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Tripping on the Color Line: Black-White Multiracial Families in a Racially Divided World. Heather M. Dalmage.

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Book Notes

Heather M. Dalmage, *Tripping on the Color Line: Black-White Multiracial Families in a Racially Divided World*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2000. \$50.00 hardcover, \$20 papercover.

W.E.B. Dubois predicted that the central problem facing the United States in the 20th century would be the 'color' line. Dalmage suggests that central problem of the 21st century may be the blurring of the 'color' line, and the structure that this color line imposes on social and power relationships in United States. She examines the politically and socially loaded issue of multi-racial families with clarity by retelling the stories shared with her through in-depth interview with over 40 individuals. The multi-racial movement is a growing movement and the demand for recognition of multi-racial families and individuals is of clear sociological significance.

This author offers a sociological account of multiracial families in which she names the phenomena related to these families (specifically black and white), and develops a language to describe lives that those who choose to 'trip' the color line experience. She addresses the issues of the borders that are in place in our society to ascertain which side of the color line an individual or a family belongs to. She also provides an interesting discussion of the different normative perspectives on race. This includes the essentialist who believes that race is genetic, the social constructionist who understands that the social concept of race builds a strong sense of them and us, and the color-blind arguist, who wants to believe that race is inconsequential.

Three themes emerge from Dalmage's research. The hurtfulness (and for whites the invisibility) of whiteness and racism; the lack of language available to describe the multiracial experience positively; and the demands that institutions and individuals impose on multiracial families to conform to a racially divided system. The book is most successful in developing a language to describe the multiracial experience. Terms such as 'border patrolling', 'black and white', as well as 'rebound racism' are new

concepts that clarify the unique position of the multi-racial couple and of biracial individuals. The book points to the processes that stigmatize and traumatize the black, white and mixed-race members of multiracial families and shows how racial identities are constructed and deconstructed over time. A reoccurring theme is that of white women married to black men with biracial children who no longer claim the racial label of 'white' because of the racism they have been exposed to. The incredible stress of 'tripping' over the color line is also clearly elaborated. Another, very interesting and neglected aspect is that of biracial children of white appearance and the difficulties they experience. They have to deal with racism and racist talk by whites, rejection by blacks, the problems of 'passing' and feelings against their own family members.

A drawback of the book is the failure to undergird the qualitative information with statistical information. For example, Dalmage does not give statistics on the percentage of the mixed race couples or discuss the disproportionate percentage of white women married to black men versus black women to white men. She intimates that there is a difference but a full discussion of the significance of the difference would have enhanced the second chapter of the book dealing with 'Redlines and Colorlines'. In omitting a full discussion of the role of gender and race as it relates to couple formation, the author misses an opportunity to explore the fact that the multicultural world is mostly comprised of white women and black men.

Nevertheless, Dalmage presents a unique overview of a neglected issue, based on a unique familiarity with the literature on multiculturalism, black liberation, and race relations. Through her strong narrative, she is able to illuminate for the reader the world of those who are multiracial and who are involved in multiracial relationships. This is a very useful book and will form the basis for future policy discussions on race and racialization in the United States.

Lynne M. Healy, *International Social Work: Professional Action in an Interdependent World*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2001. \$32.95 papercover.

There has been a rapid increase in the number of academic articles and books on the topic of international social work in