacy of slavery and of Jim Crow segregation might make Blacks see her as an enemy who had stolen a Black man, who had undermined the racial solidarity Blacks need in order to overcome racism. She read some Black literature and struggled to better understand the experiences of Black folks and the significance of the Black Power movement. She grew accustomed to living in a Black neighborhood in New York. Her increased historical and political consciousness resulted in moments when she would find herself surprisingly comfortable as the only White person in a roomful of Blacks who were discussing racism. And she could acknowledge that she was no

exception to the rule that most often the White partner in an interracial relationship “has ample, if unconscious, stereotypes to overcome” (p. 26).

Of particular significance in opening up anti-racist possibilities is Gail’s increased sensitivity to racism. Of visiting Hilton Head Island, South Carolina, with Mark and his family, she writes of noticing the stares they received as the only Blacks on the beach and of Mark’s grandmother being relegated to renting a broken umbrella chair far from the prime spots on the beach:

My senses having become keen to the subtlest discrimination, I burned with anger and resentment, ashamed that members of my own race could behave so abominably to my new family, or to any blacks for that matter. But like Mark and his family, I was learning that such discrimination was too subtle and pervasive to fight. (p. 144)

During this vacation, Gail learned something of the historical legacy of racism and of the White privilege that she had long taken for granted:

The typical Southern atmosphere of Hilton Head made me more aware than ever that I, now a member of a black family, had forfeited my rights and privileges as a white person. I could no longer ignore the fact that racial prejudice exists. The predominantly white plantations—the retention of this name from a master-slave past seemed more than a coincidence—with their elegant ocean-front mansions and summer homes were worlds apart from the rundown shacks where the black natives of Hilton Head Island lived. Also, the smooth, clean beaches with golden sand were paradisiacal compared to the rocky beaches strewn with trash and broken glass, where blacks swam. To enter the white plantations and swim on their beaches one needed a permit. There was apartheid again, without the name. By the end of our trip I was fed up with plantations and permits and eager to return home.... (p. 144).

Taking up a position as a member of a Black family gave Gail opportunities to see some of the ugly realities of racism from which she had previously been sheltered. Further, the unexpected loss of the protections and advantages of Whiteness, privileges of which she had previously been unaware, illuminated everyday aspects of racism of which she would otherwise likely have remained ignorant. Earlier, a Black roommate had commented in

regard to Gail and one of her long-time friends: “I guess you two aren’t really all that white, I mean, you both got black boyfriends” (p. 109). Despite such recognition that in some way Gail’s position and experience were changed by being involved in an interracial relationship, she ultimately recognized that there were limitations to her understanding as she “still could not grasp what it truly meant to be discriminated against or oppressed simply because of one’s skin color and the texture of one’s hair” (p. 52). Further, the extent to which Gail’s perspective changed as a result of being interracially married was constrained by her faithfulness to the discourse of Color-Blind Love. Her deviations from this reliably White discourse were essentially momentary flashes of alternative possibilities in this text.

What would happen if interracially married couples were to break free from the discourse of Color-Blind Love and sustain a transgressive position in relation to some of the sociohistorical forces—e.g., psychologization, White privilege, consumerism, individualism, and the “free market”—that help to maintain the hegemony of this discourse? How might such a shift on the part of interracially married couples contribute to changing the racial status quo? In his famous “I Have a Dream” speech in 1963, Martin Luther King spoke of the importance of recognizing that we share a common future in this country, that, ultimately, we will sink or swim together:

The marvelous new militancy which has engulfed the Negro community must not lead us to a distrust of all white people, for many of our white brothers, as evidenced by their presence here today, have come to realize that their destiny is tied up with our destiny. And they have come to realize that their freedom is inextricably bound to our freedom. We cannot walk alone. (2001, p. 83).

Indeed, one of the principal legacies of the Civil Rights Movement is the evidence it provides of how the status quo can be forever changed when people from divergent

groups join in solidarity and demand change. On the other hand, the demise of that movement demonstrates what happens when unity of purpose is lost as the movement splintered into competing interest groups. Given the centuries-long entrenchment of racist beliefs and practices in the United States, change can only be initiated and institutionalized where there is broad, multiracial support for social justice. Further, given the numerical, political, and economic dominance of Whites, peaceable change is only possible when a substantial proportion of Whites join in solidarity with people of color to support such change.

On the level of interpersonal relationships, interracially married couples can potentially serve as models of multiracial solidarity given that their most consequential and intimate relationships demand a recognition of cross-racial unity and mutual support. Given their positions along the color line and their daily experiences, interracial couples would seem to be ideally situated to develop a broader, racially inclusive vision of solidarity. Of particular consequence on the individual and interpersonal levels, the potential for White partners to get in touch with the suffering that racism causes in the lives of people of color can be transformative. Such Whites might previously have remained ignorant of or willfully turned away from such suffering while safely ensconced in White corners of a racially segregated society, but having “hitched their wagons” with people of color may help such Whites to develop new levels of compassion. A Buddhist monk writes: “Compassion is a melting of the heart at the thought of another’s suffering. It is a spontaneous, wholesome reaction, coupled with a wish to alleviate another’s pain” (Gunaratana, 2001, p. 74). In this light, the development of genuine compassion on the part of Whites would seem to demand engagement with the suffering caused by racism—

in contrast to the disengagement of merely mouthing abstract ideals of color-blind equality.

Beyond the engagement at the emotional level that is inherent in true compassion, White partners involved in interracial marriages are ideally situated to develop a kind of “double consciousness.” As Gordon noted, Du Bois’ notion of “double consciousness” involves an understanding by Blacks of both the mainstream (i.e., White) view of the American experience and a conflicting Black understanding of that experience:

What black folks *experience* are the contradictions of American society; it is an experience of what is denied, an experience of the contradictions between the claims of equality and the lived reality of inequality, between the claims of justice and the lived reality of systematic and systemic injustice, between the claims of a universal normativity and the lived reality of *white* normativity, between the claims of blacks not having any genuine points of view and the lived reality of blacks’ points of view on such claims. (2000, p. 92)

It may be that the way forward in regard to race relations in the United States requires the development of this kind of tangibly experienced “double consciousness” on the part of Whites leading them to a critical engagement with American institutions, politics, and ideologies in alliance with people of color. The development of real compassion and of this kind of “double consciousness” might lead Whites to assume a position as and among people of color. (Of course, if “color” equals race, then Whites are every bit as much a racial group as Blacks. But an essential part of Whiteness is its hiddenness to Whites such that Whites often fail to recognize themselves as part of a racial group. Unless and until Whites acknowledge their own racial status no discussion of racism will have any personal significance for them. Whiteness is of profound contemporary significance, but as long as Whites deny this reality we will be prevented from making any further progress toward racial equality.) The foregoing analysis shows that, from a

discursive perspective, there is nothing particularly transgressive or anti-racist about interracial marriage conceived within the bounds of the discourse of Color-Blind Love since that discourse is entirely consonant with contemporary White privilege and poses no threat to the racial status quo. However, to the extent that interracial marriage enables White partners to expand their perspectives, identify with people of color, and take on the struggles of people of color as their own, there is both transgression and great anti-racist potential.

In contrast to the Mathabanes, Jane Lazarre, in her *Beyond the Whiteness of Whiteness: Memoir of a White Mother of Black Sons* (1996), sustains an explicitly transgressive position in relation to color-blind Whiteness. A professor of African American literature who had been married to a Black man for 27 years at the time she wrote this memoir—they met on a picket line and had both been active in the Civil Rights and Black Power movements—Jane describes her personal journey from a belief that their home could be an oasis of color-blindness where race did not matter to a constant awareness of the significance of race in every aspect of American life and a commitment to aligning herself with Black people in every situation. Her experience as the White mother of two Black sons has led her to conclude that “It is too late for clichés about all of us being the same....One must be educated, willing to cross over into an entirely new way of seeing things” (p. 57). In regard to the historical dimensions of American racism, she notes that her sons, young Black men in the 1990s, are “the first legally integrated generation in the United States of America” (p.14). As a mother, her perspective on racism has forever been changed by the experience of one of her sons running home at the age of three after the first time he was called a “nigger” and by their continual

experiences of being accosted by the police. So profoundly have these experiences transformed her perspectives that she writes: “I am no longer white. However I may appear to others, I am a person of color now” (p. 135). In Jane’s view, the only way for Whites to mitigate the guilt and shame of Whiteness is to actively engage in anti-racist work.

Sadly, though, Whites have historically been more likely to organize amongst themselves in order to protect the racial status quo—or to seek a return to the “good old days” of unabashed White supremacy—than to join in solidarity with people of color to seek justice and equality for all. As White supremacist organizations go, no group has been so notorious over such a long period of time and throughout the nation as the Ku Klux Klan, but many similarly violent organizations have terrorized alongside the Klan. And during the Civil Rights Movement many locally prominent White Southerners were Klan members, but the South also saw the development of a network of White Citizens’ Councils that was similarly dedicated to maintaining White supremacy—but were a little squeamish about directly participating in violent terrorism against Blacks and their White allies. White Citizens’ Councils were made up of reputable citizens who met openly and opposed desegregation via less spectacular means—by wielding their economic power. In contrast, how many groups of Whites have been organized with explicitly anti-racist purposes? Certainly there were many Whites involved in the Abolitionist Movement of the mid-1800s as well as in the Civil Rights Movement of the mid-1900s. And there was the Southern Student Organizing Committee, the largely White sister organization to the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, in the 1960s along with the more radical Weather Underground in the early 1970s. There is a history of small, largely unknown

groups of Whites along with individual Whites joining in solidarity with people of color, but it is the exception rather than the rule when Whites join anti-racist causes in large enough numbers to prompt a significant political shift. Of course, the impacts of both the Abolitionist and Civil Rights Movements were quickly attenuated by powerful backlashes. Even so, in the wake of the Civil Rights Movement, many individual Whites have remained committed to anti-racist action and books such as *White Men Challenging Racism: 35 Personal Stories* (Thompson, Schaefer, & Brod, 2003) and *A Promise and a Way of Life: White Antiracist Activism* (Thompson, 2001) document their experiences. Additionally, there are memoirs by anti-racist activists and scholars such as *Honky* (Conley, 2000), *White Boy* (Naison, 2002), *Memoir of a Race Traitor* (Segrest, 1994), and *White Like Me: Reflections on Race from a Privileged Son* (Wise, 2005) that highlight the potentially transformative effects for Whites of close relationships with people of color. Each of these memoirists demonstrates a commitment to anti-racism that is at least partially attributed to those interracial relationships—ranging from romantic partners, mentors, and preschool teachers to childhood and adult friends.

Is anti-racism incompatible with “color-blindness”? I think so. The texts I cited in the preceding paragraph were written by explicitly, actively anti-racist Whites who have rather limited patience with the platitudes of color-blindness. The discourse of Color-Blind Love favored by the Mathabanes cannot be seen as effectively anti-racist. While the Mathabanes—and all interracially married couples—have unquestionably transgressed racial prejudices and taboos in the simple act of saying “I do,” their preferred discourse places severe constraints on their ability to actively engage in anything that would, in the post-Civil Rights era, be effectively anti-racist. Perhaps I

should modify the question that initiates this paragraph: Is “color-blindness” incompatible with contemporary anti-racism? As society and as political realities evolve, the practical definitions of progress, of transgression, and of anti-racism necessarily change. Thus, while the ideology of color-blindness served well in the pursuit of formal legal equality and helped to nullify Jim Crow laws, we now find ourselves in an era of de facto racial segregation, an era that requires a different discourse—if progress is to be made. Color-blindness was part of the solution to a problem that we no longer have. It has outlived its usefulness in service of progressive, anti-racist politics.

Discussion of Findings, Limitations, Contributions, and Future Directions

As I conclude this account of my research project, I will broadly summarize and consider my findings in relation to the major themes of the introductory literature review, address some of the limitations of this research project, reflect upon its contributions and significance, and, finally, offer a few suggestions for future research. By choosing the topic of interracial marriage, I tackled one of the most emotionally charged issues in America’s troubled racial history—one that retains the power to unsettle many who would otherwise seem to be quite liberal. And by choosing a relatively popular memoir as my means of access to the discourse(s) surrounding interracial marriage, I anticipated that I might be able to learn quite a bit about where we stand in regard to “the problem of the color line” in the post-Civil Rights era. To that end, I embarked on a close, systematic reading of *Love in Black and White: The Triumph of Love over Prejudice and Taboo* using the key Foucauldian concepts of discourse, power, subjectivity, and critique to interpret this text and its context. Thus, at the most tangible textual level, I have

elucidated the language that the Mathabanes use to describe and explain their interracial marriage—and how they are seen as an interracial couple. The dominant discourse of this text, *Color-Blind Love*, has material implications for the people who use it—and who are used by it—and I have explicated some of these in relation to their context. I explored how the discourse of *Color-Blind Love* has evolved in—and is sustained by—a particular context which includes historical, institutional, political, and ideological dimensions. As a result of grappling with this discourse and what it means for us now and in the future, I concluded that it is inadequate. It is too simplistic. Though the notion of *Color-Blind Love* was formerly quite radical, we now need new ways of thinking about and articulating the experience of interracial marriage.

One major theme of the literature review was that Whites tend not to recognize and/or acknowledge the ongoing significance of racism in the United States. Through an explication of multiple below-the-surface, sociohistorical dimensions of the discourse of *Color-Blind Love*, I hoped to counteract the apparent invisibility of Whiteness and its privileges and to help Whites see some of what is all too apparent to people of color, i.e., that racism is indeed fundamental to the American experience. For example, the naïveté about racism—and White privilege—that is so central to the contemporary experience of Whiteness can be seen clearly in Gail's blindness to Black perspectives even as she is obsessed by the racial features that leave her feeling that her daughter looks nothing like her. Similarly, the vast majority of psychologists would disavow and condemn racism broadly and argue that psychology as an institution has long been "progressive" saying that psychology's role in promoting "scientific racism" and eugenics is a distant memory. Some might even cite the role played by psychological research on the internalization of

racism by Black children in the *Brown* (1954) decision. But I have demonstrated how mainstream psychology's myopic focus on individuals serves to support the status quo and the effective racism of color-blindness. Further, I have demonstrated the political significance of the discourse of Color-Blind Love in terms of its preservation of White privilege. Given the hegemony of the ideology of color-blindness, it is not surprising to find the Mathabanes adopting and adapting this discourse as their own. On the other hand, given that professions of color-blindness are much less common among Blacks, it is also not surprising to find that this discourse does not fit perfectly for interracial married couples. However, I found much less "race cognizance" in the Mathabanes' memoir than I had hoped. This text clearly fits among the variety of contemporary accounts of interracial marriage that I earlier characterized as "defensive counter-portrayals" that must be seen as responses to the pathologizing accounts of so many outsiders who are in varying degrees opposed to such marriages. The Mathabanes were very much aware of those unfavorable accounts, so the "happily ever after" ending of the book serves the purpose, ultimately, of explicitly contradicting those accounts.

Inevitably, this research project has limitations. It is a partial, an incomplete, and a politically inflected reading of a text and its contexts. My focused interest in explicating color-blind racism led me to neglect other themes that could be very fruitfully explored in relation to contemporary discourses of interracial marriage. For example, the sexualization of racism is a longstanding phenomenon with profound significance in relation to interracial sex. The ugly history of the lynching of countless Black men who were merely accused of "violating" the sanctity of White womanhood remains an important aspect of the historical context of any sexual relationship between a Black man

and a White woman. Additionally, while I did touch upon the love in the discourse of Color-Blind Love, I left that aspect of the discourse relatively unexplored in comparison to my engagement with color-blindness. Further, I left unexplored the intercultural dimensions of the Mathabanes' marriage. These are but three examples of choices I made to explore some themes at the expense of others. And I mention these here simply to acknowledge that this is not an exhaustive analysis; there is much more that can—and should—be said about this text and its contexts. This is not the final analysis.

If my readers cannot see light through the cracks of the apparently unchallengeable monolith that is the discourse of Color-Blind Love, then it will likely be considered a significant limitation that I “found” only this discourse that I had sketched out even in my introductory review of the literature. In this light, it would seem that my preconceptions prevented me from seeing anything in this particular text beyond what I had already anticipated would be there. However, I have provided plenty of textual evidence that I have not created this reading of the Mathabanes' memoir *ex nihilo*. Further, their memoir was not the fundamental focus of this research; it was only a means of accessing a broader discourse so that that discourse could be examined in regard to its implications for subjectivity and in its sociohistorical context. So to dismiss this analysis on the basis that the discourse I found in this text was apparent in the literature review is essentially to ignore over two-thirds of the analysis.

A more serious limitation of this research is found in my relative lack of expertise in a variety of disciplines that are crucial to this analysis, e.g., history, sociology, and political theory and practice. Scholars in those fields may find my use of materials from their disciplines to be, at times, problematic. If so, I stand eager to engage with such

scholars so that I can revise my analysis as necessary. However, at what remains a relatively early stage in the opening of psychology to interdisciplinarity, the possibility that we as psychologists might get it wrong cannot be allowed to stand as an obstacle. We have too often disregarded related disciplines altogether—especially the humanities—and such willful deepening of our own myopic ignorance should shame us. A related limitation of this research is the time intensity of the approach. Completing this project required commitments to both dig deeply into the details of a book-length text and establish a working knowledge of related disciplines—the rather specialized nature of my academic training meant that this was fundamentally a process of self-education. The time intensity of the this approach meant that I had to dramatically scale back my ambitions for this project as I had originally intended to include close readings of four memoirs of interracial marriage. On the other hand, the analysis of the sociohistorical context included here can serve as a strong foundation for future analysis of those three additional memoirs.

In regard to properly understanding the significance of the contributions of this research, I am most concerned about a particular misinterpretation to which my analysis may be subject, i.e., the danger that this analysis might be read as hostile to the Mathabanes. Some readers may feel that I am too “critical” of the Mathabanes, that I have merely engaged in a point-by-point refutation of everything in *Love in Black and White*. Because of our tendency to identify texts with their authors, I feel compelled to reiterate that none of the analysis contained herein should be read as criticism of the Mathabanes, of their integrity, of their intelligence, or of any other aspect of their personal lives. In an essay entitled “What is an Author?” Foucault (1998) reflected on

the connections among individualism, private property, and the figure of the author and imagined a time when “the author function will disappear” (p. 222). He concluded:

All discourses, whatever their status, form, value, and whatever the treatment to which they are subjected, would then develop in the anonymity of a murmur. We would no longer hear the questions that have been rehashed for so long: Who really spoke? Is it really he and not someone else? With what authenticity or originality? And what part of his deepest self did he express in his discourse? Instead, there would be other questions, like these: What are the modes of existence of this discourse? Where has it been used, how can it circulate, and who can appropriate it for himself? What are the places in it where there is room for possible subjects? Who can assume these various subject functions? And behind all these questions, we would hear hardly anything but the stirring of an indifference: What difference does it make who is speaking? (p. 222)

While I do not want to go so far as to say that it makes no difference that the discourse of Color-Blind Love is here used by an interracial couple, I am contending that it is irrelevant to this analysis that this particular interracial couple (i.e., the Mathabanes) use—and are used by—this discourse. The flesh-and-blood Mathabanes are immaterial here. This is an analysis of a discourse, its associated subject positions, its sociohistorical context, and its significance for us today in the post-Civil Rights era—not an analysis of the Mathabanes.

Among the contributions of this research project is its demonstration of the hegemony of color-blind discourses—even in places and for subjects such as interracial couples who, based on their marginal positions in a racialized society, might be expected to resist their grasp. Significantly, this Foucauldian discourse analysis did not result in the “discovery” of a new discourse used by or about interracial couples. Instead, a key contribution of this project is the explanation it offers for why the discourse of Color-Blind Love is so firmly entrenched. I have explained why the notion of Color-Blind Love makes so much sense to so many—and why it is a dead end. By

means of a detailed explication of this discourse, its subject positions, its sociohistorical context, and the implications of these, I have shown it to be misguided and misleading. It provides no means to resist contemporary forms of racism, so it effectively serves to preserve those racisms. Unfortunately, the discipline of psychology—and most psychologists—have been complicit with such racisms because of our inclinations toward individualistic understandings of human experience and society, understandings that like the discourse of Color-Blind Love itself are simplistic.

The call of Howitt and Owusu-Bempah (1994) for research approaches attending to the institutional and social structures that shape individuals will be remembered and, by using discourse as a multidimensional construct, I have traced out some of the connections between the individual, historical, institutional, political, and ideological aspects of racism as they operate currently. This effort contributes to the analyses of a growing number of psychologists whose work can be considered broadly “postmodern” and increasingly open to interdisciplinarity. Thus, in a certain sense, this research is an intervention in psychology that aims to help push the field toward more integrated understandings of human experience. Kovel’s (1984) *White Racism: A Psychohistory* stands as an exemplary multidimensional approach pursued by a psychologist who argued that although racism is woven into the social fabric of the United States, racism is always being transformed and it can be transcended. Indeed, the possibility of helping facilitate an escape from the grip of racism—distant though it may seem—is the only practical reason to engage in this exercise, the only thing that takes this project beyond self-indulgent theorizing. In an interview focused on the practice of criticism, Foucault (1988) said:

A critique is not a matter of saying that things are not right as they are. It is a matter of pointing out on what kinds of assumptions, what kinds of familiar, unchallenged, unconsidered modes of thought the practices that we accept rest....Criticism is a matter of flushing out that thought and trying to change it: to show that things are not as self-evident as one believed, to see that what is accepted as self-evident will no longer be accepted as such. Practicing criticism is a matter of making facile gestures difficult....As soon as one can no longer think things as one formerly thought them, transformation becomes both very urgent, very difficult, and quite possible. (pp. 154-155)

It is in this spirit that this research project was pursued. My aim was to closely examine both text and context in order reveal the foundations of the discourse of Color-Blind Love so that both you and I might gain a little bit more perspective on this discourse and, thus, begin to imagine other possibilities. So, on one level, the value of this research is best judged in light of the degree to which I have succeeded in making the “facile gestures” of the discourse of Color-Blind Love “difficult” for readers of this work to accept and employ unthinkingly. There is little question that this discourse has tremendous appeal for many; it embodies liberal values and it is romantic. Given this, does the foregoing analysis effectively problematize the discourse of Color-Blind Love for you, the reader? Has this analysis served to diminish its appeal to you?

My anti-racist values and my commitment to subjecting contemporary racisms to analysis and critique were the driving force behind this research project from beginning to end. However, the significance of the research goes beyond anything it says directly about this memoir, race, racism, and/or interracial marriage. An at times explicit—and at others implicit—critique of the discipline of psychology accompanies my critique of Color-Blind Love throughout. Because conventional psychological methods and models are inadequate to the task of understanding the complexities of contemporary racisms, I chose to pursue an extra-psychological approach. Thus, this analysis provides an

example of an approach that may be fruitful for psychologists hoping to develop broader, deeper, multidimensional understandings of any number of issues of interest to psychology—if we are open to interdisciplinarity. All psychological phenomena are embedded in sociohistorical contexts that cry out for attention from psychologists who wish to develop richer understandings of psychology’s concerns. We need to begin working with broader, more inclusive conceptions of what is relevant to psychological research. Foucauldian discourse analysis—or critical discursive psychology—provides one promising framework for such work, as I have attempted to show. This approach can be adapted by others who want to conduct research that stretches beyond psychologism toward the richness of contextual understandings afforded by interdisciplinarity. Thus, the contributions of this research include its interdisciplinary methodological and theoretical implications.

I should note, however, that I am not alone in such criticisms of the mainstream of psychology. For example, though I was not aware of the critical psychology “movement” when I began working on this project, I have learned that there is a loosely organized group of psychologists who are similarly committed to an approach to psychology that is sensitive to systemic issues of power and who are willing, as psychologists, to commit to resisting oppression. Indeed, as I was preparing to write this concluding discussion, I happened upon a discussion of research from a critical psychology perspective in a text entitled *Doing Psychology Critically* (Prilleltensky & Nelson, 2002) that is remarkably consonant with what I have done here. In contrast to most conventional portrayals of professional psychologists, Prilleltensky and Nelson see psychologists as potential “agents of change” who can and should work to “make a

difference” on multiple levels and in multiple roles. Among the kinds of things this means for research practice are that research should involve collaboration with oppressed groups with the explicit goal of creating social change that will benefit such groups. They argue that members of the group that is the focus of a research project should be represented in the research process. From a more conventional perspective that emphasizes “objectivity,” my position as a member of the relevant marginalized group (as one who is interracially married) would, for many, throw into question the validity of my interpretations and conclusions throughout this research. However, from a critical psychology perspective, I am a direct stakeholder here and should be encouraged to participate in the conduct of such research about interracial marriage. Additionally, these authors encourage research with self-help groups (an idea to which I will return presently) and with people who serve as “bridges” between dominant and oppressed groups (e.g., interracially married couples?) because such people are well-positioned to help facilitate social change. Further, Prilleltensky and Nelson encourage attention to issues of social policy and social movements because research must be shared if it is to be used to facilitate change. In this spirit, my aim has been that this research should be conducted and presented in such a way that it will be of interest and use to all who are concerned with issues of contemporary racism—not only interracially married couples who have already read *Love in Black and White* and who have advanced degrees in the social sciences. At the very least, this report illuminates some of what we are up against in pursuing anti-racist objectives.

Among the kinds of future research that would most meaningfully build on this research project, the first thing that comes to mind is a Foucauldian discourse analysis of

those three additional memoirs—Jane Lazarre’s (1996) *Beyond the Whiteness of Whiteness: Memoir of a White Mother of Black Sons*, David Mura’s (1996) *Where the Body Meets Memory: An Odyssey of Race, Sexuality, and Identity*, and Dorothy Gaiter and John Brecher’s (2002) *Love by the Glass: Tasting Notes from a Marriage*. Another published text of immediate interest is, ironically, also entitled *Love in Black and White* (Kalergis, 2002), but that one is a collection of photographs of forty-two interracial couples and their children accompanied by excerpts from interviews conducted by the author-photographer. A Foucauldian discourse analysis of this book could be interesting in the access it would provide to a much broader range of interracial couples along with the greater prominence afforded the photographs, which could also be included as part of the text to be read. Broadly then, the consideration of additional memoirs of interracial couples would facilitate the identification of variations of the discourse of Color-Blind Love along with increasing the likelihood that newly emerging transgressive and anti-racist discourses could be explored. A related avenue for research would be the pursuit of Foucauldian discourse analyses of the memoirs of the multiracial children of interracially married couples—and the number of such memoirs greatly exceeds those written by their parents. In an oft-cited collection of interviews of multiracial Americans, Funderburg (1994) wrote:

Many black-white couples think that they and their children are all part of the same experience: that they are equal participants in their multiracial family. They expect that their children will experience the world as they do, and that the views they hold, their children can hold, too. (p. 27)

Funderburg then goes on to cite a biracial psychiatrist who has studied biracial people who says that her most striking finding is the difference between the perspectives of parents who chose to marry interracially and those of their children who did not choose

their racial identities. She claims that most parents of multiracial children never truly understand that their children have an entirely different experience than they do. So how does the discourse of Color-Blind Love look and work from the perspective of multiracial children?

Finally, both individual and group interviews with interracial couples would provide an interesting opportunity to explore the limits of the discourse of Color-Blind Love and even to intentionally work toward “co-creation” of anti-racist alternatives to the hegemonic discourse. Such alternative discourses might provide foundations for more effective collective action as well as providing a stronger sense of organization and collective purpose to the anti-racist actions of individuals. The series of interview studies cited in the introduction, studies that for the most part sought to avoid interpreting the words—and worlds—of interracial couples as much as possible, were politically hamstrung by their assiduous commitment to a version of “objectivity.” However, in the interest of collective political engagement with the issues of race and racism potentially illuminated by the experiences and perspectives of interracial couples, action research seems likely to be a productive avenue to explore. Indeed, according to the account of “community-based action research” provided by Stringer (1999, p. xx), the essential values of such research—including “empowerment, democracy, equity, liberation, and life enhancement”—are quite consonant with those of critical psychology. Further, Stringer provides a theoretical rationale for action research that draws substantially on Foucault’s “ascending” analysis of power, spotlights power’s dispersion throughout the populace, and points to the need to intervene on the “local level” (i.e., to resist oppression at its “extremities”). This suggests to me the possibility of action research with pre-

existing self-help/support groups of interracially married couples and/or their multiracial children with the purpose of exploring anti-racist alternatives to the status quo. In that context, the analysis pursued here could serve as a foundation for a more concrete level of collective political engagement. Indeed, if we are to rise to the challenges posed by both critical psychology and action research, we must consider how we might engage in a process that will lead to the articulation of anti-racist discourses that can and will be used beyond academic circles.

APPENDIX

Narrative Arc of Mark and Gail Mathabane's *Love in Black and White: The Triumph of Love over Prejudice and Taboo*

PREFACE

In the United States, interracial couples have long been subject to tremendous scrutiny—from society at large as well as from sociologists and psychologists who have been interested in the special problems of and motivations of the people who become involved in interracial couplings. And while the Supreme Court's ruling in *Loving v. Virginia* (1967) struck down the remaining anti-miscegenation laws, attitudes toward interracial couples have been slow to change and many stereotypes of and misconceptions about such couples remain widespread.

Mark and Gail Mathabane note that their book does not add to the scientific or sociological literature on interracial couples; in contrast, theirs is “simply the story of two individuals who fell in love” in the face of “America's lingering and pervasive racism” (p. xii). But they are not alone and while they are careful to note that they cannot speak for all interracial couples, they also include the stories of others they have known who have lost careers, friendships, and families because they, too, believe that “humanity is one” (p. xii) and that love can cross racial lines. Thus, the Mathabanes wrote this book because they believe it is time for interracial couples to be more than research subjects—they must be seen as human beings.

PART 1: OUR STORY

1—HOW WE MET

Mark's View

Mark met Gail in 1984 when he was 24 and she was 22. Both of them were graduate students at the Columbia Graduate School of Journalism in New York City, but he had just left school in order to finish his manuscript about his childhood in a South African ghetto and his escape from apartheid (i.e., *Kaffir Boy*). They were both living at the International House, but Mark was, at the time, an “intellectual hermit” completely focused on completing his manuscript. Additionally, his immigration status was precarious and he was frequently receiving threatening phone calls in the middle of the night—apparently in direct response to articles he had published that were critical of South African apartheid.

From his first awareness of Gail at a crowded dance party through each of their brief encounters in the elevator and the gym, Mark felt an attraction to her as she seemed spontaneous, athletic, and independent of societal pressures “to act weak and feminine” (p. 5). Mark’s first conversation with Gail was about women’s issues; Gail and their mutual friend were surprised by Mark’s passionate opposition to male violence toward women. But Mark had been introduced to feminism by the strength of his mother and grandmother—these two women also enabled Mark to liberate the “feminine part” of himself. When he came to know Gail well, he saw a lot of his mother in her—her being White did not obscure her humanity. However, initially he did not think his attraction to Gail was reciprocated—and he was uncomfortable about being attracted to her because she was White.

Mark had dated both Black and White women since arriving in the United States to begin college. He had hoped eventually to marry a Black woman in the United States as he assumed that he had much in common with them, but his attempts to establish serious relationships with Black women had failed as some considered him too serious, too feminine, and/or too foreign. Mark was hurt by this and became determined to ignore race when it came to friendship and love. However, he felt pressure from “militant” Blacks in the United States to prove his solidarity with them by confining his relationships to the Black community and when he refused to assume that all Whites were racist, he found himself labeled an “Uncle Tom.”

Gail’s View

Given the many positive things Gail had heard about Mark from their fellow students, she was excited to meet him, but she was confused about how to deal with her emotions when she found herself attracted to him—she “had never before been attracted to anyone of a darker race” (p. 10) and she already had a boyfriend. She had learned to relate respectfully to Blacks as her interviewees for projects in her journalism classes, but given the societal taboos about interracial love she dreaded the possibility of even befriending a Black man. Still, she was fascinated by Mark’s story of life under apartheid, his athleticism, and by the color of his skin.

When Mark invited her to a tennis match, Gail was seized by both joy and fear. She initially accepted, but cancelled after feeling guilty in relation to her then-current boyfriend. But when she saw news of the tennis match, she regretted not going and wrote a note to Mark in which she explained why she had cancelled—and asked if he had a girlfriend. Mark’s reply led to their first date and that same evening she was writing in her journal that she had fallen in love with Mark.

Gail goes on to directly dispute the validity of some of the stereotypes about White women who become involved with Black men by referring to both her own experience and that of other White women she has known. For example, it is not a matter of the White woman being unable to find a White man or of the White woman having low self-

esteem and, thus, seeking to degrade herself. In contrast, Gail asserts that Mark “was all the things [she] had ever hoped for in a man” and though she “had not expected [her] ideal man to be black” (p. 18), that did not keep her from falling in love with him. Thus, they spent hours deep in conversation about news, history, and writing—and saw models for their growing relationship among “nonconformist” writers they discussed.

2—OVERCOMING STEREOTYPES

Mark’s View

During his youth in a South African ghetto, Mark never imagined that he could someday marry a White woman. His image of Whites was formed by the White policemen and soldiers who frequently terrorized and humiliated his family—and many others—during their raids into the ghetto. And his father’s emasculation under apartheid reinforced his hatred of Whites. However, when a White nun helped Mark’s mother enroll him in the local school, the nun cried in response to Mark’s mother’s plea for help. At that point Mark realized that White people were human, too.

Mark taught himself to play tennis and attracted the attention of some liberal Whites who invited him to play with them. In 1977 he befriended U.S. tennis champion Stan Smith and Smith arranged for Mark to attend college in the U.S. on a tennis scholarship. In both South Africa and in the U.S., Mark’s associations with Whites created tensions with his Black peers, but he refused to consider all Whites to be racist. Mark faced physical violence from other Blacks in South Africa and accusations of being an “Uncle Tom” from “militant Blacks” in the U.S., but he held to his belief that he had to respect the humanity of others in order to realize his own.

Gail’s View

In the early 1970s, Gail’s family moved from a “lily-white” community in Ohio to a racially divided neighborhood on the outskirts of Austin, Texas. There Gail attended a public junior high school which was overcrowded and wrought with racial tensions which frequently boiled over into violence. As a White girl who had no previous exposure to Black peers, Gail was in the minority and looked upon the Black students with a combination of fear, admiration, and envy. The Mexican students at the school socialized with both Blacks and Whites, but the only close contact between Blacks and Whites came in the context of sports. And when Gail, at the age of 12, was forcibly kissed by a slightly older Black boy she was terrified and her friends were horrified—they subsequently shunned Gail as a “nigger lover.”

Gail’s family then moved to a White suburb of Minneapolis where Gail happily forgot about racial issues and came to think of racial segregation as natural. And under the influence of television imagery and rumors, she came to fear Black men as sexual

predators. Gail was then horrified and incredulous when one of her best friends at Brown University—Carol, a Lebanese-American—started dating a Black man. Gail felt her friend’s attraction was perverse and they drifted apart. But after she spent time with Carol’s Black friends, she found herself defending Carol’s relationship against her own father’s pathologizing interpretations.

But when Gail found herself attracted to Mark, she began to vacillate between confidence in the affectionate warmth of their growing relationship, fear of hurting Mark if she were to someday decide she did not have the courage to marry across racial lines, anger with herself for caring what society might think about her, and fear of alienating her family.

3—GOING PUBLIC

Mark’s View

While Mark felt completely comfortable with Gail when they were alone, he became hyperaware of others’ reactions to them as an interracial couple whenever they were out in public. Sometimes they seemed to blend in with the diverse crowd on city streets, but at other times the stares they received made Mark uncomfortable. He had lots of experience being the only Black person in a roomful of Whites, but he had not, in those situations, been the “date” of a White woman. When Gail accompanied Mark for lectures he gave on apartheid, they pretended to be only platonic friends in order to avoid confronting prejudices against interracial couples. And when Gail became angry with the discrimination that they faced in a restaurant, Mark urged her to be realistic and not to become obsessed with other people’s racism.

Mark became defensive when Gail asked him if he sometimes wished she were Black so that they would not be such a conspicuous couple. He responded by asking why she was so concerned about what others thought, but he, too, was troubled by this. He was particularly bothered by the reactions of Blacks since they might come to see him as a spokesperson for the Black community because of his anti-apartheid writings. In this light, he wondered what impact his relationship with Gail might have on his career as a writer. Still, he was eager to introduce Gail to an interracial couple who lived on Long Island, Stew and Claudia, because he wanted her to know that there were other mixed couples.

Gail’s View

Gail recognized that Mark took her to Stew and Claudia’s house in order to gauge her reaction to interracial marriage and she was troubled by much of what she found. At 23, she was not ready to become a suburban housewife, but what troubled her most was Claudia’s comment that mixed couples are seen—and treated—as Black couples. Claudia had been disowned by her parents because of her marriage to Stew and Gail admired her

strength, but Gail fell asleep wanting children with blue eyes who would not have to deal with prejudice and discrimination. However, waking up in Mark's arms, she tried to get rid of those thoughts and focus on how much she loved Mark, as a “human being.” Gail began reading the work of Black authors and participated in anti-apartheid protests that included a surprising number of White students and made her more optimistic about the eventual defeat of racism. Still, Gail constantly worried about their future as an interracial couple.

In May of 1985, Gail left for a stint as a foreign correspondent in West Germany, but she missed Mark tremendously and felt lonely there. They began exchanging long, heartfelt letters and this deepened her commitment to their relationship. She reread Mark's letters on her flight back to New York wondering how they would combat the prejudice they would face. Gail was particularly concerned about how her father would react as she remembered his psychological interpretations of Carol's interracial relationship. Mark seemed confident that she would be able to handle her father's reaction, but she was not feeling particularly courageous in that regard.

4—LOVE UNDER PRESSURE

Mark's View

Upon Gail's return from Germany, Mark initially feared that their relationship might be finished as Gail wrote to him that instead of sharing an apartment, she had decided to live with her brother. And though her parents thought she was living with her brother, she spent most of her time with Mark. They did not have much money, but they felt that all they really needed was each other as they wrote, read, and dreamed together. Signs of trouble emerged when Gail admitted that she was afraid to live with Mark because she feared her parents' reaction. She made several efforts to write them a letter, but then decided to tell them in person during her upcoming visit to Minneapolis for Thanksgiving.

When Gail returned from Minneapolis, her mood had changed, she found another apartment, and Mark felt that they were drifting apart. Clearly, her parents were opposed to their relationship and if Gail chose to heed their advice, then it would be better to end their relationship. He stopped calling Gail. And when he learned that two of his brothers had been murdered by policemen in South Africa, he wondered if his activism against apartheid had led to their deaths. His passport had been revoked and the threatening phone calls continued. He felt alienated from America, but he knew that returning to South Africa would be very dangerous for him. He felt that no matter how much Gail loved him, she would never understand him, so it would be best to let their relationship die and devote himself to the anti-apartheid struggle. Mark left on a publicity tour for *Kaffir Boy* without saying good-bye to Gail.

Gail's View

The only problem in her relationship with Mark was her reluctance to tell her parents about him. And as the time for her trip to Minneapolis approached, she was awakened several times by images of her father's angry face as she believed that her parents might disown her. She started telling them about her South African friend Mark, but found herself changing the subject before getting to the point that he was Black. The next day Gail eased into telling her mother and when her mother responded supportively, she was greatly relieved. She and her mother talked about her father's likely negative reaction, but her mother reassured Gail that he loved her too much to disown her. She left Minneapolis without talking to her father any further about Mark, but knowing that either her mother or her brothers would soon tell him that Mark was Black.

Upon returning to New York, Gail's brother and sister-in-law began asking whether she was looking for a new apartment and speaking of feeling protective toward her. Gail wondered if her father was trying to apply pressure to her indirectly, but she was also fearful of the growing intensity of her relationship with Mark, so she decided to slow the pace of their relationship and found a roommate. When Mark pulled away from her, she pressed him to tell her what was going on and he said it was pointless to continue their relationship. So when Mark left on his promotional tour without calling her, Gail knew that Mark was determined to end their relationship. Desperate over the possibility of losing Mark, Gail became furious with her father and wrote him an angry letter in which she both informed him that Mark had distanced himself from her and blamed him for this. Her father responded with a tearful phone call in which he encouraged her to go after Mark, asked if she thought he was a racist, and asked if she still hated him.

Upon returning from his book tour, Mark went directly to Gail's apartment. He told her that while he was away he realized that neither his book nor his career as a writer were as important to him as their relationship. Then she told him about her letter to her father. She was still feeling hurt from Mark's withdrawal from her, but Mark was happy to hear that she had finally confronted her father. Gail was slow to respond to Mark's physical demonstrations of his affection, but they both knew that they still loved one another and that their relationship would continue.

5—OVERCOMING OBSTACLES

Mark's View

Mark and Gail talked about having been obsessed with what others thought about them, then resolved to resist with all the strength of their love the "pressures and prejudices" of the "outside world." In the intimacy of Mark's apartment, they agreed that their love was worth fighting for—even dying for—and that as long as they had each other they needed nothing else. For the first time in their relationship they began holding hands in public. And as a way of supporting one another and reaffirming their commitment to one

another, they discussed their feelings when they encountered stereotypes of interracial couples in books, in the news, and in their daily lives. Mark wanted to leave New York City and he wanted Gail to leave with him. He began thinking about asking Gail to marry him, but he feared frightening her off given her need for independence, her fear of commitment, and her parents. Mark's mother had asked him when he was going to marry Gail; his mother knew Gail was White, but race was not an issue for her.

In June 1986, Gail found out that her parents were divorcing, but Mark did not think that news would have any impact on his relationship with Gail. He asked her to marry him, but she was unprepared for that and said she needed time to think about it and wanted to discuss it with her parents during a weekend trip to Minneapolis. A week later Mark received a letter from Gail in which she spoke of being confused and angry and that because she did not want to make a mistake similar to that of her parents, she had decided to cut off all contact with Mark for five months. Mark was shocked, confused, and became depressed. He moved to North Carolina in August. He heard nothing further from Gail—and when he surprised her in September by flying to New York and waiting for her outside her office, she spoke to him curtly. The next month Mark accepted an invitation to give a lecture in New York—with the hope that Gail might attend.

Gail's View

Gail was stunned by the news of her parents' divorce, but did not expect that to make her fear commitment to Mark. However, during her trip to Minneapolis she found herself caught between her quarreling parents—the one thing her parents agreed on was that Gail should wait and make certain that marrying Mark was the right decision as they would face extra pressures and increased likelihood of divorce as an interracial couple. Thus, Gail decided that if she could make it for five months without any contact with Mark, then she might be strong enough to handle the societal pressures they would face if they did marry. During that time, she missed Mark terribly and sometimes wondered why she was putting both of them through this, but she wrote to him only once to tell him that she missed him. And when Mark called her at work, she was tempted to give in and resume their relationship, but instead she cut the conversation short. At times Gail wished that, as a solution to her dilemma, she would fall in love with a White man, but was convinced that she would never meet another man like Mark.

When a friend told her of Mark's lecture, she felt torn as she wanted to see him, but she feared what it might lead to. And when she saw him there she felt a strong pull toward him, so she left before Mark had a chance to talk to her. Mark called and invited her to lunch the following day; she accepted, but took a coworker as a chaperone. At lunch she told Mark that this would be their final good-bye—though she wanted to follow her feelings and throw her arms around him. But after they parted and she returned to work, she decided that if she could get in touch with him before he left town, then they were meant to be together—if not, then their fate was sealed. When she found him, he was overjoyed—and she determined to accept the fact that she was in love with a Black South African. They then spent a weekend together in North Carolina talking “excitedly about

writing a book that would encourage mixed couples to choose love and disregard the world around them” (p. 104). Gail’s family and many of her friends were disappointed by this news, but she felt that she had finally made the decision that she wanted to make.

6—GETTING MARRIED

Mark’s View

Maintaining a long-distance relationship was difficult, but they enjoyed frequent weekends together and grew accustomed to the stares they attracted as a couple in North Carolina. Mark was ready to marry, but he worried that Gail might feel unhappy and isolated if he asked her to leave New York, her friends, and her job. So he was very pleasantly surprised when, during an extended visit to New York, she suddenly suggested that they go to City Hall and get married saying that it would be romantic—and that marriage is essentially a promise between two people, not a social event. When Mark pressed Gail for an explanation, she said that she was confident in their love, but admitted that she was afraid that her father might once again convince her to change her mind. She said that she wanted to protect her feelings from the outside world and this way it would be just the two of them—at least for a while.

Gail’s View

In the days before they went downtown to get married, Gail called her grandfather—who had also gotten married at City Hall against his parents’ wishes—for advice. He laughed and reminded her that it would be difficult to marry interracially and keep it a secret. Gail also went to the public library to do some research on interracial couples, but much of what she found was pathologizing and she left angry. She wondered why such couples were “constantly analyzed” and why the “human story” was always left out.

After the ceremony, which was witnessed by only one friend, Gail and Mark spent the afternoon together reading. She reflected that this wedding was not what she had imagined as a girl, but that she was very much in love and that this private ceremony was “based on love, not show” (p. 119). They kept the news from her family as Gail gathered her strength to face her father—who had yet to meet Mark. And when her mother called and asked how she and Mark were doing, Gail suddenly told her that they were engaged. Her mother excitedly congratulated them and they began receiving congratulatory phone calls from various family members—but her father had not called, and he was due to visit in one week.

7—MEETING THE FAMILY

Mark's View

Mark was very anxious about meeting Gail's father—even though he had expressed his congratulations to Gail the day before Mark was to meet him. In contrast to the overt racism he had faced in South Africa, Mark knew that White racism in the United States was often much more subtle and masked beneath a “veneer of liberalism and tolerance” (p. 124). So when Gail's father physically and emotionally embraced Mark, he was astounded and Gail cried. Gail's father later said that there had been no “conscious change” in his attitude toward Mark and that his earlier reservations reflected only his fatherly desires to protect his daughter from the additional stresses of interracial marriage—it was nothing against Mark. And now that Mark felt welcomed by Gail's family, he wished she could somehow meet his family.

Gail's View

In late June, 1987, Gail received a call from Mark saying that his family was arriving from South Africa as Oprah Winfrey had read *Kaffir Boy* and arranged for his family to visit the United States. Gail began to fear that she would lose Mark to this loving group of strangers—even though his family greeted her warmly at the airport. Mark was happier than Gail had ever seen him and she wondered if she, as a White woman, could ever become a part of this tight-knit African family whose language and customs she could not understand. But just at the time when her own family was falling apart, Mark's family embraced Gail without the slightest consideration of their racial and cultural differences.

As Gail spent time with Mark's family, she began to notice the stark contrast between his family's unconditional acceptance of her and numerous instances of White prejudice against them which made her uncomfortable when they were out together in public spaces. As the day of their public wedding approached, Gail tried not to think about the opposition of many—both Black and White—to interracial marriages, but that was difficult as she began receiving phone calls from “concerned” relatives who suggested—directly or indirectly—that she reconsider her marriage to Mark. However, she also received calls from her mother and others who expressed their admiration for her courage in marrying interracially. And when the wedding day came, all but one of her uncles was present and supportive at the celebration in New York.

Only a few days later, however, Gail and Mark's family were back in the South together and faced with more unfriendly stares and subtle discrimination. This reinforced Gail's awareness that she was now a member of a Black family and that she had forfeited her rights and privileges as a White person. She could no longer ignore the existence of racial prejudice. Some of Mark's family returned to South Africa, but three of his younger siblings remained in North Carolina with Mark and Gail. As she and Mark unexpectedly took on the responsibilities of surrogate parents, Gail sometimes wished she

could have Mark all to herself—as it had been not so long ago—but she came to take satisfaction in sharing their good fortune with Mark’s siblings.

8—BIRTH OF A CHILD

Mark’s View

Mark and Gail saw the possibility of having a child as further realization of the oneness of humanity and expected their child to benefit from their bridging of racial and cultural differences. As a child, Mark had vowed to his mother that, in contrast to his own father, he would be by his wife's side during each step of the process—and he kept his promise during a process that he found awe-inspiring, fascinating, and bewildering. When Mark spoke of the closeness he felt to Gail in a circle of Southern White men during childbirth classes, the conversation stopped; he wondered whether his accent had surprised them or if they were unaccustomed to hearing a Black man express himself. And as Gail’s due date approached, Mark wondered what their child would look like, how Gail would feel about having a biracial child, how he would feel about having a child who was lighter-skinned than himself, and what kinds of stares and comments they would receive when they were out in public with their baby.

Gail’s View

Gail, too, had long wondered how their child would look. When Bianca was born she looked a lot like Gail with pale skin, blue eyes, and straight hair, but in a matter of months Bianca's skin darkened to a light brown, her eyes turned brown, and her hair grew thick and curly. And starting before Gail even left the hospital with Bianca, she encountered people who voiced their puzzlement over the contrast between the skin tones of mother and daughter. This left Gail feeling as if they were on display at a county fair. Small children pointed at them as their mothers presumed that Bianca had been adopted. Gail sometimes envied Mark because strangers assumed that Bianca was his child.

Gail had friends in similar situations to hers and this eventually helped her to accept the reality that she and her daughter looked different. One friend had had multiple experiences while driving with her biracial sons in which other drivers yelled that she was a “nigger lover.” Gail did not have this experience herself, but she came to a point at which she could joke about the stares that she received and the likelihood that some of those stares were from people who assumed her to be “poor White trash.” Her laughter attenuated the venom of the racism she faced. Ultimately, Gail's faith in her relationship with Mark was strengthened by the birth of Bianca and she “no longer felt a need to hide the fact that [she] was married to a black man from anyone, ever” (p. 167).

PART 2: THE LARGER PICTURE

9—BEING A MIXED COUPLE IN THE SOUTH

Mark's View

In the not-so-distant past, interracial marriage was illegal across the South and the Ku Klux Klan has continued to terrorize interracial couples and their families. Mark and Gail met a biracial man who grew up in the 1970s in a small South Carolina town just a few miles from the college Mark first attended in 1978. This man remembers obscene phone calls, the burning cross in their front yard, and Klan rallies held in a nearby vacant lot. His parents were Bahá'í and felt that their relationship was providing a good example of racial harmony.

Mark was wary about the reactions that he and Gail provoked when they moved from New York to North Carolina. They received plenty of stares and were careful as they knew that many people would be opposed to their relationship and that some of them might express their opposition through physical violence. The driver of a pickup truck displaying a Confederate flag laughed at them after swerving in front of their car and slowing abruptly. Other incidents that are easier for them to laugh about in retrospect involved banks refusing to open a joint checking account for them and people assuming that Mark's fourteen-year-old sister was his wife. Mark wished that he could protect Gail from this kind of racism, but he knew it was only the beginning of what she would face as his wife.

And while they sometimes had to deal with remnants of the "Old South," they liked the slow pace, the friendliness of strangers, the lost cost of living, the tranquility, and the sense of community that they found in North Carolina. However, Mark's anger was aroused when, during a solo Sunday morning walk through the neighborhood, several of his neighbors called the police out of concern that he might be a thief. Still, he was able to understand the homeowners' concerns about their property and a few days later one of the men who had called the police apologized to Mark.

Gail's View

Gail thought Mark was crazy when he said he wanted to move to the South with Gail. He said that the South had changed—it was not paradise, but was better than the Northern hypocrisy around race in which liberal pronouncements are not put into practice. And Gail found that she enjoyed the relief of being away from crime-ridden New York City neighborhoods. However, she found plenty of overt racism in North Carolina from the casual use of the word "nigger" to older Southerners who confided that most others would think Gail was a "whore" or pity her because she had married a Black man to hearing the names of numerous towns where the Klan held regular meetings. Further, after a local newspaper printed a photograph in 1990 of a Black teenage boy holding the hand of a White girl, a debate raged in the paper for a month as to whether the paper

owed the community an apology for promoting race mixing. A few readers urged tolerance toward interracial couples, but most were very angry about the photograph.

When Gail decided to write an article on interracial couples for a local magazine, she had difficulty finding mixed couples and most refused to be interviewed. Others agreed to be interviewed but insisted on anonymity as they feared losing their jobs, their families, even their lives. When the article—“Color-Blind Love”—appeared in 1990 with a photograph of Gail, Mark, and Bianca, the magazine received a flood of angry letters, but the editor remained supportive of Gail’s article. And Gail received numerous letters of thanks from interracial couples and their families and friends. Gail felt that these letters made the article worth the effort of writing it and she became convinced that in order for interracial couples to be understood and accepted, they needed to start speaking out.

10—IN THE LIMELIGHT: AM I BETRAYING MY RACE?

Mark’s View

After Mark's appearance with his family on the “Oprah Winfrey Show” in 1987, *Kaffir Boy* became a bestseller and Mark was increasingly seen as a spokesperson for the anti-apartheid struggle. And he began receiving letters and phone calls from readers. Mark believed that part of his appeal was that many Black female fans assumed that he was single and he knew that such fans would be angry if they knew that he had married a White woman—this would be seen as the ultimate betrayal of the Black community. Uncertain about how to handle this, Mark subtly discouraged Gail from attending many of his lectures before Black audiences and when she did attend, he asked her to be as inconspicuous as possible. And when strangers accosted Mark in public, Gail would slip away quietly and wait for him to finish. But Mark hated keeping his relationship with Gail a secret and decided to put an end to it.

When his second book, *Kaffir Boy in America*, was published in 1989, Mark insisted that several pictures of Gail—including their wedding picture—be included and he devoted one chapter to their relationship. While several of his friends warned that this would alienate some readers, Mark decided that his love for Gail was more important than maximizing book sales. This time on his book tour, Mark received a flood of angry calls and letters from Black women, but he stood his ground and defended his relationship with Gail without apology. And some Black women wrote to say that after initially being angry about his marriage to a White woman, they came to respect his relationship with Gail. One of these initially angry Black women wrote that it was clear that Mark and Gail were true soul mates and that “true love knows no color” (p. 199).

11—FOR BLACK WOMEN, THE PAIN RUNS DEEP

Gail's View

When she married Mark, Gail expected that the strongest opposition to their relationship would be from Whites. She was completely unprepared to face the anger of Black women who saw her as yet another White woman who had stolen a Black man and thereby committed a crime against the Black community. Gail was hurt by this as she had long admired—even envied—the strength of Black women; she felt that “they were full of life and laughter” (p. 202) while she and other Whites lived under the tyranny of guilt complexes. It was only after Gail was confronted with the anger of Black women that she began to make connections between the historical legacies of racism and her own marriage to Mark.

Gail learned to be sensitive to the feelings of Black women, but she decided that she would not feel guilty or make apologies for her relationship with Mark—those Black women would have to make the effort to understand her position, too. So Gail treasured the words of Black women who had initially been angry with her, but after getting to know her or stopping to think about their own reactions came to accept Gail's relationship with Mark. Gail found further reassurance in Mark's increasingly strong and unapologetic public defenses of their marriage in response to angry Black women who attended his lectures.

12—RAISING CHILDREN: BLACK OR WHITE?

In August 1989, Wesley and Brenda Root, an interracial couple, attracted national headlines when they refused to identify their daughter's race on a high school registration form saying that it would misrepresent her heritage to select a single racial category. Mark and Gail applauded the courage of this family and others who challenged institutional and societal systems of racial classification. Further, Mark and Gail cite examples of biracial children and their parents who dispute the widespread belief that biracial children suffer as a result of being “caught between two worlds” (p. 214). And they dispute the criticism that several popular biracial entertainers have received to the effect that they are denying their Black roots and trying to “pass” as White. Mark and Gail contend that people should not be criticized for looking beyond race and considering “themselves as human beings first” (p. 216).

Mark's View

Upon arriving in the United States in 1978, Mark was very disappointed to learn that it was not the racial utopia that he had imagined while living under apartheid. But he turned his disillusionment into a sense of determination to resist America's racial politics and follow his own set of values. As the father of a biracial child, he wanted Bianca to

know that she was “first and foremost a human being” (p. 216) who demonstrates the “oneness of humankind” (p. 217) and should, therefore, never allow society to force her to choose one race over the other. Further, Mark and Gail have seen their efforts to make sure that Bianca grows up being comfortable with both Blacks and Whites begin to be realized. Thus, Mark has no fear that Bianca will be caught between two worlds; he is confident that growing up amid diversity will enhance her life.

Gail’s View

In August 1990, Mark’s parents visited North Carolina for several months and, despite Gail’s fears the Mark’s father would be an angry and difficult man, he had changed over the years and become gentle and kind—Bianca became attached to him very quickly. And Gail’s relationship with Mark’s mother deepened, though Gail was still somewhat self-conscious in confronting the stares that they received when they went out in public together.

13—FRIENDS WHO ARE MIXED COUPLES

Mark and Gail befriended several interracial couples who are proud of the racial harmony that their relationships represent. Among the Black female-White male couples, they found that the Black women generally encountered minimal resistance from their families and that the families of the White men eventually accepted the couple. And two such couples reported that they enjoyed the stares that their interracial relationships attracted in public—one couple because of their confidence that they are an attractive couple and the second because it gives them an opportunity to challenge stereotypes by providing a healthy example of racial harmony.

Mark and Gail have found White women married to Black men to have much more difficulty—even though this racial pairing is far more common than Black female-White male couples. One such woman said that even though her parents raised her to believe in racial equality, she knew that they would not accept her marriage to a Black man. It took several years and her mother’s near-death experience before her father agreed to meet her husband. In another case, a nineteen-year-old White woman’s father threw her out of the family house because she was dating a Black man. It took nine years and the birth of several children before her father accepted their relationship. In yet another case, twenty-two years after a seventeen-year-old White woman’s parents disowned her, she has heard nothing from them—despite her repeated attempts to reach out and reconcile with her parents.

14—MIXED COUPLES IN SOUTH AFRICA

With apartheid crumbling and legal prohibitions against interracial marriage repealed, mixed couples became more common in South Africa's major cities—but such couples continued to attract scrutiny, indignation, and media attention. Many experienced harassment and/or physical violence of various kinds and the White partners often had to choose between their romantic partners and their parents. (In general, interracial marriages were welcomed and celebrated by Black South Africans.) In some liberal White circles interracial couples were invited to and eagerly exhibited at parties as evidence of their hosts' progressive politics. A few interracial marriages had occurred even in very conservative White areas of the country and, ironically, both the Black president of the African National Congress and the White president of South Africa had children who were interracially married.

One Bahá'í couple, she is a Black South African and he is a White American man, who live in the United States contrasted their treatment in these two countries. He spoke of being accepted unconditionally by Black South Africans when they traveled there to be married in 1989, but she became disillusioned when she arrived in the United States to attend college in 1982 because attitudes toward Blacks had not progressed. Further, while Afrikaners don't deny their prejudices, there is tremendous denial of prejudice in the United States. Thus, this Bahá'í man was subconsciously worried about what his White parents and others in the United States would think about his interracial relationship. However, this couple is hopeful that the irrationality of racism will be overcome in both countries and that people will increasingly see interracial marriage as a manifestation of the ideal of racial harmony.

EPILOGUE

Twenty-five years after *Loving v. Virginia* there remains intense pressure not to date or marry across racial lines, and interracial couples find themselves caught between warring camps. And relatively few Americans seem to have held on to the ideal of an integrated society. So it is heartening that interracial couples have begun to speak out with pride about the racial harmony that their relationships represent while their children resist being forced to identify themselves in conventional racial terms.

As for Mark and Gail, strains they once felt in their relationships with their families have been healed and with the birth of their second child they feel no more self-consciousness about the racial differences within their immediate family. And the writing of this book renewed their hopeful dedication to fighting prejudice. They see racism as “essentially a problem of the heart” that can be eliminated once we come to “truly accept one another as fellow human beings” (p. 262).

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