

"My Daughter Married a Negro": Interracial Relationships in the United States as Portrayed in Popular Media, 1950-1975

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ABSTRACT

Between 1948 and 1967, thirty states either repealed their anti-miscegenation laws or the states' laws themselves were struck down as unconstitutional by the 1967 *Loving v. Virginia* Supreme Court decision. Although these laws were slowly being annulled, interracial relationships, especially Black-White relationships, were still considered taboo in much of the country. This research project critically examines how mainstream America thought about interracial relationships during and after those years as portrayed in popular culture media outlets such as popular magazines and periodicals, newspapers, and one major film. The articles and productions reveal both continuity and change over time and that many of those articles and productions were reactions to national events and court cases. After examining various articles it becomes clear that as more states repealed laws banning interracial relationships, more people accepted interracial relationships as long as interracial couples did not move into their neighborhoods, or involve their children. Currently, while there is an ever-increasing population of people involved in interracial relationships, this fact is not widely depicted in advertisements, on television, or in movies, revealing vestiges of an out-dated taboo.

INTRODUCTION

The author of "My Daughter Married a Negro" chose not to reveal his identity when he wrote this story detailing his family's ordeal with their daughter marrying across the color line.¹ But his story reveals that he and the rest of his family and their friends and neighbors did indeed have issues with the marriage. In fact, with the many references to the Second World War and to war in general, it seems as though he feels that he is fighting a war against the interracial union. This article was one of many articles published between 1950 and 1975 that portrayed both a reluctance to allow such relationships and a slow eventual acceptance of interracial relationships. Even the fact that he chose to remain anonymous and hide the fact that his daughter was marrying a black man from his co-workers speaks volumes about the general thoughts and notions about interracial marriages during the early 1950s. In fact, at the time this article was published and for years after, antimiscegenation laws were still widely practiced and enforced in the majority of the states in the South and the West of the United States. These laws were used to prohibit racial mixing, or amalgamation so to ensure the superiority and purity of the white race, to maintain the hierarchy of slave or free during the centuries of slavery, and to regulate property transmission. Such antimiscegenation laws predated the United States of America and continued to regulate relationships, race, and property transmission for a long time—less than forty years ago many states still had laws that banned the marriage of a white person to a person of any other race. Many of these laws were in place for decades, or even centuries, while other states had more recently passed their laws during the twentieth century.

Miscegenation is defined by the Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary as "a mixture of races: *especially*: marriage, cohabitation, or sexual intercourse between a white person and a member of another race."² These types of relationships have been banned in 41 states and colonies of the United States of America over the course of three hundred years—between the 1660s and the 1960s.³ Between 1780 and 1887, eight states permanently repealed their

¹ Anonymous, "My Daughter Married a Negro," *Harper's Magazine* 203 (July 1951): 36-40.

² "Miscegenation," Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary, 2004, <http://m-w.com/cgi-bin/dictionary?book=Dictionary&va=miscegenation&x=0&y=0>, (22 March 2004).

³ Peggy Pascoe, "Ophelia Paquet, a Tillamook Indian Wife: Miscegenation Laws and the Privileges of Property," in *Women's America: Refocusing the Past*, 5th ed., eds. Linda K. Kerber and Jane Sherron De Hart (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000).

anti-miscegenation laws.⁴ However, the next state to permanently repeal its anti-miscegenation law was California, in 1948—nearly sixty years later. Then, from 1948 until just before the 1967 *Loving v. Virginia* decision, 14 states permanently repealed their anti-miscegenation laws through their own action.⁵ The *Loving* decision ended the miscegenation regime in the last 16 states by ruling such laws as unconstitutional.⁶ So in the almost 20 years between 1948 and 1967, 30 states changed from prohibiting miscegenation to allowing it either by the states' choice or by the federal government's intervention.

Although Wisconsin was one of five states that never had a law prohibiting marriage based on race, it was not too long ago that my own marriage to a black man would have surely been harshly criticized and blatantly illegal in many states.⁷ Even within the last half-century, marriage between a black person and a white person was so shameful that the father who wrote "My Daughter Married a Negro" chose to remain anonymous. That is why this topic is so interesting and important to me. What same-sex couples are facing now is what we might have faced just decades ago, had we lived in another state.

Scholars seem to each take their own vantage point in analyzing the various legal and social aspects of interracial relationships. During the early 1990s, Peggy Pascoe brought to the attention of historians throughout the United States the perspective of the women in these relationships. She points out that many of the laws were designed to keep property and the inheritance out of the possession of the surviving woman, who often tended to be the non-white partner.⁸ Pascoe explains that this would often leave an African American or American Indian woman vulnerable to lose any possessions that her or her and her husband had accumulated during their lifetimes. In "Ophelia Paquet, a Tillamook Indian Wife: Miscegenation Laws and the Privileges of Property" Peggy Pascoe clarifies numerous findings about the antimiscegenation regime.⁹ The miscegenation laws and statutes prevented marriage between two consenting adults, solely based on the socially constructed category of race. In this way, marriage, as a "social and economic unit" was a privilege only for those who would not disrupt the racial purity of the white race.¹⁰

In another essay that Peggy Pascoe wrote, titled "Miscegenation Law, Court Cases, and Ideologies of 'Race' in Twentieth Century America," she explains that "the legal system does more than just reflect social or scientific ideas about race; it also produces them and reproduces them."¹¹ When the court ruled that "separate but equal" was constitutional in the 1896 *Plessy v. Ferguson* Supreme Court Case, it not only reflected society's ideas about the separation of the races but also made that the law of the land for over 50 years. In the same way, as the courts failed to rule against the constitutionality of antimiscegenation laws in the years between the enactment of the 14th Amendment and the 1967 *Loving v. Virginia* Supreme Court Case (which finally did rule them as unconstitutional) the court reinforced many peoples' hatred of racial mixing and the ideal of white racial purity.

More recently, two excellent books that were relevant to this specific research have been published. In *Race Mixing: Black-White Marriage in Postwar America* the author, Renee C. Romano discusses the occurrence and increased frequency of interracial couples during the years following the Second World War. Although the increasing numbers of such relationships may be a sign of decreasing racism, Renee Romano argues that even though there was an "erosion of the taboo against black-white marriages" it cannot be taken as a sign that racism is decreasing.¹² She ponders over the fact that although white people tend to be very willing to go to school with, work with, and spend time with black people, they still overwhelmingly disapprove of interracial romantic and sexual relationships.¹³

⁴ Peter Wallenstein, *Tell the Court I Love My Wife: Race, Marriage, and Law—An American History* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 253-254.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ *Ibid.*, 253.

⁸ Peggy Pascoe, "Ophelia Paquet, a Tillamook Indian Wife: Miscegenation Laws and the Privileges of Property" in *Women's America: Refocusing the Past*, 5th ed., edited by Linda K. Kerber and Jane Sherron De Hart (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 279.

⁹ Linda K. Kerber, and Jane Sherron De Hart, eds., *Women's American: Refocusing the Past*, 5th ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 278.

¹⁰ Pascoe, "Ophelia Paquet," in *Women's America*, 279.

¹¹ Peggy Pascoe, "Miscegenation Law, Court Cases, and Ideologies of 'Race' in Twentieth Century America," in *Unequal Sisters: A Multicultural Reader in U.S. Women's History*, 3rd ed., edited by Vicki L. Ruiz and Ellen carol DuBois, 161-182, New York: Routledge, 2000.

¹² Romano, *Race Mixing*, 9.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 1.

Peter Wallenstein's book *Tell the Court I Love My Wife: Race, Marriage, and Law: an American History* not only tells the story of Richard and Mildred Loving, who would eventually destroy the antimiscegenation regime through the Supreme Court in 1967; it is about all Americans whether or not they married across the color line.¹⁴ Through these stories, he tells about the instances where ordinary "people challenged the law as it was applied to them, [and] private relationships could shape public policy."¹⁵ This book, like the previous one, focuses on more recent debates and cases of miscegenation.

METHOD

Scholars have studied the culture and society of time period that encapsulated the antimiscegenation regime. They have studied the laws and the repercussion of those laws. They have studied the challenges to such laws. In fact, the focus of historical scholarship on the subject of interracial relationships and miscegenation often tends to be on the regulation of such relationships, including the laws and statutes designed to retain white racial purity as well as the court trials that lead to their ultimate demise.¹⁶ In addition to the regulation of these laws, much scholarship focuses on the repercussions felt by those parties involved. While it seems that historians often focus on the causes of the regulation of antimiscegenation laws and the repercussions within society, sociologists often study interracial couples themselves through interviews and attempt to explain their motives and the outcomes of such relationships on the couple, their families, and our society in general.¹⁷ The contribution of my research is to provide a broader cultural reading of attitudes about interracial relationships during the 1950s, 1960s, and early 1970s as portrayed in popular magazines and one major motion picture produced during that time. In there any continuity or change in those attitudes over the span of these two and a half decades? Is there any pattern to these articles? Can we affix other national affairs as causal factors or prompters in the writing of these articles—do the articles found in popular magazines regarding interracial relationships seem to correlate with other national or global affairs?

While it is difficult to reveal answers to those questions within a paper of this scope, the seventy some articles studied and analyzed from the 1950s and 1960s seem to reveal that one of the main fears of integration was miscegenation, or racial mixing. Many of the articles focus on pointing out this fear of racial mixing as the reason for Southerners' avoidance of integrating the public schools. However, as the 1950s and 1960s wear on, and more and more states repeal their antimiscegenation statutes, more and more people seem to passively accept interracial relationships as long as the interracial couples do not move into their neighborhoods, and more importantly, as long as the interracial couple does not include close family, such as their children.

The 70-80 articles used in this research were found by looking through the *Readers Guide to Periodical Literature* for the time period of May 1949 through February 1971. Most of the articles were under the heading of "intermarriage of races," while others were found under "race relations" and "interracial cooperation." Some of the most frequent periodicals, or magazines, which published these articles include *Newsweek*, *Time*, *U.S. News and World Report*, *Ebony*, *Atlantic Monthly*, *Commonweal*, and others less frequently, like *Ladies Home Journal*, and *McCall's*. While the majority of these magazines seem to be marketed towards middle class whites, *Ebony* is marketed toward African Americans, *Commonweal* seems to be more religious-centered, and magazines such as *Ladies Home Journal* and *McCall's* are marketed toward women. How interesting to look at popular attitudes of interracial relationships during the years of great change in these laws, during the years when 30 states either repealed the laws by themselves or had them ruled unconstitutional by the Supreme Court in 1967.¹⁸

RESULTS

Continuity

The examination of the large array of articles from popular magazines shows both continuity and change through time. One of the most consistent ideas concerned with interracial couples and antimiscegenation statutes during this time were articles about the Catholic Church's support of such relationships and their dislike for laws and statutes banning miscegenation. Of course, there was also great change in these articles. Articles of the late

¹⁴ Wallenstein, *Tell the Court*, 9.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 5.

¹⁶ Renee C. Romano, *Race Mixing: Black-White Marriage in Postwar America* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2003), 7.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 7-8.

¹⁸ Wallenstein, *Tell the Court*, 253-254.

1940s and early 1950s reveal that determining one's race was very relevant when determining if marriages were legal or not. Articles from the mid-1950s reveal that the country was in turmoil over whether or not integration would lead to miscegenation and race-mixing. Articles from the early 1960s seem to showcase more and more interracial couples, especially ones in which at least one of the two are famous. The articles from the mid-1960s reveal information about two very important court cases concerning interracial relationships. Also during the mid-1960s, when the Civil Rights Movement was heading toward more militant measures, there appears to be an increased interest in determining if amalgamation, or racial mixing, could help America's race problems. As the 1960s draw to a close, there seems to be an increase in articles that profile various interracial couples. Strangely, by the early 1970s, there were very few articles pertaining to interracial relationships. Regardless of the fluctuations, considering the sheer number of articles pertaining to interracial relationships published between 1950 and 1975 reveal that Americans were responding to national events concerning interracial relationships by trying to understand more about such relationships.

Continuity: Religious and Scientific Support for Interracial Relationships

As early as 1950, the periodical *Commonweal* published the conclusion to a doctoral dissertation written by Reverend Joseph F. Doherty. He concludes that although there may be negative aspects of interracial marriage in *this* country, Catholic scholars overwhelmingly agree that an interracial union is a morally good act despite the less appealing aspects of such relationships like racism and discrimination.¹⁹ So although racism and intolerance exist within the United States, the Catholic Church felt that is no reason to not get married to a person that one loves—race should not be a factor in choosing a partner and deciding to marry him or her; the color of a person's skin is not important.

Later that same decade, there is another article mentioning and questioning the Catholic Church's stand on interracial relationships and interracial marriages. This article was published in *U.S. News and World Report* in 1958. In the article, titled “—And What About Intermarriage?” by David Lawrence, he commends the Catholic Bishops of America for their annual announcement which apparently displayed support of Negroes, but much to the dismay of the author of this article, did not mention any information about their stance and beliefs on interracial couples in that report.²⁰ The reason is not clear. Perhaps the bishops were not in consensus, or maybe they did not want to anger those who were against interracial marriage.

Approximately five years later, *America* published a short article titled “Strange, Isn't it?” In this article the author charges that Catholics and Protestants in the United States “have no hesitation in marrying each other. But they would recoil in horror at the thought of marrying a Negro man of their own faith.”²¹ The author seems surprised; he says that Catholics hear that religion is important while race is not, yet in the United States, Catholics seem to be hypocritical—they focus on race, and not religion when choosing a person for marriage. He says, “Race is purely a bodily thing and consists for all practical purpose in the color of the skin...Religion, on the other hand, is spiritual and constitutes a person's relationship with God.”²² To many, including this person, it is worse to marry outside of your religion than outside of your race.

Later, that same year, *U.S. News and World Report* published an article about churches backing mixed marriages. The article, in the “Front Page of the Week” section releases the news that a Negro leader urged churches to support interracial couples regardless of the laws in place that forbid such unions.²³ And although it was not a church official, a Catholic Church group backed this leader's stand. They argued that the “choice of a marriage partner is a personal right which should not be abridged by the state.”²⁴ Finally, in 1967, *America* publishes a story which tells of the Catholic Churches' support of the unconstitutionality of antimiscegenation laws. The article, “The Crime of Interracial Marriage” released the news that a group filed an Amicus Brief with the Supreme Court.²⁵ The article identified that the brief was initiated by the National Catholic Conference for Interracial Justice and then was signed by the National Catholic Social Action Conference.²⁶ The argument presented in the brief is similar to that of the court case in California in 1948: antimiscegenation laws prohibit free

¹⁹ Joseph F. Doherty, “Interracial Marriage” *Commonweal* 52 (22 September 1950): 582-583.

²⁰ David Lawrence, “—And What About Intermarriage?” *U.S. News and World Report* 45 (21 November 1958):136.

²¹ “Strange, Isn't it?” *America* 109 (3 August 1963): 112.

²² *Ibid.*

²³ “Should Churches Back Mixed Marriages?” *U.S. News and World Report* 55 (2 December 1963): 8.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ “The Crime of Interracial Marriage,” *America* 116 (8 April 1967) 522-523.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

exercise of religion which is guaranteed by the U.S. Constitution, and point out that marriage is a recognized as a fundamental act of religion by Catholics, Protestants, and Jews.²⁷

The view of the many churches, most predominantly the Catholic Church, seemed to consistently be one of acceptance of interracial marriages and therefore interracial families. Another consistency seen in the magazine articles from this time period are scientific findings. In a 1952 *Science Newsletter* magazine, there was an article under the “Genetics” section called “Complete White-Negro Mixing in 1,000 Years.” The scientists that the writer was reporting about make this claim based on a gene that occurs more in blacks than in whites.²⁸ While this article was unbiased in that it did not seem to take a side in the issue of interracial relationships, it does show that racial intermingling has been occurring for quite some time and will continue to do so. A second article that appeared during these two decades focused on science but did not mention details. In the article “Science Used in Race Case” found in *Science News* in a December 1966 issue, the writer mentioned that although a rabbi thought that there might be sociological and psychological challenges for the children of a mixed marriage, there was no evidence of biological complications.²⁹ For an article that sounded so scientifically based, this article was a disappointment. It did not concentrate on biological science, but on social science.

In more scholarly publications, such as the *American Journal of Sociology*, two articles appeared in the very early 1950s that focused on interracial marriages. Milton Barron, one of the authors, notes that “the study of intermarriage may provide a precise, quantitative measurement of such vital and related sociological questions as the process of assimilation, the degree of internal cohesion in individual racial, religious, and ethnic groups, and the extent of social distance between groups of these types.”³⁰ As a social scientist, he was looking at the social phenomenon of intermarriage to determine if such unions reveal anything about the quality of the United State’s multiple-race society. He determined that most Americans do not believe in the “melting pot” theory of Israel Zangwill.³¹ Zangwill’s take on the melting pot theory is that the population of the U.S. would intermarry, and that this process would create a race of super humans because of the combination of the virtues of all races, creeds, and nationalities.³² This sentiment is in direct opposition to the core beliefs of most southern whites, who, as Gunnar Myrdal (a Swedish economist and politician who was commissioned to study race relations in the United States and subsequently published *An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy* in 1944) points out, make interracial marriage their ultimate taboo—the reason that they strive so diligently to maintain the racial hierarchy of the South.³³

A second article in the *American Journal of Sociology* reveals the findings of a study by John H. Burma. He studied the rates of interracial marriages in Los Angeles County in the years following the nullification of that state’s anti-miscegenation statutes, which occurred in 1948. During those years, this sociologist found that there was no rush to intermarry among inhabitants of Los Angeles County in California.³⁴ Although drawing other conclusions from this fact would not be scientifically and mathematically sound, it is likely that Los Angeles was not that different from other counties in California in the years following the ban and invalidation of that state’s antimiscegenation lawsuits. Surely there was no real increase in rates of racial intermarriage anywhere in the state. Similarly, almost two decades later, in 1967, when the Supreme Court of the United States ruled that laws prohibiting miscegenation, or interracial marriages were unconstitutional in the landmark *Loving v. Virginia* Supreme Court Case, there seemed to be no “rush” toward marrying interracially. Even during the years between these breakthrough cases, there seems to be no “rush” to marry interracially—whether in a state with or without an antimiscegenation statute.

Although there does not appear to be U.S. Census data measuring rates of interracial marriages before 1960, in 1960, there were about 51,000 black-white married couples. Ten years later, in 1970, after all antimiscegenation laws had either been overturned or ruled as unconstitutional, there were about 65,000 black-white married couples.³⁵

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ “Complete White-Negro Mixing in 1,000 Years,” *Science Newsletter* 62 (20 September 1952): 189.

²⁹ “Science Used in Race Case,” *Science News* 90 (3 December 1966): 465.

³⁰ Milton Barron, “Research on Intermarriage: A Survey of Accomplishments and Prospects,” *The American Journal of Sociology* 57 (November 1951): 249.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid.

³³ Gunnar Myrdal, *An American Dilemma* (New York: Harper & Bros., 1944), 60-61.

³⁴ John H. Burma, “Research Note on the Measurement of Interracial Marriage,” *The American Journal of Sociology* 57 (May 1952): 587.

³⁵ Randall Kenney, “Interracial Intimacy,” *The Atlantic Monthly* (Online) December 2002.

While these numbers certainly show an increase in interracial marriages, it is not a huge increase, and is certainly a small percentage of all marriages.³⁶

Change

While it is evident that these periodical articles show consistency in the way that Catholic religious leaders and sociologists each talk about interracial marriages. The change in these articles, however, is even more apparent. The articles in the very late 1940s and early 1950s talk about determining one's race—through the courts, through ancestry, or through visual appearance. The articles in the mid-1950s, in the years following the landmark *Brown v. Board of Education* Supreme Court Case focus on “where integration will lead” with a fear that integration in schools will lead to amalgamation and interracial marriages. The articles from the early 1960s seem to showcase more and more interracial couples, especially ones in which at least one of the two are famous. The articles from the mid-1960s reveal that there was a dispute about an interracial couple in Florida during this time that eventually went to the Supreme Court. Also during the mid-1960s, when the Civil Rights Movement was heading towards more militant measures, there appears to be an increased interest in determining if amalgamation, or racial mixing, could help America's race problems. The articles from 1967 focus on the Lovings and their 1967 Supreme Court Case against the antimiscegenation law of Virginia. As the 1960s draw to a close, there seems to be an increase in articles that show the profiles of various interracial couples. Interestingly, the public's attention seemed to shift away from interracial relationships during the early 1970s—there were practically no articles pertaining to interracial relationships printed during the 1970s. It does indeed seem that there were similarities in what topics certain articles were about during this time period, and that those topics changed over time.

Change: Early 1950s and the Determination of One's Race

Several articles from the very late 1940s and the very early 1950s show an interest in determining a person's race—either socially, legally, or by perception. “Pawn in Pigtails” is an article in the National Affairs section of the November 14, 1949 issue of *Newsweek*. It is about a little girl who was basically kidnapped by her white grandparents because her father is black, and therefore, in their opinion, unfit to care for the child.³⁷ According to the article, the court is to decide if “the child is to be raised as a white or colored girl.”³⁸ In this case, it appears that as long as a person is light-skinned enough to “pass” for a white person, physical features do not matter and neither does lineage. What is more important in this case in determining this little girl's race seems to be the adults she will grow up under the supervision of as well as the neighborhood in which she will grow up. If the court determines that she will remain with her grandparents, she will be “white” whereas if she returns to her parents, she will be “colored.” This article not only shows how subjective race or color is, but also how at this time some people felt about the parenting ability of a colored person and a mixed-race couple.

During that same month, *Newsweek* also published an article about a man, David Knight, who had married a white woman, only later to be charged with miscegenation because of the possibility that he was more than the prescribed one-eighth black.³⁹ The court determined his race based on witnesses who allegedly remembered and could describe to the court the physical feature of his grandmother—whether or not she was only of African descent or mixed would determined his race, and the validity of his marriage.⁴⁰ Because he was light enough to “pass,” he was known as white, until his lineage came into question.

A mere two years later, *Life* magazine included an article about a mixed race couple, Herb Jeffries, who was a Negro singer, and his wife, Betty, and their daughter Fern Elizabeth.⁴¹ The famous singer, Herb Jeffries, was apparently light-skinned enough to “pass” for a Spaniard, an Italian, a Mexican, a Portuguese, an Argentine, or even a Jew, however chose to be a Negro. Here again, if one is light enough, they can elect to be a certain race and classified as a certain color. Apparently, the one-drop rule did not always hold true, unless someone wanted it to.

These arguments of the early 1950s reiterate that race is indeed socially constructed by the members of a society. In the United States and elsewhere, race was and continues to be used in order to form a hierarchy of different classes of people. This hierarchy is then used to justify treatment of “the other.” Although different races of people were once considered to be biologically different, that theory has now disappeared from mainstream scientific thought. The category of “race” is constructed purely from society itself and as seen by the above-mentioned articles, can be determined in a number of different ways.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ “Pawn in Pigtails,” *Newsweek* 34 (November 14, 1949): 28.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ “Davis Knight, White,” *Newsweek* 34 (November 28, 1949): 16.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ R.L. Williams, “He Wouldn't Cross the Line,” *Life* 31 (September 3, 1951): 81.

Change: Mid-1950s and Responses to *Brown v. Board of Education*

In response to the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* Supreme Court ruling in favor of school integration of whites and blacks in the South, many of the magazine articles published in the mid-1950s deal with fears of integration. In fact, the November issue of the *Atlantic Monthly* features two rather lengthy articles about integration and the results of such practices. “Would integrated schools lead to mixed blood?” is, according to the preface to these articles, “the most inflammatory domestic issue now before the country.”⁴²

The first of the two articles, “Mixed Schools and Mixed Blood” by Herbert Ravenel Sass argues just that—that integrated schools will lead to integrated and amalgamated or mixed blood; “It is a deep conviction of nearly all white Southerners in the states which have large Negro populations that the mingling or integration of white and Negro children in the South’s primary schools would open the gates to miscegenation and widespread racial amalgamation.”⁴³ He also argues that Southerners have “race preference” to whites, not “race prejudice” toward blacks, and that “Progress in racial relations has been stopped short by the ill-advised insistence of the Northern-directed Negro leadership upon the one concession which above all the white South will not and cannot make—public school integration.”⁴⁴ Finally, playing of the Cold War and its rhetoric, he argues that racial discrimination is not “un-American”, but is actually “the most distinctively American thing there is” and that these actions are designed to “appease the peoples of Asia and Africa and wean them away from Communism.”⁴⁵

This article does indeed speak of the time during which it was written—references to the Cold War, and the South blaming the North for regression, not progress, in race relations. In this article, Herbert Ravenel Sass hits the nail on the head by admitting that the South’s discord with school integration is not about equality, or equal rights, or fairness, but racial purity, a racial hierarchy, and the purity and superiority of the white race. The author, a native of Charleston, South Carolina, is surely a product of his time and culture and passionately believes in what he is saying.

The other article, “Where Equality Leads” is by Oscar Handlin. The author, a professor at Harvard University, realizes the South’s fear, but points out that their fear of increased interracial marriage runs “counter to all the available evidence.”⁴⁶ He argues that because intermarriage occurs when there are weak family ties and among the lower social classes, by widening opportunities both socially and economically, integration would not lead to intermarriage, but self-respect and therefore, lower rates of intermarriage.⁴⁷ He also points out that race and color are socially constructed, and declares that “the notion that Negroes are eager to marry whites is a delusion born of the white’s own vanity and of his ignorance of the real sentiments of his fellow Americans of another color.”⁴⁸ In a rebuttal, Herbert Ravenel Sass points to Brazil and its widespread racial amalgamation as what happens where equality between the races flourishes.⁴⁹

Racial equality leading to mixed marriages and then to children of mixed racial descent was one of the driving forces behind preventing school integration. The September 19, 1958 issue of *U.S. News & World Report* published as its cover story “What South Really Fears about Mixed Schools: Leading Sociologists Discuss Sex Fears and Integration.” This article, along with the “Mixed Schools and Mixed Blood” article blatantly reveal the South’s real fear about integration. The sociologists’ views varied greatly. One stated, “...about the last person in the world that the average white kid would really seriously get interested in would be a Negro.”⁵⁰ Another stated that although school integration may not directly lead to intermarriage, it will definitely lower the barriers to such relationships.⁵¹ Another leading sociologist argued that interracial relationships and sex are used to oppose integration, but that it “may not be the real reason but merely one that is easily understood and useful for the opposition.”⁵² He then argued that the real reasons may have to do with social and political mobility of Negroes—that better educated Negroes would rock the world of politics in the South and that would eventually lead to whites losing status and privilege in

⁴² Introduction to “Mixed Schools and Mixed Blood,” *Atlantic Monthly* 198 (November 1956): 45.

⁴³ Herbert Ravenel Sass, “Mixed Schools and Mixed Blood,” *Atlantic Monthly* 198 (November 1956): 45.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 46.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.* 46-47.

⁴⁶ Oscar Handlin, “Where Equality Leads,” *Atlantic Monthly* 198 (November 1956): 50.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 53.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 52-53.

⁴⁹ Herbert Ravenel Sass, “Desegregation” in Letters To and From the Editor, *Atlantic Monthly* 198 (November 1956): 31.

⁵⁰ “What South Really Fears about Mixed Schools,” *U.S. News & World Report* 45 (September 19, 1958): 78.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 82.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 84.

society.⁵³ Still another sociologist, when answering the question, “Do you think that white parents are afraid their daughters may become interested in Negro boys, or their sons might become involved with Negro girls?” responded with,

Their sons have clandestinely been involved with Negro girls and women for over 200 years, and the evidence can be seen in the form of light mulattoes in almost every Southern and Northern City.

Public opinion accepts this fact, however, as not endangering the purity of the white race so long as the mixing does not involve the incorporation of the mixed-blood children in the father’s group. Of course, legal marriage with colored women would violate this principle, and this is why it is forbidden by law in every Southern State and in many non-Southern States.

With the daughters of white parents, it is a very different matter. Motherhood is concealed only with great difficulty. An old saying of the frontier has it that motherhood is a matter of fact but fatherhood is a matter of opinion. Hence it is through the woman that the white group lays down its rules of race membership.⁵⁴

This statement, very similar in many ways to Peggy Pascoe’s explanation of interracial relationships, shows why interracial marriage, but not interracial sex, is banned by law in many states, and how race and sex compound to further subjugate black women of the South. This statement reveals the sick truth that while white male slave owners had supreme control over his slaves, and later sharecroppers, and women in general in the South, black men had almost no power—not even to protect their female family and friends from the possible horrors of the white man. And, while not all of the relationships resulting in mixed children were based on this imbalance of power that resulted in rape, many surely were purely by the definition of rape itself. This statement reveals the ugly, horrible truth about one aspect of race relations in the South.

While some people felt that people should never interracially mix, other people saw amalgamation as inevitable. In *U.S. News & World Report*, the author of “A Historian Predicts: Intermarriage of the Races ‘Will Be Inevitable,’” Allen Nevins says that, “as a historian, I do not for a moment believe that in our mighty American river of many nationalities, two currents can flow side by side down the centuries without ultimately becoming one.”⁵⁵ There were surely many and varied ideas about integration and interracial relationships.

Change: Early 1960s and the Showcasing of Interracial Couples

The articles of the early 1960s were different in that the focus of the articles switched from reasons why such relationships were considered wrong to the timid acceptance that such relationships existed. One *Ebony* article from 1962 was an extremely intriguing and extensive history of “Miscegenation in America.”⁵⁶ While that article was about miscegenation in general, most of the other articles from the early 1960s focused specifically on various interracial couples. In 1961, Swedish actress May Britt wrote an article for *Ebony* called, “Why I Married Sammy Davis Jr.”⁵⁷ In this personal narrative, she told the story of their relationship and their love for each other.⁵⁸ This story would start a trend of magazine articles showcasing interracial couples, especially famous couples.

One interracial couple found themselves in the spotlight in September 1963. During that month alone, there were three separate articles published in *Time*, *Newsweek*, and *U.S. News & World Report* which illustrated that integration in schools can lead to racial intermarriage. These articles relayed the story of Charlayne Hunter, who was the first black girl to attend the University of Georgia and about the white student there whom she married, Walter Stovall. This apparently was a very popular news story, as it made three national general news and information magazines all within one week. The title of the *U.S. News & World Report* article was in fact, “Where Integration Led to Intermarriage.”⁵⁹

Change: Mid-1960s and Court Cases Involving Interracial Relationships

Of course, an integrated school is not the only way to an interracial relationship—school is not the only place where two people can meet and have interest in each other. Starting in the mid-1960s, magazine articles about a

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 89.

⁵⁵ “A Historian Predicts: Intermarriage of the Races ‘Will Be Inevitable,’” *U.S. News & World Report* 45 (November 14, 1958): 72.

⁵⁶ Lerone Bennett, Jr., “Negro History Part X: Miscegenation in America,” *Ebony* 17 (October 1962): 94-104.

⁵⁷ May Britt, “Why I Married Sammy Davis Jr.,” *Ebony* 16 (January 1961): 96-102.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ “Where Integration Led to Intermarriage,” *U.S. News & World Report* 55 (September 16, 1963):10. The other two articles are as follows, “The Image,” *Time* 82 (September 13, 1963): 27, and “We Fell in Love,” *Newsweek* 62 (September 16, 1963):27-28.

Florida interracial couple were very prevalent. In fact, there were ten articles about this couple and the ensuing Supreme Court Case within one year's time. The May 8 issue of *Time* was the first magazine article about this touchy issue. According to this article, authorities in Florida arrested a couple breaking a statute that did not allow a male and a female of a different race to live together. This resulted in both jail time and a fine. Because they felt that they were being deprived of their 14th Amendment rights, they were planning to take it to the Supreme Court.⁶⁰

After several more articles from *Time*, *U.S. News & World Report*, *New Republic*, *Newsweek*, it was revealed that on December 7, 1964, the Supreme Court "unanimously struck down a Florida law that makes it a crime for Negroes and whites of different sexes to live together while not married," but at the same time did not rule on the constitutionality and validity of Florida's antimiscegenation statute.⁶¹ That decision would have to be made only a couple years later, in 1967.

Another trend of the mid-1960s is several articles showing an increased interest in amalgamation as a solution to the race problem in the United States. Articles such as "Is a Mixed Race Inevitable" from the May 10, 1965 issue of *U.S. News & World Report* and a two part series entitled "Does Amalgamation Work in Brazil?" that was published in *Ebony* in the July 1965 and the September 1965 issues argue that complete integration will mean racial amalgamation and that racial amalgamation may be the best solution to race problems in this country.⁶² While this may seem a like a radical idea in the context of United States history, it seems that once people came to a realization that mixed marriages were going to be inevitable, they tried to determine if such unions could help the United States in its various race problems.

Even at this point in time, antimiscegenation statutes were still legal in the United States. As early as 1965, articles mention the dilemma of the Lovings, who would bring suit against the state of Virginia and its unconstitutional antimiscegenation statutes.⁶³ A 1966 article, "The Crime of Being Married," published in *Life Magazine* chronicles the Loving family and their fight against the state of Virginia's antimiscegenation statutes.⁶⁴ Other articles appeared at this time reviewing the history of miscegenation, the laws against it, and the recent repeals of some of those laws, such as an article by William D. Zabel in the *Atlantic Monthly* October 1965 issue.⁶⁵ Several other articles appeared at this time as well showcasing the couple who took antimiscegenation statutes to the Supreme Court. Article titles such as "Anti-Miscegenation Statutes: Repugnant Indeed" show that by 1967 many people did not think that antimiscegenation laws had a place in American life.⁶⁶ Yet, only a couple years earlier, an article in *Ebony* revealed that interracial couples faced harassment and violence from neighbors in "The Trials of An Interracial Couple: What do 'average, decent Americans' do when a 'mixed' couple settles in?"⁶⁷ Even though many Americans apparently thought antimiscegenation laws and statutes were wrong, they still did not necessarily want to come into contact with such couples, and surely did not want interracial couples to live near them.

Finally, on June 12, 1967, the Supreme Court of the United States of America ruled that Virginia's antimiscegenation statute was unconstitutional under the 14th Amendment in the landmark *Loving v. Virginia*. This decision also affected 15 other states, which still had antimiscegenation statutes on their books.⁶⁸ Magazines

⁶⁰ "Marriage by Choice," *Time* 83 (May 8, 1964): 61.

⁶¹ "Mixed Marriages—What Justices Said," *U.S. News & World Report* 57 (December 21, 1964): 7. Other articles found in magazines during this time that dealt with this Florida case include: "Will High Court Rule on Mixed Marriage," *U.S. News & World Report* 56 (May 11, 1964):14; "Integrated Cohabitation," *New Republic* 150 (May 30, 1964): 4-5; "Will High Court O.K. Mixed Marriages?," *U.S. News & World Report* 57 (October 26, 1964): 10; "Strict Caution on Miscegenation," *Time* 84 (December 18, 1964): 43; "Interracial Cohabitation," *New Republic* 151 (December 19, 1964): 5; "The Bedroom Issues," *Newsweek* 64 (December 21, 1964): 21; Allan C Brownfeld, "Intermarriage and the Court," *Commonweal* 81 (February 5, 1965): 609-610; "Miscegenation Test Case," *America* 112 (February 6, 1965): 183.

⁶² "Is a Mixed Race Inevitable" (excerpt from "The Pace is Important" by Virginius Dabney) *U.S. News & World Report* 58 (May 10, 1965): 67, and Era Bell Thompson, "Does Amalgamation Work in Brazil?," *Ebony* 20 (July 1965): 27-30 (Part I), and Era Bell Thompson, "Does Amalgamation Work in Brazil?," *Ebony* 20 (September 1965): 33-41 (Part II).

⁶³ "Mixed Marriages—Next Trend in Race Problem?" *U.S. News & World Report* 58 (June 28, 1965): 58-63.

⁶⁴ "The Crime of Being Married," *Life Magazine* 60 (March 18, 1966): 85-91.

⁶⁵ William D. Zabel, "Interracial Marriage and the Law," *Atlantic Monthly* 216 (October 1965): 75-79.

⁶⁶ "Anti-Miscegenation Statutes: Repugnant Indeed," *Time* 89 (June 23, 1967): 45-46.

⁶⁷ "The Trials of an Interracial Couple: What do 'average, decent Americans' do when a 'mixed' couple settles in?" *Ebony* 20 (October 1965): 66-75.

⁶⁸ Simeon Booker, "The Couple that Rocked Courts: Lovings' fight brought Supreme Court decision against miscegenation laws," *Ebony* (September 1967): 78-86.

continued to feature articles about the Loving family and their long struggle to victory. *U.S. News & World Report* even published an article entitled, “Now that Mixed Marriage is Legal...” in response to the Supreme Court decision.⁶⁹

Change: Late 1960s, Guess Who’s Coming to Dinner, and more Interracial Couples

Similar to the articles showcasing interracial relationships of the early 1960s, another couple whose relationship was quite popular in magazines was Margaret (Peggy) Rusk, daughter of Secretary of State, Dean Rusk, and Guy Smith. A picture from their wedding made the front page of the September 29, 1967 issue of *Time*. The article in that issue pointed out that “as recently as 1948, California law would have made the union a criminal offense in the state.”⁷⁰ The article also talked about who attended the event and the nation’s reaction to it. At least two other articles, one in *Newsweek* and one in *Ebony* also discussed the marriage.

With an increase in interracial marriages in the news, and the eventual legalization of such unions, it should be no surprise that Hollywood entered the picture with its take on the “Would you want your daughter to marry a Negro?” question. The 1968 film *Guess Who’s Coming to Dinner* started screening in late 1967, only months after the landmark *Loving v. Virginia* Supreme Court decision.⁷¹ While many published movie critics, such as Roger Ebert gave the movie good reviews, some people were offended by the on-screen interracial romance. For example, in Hamilton, Ohio, some young black youth vandalized an area of the town after Ku Klux Klan members picketed the showing of *Guess Who’s Coming to Dinner*.⁷² While there is little evidence of displeasure by the majority of Americans with the movie and with interracial relationships in general in these publications, it is very obvious that many people were not at all delighted with the film and with the message—especially those working toward the purity and superiority of the white race, such as Ku Klux Klan members.

During the late 1960s, most articles dealing with interracial relationships and interracial marriages were basically profiles of interracial couples and talked about their lives, their families, and others’ reactions to their relationships. It seems that by this time, people were accustomed to the idea of interracial marriages and were curious about how they worked and if there were any differences between interracial marriages and those unions between two people of the same race.

A very lengthy article in *McCall’s* conveyed the stories of several interracial couples. “Are there Boundary Lines in Love? Five True Stories” by William Peters revealed some of the many challenges that interracial couples face, including estranged family and friends, deciding where to live.⁷³ The article also documented how some people in interracial relationships grew up, why they married their spouse, and how they feel about how society treats them.⁷⁴

While oftentimes it seemed that white people were questioning if their children should marry black people, in the *Ladies Home Journal*, Mrs. Medgar Evers questions “Why Should My Child Marry Yours?”⁷⁵ This shift is also evident in several of the other articles that interviewed both white and black people concerning their thoughts about interracial relationships, but this article is explicitly the opinion of an African American mother of three children. Her article is thoughtful and provocative and points out, “The subject of interracial dating and marriage is one that summons up unexplored emotions in almost every American adult.”⁷⁶ She explains that black people’s perspective acknowledges the terrible history of white male aggression toward black women. An article published a couple years later in *Ebony* features more black perspective in “A Sister Debates a Brother on That Black Man-White Woman Thing.”⁷⁷ In this article, Lisbeth Grant argues that she thinks that white women are greatly influenced to date black men because of the idea that black men are sexually superior to white men, while Danny Davis argues that interracial relationships are one way that this country can come closer together.⁷⁸

⁶⁹ “Now that Mixed Marriage is Legal,” *U.S. News & World Report* 62 (June 26, 1967): 25.

⁷⁰ “A Marriage of Enlightenment,” *Time* 90 (September 29, 1967): 28-31.

⁷¹ Bosley Crowther, “Screen: ‘Guess Who’s Coming to Dinner’ Arrives,” *The New York Times*, 1967 (December 12): 56:1.

⁷² “Hamilton, Ohio, Police Quell Vandalism by Negro Youths,” *The New York Times*, 1968 (March 7): 27:2.

⁷³ William Peters, “Are there Boundary Lines in Love? Five True Stories,” *McCall’s* 95 (June 1968): 64-66, 118-123).

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵ Myrlie Evers, “Why Should My Child Marry Yours?” *Ladies Home Journal* 85 (April 1968): 80, 82.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷⁷ “Sister Debates a Brother on that Black Man-White Woman Thing,” edited by Dr. Kermit Mehlinger, Lisbeth A. Grant, and Danny K. Davis, *Ebony* 25 (August 1970): 130-133.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

Perhaps “Interracial Marriage is a Sometime Thing” as William Barry Furlong argues in the June 9, 1968 *New York Times Magazine*.⁷⁹ He points out that along with black male-white female relationships, there are also many black female-white male relationships and then acknowledges that although the rates of interracial marriages are rising, he thinks that the Black Separatist movement may hamper the continuation of the increase.⁸⁰ Perhaps interracial marriage is only a “sometime thing.” Verify evident from all of these articles, though, is that it does indeed take a special kind of person to be involved in an interracial relationship, especially in such times of turbulence for such couples.

Change: Early 1970s and a Subsiding Controversy?

After the turbulent decade of the 1960s, the magazines of the early 1970s seemed quite uninterested in the controversy over interracial relationships, at least as evidenced in the Readers Guide. According to the Readers Guide, while there were typically several articles under the topic heading “Intermarriage of Races” every year between 1950 and 1970, during the five year span of 1970-1975, there were only about a half a dozen articles total—usually only one or two articles a year, with the March 1974-February 1975 volume having no articles listed at all. Besides the “Sister Debates a Brother on the Black Man-White Woman Thing” article, *Time* published an article entitled “Boy, Girl, Black, White” also in 1970.⁸¹ A 1973 article published in *Science* revealed that geneticists in England and the United States “reversed their published remarks on the effects of race crossing between 1930 and 1950.”⁸² The last article from the time period being studied was published in *Ebony* in 1975 and exposes that a national poll reveals “Startling New Attitudes on Interracial Marriage.”⁸³ While this article cites a national poll as evidence that people’s attitudes have changed, the author also mentions that opinions are not the same as actions.⁸⁴

Although articles regarding interracial relationships were quite numerous in the years leading up to *Loving v. Virginia* as well as the year or so after the landmark case, the sheer number of articles from 1970-1975 declined quite abruptly. Why this sudden change? Why did the number of articles increase again a couple years later? The cause for this is not obvious in the articles or in the various books and articles written about interracial relationships. Perhaps mainstream America finally adjusted to the legality and the reality of interracial relationships. Or perhaps other national events such as the Watergate scandal and the *Roe v. Wade* Supreme Court decision distracted most Americans. Whatever the reason, interracial relationships were finally legal within the United States of America.

CONCLUSION

Now, almost forty years after the last of the antimiscegenation laws were struck down by the *Loving v. Virginia* Supreme Court case, interracial marriages seem to be more and more commonplace. Although interracial couples today may get a couple odd stares every once in a while, and may face antagonism from their family and friends, they are unhampered by any laws and social restrictions barring their relationship from evolving into marriage. Surprisingly similar and unfortunate is the plight of same sex couples of today who in many states are not allowed to obtain a marriage license and therefore get married. Not too long ago, as I was sitting in church listening to the homily given by a visiting priest, I surprised to hear him declare to a church full of parishioners that he thought that the world would end within the next twenty years because of homosexuality and the legalization of same-sex marriages. Not only was I surprised, but also shocked, embarrassed, and irate. This man felt that marriage can only occur between two specific people—a man and a woman. This sentiment is disgustingly similar to the sentiment of antimiscegenation that began in colonial days and ran rampant throughout the United States in the century after the Civil War, ending during the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s—that marriage can only occur between two people of the same race.

If one looks to history to determine the fate of same-sex couples today, one would see that although there will be those who disagree and try to keep such marriages illegal, one would also see that there are laws, amendments, and Supreme Court Cases in place that would support, not prohibit, same-sex couples wishing to be married.

⁷⁹ William Barry Furlong, “Interracial Marriage is a Sometime Thing,” *The New York Times Magazine*, June 9, 1968: 44-45, 137-147.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 147.

⁸¹ “Boy, Girl, Black, White,” *Time* 95(April 6, 1970): 74.

⁸² William B. Provine, “Geneticists and the Biology of Race Crossing,” *Science* 182 (November 23, 1973): 790-796.

⁸³ Alex Bontemps, “Startling New Attitudes on Interracial Marriage,” *Ebony* 30 (September 1975): 144-150.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to sincerely thank Dr. Jodi Vandenberg-Daves, my faculty sponsor, for her guidance during this entire project. I would also like to thank Dr. Victor Maciás-Gonzalez, Dr. Mark Soderstrom, and Dr. Jonathan Majak for their ideas and assistance while exploring and researching this topic. Finally, I would like to thank my family—my parents for their interest and support, and my husband for his technological assistance, but mostly for his inspiration and dedication.

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