Racism's Revenge: A Du Boisian Theory of White Supremacist Ideology

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Dissertation

Submitted to the Faculty of the

Graduate School of Vanderbilt University

in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in

Philosophy

August 31, 2021

Nashville, Tennessee

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter   Page

Chapter I

Introduction

One cannot, to be sure, demand of whole nations exceptional moral foresight and heroism; but a

certain hard common-sense in facing the complicated phenomena of political life must be expected

in every progressive people. In some respects we as a nation seem to lack this; we have the somewhat

inchoate idea that we are not destined to be harassed with great social questions, and that even if we

are, and fail to answer them, the fault is with the question and not with us. Consequently we often

congratulate ourselves more on getting rid of a problem than on solving it. Such an attitude is danger-

ous; we have and shall have, as other peoples have had, critical, momentous, and pressing questions

to answer. The riddle of the Sphinx may be postponed, it may be evasively answered now; sometime

it must be fully answered.[1]

White Supremacy in the Age of Ecological Catastrophe

White supremacy permeates the modern world.[2] If the current trajectory continues unabated,

White supremacy, among other pernicious social forces, may end this world, erasing all memory of

its existence.[3] Centuries of capitalistic expropriation and destruction, guided and rationalized in part

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[1] W. E. B. Du Bois, "The Suppression of the African Slave Trade," in Nathan Irvin Huggins, ed., *Writings* (New York, N.Y: Literary Classics of the United States, 1986), 196.

[2] Following Charles Mills, I interpret White supremacy as a multidimensional sociopolitical system of domination. More specifically, as Mills explains, this is "a latitudinarian conception, one that encompasses de facto as well as de jure White privilege and refers more broadly to the European domination of the planet that has left us with the racialized distribu-tions of economic, political, and cultural power that we have today." Charles Mills, "White Supremacy as Sociopolitical System: A Philosophical Perspective," in Ashley Doane & Eduardo Bonilla-Silva, eds., *White Out: The Continuing Significance of Racism,* (New York & London: Routledge, 2003), 37, 42. Charles W. Mills, *Blackness Visible: Essays on Philosophy and Race* (Ithaca, N.Y: Cornell University Press, 1998), 98. Hereafter cited as "Charles Mills, *Blackness Visible.*"

[3] Following Anthony Appiah, I capitalize "White" and "Black" throughout this project to highlight the fact that these terms denote historically created racialized identities, not colors. See Anthony Appiah, "The Case for Capitalizing the

by White supremacist culture, have induced irreversible changes in planetary ecosystems, propelling the human species into a critical juncture of unprecedented proportions.[4] "Climate change," UN Secretary-General António Guterres recently warned, "is, quite simply, an existential threat for most life on the planet – including, and especially, the life of humankind."[5] Guterres echoes a broader scientific consensus: global climate change poses the imminent threat of "total disaster," "global catastrophe," "uninhabitable hell," and an "uninhabitable earth."[6] Rising sea levels, diminishing water supplies, disrupted food production and supply chains, and extreme weather patterns will result in "major reductions in global and national population, mass species extinction, economic disruption and social chaos" and "escalating cycles of humanitarian and socio-political crises, conflict and forced migration."[7] Simply put, we currently face "the real possibility that human life on earth may be on the way to extinction, in the most horrible way."[8]

B in Black," *The Atlantic*, June 18, 2020, https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2020/06/time-to-capitalize-blackand-White/613159/.

[4] To be clear, I do not claim that White supremacy is the sole cause of environmental devastation. White supremacist societies have always also been heteropatriarchal, Christian, and capitalistic. This project simply focuses on White supremacy, which I treat as one major driver of ecological catastrophe.

[5] "Climate change: An 'existential threat' to humanity, UN chief warns global summit," *UN News*, May 15, 2018, https://news.un.org/en/story/2018/05/1009782.

[6] "UN chief forecasts 'total disaster' if global warning not stopped," *Al Jazeera*, May 9, 2019, https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/5/9/un-chief-forecasts-total-disaster-if-global-warning-not-stopped; "Act now to prevent an environmental catastrophe," *The Guardian*, December 9, 2018, https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2018/dec/09/act-now-to-prevent-an-environmental-catastrophe; David Wallace-Wells, "The Uninhabitable Earth," *New York*, http://nymag.com/intelligencer/2017/07/climate-change-earth-too-hot-for-humans.html; https://www.cnn.com/2020/10/13/world/un-natural-disasters-climate-intl-hnk/index.html

[7] David Spratt and Ian Dunlop, "What Lies Beneath," *Breakthrough, National Center for Climate Restoration*, September 2017, https://climateextremes.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/What-Lies-Beneath-V3-LR-Blank5b15d.pdf, 84; David Spratt and Ian Dunlop, "Existential climate-related security risk: A scenario approach," *Breakthrough, National Centre for Climate Restoration Policy Paper*, https://docs.wix-static.com/ugd/148cb0_b2c0c79dc4344b279bcf2365336ff23b.pdf, 4.

[8] David Spratt and Ian Dunlop, "Existential climate-related security risk," 3.

This irreversible disruption of earth's ecosystems threatens the future of human (and non-human) life on the planet, thereby calling on us to act as interdependent sociobiological creatures and, more precisely, members of a species. Put otherwise, as many climate and sustainability experts now emphasize, the sheer scale of the unfolding ecological catastrophe demands a global response. David Spratt and Ian Dunlop, for example, argue that we must achieve a "global mobilization of resources on an emergency basis" in order to "build a zero-emissions industrial system very quickly."[9] Similarly, a recent UN Human Rights Council report "contends that genuinely transformative change is needed both in the ways societies and economies are currently structured and in the human rights regime."[10] A recent public letter signed by 100 academics, authors, politicians, and campaigners echoes these views, calling on "concerned global citizens to rise up and organise against current complacency in their particular contexts."[11]

These warnings and proposals regarding the unfolding ecological catastrophe signal an emerging consciousness of the fact that, in Theodor Adorno's words, "The forms of humanity's own global societal constitution threaten its life, if a self-conscious global subject does not develop and intervene."[12] Indeed, organizations such as Extinction Rebellion and the Sunrise Movement are actively working to construct this self-conscious global subject, tacitly affirming Adorno's judgment that this is the fundamental precondition for "the possibility of progress,

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[9] Ibid., 4.

[10] Ibid., 3.

[11] "Act now to prevent an environmental catastrophe," *The Guardian*, December 9, 2018, https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2018/dec/09/act-now-to-prevent-an-environmental-catastrophe

[12] Theodor Adorno, "Progress," *Critical Models: Interventions and Catchwords* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 144.

of averting the most extreme, total disaster."[13] As Adorno was well aware, however, the emergence of this "self-conscious global subject" is by no means inevitable. Alongside the progressive tendencies embodied by Extinction Rebellion and the Sunrise Movement we face countervailing movements towards right-wing authoritarianism.[14] From Trump and Boris Johnson to Burma's ethnic cleansing of the Rohyinga people and Hindu nationalist Narendra Modi's decision to strip the Muslim-majority Kashmir region of autonomy, populations across the planet are recoiling from difference and complexity. Widespread (and worsening) social instability is reinforcing exclusionary in-group identities and anti-egalitarian political projects predicated on the violent construction and enforcement of human hierarchies. Ecological catastrophe thus presents us qua members of the human species with a choice: construct and mobilize a self-conscious global subject capable of enforcing and expanding human rights and minimizing the worst effects of climate catastrophe for all, or shore up exclusionary in-group boundaries, embrace "climate apartheid," and engage in existential struggle for in-group self-preservation at all costs.[15] In Noam Chomsky's words, "This is the most important decision in human history."[16]

White supremacist culture – roughly, the constellation of action-guiding beliefs, meanings, values, and narratives constitutive of, and organized around, the conviction that White people matter more than others (what Eddie Glaude, Jr. calls "the value gap") - poses significant obstacles to efforts

[13] On Extinction Rebellion, see https://rebellion.earth/. On the Sunrise Movement, see https://www.sunrisemovement.org/about. Adorno, "Progress," *Critical Models*, 144.

[14] David Renton, *The New Authoritarians: Convergence on the Right* (London: Pluto Press, 2019).

[15] "World faces 'climate apartheid' risk, 120 more million in poverty: UN expert," *UN News*, June 25, 2019, https://news.un.org/en/story/2019/06/1041261; Douglas Rushkoff, "Survival of the Richest," *Medium*, July 5, 2018, https://medium.com/s/futurehuman/survival-of-the-richest-9ef6cddd0cc1.

[16] David Barsamian, "Chomsky: By Focusing on Russia, We Ignore Trump's Existential Threat to Climate," *Truthout*, August 21, 2019, https://truthout.org/articles/chomsky-by-focusing-on-russia-we-ignore-trumps-existential-threat-to-climate/?eType=EmailBlastContent&eId=0610c386-4b98-4695-bd36-f8a52fa71d1a.

to mitigate the worst effects of ecological catastrophe.[17] For one, White supremacist attitudes are closely related to climate change denialism. Political scientist Salil D. Benegal, for example, recently performed a study on the relationship between racial identification, racial resentment, and attitudes about climate change. He found that high levels of White racial resentment predicted disagreement with the scientific consensus on climate change.[18] Indeed, as economic and social policy expert Heather McGhee discusses, there is a close relationship between White supremacy and climate change denialism.[19] In this regard, the persistence and prevalence of White supremacist culture poses a significant obstacle to progressive, eco-conscious social change.

The convergence of increasingly overt White supremacist narratives and an awareness of ecological catastrophe among some sectors of the US right poses a further obstacle to such efforts. As Jason Wilson put it in *The Guardian*, some now see ecological catastrophe "as an opportunity to re-order society along their preferred lines, and to cleanse the Earth of those they despise."[20] Indeed,

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[17] Eddie S. Glaude, Jr., *Democracy in Black: How Race Still Enslaves the American Soul* (New York: Crown Publishers, 2016). Following Charles Mills again, I adopt a latitudinarian conception of White supremacist culture. In my view, it encompasses the overt culture that guided and rationalized chattel slavery and Jim Crow segregation as well as the covert – or at least less overt – meanings, narratives, etc. that have guided public policy since the 1960s. From this perspective, the so-called wars on drugs and crime, which contributed significantly to mass incarceration and the prison-industrial complex, have been guided and rationalized in part by covert – or, again, at least less overt - White supremacist culture. There are, of course, important differences between, say, antebellum 19th century White supremacist culture and late 20th century White supremacist culture. However, both remain White supremacist in the aforementioned sense. Charles Mills, "White Supremacy as Sociopolitical System: A Philosophical Perspective," in Ashley Doane & Eduardo Bonilla-Silva, eds., *White Out: The Continuing Significance of Racism*, (New York & London: Routledge, 2003), 37, 42. Charles W. Mills, *Blackness Visible: Essays on Philosophy and Race* (Ithaca, N.Y: Cornell University Press, 1998), 98.

[18] Salil D. Benegal, "The Spillover of Race and Racial Attitudes into Public Opinion about Climate Change," *Environmental Politics* 27, no. 4 (July 4, 2018): 733–56. The "racial resentment scale" measures the extent to which White people believe that Black people and other people of color fail to work hard enough to overcome adversity and make unjustified demands on the United States.

[19] Heather C. McGhee, *The Sum of Us: What Racism Costs Everyone and How We Can Prosper Together* (New York: One World, 2021), 193 – 206. See also Andreas Malm, *White Skin, Black Fuel: On the Danger of Fossil Fascism* (New York: Verso Books, 2021).

[20] Jason Wilson, "Eco-fascism is undergoing a revival in the fetid culture of the extreme right," *The Guardian,* March 19, 2019, https://www.theguardian.com/world/commentisfree/2019/mar/20/eco-fascism-is-undergoing-a-revival-in-the-fetid-culture-of-the-extreme-right; Sarah Manavis, "Eco-fascism: the ideology marrying environmentalism and White supremacy thriving online," *New Statesman,* September 21, 2018, https://www.newstatesman.com/science-tech/social-media/2018/09/eco-fascism-ideology-marrying-environmentalism-and-White-supremacy; Natasha Lennard, "The El Paso

one contributor to the self-avowed "White nationalist"[21] magazine *American Renaissance* calls on the right to disregard "other countries" and refuse assistance to climate refugees "in the interest of our national well-being":

> Initiatives to slow or reverse climate change are far less crucial than strengthening our capacity to deal with natural disasters in low-lying areas and to capitalize on new opportunities in the warming north.[22] Assistance to other countries is the lowest priority. Resettling millions of their displaced into our countries is not acceptable.[23]

The narrative is deceptively simple: ecological catastrophe cannot be slowed or mitigated, so White people should treat it as an opportunity, working to maximize in-group benefits at the expense of out-groups. In the face of ecological catastrophe, then, White supremacist culture offers two false solutions: denial or climate apartheid.[24]

Shooter Embraced Eco-Fascism. We Can't Let the Far Right Co-Opt the Environmental Struggle," *The Intercept*, August 5, 2019, https://theintercept.com/2019/08/05/el-paso-shooting-eco-fascism-migration/.

[21] Although *American Renaissance* and *Counter-Currents* (mentioned below) contributors refer to themselves as "white nationalists" they nevertheless adopt White supremacist views. To cite just one example, Greg Johnson attempts to distinguish White nationalism from White supremacy, writing, "*White supremacists* want whites to rule over other races, which logically presupposes the existence of a multiracial society in which whites are the top of the hierarchy. If we *must* have multiracial societies, I would want whites and white standards to be supreme. But I recognize that such a society is oppressive to other racial groups, which is why I would prefer separate homelands for all peoples." Although Johnson hopes for a future of homogenous, non-multiracial societies, the United States remains a "multiracial" society. For the time being, then, Johnson accepts the notion that White people should occupy the top of the social hierarchy and, in doing so, oppress non-White people. Greg Johnson, *White Identity Politics* (San Francisco: Counter-Currents Publishing, 2020), 31 (E-book edition), original emphasis. For a recent argument supporting the claim that so-called White nationalists are effectively White supremacists, see Michael J. Monahan, "Racism and 'Self-Love': The Case of White Nationalism," *Critical Philosophy of Race* 9, no. 1 (2021): 1–15.

[22] This casts ex-President Trump's recent offer to buy Greenland in a disturbing new light. See Chelsea Harvey, "What Greenland Might Have Taught Trump about Warning," *Scientific American*, August 19, 2019, https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/what-greenland-might-have-taught-trump-about-warning/.

[23] Philip Santoro, "What Does it Mean for Whites if Climate Change is Real?," *American Renaissance*, September 11, 2017, https://www.amren.com/news/2017/09/climate-change-mass-immigration-green-identity-politics/, emphasis added.

[24] These supposed solutions are false insofar as they fail to address the real causes of ecological catastrophe – among them, capitalistic exploitation and expropriation as guided and rationalized by White supremacist culture.

I offer this brief discussion of White supremacy in the age of ecological catastrophe for two reasons. First, ecological catastrophe heightens the urgency of combating and overthrowing contemporary White supremacy. Long having posed an existential threat to people of color, White supremacy, among other pernicious social forces, obstructs efforts to address ecological catastrophe, and therefore indirectly threatens the very survival of the human species. Of course, the fact that White supremacy has hurt, and continues to hurt, people of color should offer sufficient moral justification for its abolition. In my view, however, such moral reasons have rarely been sufficient to mobilize large numbers of White people towards anti-White supremacist ends.[25] Charles Mills put the point well in his discussion of "black radical liberalism." In his words,

> Insofar as black radical liberalism is attentive to trends within capitalism...it would
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> hope that an increasing number of the White poor/working class may begin to wake
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> up to the reality that the prospects for their children and grandchildren under

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[25] In this regard I follow Derrick Bell in endorsing the interest-convergence thesis. Simply put, this is the view that most White people have generally supported Black civil rights only when they have found it to be in their interest to do so. W.E.B. Du Bois makes a similar claim (albeit not quite as explicitly as Bell) in at least three places. First, he argues in *Black Reconstruction* that Abraham Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation only after realizing that the formal abolition of slavery was a necessary military strategy to defeat the Confederacy. Second, in his third autobiography he claims of the Supreme Court's ruling in Brown v. Board that "no such decision would have been possible without the world pressure of communism led by the Soviet Union. It was simply impossible for the United States to continue to lead a 'Free World' with race segregation kept legal over a third of its territory." Third, in a 1925 essay titled "Worlds of Color," Du Bois reflects on many white workers' persistent investment and participation in White supremacy, asking, "What hope is there that such a mass of dimly thinking and misled men [referring to racist white workers] will ever demand universal democracy for all men?" His answer implicitly relies on the interest-convergence thesis: "The chief hope lies in the gradual but inevitable spread of the knowledge that the denial of democracy in Asia and Africa hinders its complete realization in Europe." Although I adopt the interest-convergence thesis as a basic premise of the current project, the first chapter also offers a pragmatic argument to support the claim that an effective campaign against White supremacy must address the ways in which White supremacy has negatively impacted many White people. In other words, such a campaign must identify ways in which it is in fact in the interest of many White people to combat and overthrow White supremacy. Derrick A. Bell, "Brown v. Board of Education and the Interest-Convergence Dilemma," *Harvard Law Review* 93, no. 3 (1980): 518–33. W.E.B. Bois, *Black Reconstruction in America, 1860-1880* (New York, NY: Free Press, 1998). W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Autobiography of W.E.B. Du Bois. A Soliloquy on Viewing My Life from the Last Decade of Its First Century*, (International Publishers, 1968), 333. W.E.B. Du Bois, "Worlds of Color" [1925], in Herbert Aptheker, ed., *Writings by W.E.B. Du Bois in Periodicals Edited by Others. Volume 2, 1910-1934*, (New York: Kraus-Thomson Organization Limited, 1982), 254. For a recent discussion of the interest-convergence thesis as it pertains to White supremacy, see Andrew J. Pierce, "Interest Convergence: An Alternative to White Privilege Models of Anti-Racist Pedagogy and Practice," *Teaching Philosophy* 39, no. 4 (2016): 507–30.

plutocratic capitalism – albeit White supremacist plutocratic capitalism – are not that

great either. As a materialist political philosophy, black radical liberalism does not

rest its hopes for social transformation on moral suasion alone but on the mobiliza-

tion of group interests. The strategy would be to combine the racial justice political

project with a larger social justice political project, highlighting the startling fact that

the United States has the most unequal distribution of income and wealth of all the

Western democracies.[26]

I am in general agreement with Mills here, particularly with his judgment that "there has not in

decades been a more favorable environment for such a political appeal [to White material interests]

today."[27]

Mills is alluding to the steady deterioration in quality of life for many White people across

the United States in recent decades. This historical development represents an opportunity for in-

tellectuals and activists committed to progressive social change. It also poses a significant challenge,

further intensifying the urgency of the present conjuncture. A burgeoning social-scientific literature

has highlighted the severity and unprecedented character of this deterioration, linking it directly to

Trump's 2016 election victory. This includes studies finding that counties whose populations have

been experiencing an increase in mortality in the last 15 years and decreases in life expectancy in the

last 3 decades had increased support for Trump.[28] The "Whiteness" of these counties is indicated

by evidence showing that morbidity and mortality rates have been increasing disproportionately

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[26] Charles Mills, *Black Rights/White Wrongs: The Critique of Racial Liberalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 206. Hereafter cited as "Charles Mills, *Black Rights/White Wrongs.*"

[27] Ibid, 134.

[28] Usama Bilal, Emily A Knapp, Richard S Cooper, "Swing voting in the 2016 presidential election in counties where midlife mortality has been rising in White non-Hispanic Americans," *Social Science & Medicine* 197 (2018): 33-38; Jacob Bor, "Diverging life expectancies and voting patterns in the 2016 US Presidential election," *American Journal of Public Health* (2017), e1–e3.

among middle-aged, White non-Hispanic Americans, predominantly due to drug and alcohol abuse and suicide.[29] Prior to 1999, mortality and morbidity rates among middle-aged White Americans had been declining by 1.8 percent per year. Since then, as Princeton researchers have shown, that trend has reversed, and is now worsening at an alarming rate. A more recent report by the Commonwealth Fund explains that this phenomenon is more extreme than previously expected, for this mortality gap is not just affecting middle-aged Whites but is also affecting younger White adults aged 25 to 34.[30] While a comprehensive explanation of this phenomenon has not been proposed, there is evidence pointing to the negative impact of economic immobility on quality of life.[31]

Indeed, increased mortality rates and decreased life expectancy have been directly linked to decreased economic opportunities and mobility, and, according to a recent Federal Reserve survey, "Low-income White people have seen their wealth nearly cut in half since the recession, while the net worth of black and Hispanic families who make a similar amount of money remained basically stable."[32] Furthermore, studies have shown a significant relationship between a community's military casualty rates and support for Trump. These communities were also more rural, less wealthy, and less educated than other parts of the country.[33] Finally, Trump overperformed the most in counties with the highest drug, alcohol, and suicide mortality rates, which study authors explain in terms of

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[29] Anne Case and Angus Deaton, "Rising morbidity and mortality in midlife among White non-Hispanic Americans in the 21ˢᵗ century," *PNAS*, 112, no. 49, (2015): 15078-15083.

[30] D. Squires and D. Blumenthal, *Mortality Trends Among Working-Age Whites: The Untold Story, The Commonwealth Fund* (2016).

[31] Rourke L. O'Brien and Atheendar S Venkataramani, "Economic Mobility and the Mortality Crisis Among US Middle-aged Whites," *Epidemiology,* 28, no. 2, (2017), e13.

[32] Rourke L. O'Brien, Atheendar S. Venkataramani, and Alexander C. Tsai, "Economic Mobility and the Mortality Crisis Among US Middle-aged Whites," *Epidemiology,* 28, no. 2 (2017), e12-e13; Lydia DePillis, "America's wealth gap is bigger than ever," *CNN,* November 3, 2017, http://money.cnn.com/2017/11/03/news/economy/wealth-gap-america/index.html?iid=EL.
[33] Douglas Kriner and Francis Shen, "Battlefield Casualties and Ballot Box Defeat: Did the Bush-Obama Wars Cost Clinton the White House?" *Political Science & Politics* (2017).

economic distress and the proportion of working-class residents.[34] Although racial attitudes and sexism were strongly related to support for Trump, this research clearly shows that significant fractions of Trump's voter bloc have indeed been suffering under "White supremacist plutocratic capitalism."[35]

Critical race theorist Ian Haney-Lopez echoes Mills, reiterating the opportunity progressive intellectuals and activists face: "For the first time in the history of the country, we have a chance to convince perhaps even a majority of Whites that if they want a country for their children, if they want a secure retirement, if they want an economy and a government that works for them, and their family, their kin, they need to fight racism. We've never been there before."[36] The difficulty and urgency of this situation consists, in part, in the fact that conscious White supremacists are acutely aware of the deteriorating social conditions facing growing numbers of White people in the United States. Self-avowed "White nationalist" Greg Johnson, for example, explicitly identifies White "middle-class" college graduates facing exploding student debt and fewer job opportunities as potential recruits, writing, "For White Nationalists, they are a vast, increasingly receptive audience, for we are the only ones offering honest explanations of what is happening to them and realistic, long-term solutions."[37] Similarly, Johnson frames *The White Nationalist Manifesto* in the following terms: "In the present system, we [White people] have no future and we are acting accordingly. Loss of hope for the future

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[34] Shannon M. Monnat, "Deaths of Despair and Support for Trump in the 2016 Presidential Election," (2016), http://aese.psu.edu/directory/snm67/Election16.pdf.

[35] Brian F. Schaffner, Matthew Macwilliams, Tatishe Nteta, "Understanding White Polarization in the 2016 Vote for President: The Sobering Role of Racism and Sexism," *Political Science Quarterly*, 133:1 (2018): 9-34.

[36] Ian Haney-Lopez, "Dog Whistle Politics: Race, Policy and Economic Inequality," *Robert R. Wilson Lecture*, Duke University, March 2nd, 2017, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZYx5wX-d3qM, 1:03:27 – 1:05:00.

[37] Greg Johnson, "The Boomerang Generation: Connecting with Our Proletariat," *Counter-Currents Publishing*, August 27, 2013, https://www.counter-currents.com/2013/08/the-counter-currents-2013-summer-fundraiser-2/.

is what ties together a whole array of social pathologies afflicting White Americans. After rising steadily for centuries, White life expectancies are declining, something that we would only expect in times of war, famine, plague, or social collapse.... If Whites have no future in the current system, then we will simply have to set up a new one. That is the goal of White Nationalism. To give our people a future again, we need a new political vision and new political leadership."[38] As these examples indicate, self-conscious "White nationalists" are actively working to present White supremacist narratives and political projects as adequate interpretations of, and solutions to, declining standards of living across the White US population. In doing so, they explicitly endorse the pernicious zero-sum belief, widely held among the White US population (discussed in chapter one), that social, cultural, political, and/or economic gains for non-White people must come at the expense of White people.[39]

Part of the challenge, then, is to engage broader sectors of the White population with narratives which can both account for their worsening suffering and help mobilize them towards progressive – rather than White supremacist – ends. This brings me to the second reason I discuss White supremacy in the age of ecological catastrophe: it illustrates in the broadest possible terms one of this project's central claims (developed in chapter four) – namely, that White supremacy ultimately hurts most White people. David Roediger has recently elaborated this point vis-à-vis ecological catastrophe, exposing the misguided character of the eco-conscious "White nationalist" narrative I mention above. The relevant passage is worth quoting at length:

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[38] Greg Johnson, *The White Nationalist Manifesto* (San Francisco: Counter-Currents Publishing, 2018), 2-3.

[39] In self-avowed White nationalist Greg Johnson's words, "diversity simply means white dispossession." Contributor to the White nationalist webzine *Counter-Currents*, Spencer Quinn makes a similar point, writing of "the Left – especially the non-white Left," that "Nearly all of the Left's social and political movements for the last 150 years can be interpreted not through Progress or universal principles or human rights, but through the acquisition of power at the expense of white people." According to Quinn, the future will be "white supremacist" or "non-white supremacist" (by which he means characterized by the supremacy of non-White people). "As long as whites and non-whites coexist in a single country," he writes, "there can be no middle ground." Greg Johnson, *The White Nationalist Manifesto* (San Francisco: Counter-Currents Publishing, 2018), 2-3. Spencer J. Quinn, "Merrick Garland: Non-White Supremacist," *Counter-Currents*, June 21, 2021, https://counter-currents.com/2021/06/merrick-garland/#more-128343.

We have little chance of winning whites from the far-fetched idea that they are made miserable by people of color or from the false hope that they can pursue happiness through white identity if we do not allow that they are unspeakably sad and increasingly desperate. We will soon reach a limiting case in that regard. If all goes as planned the planet will shortly lose its ability to nurture the forms and number of living things it now sustains. To the considerable extent that they have more wealth average whites will presumably have more access to the planet's last fish, to increasingly scarce food in general, to the fossil fuels that helped broil the planet but will provide power to cool a few a little longer, and to habitats not flooded or on fire. Advantages will vary by class but absent change white advantage will be real. Such advantages will provide a few months of additional misery to the advantaged and perhaps even years to the truly advantaged—a longer window to watch the catastrophes from gated, climate-controlled havens until those fail.[40]

As Roediger suggests, the scope and severity of the ecological catastrophe are so great that even the most successful "White nationalist" endeavor to maximize in-group benefits by any means necessary will, at best, buy some White people a few additional months or years to wait out the end of the world (in the most literal sense of that phrase). When all is said and done, human extinction – the quite possible, perhaps likely, outcome of unbridled ecological catastrophe - means suffering and death for all, including White people.

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[40] David Roediger, "White Privilege, White Advantage, White and Human Misery," *Verso*, March 8, 2019,

https://www.versobooks.com/blogs/4262-White-privilege-White-advantage-White-and-human-misery. Roediger reiterates these claims in a more recent interview with George Yancy. See George Yancy, "It's Time for "Whiteness as Usual" to End," *Truthout,* May 23, 2021, https://truthout.org/articles/its-time-for-Whiteness-as-usual-to-end/?utm_campaign=Truthout%20Share%20Buttons&fbclid=IwAR2FKyU1Ei6-W14E6m6sNcMC1gR5Oo5JAOFYL-uB-GFcKyQV6Z8cJR65gtGI.

Roediger's remarks raise the two related questions which guide the current project. First, in what ways has White supremacy hurt White people? At first glance this may seem a strictly empirical question, a request for a descriptive account of the specific negative consequences White supremacy has had for White people. The question raises further conceptual issues, however. Any such account must not downplay the disproportionate harms many White people have inflicted on people of color in the name of White supremacy or the relative advantages they have accrued in the process. To do so would be to disavow undeniable historical realities and experiences, which would do an injustice to people of color. It would also constitute an inadequate explanation of the persistence and prevalence of White supremacy. At a theoretical level, then, the initial empirical question raises the issue of how we should understand White supremacy. David Roediger put it well: "How do we talk about the fact that Whiteness is a misery-producing machine for people of color, but likewise encourages people to accept miserable lives on the other side of the color line?"[41] In other words, what conception of White supremacy accounts for both relative White advantages accrued at the expense of people of color as well as the negative consequences White supremacy has had on many White people throughout US history? This raises a further theoretical question: how do we account for the persistence and prevalence of White supremacy if it has in fact hurt many White people? This question is less difficult to answer if we understand White supremacy as a system which has wholly benefited White people. From that perspective, White people strive (consciously or otherwise) to ensure its persistence and prevalence precisely because they benefit from it. The persistence and prevalence of White supremacy become less clear, however, if we understand it as a system which

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[41] David Roediger, "Whiteness in the Time of Trump," talk at Brown University. Available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=96m8FzPkUIc&. For the quoted statement see 21:04 – 21:49.

has, in part, hurt White people. How and why would White people support a system which harms them?

Philosophical Context

At the most general level, the current project adopts a broadly Black radical approach towards these questions. In doing so, my thinking has been greatly informed by Cedric Robinson's conceptualization of the Black Radical Tradition (BRT). As Gaye Theresa Johnson and Alex Lubin put it in their introduction to a recent collection of essays on Robinson and Black radicalism, the BRT is "a tradition of resistance honed by the history of racialized, permanent, hereditary, and chattel slavery that formed the contours of civic and social life in the Americas, Europe, and Africa. Grounded in Black resistance," they continue, "this practice produced an enduring vision of shared future whose principal promise is the abolition of all forms of oppression."[42] There are several points to highlight in this description. First, the Black Radical Tradition emerges from shared experiences of subjection to – and, more importantly, struggle against - racialized chattel slavery.[43] Second, as Charles Mills has recently noted, Black radical figures conceptualize and combat White supremacy as constitutive features of the United States and modern world.[44] Third, this "collective intelligence gathered from struggle," in Cedric Robinson's words, took shape through a complex web of inheritances, exchanges, and interactions between African and African-descended peoples living and

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[42] Gaye Theresa Johnson and Alex Lubin, eds., *Futures of Black Radicalism* (New York: Verso Books, 2017), 18.

[43] For the purposes of this project, I follow Tommie Shelby and Lawrence Blum in understanding racialization as, in Blum's words, "the treating of groups as if there were inherent and immutable differences between them; *as if* certain somatic characteristics marked the presence of significant characteristics of mind, emotion, and character; and *as if* some were of greater worth than others." See Tommie Shelby, "Ideology, Racism, and Critical Social Theory," *The Philosophical Forum* 34, no. 2 (June 2003), 169; Lawrence Blum, *"I'm Not a Racist, But . . .": The Moral Quandary of Race* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2002), 147. To refer to an institution such as chattel slavery as "racialized," then, is to say that it was/is constituted and sustained in part through a process of racialization.

[44] Charles Mills, *Black Rights/White Wrongs*, 202-203.

moving (forcibly or otherwise) between the Americas, Europe, and Africa.[45] The Black Radical Tradition is, in other words, a transatlantic – therefore transnational – constellation of texts and practices.[46] Fourth, the fundamental ideal and practice informing this tradition is "the abolition of all forms of oppression." In this regard, one of the tradition's hallmarks, evident from the work of Hubert Harrison, Claudia Jones, W.E.B. Du Bois, Angela Davis, Cedric Robinson, Stuart Hall, the Combahee River Collective, and Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor, to name just a few its many practitioners, is the transdisciplinary analysis and critique of the complex, historically dynamic relationship between capitalism, White supremacy, and heteropatriarchy. Relatedly, these analyses and critiques are deployed for the sake of negative social freedom, that is, collective liberation from the destructive constraints of economic, racialized, and gendered forms of domination as secured through the construction of social relations, practices, institutions, and cultures which prevent their reemergence.

This latter formulation highlights one point of contact (and contestation) between the BRT and the history of social and political philosophy, namely, the concept of *freedom*. Indeed, decades after the initial publication of *Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition*, Cedric Robinson explained that he wrote that classic text in part to demonstrate that enslaved African peoples developed "notions of freedom, agendas for freedom, protocols for freedom, movements for freedom."[47] The BRT thus challenges the still-pervasive "Whiteness" of social and political philosophy, to borrow Charles Mills's turn of phrase.[48] In contrast with philosophers such as Axel Honneth,

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[45] Cedric J. Robinson, *Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2000), xxx. For a history of Black struggle against racialized chattel slavery and Jim Crow, see Vincent Harding, *There Is a River: The Black Struggle for Freedom in America* (San Diego, Calif.: Harvest, 1993).

[46] For a classic discussion of the transatlantic character of Black resistance against White supremacy, see Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1993).

[47] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kF5abUP1PDM. For the quoted remarks, go to the 1:55 mark.

[48] Charles Mills, "The Whiteness of Political Philosophy," in *Black Rights/White Wrongs* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017): 181-200.

for example, who traces the idea of negative freedom to Thomas Hobbes's reflections on the religious civil wars of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Black radical figures such as W.E.B. Du Bois – who, of course, plays a central role in Robinson's account of the BRT - teach us that enslaved African peoples had enacted the idea of negative freedom for generations prior to Hobbes' birth.[49] Where Honneth's historical narrative regarding the notion of freedom centers White European men (Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau, Hegel, etc.), Du Bois, among other Black radical figures, centered enslaved African peoples and their descendants, writing, "The slave revolts were the beginnings of the revolutionary struggle for the uplift of the laboring masses in the modern world."[50] If, as Karen Ng has recently argued, Honneth's conception of social freedom is ultimately ideological, then I suggest the BRT offers resources for articulating a truly emancipatory of that indispensable human value.[51]

W.E.B. Du Bois's *The Souls of Black Folks* is one resource for exploring and developing a Black radical conception of freedom. As Du Bois explains in "Of Our Spiritual Strivings," enslaved African peoples and their American descendants gradually cultivated an integrated conception of freedom through their struggles against racialized chattel slavery and, later, Jim Crow. First committed to freedom from the bondage of racialized chattel slavery, Du Bois explains, formerly enslaved Black people learned that physical freedom alone was insufficient. They also needed political power,

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[49] Axel Honneth, *Freedom's Right: The Social Foundations of Democratic Life* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014), 22. As Du Bois points out in *The World and Africa*, enslaved peoples waged at least five major revolts between 1522 and 1560. Hobbes was born in 1588. W.E.B. Du Bois, *The World and Africa*, in Henry Louis Gates, ed., *The World and Africa and Color and Democracy: An Essay in the History and Sociology of the Negro Race* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, USA, 2007), 38. Hereafter cited as "W.E.B. Du Bois, *The World and Africa*." See also the early chapters of Vincent Harding's *There is a River* (cited above), which highlight African peoples' resistance to capture and enslavement during the early days of the transatlantic slave trade. Relatedly, see Howard McGary and Bill Lawson's *Between Slavery and Freedom* for discussions of the role that articulations of freedom play in narratives written by enslaved Black people. Howard McGary, *Between Slavery and Freedom: Philosophy and American Slavery* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992).

[50] Axel Honneth, *Freedom's Right* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014), 15. W.E.B. Du Bois, *The World and Africa*, 38.

[51] Karen Ng, "Social Freedom as Ideology," *Philosophy & Social Criticism* 45, no. 7 (2019): 795–818.

which is to say, freedom from political subjection. This, too, proved inadequate as the destructive consequences of widespread ignorance and poverty revealed the limitations of political rights without education and wealth. Over time, Du Bois suggests, their experiences and struggles led many Black people to articulate an integrated conception of negative social freedom:

> The bright ideals of the past, -- physical freedom, political power, the training of brains and the training of hands, -- all these in turn have waxed and waned, until even the last grows dim and overcast. Are they all wrong, -- all false? No, not that, but each alone was over-simple and incomplete...To be really true, all these ideals must be melted and welded into one... Freedom, too, the long-sought, we still seek, -- the freedom of life and limb, the freedom to work and think, the freedom to love and aspire. Work, culture, liberty, -- all these we need, not singly but together, not successively but together, each growing and aiding each...[52]

Here Du Bois articulates an integrated conception of what I referred to above as "negative social freedom." First, as this passage suggests, the ideal of freedom at stake in Black radical struggles is an integrated one: it entails a recognition of the mutual necessity of physical, political, cultural, and economic freedoms. It is negative insofar as it entails freedom from the destructive constraints of bondage, political subjection, ignorance, and poverty - or "the unloosing of the energies and capabilities of the depressed," as Du Bois put it elsewhere.[53] Finally, this conception of freedom is social

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[52] W.E.B. Du Bois, The *Souls of Black Folk* (Gorham, ME: Myers Education Press, 2018), 14.

[53] W.E.B. Du Bois, *Color and Democracy*, in Henry Louis Gates, ed., *The World and Africa and Color and Democracy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, USA, 2007), 313.

insofar as its realization depends on the construction of enabling social conditions, relations, practices, and institutions.[54]

A full elaboration and defense of this conception of freedom goes well beyond the scope of this project. For my present purposes, I offer this brief discussion as a way of highlighting one connection (and point of contestation) between the BRT and the history of social and political philosophy and illustrating the background normative orientation which informs the current project. My focus in the chapters that follow is the systemic, mutually constitutive relationship between White supremacy and economic domination. In discussing this relationship, I draw inspiration from Charles Mills's brief account of the distinctively Black radical dimension of his emerging Black radical liberal project. This dimension of the project, Mills suggests, will require a critical engagement with Du Bois and Marx as mediated through the insights of Cedric Robinson. More specifically, Mills suggests that the Black radical liberal project will require the development of a critical class analysis of race. Citing the "modified Marxist framework" of Cedric Robinson's *Black Marxism*, Mills explains that

> "whites" as a group need to be disaggregated into classes, and the imperative of
> capital accumulation and the role of different class forces within "races" must be
> taken into account in explaining the overall trajectory of the system. Thus a more
> complex political picture is involved, for which struggle against *both* racial and
> class domination is required.[55]

Following Mills' suggestion, I draw on W.E.B. Du Bois to explore the mutually constitutive relationship between systemic White supremacy (interrelated White supremacist culture and practices) and

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[54] In other words, this form of freedom can only be realized and sustained under certain social conditions. It cannot be possessed or enjoyed by individuals qua individuals.

[55] Charles Mills, *Black Rights/White Wrongs*, 202.

18

economic domination. In doing so, I provide provisional answers to the guiding questions mentioned above. As the reader will recall, there were three:

(1) How has White supremacy hurt White people throughout US history?

(2) What conception of White supremacy accounts for both relative White advantages accrued at the expense of people of color as well as the negative consequences White supremacy has had on many White people throughout US history?

(3) How do we account for the persistence and prevalence of White supremacy if it has in fact hurt many White people?

To anticipate the discussion I develop in chapters three and four, I answer these questions in the following manner:

(1) White supremacy has historically intensified many White people's subjection to economic domination.

(2) Systemic White supremacy has been, and remains, an ensemble of cultural and practical resources which have enabled many White people to attain and secure a relative degree of social mobility and security within a broader system of economic domination. This relative degree of mobility and security has come at the expense of people of color.

(3) White supremacy has persisted and prevailed in part because it has offered many White people cultural and practical resources for interpreting and coping with economic domination.

To conclude this brief discussion of the broader philosophical context behind the current project, I would like to add that I regard the chapters that follow primarily as a series of inquiries into a pressing social problem – namely, the persistence and prevalence of White supremacy in the age of ecological catastrophe. However, they also constitute a modest attempt to address a significant gap in the philosophical literature – namely, that between critical philosophy of race and critical theory. With a few

exceptions, academic philosophers have generally had little to say about the relationship between race and class, racialized domination and economic domination, or White supremacy and capitalism.[56] As Lucius Outlaw, Jr. pointed out decades ago, critical philosophers of race have tended to neglect questions of class domination, capitalism and its legitimating ideologies, and anti-capitalist struggles.[57] Tommy Curry recently made a similar point, arguing that contemporary philosophers of race have neglected the analysis of economic status, political power, and social stratifications.[58] Regarding the other side of the aisle, Lucius Outlaw, Jr. also highlighted the apparent inability or unwillingness of critical theorists of capitalism/class/economic domination to take matters of race and racism seriously.[59] Charles Mills has more recently corroborated that point, arguing that critical theory "needs to be deracialized," which is to say, purged of its Whiteness (in the sense of systematic silence/ignorance regarding matters of race and racism). In his succinct formulation, "Critical theory needs to start talking to critical race theory."[60]

The result of this mutual neglect is a social-theoretical lacuna: an inadequate theorization of the complex imbrication of *both* race *and* class, racialized domination *and* economic domination, White supremacy *and* capitalism. This is particularly unfortunate because there is a rich history of efforts to address *both* race *and* class as fundamentally interdependent sites of social struggle in the

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[56] Nancy Fraser, "Is Capitalism Necessarily Racist?," *Presidential Address*, Eastern Division Meeting of the American Philosophical Association, Savannah, GA, January 5, 2018, http://quarterly.politicsslashletters.org/is-capitalism-necessarily-racist/; Larry Alan Busk, "From the Epistemology of Ignorance to Rassenwahn: Thinking Ideology with Mills and Adorno," *Constellations* (2020): 1 - 11.

[57] Lucius T. Outlaw, Jr., *Critical Social Theory in the Interest of Black Folks* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2005).

[58] Tommy Curry, "Canonizing the Critical Race Artifice," in Paul C. Taylor, Linda Martin Alcoff, and Luvell Anderson, eds., *The Routledge Companion to Philosophy of Race* (New York and London: Routledge, 2018), 394.

[59] Lucius T. Outlaw, Jr., *Critical Social Theory in the Interest of Black Folks* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2005).

[60] Charles Mills, "Criticizing Critical theory," in Penelope Deutscher and Cristina Lafont, eds., *Critical Theory in Critical Times* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2017), 235. Cf. Charles Mills, *Black Rights / White Wrongs*, 203-204.

United States. This history, however, is often effaced by popular representations of the civil rights movement, which reduce "the movement" to a singular struggle against racial injustice and erase the class politics of the period.[61] Popular recollections of Martin Luther King Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech, for example, tend to overlook its political context: the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom. The chief organizer of that march was Bayard Rustin, a former member of the Communist Party who argued that the civil rights movement needed to move "beyond race relations to economic relations" and focus on the "refashioning of our political economy."[62] King, too, called for the civil rights movement to turn its attention to the struggle for economic equality and dedicated his life to the formation of a labor-civil rights coalition.[63] In the years following the march, he worked with Rustin and A. Philip Randolph, organizer of the first predominantly Black labor union in the country (the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters) to develop a "Freedom Budget" that laid out an agenda for realizing a full-employment economy and the abolition of poverty in the United States.[64]

This history of race-and-class theorizations and struggles does not begin in the 1960s either; nor can it be reduced to a broadly left-liberal response to the dual problems of white supremacy and capitalism in the United States. While the authors of the "Freedom Budget" eschewed the need for a radical change in the U.S. economic system, there is a rich history of leftist race-and-class movements in the United States, including the Maoist-inflected internationalist struggles of the Black Panther Party, which explicitly worked to reinvent Marx's concept of the lumpenproletariat, and the

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[61] Shana A. Russell, "Intersectionality: A Young Scholar Responds," *Science & Society* 82, no. 2 (2018), 290.

[62] Adolph Reed, Jr., "Revolution as 'National Liberation' and the origins of neoliberal antiracism," *Socialist Register* 53 (2017), 315.

[63] Michael Honey, *All Labor Has Dignity,* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2011), 175; Michael Honey, *To the Promised Land,* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2018).

[64] Michael Honey, *All Labor Has Dignity,* 315. A. Philip Randolph and Bayard Rustin, "A 'Freedom Budget' for all Americans" (New York: A. Philip Randolph Institute, 1967), 10. Available at https://www.prrac.org/pdf/FreedomBudget.pdf

revolutionary theorizations and aspirations developed by radical Black leftists in the early 20th cen-

tury.[65] As historian Robin Kelley has shown, for example, the Communist Party helped lay the infra-

structural foundations for the Civil Rights Movement in the South.[66] Black radical figures such as

Claudia Jones, Harry Haywood, Cyril Briggs, and Hubert Harrison worked within and around the

Communist Party in the early decades of the 20th century to advance the cause of an anti-racist revo-

lutionary politics.[67] Indeed, as Stephen C. Ferguson III has emphasized, socialism and Marxism-

Leninism are integral parts of African-American history and culture.[68] Despite systematic efforts on

the part of corporate Democrats to separate "race" from "class" since at least the 1940s, a burgeoning

historical and sociological literature on "racial capitalism" has begun to draw on this history, partic-

ularly since the publication of Cedric Robinson's *Black Marxism*.[69] Academic philosophers, however,

have yet to bring our tools of conceptual and normative analysis to bear on these issues. This project,

then, represents my modest attempt to initiate and encourage that task.

Chapter Overview

On October 10th, 1946, Justice Charles E. Toney of the New York City Municipal Court

wrote to W.E.B Du Bois, suggesting that he write on the moral, social, economic, and cultural losses

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[65] Shana A. Russell, "Intersectionality: A Young Scholar Responds," *Science & Society* 82, no. 2 (2018), 290.

[66] Robin D.G. Kelly, *Hammer and Hoe: Alabama Communists During the Great Depression* (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1990).

[67] Michael C. Dawson, *Blacks In and Out of the Left* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2013), 18. For a recently published collection of primary texts from this period, see Paul Heideman, *Class Struggle and the Color Line, American Socialism and the Race Question 1900-1930* (Chicago: Haymarket, 2018).

[68] Stephen C. Ferguson III, *The Philosophy of African-American Studies: Nothing Left of Blackness* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2015), 8.

[69] See the recent *Monthly Review* issue on "racial capitalism," available at: https://monthlyreview.org/2020/07/01/mr-072-03-2020-07_0/. For a critical discussion of postwar liberals' systematic efforts to separate "race" from "class," see Touré F. Reed, *Toward Freedom: The Case against Race Reductionism* (London; Verso, 2020).

suffered by "the American White man...by the mistreatment of the Negroes."[70] In his response, Du Bois acknowledged the importance of such work, but declined to undertake the project, citing internal difficulties at the NAACP.[71] Seventy years later, labor historian David Roediger posed a similar question: "How do we talk about the fact that Whiteness is a misery-producing machine for people of color, but likewise encourages people to accept miserable lives on the other side of the color line?"[72] The second chapter, "White Privilege and White Self-Sabotage," highlights the contemporary urgency of this question in light of the significant limitations with White privilege discourse and proposes to approach it in terms of a theory of White supremacist ideology. The first section draws on popular media to highlight the contemporary prevalence of "White privilege discourse," which is a narrative framework that emphasizes the unearned advantages White people have accrued at the expense of people of color throughout US history. In doing so, it identifies one general limitation of White privilege discourse – namely, that it operates as an external critique of White supremacy. In section two, I draw on social-scientific research to highlight two prominent sociohistorical developments that present challenges for White privilege discourse. First, many White people interpret racism (qua discrimination) and interracial political and economic relations in zero-sum terms ("zero-sum Whiteness"). Second, increasing numbers of White people are experiencing worsening levels of relative socioeconomic and biological precarity ("White precarity").[73] These sociopolitical

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[70] "Letter from Charles E. Toney to W. E. B. Du Bois, October 10, 1946," accessed March 22, 2019, http://credo.library.umass.edu/view/full/mums312-b112-i180.

[71] "Letter from W. E. B. Du Bois to Charles E. Toney, November 14, 1946," accessed March 22, 2019, http://credo.library.umass.edu/view/full/mums312-b112-i181.

[72] David Roediger, "Whiteness in the Time of Trump," talk at Brown University. Available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=96m8FzPkUIc&. For the quoted statement see 21:04 – 21:49.

[73] By "biological precarity" here I mean, roughly, a condition of being vulnerable to poor health and well-being. People who suffer disproportionately from disease (heart disease, cancer, etc.) and mental health issues (depression and anxiety), for example, are biologically precarious in this sense.

developments, I argue, present two challenges for White privilege discourse. First, White privilege discourse is not likely to gain political traction in the context of zero-sum Whiteness and White precarity. Second, it may inadvertently provoke White backlash effects. In closing this section, I argue that these challenges indicate the need for a complementary, non-zero-sum approach to White supremacy, that is, one which attends to the detrimental impact that white supremacy has had on many White people. In section three, I propose that this non-zero-sum approach can be developed through a broad ideology-critique framework. First, I draw on sociologists Ian Haney López and Jonathan Metzl to show that White supremacy has contributed to White precarity. This evidence, I suggest, raises the question of how to conceptualize the relationship between White supremacy, White privilege, and White precarity. Drawing on Linda Alcoff, I propose to conceptualize this relationship in terms of a theory of White supremacist ideology.

Contemporary accounts of racist ideology tend to centralize the concept of social practices. Focusing on Sally Haslanger, the third chapter, "Racist Ideology: From Social Practices to Social Problems," (1) argues that this approach neglects questions of interests and power; and (2) proposes a shift in focus to the concept of social problems. The first section reconstructs Haslanger's account of racist ideology, highlighting her reliance on the concepts of *social practices* and *looping effects*. Section two argues that Haslanger overlooks the historical and political dimension of the examples she uses to illustrate her account of racist ideology. In so doing, she fails to account for the importance of agency, interests, and power in the reproduction and maintenance of racist ideology. Section three discusses the implications of this oversight, arguing that Haslanger's account does not adequately explain the presence and persistence of racist ideology and fails to account for significant obstacles to the critique of ideology. Section four explores undeveloped resources in Haslanger's work to suggest that a critical conception of racist ideology that centralizes the concept of social problems may allow us to account for the relationship between social practices, interests, and power.

24

Lucius T. Outlaw, Jr. and Robert Gooding-Williams have shown that the notion of *social problems* plays a central role in W.E.B. Du Bois's "The Study of the Negro Problems." Where Outlaw highlights the historical and philosophical anthropological dimension of this notion, Gooding-Williams emphasizes its cultural and political dimension. The fourth chapter, "W.E.B. Du Bois and the Study of Social Problems: Systemic and Agonistic," extends their work to outline Du Bois's systemic and agonistic conception of social problems. On this account, social problems are multidimensional (historical, anthropological, cultural, political) conflicts between social ideals and conditions. Furthermore, these conflicts are: (1) functions of structured social relations of domination; and (2) sites of ongoing normative struggles over the control and management of social relations; with (3) similar practical implications for all those who are similarly situated within the broader social system.

The fifth chapter, "White Elite Subterfuge, White Supremacist Ideology, and the White Boomerang Effect," extends the systemic and agonistic conception of social problems to reconstruct an account of White supremacist ideology from Du Bois's writings. The first section argues that, for Du Bois, White supremacist culture provides an action-guiding framework for identifying, interpreting, and resolving social problems. The second section rearticulates the systemic and agonistic account of social problems to construct a notion of economic domination as a social problem. The third section explores Du Bois's analysis of poor White support for the Confederate elite during the Civil War and the overthrow of Reconstruction, as well as White workers' participation in the Red Summer of 1919, to make three related claims: (1) White supremacist culture has concealed elite White economic domination of working-class White people; (2) White supremacist practices have served as palliative means for coping with economic domination; (3) White supremacist practices have reinforced White elite economic domination of non-elite White people. The final section ties these claims together to argue that White supremacist culture has functioned as an ideology – that is, a constellation of social meanings and narratives that conceal and rationalize White elite

25

domination of non-elite White people and guide palliative social practices which, in perpetuating White domination of people of color, simultaneously intensify non-elite White people's subjection to economic domination.

The conclusion, "Racism's Revenge," **(I)** recaps and briefly elaborates on my Du Boisian account of White supremacist ideology and the White boomerang effect; **(II-IV)** briefly extends this account to the late 20th and early 21st centuries; **(V)** further illustrates this account through a discussion of the January 6th Capitol riot; **(VI)** identifies the contributions I hope to have made with this project; and **(VII)** briefly describes my future research plans.

Chapter II

White Privilege Discourse and White Self-Sabotage

White Privilege Discourse

The terms "racism," "white supremacy," and "white privilege" have received unprecedented public attention since the emergence of the Black Lives Matter movement in 2013. Perhaps the best indication of this is the role that these terms played in the 2016 and 2020 presidential campaigns. Shortly after Trump secured the 2016 Republican presidential nomination, for example, Hillary Clinton criticized his references to poverty, crime, and poor education in Black communities, re-marking that "he certainly doesn't have any solutions to take on the reality of systemic racism and create more equity and opportunity in communities of color."[74] Shortly after, at a fundraiser in New York City, Clinton infamously referred to "half of Donald Trump's supporters" as a "basket of de-plorables...The racist, sexist, homophobic, xenophobic, Islamaphobic—you name it."[75] Finally, Clin-ton insisted at a NAACP convention in Cincinnati that "we white Americans...need to recognize our privilege."[76]

The 2020 presidential election campaign offers similar examples, with Democratic hopefuls taking up issues of "institutional racism" and "systemic racism" on the national debate stage and

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[74] Hillary Clinton, "Hillary Clinton speech on how Donald Trump's campaign has mainstreamed the "Alt-Right" hate movement," August 25, 2016, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_soeyHVrawY.

[75] Katie Reilly, "Read Hillary Clinton's 'Basket of Deplorables' Remarks About Donald Trump Supporters," *Time*, Sep-tember 10, 2016, https://time.com/4486502/hillary-clinton-basket-of-deplorables-transcript/.

[76] "Hillary Clinton: 'We White Americans...Need to Recognize Our Privilege'," *NBC News*, July 18, 2016, https://www.nbcnews.com/video/hillary-clinton-we-white-americans-need-to-recognize-our-privilege-727176259735.

publicly condemning Trump as a "white supremacist."[77] "Racism in America is endemic," Democratic candidate Beto O'Rourke declared at the Houston presidential debate. "It is foundational. We can mark the creation of this country not at the Fourth of July, 1776, but August 20, 1619, when the first kidnapped African was brought to this country against his will."[78] Peter Buttigieg echoed O'Rourke, remarking that "[w]e've had a lot challenges in this country, but the one that actually almost ended this country in the civil war was white supremacy...It could be the lurking issue that ends this country in the future, if we don't wrangle it down in our time."[79] Similarly, Democratic candidate Kirsten Gillibrand declared during a national debate that she "can talk to those white women in the suburbs that voted for Trump and explain to them what white privilege actually is. That when their son is walking down a street with a bag of M&M's in his pocket, wearing a hoody, his whiteness is what protects him from not being shot...that is what white privilege in America is today."[80] Elsewhere, Beto O'Rourke acknowledged "the truth of the criticism that I have enjoyed white privilege."[81]

Although these presidential hopefuls did not define the terms "racism," "systemic racism," "white supremacy," or "white privilege," their public remarks suggest that, when it comes to matters

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[77] Ronald Brownstein, "Why race is moving center stage for 2020," *CNN*, September 17, 2019, https://www.cnn.com/2019/09/17/politics/2020-candidates-voters-racism-sexism-attitudes/index.html; Elizabeth Thomas and Abby Cruz, "More 2020 Democrats calling Trump a 'white supremacist'," *ABC News,* August 9, 2019, https://abcnews.go.com/Politics/2020-democrats-calling-trump-white-supremacist/story?id=64885082.

[78] Ronald Brownstein, "Why race is moving center stage for 2020," *CNN*, September 17, 2019, https://www.cnn.com/2019/09/17/politics/2020-candidates-voters-racism-sexism-attitudes/index.html.

[79] Martin Pengelly, "Pete Buttigieg: white supremacy could be the end of America," *The Guardian*, July 21, 2019, https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2019/jul/21/pete-buttigieg-trump-racist-comments-white-supremacy.

[80] Kyle Morris, "Kirsten Gillibrand: White Privilege Keeps Whites From 'Being Shot'," *Breitbart*, July 31, 2019, https://www.breitbart.com/politics/2019/07/31/kirsten-gillibrand-white-privilege-keeps-whites-being-shot/.

[81] "Beto O'Rourke: I have enjoyed white privilege," *CNN*, https://www.cnn.com/videos/politics/2019/03/16/beto-orourke-wife-joke-apology-white-privilege-sot-vpx.cnn.

of race and racism, they understand the history of the United States primarily through the lens of what I call "White privilege discourse." Simply put, White privilege discourse is a narrative framework which centers the racialized advantages many White people have enjoyed at the expense of people of color throughout US history. Put otherwise, this discourse is premised on an understanding of White privilege as a "system of unearned social, psychological, and material benefits overtly and covertly granted to persons by virtue of their membership in the white racial category."[82] Of course, the concept of *White privilege* has a long history in the United States. As Olivia Perlow and Laurie Fuller point out, it appears as early as the antebellum period, when abolitionists used the phrase "the privilege of white people" to refer to the systematic legal rights granted to White people and refused to people of color.[83] It has since appeared in the writings of W.E.B. Du Bois, labor historian Theodore Allen, and, perhaps most famously, Peggy McIntosh.[84] White privilege discourse, then, is not new, however its prevalence in the 2016 and 2020 presidential campaigns indicate that, as Linda Alcoff and Andrew Pierce have recently noted, it now occupies an unprecedented role in public discourse.[85]

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[82] Perlow and Fuller, "White Privilege," 1. For an earlier defense of this definition of "White privilege" and a conceptual analysis of the relationship between privilege and benefits or advantages, see Alison Bailey, "Privilege: Expanding on Marilyn Frye's 'Oppression,'" *Journal of Social Philosophy* 29, no. 3 (1998): 104–19. Sociologists Joe Feagin and Kimberley Ducey offer a similar definition: "the large set of advantages and benefits inherited by each generation of those routinely defined as 'white' in the social structure and processes of U.S. society." Joe R. Feagin and Kimberley Ducey, *Racist America: Roots, Current Realities, and Future Reparations*, (New York and London: Routledge, 2019), 212. Hereafter cited as "Feagin and Ducey, *Racist America*."

[83] Perlow and Fuller, "White Privilege," 1.

[84] Ibid., 2.

[85] Linda Alcoff, *The Future of Whiteness* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2015), 116, 171; Andrew J. Pierce, "Interest Convergence: An Alternative to White Privilege Models of Anti-Racist Pedagogy and Practice," *Teaching Philosophy* 39, no. 4 (2016), 509.

Indeed, *Inside Higher Ed* contributor Cory Weinberg suggests that we are living in a "white privilege moment."[86] Beyond the facts that White privilege has been the regular subject of introductory sociology courses and an annual conference, Weinberg cites the growing right-wing reaction as evidence of the current prevalence of White privilege discourse. At the time, Weinberg was concerned with Bill O'Reilly's incendiary dismissal of the notion of White privilege on his Fox News show, as well as the hate mail sent to participants in the White Privilege Conference. This reaction has only intensified since the 2014 publication of Weinberg's article. Since then, the late Trump administration instructed federal agencies to end "racial sensitivity trainings" that address White privilege and critical race theory.[87] Self-avowed "white nationalist" Greg Johnson has more recently published a book that, among other things, "debunks the idea of 'white privilege'."[88]

Setting right-wing reactions aside for the time being (more on them below), it seems to me that White privilege discourse has become the dominant framework for interpreting and challenging the historical and contemporary impacts of White supremacy in the United States. On this point, we can consider the various private school diversity initiatives focused on White privilege.[89] White privilege has also become increasingly central to corporate diversity and racial sensitivity trainings.[90]

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[86] Cory Weinberg, "The White Privilege Moment," *Inside Higher Ed*, May 28, 2014, https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2014/05/28/academics-who-study-white-privilege-experience-attention-and-criticism.

[87] Matthew S. Schwartz, "Trump Tells Agencies to End Trainings On 'White Privilege' And 'Critical Race Theory'," *NPR*, September 5, 2020, https://www.npr.org/2020/09/05/910053496/trump-tells-agencies-to-end-trainings-on-white-privilege-and-critical-race-theory.

[88] Greg Johnson, *White Identity Politics* (San Francisco: Counter-Currents Publishing, 2020).

[89] Kyle Spencer, "At New York Private Schools, Challenging White Privilege from the Inside," *The New York Times*, February 2, 2015, https://www.nytimes.com/2015/02/22/nyregion/at-new-york-private-schools-challenging-white-privilege-from-the-inside.html.

[90] Ama Afrifa-Tchie and Sarah McIntosh, "'White privilege': using HR's influence to tackle racism and bias," *Personnel Today*, October 12, 2020, https://www.personneltoday.com/hr/white-privilege-using-hrs-influence-to-tackle-racism-and-bias/.

The Virtual White Men's Caucus, for example, aims to help "leaders... [e]xplore how racism, sexism, heterosexism, and classism operate as *systemic advantage/privilege* in work, community and personal life."[91] Popular media commentators regularly offer their opinions about White privilege.[92] There has even been a Netflix special and celebrity public service announcement about White privilege.[93] White privilege has increasingly become the subject of academic studies. There is, for example, an abundant social-scientific literature that explores White perceptions of, and reactions to, information about White privilege.[94] There is also the vast empirical literature on "racial disparities,"

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[91] https://wmfdp.com/virtual-white-mens-caucus/; https://www.racialequitytools.org/curricula/transforming-white-privilege

[92] To cite just a few examples: Ella Alexander, "Understanding white privilege: 20 everyday examples," *Bazaar,* January 7, 2021, https://www.harpersbazaar.com/uk/culture/a32752175/white-privilege-everyday-examples/; Stephanie Rendall, "What is white privilege? the origins and meaning of the term used amid Black Lives Matter debate - and why it's misunderstood," *The Scotsman,* September 7, 2020, https://www.scotsman.com/news/world/what-white-privilege-origins-and-meaning-term-used-amid-black-lives-matter-debate-and-why-its-misunderstood-2884982; Luke Pearson and Sophie Verass, "10 things you should know about white privilege," *NITV,* October 2016, 17, https://www.sbs.com.au/nitv/10-things-you-should-know-about-white-privilege/63cad15c-ff04-4c9f-95b6-597cfd213236; Jon Greenberg, "10 Examples That Prove White Privilege Exists in Every Aspect Imaginable," *Yes!,* July 24, 2017, https://www.yesmagazine.org/social-justice/2017/07/24/10-examples-that-prove-white-privilege-exists-in-every-aspect-imaginable; Christina Wyman, "Dear white people: Stop confessing to white privilege. Start acting to end it," *Detroit Free Press,* July 5, 2020, https://www.freep.com/story/opinion/contributors/2020/07/05/dear-white-people-stop-confessing-white-privilege-act-change-racist-systems/5375191002/.

[93] Christi Carras, "White celebrities partner with NAACP to 'take responsibility' for racism," *Los Angeles Times* June 11, 2020, https://www.latimes.com/entertainment-arts/story/2020-06-11/i-take-responsibility-video-white-celebrities-naacp; https://www.netflix.com/title/80244973

[94] Alexandra Murdoch and Kareena McAloney-Kocaman, "Exposure to Evidence of White Privilege and Perceptions of Hardships Among White UK Residents," *Race and Social Problems,* (2019); Erin Cooley, "Complex Intersections of Race and Class: Among Social Liberals, Learning about White Privilege Reduces Sympathy, Increases Blame, and Decreases External Attributions for White People Struggling with Poverty," *Journal of Experimental Psychology: General* (2019); Naa Oyo A. Kwate and Melody S. Goodman, "An Empirical Analysis of White Privilege, Social Position and Health," *Social Science & Medicine* 1982, no. 116 (2014): 150–60; Louisa C. Egan Brad, Tatiana J. Spisz, and Chloé G. Tanega, "Does 'Privilege Checking' Make Us Less Racist, or More? Generation and Political Orientation Matter," *Race and Social Problems* 11, no. 1 (2019): 1–14; Tracie L. Stewart, "White Privilege Awareness and Efficacy to Reduce Racial Inequality Improve White Americans' Attitudes Toward African Americans," *Journal of Social Issues* 68, no. 1 (2012): 11–27; Tracie L. Stewart, "Yes We Can!: Prejudice Reduction Through Seeing (Inequality) and Believing (in Social Change)," *Psychological Science* 21, no. 11 (2010): 1557–62; Nyla R. Branscombe, Michael T. Schmitt, and Kristin Schiffhauer, "Racial Attitudes in Response to Thoughts of White Privilege," *European Journal of Social Psychology* 37, no. 2 (2007): 203–15; Kim A. Case, "Raising White Privilege Awareness and Reducing Racial Prejudice: Assessing Diversity Course Effectiveness," *Teaching of Psychology* 34, no. 4 (October 1, 2007): 231–35; L. Taylor Phillips and Brian S. Lowery, "The Hard-Knock Life? Whites Claim Hardships in Response to Racial Inequity," *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology* 61 (November 1, 2015): 12–18; Eric D. Knowles et al., "Deny, Distance, or Dismantle? How White Americans Manage a Privileged Identity," *Perspectives on Psychological Science* 9, no. 6 (2014): 594–609.

which, to put it simply, details the many disadvantages people of color face relative to White people and, in so doing, highlights various contemporary manifestations of White privilege.

This unprecedented national attention to White privilege is a small step in the right direction for a nation constructed through racialized colonial genocide and chattel slavery. As George Lipsitz and Cheryl Harris, among others, have detailed, White people have historically accrued a broad range of unearned psychological, social, cultural, political, and economic advantages at the expense of people of color.[95] The aforementioned empirical literature on "racial disparities" demonstrates that they continue to do so. The construction of a true multiracial democracy will require, among other things, a conscious recognition of the historical and contemporary impacts White supremacy has had on people of color. It will also require widescale social change. This is where White privilege discourse suffers significant limitations.

The general problem is that White privilege-centered critiques of White supremacy emphasize the illicit advantages White people have attained at the expense of people of color throughout US history. Relatedly, they highlight the disproportionate negative impacts White supremacy has had on people of color to the relative benefit of many White people. My concern here, then, is that, when it comes to enacting concrete sociopolitical change to address the historical and contemporary impacts of White supremacy, White privilege discourse implicitly asks White people to abandon the various unearned advantages that constitute their so-called privilege. White privilege discourse thus highlights the losses White people must endure for the sake of anti-White supremacist social change. If White supremacy benefits White people and hurts people of color, White privilege discourse implies that anti-White supremacy will benefit people of color and hurt White people. At

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[95] George Lipsitz, *The Possessive Investment in Whiteness: How White People Profit from Identity Politics* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2006); Cheryl I. Harris, "Whiteness as Property," *Harvard Law Review* 106, no. 8 (1993): 1707–91.

the very least, White privilege discourse remains silent regarding the potential ways in which many White people could benefit from anti-White supremacist change. In either case, the practical result is a zero-sum interpretation of White supremacy.

Several scholars and organizers have highlighted the limited character of the zero-sum implications of White privilege discourse. Rev. Dr. Thandeka, for example, has recently suggested that "racism will not go away until whites are recognized as racial victims of white America too."[96] Tim Wise makes a similar point: "Unless we focus just as much attention on the harms and downside of relative privilege, the best we can hope for is that altruism alone will motivate activism against racism."[97] Echoing Wise, organizer Jesse A. Meyerson insists that "white anti-racism must be based in solidarity, not altruism."[98] More recently, Ibram X. Kendi, Ian Haney-Lopez, and Heather McGhee have highlighted the pernicious character of this zero-sum interpretation. According to Kendi, the notion that "racism materially benefits the majority of white people, that white people would lose and not gain in the reconstruction of an antiracist America" is "one of the oldest myths of the modern era."[99] Similarly, Ian Haney-Lopez and Heather McGhee reflect on the potential for US progressives to construct a multiracial coalition capable of addressing both White supremacy and economic domination. One necessary condition for achieving this task, they emphasize, is for "the left...to challenge

[96] Thandeka, "Whites: Made in America: Advancing American Authors' Discourse on Race," *The Pluralist* 13, no. 1 (2018), 27.

[97] Tim Wise, "Brilliance without Passion: Whiteness Scholarship and the Struggle against Racism," *Souls: A Critical Journal of Black Politics, Culture, and* Society 4, No. 4 (2002): 65-66.

[98] Jesse A. Meyerson, "White Anti-Racism Must Be Based in Solidarity, Not Altruism," *The Nation*, February 5, 2018, https://www.thenation.com/article/archive/white-anti-racism-must-be-based-in-solidarity-not-altruism/.

[99] Ibram X. Kendi, *Stamped from the Beginning: The Definitive History of Racist Ideas in America* (New York: Nation Books, 2016), 503.

its own orthodoxy that defines racism as something that *wholly* benefits White people and *solely* victimizes people of color."[100]

We find perhaps the most direct discussion of this zero-sum framework in economic and social policy expert Heather McGhee's recent *The Sum of Us*.[101] Her book details, as the subtitle states, "what racism costs everyone and how we can prosper together." Throughout this important book McGhee offers historical and ethnographic evidence to disprove what she calls "the old zero-sum paradigm," according to which White people benefit from systemic racism at the expense of people of color.[102] As she explains in the introduction, well-intentioned, progressive supporters of efforts to realize anti-racist social change often analyze White supremacy "through a prism of com-petition, every advantage for one group mirrored by a disadvantage for another."[103] The "real story," however, is more complex. Although Black people and other people of color were (and continue to be) disproportionately impacted by White supremacy, White people, McGhee writes, "for the most part...lost right along with the rest of us. Racism got in the way of all of us having nice things."[104]

Kendi, Haney-Lopez, and McGhee do not explicitly elaborate on their claims that White privilege discourse constitutes a "myth" or "orthodoxy". Their remarks suggest, however, that White privilege discourse, though widely accepted within progressive circles, offers a limited understanding

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[100] Ian Haney López and Heather McGhee, "How Populists Like Bernie Sanders Should Talk About Racism," *The Nation*, January 28, 2016, https://www.thenation.com/article/how-populists-like-bernie-sanders-should-talk-about-racism/, emphasis added. Cf. Heather C. McGhee, "The Way Out of America's Zero-Sum Thinking on Race and Wealth," *The New York Times*, February 13, 2021, https://www.nytimes.com/2021/02/13/opinion/race-economy-inequality-civil-rights.html.

[101] Heather C. McGhee, *The Sum of Us: What Racism Costs Everyone and How We Can Prosper Together* (New York: One World, 2021).

[102] Ibid., xxii.

[103] Ibid., xix.

[104] Ibid.

of the history of White supremacy in the United States. More specifically, it fails to capture the ways in which many White people have been hurt by White supremacy and, therefore, could benefit from anti-White supremacist social change. Drawing inspiration from Kendi, Haney-Lopez, and McGhee, this chapter offers a pragmatic argument that illustrates the need for, and urgency of, non-zero-sum account of White supremacy, that is, one which attends to the ways in which White supremacy has hurt many White people throughout US history.[105]

Before I present that argument, I would like to note that I am not the first philosopher to raise concerns regarding White privilege discourse. The argument that follows complements recent criticisms of White privilege discourse in the philosophical literature. Naomi Zack, Lewis Gordon, and Michael Monahan, for example, have argued that White privilege discourse conflates rights and privileges.[106] Andrew Pierce has recently discussed the "psychological barriers to the effectiveness of white privilege pedagogy,"[107] arguing that attribution and in-group biases undermine pedagogical efforts to educate White students regarding their White privilege. Shannon Sullivan recently argued that the concept of *White privilege* does not capture the racialized advantages conferred upon "poor

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[105] For the purposes of this project, I understand a pragmatic approach as one which attends to the concrete, contextual, and historically-specific relationship between concepts and social practices – and, more specifically, the practical implications and consequences of specific social concepts under specific social conditions or situations. With respect to the contemporary philosophical literature, as I read it, Cornel West, Eddie Glaude, Jr., Shannon Sullivan, Melvin Rogers, Jose Medina, and Elizabeth Anderson are pragmatic philosophers in the preceding sense of the term. Further discussion of pragmatist methodology goes beyond the scope of the current project, but for one recent take, see Gregory Fernando Pappas, "The Pragmatists' Approach to Injustice," *The Pluralist* 11, no. 1 (2016): 58–77.

[106] See Lewis Gordon, "Critical Reflections on Three Popular Tropes in the Study of Whiteness," in George Yancy, ed., *What White Looks like: African-American Philosophers on the Whiteness Question* (New York: Routledge, 2004) 173 - 193. Hereafter cited as "Lewis Gordon, 'Critical Reflections'." Naomi Zack, *White Privilege and Black Rights: The Injustice of U.S. Police Racial Profiling and Homicide* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 2015), especially chapter one; Michael J. Monahan, "The Concept of Privilege: A Critical Appraisal," *South African Journal of Philosophy* 33, no. 1 (2014): 73–83.

[107] Andrew J. Pierce, "Interest Convergence: An Alternative to White Privilege Models of Anti-Racist Pedagogy and Practice," *Teaching Philosophy* 39, no. 4 (2016), 511.

and working class white people."[108] In broad terms, I see the present chapter as a contribution to these broader efforts to understand the limitations of White privilege discourse.

At a methodological level, the problem I highlight in this chapter is that White privilege discourse ultimately operates as an external critique of historical and contemporary White supremacy. Lewis Gordon captures the issue when he argues that White privilege-centered critiques end up "condemning whites for possessing, in the concrete, features of contemporary life that should be available to all."[109] He continues:

> there are whites who don't care about getting into first-tier institutions and are instead concerned with their daily, means-to-means subsistence. For such whites, nothing they have acquired is a privilege but a right...For everyday white people, the logical response should not be to eliminate or make them feel guilty for what they have, but to transform the mechanisms of access so such things – rights – are really available to all.[110]

The issue here, to cite Gordon again, is that, with respect to White privilege discourse, "the larger populations of Whites find themselves structured as a reality that has nothing to do with their lived experience."[111] Similarly, Linda Alcoff suggests "that the current subjectivity of many whites today does not correspond to the dominant narrative of whiteness that holds itself ahead of and better than every other culture. In some cases, their own experience of their work lives may cohere little with

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[108] Shannon Sullivan, "White Priority," *Critical Philosophy of Race* 5, no. 2 (2017): 171–82.

[109] Lewis Gordon, "Critical Reflections," 177.

[110] Ibid.

[111] Lewis Gordon, "Critical Reflections," 176.

supremacist claims."[112] Many poor, rural, and/or blue-collar White people, she continues, can feel a sense of "alienation": "for these whites, the notion of privilege and the promised entitlements of the vanguard feel pretty meaningless."[113]

Gordon and Alcoff rightly point out that White privilege discourse operates as an external critique of historical and contemporary White supremacy. External criticisms "apply criteria that are brought to bear on the norms and practices of a given social formation from the outside."[114] In this context, external critique does not sufficiently attend to the varied lived experiences, self-understandings, and normative commitments of White people. Thus, it fails to articulate standards of criticism in terms of these lived experiences, self-understandings, and normative commitments. Instead, the standard of external criticism "is supposed to be valid regardless of whether it already holds within an existing community or an existing social institutional structure and of whether it is 'contained' in a given state of affairs, and it judges the given situation according to whether it satisfies this standard."[115] The consequence, as I discuss below, is two-fold. First, White privilege discourse is unlikely to gain significant traction beyond a relatively small portion of the White US population. Second, White privilege discourse may inadvertently worsen White reactions to people of color and efforts to initiate substantive anti-White supremacist social change. The discussion that follows substantiates these claims through a consideration of two prominent features of our post-Civil Rights period: (1) White interpretations of discrimination and racialized social relations as a zero-sum game ("zero-sum Whiteness"), and (2) relative White deprivation ("White precarity"). Specifically, I review

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[112] Linda Alcoff, *The Future of Whiteness* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2015), 171.

[113] Ibid.

[114] Rahel Jaeggi, *Critique of Forms of Life* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2018), 223.

[115] Ibid. For a more general discussion of the limitations of external critique, see Robin Celikates, *Critique as Social Practice: Critical Theory and Social Self-Understanding* (London: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2018), 118 – 121.

social-scientific evidence to define these phenomena and discuss two challenges they pose for White privilege discourse: (1) political infeasibility and (2) White backlash effects.

Challenges

Zero-Sum Whiteness

One of the more perplexing features of our post-Civil Rights period is the prevalent belief that White people "have replaced Blacks as the primary victims of discrimination."[116] This is (or at least should be) perplexing because, as Michael Norton and Samuel Sommers write, "by nearly any metric—from employment to police treatment, loan rates to education—statistics continue to indicate drastically poorer outcomes for Black than White Americans."[117] Nevertheless, this belief has been a central point of contention in a number of high-profile Supreme Court cases, prompting Norton and Sommers to test the hypothesis that it is more widely held among White people and is rooted in the view that racialized discrimination is a zero-sum game - in other words, that when it comes to less discrimination against one population entails more for another.[118]

They tested this hypothesis with a national survey of White and Black U.S. Americans, asking respondents to indicate the extent to which they felt both Black people and White people were the target of discrimination in each decade from the 1950s to the 2000s."[119] While both groups perceived greater anti-Black discrimination in the 1950s, White respondents perceived a more dramatic

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[116] Michael I. Norton and Samuel R. Sommers, "White people See Racism as a Zero-Sum Game That They Are Now Losing," *Perspectives on Psychological Science* 6, no. 3 (May 2011), 216.

[117] Ibid., 216.

[118] Ibid., 215.

[119] Ibid., 216.

decline of anti-Black discrimination across the decades. They also perceived a sharp increase in anti-White discrimination for every decade since the 1950s and more anti-White discrimination than anti-Black discrimination in the 2000s.[120] Based on the strong negative correlation between White respondents' perceptions of anti-White and anti-Black discrimination, Norton and Summers conclude that White perceptions of anti-White discrimination are rooted in the belief that racism is a zero-sum game.

While Norton and Summers measured White people's zero-sum beliefs about racialized discrimination, political scientist Ashley Jardina recently studied White zero-sum beliefs about racialized political and economic relations.[121] Before I present her findings, I will provide a brief overview her project. This will help illustrate the scope of zero-sum Whiteness in the United States today.

In broad terms, Jardina offers a combined quantitative and qualitative analysis of the content, salience, prevalence, and political implications of White identification in the contemporary United States. Rejecting what she sees as a tendency among social scientists to treat White racial prejudice, resentment, and negative affect toward racial and ethnic minorities as essential constituents of White identification, Jardina distinguishes between "white identity" as an in-group attachment and "white consciousness" as an in-group attachment accompanied by antagonistic out-group beliefs and attitudes. More specifically, "white identity," on her account, refers to a "psychological, internalized

[120] Ibid. A recent Public Religion Research Institute survey replicated these findings, showing that 50% of White Americans "including 60% of White working-class [non-Hispanic White Americans without a four-year college degree who hold non-salaried jobs] Americans—agree that discrimination against White people has become as big a problem today as discrimination against blacks and other minorities." Betsy Cooper, Daniel Cox, Rachel Lienesch, Robert P. Jones, "Anxiety, Nostalgia, and Mistrust: Findings from the 2015 American Values Survey," *PRRI*, November 17, 2015, https://www.prri.org/research/survey-anxiety-nostalgia-and-mistrust-findings-from-the-2015-american-values-survey/. For their definition of working-class White Americans, see Daniel Cox and Robert P. Jones, "Beyond Guns and God: Understanding the Complexities of the White Working Class in America," *PRRI*, September 9, 2012, https://www.prri.org/research/race-class-culture-survey-2012/.

[121] Ashley Jardina, *White Identity Politics*, (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2019).

sense of attachment" to White people as a group.[122] "white consciousness," on the other hand, is a politicized form of White identity, that is, a psychological sense of attachment to White people as a group accompanied by the belief or perception that White people's circumstances are "a function of some external, unjust force, like the encroachment of another group on the racial hierarchy" and the desire "to work together with other group members to eliminate challenges to their group's dominance."[123]

With this framework, Jardina measures the prevalence of White identity and White consciousness in the United States. Her measurements of the former yielded the following results:

- "Between 30 and 40 percent of White Americans indicate that their racial identity is very, if not extremely, important to them."[124]

- 54 percent of White Americans said that White people have "a lot" (26 percent) or "a great deal" (28 percent) of which to be proud, indicating that "sizeable portions of White Americans associate their racial group with feelings of pride."[125]

- 83 percent of White Americans said that White people have "a moderate amount" (42 percent), "a lot" (27 percent), or "a great deal" (14) in common with one another.[126]

Her measurements of the latter yielded the following results:

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[122] Ibid, 58.

[123] Ibid., 60.

[124] Ibid., 62.

[125] Ibid., 64-65.

[126] Ibid., 65.

- 7 – 19 percent of White people think it is "extremely likely" and 14 – 22 percent believe it is "very likely" that many White people are unable to find a job because employers are hiring minorities instead.[127]

- 15 – 26 percent of White people believe that it is "extremely important" and 19 – 26 percent believe it is "very important" for White people to work together to change laws that are unfair to White people.[128]

Finally, Jardina draws on a 2010 survey that assessed White perceptions of interracial political and economic relations, finding that White identity and White consciousness are "strong and significant predictor[s]" of zero-sum perceptions of intergroup competition. "As racial out-groups gain political and economic power," she writes, "White people high on racial identity may very well see this as an encroachment on their own group's status and privileges" and may, consequently, develop a greater sense of White consciousness.[129] Given the high prevalence of White identity and the lower, but still significant, prevalence of White consciousness, a majority of White US Americans interpret interracial political and economic relations as a zero-sum game.

Norton, Summers, and Jardina show that a significant portion of the White US population interprets racialized discrimination and political and economic relations as zero-sum games. Additional research shows that these zero-sum interpretations are mutually reinforcing. Real or perceived non-White political and economic gains tend to intensify White perceptions of anti-White

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[127] Ibid., 67.

[128] Ibid.

[129] Ibid., 140, 142-143.

discrimination.[130] These perceptions, rooted in zero-sum beliefs (as the Norton and Summers study shows), in turn make non-White political and economic gains more salient to White people, further intensifying their perceptions of anti-White discrimination. To make matters worse, the increasing salience of diversity (demographic change being the most obvious example) further intensifies White people's perceptions of anti-White discrimination, zero-sum interpretations of social relations, and practical efforts to maintain their real or perceived social status, even among those "who think of themselves as not prejudiced (and liberal)."[131] Furthermore, as I mentioned in the introduction, self-avowed "White nationalists" explicitly endorse these zero-sum interpretations as fundamental tenets of their political program, actively working to intensify them among the broader White U.S. population and recruiting less politically active White people on that basis.[132] The prevalence and severity of White precarity in the United States today provides further fuel for this White supremacist fire.

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[130] Clara L. Wilkins and Cheryl R. Kaiser, "Racial Progress as Threat to the Status Hierarchy: Implications for Perceptions of Anti-White Bias," *Psychological Science* 25, no. 2 (February 1, 2014): 439–46.

[131] For the quoted remark, see Brian Resnick, "White fear of demographic change is a powerful psychological force," *Vox*, January 28, 2017, https://www.vox.com/science-and-health/2017/1/26/14340542/White-fear-trump-psychology-minority-majority. H. Robert Outten, "Feeling Threatened about the Future: Whites' Emotional Reactions to Anticipated Ethnic Demographic Changes," *Personality & Social Psychology Bulletin* 38, no. 1 (January 2012): 14–25, https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167211418531. Maureen A. Craig and Jennifer A. Richeson, "Majority No More? The Influence of Neighborhood Racial Diversity and Salient National Population Changes on White people' Perceptions of Racial Discrimination," *RSF: The Russell Sage Foundation Journal of the Social Sciences* 4, no. 5 (2018): 141–57, https://doi.org/10.7758/RSF.2018.4.5.07; Maureen A. Craig and Jennifer A. Richeson, "Information about the US Racial Demographic Shift Triggers Concerns about Anti-White Discrimination among the Prospective White 'Minority,'" *PLOS ONE* 12, no. 9 (2017): e0185389, https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0185389.

[132] Contributor to the White nationalist webzine *Counter-Currents*, Spencer Quinn, for example, writes of "the Left – especially the non-white Left," that "Nearly all of the Left's social and political movements for the last 150 years can be interpreted not through Progress or universal principles or human rights, but through the acquisition of power at the expense of white people." According to Quinn, the future will be "white supremacist" or "non-white supremacist" (by which he means characterized by the supremacy of non-White people. "As long as whites and non-whites coexist in a single country," he writes, "there can be no middle ground." Spencer J. Quinn, "Merrick Garland: Non-White Supremacist," *Counter-Currents*, June 21, 2021, https://counter-currents.com/2021/06/merrick-garland/#more-128343.

White Precarity

White US Americans are dying at rates that have "little precedent in the industrialized world over the past half-century."[133] Princeton researchers Anne Case and Angus Deaton recently observed a "marked deterioration" in the mortality rates of middle-aged White non-Hispanic Americans in the United States since 1998.[134] Although Black and Hispanic US American mortality rates continue to decline (though, to be clear, they remain higher than White mortality rates), White people are now dying at an alarming rate: "if [their mortality rate] had continued to decline at its previous (1979 – 1998) rate, half a million deaths would have been avoided in the period 1999 – 2013, comparable to lives lost in the US AIDS epidemic through mid-2015."[135] In a follow-up study, they observed the same mortality reversal "for non-Hispanic White men and women in all age groups from 25–29 through 60–64."[136] The proximate cause? Suicides, drug and alcohol poisonings, and alcohol-related liver disease and cirrhosis.[137] White people aren't simply dying; they are killing themselves. But why? Case and Deaton identify one reason: this mortality reversal has been accompanied by "declines in self-reported health and mental health, increased reports of pain, and greater difficulties with daily living."[138] These are, as they put it, "deaths of despair."[139]

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[133] David Squires and David Blumenthal, "Mortality Trends Among Working-Age White people: The Untold Story," *Commonwealth Fund*, January 29, 2016, https://www.commonwealthfund.org/publications/issue-briefs/2016/jan/mortality-trends-among-working-age-White people-untold-story.

[134] Anne Case and Angus Deaton, "Rising morbidity and mortality in midlife among White non-Hispanic Americans in the 21st century," *PNAS*, vol. 112, no. 49, (2015): 15078-15083. Hereafter cited as "Case and Deaton, 'Rising Morbidity'."

[135] Ibid., 15078.

[136] Anne Case and Angus Deaton, "Mortality and Morbidity in the 21st Century," *Brookings Papers on Economic Activity* 2017, no. 1 (2017), 17. Hereafter cited as "Case and Deaton, 'Mortality'."

[137] Ibid.

[138] Case and Deaton, "Rising Morbidity," 15078.

[139] Case and Deaton, "Mortality," 3.

Case and Deaton have more recently proposed a broader explanation. Unemployment and decreasing income, they argue, do not adequately explain the mortality reversal. Among other issues, these narrow economic accounts fail to explain why Black and Hispanic mortality rates continue to decline despite these populations' long suffering disproportionately from unemployment-inducing and income-depriving economic change.[140] Case and Deaton propose that a complex process of cumulative White deprivation more adequately explains the issue. The source of this unprecedented White mortality rate, they propose, is a confluence of social, economic, and cultural factors: the steady deterioration of wages, job opportunities, and intergenerational economic stability for high-school educated White people since the 1970s accompanied by a weakening of supportive social structures (White nuclear families and religious organizations).[141] The result has been a cumulative distress which is leading many White people – who, Case and Deaton note, tend to lack the more extensive and protective support of Black kin networks and churches – to adopt self-destructive habits (drugs and alcohol) for coping with these social changes.[142] From this perspective, the mortality

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[140] Case and Deaton, "Mortality," 24. This is an important point. None of this is to downplay Black and Latino people's disproportionate exposure to unnecessary social precarity and death in the United States. Although mortality rates for these populations have been declining for decades, they are still worse than they are for the White population, even accounting for this recent mortality reversal. On this point, see Wendy Brown, "Neoliberalism's Frankenstein: Authoritarian Freedom in Twenty-First Century 'Democracies,'" *Critical Times* 1, no.1 (2018), 60-61; Peter A. Muennig et al., "America's Declining Well-Being, Health, and Life Expectancy: Not Just a White Problem," *American Journal of Public Health* 108, no. 12 (2018): 1626–31.

[141] Ibid., 30. An abundant literature has detailed this broad deterioration of socioeconomic life across the United States. See, for example, the studies cited in Bart Bonikowski, "Ethno-Nationalist Populism and the Mobilization of Collective Resentment," *The British Journal of Sociology* 68, no. S1 (2017), 202.

[142] Ibid., 34. This difference is, of course, the result of the history of White supremacy in the United States. As sociologists Michael Omi and Howard Winant argue, populations who have been "relegated to what was supposed to be a permanently inferior sociocultural status, were also forced *inward* upon themselves as individuals, families, and communities. Tremendous cultural resources were nurtured among such communities; enormous labors were required to survive and to develop elements of an autonomy and opposition under such conditions." In social-psychological terms, social groups exposed to chronic (historical, intergenerational) insecurity (material, physical, emotional, etc.) tend to develop communal and religious coping mechanisms for maintaining some sense of personal control over their lives. Social groups who have historically enjoyed relative security, on the other hand, tend not to develop these coping mechanisms. When threats to their security arise, then, Sullivan and Stewart write, they "have only their own underdeveloped resources and abilities to rely on." Indeed, the empirical evidence indicates that Black people tend to be more mentally resilient in the face of social inequality than White people. Poor White people, in particular, exhibit more distress and less resilience than poor black people in the face of poverty. Michael Omi and Howard Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States*,

reversal points to a broad, multicausal deterioration of White social, economic, and cultural life and well-being in the United States.[143]

The Political Feasibility Challenge

Zero-sum Whiteness and White precarity pose two significant challenges for White privilege discourse. The first is a matter of political feasibility. White people who interpret racialized discrimination and political and economic relations in zero-sum terms are extremely unlikely to consider, much less accept, White privilege-centered critiques of White supremacy, which, as I argued above, emphasize the losses White people must endure for the sake of anti-racist social change. Consequently, they are extremely unlikely to support sociopolitical efforts to correct for the detrimental impact intergenerational White privilege has had on people of color. Given the prevalence of zero-sum beliefs among the White population, this is concerning. Indeed, it is the central problem of an important book by political scientists James Glaser and Timothy Ryan, *Changing Minds, If Not*

(New York and London: Routledge, 2015), 143; Daniel Sullivan and Sheridan A. Stewart, "Perceived Uncontrollability as a Coping Resource," in Marcin Bukowski, Immo Fritsche, and Ana Guinote, eds., *Coping with Lack of Control in a Social World* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2017), 105. For studies on Black mental resilience and poor White distress, respectively, see Corey L. M. Keyes, "The Black–White Paradox in Health: Flourishing in the Face of Social Inequality and Discrimination," *Journal of Personality* 77, no. 6 (2009): 1677–1706; Carol Graham and Sergio Pinto, "Unequal Hopes and Lives in the USA: Optimism, Race, Place, and Premature Mortality," *Journal of Population Economics* 32, no. 2 (2019): 665–733.

[143] See also Noreen Goldman, Dana A. Glei, and Maxine Weinstein, "Declining Mental Health among Disadvantaged Americans," *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, June 14, 2018, 201722023, https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.1722023115. Justin R Pierce and Peter K Schott, "Trade Liberalization and Mortality: Evidence from U.S. Counties," n.d., 68, Available at https://www.nber.org/papers/w22849; Elizabeth M. Stein et al., "The Epidemic of Despair Among White Americans: Trends in the Leading Causes of Premature Death, 1999–2015," *American Journal of Public Health* 107, no. 10 (October 2017): 1541–47; Rourke L. O'Brien, Atheendar S. Venkataramani, and Alexander C. Tsai, "Economic Mobility and the Mortality Crisis Among US Middle-Aged White people:," *Epidemiology* 28, no. 2 (2017): e12–13; Erin C. Strumpf et al., "Did the Great Recession Affect Mortality Rates in the Metropolitan United States? Effects on Mortality by Age, Gender and Cause of Death," *Social Science & Medicine* 189 (September 2017): 11–16.

Hearts: Political Remedies for Racial Conflict.[144] As they put it in the introduction, "Where alternatives are seen in a zero-sum context, perceptions of threat arise, and individuals are likely to favor options that they perceive as protecting their group's interests."[145] This, of course, entails their rejection of options perceived as *threatening* their group's interests, which is to say, options they perceive as promoting out-group interests. This zero-sum interpretation, Glaser and Ryan point out, contributes to systematic, intergenerational White "opposition to policies designed to help blacks and other minorities."[146] It is extremely unlikely that White privilege discourse can succeed in a political context where so many White US Americans hold such zero-sum beliefs.

Worsening White precarity only intensifies this feasibility constraint. White people experiencing unprecedented levels of sociopolitical, economic, and biological precarity are not likely to consider criticisms and social initiatives that emphasize the losses they must endure for the sake of anti-White supremacist social change. On the contrary, one study finds that "challenging economic circumstances might further sensitize White people to competition from racial minority groups."[147] In other words, relative White socioeconomic precarity tends to reinforce zero-sum beliefs among many White people. Another study showed that economic scarcity distorts White social cognition of minority groups, leading to increased discrimination and the intensification of racialized disparities.[148] Yet another found that White people "who had negative views of their current economic

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[144] James M. Glaser and Timothy Ryan, *Changing Minds, If Not Hearts Political Remedies for Racial Conflict* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013).

[145] Ibid., 15.

[146] Ibid, 138.

[147] Eric D. Knowles and Linda R. Tropp, "The Racial and Economic Context of Trump Support: Evidence for Threat, Identity, and Contact Effects in the 2016 Presidential Election," *Social Psychological and Personality Science* 9, no. 3 (2018), 276.

[148] Amy R. Krosch and David M. Amodio, "Economic Scarcity Alters the Perception of Race," *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 111, no. 25 (June 24, 2014): 9079–84, https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.1404448111.

situation" were "significantly more likely" to endorse anti-Black stereotypes.[149] While economic precarity alone does not cause these responses, it intensifies White people's zero-sum beliefs, as well as their negative attitudes toward, and perceptions of, people of color. Once again, an approach that asks White people to lose for the sake of anti-White supremacist social change does not seem particularly feasible in this context.

The first challenge, then, is one of political infeasibility. Although White privilege discourse is increasingly popular as a framework for interpreting and challenging White supremacy, it is unlikely to gain more significant political traction in the context of zero-sum Whiteness and White precarity. The second and, in my view, more pressing challenge for White privilege discourse is the danger of inadvertently provoking negative White reactions (White backlash).

The White Backlash Challenge

A broad range of empirical studies support my contention regarding this second challenge. First, consider the fact that the mere exposure to evidence of White privilege elicits "self-protective reactions" from many White people.[150] White people who strongly identify as White, for example, experience information about White privilege as a status-threat.[151] It challenges their belief that they have earned their social advantages. Interestingly, these White people do not deny the reality of

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[149] Paula K Miller, "But Aren't We All Poor?" How Whites' Perceptions of Economic Group Threat Influence Racial Attitudes in Michigan," 30 (2016): 44-68.

[150] L. Taylor Phillips and Brian S. Lowery, "The Hard-Knock Life? White people Claim Hardships in Response to Racial Inequity," *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology* 61 (November 1, 2015), 13, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jesp.2015.06.008.

[151] Nyla R. Branscombe, Michael T. Schmitt, and Kristin Schiffhauer, "Racial Attitudes in Response to Thoughts of White Privilege," *European Journal of Social Psychology* 37, no. 2 (March 2007), 207, 212. Branscombe and colleagues measured White identification in terms of self-reports of degree of agreement with the following statements: (1) I am comfortable being White. (2) Being White just feels natural to me. (3) I believe that White people have a lot to be proud of. (4) I feel good about being White. (5) I am not embarrassed to admit that I am White. Ibid., 208.

White privilege. They simply reject the notion that it is unearned and systematically connected to non-White disadvantage. They deny that "existing racial inequality is due to discrimination" and believe that "Blacks are making illegitimate demands for change."[152] A related study also found that White people are willing to acknowledge the reality of White privilege, but tend to appeal to personal hardships to deny the impact of that privilege on their own lives.[153] Yet another study found that White Millennials who self-identify as conservative and moderate expressed stronger racist attitudes after being primed to think about their White privilege.[154] These studies indicate that information about White privilege often elicits self-protective reactions from many White people. These, in turn, have clear political implications. White people who claim more hardships in response to information about White privilege are less likely to support redistributive policies they perceive as benefiting minority populations.[155] Many express less support for affirmative action and public spending policies, as well as greater perceived anti-White bias, zero-sum thinking, and Trump support.[156]

The fact that exposure to information about White privilege elicits these negative reactions, including intensified zero-sum interpretations, in many White people is troubling since zero-sum beliefs dispose White people to react negatively to sociopolitical changes they perceive as benefiting

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[152] Ibid., 204.

[153] L. Taylor Phillips and Brian S. Lowery, "The Hard-Knock Life? White people Claim Hardships in Response to Racial Inequity," *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology* 61 (November 1, 2015): 12–18, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jesp.2015.06.008.

[154] Louisa C. Egan Brad, Tatiana J. Spisz, and Chloé G. Tanega, "Does 'Privilege Checking' Make Us Less Racist, or More? Generation and Political Orientation Matter," *Race and Social Problems* 11, no. 1 (March 1, 2019): 1–14, https://doi.org/10.1007/s12552-018-9246-0.

[155] L. Taylor Phillips and Brian S. Lowery, "The Hard-Knock Life? White people Claim Hardships in Response to Racial Inequity," *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology* 61 (November 1, 2015), 15, 16.

[156] Curtis Puryear, Logan M. Steele, Joanna Lawler, and Joseph Vandello, "The Effects of Highlighting Privilege on Those Who Deny It," *PsyArXiv* (2019), https://psyarxiv.com/gvjkc/; For a list of symbolic racism measures, see David O. Sears and P. J. Henry, "The Origins of Symbolic Racism," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 85, no. 2 (2003): 259–275, https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.85.2.259.

non-White people. As Jardina's work shows, White people who perceive political and economic relations in zero-sum terms also perceive non-White political and economic gains as threats to their own political and economic position. In response, they tend to develop a greater desire to "work together with other group members to eliminate challenges to their group's dominance."[157] The implication is clear: many White people's zero-sum interpretations of political and economic relations dispose them to take active efforts to impede real or perceived non-White political and economic gains. Indeed, one study found that White zero-sum beliefs "corresponded with efforts to increase ingroup competitiveness and to decrease outgroup competitiveness" and perceptions of anti-White discrimination (rooted in zero-sum beliefs, as the Norton and Summers study shows) "may be associated with favoring policies that ultimately hurt women and Blacks."[158] More generally, motivations to protect an apparently threatened in-group predicts retaliatory aggression and preemptive offensive actions against apparently threatening out-groups.[159]

White precarity also disposes White people to react negatively towards people of color. Economic scarcity distorts White social cognition of minority groups, leading to increased discrimination and the intensification of racialized disparities.[160] This social psychological tendency is activated by scarcity-induced threat-processing mechanisms.[161] White people primed with scarcity conditions tend

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[157] Ibid., 60.

[158] Clara L. Wilkins et al., "You Can Win but I Can't Lose: Bias against High-Status Groups Increases Their Zero-Sum Beliefs about Discrimination," *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology* 57 (March 1, 2015): 1–14.

[159] Robert Böhm, Hannes Rusch, and Özgür Gürerk, "What Makes People Go to War? Defensive Intentions Motivate Retaliatory and Preemptive Intergroup Aggression," *Evolution and Human Behavior* 37, no. 1 (January 1, 2016): 29–34, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.evolhumbehav.2015.06.005.

[160] Amy R. Krosch and David M. Amodio, "Economic Scarcity Alters the Perception of Race," *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 111, no. 25 (June 24, 2014): 9079–84, https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.1404448111;

[161] Ibid, 9082. See also Amy R. Krosch, Tom R. Tyler, and David M. Amodio, "Race and Recession: Effects of Economic Scarcity on Racial Discrimination," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 113, no. 6 (December 2017): 892–909, https://doi.org/10.1037/pspi0000112;

to seek out salient threats in their immediate environment. Their deep-seated sociocultural conditioning, shaped as it is by the history of White supremacy, disposes many White people to identify non-White people as the threat, regardless of the precise causes of that scarcity.[162] The social psychological evidence indicates that, in the short term, these threat-processing mechanisms dispose many White people to engage in racialized group-oriented action to oppose that threat, thereby reaffirming their racialized group identity, restoring their sense of personal control, and reducing the negative psychological effects – apathy and depression, in particular - of control-deprivation.[163] Thus, these threat-processing mechanisms produce short-term psychological benefits.

The sociopolitical implications of this research were clearly borne out during the 2016 presidential election. Trump certainly mobilized racialized resentments of Obama, fears of demographic change, racialized status anxieties, and sexist attitudes.[164] However, a substantial social-science literature shows that direct and indirect effects of White precarity were also significant factors in his

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[162] I want to emphasize that I am *not* arguing that economic scarcity *causes* racism(s) in a simple, unidirectional fashion but that economic scarcity can *intensify* racism(s).

[163] Immo Fritsche, Miguel Moya, Marcin Bukowski, Philipp Jugert, Soledad de Lemus, Oliver Decker, Inmaculada Valor-Segura and Gines Navarro-Carillo, "The Great Recession and Group-Based Control: Converting Personal Helplessness into Social Class In-Group Trust and Collective Action," *Journal of Social Issues* 73, no. 1 (2017): 117-137; Daniel Sullivan and Sheridan A. Stewart, "Perceived Uncontrollability as a Coping Resource" in Marcin Bukowski, Immo Fritsche, and Ana Guinote, *Coping with Lack of Control in a Social World*, Current Issues in Social Psychology (Abingdon: Routledge, 2017): 97 – 115; Janine Stollberg, Immo Fritsche, Markus Barth, and Philipp Jugert, "Extending Control Perceptions to the Social Self," in Ibid, 133 – 150; Julie Davydova et al., "Illuminating the Link between Perceived Threat and Control over Climate Change: The Role of Attributions for Causation and Mitigation," *Climatic Change* 148, no. 1 (May 1, 2018): 45–59; Katharine H. Greenaway et al., "Perceived Control Qualifies the Effects of Threat on Prejudice," *British Journal of Social Psychology* 53, no. 3 (September 1, 2014): 422–42; Zachary K. Rothschild et al., "A Dual-Motive Model of Scapegoating: Displacing Blame to Reduce Guilt or Increase Control," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 102, no. 6 (2012): 1148–63.

[164] Brenda Major, Alison Blodorn, and Gregory Major Blascovich, "The Threat of Increasing Diversity: Why Many White Americans Support Trump in the 2016 Presidential Election," *Group Processes & Intergroup Relations* 21, no. 6 (September 1, 2018): 931–40; Lindsay Perez Huber, "Make America Great Again: Donald Trump, Racist Nativism and the Virulent Adherence to White Supremecy Amid U.S. Demographic Change," *Charleston Law Review* 10 (2016): 215–50. Jarrod Bock, Jennifer Byrd-Craven, and Melissa Burkley, "The Role of Sexism in Voting in the 2016 Presidential Election," *Personality and Individual Differences* 119 (2017): 189–93. Kate A. Ratliff et al., "Engendering Support: Hostile Sexism Predicts Voting for Donald Trump over Hillary Clinton in the 2016 U.S. Presidential Election," *Group Processes & Intergroup Relations* 22, no. 4 (2019): 578–93.

victory.[165] For example, one study found a significant relationship between a community's military casualty rates and support for Trump. These communities were more rural, less wealthy, and less educated than other parts of the country.[166] Another found that Trump received the most support from predominantly White working-class counties that were the most economically distressed, had the highest drug, alcohol, and suicide mortality rates, and contained high concentrations of White poverty, high unemployment rates, and low median incomes.[167] In short, a complex process of White socioeconomic deprivation was also central to Trump's electoral victory.[168]

The available social psychological evidence indicates that zero-sum Whiteness and White precarity intensify negative White attitudinal, perceptual, and sociopolitical reactions to people of

[165] See Shannon M. Monnat, "Deaths of Despair and Support for Trump in the 2016 Presidential Election," Pennyslvania State University Research Brief (2016): 1-9. Available at: http://aese.psu.edu/directory/smm67/Election16.pdf; Usama Bilal, Emily A. Knapp, and Richard S. Cooper, "Swing Voting in the 2016 Presidential Election in Counties Where Midlife Mortality Has Been Rising in White Non-Hispanic Americans," *Social Science & Medicine (1982)* 197 (2018): 33–38. Jacob Bor, "Diverging Life Expectancies and Voting Patterns in the 2016 US Presidential Election," *American Journal of Public Health* 107, no. 10 (2017): 1560–62; Douglas L. Kriner and Francis X. Shen, "Battlefield Casualties and Ballot Box Defeat: Did the Bush-Obama Wars Cost Clinton the White House?," SSRN Scholarly Paper (Rochester, NY: Social Science Research Network, 2017), https://papers.ssrn.com/abstract=2989040.

[166] Kriner, Douglas and Francis Shen. 2017. "Battlefield Casualties and Ballot Box Defeat: Did the Bush-Obama Wars Cost Clinton the White House?" Available at SSRN: https://ssrn.com/abstract=2989040

[167] Many of these counties are in the Industrial Midwest and came out for Obama in 2008 and 2012. In their 2017 paper, Shannon Monnat and David Brown briefly explain this Obama-Trump voting pattern as the result of a combination of White voters' despair about downward social mobility and their receptivity to Trump's "overtly and implicitly racist messages." Black and Hispanic voters, on the other hand, have been more persistently disadvantaged and poor (and thus had different experiences of disadvantage and poverty than whites) and were unlikely to support Trump given his "[White] racial identity politics." It is also important to note that White voters' hopes for social mobility (implied by their despair over downward social mobility) were themselves shaped by the racial history of the United States. Shannon M. Monnat, "Deaths of Despair and Support for Trump in the 2016 Presidential Election," Pennyslvania State University Research Brief (2016): 1-9. Available at: http://aese.psu.edu/directory/smm67/Election16.pdf. Shannon M. Monnat and David L. Brown, "More than a Rural Revolt: Landscapes of Despair and the 2016 Presidential Election," *Journal of Rural Studies* 55 (October 1, 2017), 233. See also: Stephen L. Morgan and Jiwon Lee, "Trump Voters and the White Working Class," *Sociological Science* 5 (April 16, 2018): 234–45, https://doi.org/10.15195/v5.a10; Shannon M. Monnat, "The Contributions of Socioeconomic and Opioid Supply Factors to U.S. Drug Mortality Rates: Urban-Rural and within-Rural Differences," *Journal of Rural Studies* 68 (May 1, 2019): 319–35. Raul Hinojosa Ojeda, "Donald Trump's False Narrative on Mexican Migration and Trade: A Geopolitical Economic Analysis," *Institute for Research on Labor and Employment*, http://www.naid.ucla.edu/uploads/4/2/1/9/4219226/trumptrade_execsum_v16.pdf.

[168] Thomas Ferguson, Benjamin Page, Jacob Rothschild, Arturo Chang, and Jie Chen, "The Economic and Social Roots of Populist Rebellion: Support for Donald Trump in 2016," *Institute for New Economic Thinking*, October 2018, https://www.ineteconomics.org/uploads/papers/WP_83-Ferguson-et-al.pdf.

color. So far, though, I've treated these as separate tendencies, each contributing in their own way to White backlash reactions. Unfortunately, this analytic distinction does not capture the scope and complexity of the challenge. Zero-sum Whiteness and White precarity are in fact mutually reinforcing tendencies. As I discussed above, Ashley Jardina's work shows that significant portions of the White US population interpret political and economic relations as a zero-sum game. This disposes them to "want to work together with other group members to eliminate challenges to their group's dominance."[169] Now consider that, if many White people interpret political and economic relations in zero-sum terms, they will interpret non-White efforts to acquire and secure political and economic gains as attempts to deprive them of essential resources. That is, they will experience these efforts as unjustified attempts to subject them to unnecessary forms of scarcity. In other words, they will experience these efforts as scarcity-threats, which, as discussed above, intensify their perceptions of anti-White discrimination, zero-sum beliefs, and perceptual biases against people of color. The existence of actual scarcity may only intensify this effect. In this sense, White precarity and zero-sum Whiteness are mutually reinforcing White backlash tendencies.

The Problem

This conjuncture poses a serious challenge for White privilege discourse. The dynamic co-existence of zero-sum Whiteness and White precarity disposes many White people to react negatively to real or perceived social, cultural, political, and economic progress on the part of people of color. Consequently, it disposes them to react negatively to sociopolitical initiatives to promote such progress. Racial justice proponents, justifiably unwilling to tolerate these reactions, may double down on their efforts to expose and challenge the White backlash and promote anti-White supremacist

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[169] Ashley Jardina, *White Identity Politics* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 66.

progress. But White people who endorse zero-sum beliefs and/or are subject to White precarity are likely to see such efforts as further threats. These anti-racist efforts may thus inadvertently intensify White threat-perceptions and backlash tendencies, to which anti-racists may respond by once again doubling down on their anti-racist efforts, and so on. The danger here, then, is that anti-racist action and White reaction may constitute an unstable, mutually polarizing feedback loop that inadvertently intensifies White backlash. My worry is that White privilege discourse will not only fail to garner political support among many White people but may tragically stoke the flames of White backlash. Given the global resurgence of overt White nationalism and White power extremism, this is a serious threat to racial progress by any measure.[170] Ian Haney López put the point well:

> We know that as white people confront becoming a numerical minority, they become more racially anxious and more politically conservative.[171] This dynamic is likely to accelerate—we seem caught in a downhill slide, hurtling from coded racial appeals to explicit white nationalism. The great danger from the Right is a reenergized belief in white victimization, white aggrievement, and white resurgence... I think there is a profound risk of a deepening racial crisis in the country, and much of the Left is doing little to halt the slide. Instead, too many are hiding their heads in the sand, pretending that if we don't talk about race, it's not really out there wrecking our society.[172]

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[170] Kathleen Belew, "Pittsburgh Shooting Was Straight Out of White Power Movement," *The Daily Beast*, November 3, 2018, https://www.thedailybeast.com/pittsburgh-shooting-was-straight-out-of-white-power-movement; Kathleen Belew, "The Christchurch Massacre and the White Power Movement," *Dissent Magazine*, March 17, 2019, https://www.dissentmagazine.org/blog/the-christchurch-massacre-and-the-white-power-movement.

[171] Maureen A. Craig and Jennifer A. Richeson, "On the precipice of a 'majority-minority' America: Perceived status threat from the racial demographic shift affects White Americans' political ideology," *Psychological Science* 1189 (2014).

[172] Interview with Kimberle Crenshaw. Available at http://aapf.org/ian-haneylopez

Although Haney-Lopez is talking about the "color-blind" left that Linda Alcoff criticizes in *The Future of Whiteness*, I think, for the reasons I lay out above, White privilege discourse may also fail "to halt the slide" into "a deepening racial crisis in the country," and may even inadvertently contribute to its acceleration. In other words, it is not enough to "talk about race." We must also carefully consider the ways in which we do so.

To be sure, critical philosophers of race are aware of the dangers of White backlash. For example, George Yancy recently published an entire book on the matter, detailing the egregious, trauma-inducing anti-Black racism he suffered following the publication of "Dear White America."[173] His primary aim there, however, is to compel White people to confront the problem, to "lay bare the ugliness and violence of white supremacy in a concrete way."[174] As he put it elsewhere, *Backlash* "inundates its white reader with unmitigated reality, and asks white readers to dwell within a space of black trauma. And it asks the white reader to linger, to touch the truth about their whiteness and its complicity with that trauma. So, it dares to ask 'good white people' to explore their racism, their hatred, their white racist microaggressions and complicity with white racist macroaggressions."[175] In short, Yancy wants to raise White consciousness about the persisting problem of White backlash.

To cite another example, Charles Mills acknowledged that his racial justice project "will be militantly and furiously opposed," but accepts this danger as the inevitable response to any racial justice project: "such hostility goes with the territory and will greet *all* attempts to advance the struggle

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[173] George Yancy, *Backlash: What Happens When We Talk Honestly about Racism in America* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2018). Hereafter cited as "George Yancy, *Backlash*."; George Yancy, "Dear White America," *The New York Times*, December 24, 2015, https://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2015/12/24/dear-White-america/.

[174] George Yancy, *Backlash*, 16.

[175] George Yancy and Alex Blasdel, "Is White America Ready to Confront Its Racism? Philosopher George Yancy Says We Need a 'Crisis,'" *The Guardian*, April 24, 2018, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/apr/24/george-yancy-dear-White-america-philosopher-confront-racism.

for racial justice, no matter what conceptual banner is chosen to fly over it."[176] Finally, Linda Alcoff's *The Future of Whiteness* opens with an acknowledgment of the danger of White reaction, but her primary aim is to argue that White backlash is not a historical inevitability. Although she identifies some points of departure for mobilizing White people in progressive directions, she does not develop them in her book. While Yancy, Mills, and Alcoff are aware of White backlash, then, I think we need to do more work to address the likelihood that the White privilege discourse may inadvertently intensify that backlash.

Although White privilege discourse captures the truth that White supremacy has been a source of substantial, unearned White advantages accrued at the expense of people of color,[177] the political infeasibility and White backlash challenges give critical philosophers of race good reason to dispense with the "orthodoxy that defines racism as something that *wholly* benefits White people and *solely* victimizes people of color."[178] That is, they indicate the need for a reconceptualization of White supremacy that attends to both non-White *and* White suffering, even as these forms of suffering differ in significant and complex ways. Going further, I suggest that this reconceptualization should focus on the ways in which White supremacy has been one significant cause of White precarity (more on this below). At the conceptual level, this could disclose a non-zero-sum dimension of anti-White supremacist social change.[179] At the level of contemporary US politics, this approach

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[176] Mills, *Black Rights/White Wrongs*, 132.

[177] For historical overviews of these unearned benefits and advantages, see Cheryl I. Harris, "Whiteness as Property," *Harvard Law Review* 106, no. 8 (1993): 1707–91; George Lipsitz, *The Possessive Investment in Whiteness: How White People Profit from Identity Politics*, (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2006); Joe R. Feagin and Kimberley Ducey, *Racist America: Roots, Current Realities, and Future Reparations* (New York and London: Routledge, 2019), 14-22, 45-47, 192-194, 212-219.

[178] Ian Haney López and Heather McGhee, "How Populists Like Bernie Sanders Should Talk About Racism," *The Nation*, January 28, 2016, https://www.thenation.com/article/how-populists-like-bernie-sanders-should-talk-about-racism/, emphasis added.

[179] Ashley Jardina, *White Identity Politics*, 281; Clara L. Wilkins and Cheryl R. Kaiser, "Racial Progress as Threat to the Status Hierarchy: Implications for Perceptions of Anti-White Bias," *Psychological Science* 25, no. 2 (February 1, 2014),

could criticize and challenge White supremacy while defusing zero-sum Whiteness, thereby mitigating (to some degree) White backlash effects and, perhaps, mobilizing greater numbers of White people to oppose White supremacy.[180]

In my view, this is an increasingly urgent task. Self-avowed "White nationalists" increasingly see relatively precarious White people as potential recruits for right-wing White nationalist movements.[181] In doing so, they seek to take advantage of the dangerous implications of White privilege discourse, explicitly endorsing and articulating widespread zero-sum beliefs and attitudes about racialized political and economic relations into systematic historical and political narratives aimed at "agitating and radicalizing" White people.[182] Critical philosophers of race should not abandon the realities of White precarity and zero-sum Whiteness to the discursive and political efforts of White

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445; Clara L. Wilkins et al., "**You Can Win but I Can't Lose: Bias against High-Status Groups Increases Their Zero-Sum Beliefs about Discrimination," *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology* 57 (March 1, 2015), 12, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jesp.2014.10.008.

[180] For empirical evidence that non-zero-sum anti-racist messages can work in this way, see Demos Action, Anat Shenker-Osorio, and Ian Haney López, "Race-Class Narrative National Dial Survey Report," *Demos*, https://www.demos.org/publication/race-class-narrative-national-dial-survey-report

[181] As I noted above, self-avowed White nationalist Greg Johnson explicitly identifies White middle-class college graduates facing exploding student debt and fewer job opportunities as potential recruits, writing, "For White Nationalists, they are a vast, increasingly receptive audience, for we are the only ones offering honest explanations of what is happening to them and realistic, long-term solutions." Similarly, Johnson frames his *The White Nationalist Manifesto* in the following terms: "In the present system, we [White people] have no future and we are acting accordingly. Loss of hope for the future is what ties together a whole array of social pathologies afflicting White Americans. After rising steadily for centuries, White life expectancies are declining, something that we would only expect in times of war, famine, plague, or social collapse.... If Whites have no future in the current system, then we will simply have to set up a new one. That is the goal of White Nationalism. To give our people a future again, we need a new political vision and new political leadership." Greg Johnson, "The Boomerang Generation: Connecting with Our Proletariat," *Counter-Currents Publishing* (blog), August 27, 2013, https://www.counter-currents.com/2013/08/the-counter-currents-2013-summer-fundraiser-2/; Greg Johnson, *The White Nationalist Manifesto* (San Francisco: Counter-Currents Publishing, 2018), 2-3.

[182] Greg Johnson, *White Identity Politics* (San Francisco: Counter-Currents Publishing, 2020), 32 (E-book edition). Regarding this conscious affirmation of zero-sum narratives, consider Greg Johnson's interpretation of multiculturalism: "Multiculturalism means many different races and cultures living within the same system, occupying the same public spaces, accessing the same services, trying to determine the direction of policy. It's a battle between groups for control of the state apparatus. There's no such thing as a common good in a multicultural society, because there is no single people. There's just the squabble of different organized ethnic groups for power. And it's inevitable that, once White people see their interests being threatened, we are going to start organizing to preserve and advance our interests." Greg Johnson, White Identity Politics: Inevitable, Necessary, Moral, Part 1, *Counter-Currents Publishing*, August 30, 2019, https://www.counter-currents.com/2019/08/White-identity-politics-inevitable-necessary-moral-part-1/.

nationalists and White supremacists. If we fail to offer compelling explanations and evaluations of these phenomena, they will. This obviously requires more work than I can accomplish within the scope of a philosophy dissertation. It also requires concrete organizing efforts with affected social groups and relevant social movements. Nevertheless, as I have argued, it also requires the philosophical work of reconceptualizing White supremacy.

Before I turn to empirical evidence showing that White supremacy has contributed to White precarity, I want to emphasize that the complementary, non-zero-sum approach I am proposing must not downplay the historical reality of White privilege or efface the vastly disproportionate negative impact White supremacy has had on people of color. Ian Haney López and Heather McGhee put it well: "Obviously, the damage inflicted on communities of color over the life of this country, as over the last half-century, has been much more concentrated, brutal, dehumanizing, and devastating than the harms visited generally on White communities."[183] The challenge, as I see it, is to conceptualize White supremacy as "a double-edged sword" that has simultaneously conferred advantages and disadvantages on many White people, that is, as a source of White privilege *and* White precarity.[184] The final section of this chapter proposes to approach this issue through an ideology-critique framework.

White Self-Sabotage

Before I turn to ideology-critique, I should note that contemporary philosophers of race have discussed some ways in which White supremacy has hurt many White people throughout US history.

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[183] Ian Haney López and Heather McGhee, "How Populists Like Bernie Sanders Should Talk About Racism," *The Nation*, January 28, 2016, https://www.thenation.com/article/how-populists-like-bernie-sanders-should-talk-about-racism/.

[184] Khiara M Bridges, "White Privilege and White Disadvantage," *Virginia Law Review* 105 (2019), 53, 67.

More specifically, George Yancy, Shannon Sullivan, Charles Mills, Terrance MacMullan, Linda Alcoff, and Rev. Dr. Thandeka have discussed the existential, epistemological, ethical, and phenomenological disadvantages many White people have suffered under White supremacy. George Yancy, for example, has described "whiteness" as a form of imprisonment.[185] Shannon Sullivan argues that persistent White supremacy has led many White people to experience "greed, hatred, jealousy, fear, destructive anger, and cruelty. Their psychosomatic health," she continues, "has suffered and continues to suffer because of their toxic racial identities built out of these affects and emotions."[186] Charles Mills's account of "white ignorance" effectively highlights the way in which many White people are subject to a systematic ignorance of the historical and contemporary impacts of global White supremacy and are consequently unable to comprehend the persistence of racialized inequalities, the hierarchical structure of contemporary US society, and the pernicious historical character of White identity itself.[187] Terrance MacMullan has argued that persistent White supremacy has inflicted cultural numbness, vacuity, and guilt on many White people.[188] Rev. Dr. Thandeka highlights the "feelings of emotional defeat" many White people have suffered as they have struggled to "conform to the racial expectations of their caretakers," as well as "the white psychological mind-set of terror, fear, and trembling."[189] Finally, Linda Alcoff writes of "white double consciousness," arguing

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[185] George Yancy, Black Bodies, White Gazes: The Continuing Significance of Race in America, Second edition. (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2017), 280.

[186] Sullivan, *Good White People*, 121.

[187] Charles Mills, "White Ignorance," in Charles Mills, *Black Rights/White Wrongs: The Critique of Racial Liberalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017): 49 – 71.

[188] Terrance MacMullan, *Habits of Whiteness: A Pragmatist Reconstruction*, American Philosophy (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009).

[189] Thandeka, "Whites: Made in America: Advancing American Philosophers' Discourse on Race," *The Pluralist* 13, no. 1 (2018), 31, 33.

that many White people suffer a form of cultural alienation as White supremacy comes under increasing public scrutiny.[190]

I cannot do justice to the subtleties of these discussions within the scope of the current chapter. For now, I would simply like to acknowledge and affirm this ongoing effort to understand the negative impacts White supremacy has had on many White people. Yancy, Sullivan, Mills, MacMullan, Alcoff, and Rev. Dr. Thandeka offer important resources for understanding some ways in which some White people could benefit from truly anti-White supremacist social change. In my view, however, more work needs to be done on this issue. For one, we need a more detailed account of the negative political-economic impacts White supremacy has had on many White people. In keeping with my broadly Black radical perspective on politics and social change, I think such an account is necessary for mobilizing larger numbers of White people towards anti-White supremacist ends. Second, I think we need a more systematic historical account of the connections between the ethical, epistemological, psychological, cultural, political, and economic dimensions of White supremacy and White disadvantage. Such an account could enhance our understanding of the persistence and prevalence of White supremacy; some ways in which many White people could benefit from the reconstruction of American democracy; and the relationship between "White privilege" and "White disadvantage."

The Empirical Data

Regarding the negative political-economic impacts White supremacy has had on many White people, a growing social science literature shows that increasing numbers of White people are experiencing worsening levels of sociopolitical, economic, and biological precarity. I already

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[190] Linda Alcoff, *The Future of Whiteness* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2015), 168-171.

discussed some above. For the purposes of this section, I would like to highlight literature that connects White precarity to White supremacy. In his 2013 book, *Dog Whistle Politics*, critical race theorist Ian Haney López shows how "dog whistle politics" - "coded racial appeals that carefully manipulate hostility toward non-white people" – have directly contributed to White economic precarity.[191] On his account, dog whistle politics emerged out of the Republican Party's mid-20th century Southern Strategy to mobilize White voters away from the multiracial New Deal coalition of Democratic Party state organizations, labor unions, and poor and working people. Citing Republican journalists, politicians, and political advisors, Haney López shows that the Southern Strategy was a conscious and deliberate effort "to use racism to become 'the White Man's Party'."[192] It was, in his words, a series of "purposeful efforts to use racial animus as leverage to gain material wealth, political power, or heightened social standing."[193] This strategy was central to the Richard Nixon and Ronald Reagan campaigns, and was so effective and influential, Haney-Lopez explains, that Democrats Jimmy Carter and Bill Clinton decided to play along, emphasizing their Southern heritage – Carter campaigning against desegregation, Clinton campaigning against welfare and in favor of the so-called war on crime.[194] Republicans, of course, continue to deploy this strategy, as Donald Trump's barely concealed dog whistles indicate.[195]

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[191] Ian Haney López, *Dog Whistle Politics: How Coded Racial Appeals Have Reinvented Racism and Wrecked the Middle Class,* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 6. Hereafter cited as "Haney Lopez, *Dog Whistle Politics.*"

[192] Ibid., 32.

[193] Ibid., 44.

[194] Ibid., 121.

[195] Ian Haney Lopez and Anat Shenker-Osorio, "The Answer to GOP Dog Whistles? Democrats Should Talk More about Race, Not Less," *The Washington Post*, August 22, 2018, https://www.washingtonpost.com/outlook/the-answer-to-gop-dog-whistles-democrats-should-talk-more-about-race-not-less/2018/08/22/7cfa4d3a-a184-11e8-8e87-c869fe70a721_story.html?noredirect=on&utm_term=.bf51b1d147c8. On this point, it's worth noting that Paul Manafort, Roger Stone, and Roger Ailes worked for the Trump campaign. Manafort had previously run Ronald Reagan's Southern

Haney López's account of the economic impact of fifty years of dog whistle politics is neatly summarized by the subtitle of his book: "how coded racial appeals have reinvented racism and wrecked the middle class." Dog whistle politicians, he argues, effectively framed progressive taxation, economic regulation, and federal spending on public services as symptoms of an "activist government" manipulated by lazy, undeserving, and narrowly self-interested racial minorities.[196] In so doing, they mobilized White voters to support massive tax cuts, economic deregulation, and the evisceration of public services, policies that had widespread detrimental consequences.[197]

While Ian Haney López focuses on the economic impact of White supremacy (qua coded appeals to racial resentment) on many White people, sociologist and psychiatrist Jonathan Metzl recently published a thorough study of its biological impact on "middle- and lower-income" White people.[198] Metzl frames his study with an account of how White opposition to gun control policies, health care reform, and public education spending in Missouri, Tennessee, and Kansas, respectively, has been shaped by the histories of White supremacy in these states, histories which, as he puts it in the introduction, "imbue debates about guns, health care systems, taxes, and schools with larger meanings about race in America and about American Whiteness."[199] Metzl interviewed White people in these states and found that these historical meanings informed their opposition to gun control

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campaign. Stone and Ailes created the infamous Willie Horton ad for the George H.W. Bush campaign. Both the Reagan and Bush campaigns relied heavily on dog whistle politics.

[196] Ibid., 92.

[197] Ibid., 160. To be clear, Haney López does not argue that dog whistle politics is the *source* of racial resentment, but that it mobilizes and intensifies already existing racial resentment. For an economic historian's account of the relationship between White supremacy and the dissolution of the White US middle class, see also Peter Temin, *The Vanishing Middle Class: Prejudice and Power in a Dual Economy* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2017).

[198] Jonathan Metzl, *Dying of Whiteness: How the Politics of Racial Resentment Is Killing America's Heartland* (New York: Basic Books, 2019), 11. Metzl does not define "middle- and lower-income."

[199] Ibid., 21.

policies, health care reform, and public education, which they often perceived as dangerous plots to illicitly benefit undeserving racial minorities at their expense. Simply put, they interpreted these policies as zero-sum racial games. The available public health data show, however, that this interpretation was quite wrong. Indeed, Metzl shows that White opposition to these policies constituted "political acts of self-sabotage [that] came at mortal cost to the health and longevity of lower- and, in many instances, middle- income white GOP supporters—and ultimately, to the well-being of everyone else."[200] His findings are startling:

- White opposition to gun control policies in Missouri directly contributed to an increase in White male gun suicides which resulted in "the loss of over 10,500 years of productive White male life" and "cost the state roughly $414,654,891."[201]

- White opposition to Medicaid expansion in Tennessee cost "between 6,365 and 12,013 White lives" and "every single adult black and White resident of the state somewhere between two and five weeks of life."[202]

- White opposition to public education spending in Kansas resulted in nearly 700 additional White dropouts, "amount[ing] to 6,195.51 additional lost White life years."[203]

White opposition to gun control policies, health care reform, and public education spending in these three states had a detrimental impact on White well-being (in addition to its greater detrimental impact on people of color). This data shows that many White people have suffered as a result of their conscious or unconscious investment in White supremacy. As he put it, "White America's

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[200] Ibid., 14.

[201] Ibid., 100.

[202] Ibid., 153, 155.

[203] Ibid., 227.

investment in maintaining an imagined place atop a racial hierarchy - that is, an investment in a sense of Whiteness - ironically harms the aggregate well-being of US Whites as a demographic group, thereby making Whiteness itself a negative health indicator."[204]

Ian Haney Lopez and Jonathan Metzl show that White precarity is in part a historical outcome of White political action informed by zero-sum interpretations of social policy. Simply put, White people perceived the above-mentioned social policies as benefiting supposedly lazy and undeserving minority populations at their expense, only to subject themselves to significant forms of economic and biological precarity. In this sense, this White political action does appear to constitute a form "self-sabotage."[205] But what, precisely, does Metzl mean by "self-sabotage?" That is, what are the normative and epistemological assumptions and implications of his use of this term? And, if White precarity is the result of White self-sabotage, what is the relationship between the latter and White privilege? Relatedly, as I put it in the introduction, what conception of White supremacy accounts for both relative White advantages accrued at the expense of people of color as well as the negative consequences White supremacy has had on many White people throughout US history? And how do we account for the persistence and prevalence of White supremacy if it has in fact hurt many White people?

Linda Alcoff on "Imaginary Whiteness" and Ideology-Critique

To conclude, I would like to propose that the broad tradition of ideology-critique offers resources for addressing these questions. In doing so, I draw inspiration from Linda Alcoff, who appeals to the concept of *ideology* throughout *The Future of Whiteness*, referring to "the ideology

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[204] Ibid., 17.

[205] Ibid., 14.

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of whiteness," "an overt ideology of racial biologism," and the "ideology of white vanguardism."[206] Similarly, she mentions that "racism" is "an ideology laying in wait, capable of appearing and increasing in intensity after it may seem to be long gone."[207] Alcoff's appeal to the concept of ideology comes out most fully in her discussion of imaginary whiteness, her term for "the realm of mythic imagery and the relatively unconscious ways in which people have affective and dispositional attitudes about whiteness – that is, what whiteness stands for, what it means, its imagined genealogy, and how it is qualitatively distinct from other groups."[208] For Alcoff, imaginary whiteness is "a collective rather than individual background layer of understandings and dispositions that both enables and constrains our ability to produce new ideas and responses."[209] The white imaginary, in Alcoff's sense, is a shared orientation comprising White people's cultural and historical self-understandings and action-guiding normative commitments. On her account, many White people draw on this shared orientation to interpret and navigate their concrete, practical relations with each other (and people of color). As she puts it, it is intimately tied up with "the sphere of rational action" and, more specifically, "drives the articulation of our rational interests."[210]

Alcoff proposes that imaginary Whiteness provides many White people with identity utility, that is, an identity-based value that shapes their desires or preferences. The latter, Alcoff suggests, inform White people's assessments of their "rational self-interest."[211] She argues that White identity utility explains "preferences that make sense in the context of group-related norms but that look

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[206] Alcoff, *The Future of Whiteness*, 13, 76, 157. See also Ibid., 1, 159, 161.

[207] Ibid., 126.

[208] Ibid., 78.

[209] Ibid., 79.

[210] Ibid.

[211] Ibid., 80.

inexplicable – or simply irrational – outside this frame. A preference may have no economic value and yet have identity value."[212] Alcoff cites the example of White people who "choose to work for less pay in a non-union hospital with a larger white workforce rather than in a unionized hospital with a diverse workforce."[213] Their "desire to be in white dominant spaces," she suggests, can be "part of [their] rational self-interest," even if it does not result in economic benefits.[214]

On Alcoff's view, then, White people who rely on White identity utility to assess their "rational interests" are not necessarily acting irrationally. In her words, "if one feels this strongly about their connection to white people and to a white dominant community or nation, then it is rational *in some sense* to make choices that manifest this preference."[215] This implies that White supremacy can be "rational in some sense" to the extent that it is informed by imaginary Whiteness and White identity utility. To extend her example, White people who desire to work in predominantly White non-union hospitals may also desire to exclude non-White people from their place of employment. In acting on this desire and ensuring that the non-union hospital remains predominantly White, they are therefore acting rationally "in some sense." This vague qualifier, however, indicates that, for Alcoff, the story is more complex. If there are "some sense[s]" in which such actions can be considered "rational," there are other sense in which they may be considered "irrational."

She proceeds with the assertion that "truly rational behavior should not simply pursue one's preferences but should consider how those preferences are produced and whether they conflict with

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[212] Ibid.

[213] Ibid., 79.

[214] Ibid., 80.

[215] Ibid., 81, emphasis added.

one's other needs and commitments."[216] Read in the context of the above example, this suggests that, for Alcoff, some such White people act on their desire to maintain "white dominant spaces" without considering that desire's historical and normative contexts.[217] That is, they fail to consider the ways in which their self-identification as White has been, and continues to be, shaped by complex and contingent historical processes and is thus not an unavoidable natural instinct.[218] Further, Alcoff suggests, they fail to consider the relationship between their White self-identification, their desires to avoid and/or exclude non-White people on the basis of that self-identification, and their other needs and commitments. When White people disregard the historical and normative contexts of their preferences, their pursuit of these preferences amounts to behavior which is not "truly rational," and is thus to some degree "irrational." In this regard, Alcoff suggests, imaginary Whiteness is an "ideology," and the concept (of imaginary Whiteness) highlights "the falsified grounds for white preferences, self-conceptions, and identifications."[219]

Now, suppose it is true that some White people sometimes pursue their racialized preferences without considering their historical and normative contexts. On Alcoff's account, these White people are not engaged in "truly rational behavior." It would be "more truly rational" of them, Alcoff suggests, to critically reflect on these contextual features of their preferences. Of course, they may do so and nevertheless decide to pursue them. However, there may also be cases in which such

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[216] Ibid., emphasis added.

[217] For the purposes of this section, I follow Alcoff in using the terms "desire" and "preferences" interchangeably. Further discussion of the difference between desires and preferences goes beyond the scope of this chapter.

[218] White nationalist and founder/organizer of American Renaissance magazine and conferences, Jared Taylor, for example, argues that "human beings appear to have deeply-rooted tribal instincts...[and] seem to prefer to live in homogeneous communities rather than endure the tension and conflict that arise from differences. If the goal of building a diverse society conflicts with some aspect of our nature, it will be very difficult to achieve." Jared Taylor, *White Identity: Racial Consciousness in the 21st Century* (New Century Books, 2011), 95.

[219] Linda Alcoff, *The Future of Whiteness*, 81.

critical reflections lead them to reject these preferences. They may find, for example, that their desire to maintain a predominantly White workplace conflicts with their familial needs and commitments. They may discover that joining a more diverse unionized workplace would put them in a better position to provide for their families, and that they would thus be better off rejecting, or at least mitigating, their initial desire. In these cases, said White people may determine that they in fact have rational interests in challenging and practically overcoming this desire. The issue, however, is that "imaginary whiteness" qua ideology somehow undermines efforts to engage in such critical self-reflection, hence Alcoff's suggestion that White people who prioritize their White self-identification are not engaged in "truly rational behavior," at least in some cases.

Although I have some reservations with Alcoff's account (more on these below), I agree with her claims that White people's racialized preferences are historically and normatively situated, and that the "rationality" of their action depends in part on the degree to which they account for these contexts in their practical deliberations. I also affirm her suggestion that White people sometimes fail to consider potential conflicts between their racialized preferences and their other needs and commitments, as well as the implication that, under certain circumstances, some White people may reflect on these potential conflicts and decide to reject said racialized preferences. Going further, I would suggest that Alcoff's brief remarks point towards one way to conceptualize White self-sabotage. In her terms, we might say that some White people have historically pursued their racialized preferences to the neglect of their other needs and commitments and, furthermore, that in doing so they have failed (for reasons that would have to be explicated) to consider potential conflicts between their racialized preferences and their other needs and commitments. In short, they have failed to engage in "truly rational behavior" and have suffered for it.

Alcoff's account provides a rough starting point for conceptualizing the relationship between White supremacy, White privilege, and White self-sabotage. Much more needs to be said, however,

about the historical, normative, and epistemological assumptions underlying her discussion. What is "truly rational behavior?" Why *should* White people engage in "truly rational behavior?" When, how, and why does imaginary Whiteness lead White people to engage in "irrational" behavior? In what sense and to what degree is such behavior "irrational?" How does one determine whether White people have considered potential conflicts between their racialized preferences and other needs and commitments? And what all of this have to do with "ideology"? Alcoff does not elaborate.

As I showed, Alcoff refers to "ideology" several times through her book, and explicitly refers to "imaginary whiteness" as an "ideology." Although she does not thematize the concept of *ideology*, I claim its presence in her discussion is not coincidental. In fact, her discussion of "imaginary whiteness" bears much in common with the ideology-critique framework developed by Raymond Guess and, more recently, Tommie Shelby.[220] Drawing on Guess, Shelby proposes an ideology-critique approach that attends to the epistemological, functional, and genetic features of racism. The epistemological dimension attends to questions of rationality and cognition. It explains and evaluates, for example, false beliefs and unjustified empirical claims.[221] The functional dimension of ideology-critique attends to "the negative practical consequences" of an ideology "for society or some social group within it."[222] The genetic dimension of ideology-critique attends to "the negative features that are a part of the etiology or history" of the ideology. I will have more to say about this model of ideology-critique in chapter four. For now, I simply want to note that Alcoff's discussion of imaginary whiteness implicitly addresses all three dimensions. Her remarks about White people's supposed

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[220] Raymond Geuss, *The Idea of a Critical Theory: Habermas and the Frankfurt School*, Modern European Philosophy (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981); Tommie Shelby, "Ideology, Racism, and Critical Social Theory," *The Philosophical Forum* 34, no. 2 (June 2003): 153–88. Hereafter cited as "Shelby, 'Ideology, Racism, and Critical Social Theory.'"

[221] Shelby, "Ideology, Racism, and Critical Social Theory," 164.

[222] Ibid.

failure to engage in "truly rational behavior" presupposes some critical account of the epistemological dimensions of White supremacy. When she suggests that "truly rational behavior" requires some consideration of how White people's racial preferences are produced, she implicitly appeals to some critical genetic account of those preferences (and "the white imaginary" more broadly). Finally, Alcoff's discussion of "imaginary whiteness" is situated within a broader project which aims to show that White people qua White can and should participate in broad coalitions for anti-racist social change.[223] In other words, she argues that White people can and should contribute to anti-racist social initiatives because White supremacy has "negative practical consequences...for society or some social group in it," namely, people of color.[224] Finally, as I discussed, her account of imaginary Whiteness also implies that White supremacy can sometimes have negative practical consequences for White people. Considering the limitations of Alcoff's discussion of imaginary Whiteness and her implicit reliance on a general model of ideology-critique, then, the chapters that follow centralize and develop a broad ideology-critique approach to the relationship between White supremacy, White privilege, and White self-sabotage.

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[223] Alcoff, *The Future of Whiteness*, 175.

[224] Shelby, "Ideology, Racism, and Critical Social Theory," 164.

Chapter III

Racist Ideology: From Social Practices to Social Problems

[S]lavery evolved into Jim Crow segregation, which evolved into the current hierarchy maintained by

mass incarceration and felonization, ghettoization, economic marginalization, and cultural stigma.

Sally Haslanger[225]

By using racism, consciously or unconsciously, to divert public discontent and to boost the shaky

egos of White groups on or near the bottom, men of power in America have played a key role in

making racism a permanent structure of our society.

Lerone Bennett, Jr.[226]

Introduction

In his 2002 response to Jorge Garcia, Tommie Shelby first introduced an ideology-theoretical conception of racism into contemporary academic philosophy. The question of how to understand ideology and racism as ideology has since emerged as an important site of debate among philosophers, with Sally Haslanger, Jason Stanley and, more recently, Robert Gooding-Williams offering their own contributions to the discussion. Departing from Shelby's belief-first conception of racist ideology, Haslanger, Stanley, and Gooding-Williams have recently developed conceptions of racist ideology that take concept- and norm-laden social practices as their primary unit of analysis. To offer a crude preliminary sketch, the basic idea is that racist ideology is a set of concepts, social meanings, and/or expectations that emerge from social practices (more on these below) which

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[225] Sally Haslanger, "Racism, Ideology, and Social Movements," *Res Philosophica* 91, No. 1 (2017), 8. Hereafter cited as "Haslanger, 'Racism.'"

[226] Lerone Bennett, Jr, "The White Problem in America," in Ebony Magazine, *The White Problem in America* (Chicago: Johnson Publishing Company), 8.

disproportionately harm people of color. Further, these concepts, social meanings, and expectations serve to justify and reinforce said social practices, often in terms that appeal to epistemologically problematic notions of inherent non-White moral and intellectual inferiority.

Although I am sympathetic to this approach to the concept of racist ideology, I will argue that it suffers from significant explanatory and political limitations. First, the social practice approach relies on what Tommie Shelby has called a "functionalist" account of social explanation. The basic idea, in his words, is that "through a kind of self-perpetuating feedback loop, ideologies are reproduced by the relations of domination and exploitation that they sustain."[227] Put crudely, this approach proposes that racist ideologies emerge spontaneously as social actors attempt to make sense of the world as it appears to them.[228] Since social actors can never attain a comprehensive apprehension of the world in all of its complexity, their perceptual and interpretative efforts to do so inevitably generate partially distorted belief systems, conceptual repertoires, perceptual habits, etc. In a White supremacist society, the resulting tendency will be for the dominant White group to acquire White supremacist beliefs, attitudes, perceptions, etc., which then reinforce racialized stratifications.

What the functionalist approach neglects, however, is the inherently contested nature of racist ideologies, which – along with culture more generally - are also sites of social struggles between and among social groups striving to establish authoritative interpretations of particular situations with the aim of shaping and coordinating political responses to social problems.[229] Insofar as the

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[227] Tommie Shelby, "Ideology, Racism, and Critical Social Theory," *The Philosophical Forum* 34, no. 2 (June 2003), 186. Hereafter cited as "Shelby, 'Ideology.'"

[228] Tommie Shelby, *We Who Are Dark*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005), 142, 156, 158; Sally Haslanger, "Racism, Ideology, and Social Movements," *Res Philosophica* 91, no.1 (2017), 14; Robert Gooding-Williams, "Ideology, Social Practices, Anti-Black Concepts," forthcoming in OUP Ideology Volume, ed. Celikates, Haslanger, and Stanley, 34; Jason Stanley, *How Propaganda Works* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015), 193-197.

[229] Ashley ("Woody") Doane, "Beyond Color-Blindness: (Re) Theorizing Racial Ideology," *Sociological Perspectives* 60, no. 5 (2017): 977; Stuart Hall, *The Hard Road to Renewal. Thatcherism and the Crisis of the Left* (London and New York: Verso, 1988), 188.

functionalist approach overlooks this political dimension, it risks neglecting the active role that Whites have played in the construction and maintenance of racist ideologies, which, as Cedric Robinson once put it, "are actually contrivances, designed and delegated by interested cultural and social powers with the wherewithal sufficient to commission their imaginings, manufacture, and maintenance."[230] In other words, if, in Haslanger's words, "our responses seem to be called for by the way the world is," then we also need to account for the ways in which "the way the world is" is largely a function of the efforts of "interested cultural and social powers" to shape the way we see the world.[231]

To be sure, these "interested cultural and social powers" (more on them below) do not create racist ideologies *ex nihilo* but out of preexisting cultural elements.[232] The functionalist approach is thus one necessary component of a theory of racist ideology. On its own, however, it does not adequately account for the ways in which dominant members of society actively shape racist ideologies to suit their practical political-economic aims.[233] More generally, this approach does not adequately account for the distinctive roles that interests and power play in the reproduction of racist ideology.[234]

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[230] Cedric Robinson, *Forgeries of Memory and Meaning* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2007), xiii.

[231] Sally Haslanger, *Resisting Reality* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 468.

[232] Shelby, "Ideology," 179.

[233] Shelby briefly acknowledges this point (though without mention of practical political and economic needs of the dominant members of society) but does not elaborate on it. Ibid. For a discussion of how racist ideology is modified to suit the needs of the dominant members of society, see Richard Delgado, "Two Ways to Think about Race: Reflections on the Id, the Ego, and Other Reformist Theories of Equal Protection", *The Georgetown Law Journal* 89 (2001), 2285-2286; Richard Delgado & Jean Stefancic, "Images of the Outsider in American Law and Culture: Can Free Expression Remedy Systemic Social Ills?," *Cornell Law Review* 77 (1992), 1270-1275.

[234] A proper explication of the concepts of interests and power must wait. My aim in this chapter is simply to persuade the reader that a critical conception of racist ideology requires *some* notion of interests and power. For now, then, I take interests to be, roughly, cognitive-affective conditions and processes of being committed to some specific end. In this case, the Nestle corporation qua corporation is primarily interested in pursuing the specific end of profit. (Of course, the *corporation* does not have cognitive-affective characteristics. The interest here, then, is roughly the cumulative effect of the shared cognitive-affective commitments of the individuals who manage and direct the corporation. Further elaboration of the social ontology of corporations goes beyond the scope of this project.) For my present purposes, "power" simply refers to the ability to actively produce a desired effect. Finally, I will use the phrase "interested power" below to

Thus, taken alone, it cannot adequately explain the persistence of racist ideology and fails to account for significant obstacles to the critique of ideology. In order to substantiate these claims, I will now turn to Sally Haslanger's account of racist ideology.

Racist Ideology and Social Practices

Sally Haslanger has recently offered an account of racist ideology and ideological formation that, she believes, explains the persistence of systematic racial injustice.[235] She develops this account through a critical engagement with Tommie Shelby. Criticizing what she sees to be Shelby's cognitivist (or belief-first) approach to racist ideology, Haslanger develops an alternative focus on social practices. This section reconstructs Haslanger's practice-based account of racist ideology and ideological formation.

Haslanger's account of racist ideology and ideological formation centralizes a conception of social practices as "patterns of learned behavior that enable us (in the primary instances) to coordinate as members of a group in creating, distributing, managing, maintaining, and eliminating, a resource (or multiple resources)."[236] Although these patterns of learned behavior vary in the degree to which social actors consciously and intentionally engage in them, they are always laden with social meanings and norms. Coordinated action in response to a resource, on Haslanger's account, requires a shared recognition of that resource qua resource, that is, something taken to have a positive

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refer to a social agent who is in the cognitive-affective condition or process of being committed to some specific end and is able to actively produce effects so as to bring about that end.

[235] Haslanger, "Racism," 9. Haslanger does not develop an account of racial injustice.

[236] Sally Haslanger, "What Is a Social Practice?" *Royal Institute of Philosophy Supplement* 82 (2018), 245. Hereafter cited as "Haslanger, 'Social Practice'." Haslanger does not explain what she means by "in the primary instances."

or negative value.[237] It also presupposes normative commitments to treating the resource as a resource, as well as the manner in which the resource should be treated. That is, coordinated action in response to a resource requires social meanings and norms establishing a shared recognition of, and mode of coordination with respect to, the resource in question.

On Haslanger's account, these social meanings and norms are established through culture.[238] "Culture," in her words, "is a network of social meanings, tools, scripts, schemas, heuristics, principles, and the like, which we draw on in action, and which gives shape to our practices."[239] Cultural *schemas* are particularly important for shaping our practices, according to Haslanger. These are public meanings that social actors internalize as "shared mental states and processes, including concepts, attitudes, dispositions, and such, that enable us to interpret and organize information and coordinate action, thought and affect."[240] Cultural schemas, Haslanger suggests, "frame our consciousness of and practical orientation toward[s]" resources, and also provide reasons for interacting with resources in specific ways.[241] Insofar as we draw on these schemas in our social practices, Haslanger maintains, they serve as tools for coordinating social action. Further, as participants in social practices, we do not draw on independent schemas for coordinating social actions. Rather, social practices require us to draw on a set of interdependent schemas for successful coordination.[242]

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[237] Sally Haslanger, *Critical Theory and Practice. Spinoza Lectures* (Assen, Netherlands: Koninklijke Van Gorcum, 2017), 21-22. Hereafter cited as "Haslanger, *Critical Theory.*"

[238] Sally Haslanger, "Culture and Critique," *Aristotelian Society Supplementary Volume* XCI (2017), 155. Hereafter cited as "Haslanger, 'Culture and Critique'."
[239] Ibid.

[240] Haslanger, *Critical Theory*, 21.

[241] Haslanger, "Racism," 13.

[242] Haslanger, *Critical Theory*, 22-23.

For example, schemas that enable us to interpret "a kind of nut as food" are implicitly connected to schemas for defining and recognizing food as a resource we have reason to consume.[243] This interpretation also entails "questions about how to gather, maintain, produce, distribute, protect, and store, the nuts."[244] Cultural schemas provide us with tools for answering these questions; they enable us to define and coordinate practices of gathering, maintaining, producing, etc. In this regard, cultural schemas are interdependent and tool-like elements of culture, constituting what Haslanger calls "cultural techne."[245]

Haslanger extends this example to elaborate on the dynamic interdependence of schemas and resources. The cultural schemas we draw on and develop to answer questions about how to gather, maintain, produce, etc. nuts as a kind of food shape subsequent practices which, "in turn, affect the quality, quantity, and sorts of nuts produced."[246] Thus, the cultural schemas we draw on and develop in our social practices indirectly transform our resources. Changes to the latter also sometimes require us to revisit and revise our cultural schemas: "Resources change – California is running out of water. This requires new practices, new schemas, e.g., almond production is at risk. We then ask: what nuts require less water to produce? Our thinking and acting evolve along with the object/artifact."[247] Material effects in the world sometimes pose challenges to our social practices, and thus compel us to revisit and revise the cultural schemas which guide those practices.

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[243] Ibid.

[244] Ibid.

[245] Ibid.

[246] Ibid.

[247] Ibid.

Haslanger also offers the example of an ear of corn. We can draw on any number of cultural schemas to interpret an ear of corn, she suggests. It "can be viewed as something to eat, or as a commodity to be sold, as a religious symbol."[248] Each cultural schema guides different social practices vis-à-vis the ear of corn: "for example, it might be cooked for food, or the kernels removed to be shipped, or dried and hung in a prominent place to be worshipped."[249] These distinct practices have different effects on the ear of corn, which in turn influence our initial cultural schema. Extending her example, she suggests that a situation may arise in which "American agri-business offers a high price for the corn, and the community needs cash, the farmer may sell the crop to be converted to ethanol. In turn, this may change the meaning of corn – what it is 'for' and how it is grown."[250] In this scenario, an ear of corn which was initially interpreted as food may come to be interpreted as a commodity. Our consistent application of the commodity-schema to an ear of corn results in the regular removal and transportation of kernels, and the regularity of this practice, in turn, reinforces the commodity-schema. "Thus," she concludes, "culture and material resources...are embedded in a loop, where each affects the other."[251]

Haslanger employs the above examples to highlight the mutual interdependence of cultural schemas and resources. In Haslanger's words, "schemas and resources are both causally ('sustain each other') and constitutively ('mutually imply') interdependent."[252] She elaborates on this point in terms of looping effects, writing,

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[248] Haslanger, "Racism," 13.

[249] Ibid.

[250] Ibid.

[251] Ibid.

[252] Sally Haslanger, "What is a (social) structural explanation?" *Philos Stud* 173 (2016), 126.

Schematically, the loop includes a cultural techne that is public and available to various parties to the coordination; we internalize these tools and engage in the practices that they structure; the practices organize us in relation to resources, that is, they provide schemas for producing, distributing, accessing, and otherwise managing resources (things taken to have (+/-) value); the world then conforms to the techne (more or less), and the techne seems to be mirroring the world rather than producing it.[253]

To return to Haslanger's ear of corn, our regular engagement in the practice of removing and transporting kernels gradually naturalizes the corn-as-commodity schema. We become so accustomed to removing and transporting kernels, that is, treating ears of corn as commodities, that we come to perceive, interpret, and treat ears of corn as *mere* commodities. In this sense, our reliance on the commodity-schema seems to reflect a warranted response to an apparently natural fact about the world. But what does Haslanger's mirroring metaphor mean, more precisely? She clarifies in epistemological terms, suggesting that

the schemas we employ to interpret the world are confirmed by the world they have shaped, e.g., we allow Nestle to drain local springs in order to bottle water, leaving a less potable public water supply, giving people reason to drink bottled water (sustaining this practice); thus reinforcing the practice of granting water rights to corporations such as Nestle to provide bottled water. Thus it becomes difficult to even see that schemas/practices are problematic, for they appear to have epistemic warrant.[254]

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[253] Haslanger, "Culture and Critique," 157.

[254] Haslanger, "Social Practice," 244.

In other words, the widespread application of a cultural schema transforms the world in such a way that the cultural schema receives a form of retroactive justification. The schema becomes naturalized, so that "our responses seem to be called for by the way the world is" and not the contingent ways we have shaped the world.[255]

Haslanger employs the concepts of social practices, cultural schemas, resources, and looping effects to develop her account of racist ideology and ideological formation. "An ideology," on her view, "is a cultural techne ... that functions to create or stabilize unjust social relations" – or "relations of domination and subordination" - "through some form of masking or illusion."[256] More specifically, Haslanger thinks that ideology "skew[s] our understanding of what is valuable" and "prevents us from knowing what and who matters."[257] This masking or illusion effect operates at the epistemological level, as the latter quote indicates, but it also shapes sub-doxastic processes – affects, desires, motivations, bodily dispositions.[258] These epistemological and sub-doxastic mechanisms are also intertwined, on her account. She writes, "There is a sense in which individuals in the grip of an ideology fail to appreciate what they are doing or what's wrong with it, and so are often unmotivated, if not resistant, to change."[259] In other words, ideology prevents ideological subjects from recognizing the unjust effects of their social practices and thereby reduces their motivations and capacities to change.[260]

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[255] Sally Haslanger, *Resisting Reality* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 468.

[256] Haslanger, "Racism," 16-17; Haslanger, *Critical Theory*, 23; Haslanger, "Culture and Critique," 150.

[257] Haslanger, "Culture and Critique," 159.

[258] Haslanger, "Racism," 7; *Critical Theory*, 35, 38. Haslanger does not thematize the distinctions between these processes.

[259] Haslanger, "Culture and Critique," 152.

[260] Haslanger, *Critical Theory*, 20, 35, 38; Haslanger, "Culture and Critique," 163. I will use the phrase "ideological subjects" as shorthand for "people in the grip of an ideology."

Although Haslanger focuses on ideology as a cultural phenomenon, she argues that her account is "materialist" because ideology "depends on the complex network of social relations that organizes our relationship to things of (assumed) value."[261] This dependence is, however, bidirectional: looping effects mean that unjust social relations can also be "guided or formed by an ideology."[262] Haslanger calls these unjust social relations "ideological formations."[263] Racism is one such ideological formation. She writes,

> Racism, on my view, is constituted by an interconnected web of unjust social practices that unjustly disadvantage certain groups, such as residential segregation, police brutality, biased hiring and wage inequity, and educational disadvantage.[264]

Because of looping effects, this ideological formation is interdependent with a racist techne or ideology. Haslanger continues,

> These are not random practices, but are connected to a racist techne. But due to the looping effects that connect agents, meanings, and material conditions, the racist techne is both a product and a source of racism.[265]

In other words, racist techne guide racist practices, transforming the social world in ways that "unjustly disadvantage certain groups."[266] In this sense, Haslanger proposes, they are a *source* of racism. Due to looping effects, however, the material effects of racist practices seem to lend epistemological

[261] Haslanger, *Critical Theory*, 25.

[262] Haslanger, "Racism," 16-17.

[263] Ibid.

[264] Ibid.

[265] Ibid.

[266] Haslanger, *Critical Theory*, 35.

warrant to the racist techne. That is, the racist techne seems to be justified by the effects of residential segregation, police brutality, etc. In this sense, racist techne is also a *product* of racism.

Although Haslanger does not offer much in the way of concrete analysis here, she presents a couple of examples to illustrate her account. I quote her at length:

> the Interstate highway system in the United States was constructed largely to serve the interests of affluent Whites. Those in power relied on a cultural techne offering inadequate and distorting tools for interpreting the landscape and communities that inhabited it, for example, thriving Black communities were considered 'blighted' and were razed or bisected. Decisions to produce and distribute resources (transportation, access to opportunity, noise, pollution, safety) disadvantaged poor Blacks, and the material reality of the effects made the disadvantage appear inevitable or justified, and so reinforces the cultural techne.[267]

In this case, the cultural techne "Black community = Blighted" guided social practices which produced detrimental material effects, e.g, reduced access to transportation and opportunity, decreased safety, and increased noise and pollution, in disproportionately Black neighborhoods. These material effects then seemed to justify the initial cultural techne. Simply put, on Haslanger's account, many White people interpreted disproportionately Black neighborhoods as blighted and acted accordingly, thereby producing material effects which seemed to them to justify the initial interpretation. Those who are challenged to justify their initial interpretation, Haslanger implies, could simply point to these detrimental material effects as empirical evidence. Her second example reads as follows:

> toxic waste is dumped in poor Black neighborhoods, and good schools are built in the White suburbs. Of course, these practices are not arbitrary; there is no surprise

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[267] Haslanger, "Culture and Critique," 157-158.

where the good stuff ends up. But the distribution of goods doesn't end up how it does because of what most people believe, for it is just as true that individuals share racist beliefs because they live in a world in which certain groups get the good stuff. *We learn about race and what different races "deserve" by looking around us.*[268]

As I noted above, then, Haslanger thinks that racist subjects tend to point to the material effects of racist practices - neglecting their complex, contingent historical roots, of course - as justification for their interpretations of racial inequality.[269] Thus, Haslanger imputes to many White people something like the following view: *I see that fewer resources are distributed to poor Black neighborhoods; it must be because Black people are less deserving.*

Haslanger generalizes from these brief examples to explain the history of racism in the United States. Immediately following the passage I quoted above, Haslanger writes:

This suggests that racial inequality is a systematic phenomenon best understood in terms of dynamic homeostasis. There are multiple determinants of social stratification in a society: wealth, status, prestige, power, authority, autonomy, opportunity, to name a few. In a stratified society, there are mechanisms that stably position groups hierarchically along these dimensions. Homeostasis explains the persistence of hierarchy: changes in part of the system are adjusted for elsewhere so that the status quo is maintained. But the system is dynamic; although relatively stable, there is a historical development; the adjustments don't always return the system exactly to the original state, but can allow a shift to a different sort of hierarchical structure. For example, in the case of African Americans, slavery evolved into Jim Crow segregation, which

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[268] Haslanger, "Racism," 17, emphasis added.

[269] "Racist subjects" here is shorthand for "people in the grip of racist ideology."

evolved into the current hierarchy maintained by mass incarceration and felonization, ghettoization, economic marginalization, and cultural stigma.[270]

In short, Haslanger proposes that systematic racial injustice can be explained in terms of culture-practice looping effects: racist techne shape and reproduce racist practices, which exert unjustly disadvantageous material effects on African American people. These material effects in turn reinforce racist techne, which reinforce racist social practices, and so on.[271]

Social Practices, Interests, and Power

The first section reconstructed Sally Haslanger's account of racist ideology. As I showed, her account centralizes social practices and looping effects. This section will explore the limitations of her account. Specifically, I argue that Haslanger overlooks the historical and political dimension of the examples she uses to illustrate her account of racist ideology. In so doing, she fails to account for the importance of interests, agency, and power in the reproduction and maintenance of racist ideology.[272]

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[270] Ibid.

[271] Sally Haslanger, "Ideology, Genesis, and Common Ground," in *Resisting Reality*, 468.

[272] I suspect that the underlying issue here is Haslanger's reliance on an Althusserian conception of ideology, which, to put it simply, emphasizes the passive dimension of subject-formation and social practices. As sociologist Göran Therborn put it decades ago, the Althusserian conception "allows no room for any dialectic of ideology." For Therborn, ideological subjectivation – or, if you prefer, individuals' socialization into an ideology – entails both passive and active processes. Although ideological subjects "are subjected to a particular order that allows or favours certain drives and capacities, and prohibits or disfavours others," they also "become qualified to take up and perform (a particular part of) the repertoire of roles given in the society into which they are born, including the role of possible agents of social change." In other words, the reproduction of ideology entails both processes of passive socialization as well as active reflection on, and modification of, ideologies and social roles. The Althusserian conception, as Therborn points out, generally neglects this latter active dimension. Göran Therborn, *The Ideology of Power and the Power of Ideology* (London: Verso, 1980), 16, 17. For Haslanger's explicit reference to Althusser's conception of ideology, see Sally Haslanger, "Disciplined Bodies and Ideology Critique," *Glass Bead* (2019), https://www.glass-bead.org/article/disciplined-bodies-and-ideology-critique/?lang=enview.

I begin with a closer look at an example she uses to illustrate the general notion of looping effects. This is her Nestle example:

> we allow Nestle to drain local springs in order to bottle water, leaving a less potable
> public water supply, giving people reason to drink bottled water (sustaining this prac-
> tice); thus reinforcing the practice of granting water rights to corporations such as
> Nestle to provide bottled water.[273]

In this case, the practice of bottling water reduces potable water supplies, which reinforces the interpretation of water as a resource that should be bottled, and so on.

The conceptual limitations of Haslanger's account of looping effects appear when we consider the historical and political dimensions of her example. Politically, the question is, who is the "we" here? Who is it that allows Nestle to drain and bottle water from local springs? For whom is the practice of granting water rights to corporations such as Nestle reinforced? Further, even if we grant Haslanger's point that the subsequent proliferation of this practice reinforces cultural interpretations of water as a resource that should be bottled, the historical question remains: how did this practice emerge in the first place? Haslanger's brief and abstract discussion of this example offers little guidance here, so let's turn to the article she cites, Caroline Winter's "Nestle Makes Billions Bottling Water It Pays Nearly Nothing For."[274]

A cursory reading reveals that Winter's article highlights precisely these historical and political dimensions of Nestle's water-bottling practices, focusing on the corporation's operation in Michigan – which, in her words, "illuminates how Nestlé has come to dominate a controversial industry,

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[273] Sally Haslanger, "What Is a Social Practice?" *Royal Institute of Philosophy Supplement* 82 (2018), 244.

[274] Caroline Winter, "Nestle Makes Billions Bottling Water It Pays Nearly Nothing For," *Bloomberg Businessweek,* September 21ˢᵗ, 2017, https://www.bloomberg.com/news/features/2017-09-21/nestl-makes-billions-bottling-water-it-pays-nearly-nothing-for.

spring by spring, often going into economically depressed municipalities with the promise of jobs and new infrastructure in exchange for tax breaks and access to a resource that's scarce for millions." Importantly, Winter highlights Nestle's efforts to promote its practices despite widespread public outcry: "Where Nestlé encounters grass-roots resistance against its industrial-strength guzzling, it deploys lawyers." Indeed, the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality's (DEQ) consideration of Nestle's request to expand its water pumping operation in 2018 was met with "massive and unprecedented" public opposition.[275] The DEQ approved Nestle's request despite 80,000 public comments against it. Further, as Winter explains, these comments only came out after environmental reporter Garret Ellison broke a story on the permit request. Prior to his report, the DEQ did not allow for a period of public comment.

On Winter's telling, Nestle's water-bottling practice is enabled, not by widely shared cultural interpretations of water as a resource that should be bottled and sold, but unenforced laws (the Safe Drinking Water Act of 1974), government deregulation, antiquated wastewater-treatment systems, and failing local infrastructures – in short, a variety of historically-specific political-economic decisions and indecisions, as well as their material effects. The case of Flint, Michigan – which Winters spends some time on - is particularly illuminating in this regard. Flint's water crisis began in 2014, when Michigan Governor Rick Snyder and local officials decided to cut costs by switching the city's water supply to the Flint River.[276] A recent *Vice* report shows that Snyder knew the dangers of the

[275] Bill Chappell, "Michigan OKs Nestlé Water Extraction, Despite 80K+ Public Comments Against It," *National Public Radio*, April 3rd, 2018, https://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2018/04/03/599207550/michigan-oks-nestl-water-extraction-despite-over-80k-public-comments-against-it; Carly Cassella, "Flint Residents Struggle For Affordable, Clean Water, While Nestle Pumps Gallons of It Nearby," *Science Alert*, April 10th, 2018, https://www.sciencealert.com/flint-michigan-residents-clean-water-nestle-pump-gallons-cheap.

[276] Natural Resources Defense Council, "Flint Water Crisis," https://www.nrdc.org/flint; Merrit Kennedy, "Lead-Laced Water In Flint: A Step-By-Step Look At The Makings Of A Crisis," *National Public Radio,* April 20th, 2016, https://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2016/04/20/465545378/lead-laced-water-in-flint-a-step-by-step-look-at-the-makings-of-a-crisis.

switch, and his administration pressured then-mayor of Flint Karen Weaver to lie about the water quality.[277] In so doing, they failed to ensure that the river water was properly treated, producing a "public health disaster" which included "the lead poisoning of thousands of children" and "one of the largest outbreaks of Legionnaires' disease in U.S. history."[278] Unsurprisingly, Nestle stepped in to "solve" the problem. As Winter explains, "since the crisis, Flint residents have paid thousands of dollars to purchase bottled water for drinking, cooking, washing, and bathing." Michigan resident and social organizer Peggy Case describes the result: "Between 2005 and 2016, Nestlé has taken over 4 billion gallons of our water for pennies and sold it back to us for huge profits…Meanwhile, the people of Flint have been forced to use this bottled water for several years and are required to pay some of the highest water bills in the country for undrinkable water." "Case's three-minute speech" at a public DEQ hearing, Winter notes, "got a standing ovation." My questions for Haslanger, again, are: Who is it that allows Nestle to drain and bottle water from local springs? For whom is the practice of granting water rights to corporations such as Nestle reinforced? Certainly not the people of Flint.

A closer look at Haslanger's Nestle example reveals a major limitation of her account of looping effects. In this case, she fails to account for the role that political and economic interests, agency, and power play in the establishment and reproduction of social practices despite the broad public rejection of the cultural schemas that guide, and are purportedly justified by, them. Although much more could be said about this case, my general point is that a critical conception of ideology and ideological formation must attend to questions of political-economic interests and power. In

[277] Jessica Corbett, "As Flint Water Crisis Enters Sixth Year, 'Astounding' Report Exposes Lies of Ex-Gov. Rick Snyder and Other Officials," *Common Dreams*, April 16, 2020, https://www.commondreams.org/news/2020/04/16/flint-water-crisis-enters-sixth-year-astounding-report-exposes-lies-ex-gov-rick.

[278] PBS Frontline, "Flint's Deadly Water," September 9th, 2019, https://www.pbs.org/video/flints-deadly-water-pwsj3m/.

order to further develop this point vis-a-vis Haslanger's account of racist ideology and ideological formation, in particular, I will now revisit her brief discussion of the interstate highway system, which reads as follows:

> the Interstate highway system in the United States was constructed largely to serve the interests of affluent Whites. Those in power relied on a cultural techne offering inadequate and distorting tools for interpreting the landscape and communities that inhabited it, for example, thriving Black communities were considered 'blighted' and were razed or bisected. Decisions to produce and distribute resources (transportation, access to opportunity, noise, pollution, safety) disadvantaged poor Blacks, and the material reality of the effects made the disadvantage appear inevitable or justified, and so reinforces the cultural techne.[279]

Again, on Haslanger's account, a racist techne guided social practices that produced material effects which then seemed to justify that techne. As with the Nestle case, the political question here is, who enabled the social practice of constructing public highways through Black communities? And for whom did the cultural techne appear justified? Presumably not the Black people living in these thriving communities. Second is the historical question: How were these practices enabled? This question is particularly pressing in this case, because Haslanger claims that the disrupted communities were initially thriving. If this is true, then how is it that the inadequate and distorting cultural techne was effectively deployed to interpret those communities as blighted in the first place? After all, if the communities were thriving, they were not yet subject to the material effects which would later appear to justify the "Black community = blighted" techne. Unfortunately, Haslanger's discussion is here is quite brief. Although she refers to "the interests of affluent Whites" and "those in

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[279] Haslanger, "Culture and Critique," 157-158.

power," she does not thematize the concepts of interests, agency, and power. The public radio discussion she cites, however, points towards the need to do so.

For example, senior fellow at The Brookings Institution, Robert Puentes, explains that the decision to construct public highways through Black neighborhoods was made without any kind of public oversight or input. Black people living in these communities played no part in the decision-making process. Economic Policy Institute research associate Richard Rothstein elaborates, noting that public highways were constructed "as part of an overall federal program to segregate metropolitan areas." That is, the public highways program was one of several mid-20th century federal policies that were "specifically designed" to suburbanize the White population. Noting the importance of economic interests here, Rothstein adds, "The Federal Housing Administration [FHA] gave production loans to mass production builders of suburbs to get the White population out of cities and into suburban areas." These federal policies deprived most, if not all, Black people of opportunities to acquire housing outside of urban areas, thereby overcrowding many in "central city ghettos." This overcrowding then served as a justification for "demolishing slums." The chief architect of the federal highway bill, Rothstein continues, worked with city officials who explicitly interpreted the interstate highway system as "a good opportunity to get rid of the local ni**er town." Why? According to Rothstein, the broader strategy was to disrupt the Civil Rights Movement by undermining Black churches, which were central sites of community organizing efforts throughout the 1950s. "This was typical of the way in which highways were used throughout the country," Rothstein concludes.[280]

This brief discussion indicates that the deployment of racist techne, in Haslanger's terms, towards the disruption of thriving Black communities during the mid-20th century was the result of

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[280] Diane Rehm, "Transportation Secretary Anthony Foxx On The Legacy Of The U.S. Highway System," *The Diane Rehm Show*, March 31st, 2016, https://dianerehm.org/shows/2016-03-31/transportation-secretary-anthony-foxx-on-transportation-opportunity-%20and-the-legacy-of-the-u-s-highway-system.

strategic decisions made on the part of interested powers to transform the mid-20th century urban landscape. Rothstein's mention of the FHA's production loans also points toward the importance of political-economic interests in this context.

Historian Toure Reed's recent article, "Between Obama and Coates," helps illuminate these political-economic interests, and contextualizes them within "the complex political-economic under-pinnings of housing discrimination" during the mid-20th century.[281] He describes federal housing policy as a bipartisan strategy to "spur a construction boom that might stimulate macroeconomic growth" and "[sell] homeownership to America's well-unionized postwar workforce as a passport into the middle class." The aim? Citing historian Robert Self, Reed is succinct: "homeownership and suburbanization thus functioned to defuse labor militancy...by encouraging workers to identify with the ownership class." In this regard, federal housing policy represented an elite strategy to promote specific interests (defusing labor militancy, thereby minimizing employers' exposure to economic disruption) by shaping workers' interests (encouraging them to "identify with the ownership class").[282] In other words, federal policies formally established an ensemble of social practices that effectively incentivized White homeownership and private individualism, rather than collective action and social solidarity, as a path towards social mobility. In the process, as Reed explains, these policies

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[281] Toure Reed, "Between Obama and Coates," *Catalyst,* 1, no. 4 (2018), https://catalyst-journal.com/vol1/no4/between-obama-and-coates.

[282] "Elite" here refers to "those whose decisions impact the lives of a significant number of people; those who can consistently communicate their views widely or to a select, powerful audience; and/or those with significant power, wealth, or professional credentials." For example, Abraham Lincoln, Rush Limbaugh, Bill Clinton, Roger Stone, Roger Ailes, and Steve Bannon were/are elite White people. Jonathan Metzl's interview subjects, Reconstruction-era poor White Southerners, and White opiate addicts in Youngstown, Ohio were/are non-elite White people. Christopher Cimaglio, "Contested Majority: The Representation of The White Working Class in US Politics from the 1930s to the 1990s" (Dissertation, January 1, 2018), 30-31. Available at https://repository.upenn.edu/edissertations/3006. See also Joe R. Feagin and Kimberley Ducey, *Elite White Men Ruling: Who, What, When, Where, and How* (London New York: Routledge, 2017).

effectively linked racial integration at the neighborhood level to property values, thereby mobilizing and intensifying White families' racist techne.

Above I posed three questions for Haslanger's account: Who enabled the social practice of constructing public highways through Black communities? For whom did the cultural schema "Black community = blighted" appear justified? And how were these practices enabled? Through a closer examination of Haslanger's example, we see that the racist cultural schema appeared justified to interested White powers aiming to reshape the political-economic terrain of the United States. Secondly, that schema subsequently acquired apparent justification in the minds of affluent White people because those interested powers established an ensemble of social practices that effectively incentivized White families to adopt that schema. To put it simply, here we do have a case of social practices reinforcing a racist cultural techne. However, specific interested White powers played a significant role in establishing those social practices and, therefore, indirectly reinforcing the racist cultural techne in question.

So far, I have revisited two examples Haslanger uses to illustrate her account of culture-resource looping effects generally and with respect to racist ideology. My discussion of Haslanger's Nestle example showed that interested political-economic powers sometimes shape social practices despite widespread opposition to cultural techne. Conceptually, this highlights a limitation of Haslanger's general claim that social practices tend to reinforce, by granting some apparent epistemic justification for, cultural techne. Although this almost certainly does happen, Haslanger's examples indicate that interested powers can sometimes establish social practices which never acquire apparent epistemic justification for most people affected by them. My discussion of Haslanger's public highways example further illustrated the importance of interested powers in shaping culture-resource looping effects. Specifically, I showed that, in the case of the interstate highway system, interested White powers made strategic decisions to undermine the civil rights movement by disrupting Black

churches. Further, my brief consideration of public highway construction as one element of a broader ensemble of social practices aimed at White suburbanization and homeownership revealed that interested White powers sought to undermine postwar labor organizations and effectively established an ensemble of social practices that incentivized White families to rely on racist techne. The general conclusion I draw from this discussion is that a critical conception of racist ideology must account for interests, agency, and power.

More generally, my reconsideration of these two examples indicates that "we" do not simply "learn about race and what different races 'deserve' by looking around us." Haslanger makes this claim in the following passage, which I quoted above:

toxic waste is dumped in poor Black neighborhoods, and good schools are built in the White suburbs. Of course, these practices are not arbitrary; there is no surprise where the good stuff ends up. But the distribution of goods doesn't end up how it does because of what most people believe, for it is just as true that individuals share racist beliefs because they live in a world in which certain groups get the good stuff.

We learn about race and what different races "deserve" by looking around us.[283]

As I noted above, Haslanger thinks that racist practices produce material effects which disproportionately disadvantage people of color. Racist subjects, her argument goes, then point to the material effects of racist practices - neglecting their contingent historical roots, of course - as justification for their ideology. Thus, Haslanger imputes something like the following explanatory inference to White people: *Fewer resources are distributed to poor Black neighborhoods. It must be because Black people are less deserving.*

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[283] Haslanger, "Racism," 17, emphasis added.

As I will now show, however, this formulation elides one of the central insights of decades of empirical research in communication and media studies, namely, that "our" interpretations of "what different races 'deserve'" is highly mediated. They rarely, if ever, arise from direct, personal observations of, say, life in predominantly Black neighborhoods. Stuart Hall had already made this point over thirty years ago: "In a sense, what the society knows about race and what it feels about race do not exist outside of the way in which those subjects are represented in the media."[284] And even when "we" do "look around" and make direct, personal observations of the way "the other side" lives, those observations are often, if not always, inextricably entangled with the meanings and associations "we" have absorbed from the media: "The media are indeed constitutive of what we know and how we feel, indeed how we feel about ourselves."[285]

Decades of communications and media studies research have yielded abundant empirical support for this claim. For example, communications researcher Rajesh Gaur recently published a meta-analysis of forty-nine studies on media depictions of Black people.[286] These studies examined the effects of negative portrayals of Black people in the media (depictions of Black people as lazy, violent, and unintelligent) on media consumers' attitudes. Gaur's meta-analysis finds "significant positive associations between stereotypical portrayals of Blacks in the media and viewers' negative evaluations of Blacks," indicating that "people with prior exposure to media are more likely to perceive the real world in the manner portrayed in the media."[287] The effects of widespread portrayals of

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[284] Lizbeth Goodman, "Race and the Cinema: An Interview with Stuart Hall and Paul Gilroy," *Critical Sociology*, 19, no. 3 (1992), 108.

[285] Ibid.

[286] Rajesh Gaur, "A Multilevel Meta-Analysis of Effects of Negative Stereotypes of Blacks in Media on Consumers' Attitudes," *Media Psychology* (2019): 0–22.

[287] Ibid., 15, 17, 18.

Black men as criminals, the author suggests, "can explain harsher real-life evaluations of Blacks in the criminal justice system."[288] For example, crime coverage in the news media contributes to public support for mandatory minimum sentencing, longer sentences, treating juveniles as adults, use of police force, all of which disproportionately impact Black people.[289]

Importantly, these media effects are greater for White people who live in predominantly White neighborhoods.[290] When exposed to negative stereotypes of Black people in the media, these White people expressed more negative stereotypic evaluations of Black people, felt more distant from Black people as a group, and endorsed more punitive criminal justice policies. White people living in more heterogenous neighborhoods were either unaffected by these media depictions or tended to move in the opposite direction of their more segregated White counterparts. They expressed fewer negative stereotypes, felt closer to Black people as a group, and endorsed less punitive criminal justice policies. Pace Haslanger, then, White people who have had the chance to "look around" and see, perhaps even interact with, Black people on a consistent basis are less likely to accept racist techne.[291]

Similar effects have been observed regarding media consumers' stereotypes and perceptions of, and political attitudes towards, Muslim people. People exposed to media depictions of Muslims

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[288] Ibid., 16.

[289] Michelle Edelstein, "Media portrayals of black men contribute to police violence, Rutgers study says," *AAAS Eurekalert*, November 29th, 2018, https://www.eurekalert.org/pub_releases/2018-11/ru-mpo112118.php; Sara Sun Beale, "The News Media's Influence on Criminal Justice Policy: How Market-Driven News Promotes Punitiveness," *William and Mary Law Review* 48 (2007 2006): 397–482.

[290] Franklin D. Gilliam, Nicholas A. Valentino, and Matthew N. Beckmann, "Where You Live and What You Watch: The Impact of Racial Proximity and Local Television News on Attitudes about Race and Crime," *Political Research Quarterly* 55, no. 4 (December 1, 2002): 755–80.

[291] Indeed, this is the basic theoretical premise, now supported by decades of empirical research, of the social psychology of intergroup contact. For overviews, see Thomas F. Pettigrew and Linda R. Tropp, "A Meta-Analytic Test of Intergroup Contact Theory," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 90, no. 5 (2006): 751–83; Linda R. Tropp and Fiona Kate Barlow, "Making Advantaged Racial Groups Care About Inequality: Intergroup Contact as a Route to Psychological Investment," *Current Directions in Psychological Science* 27, no. 3 (June 1, 2018): 194–99.

as terrorists were more likely to perceive Muslims as aggressive, support harsh civil restrictions of Muslim Americans, and support military action in Muslim countries.[292] This media effect extends to general stereotypic beliefs about, and negative emotions towards, Muslim people. Those who consume less media and engage in direct contact with Muslim people, on the other hand, hold fewer stereotypic beliefs and negative emotions, and express less support for civil restrictions for Muslim Americans.[293] Similar results have been observed regarding media consumer attitudes towards Mexican immigrants.[294] The authors of one study draw on survey data on exposure to Fox News, perceptions of Mexican immigrants, and support for immigration policies.[295] They found significant negative associations between Fox News exposure and perceptions of immigrants and immigration policies regardless of respondents' political orientation (liberal or conservative) and party identification (Democrat or Republican).[296] "The more individuals watch Fox News," the authors write, "the less likely they will be to support Mexican immigration."[297]

Contemporary communication and media studies research challenges Haslanger's assertion that many White people acquire racist techne through direct observation. On the contrary, White people's perceptions of the world, social relations, and human difference are highly mediated through the narratives and explanations presented in mass media, especially television. Simply put,

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[292] Muniba Saleem et al., "Exposure to Muslims in Media and Support for Public Policies Harming Muslims," *Communication Research* 44, no. 6 (August 1, 2017): 841–69.

[293] Muniba Saleem, Grace S. Yang, and Srividya Ramasubramanian, "Reliance on Direct and Mediated Contact and Public Policies Supporting Outgroup Harm," *Journal of Communication* 66, no. 4 (August 1, 2016): 604–24.

[294] Homero Gil de Zúñiga, Teresa Correa, and Sebastian Valenzuela, "Selective Exposure to Cable News and Immigration in the U.S.: The Relationship Between FOX News, CNN, and Attitudes Toward Mexican Immigrants," *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media* 56, no. 4 (October 1, 2012): 597–615.

[295] Ibid., 609.

[296] Ibid., 610.

[297] Ibid., 608.

the media effectively activate and reinforce racist techne.[298] In other words, it is not the case that racist

techne persist simply because racist practices generate detrimental material effects that seem to grant

them some epistemological warrant. Instead, interested media powers actively influence their audi-

ences. Nor is it the case that media actors "learn what different races 'deserve' by looking around."

First, and most obviously, because media actors themselves consume the media. Second, because

media actors are also interested cultural and political powers who construct narratives that shape

cultural techne and, consequently, social practices. Allow me to elaborate.

A recent entry in the *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Politics*[299] summarizes research on

the relationship between mediated political information and citizens' political perceptions, attitudes,

and behavior.[300] In general, this research explores the complex processes through which the media

present narratives that influence consumers' perceptions and interpretations of politics. Summariz-

ing, the authors note that "the media have become the most important source of citizens' political

experiences."[301] Importantly, the media play an active role in *constructing* these narratives, which are

never simply passively relayed observations of "the facts." In the authors words,

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[298] For a general overview of media effects research, see Kimberly A. Neuendorf and Leo W. Jeffres, "Media Effects: Accounts, Nature, and History Of," in *The International Encyclopedia of Media Effects*, ed. Patrick Rössler, Cynthia A. Hoffner, and Liesbet van Zoonen (Hoboken, NJ, USA: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2017), 1–13.

[299] Hajo G. Boomgaarden and Rüdiger Schmitt-Beck, "The Media and Political Behavior," in *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Politics*, by Hajo G. Boomgaarden and Rüdiger Schmitt-Beck (Oxford University Press, 2019), https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190228637.013.621. The term "media" refers to "news coverage and current affairs information produced by professional journalists," as well as digital information distribution platforms (web applications and social media). Ibid, 3.

[300] "Mediated political communication is the production and dissemination of information about political actors, policies, or political events that passes through some sort of gatekeeping mechanism, usually that of professional journalistic routines and practices, before reaching what was conceived as a mass audience." Ibid, 3, parenthetical citation omitted.

[301] Ibid, 2.

> Media are not simply mirroring political realities. Rather, media select what to cover and what to ignore, and they need to transform complex political processes into 'storylines' that can be understood by laypersons.[302]

These storylines influence the way people think and feel about policies, politicians, and politics, and thus influence their political behavior. Fox News, "America's dominant TV news channel," is an especially relevant case study in this regard.[303] *Vox* correspondent Dylan Matthews summarizes the findings of a 2017 study by Emory University political scientist Gregory Martin and Stanford economist Ali Yurukoglu: "watching Fox News directly causes a substantial rightward shift in viewers' attitudes, which translates into a significantly greater willingness to vote for Republican candidates." The concrete political implications of this study are indeed "stunning."[304] Matthews continues, noting that Martin and Yurukoglu

> estimate that if Fox News hadn't existed, the Republican presidential candidate's share of the two-party vote would have been 3.59 points lower in 2004 and 6.34 points lower in 2008.
>
> For context, that would've made John Kerry the 2004 popular vote winner, and turned Barack Obama's 2008 victory into a landslide where he got 60 percent of the two-party vote.

While the above studies show that the media effectively exercises a form of *cultural power* - broadly, the ability to define, "to 'make things mean'" - this study goes further and shows that this cultural

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[302] Ibid, 3.

[303] Dylan Matthews, "A Stunning New Study Shows That Fox News Is More Powerful than We Ever Imagined," *Vox*, September 8, 2017, https://www.vox.com/policy-and-politics/2017/9/8/16263710/fox-news-presidential-vote-study.

[304] Ibid.

power simultaneously functions as a *political power*.[305] That is, the ability to subtly shift attitudes, interpretations, and experiences of social reality, is simultaneously the ability to shift political orientations and behavior.

Communications and media researchers also study the entwined dynamics of this cultural and political power. Political communications researcher Robert Entman succinctly summarized this research when he wrote that "Powerful players devote massive resources to advancing their interests precisely by imposing [persistent, politically relevant] patterns on mediated communications."[306] More specifically, interested political and cultural powers *frame* social issues "culling a few elements of perceived reality and assembling a narrative that highlights connections among them to promote a particular interpretation."[307] The resulting narratives, or frames, Entman continues,

> typically perform four functions: problem definition, causal analysis, moral judgment, and remedy promotion. Framing works to shape and alter audience members' interpretations and preferences through priming. That is, frames introduce or raise the salience or apparent importance of certain ideas, activating schemas that encourage target audiences to think, feel, and decide in a particular way.[308]

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[305] Stuart Hall, *The Hard Road to Renewal. Thatcherism and the Crisis of the Left* (London and New York: Verso, 1988), 188.

[306] Robert M. Entman, "Framing Bias: Media in the Distribution of Power," *Journal of Communication* 57, no. 1 (2007), 164.

[307] Ibid.

[308] Ibid., parenthetical citations omitted. For a helpful overview of the concept of *framing*, see Diana Elizabeth Kendall, *Framing Class: Media Representations of Wealth and Poverty in America*, 2nd ed (Lanham, Md: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2011), 14-20.

In so doing, they "suggest how politics should be thought about," and therefore influence political behavior.[309] Once again, Fox News is an especially relevant example here. It is no accident that the network has subtly shifted US voters towards the Republican Party. Long-time Fox News chair and CEO, Roger Ailes, was a prominent political consultant who helped shape the successful presidential campaigns of Ronald Reagan and George H.W. Bush.[310] We might also consider the power of Steve Bannon and Breitbart News in this regard.[311]

By way of a final illustration, one study found that political advertisements linking images of Black people to narratives about Black people as undeserving increases the accessibility of race in White people's memory, and activates White interpretations of interracial group relations as a zero-sum game, direct resentment towards Black people, "as well as opinions about redistributive policies such as affirmative action and welfare."[312] Counter-stereotypic cues, on the other hand – for example, ones that imply that Black people are deserving of government resources – reduce this activation effect. Indeed, a more recent study demonstrates "that positive campaign coverage of minorities

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[309] Thomas J. Leeper and Rune Slothuus, "How the News Media Persuades: Framing Effects and Beyond," in Bernard Grofman, Elizabeth Suhay, and Alexander Trechsel, eds., *Oxford Handbook of Electoral Persuasion* (forthcoming), 7, https://s3.us-east-2.amazonaws.com/tjl-sharing/assets/HowTheNewsMediaPersuade.pdf.

[310] Appropriately, he co-authored a book entitled *You are the Message: Getting What You Want by Being Who You Are.* Penguin Randomhouse informs potential buyers that this book will help them "learn the secrets of communication that win elections, promotions, and customers." https://www.penguinrandomhouse.com/books/1290/you-are-the-message-by-roger-ailes/9780385265423/. Tim Dickinson, "How Roger Ailes Built the Fox News Fear Factory," *Rolling Stone,* May 25th, 2011, https://www.rollingstone.com/politics/politics-news/how-roger-ailes-built-the-fox-news-fear-factory-244652/.

[311] Yochai Benkler, Robert Faris, and Hal Roberts, *Network Propaganda: Manipulation, Disinformation, and Radicalization in American Politics* (Oxford University Press, 2018).

[312] Nicholas A. Valentino, Vincent L. Hutchings, and Ismail K. White, "Cues That Matter: How Political Ads Prime Racial Attitudes during Campaigns," *The American Political Science Review* 96, no. 1 (2002), 87. Laissez-faire racism "presumes...that all major obstacles facing blacks as a group have been removed," so that "government-sponsored efforts to address racial inequality are unnecessary." Ibid., 81.

attenuated negative out-group attitudes."[313] Summarizing their findings, the authors write, "It seems reasonable to expect that candidates will attempt to infuse particular group cues into the political debate, to shape the criteria that citizens use when evaluating candidates."[314]

Much more could be said about the cultural and political power of the media. For my present purposes, I simply want to challenge Haslanger's claim that "we learn what different races 'deserve' by looking around us." Meanings do not simply "emerge and evolve;"[315] they are produced, disseminated, and consumed.[316] To put it simply, many White people learn what different races "deserve" by watching carefully framed media coverage and scrolling through their Facebook news feeds.[317] In this regard, the media exert a significant cultural power in our society; they shift and shape shared social meanings and interpretations of social reality, thereby constituting "a decisive and fundamental leadership in the cultural sphere."[318] This cultural power, in turn, often translates, directly or

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[313] C. Schemer, "Media Effects on Racial Attitudes: Evidence from a Three-Wave Panel Survey in a Political Campaign," *International Journal of Public Opinion Research* 26, no. 4 (December 1, 2014), 538.

[314] Valentino et al, "Cues that Matter," 87.

[315] Haslanger, "Racism," 14.

[316] Stuart Hall, "Introduction," in *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*, ed. Stuart Hall (London: Sage Publications, 1997), 2.

[317] This raises the question of how and why some White people are receptive to, say, Fox News narratives regarding the perils of immigration and urban crime. According to some of the studies I cited above, social and geographic proximity to (or distance from) people of color is one factor here. We could also consider the fact that children are always socialized by adults who themselves consume media, and thereby indirectly internalize the attitudes, reactions, dispositions, etc. expressed through that media. In any case, this question, although important, goes beyond the scope of the current project. For my present purposes I simply wish to highlight the limitation of Haslanger's claim that White people acquire racist ideology through direct observation, and emphasize that interests, agency, and power play a substantial role in the maintenance and reproduction of racist ideology. As Joe Feagin and Kimberley Ducey emphasize, White interpretations of intergroup relations and social hierarchy are deeply shaped by elite white male media dominance. See Joe R. Feagin and Kimberley Ducey, *Elite White Men Ruling: Who, What, When, Where, and How* (London New York: Routledge, 2017), 82 – 85.

[318] Stuart Hall, "Culture, Media, and the 'Ideological Effect'," in James Curran, Michael Gurevitch, and Janet Woollacott (eds.), *Mass communication and Society* (London: Open University Press, 1977), 340.

indirectly, into political power[319] and, therefore, real effects on our social practices.[320] The general point, again, is that a critical conception of racist ideology should incorporate the concepts of interests, agency, and power into its framework.

Through a reexamination of the examples Haslanger uses to illustrate her account of culture-resource looping effects generally, and racist ideology and ideological formations in particular, I have sought to show that Haslanger's account neglects the significant role that cultural, political, and economic interests, agency, and power play in shifting shared social meanings and interpretations and shaping our social practices. In what follows, I will explore the implications of this failure.

Implications

In her critique of Tommie Shelby, Haslanger points out that his account of racist ideology purports to explain the persistence of racial injustice. According to Haslanger, however, his account does not live up to its explanatory ambitions because it does not explain the presence and persistence of the shared beliefs that, according to Shelby, constitute racist ideology. Thus, on Haslanger's view,

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[319] And interested political powers are quite aware of this fact. For example, after House Democrats opened a formal impeachment inquiry of the Trump administration, the president's campaign spent up to $1.4 million on Facebook ads promoting the narrative that "impeachment efforts were the work of the 'socialist squad' whose members had made 'pro-terrorist remarks.'" The so-called socialist squad consists of House Representatives Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, Ilhan Omar, Ayanna Pressley, Rashida Tlaib, all women of color. See Natasha Lennard, "Trump Attacked the Women of Color Who Led the Push for Impeachment. Then CNN Erased Them," *The Intercept*, October 1ˢᵗ, 2019, https://the-intercept.com/2019/10/01/cnn-impeachment-badasses-squad/. Of course, the Trump administration is not exceptional in its use of social media advertising. A recent University of Oxford report found "evidence of organized social media manipulation campaigns which have taken place in 70 countries, up from 48 countries in 2018 and 28 countries in 2017. In each country, there is at least one political party or government agency using social media to shape public attitudes domestically." See Mary Hanbury, "Facebook is the most popular social network for governments spreading fake news and propaganda," *Business Insider*, September 27ᵗʰ, 2019.

[320] I do not mean to suggest that the media are comprised of a homogenous and monolithic bloc of elites who consciously manipulate mass culture from the shadows. I am arguing *that* the media exercise significant cultural and political power in our society, and that a critical theory of racist ideology needs to be attentive to this fact. The question of *how* media power works goes beyond the scope of this project. See Stuart Hall, *Cultural Studies 1983. A Theoretical History*, ed. Jennifer Daryl Slack and Lawrence Grossberg (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2016), 131-133.

Shelby's cognitivist approach to racist ideology "just pushes the question back."[321] Haslanger's preferred approach, as I have shown, is to conceptualize racist ideology in terms of social practices and looping effects: racist ideology, or racist cultural techne, persists because interconnected racist social practices, or racist formations, persist, which persist because racist ideology persists. Towards the end of her article on Shelby, Haslanger summarizes her view:

> This suggests that racial inequality is a systematic phenomenon best understood in terms of dynamic homeostasis. There are multiple determinants of social stratification in a society: wealth, status, prestige, power, authority, autonomy, opportunity, to name a few. In a stratified society, there are mechanisms that stably position groups hierarchically along these dimensions. Homeostasis explains the persistence of hierarchy: changes in part of the system are adjusted for elsewhere so that the status quo is maintained. But the system is dynamic; although relatively stable, there is a historical development; the adjustments don't always return the system exactly to the original state, but can allow a shift to a different sort of hierarchical structure. For example, in the case of African Americans, slavery evolved into Jim Crow segregation, which evolved into the current hierarchy maintained by mass incarceration and felonization, ghettoization, economic marginalization, and cultural stigma.[322]

Although I quoted this passage above, my subsequent reconsideration of Haslanger's examples casts it in a new light. As I have argued, Haslanger's account fails to account for the importance of interested cultural, political, and economic powers in maintaining and shaping racist ideology and racist formations. This comes out quite clearly in this passage. Consider, for example, her suggestion that

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[321] Haslanger, "Racism," 9.

[322] Ibid.

"in a stratified society, there are mechanisms that stably position groups hierarchically along these dimensions." Here she acknowledges that stratified societies are made up of hierarchically positioned groups, but instead of pursuing some account of the interests and powers that condition, enable, and disenable group efforts to navigate, position themselves within, enforce, and/or challenge hierarchies, she says that these groups are "stably positioned" by "mechanisms." When parts of the hierarchical system change - due to counter-mechanisms, I presume - these change "are adjusted for elsewhere so that the status quo is maintained." Haslanger's use of the passive voice in this passage points to the explanatory limitations of her account. How is it that "mechanisms" stably position groups in hierarchical systems? How are changes introduced into these systems? How are these changes "adjusted for elsewhere?" These are at once historical and political questions. First, how is it that these changes take place over historical time? Second, *who* is it that initiates these changes, how, and why? And who is it that initiates the compensatory changes which ensure the maintenance of the status quo, how, and why? Who "allow[s] a shift to a different sort of hierarchical structure?"

Haslanger's account of looping effects is explanatorily limited here. There are no interested powers acting to maintain and enforce, or resist and dismantle, social hierarchies. Instead, hierarchical structures "evolve" into one another: "slavery evolved into Jim Crow segregation, which evolved into the current hierarchy." Haslanger thereby subsumes strategic decisions to disrupt the Civil Rights movement and capitalize on White racial resentment for political and economic purposes[323], and the significant cultural and political power of the media, into "a vast impersonal system for which no one is responsible."[324] Interested powers thus drop out of the picture. But, historian Lerone Bennett Jr. emphasized, "Racism did not fall from the sky; it was not secreted by insects. No:

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[323] Cf. my first chapter's discussion of dog whistle politics.

[324] Lerone Bennett, Jr, "The White Problem in America," 8.

racism in America was made by men, neighborhood by neighborhood, law by law, restrictive cove-nant by restrictive covenant, deed by deed."[325] And racism was not made by just any men but by "highly-placed politicians and businessmen who derive direct power gains from the division of our population into mutually hostile groups. By using racism, consciously or unconsciously, to divert public discontent and to boost the shaky egos of White groups on or near the bottom, men of power in America have played a key role in making racism a permanent structure of our society."[326] We cannot explain the presence and persistence of racist ideology, which is to say, we cannot adequately conceptualize racist ideology, and systematic racial injustice more broadly, without some account of elite White interests and power.[327] Conceptually, we cannot grasp racist ideology qua ideology with-out the concepts of interests and power. The first implication of the absence of the concepts of interests and power in Haslanger's account is that she does not adequately fulfill her aim of explain-ing the presence and persistence of racist ideology. The second, to which I will now turn, is that Haslanger overlooks significant obstacles to the critique of racist ideology.

Haslanger criticizes Shelby for failing to attend to the broader social-psychological and cul-tural forces that sustain ideology. "On the cognitivist account," she writes, "it remains the individual's thinking or reasoning that is in error, not the very tools that our language and culture provide us in order to think. But what we absorb through socialization is not just a set of beliefs, but a language, a set of concepts, a responsiveness to particular features of things (and not others), a set of social

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[325] Ibid.

[326] Ibid.

[327] To be clear, I am not claiming that critical philosophers of race/racism should drop the philosophy in favor of history or sociology. I am simply arguing that the conceptual frameworks we use for explaining and evaluating racism, and prescribing anti-racist strategies, should be attentive to the available historical and political-economic material. In this context, that material indicates the need for increased attention to, and development of, the concepts of interests and power.

103

meanings."[328] The cognitivist approach is limited, then, in that it fails to recognize that "ideology is part of what gives people their tools of reasoning in the first place"; it "manages and filters experience for us."[329] Its reliance on "standard epistemic challenges derived from science or logic" does not provide the critical force necessary to "break down" ideology.[330] More generally, Haslanger implies, the cognitivist approach fails to account for substantial social psychological and cultural obstacles to ideology-critique. From here, Haslanger argues that her broader social practice approach offers the advantage of highlighting the role that social movements can play in ideology-critique. "Social movements," she writes, "can promote change by providing disruptive experiences that force a shift in our collective conceptual repertoire," "challeng[ing] everyday practices in public and systematic ways, to bring them to the surface so that they might be critically evaluated," and "bring[ing] about changes in the material conditions that sustain the practices."[331]

While I appreciate Haslanger's acknowledgment of the importance of social movements for initiating social change, her approach to racist ideology faces a similar problem. If, as I have argued, interested powers play important roles in shaping and maintaining social practices, then their efforts contribute to the maintenance and reproduction of the social relations which sometimes seem to lend epistemological warrant to ideology. Further, in directly or indirectly shifting and shaping culture, they play an important role in modifying and reinforcing ideologies. These active efforts pose significant obstacles to progressive social change. If, for example, we wish to transform the cultural schemas and social practices that interpret and treat water as a grocery product, it would behoove us

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[328] Haslanger, "Racism," 9.

[329] Ibid., 7, 11.

[330] Ibid., 10.

[331] Ibid., 15.

to explain and evaluate the broader political-economic decisions and indecisions that enabled and enforced those schemas and practices. An effective water decommodification campaign, it seems to me, would require some account of the social actors who actively strive to commodify water. The same holds for challenging everyday practices and changing material conditions. These social practices, and their sustaining material conditions, are not simply the cumulative effects of spontaneously self-reproducing and self-adjusting "mechanisms" and "counter-mechanisms" but the managed and maintained products of individual and group decision-making processes.

Haslanger approaches some recognition of this issue in a more recent essay, writing, "Sometimes we should (at least try to) take control over meanings, for if we don't, others will."[332] This is a step in the right direction, but it neglects a more serious problem: others *already have* taken control over meanings (think of the media here), and it would behoove us as critical social theorists to analyze, explain, and evaluate this process. More generally, we can actively work to challenge the social relations of domination and exploitation sustained by racist ideologies, but if it turns out that other social groups are working just as hard to sustain and reinforce those unjust social relations and the ideology that stabilizes them, then the success of our efforts depends upon a critical understanding of those social groups. Who are they? How are they working to sustain the social relations in question, and why? What narratives do they offer to justify and rationalize those social relations? How do they adjust those narrative to account for changing social conditions? How do we account for the broader efficacy and appeal (or lack thereof) of those narratives? In my view, a critical conception of racist ideology must attend to these questions, or risk neglecting substantial obstacles to the critique of ideology.

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[332] Sally Haslanger, "Going On, not in the Same Way," in Alexis Burgess, Herman Cappelen, and David Plunkett, eds., *Conceptual Engineering and Conceptual Ethics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), 230.

I mention efficacy and appeal here because these are further social-psychological and cultural obstacles to the critique of ideology. If social movements are to succeed in "promoting disruptive experiences," we need to explain and evaluate the role that interested powers play in shaping the ideological experiences that we take to be problematic, as I argued above. Going further, however, critical social theorists should explain and evaluate the efficacy and appeal of these ideological experiences. Jan Rehmann puts it well: "the endeavor to refute ideologies" – whether through scientific and logical refutation of ideological beliefs (Shelby) or movement-based disruptions of ideological experiences (Haslanger) – "risks drawing attention away from the main ideology-theoretical task, which is to grasp their appeal and efficacy."[333] Why is this the main ideology-theoretical task? Because, Rehmann continues, "It is a necessary prerequisite for developing an efficacious critique of ideology able to 'release' its appealing elements, which are capable of being transformed, and remounted to function 'in a different connection'."[334] With respect to racist ideology, an efficacious critique requires the practical elaboration of a "counter-good…something more existentially substantial and psychically compelling" than racist ideology.[335] And this requires a theoretical analysis and critique of the existentially substantial and psychically compelling elements of racist ideology.

From Social Practices to Social Problems

The last section explored two implications of Haslanger's neglect of the concepts of interests and power. First, her account does not adequately explain the presence and persistence of racist ideology. Second, her account overlooks significant obstacles to the critique of ideology. This section

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[333] Jan Rehmann, *Theories of Ideology: The Powers of Alienation and Subjection* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2013), 6.

[334] Ibid., 7.

[335] Nancy Fraser and Rahel Jaeggi, *Capitalism: A Conversation in Critical Theory*, ed. Brian Milstein (Medford, MA: Polity Press, 2018), 216.

explores undeveloped resources in Haslanger's work to suggest that a critical conception of racist ideology that centralizes the concept of social problems may allow us to account for the relationship between social practices, interests, and power.

On several occasions, Haslanger suggests that cultural techne sometimes "fail," and that such "failures" are potential targets of critique. She writes, for example, that "effective social movements force our everyday concepts to break down and demonstrate how they fail to serve as adequate tools to get along in the world."[336] Similarly, she says that "critique of ideology first aims at the ways in which ... schemas fail."[337] For Haslanger, these failures are simultaneously epistemological and moral. For example, she suggests that persistent segregation and the educational achievement gap are "maintained at least in part by collective epistemic failings. There is a sense in which individuals in the grip of an ideology fail to appreciate what they are doing or what's wrong with it, and so are often unmotivated, if not resistant, to change."[338] So, simply put, racist subjects do not know what they are doing when they participate in racist practices. Specifically, they do not know that they are doing something *wrong*, because their ideological cultural techne "mask" or "obscure" pertinent "moral facts."[339] Thus, Haslanger writes, "White supremacy teaches us to be selective in what we notice, what we respond to, what we value...the police officer ignores or interpretively skews the cries of the poor woman of color. Her perspective is not what matters."[340] In this case, the police officer's practical orientation has been shaped by White supremacy, and he lacks "moral knowledge" of the "fact" that the practical

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[336] Haslanger, "Racism," 10.

[337] Haslanger, *Critical Theory*, 36.

[338] Haslanger, "Culture and Critique," 152.

[339] Haslanger, "Racism," 10; *Critical Theory*, 40.

[340] Haslanger, *Critical Theory*, 44.

"terms of coordination" he has violently imposed on the poor woman of color are "intolerable."[341] In this sense, racist subjects are ignorant of moral facts, and deny them in practice, thereby inflicting moral harms on poor women of color, reproducing unjust social relations, and failing to acquire moral knowledge.[342]

So how does critique target the epistemological and moral failures of ideological techne and practices? Haslanger returns to movement-based cultural change on this question. "Gaining the relevant [moral] knowledge," she writes, "may require changes to the cultural techne, the frame of social meanings and social practices, that shape their ["defenders of patriarchal White supremacy"] practical orientation."[343] Initially, Haslanger suggests that proponents of this change should engage ideological subjects. Specifically, she identifies two reasons ideological subjects should see this change as "legitimate." First, they "should want" to acquire moral knowledge. Second, effective practical coordination requires that they "be attentive to the reasons that all parties have to maintain the coordination."[344] She continues, "If others have good reason to defect, [they] are at risk of losing the benefits of coordination."[345] Thus, Haslanger proposes, ideological subjects have moral epistemological and pragmatic reasons to accept changes to their techne and practices.[346]

These considerations, Haslanger notes, appear to be "a matter of rational self-interest."[347] Perhaps ideological subjects have "rational self-interests" in acquiring moral knowledge or accepting

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[341] Ibid., 43-44, 40, 46.

[342] Ibid.

[343] Ibid., 46-47. Haslanger does not elaborate the notion of "rational self-interests."

[344] Ibid., 47.

[345] Ibid., 47.

[346] Haslanger does not elaborate on this practical consideration. More on this below.

[347] Ibid., 46.

effective and mutually beneficial coordination. The problem here, Haslanger goes on to say, "is that these considerations are less than compelling when there are substantial differences of power. If you can coerce me to conform to the terms of coordination, then self-interest doesn't require you to listen to me or take in information that challenges your power."[348] Those in power, Haslanger claims, have a "self-interest" in disregarding challenges to, and therefore maintaining, their power.

Haslanger does not pursue these remarks on the relationship between ideological subjects, power, and interests. Instead, she immediately reaffirms the importance of movement-based change: "But note that it is not our only option to 'ask' those in power to take us seriously, as if our only option is to reason with them what justifies us in undertaking cultural change, engaging in social movement work, with the intention of disrupting the social order?"[349] Since the above considerations are likely to be less than compelling for racist subjects, social movements should work to promote cultural and practical change that could reshape their cultural techne and practices. As she put it more recently:

> I don't think that we need to wait to convince the dominant of anything. Instead, we
> should grow social change from the margins, expand counterpublics through activism
> and emancipatory critique, and build the movement until there is a tipping point, and
> the dominant realize that the only good option left is to yield.[350]

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[348] Ibid., 47.

[349] Ibid.

[350] Haslanger, "Agency within Structures and Warranted Resistance: Response to Commentators," *Australasian Philosophy Review* (forthcoming), 7, https://sallyhaslanger.weebly.com/uploads/1/8/2/7/18272031/haslanger_apr_reply-agency_structure_warranted_resistance_final.pdf.

So Haslanger sets aside the issue of how to engage ideological subjects – since social movements will compel them to "yield" – and then reaffirms the above two considerations as normative justifications for this movement work:

- If you (the dominant) were to hear the demands of the currently disenfranchised, you would gain moral knowledge; you would have reason to and want to be responsive to them and change your practices of valuing, producing, distributing, relating – and the further practices that depend on them – to be more open and inclusive.

- If you were to change your practices to take the disenfranchised into account, this would result in new forms of coordination that you yourselves would recognize to be an improvement.[351]

"What we are saying to the powerful," she summarizes, "is that we do matter, and that if we are recognized to have value and treated humanely, we will all be better off. That may not be true. But it is what we have to offer."[352] Although these considerations may not offer ideological subjects compelling reasons to change, then, they offer counter-ideological social activists justified reasons to change them.

While I appreciate Haslanger's affirmation of social movements, there are two issues with her strategy. The first is conceptual and empirical. She sidelines the question of how to engage ideological subjects by appealing to an unthematized account of the relationship between ideological subjects, power, and self-interests. On her view, "substantial differences of power" grant ideological subjects an overriding "self-interest" in disregarding challenges to, and therefore maintaining, their

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[351] Haslanger, *Critical Theory*, 47.

[352] Ibid.

power. But it's not clear that all ideological subjects are identically situated with respect to substantial differences of power. Many White Rust Belt-dwelling Trump voters have internalized the techne of White supremacy, in Haslanger's terms, but they are relatively powerless in comparison to, say, media baron and Fox News founder Rupert Murdoch.[353] If this is right, then there are likely substantial differences in their self-interests. Of course, this depends on how we understand power and self-interests. The point here is simply that the conceptual and empirical relationship between ideological subjects, power, and self-interest needs to be developed in more detail.

The second issue is pragmatic. Haslanger's dismissal of the engagement question seems to hinge on hope for a future moment in which the dominant will "realize" they must "yield." I am more pessimistic here. If the target of critique is racist ideology and practice in the United States, then the growth of social change "from the margins" requires some form of engagement with White people. That is, it requires some form of reasoning with, or persuasion of, some White people. Ironically, Haslanger does not reject reasoning or persuasion tout court. The dominant can only "realize" they must "yield" to social movements if they can eventually recognize and endorse compelling pragmatic reasons to do so. So Haslanger does not dispense with reasoning or persuasion, she simply defers them to a quasi-revolutionary future. Although I share Haslanger's hope for that future, I think it is extremely dangerous to defer efforts to *engage and change*, rather than just change, racist subjects. As I argued in the first chapter, the failure to engage relatively precarious White people, in particular, likely contributes to political infeasibility and White backlash problems.

Assuming social movement work should *engage and change* at least some White people, then, how do Haslanger's considerations fare? Reconsider the first: if the dominant were to take the

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[353] David McKnight, *Murdoch's Politics: How One Man's Thirst for Wealth and Power Shapes Our World* (London: Pluto Press, 2013).

disenfranchised into account and abandon their ideology and ideological practices, they would gain moral knowledge. First, this claim would not offer ideological subjects compelling reasons to change, as Haslanger recognizes.[354] Racist ideology shapes their patterns of experience and valuing and, thus, what they take to constitute moral knowledge. This consideration would appear to them to beg the question. Second, I am not sure that, in the case of White supremacy, White people lack moral knowledge regarding the harms inflicted, directly or indirectly, on people of color. I tend to agree with James Baldwin and Derrick Bell here:

> No matter how Southerners, and Whites in the rest of the nation, too, deny it, or what kind of rationalizations they cover it up with, they know the crimes they have committed against black people. And they are terrified that these crimes will be committed against them.[355]

> I have the sense that, however much individuals might deplore it from time to time, the harm done by racial discrimination is an open secret, which everyone has agreed on.[356]

Of course, these are empirical claims, and I cannot defend them fully here. However, a substantial psychiatry and social psychology literature shows that perpetrators of severe physical harm or death tend to experience trauma following their actions.[357] Police officers who participate in abusive and violent behavior on the job, for example, are more likely to suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder

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[354] Haslanger, *Critical Theory*, 46.

[355] Quincey Troupe, *James Baldwin: The Last Interview and Other Conversations* (Brooklyn and London: Melville House, 2014), 10.

[356] Derrick Bell, "Wanted: A White Leader Able to Free Whites of Racism," 33 U.C. Davis L. Rev. 527 (2000), 539.

[357] See the special issue Winnifred R. Louis et al., "Collective Harmdoing: Developing the Perspective of the Perpetrator," *Peace and Conflict: Journal of Peace Psychology* 21, no. 3 (August 2015): 306–12.

(which is linked to physical health problems, anxiety, depression, and substance abuse and addiction), suggesting that "police violence may be detrimental not only to the health of targeted communities and individuals but also to the mental health of police officers themselves."[358] Researchers conceptualize this phenomenon as the impact of perpetrating "acts that transgress deeply held moral beliefs and expectations."[359] That police officers tend to suffer psychological trauma after inflicting severe harm suggests some degree of knowledge regarding the wrongdoing. Since US police officers are disproportionately White, and victims of police violence disproportionately poor people of color, it's quite possible that some White police officers suffer as a result of the harms they knowingly perpetrate on poor people of color. Perhaps this is what James Baldwin was getting at when he wrote, "*Whoever debases others is debasing himself.* That is not a mystical statement but a most realistic one, which is proved by the eyes of any Alabama sheriff – and I would not like to see Negroes ever arrive at so wretched a condition."[360]

I raise the police violence issue to challenge the viability of Haslanger's moral knowledge consideration for engaging racist subjects, but also because it highlights the potential of her second, pragmatic consideration, which proposes that "we will all be better off" if the powerful were to accept new terms of coordination that take the disenfranchised into account. As I noted above, Haslanger ultimately rejects this consideration on the basis of an unthematized account of the relationship

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[358] Jordan DeVylder, Monique Lalane, and Lisa Fedina, "The Association Between Abusive Policing and PTSD Symptoms Among U.S. Police Officers," *Journal of the Society for Social Work and Research* 10, no. 2 (April 22, 2019): 261–73; Irina Komarovskaya, "The Impact of Killing and Injuring Others on Mental Health Symptoms among Police Officers," *Journal of Psychiatric Research* 45, no. 10 (October 2011), 270.

[359] Brett T. Litz, "Moral Injury and Moral Repair in War Veterans: A Preliminary Model and Intervention Strategy," *Clinical Psychology Review*, 29, no. 8 (December 1, 2009): 695–706. For an exhaustive overview, see Brandon J. Griffin, "Moral Injury: An Integrative Review," *Journal of Traumatic Stress* 32, no. 3 (2019): 350–62.

[360] James Baldwin, *The Fire Next Time,* in *Baldwin: Collected Essays* (The Library of America, 1998), 334, emphasis in original.

between ideological subjects, power, and self-interests. ("That may not be true," she concludes.[361]) However, the above evidence indicates that things are more complex. It is not immediately clear that the police officer has a self-interest in inflicting violence on the poor woman of color. He may, but Haslanger does not develop or justify her claim that he does. On the other hand, the empirical evidence suggests that he has at least one good reason for *not* engaging in abusive and violent behavior: abstaining from violent behavior may be beneficial to his psychological health.[362] Thus, with respect to Haslanger's example, there is at least one sense in which we *would* all be better off *if* the powerful were to take the disenfranchised into account.

As I showed, Haslanger rejects the pragmatic consideration as a potential resource for engaging ideological subjects. She thinks that ideological subjects exercise or possess power, and that this power entails an overriding self-interest in maintaining power. So pragmatic considerations fall flat. My discussion of the police officer case challenges this view, and points to the need to reconsider the pragmatic dimension of the critique of ideology, particularly with respect to matters of interests and power. It also reveals an inconsistency in Haslanger's conceptual and normative account of ideological cultural techne and practices. Her account of the causal and mutual interdependence of culture and practices would seem to imply that cultural failures might translate into practical failures. While she thinks ideological cultural schemas fail vis-à-vis the dominant in that they mask or obscure moral facts and therefore prevent the dominant from acquiring moral knowledge, she seems to deny that these failures may condition, and depend upon, practical failures vis-à-vis the dominant.

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[361] Haslanger, *Critical Theory*, 47.

[362] My aim here is not to offer a comprehensive discussion of Haslanger's police officer case. This would require a careful consideration of the role that power and interests, and the relationship between the two, play in his lived experience and self-understanding, practical orientations, and institutional context. I am simply arguing that the case is more complex than Haslanger seems to think, and that it is more complex in ways that demand some attention to issues of power and interests. In short, I am simply arguing *that* the concepts of power and interests are necessary for effectively explaining and evaluating this case and challenging and engaging ideological subjects more generally.

In my view, Haslanger is too quick to reject this consideration. In so doing, she overlooks underdeveloped resources in her account of social practices. Haslanger does allow for the possibility that social practices can fail, and that such failures can serve as potential targets of critique: "practices typically function to coordinate us, we may critique them as failing to coordinate us well, e.g., by providing inefficient or incoherent means towards our collective ends."[363] Although she does not thematize the relationship between social practices and collective ends, she suggests that the latter concern human coordination with respect to resources: "Social practices are, in the central cases (though not all cases), collective solutions to coordination or access problems with respect to a resource. The solution consists in organized responses to the resource."[364] The collective ends at issue here thus seem to be solutions to coordination or access problems concerning resources. That is, in establishing and participating in social practices, social actors aim (consciously or unconsciously) to solve coordination or access problems. And what are coordination or access problems? In Haslanger's words, they are "social engineering problem[s]," situations in which human beings consciously or unconsciously, directly or indirectly, face the question, "how do we facilitate cooperation efficiently in response to the resource in question?"[365] Cultural techne, in turn, also serve a problem-solving function in this context. "Our cultural techne," she writes, "organizes us to solve coordination problems, to establish and affirm relationships and identities, and to distribute power, resources, knowledge."[366] Thus, Haslanger links culture and social practices to social problems.

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[363] Haslanger, "Social Practice," 244.

[364] Haslanger, *Critical Theory*, 21. Haslanger does not thematize this distinction between types of social problems, viz. those which are, and those which are not, collective solutions to coordination or access problems.

[365] Ibid.

[366] Haslanger, *Critical Theory*, 44.

These references to social problems are important because they further indicate the need for greater attention to interests and power. Consider Haslanger's passing mention that "valuable resources are a source of power."[367] If this is right, then ideological subjects who have disproportionate access to valuable resources have differential power, as well as differential interests with respect to that power and those resources. To the extent that coordination or access problems involve the cooperation question,[368] these differences in power and interest will condition quite different interpretations of the proper terms of coordination – who should cooperate, how, and why? – as well as the precise nature of social problems and potential solutions. Further, this differential power entails differential abilities to mobilize resources to implement some social practices (qua solutions to social problems) and not others. If social practices are guided by cultural techne, as Haslanger claims, then this also entails differential abilities to mobilize resources to promote some cultural techne and not others.

Put otherwise, if not all ideological subjects have the same access to the same resources, then there are differences of power and interests within the population of ideological subjects. Different sub-populations will be situated quite differently with respect to social problems. They will have different interpretations of those problems and their potential solutions, different interests regarding particular solutions, different abilities to mobilize resources to solve those problems, and will be situated differently with respect to the material effects of different solutions. Different solutions to social problems will have different effects on different ideological sub-populations. This raises the possibility that some ideological subjects may benefit in some sense from some solutions to social problems where others may be disadvantaged by them.

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[367] Haslanger, *Critical Theory*, 21-22.

[368] "How do we facilitate cooperation efficiently in response to the resource in question?" Ibid.

Of course, these rough thoughts need to be developed with greater conceptual precision and historical and empirical detail. Unfortunately, however, Haslanger does not develop her passing references to social problems, interests, and power. Thus, she raises, but does not answer, several questions. First, what are social problems? As I noted, she indicates that they tend to be situations in which social groups face the question, "how do we facilitate cooperation efficiently in response to the resource in question?"[369] This, however, raises further questions: When, how, and why does coordination with respect to a resource become a problem? For whom is coordination or access with respect to a resource potentially problematic, and how? Who participates in constructing collective solutions to these problems, and how? How and why do specific social practices become established as solutions? What, more precisely, are "collective ends" with respect to these problems? When, how, and why do social practices qua solutions provide inefficient or incoherent means towards these collective ends? And where do power, interests, and ideology fit into the picture? At the root of these questions, however, remains the first: what are social problems?

Since Haslanger does not develop the concept of social problems, I will take up the task in the next chapter, revisiting these issues through an exploration of W.E.B. Du Bois's multidimensional (philosophical anthropological, cultural, political, and historical) conception of social problems. I will first explore and extend Lucius Outlaw and Robert Gooding-Williams's treatments of the concept. Where Outlaw highlights the historical and philosophical anthropological dimension of this notion, Gooding-Williams emphasizes its cultural and political dimension. The next chapter extends their work to outline Du Bois's *systemic* and *agonistic* conception of social problems. On this account, social problems are: (1) functions of a system of structured social relations of

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[369] Ibid.

domination; and (2) sites of ongoing normative struggles over the control and management of social

relations; with (3) practical implications for all those who are similarly situated within the broader

social system.

Chapter IV

W.E.B. Du Bois and the Study of Social Problems: Systemic and Agonistic

Introduction

W.E.B. Du Bois's *Black Reconstruction in America* is a masterful repudiation of the Dunning School interpretation of the Reconstruction period.[370] As Cedric Robinson and Anthony Bogues argued, however, *Black Reconstruction* is also a sophisticated work of historical and political theory.[371] On my reading, this text offers, among other things, a complex, dialectical account of the contradiction which shaped, and continues to shape, US and world history, namely, the legalized commodification of human beings.[372] Du Bois highlights one aspect of this contradiction on the first page of this monumental text, writing, "From the day of its birth the anomaly of slavery plagued a nation which asserted the equality of all men, and sought to derive powers of government from the consent of the governed."[373] The legalized commodification of human beings, in other words, contradicted the espoused US ideal of universal human equality.

Of course, one could argue that the settler colonists and human traffickers who founded the United States never cared to extend this ideal to African and African-descended peoples. From this

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[370] According to Columbia University professor William Dunning and his students, Reconstruction was an inevitable failure resulting from the hereditary inferiority of African American people and, consequently, the practical impossibility of multiracial democracy.

[371] Anthony Bogues, *Black Heretics, Black Prophets* (New York: Routledge, 2003); Cedric J. Robinson *Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition* (London: Zed Books Ltd, 1983).

[372] Angela Davis succinctly describes the contradiction here: "The slave is a human being whom another has denied the right to express his or her freedom. But is not freedom a property that belongs to the very essence of the human being? Either the slave is not a human being or else the very existence of a slave is a contradiction." Angela Davis, "Unfinished Lecture on Liberation – II," in *The Angela Davis Reader* (Malden, Mass.: Blackwell Publishers, 1998), 55.

[373] W.E.B. Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction* (New York: The Free Press, 1998), 3. Hereafter cited as "Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction.*"

perspective, there was no contradiction in withholding the ideal of universal human equality from African and African-descended peoples because the latter were not regarded as full humans: the ideal simply did not apply to them. As historian Kenneth O'Reilly has shown, however, the so-called Founding Fathers were quite conscious of the contradiction between their espoused ideals and the realities of chattel slavery.[374] George Washington, for example, privately expressed his desire "to liberate a certain species of property which I possess, very repugnantly to my own feelings; but which imperious necessity compels."[375] Thomas Jefferson held similar sentiments, privately referring to slavery as a "moral and political depravity," an "abominable crime," and a "hideous blot."[376] John and Abigail Adams thought slavery "'allways [sic] appeared a most iniquitous Scheme fit only for the daily robbing and plundering from those who have as good a right to freedom as we have.'"[377] Their eldest son John Quincy condemned the "bargain between freedom and slavery contained in the Constitution of the U.S." as "morally and politically vicious, inconsistent with the principles upon which our Revolution can be justified."[378] In fact, the first US president *not* to express any moral discomfort with chattel slavery was the *seventh*, Andrew Jackson.[379]

These early proponents of "liberty and justice for all" were in fact morally disturbed by chattel slavery. Of course, their psychological and economic dependence on this "peculiar institution" overpowered their moral discomforts, and they continued to profit from the enslavement of human

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[374] Kenneth O'Reilly, *Nixon's Piano: Presidents and Racial Politics from Washington to Clinton* (New York: Free Press, 1995). Hereafter cited as "O'Reilly, *Nixon's Piano.*"

[375] O'Reilly, *Nixon's Piano*, 16.

[376] Ibid, 20.

[377] Ibid, 18.

[378] Lerone Bennett, Jr. *The Shaping of Black America* (New York: Penguin Books, 1975), 123.

[379] O'Reilly, *Nixon's Piano*, 31.

beings. The problem, however, was that human beings tend not to passively submit to their own commodification. They sabotage and hijack slave ships, poison so-called masters, refuse to work, escape, and establish temporary autonomous communities in swamps.[380] For this reason, the system of chattel slavery could not last, and the ongoing resistance of generations of enslaved people confronted its managers and beneficiaries with the need to address the contradiction of American slavery and American freedom.[381]

For prominent White U.S. Americans of the 18th and 19th centuries, the solution was deceptively simple: resolve the contradiction by eliminating it and eliminate it by removing enslaved people from the country. This, at least, is how Thomas Jefferson articulated the issue in his 1781 *Notes on the State of Virginia*. Reflecting on his "suspicion" that "the blacks...are inferior to the Whites in the endowments both of body and mind," Jefferson lamented that "[t]his unfortunate difference of colour, and perhaps of faculty, is a powerful obstacle to the emancipation of these people."[382] More precisely, Jefferson reasoned, this "unfortunate difference" cast doubt on the possibility of interracial co-existence on equal terms in the United States. "Deep rooted prejudices entertained by the Whites; ten thousand recollections, by the blacks, of the injuries they have sustained; new provocations; the real distinctions which nature has made; and many other circumstances, will divide us into parties, and produce convulsions which will probably never end but in the extermination of the one or the other race." For Jefferson, then, the question became: "What further is to be done with them

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[380] Vincent Harding, *There Is a River: The Black Struggle for Freedom in America* (San Diego, Calif.: Harvest, 1993).

[381] "A nation could not exist half-slave and half-free. If it tried, either its mass of laborers would by force of competition sink into the depths of exploited, ignorant poverty, or rising in bloody revolt break the monopoly of land and materials and endow the mass with more equal income and more political power to maintain their freedom." Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction*, 633.

[382] Thomas Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia.* Available at: https://docsouth.unc.edu/southlit/jefferson/jefferson.html. Subsequent quotations in this paragraph come from this text/source.

[enslaved people]?" His answer was concise: "When freed, he [the enslaved person] is to be re-moved beyond the reach of mixture."

This eliminationist interpretation and response shaped the dominant public discourse of the late 18th and early-to-mid 19th centuries. By 1816, Francis Scott Key, Henry Clay, and George Washington's nephew Bushrod, among other prominent White political figures, established the American Colonization Society (ACS), which promoted Jefferson's proposal to remove formally emancipated African American people from the country. ACS supporter and Baptist missionary Hollis Read offered a thorough moral and religious justification for this plan in his 1864 *The Negro Problem Solved*.[383] For Read, the Civil War guaranteed the end of "American slavery, putting the whole system beyond the possibility of a future resurrection."[384] The inevitable abolition of chattel slavery conferred a renewed urgency upon Jefferson's question. "What shall be done with four millions of ex-slaves?" Read asked. This, he continued, "is one of the most practical and momentous [questions] that our nation . . . ever had to decide."[385] Following Jefferson's proposal, Read argued that African American people's mass exodus to Africa would grant them the opportunity to impart Christian values onto African peoples, thereby "rescu[ing] a continent from the low depths of social, civil, and moral debasement."[386] This, he insisted, was their "imperative duty."[387] And in any case, he lamented, "There

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[383] African American people, too, debated this question of "colonization" or emigration. I focus here on the Jefferson-style interpretation of this question because of its emphasis on the supposed inferiority of African American people. See for example T. Thomas Fortune's "Will the Afro-American Return to Africa?" in *T. Thomas Fortune, the Afro-American Agitator*, Shawn Leigh Alexander, ed. (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2008): 264-270; Howard Brotz, ed., *African-American Social and Political Thought 1850 – 1920* (New Brunswick and London: Transaction Publishers, 1995), Part I.

[384] Hollis Read, *The Negro Problem Solved* (New York: A.A. Constantine, 1864), iii. Available at: https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=hvd.32044015465727&view=1up&seq=9.

[385] Ibid.

[386] Ibid., vi.

[387] Ibid., 312.

is no hope that the two races shall prosper together in this land. One will and must have the ascend-

ancy."[388]

Thomas Jefferson and Hollis Read interpreted "the Negro problem" in terms of a static and deterministic conception of human difference. According to them, the human species is comprised of homogenous populations characterized by natural, hereditary, and fixed differences that determine their relative capacities and impose ineluctable constraints on social relations and institutions. More precisely, they believed that African American people are incorrigibly inferior to European and European American people, especially in moral and intellectual terms. This "unfortunate difference," in Jefferson's words, rules out the possibility of peaceful coexistence on equal terms.[389] Incorrigible unequals cannot possibly coexist as equals. The superiors will thus inevitably and justifiably resist any attempt to realize such equality.[390] The only alternative to mutually assured destruction, then, was thus the mass migration of African American people from the United States.

This is the broad historical-discursive context within which W.E.B. Du Bois articulated his critical revisionary account of "the Negro problems." Beginning in the 1890s, Du Bois offered two broad critical interventions regarding the Jefferson/Read interpretation.[391] First, he rejected its fatalistic presuppositions. In an 1890 fragment titled "Contribution to the Negro Problem," for example,

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[388] Ibid., 311.

[389] Thomas Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia.* Available at: https://docsouth.unc.edu/southlit/jefferson/jefferson.html.

[390] For further elaboration of this point, see George Frederickson, *The Black Image in the White Mind: The Debate on Afro-American Character and Destiny, 1817 – 1914* (New York: Harper & Row, 1971).

[391] This is not to suggest that W.E.B. Du Bois acted alone here. Frederick Douglass and T. Thomas Fortune, too, offered incisive criticisms of the dominant framing of "the Negro problem," arguing that it was in fact the nation's problem. To my knowledge, however, Du Bois was unique in his efforts to propose and develop a comprehensive social-scientific and historical program for studying and resolving the many problems concealed by the phrase "the Negro problem."

Du Bois denied that "the repulsion between the Whites and blacks is instinctive."[392] Careful consideration of the historical evidence, he insisted, shows that "there was at first comparatively little race prejudice between Whites and blacks in early colonial times, and that the prejudice only appeared after a long period of artificial fostering by the laws of the land."[393] Contra Jefferson and Read, who argued that anti-Black prejudice was a necessary and unavoidable reaction to an inherently inferior population, Du Bois argued that such prejudice was in fact a contingent historical development and could, therefore, be ameliorated. Relatedly, he rejected their static and deterministic conception of human differences as natural, hereditary, and unchanging. African-descended peoples are not incorrigible inferiors, Du Bois insisted. What moral and intellectual deficiencies they did possess resulted from generations of chattel slavery, he would later argue (more on this below). Where Jefferson and Read asked, "What is to be done with this incorrigibly inferior population?" Du Bois affirmed historical contingency and human agency, asking, what, if anything, can and should African- and European-American people do to construct a society that enables their cooperation and co-existence on free and equal terms?[394]

Du Bois's dedicated the next seven decades of his life to studying this question. More specifically, he undertook the task of continually reconceptualizing and empirically analyzing the so-called Negro problems. In so doing, as we shall see, he articulated a multidimensional conception of *social problems.* Du Bois's earliest systematic engagement with this question occurs in his 1897

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[392] W.E.B. Du Bois, "Contribution to the Negro Problem," (1890), https://credo.library.umass.edu/view/full/mums312-b237-i084.

[393] Ibid.

[394] Or, as he put it in "The Negro Question of the United States" (1906), "can the White and black race live together in America in freedom and equality?" W.E.B. Du Bois, "The Negro Question in the United States," in Nahum Dimitri Chandler, ed., *The Problem of the Color Line at the Turn of the Twentieth Century: The Essential Early Essays* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2014), 327.

lecture "The Study of the Negro Problems." To begin, then, I consider Lucius T. Outlaw, Jr. and Robert Gooding-Williams's discussions of this important text.

Lucius Outlaw, Jr. and Robert Gooding-Williams on "Social Problems"

Lucius T. Outlaw Jr.'s 2000 essay "W.E.B. Du Bois on the Study of Social Problems" offers an insightful discussion of Du Bois's conception of social problems.[395] Central to this account, Outlaw shows, is a specific historical and philosophical anthropological understanding of human life:

> Du Bois...understood human history as constituted by the transgenerational ef-
> forts of psychologically, culturally bonded and sociologically bounded self-repro-
> ducing social collectivities to maintain group and individual life conditioned by,
> and in response to, circumstances of time and place while guided by accounts of
> the past and present, and by anticipated or hoped-for futures.[396]

On this view, human populations are always situated within specific sociohistorical conditions which influence their transgenerational efforts to "maintain group and individual life." These transgenerational efforts are, to varying degrees, *conscious* efforts. Social groups *respond* to their circumstances of time and place, and their responses are informed by specific empirical and normative understandings of the past, present, and future. Human efforts to maintain individual and group life are guided by "anticipated" futures, which is to say, expectations for how the present will change over time, as well as "hoped-for" futures, which is to say, envisioned futures which carry some normative weight

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[395] Lucius T. Outlaw, Jr., "W.E.B. Du Bois on the Study of Social Problems," *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 568, no. 1 (March 1, 2000): 281–97. Hereafter cited as "Outlaw, Jr., 'W.E.B. Du Bois on the Study of Social Problems'."

[396] Ibid., 287.

for individual group members. The latter consciously or subconsciously invest in these futures as ones which, in some sense, *should* be realized.[397]

This future-oriented normative dimension of group life is important, because, as Outlaw explains, "Du Bois thought of these social groups as organized in and through shared ideals, which also provide the defining and orienting meanings and values that motivate and guide social activities . . . and provide for shared sociocultural life."[398] Future-oriented ideals orient group members in the present by providing them with the meanings and values that motivate and guide their social activities and, therefore, condition individual and group life. The quality of individual and group life is thus, in part, a function of shared social ideals.

Here Outlaw introduces Du Bois's conception of *social problems*. While group life is conditioned by circumstances of time and place and group activities are guided and motivated by shared ideals, situations arise in which group circumstances and shared ideals come into conflict. Quoting Du Bois, Outlaw writes,

> [W]hen a group is situated such that it 'cannot realize its group ideals, through the inability to adapt a certain desired line of action to given conditions of life,' then the group's life situation has become problematic: they are living – and may thus become for themselves *and for other social groups with whom they are in contact* – a 'social problem'.[399]

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[397] Here I am making the (I think) non-controversial assumption that hope for X entails some normative commitment to X's being realized. If, for example, I hope that Bernie Sanders wins the 2020 presidential election, that is because I believe that his victory would be a good thing – or, in other words, that he *should* win the election.

[398] Outlaw, Jr., "W.E.B. Du Bois on the Study of Social Problems," 287.

[399] Ibid., 286-7, emphasis added.

126

In the most general terms, then, social problems are conflicts between ideals and life conditions. Social groups face such conflicts when they are *unable* to enact their ideals under specific life conditions.

Outlaw continues, noting that Du Bois identifies "two complex factors" for studying social problems.[400] Outlaw writes, "One factor is the circumstances in which members of the collectivity fashion and live their group-conditioned lives, circumstances that can be evaluated in terms of whether they are conducive to the collectivity's members realizing their individual and shared ideals."[401] From this perspective, the study of social problems requires attention to specific social conditions and the extent to which these promote or undermine group members' abilities to realize their individual and shared ideals.

Of course, Du Bois does not assume that all individual and shared ideals should always be realized. In some cases, the ideals themselves may need to be revised, perhaps even abandoned, hence the second factor for studying social problems:

> the character of a group's collection of action-guiding ideals and beliefs and of the activities its members engage in as they seek to make a life in particular circumstances: that is, whether these ideals, beliefs, and actions are appropriate to the challenges and opportunities of circumstances such that they promote adaptive success in meeting and resolving challenges and exploiting opportunities in ways that result in the group's survival and progressive evolution.[402]

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[400]Ibid., 287.

[401] Ibid.

[402] Ibid., 287-288.

The study of social problems thus also requires attention to individual and shared ideals, beliefs, and activities. In some cases, these may be "inappropriate" insofar as they condition responses to changing social conditions that undermine "progressive evolution" – that is, group survival, reproduction, development, and flourishing.[403]

Progressive evolution thus generally requires "adaptation: that is, more or less substantial changes to prevailing circumstances or to a group's ideals, beliefs, and practices – or to both."[404] The "both" is crucial here. As Outlaw observes, Du Bois relies on a "dialectical conception of social development": "Ideals and action strategies are always in mutually conditioning relation to the circumstances of life."[405] Ideals, beliefs, and activities continually interact with social conditions, which themselves change, "and so action strategies and ideals must change and adapt accordingly."[406] Thus, in Du Bois's words, social problems "constitute growth, they denote that laborious and often baffling adjustment of action and condition which is the essence of progress."[407] Individuals and groups which are unable to attend to this mutually conditioning relationship between ideals, action strategies, and social conditions thus fail to grow and progress.

With this social theoretical background, Outlaw shows, Du Bois offers a critical reconceptualization of "the Negro problems." First, Du Bois rejects assumptions of incorrigible African American moral and intellectual inferiority, instinctive European American racial prejudice, and inevitable interracial conflict. This view, as Du Bois had argued a few years earlier, assumed that African

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[403] Ibid.

[404] Ibid., 288.

[405] Ibid., 289.

[406] Ibid., 290.

[407] W.E.B. Du Bois, "The Study of the Negro Problems," in Nahum Chandler, ed., *The Problem of the Color Line at the Turn of the Twentieth Century* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2015), 82.

American people have "made no appreciable advance" since emancipation and will never "do any-thing to aid and advance the culture and civilization of the day," and that anti-Black prejudice was "a fixed and unchangeable fact."[408] Second, Du Bois rejects the dominant tendency to oversimply "the Negro problem," which, he argued, is no single problem but a "'plexus' of new and old, simple and complex social problems" demanding historical, statistical, anthropological, and sociological study for the sake of truth-production and human survival, reproduction, development, and flourishing.[409]

So how to begin studying this complex plexus of social problems? On Outlaw's reading, the central conflict at issue here for Du Bois is that between "the living realities of Negro life in the United States of America" and "the nation's founding ideals."[410] Although Outlaw does not explore the specific content of these ideals, he notes that a primary element of this social problem is the history and impacts of chattel slavery. This, Outlaw writes, "had become a decisive factor in the Negro's history of distorted and impeded development in the Americas and a key impediment to realizing group ideals conducive to their flourishing."[411] Outlaw continues, "the circumstances of Negro life, to a great extent, were directly and indirectly conditioned by White folks and their prej-udices against and economic exploitation of black folk."[412]

Lucius T. Outlaw, Jr.'s discussion of "The Study of the Negro Problems" highlights im-portant elements of the historical and anthropological dimensions of Du Bois's revisionary concep-tion of the so-called Negro problems. Simply put, this conception relies on a distinctive account of

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[408] W.E.B. Du Bois, "The Afro-American," in Nahum Chandler, ed., *The Problem of the Color Line at the Turn of the Twentieth Century* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2015), 40.

[409] Outlaw, Jr., "W.E.B. Du Bois on the Study of Social Problems," 294-5, 289.

[410] Ibid., 288.

[411] Ibid.

[412] Ibid., 290.

social problems. On this account, social problems are conflicts between ideals and conditions. These conflicts arise when specific social groups are unable to enact their ideals under specific conditions of life. They are *problems* in the sense that they impede group survival, reproduction, development, and flourishing. Solutions to such problems require adjustments to ideals, beliefs, activities, and/or social conditions to eliminate impediments to group survival, reproduction, development, and flourishing. The history of a social group, from this perspective, is the history of the group's efforts to maintain individual and group life by solving social problems. Outlaw's discussion also raises several questions:

(1) How do groups "maintain group and individual life"?[413]

(2) How do specific groups become *unable* to enact their ideals under specific life conditions?

(3) How does this inability undermine their efforts to maintain group and individual life?

(4) How do these "problematic" social groups become problems "for other social groups with whom they are in contact"?[414]

The fourth question, in turn, raises at least two prior questions:

(5) How do groups come into contact?

(6) How do they affect each other through this contact?[415]

To explore these questions and further unpack Du Bois's multidimensional conception of *social problems*, I will now turn to Robert Gooding-Williams.

While Outlaw highlights the historical and anthropological dimensions of Du Bois's conception of *social problems,* Gooding-Williams discusses the concept with an eye to its normative

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[413] Ibid., 287.

[414] Ibid., 286-7.

[415] Although I formulate these questions in general terms here, I take it for granted that they must be developed and refined within specific historical contexts.

political implications. As he argues, Du Bois's analysis of "the Negro problem" was indebted to the ethical political economy of his Berlin mentor, Gustav Schmoller.[416] "For Schmoller," Gooding-Williams writes, "measuring social practices against prevailing ideals meant evaluating those practices in the perspective of a collectively shared and historically formed ethical consciousness (*Sittlichkeit*) defined by the convictions, principles, and norms with regard to which the participants in those practices lived their lives."[417] This social theory informed Schmoller's understanding of social reform as "a matter of re-forming social practices to accord with currently ascendant ethical ideals, and most especially to accord with progressively more adequate interpretations of the ideal of justice."[418] For Schmoller, the primary task of social reform was to integrate the then emergent German industrial working class into German society.[419]

As Gooding-Williams notes, Du Bois follows Schmoller in conceptualizing social problems "in terms of the conflict between group ideals and social practices (or, more broadly, social conditions)."[420] Similarly, Du Bois envisioned social reform in integrationist terms, Gooding-Williams argues. The task was to realize "social integration," that is, to enable "the members of a marginalized group [African American people, in this case] fully to participate in the larger society."[421] The primary social problem here, then, was the conflict between this ideal of social integration and the practices

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[416] Robert Gooding-Williams, *In the Shadow of Du Bois: Afro-Modern Political Thought in America* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 2009), 58. Hereafter cited as "Gooding-Williams, *Shadow of Du Bois*."

[417] Ibid.

[418] Ibid.

[419] Ibid.

[420] Ibid., 59.

[421] Ibid., 59, 60.

and conditions impeding its realization.[422] Accepting this ideal of social integration, Gooding-Williams argues, Du Bois proposes a study of the practices and conditions impeding its realization.[423]

Here, Gooding-William shows, Du Bois distinguishes between two interrelated impediments to social integration: African American cultural deficiencies and White racial prejudice. Although Du Bois rejects the static and deterministic conception of incorrigible racial inferiority, he believed that generations of chattel slavery inflicted significant moral and intellectual damage on most, if not all, African American people (more on this below).   Thus, Du Bois writes, "Negroes do not share in the full national life because as a mass they have not reached a sufficiently high grade of culture."[424] Gooding-Williams elaborates: "According to Du Bois, the Negro's paramount defect is his social inefficiency – that is, his inability to order and adapt his behavior to conform to the widely accepted and observed social norms, such as moral and legal norms – shaping modern life."[425] This inability, in turn, derives from "the Negro's behavioral and attitudinal impairment."[426] He is "insufficiently civilized, marked by 'the grosser forms of sexual immorality . . . and crime.'"[427]

Importantly, Du Bois understood these deficiencies as the contingent historical products of chattel slavery. From this perspective, social reform requires the amelioration of African American cultural deficiencies through "assimilation to" the "economic, educational, and social norms of development" of "Euro-American modernity."[428] The fulfillment of this task is complicated, however,

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[422] Ibid., 60.

[423] Ibid.

[424] Quoted on Ibid., 60.

[425] Ibid., 62.

[426] Ibid., 62.

[427] Ibid.

[428] Ibid., 132, 61. Gooding-Williams does not clearly distinguish between "integration" and "assimilation." On some occasions, he seems to use them interchangeably. (See, for example, Ibid., 5-6.) As far as I can tell, he reads Du Bois

by White supremacy, which "functions further to reinforce and entrench Negro backwardness, and thus to sustain the gap between Negro life and the social standards of the nation."[429] Gooding-Williams continues, "In other words, prejudice against inclusion – that is, against permitting Negroes to live more or less on par with White citizens by bringing their lives into accord with the economic, educational, and social norms of modernity – makes it ever more difficult for Negroes to achieve inclusion, which would standardize their lives."[430] White supremacy thus comprises the second factor impeding the realization of the integrationist ideal.

For Du Bois, then, there are two broad, interrelated sets of factors comprising "the Negro problems": African American cultural backwardness and White racial prejudice. Both factors undermine the realization of the ideal of social integration. Thus, Gooding-Williams shows, Du Bois's subsequent political agenda has two primary components. First, "Negro leaders" must "combat cultural backwardness by directing the assimilation of the Negro masses to the developmental norms characteristic of modern life."[431] Second, "Negro leaders" must "combat White prejudice against admitting the Negro to the group life of the nation—that is, against permitting him to forge a life that accords with the norms, or standards, of American group life—by mobilizing the Negro masses to protest that prejudice."[432]

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as proposing a *simultaneously* integrationist and assimilationist solution to "the Negro problems." On this reading, Du Bois believed that full African American participation in US society on equal terms, viz. integration, requires that African American people "assimilate...to the constitutive norms of modernity." In short, social/political integration requires some degree of cultural assimilation. Ibid, 4.

[429] Ibid.

[430] Ibid., 61-62.

[431] Ibid, 63.

[432] Ibid.

133

As I discussed above, Outlaw, Jr. shows that Du Bois conceptualizes social problems as conflicts between ideals and social conditions that impede human survival, reproduction, development, and flourishing. The proximate source of these conflicts is group members' *inability* to realize their ideals under specific life conditions. I then suggested that Outlaw's discussion raises several questions:

(1) How do groups "maintain group and individual life"?[433]

(2) How do specific groups become *unable* to enact their ideals under specific life conditions?

(3) How does this inability undermine their efforts to maintain group and individual life?

(4) How do these "problematic" social groups become problems "for other social groups with whom they are in contact"?[434]

The latter, in turn, requires some consideration of at least two prior questions:

(5) How do groups come into contact?

(6) How do they affect each other through this contact?

Gooding-Williams's discussion offers preliminary answers to the second and third questions. He shows that, for Du Bois, generations of chattel slavery inflicted moral and intellectual damage on most African American people which rendered them culturally deficient and, consequently, relatively unable to act in accordance with the economic, educational, and social norms that would have enabled their integration into "the national life of the people."[435] White supremacy further "reinforce[s] and entrench[es]" this cultural backwardness, thereby "sustaining the gap between Negro life and the social standards of the nation."[436] Gooding-Williams's discussion thus indicates that the

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[433] Outlaw, Jr., "W.E.B. Du Bois on the Study of Social Problems," 287.

[434] Ibid., 286-7.

[435] Gooding-Williams, *Shadow of Du Bois*, 59, 60.

[436] Ibid.

conflict-inducing inability to realize group ideals derives from contingent African American cultural deficiencies and White supremacy. These impediments to social integration, in turn, undermine group members' efforts to make a living, acquire an education, and live safe, secure lives – in other words, their efforts to maintain individual and group life.[437]

The question, then, is: how do problematic social groups become problems for other groups? In other words, in what sense did White US Americans face a social problem in this context? Gooding-Williams points out that, according to Du Bois, "Americans as a group are generally committed to making it possible for the Negro to 'share the full national life,' and thus to making the Negro 'an integral part of the social body'."[438] This supposed commitment to the integrationist ideal conflicts, however, with White supremacy. Gooding-Williams writes, "the practice of prejudice against admitting Negroes into the group life of the nation has the causal consequence of excluding them from that life: it functions further to reinforce and entrench Negro backwardness, and thus to sustain the gap between Negro life and the social standards of the nation."[439] From this perspective, we might say that White US Americans are unable to realize the ideal of social integration because their commitment to White supremacy partially reinforces African American people's supposed cultural backwardness. Thus, White US Americans indirectly undermine the realization of their own ideal: they are committed to social integration, but support White supremacy, thereby preventing social integration. The problem here, then, seems to be a matter of moral inconsistency. I propose, however, that there is a deeper pragmatic issue at stake here for Du Bois.

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[437] Ibid., 61.

[438] Ibid., 60.

[439] Ibid., 61.

Gooding-Williams hints at this when he notes that Du Bois claims that "the widespread conviction among Americans that no persons of Negro descent should become constituent members of the social body . . . gives rise to economic problems, to educational problems, and nice questions of social morality."[440] Notably, Du Bois does not claim that these problems only affect African American people. To be sure, White supremacy "makes it more difficult for black men to earn a living or spend their earning as they will; it gives them poorer school facilities and restricted contact with cultured classes."[441] Du Bois continues, however, noting that "it becomes, throughout the land, a cause and excuse for discontent, lawlessness, laziness, and injustice."[442] The phrase "throughout the land" implies that "the Negro problems" also affect the broader society, potentially impacting White people. Indeed, Du Bois offers the following reason (among others) for studying "the Negro problems": "Whenever any nation allows impulse, whim or hasty conjecture to usurp the place of conscious, normative, intelligent action, *it is in grave danger.*"[443] Similarly, he says in *The Souls of Black Folk*, published five years after "The Study of the Negro Problems," that Southern White and Black people "ought to be in complete understanding and sympathy" "for mutual benefit and the welfare of the land."[444] Outlaw, too, touches on this deeper social pragmatic dimension when he notes that Du Bois insisted on the study of "the Negro problems" "in order to resolve the race's problems and allow for its progressive evolution *and that of the nation-state.*"[445]

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[440] Du Bois quoted on Ibid., 61; Du Bois, "The Study of the Negro Problems," 83.

[441] Du Bois, "The Study of the Negro Problems," 83.

[442] Ibid.

[443] Ibid., 85, emphasis added.

[444] W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, in Nathan Huggins, ed., *W.E.B. Du Bois, Writings* (New York: The Library of America, 1986), 489. Hereafter cited as "Du Bois, *Souls.*"

[445] Outlaw, Jr., "W.E.B. Du Bois on the Study of Social Problems," 289, emphasis added.

These remarks indicate that, for Du Bois, the conflict between ideals and conditions which undermines African American efforts to maintain individual and group life simultaneously functions to undermine *White* US American efforts to maintain individual and group life. Before I can develop this point in the next chapter, however, I must flesh out the broader social pragmatic dimension of Du Bois's account of social problems. Thus, I return to the other three questions I posed above: How do groups maintain group and individual life? How do social groups come into contact? How do social groups affect each other through their contact?

Du Bois's Conception of Social Reproduction

Du Bois's 1904 essay "The Development of a People" offers resources for exploring these questions.[446] This essay is important here for at least two reasons. First, it reiterates Du Bois's emphasis on the social pragmatic urgency of the so-called Negro problems – that is, the extent to which these problems effectively undermine social reproduction throughout the United States and not just for Black people. Second, it offers a brief account of social reproduction. Du Bois presents philosophical anthropological premises which, I aim to show, can fruitfully be extended to develop the subsequent questions about intergroup contact and intergroup contact-effects.

Du Bois opens this essay with a distinction between what he sees as social progress regarding matters of health and medicine, on the one hand, and social stagnation regarding matters of "economic and spiritual development" on the other.[447] With respect to the former, Du Bois says, human

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[446] W. E. B. Du Bois, "The Development of a People," in Nahum Chandler, ed., *The Problem of the Color Line at the Turn of the Twentieth Century: The Essential Early Essays*, American Philosophy (New York: Fordham University Press, 2014): 243 – 270. Hereafter cited as "Du Bois, 'The Development of a People'."

[447] Ibid., 243. Du Bois does not define "spiritual" here. Based on Du Bois's later remarks in *The Souls of Black Folk*, I take "spiritual" to refer to "the atmosphere of the land, the thought and feeling, the thousand and one little actions which go to make up life" – in short, what readers of Hegel might think of as ethical life. Du Bois, *Souls*, 487.

beings have generally abandoned superstitious pseudo-explanations of disease and death. He writes, "Death that arises from foul sewage, bad plumbing or vitiated air we no longer attribute to 'Acts of God,' but to 'Misdeeds of Man,' and so work to correct this loss."[448] In other words, we no longer appeal to mysterious, transcendent forces behind deaths associated with poor sanitation. Instead, we recognize them as the unnecessary outcomes of human action and take appropriate practical measures to ameliorate them. This, Du Bois indicates, is an instance of social progress.

With respect to the "higher realm of the economic and spiritual development of a people," however, Du Bois claims that many still cling to a form of "Medievalism":

> Here the world rests, and is largely contented to rest, in a strange fatalism. Nations and groups and social classes are born and reared, reel sick unto death, or tear forward in frenzied striving. We sit and watch and moralize, and judge our neighbors or ourselves fore-doomed to failure or success, not because we know or have studied the causes of a people's advance, but rather because we instinctively dislike certain races, and instinctively like our own.[449]

As this passage suggests, the form of "Medievalism" at issue here for Du Bois is racial prejudice – an "instinctive dislike [for] certain races."[450] Rather than studying "the causes of a people's advance," the racially prejudiced uncritically accept a priori explanations for what they take to be the relative failures or successes of what they take to be distinct human populations. Racial prejudice, Du Bois

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[448] Du Bois, "The Development of a People," 243.

[449] Ibid.

[450] I take Du Bois to be using the term "instinctive" loosely to refer to relatively unconscious affective responses towards others. That is, I don't think he is claiming that this dislike for "certain races" is innate and immutable. As I pointed out above, Du Bois already rejected this notion in an 1890 fragment entitled "Contribution to the Negro Problem," where he says that a careful consideration of the historical evidence shows that "there was at first comparatively little race prejudice between Whites and blacks in early colonial times, and that the prejudice only appeared after a long period of artificial fostering by the laws of the land." See: https://credo.library.umass.edu/view/full/mums312-b237-i084

suggests, generates superstitious pseudo-explanations of relative group position, that is, "explanations" based on "race" as a fixed transhistorical essence that determines human capacities.

Notably, Du Bois does not criticize this attitude in moral terms. He could have argued, for example, that it unfairly disregards the personhood of "foredoomed" individuals and group members. Instead, however, he criticizes it on the grounds that it is a form of "Medievalism," that is, an instance of social stagnation. How? Du Bois continues:

> The solidarity of human interests in a world which is daily becoming physically smaller, cannot afford to grope in darkness as to the causes and incentives to human advance when the advance of all depends increasingly on the advance of each.[451]

As this passage implies, there are two interrelated difficulties with this fatalistic approach to matters of human advance. The first is epistemological: it fails to recognize the fact that the world "is daily becoming physically smaller." It presupposes that the human species is composed of homogenous and neatly bounded populations. This assumption may have had some truth "a few centuries ago," Du Bois writes in "Race Prejudice," when "the world existed in such air-tight compartments that groups could isolate themselves and live to themselves."[452] European settler colonialism, the transatlantic slave trade, and 19th century imperialism, however, radically transformed this world, introducing an unprecedented degree and scale of interdependence into human life. "Today," Du Bois continues, "we are demanding vociferously the policy of the Open Door. We are demanding, now chiefly for economic reasons, but also in part for political and social reasons, a world-wide contact of men with men."[453] Thus, Du Bois writes in *John Brown* (1909), "The earth is growing smaller and

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[451] Du Bois, "The Development of a People," 243-244.

[452] Du Bois, "Race Prejudice" [1910], in Herbert Aptheker, ed., *Pamphlets and Leaflets by W.E.B. Du Bois*, (New York: Kraus-Thomson Organization Limited, 1986), 90-91.

[453] Ibid.

more accessible. Race contact will become in the future increasingly inevitable not only in America, Asia, and Africa but even in Europe."[454] The modern growth of "race contact," Du Bois suggests, betrays the falsity of any such abstract and atomistic understanding of human populations.

These changing sociohistorical conditions also raise a social pragmatic problem. For Du Bois, the growth of "race contact" multiplied and intensified social relations, thereby making human beings more dependent on one another. Human beings have gradually developed a "solidarity of human interests" based on the fact that "the advance of all depends increasingly on the advance of each." The stagnation of one group impedes the advance of others, Du Bois claims. Those who would sit back with indifference and fatalism as others "are born and reared, reel sick unto death, or tear forward in frenzied striving," never bothering to consider the complex causes of social stagnation, thus risk impeding the advance of their own group. Their advance, then, depends upon the group's ability and willingness to concern themselves with the advance of other groups. As Du Bois puts it, "the basic axiom upon which all intelligent and decent men North and South, White and black, must agree is that the *best interests* of every single American demand that *every Negro make the best of himself.*"[455]

Of course, the preceding remarks raise at least two questions. What constitutes human *advance?* Which social conditions and activities constrain or enable group advance, and how? Or, in Du Bois's words, what are "the causes of a people's advance"?[456] Du Bois explicitly acknowledges the complexity and difficulty of the normative questions at play here, but he insists that pragmatic considerations demand that these questions be rigorously studied. "The Negro problems," he writes,

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[454] W.E.B. Du Bois, *John Brown* (New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1997), 195.

[455] Du Bois, "The Development of a People," 244.

[456] Ibid., 243-244.

"are pressing – asking, *demanding* solution."[457] The task, then, he proposes, is to study "what human advancement historically considered has meant and what it means to-day." This study, he suggests, may provide standards for "judging the condition, development and needs of the group before us."[458]

Following this proposal, Du Bois offers a basic anthropological premise for this study. Human beings maintain individual and group life by engaging in four basic life-activities:

- First, "the struggle for sheer physical existence," or *subsistence.*

- Second, "the accumulation for future subsistence," or *accumulation.*

- Third, "some essay to train the young into the tradition of the fathers," or *education.*

- Fourth, "that transference and sifting and accumulation of the elements of human culture which makes for wider civilization and higher development," or *culture.*[459]

He elaborates, noting that human beings are continually and simultaneously engaged in these life-activities. Subsistence, accumulation, education, and culture, in other words, are not "disconnected, discrete stages" of human development.[460] "The growth of society," Du Bois writes, "is an ever-living, many-sided bundle of activities, some of which are emphasized at different ages."[461] Further, these life-activities are pragmatically interdependent: none "can be neglected without peril" and all "demand guidance and direction. As they receive this, the nation grows; as they do not, it stagnates and

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[457] Ibid., 244, original emphasis.

[458] Ibid., 246.

[459] Ibid.

[460] Ibid.

[461] Ibid., 247.

dies."[462] A group focused solely on subsistence, for example, neglects accumulation, education, and culture, thereby threatening its own survival.[463] More generally, groups that fail to attend to these basic life activities in a conscious and holistic manner – that is, in a manner that recognizes their mutually necessary and interdependent character – risk stagnation and death. The maintenance of group and individual life, Du Bois claims, requires continual reflection on, and adjustment of, these four basic life-activities.

In this regard, Du Bois proposes that this anthropological premise provides a normative reference point for evaluating relative group position. Human advance and stagnation can be evaluated in terms of the relative degrees to which groups expend energy and resources on one or another of these activities. Thus, Du Bois writes, "we designate any particular age of a people's development as (for instance) a struggle for existence, because their conscious effort is more largely expended in this direction than in others."[464] Groups which disproportionately expend energy and resources on subsistence are, according to Du Bois, less advanced than groups that subsist, accumulate, educate, and produce and exchange culture.

Du Bois does not, however, settle for this formal, quantitative standard for evaluating relative group position. The quality of the norms guiding each life-activity is also important, because each activity is *always* guided by *some* norm: "You cannot stop the education of children in order to feed their fathers," Du Bois writes. "The children continue to grow – something they are bound to learn. What then shall it be: truth, or half-truth, good or bad?"[465] Children *will be* educated; education will

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[462] Ibid.

[463] Ibid.

[464] Ibid., 246.

[465] Ibid., 247.

proceed according to *some* standard, so the question is, how will it proceed? What norms guide education? Are these norms appropriate? How and why? Similarly, Du Bois says that "people may be engaged in the pressing work of accumulating and saving for future needs...but all the time they are learning something from inevitable contact with men and nations and thoughts – you cannot stop this learning; you cannot postpone it. What then shall this learning – this contact with culture – be? A lesson of fact or fable? Of growth or debauchery? The inspiration of the schools or the degradation of the slums? Something it must be, but what?"[466] Human groups *will* interact with other groups, and they *will* learn something from these interactions. So, what norms will guide this interaction and learning? Human groups that ignore education and culture-contact will not thereby cease to engage in these life-activities; they will not thereby cease to adopt normative commitments with regards to education and culture-contact.

A population's relative degree of progress and/or stagnation, Du Bois suggests, should thus be made in terms of its relative emphasis on one or another of these life-activities, as well as the specific contents of the norms that guide the life-activity in question. He summarizes, "The more backward the nation the larger sum of effort goes into the struggle for existence; the more forward the nation the larger and broader is the life of the spirit."[467] This latter remark implies that it is not enough for a group to focus more of its life-activity on culture-contact. It must also have norms that enable the increasing size and scope of their cultural life.

To recap, Du Bois maintains that human populations are continually engaged in four normatively guided life-activities: subsistence, accumulation, education, and culture. A group's advance or stagnation and death depends upon the relative balance of energy and effort it devotes to one or

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[466] Ibid.

[467] Ibid., 257.

another of these interrelated life activities, as well as the quality of the norms or ideals which guide them. Du Bois frames "The Development of a People" by emphasizing the practical urgency of studying social problems considering the growth of human interdependence. Over the course of the essay, however, Du Bois narrows his focus to the social conditions of different African American subpopulations in the Jim Crow South, drawing on his anthropological premises to evaluate them in terms of their relative level of culture and their relative abilities to engage in the four life-activities.

First, Du Bois describes an African American family of eight living in a "dirty, ill-smelling and cheerless" cabin.[468] "The man," he writes, "works when he has no whiskey to drink, which is comparatively seldom. The woman washes and squanders and squanders and washes."[469] Du Bois doubts that the couple was ever formally married, and notes that, with the exception of three children who "can spell and read a bit...The rest of the family are in [sic] ignorant, dark and dense."[470] Here, then, is a family living in poverty, ignorance, and isolation. According to Du Bois's description, they struggle to subsist, fail to accumulate, are barely educated, and do not seem to engage in much, if any, culture. This family, Du Bois implies, represents the least advanced African American population in the Jim Crow South.

Of course, Du Bois does not attribute their conditions to inherent and immutable capability deficiencies. The condition of such "degraded homes," he proposes, "is a plain survival of the past."[471] The historical consequence of the transatlantic slave trade, he says, "was the destruction of

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[468] Ibid., 248.

[469] Ibid.

[470] Ibid., 249.

[471] Ibid.

the African family and of all just ideals of family life."[472] Whatever ideals African families had prior to their capture and importation "slavery broke and scattered and flirted to the winds," leaving "ignorance and degradation in their train."[473] In short, Du Bois claims that slavery destroyed the ideals which would enable this family to engage in the life activities that would improve their social condition of poverty and ignorance.

Du Bois then turns his attention to the "better house," inhabited by a family of four "hard-working" and "good" people.[474] This family has attained a higher standard of living than the first. "They read and write a little and, though they are slow and good natured, they are seldom idle."[475] They too, however, face difficulties. "They are unskilled, without foresight, always in debt and living from hand to mouth. Hard pressed they may sink into crime; encouraged they may rise to comfort, but never to wealth."[476] This family, "seldom idle," thus engages in subsistence, but their lack of skill and foresight renders them relatively incapable of accumulation and therefore exposes them to an indebted and precarious existence. They have some education and do not seem to engage in much, if any, cultural production and exchange. Once again, Du Bois explains the condition of this family as a historical consequence of slavery. Du Bois writes, "What does a slave know of saving? What can he know of forethought? What could he learn even of skill, save in exceptional cases?" Slavery, Du Bois claims, deprived enslaved peoples of the idea of "thrift," and rendered them ignorant and

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[472] Ibid., 254.

[473] Ibid.

[474] Ibid., 255.

[475] Ibid.

[476] Ibid.

incapable of "free individual initiative."[477] In short, Du Bois writes, "they lack skill and, more than that, they lack ideals!"[478]

Finally, Du Bois turns to a "jaunty, little yellow house on a cross street," "among the best" in the town. This family's patriarch is well-employed, probably a butcher, small grocer, carpenter, teacher, or preacher. He provides for the family, which therefore has few, if any, difficulties with subsistence. The house's "flower-bed," "vines and creepers," "gleam of White curtains and a decorous parlor" suggest that the family has even managed to accumulate some modest wealth. This relatively secure socioeconomic position, Du Bois claims, confers a distinctive social role on the man: "he is a leader in a peculiar sense - the ideal-maker in his group of people."[479] More generally, Du Bois says, this man, and others like him, are the African American educators of African American people. "The black world," Du Bois writes, "is isolated and alone; it gets its ideals, its larger thoughts, its notions of life, from these local leaders."[480] He continues,

> they set the tone to that all-powerful spiritual world that surrounds and envelopes the
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> souls of men; their standards of living, their interpretation of sunshine and rain and
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> human hearts, their thoughts of love and labor, their aspirations and dim imaginings
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> – all that makes life *life*.[481]

In short, these local leaders provide "moral uplift."[482] Through their commitment to the "ideals of life and thrift and civilization," they "set examples of moral living and correct thinking to the great

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[477] Ibid., 256.

[478] Ibid.

[479] Ibid.

[480] Ibid.

[481] Ibid., original emphasis.

[482] Ibid., 260.

masses of Negroes who spend but little of their life in schools."[483] This population, Du Bois suggests, is most advanced and therefore has the ability to "uplift" the less advanced.

"The Development of a People" further supports Gooding-Williams' view that Du Bois understood individual and group social conditions primarily in terms of relative levels of culture. On this account, individual and group cultural deficiencies – absent or inadequate ideals, lack of discipline, poor self-control, etc. – undermine individual and group efforts to engage in subsistence, accumulation, education, and culture. The lower a group's average cultural level, in other words, the less capable its members of effectively engaging in these life-activities. This, in turn, reinforces their distinct social conditions of relative poverty, ignorance, crime, and disease.

Du Bois does not develop his opening remarks on human interdependence over the course of this essay. Thus, he does not explicate the social theory underlying his claim that "the *best interests* of every single American demand that *every Negro make the best of himself*."[484] His insistence on this point towards the beginning of the essay, however, indicates that he does think that local instances of social stagnation – that is, relative group inabilities to adequately engage in the four basic life-activities – do have broader social-pragmatic implications. Here, then, we return to the subsequent questions I posed above: How do social groups come into contact? How do social groups affect each other through their contact? We find some resources for exploring these questions in another essay from the same period, "The Relations of the Negroes to the Whites in the South" (1901), to which I now turn.[485]

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[483] Ibid., 260.

[484] Ibid., 244.

[485] W. E. B. Du Bois, "The Relations of the Negroes to the Whites in the South," in Nahum Chandler, ed., *The Problem of the Color Line at the Turn of the Twentieth Century: The Essential Early Essays*, American Philosophy (New York: Fordham University Press, 2014): 189 - 208. Du Bois revised and republished this essay as the ninth chapter of *The Souls of Black Folk*, "Of the Sons of Master and Man."

Structured Social Relations: Power and Domination

Du Bois frames this essay in terms of a conflict between ideals and conditions, viz. a social problem. He articulates the ideal in question as follows: "to see that in the future competition of races, the survival of the fittest shall mean the triumph of the good, the beautiful and the true; that we may be able to preserve for future civilization all that is really fine and noble and strong, and not continue to put a premium on greed and impudence and cruelty."[486] The latter clause points towards Du Bois's understanding of the social conditions impeding the realization of this ideal. "[T]he characteristic of the age," he writes, "is the contact of European civilization with the world's undeveloped peoples."[487] This contact has been characterized by "war, murder, slavery, extermination and debauchery," activities which pose clear obstacles to the "triumph of the good, the beautiful, and the true."[488] In this context, Du Bois emphasizes the need to study intergroup contact. He writes, "we are compelled daily to turn more and more to a conscientious study of the phenomena of race contact," adding that the US American South provides "as fine a field for such a study as the world affords."[489]

From here he outlines the basic premise of this study, namely, that organized human life falls into "a few main lines of action and communication":

(1) the physical proximity of homes and dwelling places, the way in which neighborhoods group themselves, and the contiguity of neighborhoods.

(2) economic relations - the methods by which individuals co-operate for earning a living, for the mutual satisfaction of wants, for the production of wealth.

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[486] Ibid., 190.

[487] Ibid., 189.

[488] Ibid.

[489] Ibid., 190.

(3) political relations, the co-operation in social control, in group government, in lay-

ing and playing the burden of taxation.

(4) intellectual contact and commerce, the interchange of ideas through conversation

and conference, through periodicals and libraries, and above all the gradual for-

mation for each community of that curious *tertium quid* which we call public

opinion.

(5) various forms of social contact in every-day life, in travel, in theatres, in house

gatherings, in marrying and giving in marriage.

(6) varying forms of religious enterprise, of moral teaching and benevolent en-

deavor.[490]

Du Bois thus identifies six overlapping and interrelated dimensions of organized human life: (1)

spatial, (2) economic, (3) political, (4) intellectual, (5) interpersonal, and (6) moral. Following this

brief methodological note, he turns his attention to a description of these relations as they appear in

the Jim Crow South at the turn of the 20th century.

As in "The Study of the Negro Problems," Du Bois's subsequent discussion focuses primar-

ily on relative levels of culture. For example, discussing the spatial segregation of White and Black

southerners, he writes, "the best of the Whites and the best of the negroes almost never live in

anything like close proximity. It thus happens that in nearly every Southern town and city, both

Whites and blacks see commonly the worst of each other."[491] To the extent that the color line "wavers

and disappears," it does so only in the "saloon, the gambling hell and the bawdy-house."[492] Spatial

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[490] Ibid., 190-191.

[491] Ibid., 191.

[492] Ibid., 204.

149

relations in the Jim Crow South, Du Bois implies, sustained and reinforced the deficient cultural levels of White and Black people alike.

Du Bois offers a similar description of intergroup economic relations. White and black laborers, he says, are subject to relations of severe labor competition, and their social condition is sustained by character deficiencies. He says, for example, that White laborers "are not yet intelligent, thrifty and well trained enough to maintain themselves against the powerful inroads of organized capital. The result among them, even, is long hours of toil, low wages, child labor, and lack of protection against usury and cheating."[493] White laborers' social conditions (long hours, low wages, etc.) are thus "the result" of their deficient moral and intellectual character. Similarly, Du Bois claims that Black laborers "are willing and good-natured, but not self-reliant, provident or careful" and thus need "careful personal guidance, group leadership of men with hearts in their bosoms, to train them to foresight, carefulness and honesty."[494] Their economic condition is further constrained by White racial prejudice, which, at this time, Du Bois understands in terms of "ignorance and ill will," viz. the deficient cultural level of many White people.[495]

Du Bois's descriptions of the Jim Crow South emphasize the extent to which interracial relations sustain and reinforce cultural backwardness. In this regard, Du Bois implies that White and Black people affect each other insofar as their social relations are structured in such a way that they tend to mutually reinforce each group's cultural backwardness.   White southerners, he says, point to the degraded social conditions and cultural deficiencies of African Americans – their "ignorance, shiftlessness, poverty and crime" - as justification for racial segregation. African American people,

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[493] Ibid., 193.

[494] Ibid., 192.

[495] Ibid., 193-194; W.E.B. Du Bois, *Dusk of Dawn,* in Nathan Huggins, ed., *W.E.B. Du Bois, Writings* (New York: The Library of America, 1986), 557. Hereafter cited as "Du Bois, *Dusk of Dawn.*"

on the other hand, argue that Whites' own cultural deficiencies – namely, their "proscription and prejudice" – impede African American efforts to improve their social condition. Both views are one-sided and mutually reinforcing, Du Bois claims, hence his proposed solution of mutual recognition and education. "In the face of two such arguments," he writes, "the future of the South depends on the ability of the representatives of these opposing views to see and appreciate, and sympathize with each other's position . . . Only by a union of intelligence and sympathy across the color line in this critical period of the Republic shall justice and right triumph."[496] In short, the best Whites and black people must recognize and learn from each other and educate the black and White masses. Social relations sustain and reinforce cultural backwardness, which in turn sustains and reinforces social conditions. The solution, from this perspective, is for the most culturally advanced representatives of each group to lead the backward masses into civilization.

As this discussion indicates, Du Bois does not elaborate on the social pragmatic dimension of group interdependence – that is, the mutual effects of group engagements in subsistence, accumulation, education, and culture. Read alongside my discussion of "The Development of a People," however, his brief remarks on the historical growth of human interdependence and the pragmatic urgency of studying intergroup relations suggest that the organized social relations constituting intergroup contact must have more direct pragmatic implications for different groups' efforts to maintain individual and group life. That is, environing groups do not affect each other merely insofar as they differentially reinforce or ameliorate their respective cultural deficiencies. They are also interrelated in and through their basic life-activities. From this approach, each group's manner of engaging in subsistence, accumulation, education, and culture is a function of another group's manner of

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[496] W. E. B. Du Bois, "The Relations of the Negroes to the Whites in the South," 205.

engagement in these basic life-activities. But how? Du Bois's brief account of social relations indicates one way to develop the question.

The first step here is to see that increasing intergroup contact entails the proliferation and intensification of intergroup relations relative to intragroup activities. That is, as social groups become more interdependent, their respective modes of social reproduction (subsistence, accumulation, education, culture) are increasingly mediated by intergroup relations. The latter, in other words, increasingly shape local subsistence, accumulation, education, and cultural activities, thereby influencing local social conditions. From this perspective, I suggest, the ability to maintain individual and group life is increasingly contingent upon the ability to influence intergroup relations. Groups with disproportionate abilities to influence social relations disproportionately influence environing individual and group efforts to maintain individual and group life. Similarly, those with disproportionate inabilities to influence social relations are hindered when it comes to maintaining individual and group life.

The remainder of this chapter develops these thoughts in the context of Du Bois's mid-20th century writings (roughly 1935 – 1960), where, in my view, Du Bois places a greater emphasis on this social pragmatic dimension. My general aim in what follows is to highlight this shift as it pertains to his notion of *social problems.* In his turn-of-the-century writings, we saw, Du Bois understood social problems in terms of cultural backwardness, sustained and reinforced by social relations, resulting in the inability to enact specific ideals and, consequently, difficulties in maintaining group and individual life. In response to the events of the early-to-mid 20th century, however, Du Bois places a greater emphasis on the systemic and agonistic dimensions of social problems. Although he retains his earlier focus to on culture and psychology, his later work places a greater emphasis social relations,

social structure, and social domination.[497] More specifically, he approaches social problems as functions of structured social relations of domination through which some directly or indirectly impose detrimental social conditions on others and, in doing so, suppress the latter's abilities to reproduce social life. From this vantage, as I will argue, social problems involve normatively-laden conflicts between populations over the control and management of social relations.

Social Problems: Systemic and Agonistic

Du Bois offers a succinct description of this shift from culture and psychology to social relations and structures in his 1940 autobiography *Dusk of Dawn*. Reflecting on the impact of World War I on his thought, Du Bois writes, "And again my problem of human difference, of the color line, of social degradation, of the fight for freedom became transformed."[498] First, he "saw that the color bar could not be broken by a series of brilliant immediate assaults."[499] Direct moral appeals and educational efforts to correct widespread ignorance are not enough to challenge global White supremacy, Du Bois realized. Necessary though they may be, they do not address the deeper roots of "the color bar," which is defended "not simply [by] ignorance and ill will; these to be sure; but also certain more powerful motives less open to reason or appeal. There were economic motives, urges to build wealth on the backs of black slaves and colored serfs; there followed those unconscious acts and irrational reactions, unpierced by reason, whose current form depended on the long history

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[497] To be clear, I mean to highlight a shift in relative emphasis in Du Bois's though, not some sort of "epistemological break" between an "early" and a "late" Du Bois à la Althusser's reading of Marx. Du Bois's mid-20th century works retain a concern for culture and psychology. The difference, however, is that he situates his discussions of culture and psychology within a broader account of social relations, social structure, and, as I discuss below, social domination.

[498] W.E.B. Du Bois, *Dusk of Dawn,* in *Writings,* 557.

[499] Ibid.

of relation and contact between thought and idea."[500] These deep-seated psychological realities, Du Bois emphasized, could only be challenged through "long siege," "careful planning and subtle campaign with the education of growing generations and propaganda."[501]

One of the limitations of his earlier emphasis on moral appeal and educational outreach to correct ill will and ignorance, Du Bois goes on to say, is that economic motives, unconscious acts, and irrational reactions are not merely symptoms of cultural backwardness. They derive, in his words, "not simply from inertia and unconscious action but from the fact that because of the modern African slave trade a tremendous economic structure and eventually an industrial revolution had been based upon racial differences between men; and this racial difference had now been rationalized into a difference mainly of skin color. . .. Government, work, religion and education became based upon and determined by the color line," which, Du Bois had already noted in 1900, "belts the world."[502] In other words, these economic motives, unconscious acts, and irrational reactions are social psychological elements of the system of structured social relations (economic, political, religious, educational, psychological, etc.) that is "modern civilization."[503] Moral appeal and educational outreach thus need to be supplemented with a more radical approach.

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[500] Ibid.

[501] Ibid. Du Bois's distinction between "immediate assaults" and "long siege" on global White supremacy seems to parallel Antonio Gramsci's distinction between a "war of maneuver" and a "war of position," developed in his prison writings (1929 – 1935). Roughly speaking, "wars of position" involve a long-term cultural struggle to raise class and revolutionary consciousness among the peasant and proletarian classes, whereas "wars of maneuver" involve open struggle between classes. I hope to explore the relationship between Gramsci and Du Bois on this point in future work.

[502] Ibid, 556; W. E. B. Du Bois, "The Present Outlook for the Dark Races of Mankind" (1900) in Nahum Chandler, ed., *The Problem of the Color Line at the Turn of the Twentieth Century: The Essential Early Essays* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2014), 112.

[503] W.E.B. Du Bois, *Black Folk Then and Now: An Essay in the History and Sociology of the Negro Race* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, USA, 2007), 136.

What, then, is to be done? Du Bois says that "the first point of attack" on these social psychological elements "is undoubtedly the economic. The progress of the white world must cease to rest upon the poverty and the ignorance of its own proletariat and of the colored world."[504] Here Du Bois alludes to the role that systematic economic domination plays in perpetuating White supremacy. Within "the white world," viz. Western Europe and the United States, most White people are subject to a systematic socioeconomic hierarchy that reproduces widespread poverty and ignorance.[505] In global terms, the social reproduction of "the white world" depends upon the proliferation and intensification of poverty and ignorance for the rest of the world. Here Du Bois is referring to the system of colonialism. "The dependence of civilized life upon products from the ends of the world," Du Bois writes in *The World and Africa*, "tied the everyday citizen more and more firmly to the exploitation of each colonial area."[506] A vast array of consumer goods – from tea and coffee to vegetable oils, nuts, plant fibers, and rare metals – produced in the colonies, he continues, "became necessary to modern life, and modern life was thus built around colonial ownership and exploitation."[507] Through its subsistence, accumulation, educational, and cultural practices, then, the colonial system continually subjects masses of people to degraded social conditions.[508] "All over the world," Du Bois writes, "the organized economic power of Europe driven by the new capitalism and implemented by the new science and technique, fell upon ancient static cultures, ripped them apart, left

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[504] W.E.B. Du Bois, *Dusk of Dawn*, 679.

[505] I will have more to say about White subjection to economic domination in the next chapter.

[506] W.E.B. Du Bois, *The World and Africa* in Henry Louis Gates, Jr., ed., *The World and Africa and Color and Democracy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 22. Hereafter cited as "W.E.B. Du Bois, *The World and Africa*."

[507] Ibid.

[508] W.E.B. Du Bois, "Colonialism, Democracy, and Peace after the War," in Herbert Aptheker, ed., *Against Racism: Unpublished Essays, Papers, Addresses, 1887- 1961* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1985), 238. Hereafter cited as "Du Bois, 'Colonialism'."

them in helpless ruin and built a mass of poverty, ignorance and disease."[509] The colonial system "keeps the colonies poor and so conspicuously more poverty-stricken than the peoples of Europe and North America" through "the domination of White Europe over black Africa and yellow Asia, through political power built on the economic control of labor, income, and ideas."[510]

As these remarks indicate, Du Bois's mid-century writings treat poverty, ignorance, crime, and disease as continual social products of a world-system of power and domination (more on this below), rather than cultural backwardness. Going further, Du Bois revises his earlier understanding of the causal relationship between cultural backwardness and poverty, arguing that structured social relations of domination subject dominated populations to poverty, ignorance, crime, and disease – which, in turn, undermine their efforts to develop their moral, intellectual, and cultural capacities. In short, he now sees social domination, and not cultural backwardness, as the primary cause of social degradation. In *Black Folk Then and Now* (1939), for example, he says that poverty "spawns physical weakness, ignorance, and dishonesty."[511] Similarly, in his *Color and Democracy: Colonies and Peace* (1945), Du Bois says that "poverty is the basic problem and the problem chiefly responsible for ignorance, ill-health, and crime."[512] He reiterates these points in *The World and Africa* (1947):

> Poverty makes for ignorance; not simply illiteracy, which is still serious among us, but
> for inexperience, the neglect of the lessons of history, reliance on selfish prejudices
> and conventions. Poverty leads to disease; it lets us spend more for war than for the

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[509] Ibid, 239.

[510] Ibid., 238; Du Bois, *Dusk of Dawn*, 680, 624.

[511] Du Bois, *Black Folk Then and Now*, 308.

[512] W.E.B. Du Bois, *Color and Democracy* in Henry Louis Gates, Jr., ed., *The World and Africa and Color and Democracy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 287. Hereafter cited as "Du Bois, *Color and Democracy*."

perfectly possible extirpation of tuberculosis, the lessening of cancer, and the physical

welfare of children. Poverty, ignorance, and disease are back of most of our crime.[513]

Here, then, he no longer sees cultural backwardness as the primary cause of poverty. On the contrary,

he thinks that poverty tends to cause cultural backwardness.

What, then, is the primary cause of poverty, if not deficient moral and intellectual character?

As my above discussion indicates, Du Bois's answer is social – especially economic - power. He is

explicit: "today it is due to monopoly founded on our industrial organization."[514] Poverty, for Du

Bois, is the continual product of an economic system ("our industrial organization") which repro-

duces disproportionate economic power ("monopoly") for the few. The latter leverage this dispro-

portionate ability to shape and enforce economic relations, Du Bois claims, to maintain and

strengthen their social position. In doing so, they reproduce widespread poverty. Du Bois is perhaps

most explicit about this in his 1945 text, *Color and Democracy: Colonies and Peace*. Reflecting on

the question of why poverty persists despite advanced technological development and abundant

wealth, Du Bois writes,

> There can be no question that the answer is that most modern countries are in the
>
> hands of those who control organized wealth, and that the just and wise distribution
>
> of income is hindered by this monopoly.[515]

From this perspective, poverty results primarily from the direct or indirect efforts of economically

dominant populations to prevent the "just and wise distribution of income." Simply put, concen-

trated economic power sustains and reproduces poverty.

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[513] Du Bois, *The World and Africa*, 159.

[514] Ibid.

[515] Du Bois, *Color and Democracy*, 287-288.

Importantly, Du Bois emphasizes that the power which reproduces poverty, however, is not merely economic; it is also legal, cultural, and intellectual. He writes:

> This power is entrenched behind barriers of legal sanction, guarded by the best brains of the country trained as lawyers, appointed to the bench, and elected to the legislature. The retention of this power is influenced by the propaganda of newspapers and news-gathering agencies, by radio, and by social organization. The hand of organized wealth guides the education of youth . . . We are taught to regard poverty as inevitable.[516]

In other words, the economic power at issue here includes a disproportionate ability to shape the law, media, and education. In exercising this power, individuals and groups subject the relatively powerless to social conditions of poverty, ignorance, crime, and disease, stifling their efforts to subsist, accumulate, educate, and develop culture, thereby enforcing this subjection. These remarks reveal Du Bois's understanding of the *structural* dimension of social problems. Social conditions, on this account, are reproduced by a broader system of structured social relations of domination between groups (more on "domination" below). The quality of a group's social conditions – i.e., the extent to which a group is exposed to poverty, ignorance, crime and disease – is thus a function of its position within this broader social system.

Importantly, Du Bois does not develop an abstract structural-functionalist account of domination and social conditions. Structured relations of domination, in other words, are not abstract and mechanistic operations of a social system operating behind the backs of social actors. Although Du Bois readily acknowledges the significant role unconscious and semiconscious forces play in the reproduction of complex societies, he also emphasizes the point that contemporary structures of

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[516] Ibid., 287-288.

domination are sustained and enforced by a broad range of political, economic, legal, intellectual, etc. powers. These powers, for Du Bois, are fundamentally *human* powers. That is, they are composed of individual and group actors' abilities and efforts to constrain others' attempts to subsist, accumulate, educate, and engage in cultural activities. To be clear, the powerful may not always do so intentionally. The issue here, then, is that those who occupy positions of domination engage in social practices which directly (via intention) or indirectly (via unintended yet dominating consequences) maintain and enforce social hierarchy. The following passage nicely illustrates this point: "throughout the world today organized groups of men by monopoly of economic and physical power, legal enactment and intellectual training are limiting with determination and unflagging zeal the development of other groups; and ... the concentration particularly of economic power today puts the majority of mankind into a slavery to the rest."[517] The powers at issue in this context, then, are the concrete powers of specific individuals and groups who more or less consciously strive to maintain and enforce structured social relations of domination. In so doing, they undermine the abilities of less powerful individuals and groups to engage in social reproduction and directly or indirectly subject them to poverty, ignorance, crime, and disease. Here, as we shall see, lies the *agonistic* dimension of Du Bois's account of social problems.

To understand this agonistic perspective, consider some of Du Bois's further remarks on colonialism. Colonialism, for Du Bois, is a world-system of structured social relations between colonizing and colonized populations. The specific character of these social relations depends on historical context, of course, but the colonial relation is fundamentally characterized by social domination. "A colony, strictly speaking, is a country which belongs to another country, forms a part of the mother country's industrial organization, and exercises such powers of government, and such civic and

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[517] Du Bois, *Dusk of Dawn*, 654.

cultural freedom, as the dominant country allows."[518] Colonized populations are, in this sense, subject to the whims of colonizers. Their abilities and efforts to survive depend upon the colonizers' unilateral geopolitical and economic power. The latter disproportionately influence and shape intergroup relations without regard for the interests, desires, needs, etc. of colonized peoples. This is especially true, Du Bois claims, of economic relations between groups. Although "quasi-colonial" or "semi-colonial" peoples or countries possess some degree of "recognized political independence, and a cultural heritage of varying strength and persistence," they are nevertheless subject to economic domination. Du Bois writes:

> the economic dependence of the country on European and North American industrial organization, in commerce, in sale of raw materials and especially in obtaining the use of capital in the shape of machinery and manufactured material – this dependence on world industry makes the country largely dependent on financial interests and cultural ideals quite outside the land itself.[519]

The colonizer, in this context, "is thinking in terms of profit, and is obsessed with the long-ingrained conviction that the needs of the weaker country are few and its capacity for development narrow or nonexistent."[520] The result is two-fold. First, colonial powers maintain and enforce an ensemble of economic relations which "works to the distinct disadvantage of the weaker country. The terms of sale for raw materials, the prices of goods and rent of capital; even the wages of labor are dictated by the stronger partner, backed by economic pressure and military power."[521] In so doing, they subject

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[518] Du Bois, "Colonialism," 229.

[519] Ibid., 233-234.

[520] Ibid.

[521] Ibid.

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colonized peoples to degraded social conditions. Du Bois continues: "colonial and quasi-colonial peoples are as a mass, poverty-stricken, with the lowest standards of living; they are for the most part illiterate and unacquainted with the systematized knowledge of modern science; and they have little or no voice in their own government, with a consequent lack of freedom of development."[522]

Now, in what sense are the relations in question relations of *domination*? The latter clause in the preceding passage offers a hint: these relations unilaterally obstruct colonized peoples' freedom of development. Or, as Du Bois writes in a passage I quoted above, "organized groups of men...are limiting with determination and unflagging zeal the development of other groups."[523] Here I suggest that we read the term "development" in the philosophical anthropological sense I sketched earlier in this chapter. "Development," in this sense, is synonymous with "advance," which – we already saw – refers to individual and group abilities to engage in subsistence, accumulation, education, and cultural activities. Colonial relations are relations of domination because they unilaterally impede colonized peoples' efforts to maintain group and individual life.

Du Bois's reflections on Dumbarton Oaks Conference proposals for a post-WWII international organization "to bring mankind into unified effort for cultural progress" further illustrate the role that domination plays in colonial relations.[524] According to these proposals – which eventually led to the establishment of the United Nations - Du Bois writes, "There will be at least 750,000,000 colored and black folk inhabiting colonies owned by White nations, who will have no rights that the White people of the world are bound to respect. Revolt on their part can be put down by military force; they will have no right of appeal to the Council or the Assembly; they will have no standing

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[522] Ibid., 230.

[523] Du Bois, *Dusk of Dawn*, 654.

[524] Du Bois, *The World and Africa*, 245.

before the International Court of Justice. Any dispute concerning their status is put beyond the jurisdiction of either the Council or the Assembly, unless it threatens world war."[525] Du Bois continues with some more general remarks highlighting the role that domination plays in this context:

> The substantial and permanent advance of a group cannot be allowed to depend on the philanthropy of a master if the desires and initiatives of its members are given no freedom, no democratic expression; and if, on the other hand, the will of the master is swayed by strong motives of selfish aggrandizement and gain how often this selfish interest has prevailed in the past is too well known to require reminder.[526]

Here, again, I suggest that we read "advance of a group" in the philosophical anthropological sense I sketched above. In this context, colonial "master[s]" disregard the desires and initiatives of colonized groups and, acting solely on their own motives and interests, constrain the latter's abilities to freely reproduce their own social lives - to subsist, accumulate, educate, and develop culture. Thus, Du Bois writes elsewhere, the latter's "land may be taken away, their social organization uprooted and changed; and the results may prove disastrous for the colony while yielding wealth for the dominating imperialistic country."[527] Colonial relations, in short, subject colonized peoples to "the philanthropy of masters who have historical and strong interests in preserving their present power and income."[528] Colonial efforts to maintain and enforce structured social relations are thus efforts to subject colonized peoples to domination for the sake of the accumulation of wealth and power.

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[525] Ibid., 248-249.

[526] Ibid., 249.

[527] W. E. B. Du Bois, "Africa Today," in Herbert Aptheker, ed., *Writings by W.E.B. Du Bois in Periodicals Edited by Others, Vol. 4, 1945–1961* (Millwood, N.Y: Kraus-Thomson Organization, 1982), 103.

[528] Du Bois, *The World and Africa*, 252.

To recap, social problems are, in the most general sense, conflicts between ideals and conditions which create difficulties for the social maintenance of human life. Du Bois's mid-20th century writings expand on this account of social problems by highlighting the *structural* dimension of these conflicts. On this expanded account, social conditions are produced and reproduced by a broader system of structured social relations of domination between groups. These structured social relations, in turn, are maintained and enforced by the most powerful social actors – those who have the disproportionate ability to influence and manage social relations. This latter point hints at the additional *agonistic* dimension of Du Bois's expanded account of social problems.

As we have seen, the structured social relations which reproduce social conditions are the continual social products of individual and group actions. The colonial "master[s]," as Du Bois calls them, actively maintain and enforce structured social relations of domination, thereby subjecting colonized peoples to poverty, ignorance, crime, and disease. The former population enjoys specific in the colonial world-system and are therefore materially and psychologically invested in the system's reproduction.[529] They have concrete interests in supporting that system, and they desire to support that system. Furthermore, their social position in this system shapes their ideals, which they act upon.[530] In other words, action-guiding ideals are themselves social products – functions of a system of structured social relations which shape local social conditions and, consequently, individual and group interests and desires. Social relations do not absolutely determine ideals, of course, but they do as a matter of sociohistorical tendency. As Du Bois puts it,

> it is possible that persons who have the advantage in any particular social organization
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> will, nevertheless, do the right thing, as far as they see it, and that the results of their

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[529] W.E.B. Du Bois, "The Freedom to Learn [1949]," in Herbert Aptheker, ed., *Writings by W.E.B. Du Bois in Periodicals Edited by Others, Vol. 4, 1945–1961* (Millwood, N.Y: Kraus-Thomson Organization, 1982), 134.

[530] Du Bois, "Colonialism," 238.

actions will inure to the common good. But it is even more probable that power and influence will mislead them and work for the disadvantage of the nation.[531]

Thus, those who enjoy specific advantages under a particular system of structured social relations tend to be socialized in such a way that they become invested in the reproduction of that system. Their action-guiding ideal, in short, becomes the reproduction of these structured social relations of domination.

Herein lies the agonistic dimension of social problems. If social problems are conflicts between ideals and conditions, and social conditions are reproduced by a system of structured social relations, then the ideals at issue here are ideals regarding structured social relations. In the context of the colonial system, "the White masters of the world" consciously or unconsciously possess, and act on, the ideal of maintaining and enforcing structured social relations of domination between themselves and the rest of the world.[532] The issue here, however, is that human beings tend to resist domination. People tend not to offer their spontaneous support to social relations that subject them to unnecessary poverty, ignorance, crime, and disease. They may *learn* to support these social relations, but their acceptance is never guaranteed. Total control of another human being is impossible. As Du Bois put it, "One of the vast paradoxes of human nature is that no matter how degraded people become, it is impossible to keep them down on a large scale and forever. Rebellion will certainly ensue."[533] Systems of domination, in other words, continually reproduce fundamentally incommensurable ideals. Those who derive advantages from their ability to dominate others tend to acquire the ideal of protecting and accumulating such advantages and, therefore, of maintaining and

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[531] Du Bois, "The Freedom to Learn," 134.

[532] Du Bois, *The World and Africa*, 11.

[533] Du Bois, *Color and Democracy*, 301.

enforcing the system of domination. Those who suffer as a result tend to cultivate oppositional ideals of overcoming, abolishing, revolutionizing, transforming, etc. the system of domination.

These fundamentally incommensurable ideals, in turn, generate further conflicts. Active efforts to resist domination constitute conditions which threaten dominators' ability to act on their own ideals of maintaining the system of domination. Dominators often respond by doubling down on their efforts to maintain that system. In so doing, they strive to undermine dominated groups' efforts and abilities to resist domination, thereby obstructing the latter's efforts to maintain group and individual life. From this perspective, social problems involve social struggles over action-guiding ideals regarding the control and management of the intergroup relations that shape local life-activities and produce and reproduce social conditions.[534]

How, then, do groups affect each other through their contact? On the systemic and agonistic account of social problems I have been developing, local social-reproductive practices are

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[534] In *Critique of Forms of Life*, Rahel Jaeggi offers an account of "forms of life" as "complex bundles (or ensembles) of social practices geared to solving problems that for their part are historically contextualized and normatively constituted." The Du Boisian conception I have been developing also treats problems as historically contextualized and normatively constituted. However, my discussion of the systemic and agonistic dimensions of social problems points to three differences from Jaeggi's conception. First, social problems, on my Du Boisian account, are social, not only in the sense that they involve conflicts between shared ideals and social conditions qua continual products of the coordinated actions of individuals and groups. They also involve conflicts between populations or groups. That is, this account affirms Du Bois's claim that "A man lives today not only his physical environment and in the social environment of ideas and customs, laws and ideals; but that total environment is subjected to a new socio-physical environment of other groups, whose social environment he shares but in part." In Jaeggi's terms, this Du Boisian conception focuses on conflicts between "forms of life." Jaeggi, in contrast, focuses primarily on conflicts between "forms of life" and the external environment. Second, this Du Boisian account emphasizes the that social struggle plays in creating and addressing social problems. As Daniel Loick argues, "Jaeggi...courts danger by neglecting the genuinely *political* aspect of forms of life" in that she "minimize[s] the obviously confrontational, polemical, and transgressive aspect of many initiatives and projects." Finally, I would argue that Jaeggi's account generally neglects the role that differential group power and domination play in the constitution of social problems and, in her terms, "forms of life." Although she states that "negotiating and adjusting is a constitutive moment of establishing and maintaining forms of life," she does not address the fact that social processes of negotiation and adjustment – of, in Du Bois's terms, social ideals, practices, and conditions in the face of social problems – involve many asymmetrical social relations. From my Du Boisian perspective, cultural power, among other social factors, plays a significant role in shaping individual and group efforts to shape social practices and address social problems. I hope to develop these claims in more detail in future research. Rahel Jaeggi, *Critique of Forms of Life* (Cambridge, MA and London, England: Harvard University Press, 2018), 52, 212, 111. W.E.B. Du Bois, *Dusk of Dawn*, in *Writings*, 652. Daniel Loick, "On the Politics of Forms of Life," in Amy Allen and Eduardo Mendieta, eds., *From Alienation to Forms of Life: The Critical Theory of Rahel Jaeggi* (University Park, Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2018), 122.

increasingly shaped by broader social relations of domination. Groups affect each other to the extent that they influence these social relations, thereby adjusting, enabling, and/or constraining local social practices and shaping social conditions. "Problematic" social groups thus become problems "for other social groups with whom they are in contact" in at least two senses.[535]

> (1) Dominated groups strive to subsist, accumulate, educate, and engage in cultural activities freely in the face of domination, thereby conflicting with dominators' direct or indirect efforts to unilaterally shape social relations and local life-activities.

> (2) Dominating groups strive to unilaterally shape social relations and local life-activities, thereby conflicting with dominated groups' efforts to freely subsist, accumulate, educate, and engage in cultural activities.

To conclude, I would like to return to a point I made earlier. I suggested that, for Du Bois, the conflict between ideals and conditions which undermine African American efforts to maintain individual and group life simultaneously functions to undermine *White* US American efforts to maintain individual and group life. The systemic and agonistic account of social problems I have been developing points towards one way to develop this claim. Efforts to unilaterally control social relations, constrain local life-activities, and shape local social conditions have similar practical implications for those who are, in some sense, similarly situated within the overarching social system, regardless of their avowed or ascribed racial identity. That is, people who share (1) a relative inability to control and manage social relations, (2) similar constraints on their local life-activities, and (3) similar social conditions are similarly impeded in their efforts to maintain group and individual life. In concrete terms, the "colonial economy frustrates and nullifies much of the reform effort within the more

[535] Outlaw, Jr., "W.E.B. Du Bois on the Study of Social Problems," 286-7.

progressive lands which own and control colonies,"[536] with corresponding effects on people living in these "more progressive lands." The next chapter develops these claims in the context of a Du Boisian account of White supremacist ideology.

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[536]W.E.B. Du Bois, "The Future of Europe in Africa [1942]" in Phil Zuckerman, ed., *The Social of W.E.B. Du Bois* (Thousand Oaks, California: Pine Forge Press, 2004), 87.

Chapter V

White Supremacist Ideology and the White Boomerang Effect

[A] system of human culture whose principle is the rise of one race on the ruins of

another is a farce and a lie.[537]

Without doubt, of all the dangerous weapons that civilized man has attempted to use

in order to advance human culture the secret mass lie is the most dangerous and the

most apt to prove a boomerang.[538]

Introduction

The previous chapter drew on W.E.B. Du Bois's mid-century works to develop a systemic

and agonistic account of social problems. This approach treats social problems as: (1) functions of a

system of structured social relations of domination; and (2) sites of ongoing social struggles over the

control and management of social relations; with (3) practical implications for all those who are

similarly situated in the broader social system. This chapter extends this critical conception of social

problems to reconstruct an account of White supremacist ideology from Du Bois's writings.

The first section argues that, for Du Bois, White supremacist culture provides an action-

guiding framework for identifying, interpreting, and resolving social problems. The second section

rearticulates the systemic and agonistic account of social problems to construct a notion of economic

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[537] W.E.B. Du Bois, "Jefferson Davis as a Representative of Civilization" [1890], in Nathan Irvin Huggins, ed., *Writings*, The Library of America (New York, N.Y: Literary Classics of the United States, 1986), 812.

[538] W.E.B. Du Bois, "The Shape of Fear" [1926], in Phil Zuckerman, ed., *The Social Theory of W.E.B. Du Bois*, (Thousand Oaks, California: Pine Forge Press, 2004), 61.

domination as a social problem. The third section explores Du Bois's analysis of poor White support for the Confederate elite during the Civil War and the overthrow of Reconstruction, as well as White workers' participation in the Red Summer of 1919, to make three related claims: (1) White supremacist culture has concealed elite White economic domination of working-class White people; (2) White supremacist practices have served as palliative means for coping with economic domination; (3) White supremacist practices have reinforced White elite economic domination of non-elite White people. The final section ties these claims together to argue that White supremacist culture has functioned as an ideology – that is, a constellation of social meanings and narratives that conceal and rationalize White elite domination of non-elite White people and guide palliative social practices which, in perpetuating White domination of people of color, simultaneously intensify non-elite White people's subjection to economic domination.

Although I made occasional reference to "elites" in previous chapters, the notion plays a more central role in this chapter. Before I begin, then, I would like to add a brief terminological note on my use of the terms "elite domination" and "elite White men." Previously, I cited communication theorist Christopher Cimaglio's definition of elites as "those whose decisions impact the lives of a significant number of people; those who can consistently communicate their views widely or to a select, powerful audience; and/or those with significant power, wealth, or professional credentials."[539] Here I would like to add that Cimaglio's definition draws on a rich, well-established tradition of critical elite theory in history and sociology. In general terms, this tradition has sought to identify, analyze, and critique the role that social hierarchy has played in shaping political, cultural, and economic changes in the United States. The basic idea, perhaps best articulated in C. Wright

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[539] Christopher Cimaglio, "Contested Majority: The Representation of The White Working Class in Us Politics from the 1930s to the 1990s" (Dissertation, January 1, 2018), 30-31. Available at https://repository.upenn.edu/edissertations/3006. See also Joe R. Feagin and Kimberley Ducey, *Elite White Men Ruling: Who, What, When, Where, and How* (London New York: Routledge, 2017).

Mills' classic *The Power Elite*, is that the concentration of wealth, power, and resources in the United States has historically conferred upon a small population, viz. the elite, a vastly disproportionate ability to make decisions that influence the lives of many other people.[540]

As critical elite theorists such as C. Wright Mills, William Domhoff, Martin Gilens, and Benjamin Page emphasize, the elite is a social class, that is, a relatively stable constellation of social positions maintained through a complex ensemble of laws, legitimating narratives, and social practices, rather than an aggregate of specific individuals.[541] In this regard, critical elite theorists do not assume a continuous, unbroken line of descent from, say, 19th century Confederate elites to 21st century Southern Republican elites. Although some individuals and families have been able to construct and maintain "dynasties" that have survived over generations, members of the elite class are subject to downward social mobility, social disgrace, etc.[542] Occasionally, non-elite members of society have had the opportunity to join the ranks of the elite. Despite some real opportunities for upward social mobility, and vulnerabilities to downward social mobility, however, US elites have historically been wealthy White men.[543] As Joe Feagin and Kimberley Ducey put it, White men have occupied "the loftiest apex of societal power and control" for centuries.[544] "This small ruling class," they continue, "holds exceptional social rank and privileges, and they have much more power than

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[540] C. Wright Mills, *The Power Elite* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

[541] G. William Domhoff, *The Power Elite and the State: How Policy Is Made in America*, Social Institutions and Social Change (New York: A. de Gruyter, 1990); Martin Gilens and Benjamin I. Page, "Testing Theories of American Politics: Elites, Interest Groups, and Average Citizens," *Perspectives on Politics* 12, no. 3 (September 2014): 564–81.

[542] Chuck Collins, Joe Fitzgerald, Helen Flannery, Omar Ocampo, Sopha Paslaski, Kalena Thomhave, "Silver Spoon Oligarchs: How America's 50 Largest Inherited-Wealth Dynasties Accelerate Inequalities," *Institute for Policy Studies*, June 16, 2021, https://ips-dc.org/report-americas-wealth-dynasties-2021

[543] Joe R. Feagin and Kimberley Ducey, *Elite White Men Ruling: Who, What, When, Where, and How* (London New York: Routledge, 2017).

[544] Ibid., 1.

non-elite members of society. Those in the top rank of the elite form a dominant oligarchy in which they, a very small minority of U.S. residents, rule over all others in society."[545] Joe Feagin elaborates on the disproportionately White male membership of the U.S. elite in a recent review of David Roediger's *Class, Race, and Marxism*.[546] I quote Feagin at length:

> There *never* was just a "capitalist class." That class of political-economic actors has always also been, at its very top, entirely or overwhelmingly white and male. Their racial and gender characteristics often inform their framing and actions as much or more than their class characteristics. This mostly white and male capitalist elite not only operates from an elite class framing of society, but also a white racist and male sexist/heterosexist one. The subsystems of class, racial, and gender oppression constantly reproduce, interrelate, and reinforce each other because the elite white men at the top mark the most powerful "intersection" in society.[547]

Although the current project focuses on the relationship between economic domination and white supremacy, I follow Feagin and Ducey in using the term "elite White men" throughout this chapter as a reminder that socioeconomic position and racialized identity have, in practice, been inextricably intertwined with gender identity and sexual orientation. Where I focus more narrowly on economic hierarchy in the United States, I also use the term "economic elites." Relatedly, I use the term "non-elite" to denote the class of individuals and families who generally lack the wealth, power, and resources to make decisions that affect the lives of many other people.

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[545] Ibid.

[546] Joe R. Feagin, "Beyond the Class-Race Binary," *Monthly Review* 70, no. 4 (2018), https://monthlyreview.org/2018/09/01/beyond-the-class-race-binary/.

[547] Ibid.

White Supremacist Culture is a Problem-Solving Framework

In his early (ca. 1894) essay, "The Afro-American," Du Bois criticizes three general approaches to addressing the legal, political, and economic conditions of African-descended US citizens following the Civil War.[548] The "Ricardean school" adopted an extreme laissez-faire approach towards recently enslaved African American people.[549] Proponents accepted the legal abolition of chattel slavery but rejected efforts to protect African American people from their former enslavers or provide them with the basic resources (land, tools, money) necessary for social reproduction.[550] African American people were to be left to "work out [their] own salvation by 'free competition' with the American freemen."[551] The problem with this approach, Du Bois points out, is that there can be no free competition under conditions of widespread social instability, overt White supremacy, and significant economic and political power imbalances between former enslavers and their recent captives.[552]

Du Bois then turns his attention to the "philanthropic school," which proposed somewhat more ambitious measures. Proponents believed that formerly enslaved people should be educated. They supported the legal recognition of African American rights, including the right to vote, as well

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[548] W.E.B. Du Bois, "The Afro-American," in Nahum Dimitri Chandler, ed., *The Problem of the Color Line at the Turn of the Twentieth Century: The Essential Early Essays* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2014), 33. Hereafter cited as "Du Bois, 'The Afro-American'." I use the term "early" here as a neutral (and rough) chronological descriptor, not to periodize Du Bois's work into "stages".

[549] Du Bois, "The Afro-American," 37.

[550] I borrow this usage of the term "enslavers" from historian and antiracist scholar Ibram X. Kendi, who uses it throughout his recent book *Stamped from the Beginning: The Definitive History of Racist Ideas in America*. Although he does not explicitly explain his usage of this term, I find it helpful for emphasizing the cruel agency of so-called slave masters during the antebellum period. It accents, in other words, the fact that people became (and become) masters only by violently imposing themselves upon others. See Ibram X. Kendi, *Stamped from the Beginning: The Definitive History of Racist Ideas in America* (New York, NY: Nation Books, 2016).

[551] Du Bois, "The Afro-American," 37.

[552] Ibid., 38.

as private charity efforts to address widespread poverty. This approach, too, had severe limitations, however. As Du Bois puts it, aspiring philanthropists "forgot the real weakness of his ['the Afro-American's'] situation, i.e., his economic helpless and dependence."[553] While their efforts were instrumental in improving social conditions for African American people, Du Bois says, they remained "half-hearted" insofar as they neglected this crucial economic dimension.[554] Persistent, widespread economic subjugation, Du Bois believed, ultimately undermined legal rights and rendered private charity efforts futile. As he would later argue, African American "political power could only have been permanently sustained by economic security – ownership of land, control of some capital and education."[555]

"Perplexed" by the fact that "the half-hearted efforts of two decades have not settled a social problem of the 250 years growth," Du Bois says, many White Americans turned to a school of thought which offered "quick, thorough, radical methods of 'settling' the problem."[556] Its mantra was simple: "[t]his is a White man's country."[557] Proponents of this school openly embraced White supremacist culture, viz. the constellation of action-guiding social meanings, narratives, and ideals organized around the conviction that White people constitute a superior race to which non-White people must submit. For these overt White supremacists, incommensurable and immutable human differences (of appearance, ancestry, morality, culture) rendered peaceful co-existence with African American people impossible. After all, they reasoned, Black people have never demonstrated the

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[553] Ibid., 38.

[554] Ibid.

[555] W.E.B. Du Bois, "The Negro and Social Reconstruction [1936]," in Herbert Aptheker, ed., *Against Racism: Unpublished Essays, Papers, Addresses, 1887- 1961* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1985), 108.

[556] Du Bois, "The Afro-American," 39.

[557] Ibid., 39.

ability to create culture or civilization. The only way forward, their story went, was for African American people to "yield before the all-conquering Anglo-Saxon" and be "transported, isolated or left to slow and certain extermination."[558] This, Du Bois says, was the dominant narrative regarding the legal, political, and economic conditions of African-descended US citizens at the turn of the century.

Du Bois proceeds to criticize this White supremacist narrative – which, as we now know, would guide and rationalize the emergence and consolidation of the Jim Crow system – on epistemological and pragmatic grounds. Epistemologically, the overt White supremacist assumes, despite countervailing evidence, that anti-Black prejudice "is a fixed and unchangeable fact," that African American people "made no appreciable advance" since emancipation, and that they have never contributed to culture and civilization.[559] More generally, the White supremacist culture that informed this narrative is based on the false proposition that human populations can be permanently and exhaustively categorized in simplistic hierarchical terms, i.e., good/bad, superior/inferior, slave/free.[560] This proposition, Du Bois warns, is not only "ludicrously untrue" but also "universally dangerous."[561]

The universal danger with this approach arises from its inadequate interpretation of complex social issues. White supremacist culture, Du Bois writes, "assumes, with one stroke of the pen, an answer to nearly every social question which this great problem presents."[562] In reality, the so-called Negro problem (more on this below) is complex, presenting several "social questions." In his

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[558] Ibid., 40.

[559] Ibid.

[560] W.E.B. Du Bois, "The Evolution of the Race Problem [1909]," in Philip S. Foner, ed., *W.E.B. Du Bois Speaks: Speeches and Addresses 1890 - 1919* (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1970), 206.

[561] Ibid.

[562] Du Bois, "The Afro-American," 40.

dogmatic commitment to this narrative, the White supremacist assumes that his interpretation accurately describes and evaluates a complex array of social issues. He thereby disregards "a mass of complicated social problems," interpreting them through a narrow White supremacist framework which reduces complex social, cultural, political, economic, and historical processes to matters of supposed racial inferiority.[563] The pragmatic issue here is that the overt White supremacist is himself implicated in this "mass of complicated social problems." These problems "lay before the nation."[564] "They are," in Du Bois's words, "living, growing social questions whose progeny will survive to curse the nation, unless we grapple with them manfully and intelligently."[565] They are, in other words, problems which affect all Americans – in different ways and to different degrees, to be sure - regardless of supposed racial differences. Inhibiting a proper understanding of these complex social problems, Du Bois implies, the White supremacist interpretation leads to misguided practical efforts to resolve them. The practical commitment to White supremacy, Du Bois says, is an attempt "to find some one radical remedy for all such distresses."[566] The implication here is that the White supremacist fails to adequately address these complex problems, thereby allowing them to persist and worsen, with practical implications for all Americans. This, Du Bois says, is a "dangerous mistake."[567]

Du Bois's analysis of the "mass of complicated social problems" wrapped up in the so-called Negro Problem would change over the course of his life. Towards the end of "The Afro-American," he says that the White supremacist narrative "veils" four other problems: America's moral hypocrisy,

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[563] Ibid., 43.

[564] Ibid.

[565] W. E. B. Du Bois, "The Study of the Negro Problems," in Nahum Dimitri Chandler, ed., *The Problem of the Color Line at the Turn of the Twentieth Century: The Essential Early Essays* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2014), 81.

[566] Du Bois, "The Afro-American," 43.

[567] Ibid.

widespread political ignorance, inadequate moral standards, and "unreasoning and unreasonable prejudice."[568] This was in keeping with his earlier, more liberal approach to White supremacy – according to which, to oversimplify, Du Bois believed that White supremacy was primarily a matter of contingent White racial prejudice and ignorance and chattel slavery-induced African American cultural backwardness.[569] Over the course of the early-to-mid 20th century, Du Bois would, by his own admission, correct for his ignorance of US labor history and arrive at the understanding that "the Color Problem and the Labor Problem" are "two sides of the same human tangle."[570]

For my present purposes, then, I will turn to Du Bois's mid-20th century writings, which place a greater emphasis on the relationship between systemic White supremacy and economic domination.[571] In so doing, I will explore several case studies to develop the general claim I draw from "The Afro-American" – namely, that White supremacist culture serves as an inadequate framework for interpreting social problems and leads to misguided practical efforts to resolve these problems, with far-reaching detrimental social consequences. Before I do so, however, I will clarify the specific conception of social problems that will inform my subsequent remarks.

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[568] Ibid., 43-46.

[569] I discuss this point at greater length in chapter three.

[570] W.E.B. Du Bois "Worlds of Color" [1925], in Herbert Aptheker, ed., *Writings by W.E.B. Du Bois in Periodicals Edited by Others. Volume 2, 1910-1934* (New York: Kraus-Thomson Organization Limited, 1982), 254. For Du Bois's retrospective reflection on his ignorance of labor history, which he describes as a form of "mental isolation," see W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Autobiography of W. E. B. DuBois; a Soliloquy on Viewing My Life from the Last Decade of Its First Century* (New York: International Publishers, 1968), 305.

[571] "Systemic White supremacy" refers to the interrelated culture and practices which constitute White supremacy as a sociopolitical system. On White supremacy as a sociopolitical system, see Charles W. Mills, "White Supremacy as Sociopolitical System," in *From Class to Race: Essays in White Marxism and Black Radicalism* (Lanham, Md: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003).

Social Problems

Du Bois's earliest systematic discussion of social problems occurs in his 1897 lecture "The Study of the Negro Problems."[572] As the title states, Du Bois was concerned with what was then known as "the Negro problems." For White supremacists such as Thomas Jefferson and Baptist missionary Hollis Read, there was really one "Negro problem," and it resulted from what they regarded as the unfortunate presence of African and African-descended peoples in the United States. According to their White supremacist dogma, inevitable White racial prejudice against the inferior Black population and incommensurable differences of ancestry, appearance, morality, and ability rendered peaceful co-existence between the races impossible. "Whites" and "Blacks" are inherently unequal, they believed, and any attempt to co-exist on equal terms would inevitably threaten "the White race," likely culminating in race war. The Negro problem, as they understood it, thus consisted in the need to mitigate the destructive effects of contact with an inferior race, including the potential danger of a race war. Jefferson and Read articulated the question this situation raised with racist paternalism: "What is to be done with African American people?"[573]

Du Bois had already challenged this dominant understanding of "the Negro problem" in an 1890 fragment entitled "Contribution to the Negro Problem." First, he pointed out that White racial prejudice was not natural or inevitable but the result "of artificial fostering by the laws of the land."[574] Second, he rejected Jefferson and Read's static and deterministic conception of racial difference as natural, hereditary, and unchanging. African American people did suffer from moral, intellectual,

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[572] W. E. B. Du Bois, "The Study of the Negro Problems," in Nahum Dimitri Chandler, ed., *The Problem of the Color Line at the Turn of the Twentieth Century: The Essential Early Essays* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2014), 77.

[573] I discuss this at greater length in chapter three.

[574] W.E.B. Du Bois, "Contributions to the Negro Problems," ca. 1890, available at: https://credo.library.umass.edu/view/full/mums312-b237-i084.

and cultural deficiencies, Du Bois believed at the time, but these were consequences of generations of chattel slavery and not fixed biological differences. "The Study of the Negro Problems," then, is Du Bois's attempt to propose and develop a comprehensive social-scientific and historical program for studying these two broad sets of "Negro Problems" (White racial prejudice and contingent African American inferiority). In rearticulating "the Negro problem," Du Bois developed a historical and philosophical anthropological conception of social problems.

Social problems, on Du Bois's view are, in the most general sense, conflicts between action-guiding ideals and social practices and conditions. For Du Bois, such conflicts are to be evaluated and deemed problematic in terms of their practical consequences. More specifically, conflicts between ideals and practices/conditions become social problems when they exert far-reaching detrimental effects on social reproduction (subsistence, accumulation, education, culture). In "The Study of the Negro Problems," Du Bois offers the example of a conflict between the ideal of universal suffrage and the presence of an ignorant voting population. Although he does not detail the negative social consequences of such a conflict, they are not difficult to imagine: an ignorant voting population could elect unqualified candidates to office. These unqualified officials could then inflict far-reaching damage with poor decisions regarding social policy.

Du Bois delivered "The Study of the Negro Problems" in 1897, when, as I have already mentioned, he adopted a broadly liberal view of White supremacy and, more broadly, society and social change. His mid-20th century writings, however, expand on this account of social problems by highlighting the structural dimension of these conflicts. On this account, social conditions are functions of structured social relations of domination between groups. Relations of economic domination, for example, constrain local life-activities, impeding social reproduction for affected populations, thereby producing and sustaining conditions of poverty, ignorance, crime, and disease. These structured social relations, in turn, are maintained and enforced by the most powerful social actors, viz.

178

those who have a disproportionate ability to control and adjust social relations – economic elites in the case of economic domination.

This latter point hints at the additional agonistic dimension of Du Bois's mid-20th century account of social problems. Subpopulations socialized under different conditions generally acquire different action-guiding ideals regarding structured social relations. These action-guiding ideals, however, often conflict. As different subpopulations strive to realize their ideals, they come into conflict with each other. The actions of one subpopulation present obstacles to the other subpopulation's efforts to realize their ideals and vice versa. In such cases, the subpopulations in question face a common social problem. Their experiences and interpretations of the social problem, however, differ depending on their social conditions and acquired action-guiding ideals. This leads to competing efforts to establish a dominant interpretation of the social problem and implement practical measures to address the problem. Social problems, in this context, are sites of social struggles over the interpretation, control, and management of social relations.

<div align="center">Economic Domination</div>

Du Bois implicitly mobilizes this structural and agonistic conception of social problems throughout his mid-20th century writings to analyze and critique the complex relationship between economic domination and systemic White supremacy. Economic domination plays a central role in Du Bois's thought by the late 1930s, if not earlier, when he comes to the view that economic activity exerts a "dominating influence" on human life.[575] As he put it in *Black Folk Then and Now*, "The basic activity which, past and present, has conditioned all other human activities is the necessity of

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[575] W.E.B. Du Bois, *Black Folk Then and Now: An Essay in the History and Sociology of the Negro Race* [1939], ed. Henry Louis Gates (Oxford: Oxford University Press, USA, 2007), 205. Hereafter cited as "Du Bois, *Black Folk Then and Now.*"

earning a living; of defending life and getting food, clothing and shelter."[576] Far from requiring a complex and controversial theory of history or human nature here, Du Bois's reasoning was quite straightforward.[577] Most people spend most of their time "earning a living" – and, I would add, recovering for the following day of work – "and much of their thought and dream goes to this.[578] Whatever then they do," he continues, "must necessarily be greatly, indeed overpoweringly influenced by matters of work, wage, and income."[579] The dominating influence of economic activity, according to Du Bois, is thus simultaneously practical – we spend most of our time working or recovering for work, leaving less time for other matters – and cultural – much of our "thought and dream" pertain to our present and future means of making a living.[580] The social meanings, values, and ideals we acquire and internalize, as well as our "non-economic" social practices, thus depend in large part on our economic activities.

Of course, we do not perform economic activities in a vacuum. Our efforts to make a living depend in various ways upon others' efforts to do the same. Individual, family, and community life-making endeavors are thus local instances of a complex web of economic practices, viz. "the

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[576] Ibid., 205.

[577] As Terry Eagleton puts it in his self-consciously "unfashionable" defense of "the base-superstructure doctrine," the claim that "material production" is the "crucial determinant" of other aspects of social life "is in one sense to do no more than state the obvious. For there is surely no doubt that this is what the vast majority of men and women throughout history have spent their time engaged on…The sheer struggle for material survival and reproduction…has tied up such enormous resources of human energy that we would surely expect to find its traces inscribed in the rest of what we do." Terry Eagleton, *Ideology: An Introduction* (London and New York: Verso, 1991), 82-83. I will not discuss "the base-superstructure doctrine" in this project. The point is simply that economic relations and practices have a significant impact on other relations and practices within society.

[578] Regarding the matter of "non-work" time as work-recovery time, see Theodor Adorno, "Free Time," in Jay Bernstein, ed., *The Culture Industry: Selected Essays on Mass Culture* (London: Routledge, 1991): 187 – 197.

[579] W.E.B. Du Bois, "The Negro Problems of the United States [1952]," https://credo.library.umass.edu/view/full/mums312-b202-i038, 2.

[580] I do not mean to draw a rigid, abstract distinction between culture and practice here. "Culture" here refers broadly to the widely shared meanings, values, narratives, attitudes, etc. through which human beings orient themselves in and navigate the world. These, of course, are always implicit (and occasionally explicit) in social practices.

economy."[581] Individual, family, and community abilities to make a living are dependent upon relative position and power within this broader web of practices. More specifically, as Du Bois argued, local efforts to make a living are determined in large part by relative economic power. Most people lack substantial decision-making power when it comes to determining the work that gets done, the production and distribution of goods, property ownership, income inequality, etc.[582] These decisions get made by economic elites, who mobilize their vastly disproportionate economic power to sustain economic systems that reproduce extreme wealth inequality, leaving a few "with more wealth than they can possibly use, while a vast number emerge with less than can decently support life."[583] As Du Bois suggests, concentrated economic power constrains local efforts to make a living and, in his words, "puts the majority of mankind into a slavery to the rest."[584] In other words, it leaves most people with little, if any, control over their own lives, and subjects them to the direct or indirect control of others. In short, economic domination constitutes a social problem for those subject to it.

According to Du Bois, the dominating influence of economic activity and, most importantly, economic elites on human life means that the organization of the economy and quality of economic relations between populations greatly impacts other social relations:

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[581] My understanding of economic activities and "the economy" is influenced in part by Rahel Jaeggi's recent work. In her effort to broaden the concept of economy, Jaeggi has offered a helpful way to think about economic practices as that subset of social practices that is "concerned with the satisfaction of the reproductive needs of society, the production and distribution of goods and services." Economic practices are fundamentally interconnected or entangled with other social practices and are always conceptually and normatively laden. Finally, they include but are not reducible to the narrow conception of economic activities and institutions that focuses on "maximizing utility in the market," "bringing about results in an instrumental fashion through labor," and "being able to divide the world along property relations." Rahel Jaeggi, "A Wide Concept of Economy," in Penelope Deutscher and Cristina Lafont, eds., *Critical Theory in Critical Times* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2017), 168, 168-173, 175.

[582] Du Bois, *Black Folk Then and Now*, 300.

[583] W. E. B. Du Bois, *Darkwater: Voices from Within the Veil* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Howe, 1920), 99.

[584] W.E.B. Du Bois, *Dusk of Dawn*, in Nathan Irvin Huggins, ed., *Writings*, The Library of America (New York, N.Y: Literary Classics of the United States, 1986), 654. Hereafter cited as "Du Bois, *Dusk of Dawn*."

the organization of industry determines how far we can have human equality and how we can avoid war, or to put it another way: the methods by which men earn a living are the foundation on which equality is based and so long and in so far as the mass of workers can earn a decent living, just so far they will have no valid reason to kill each other. Or turning this argument around: high incomes for the few and starvation wage for the many forms the basic inequality among men today; as long as it persists there will be race and class antagonisms and these will lead to war.[585]

Here Du Bois asserts that economic relations impose significant constraints on the development of other relations within society. To the extent that "industry" is organized in an undemocratic manner, so will broader social relations within and among populations. The persistence of economic domination, Du Bois claimed, ensured the persistence of "race antagonisms" and, in my terms, White supremacist culture and practice.[586] Thus, Du Bois writes in *Dusk of Dawn*, "The first point of attack" on White supremacy "is undoubtedly the economic."[587] He continues,

The progress of the White world must cease to rest upon the poverty and the ignorance of its own proletariat and of the colored world. Thus industrial imperialism

[585] W.E.B. Du Bois, "Economic Illiteracy," 1947, https://credo.library.umass.edu/view/full/mums312-b273-i076, 31.

[586] Du Bois did not, however, believe that the abolition of economic domination would guarantee the amelioration of "race antagonisms." The point is simply that White supremacy cannot be abolished without simultaneously addressing economic domination (and vice versa). Therein lies one sense in which "the Color Problem and the Labor Problem" are "two sides of the same human tangle." W.E.B. Du Bois, "Worlds of Color" [1925], in *Writings by W.E.B. Du Bois in Periodicals Edited by Others. Volume 2, 1910-1934*, ed. Herbert Aptheker (New York: Kraus-Thomson Organization Limited, 1982), 254. Du Bois also refers to this as "the modern economic paradox" in the chapter "Of Work and Wealth" from *Darkwater*. W.E.B. Du Bois, *Darkwater: Voices from within the Veil* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Howe, 1920), 90.

[587] Du Bois, *Dusk of Dawn*, 680.

must lose its reason for being and *in that way alone* can the great racial groups of the

world come into normal and helpful relation to each other.[588]

According to Du Bois, then, the abolition of White supremacist culture and practice requires, among

other things, the abolition of White elite economic domination of working-class White people.[589] Put

otherwise, White working-class subjection to economic domination contributes to the persistence

and prevalence of White supremacy. The reason for this, I propose, is that White supremacist cul-

ture and practice offer working-class White people means for explaining and coping with economic

domination qua social problem. The following section substantiates this claim through a discussion

Du Bois's analysis of poor White support for the Confederate elite during the Civil War and the

overthrow of Reconstruction, as well as White workers' participation in the Red Summer of 1919.

<div align="center">Case Studies</div>

Reconstruction

W.E.B. Du Bois's *Black Reconstruction in America* is both a scathing critique of White

supremacist historiography and an erudite revisionist history of "the part which Black folk played in

the attempt to reconstruct democracy in America."[590] This much should be obvious to anyone who

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[588] Ibid, emphasis added.

[589] The concept of *class* is, of course, highly contested. For the purposes of this chapter, I follow Du Bois in adopting a broadly Marxian conception of class as a social position constituted through social relations to means of production. From this perspective, contemporary society is divided "into two main classes – one of laborers without capital who must sell their labor, and the other of the owners of machines and materials who get their chief income not from their work, but from ownership of the products of labor." W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Negro and Social Reconstruction*, in Herbert Aptheker, ed., *Against Racism: Unpublished Essays, Papers, Addresses, 1887- 1961* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1985), 142. For a systematic discussion of the concept of *class*, see Erik Olin Wright, *Understanding Class* (London: Verso, 2015).

[590] http://www.webdubois.org/wdb-BlackReconst.html

so much as glances at the first page of the text. What is perhaps less obvious, however, is the fact that the critique articulated in this foundational Black radical text is also simultaneously directed against White supremacist-*capitalist* historiography. First, as Cedric Robinson argued, *Black Reconstruction* demonstrated that enslaved African laborers constituted a world-historical force that enabled the emergence of the capitalist world-system.[591] This much is certainly true, but Du Bois went further. One of his other, related aims in writing this book was to correct for the systematic absence of "efforts to explore or probe Reconstruction from the point of view of the laborers," *black and White*.[592] White supremacist capitalist historians had distorted the real history of the Civil War and its aftermath, Du Bois showed, erroneously characterizing the immediate postbellum period in terms of a "great movement for the self-assertion of the White race against the impudent ambition of degraded blacks, instead of, in truth, the rise of a mass of black and White laborers."[593] In so doing, he also offered an unprecedented historical study of poor White Southerners, "almost a forgotten mass of men."[594]

Du Bois's study of poor White Southerners focused on the paradoxical role most played during the Civil War and Reconstruction periods. On the one hand, many poor White Southerners

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[591] Cedric J. Robinson, *Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 199-202. See also Lewis Gordon, "An Africana Philosophical Reading of Du Bois's Political Thought," in *A Political Companion to W.E.B. Du Bois*, ed. Nick Bromell (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 2018), 65. For a recent historical discussion of the broader Reconstruction period as a world-historical event – or, in the author's words, "a particularly influential instance in a number of interrelated worldwide processes of the nineteenth century," see Andrew Zimmerman, "Reconstruction along the Global Color Line," in James S. Humphreys, ed., *Interpreting American History: The New South* (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 2017), 37.

[592] W.E.B. Bois, *Black Reconstruction in America, 1860-1880* (New York, NY: Free Press, 1998), 383. Hereafter cited as "Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction*."

[593] Du Bois, *Darkwater*, 137. As historian Andrew Zimmerman put it, Du Bois situated emancipation "in the context of the labor movement," thereby "insert[ing] it in a broader democratic struggle of workers, White and black, enslaved and free. Andrew Zimmerman, "Reconstruction along the Global Color Line," in James S. Humphreys, ed., *Interpreting American History: The New South* (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 2017), 43.

[594] Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction*, 26. See also Ibid., 721.

participated in the general strike, fleeing Confederate states for Union camps during the war, thereby withdrawing their support for the Confederacy and contributing to its eventual loss.[595] On the other hand, most poor White Southerners did fight for the Confederacy, raising a difficult question. As Du Bois put it,

> five million non-slaveholding poor White farmers and laborers sent their manhood
> by the thousands to fight and die for a system that had degraded them equally with
> the black slave. Could one imagine anything more paradoxical than this whole situa-
> tion?[596]

Although we could question Du Bois's claim that the Confederacy degraded poor White laborers *equally* with enslaved Black people, the Southern elite certainly mobilized their immense political, economic, and cultural power to subject most of the White Southern population to conditions of abject poverty, ignorance, and disease.[597] White Southern elites were responsible for the "degradation" of poor Whites. Knowledge of this sociological fact, Du Bois implies, would lead one to expect that many more poor Whites would withdraw support for the Confederacy. Why, then, would so many sacrifice themselves for their oppressors?

The paradox only intensified after the war. On the one hand, the general strike led to the emergence of the Freedmen's Bureau, a potential "dictatorship by which the landowner and the capitalist were to be openly and deliberately curbed, and which directed its efforts in the interest of a black and White labor class."[598] As Black-led Reconstruction governments granted poor Whites

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[595] Ibid., 64, 81.

[596] Ibid., 29.

[597] Ibid., 26-27.

[598] Ibid., 219.

185

the right to vote, hold office, and receive an education, some began "to conceive of an economic solidarity between White and black workers."[599] Here was an unprecedented opportunity to construct a multiracial democracy (political, cultural, economic) and prevent the emergence of "what promised to become the greatest plutocratic government which the world had ever known."[600] This, of course, did not happen.

Instead of recognizing and seizing this opportunity, Du Bois says, most poor Whites participated in the "armed revolt," "organized by the planters," which overthrew Reconstruction and paved the way for Jim Crow, late 19th century colonial imperialism, the Great Depression, and World War I.[601] Thus, Du Bois writes, "the Poor White South became the instrument by which democracy in the nation was done to death, race provincialism deified, the world delivered to plutocracy."[602] How could this happen? Du Bois rearticulates the paradox, offering what might appear to be a simple answer:

> although ignorant and impoverished, maimed and discouraged, victims of a war fought largely by the poor White for the benefit of the rich planter, [poor White Southerners] sought redress by demanding unity of White against black, and not unity of poor against rich, or of worker against exploiter.[603]

At first glance, this paragraph would seem to offer a straightforward and familiar explanation for poor Whites' allegiance to Southern elites after the war: "unity of White against black." White

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[599] Ibid., 131.

[600] Ibid., 239, 353.

[601] Ibid., 131, 30, 631, 634-635.

[602] Ibid., 241.

[603] Ibid., 130, emphasis added.

supremacy, in other words, prevented poor Whites from recognizing and pursuing the radical democratic possibilities of Reconstruction.

Indeed, but the question remains: how? What accounted for the appeal of White supremacist culture in this context? Centrally focused on these, among other questions, Du Bois points to subtler sociological and social epistemological factors at play during this period. Poor Whites, Du Bois says, "sought redress" for their poverty, ignorance, physical and emotional suffering – consequences of economic domination - "by demanding unity of White against black." In other words, they faced social conditions which they regarded as undesirable and wrong. They set out to ameliorate these conditions and settled on White supremacy as the means to doing so. Du Bois thus suggests that White supremacist culture appealed to many Civil War-era working-class White people in part because it offered them an action-guiding explanation for the consequences of economic domination, viz. the illicit advances of incorrigible natural enemies. Wherever White people were suffering, the White supremacist narrative had it, it was because Black people (and other people of color) were refusing to "stay in their place."

Of course, that explanation was not only morally obscene but also inadequate. Du Bois's use of the subordinating conjunction "although" implies the judgment that working-class White people were mistaken in demanding racial unity as the solution to their social problem. Their social conditions were the consequence of systematic economic domination, not the presence of a formally free African American population. The real solution to their suffering, Du Bois implies, would have been multiracial class unity and struggle against planters, landholders, and industrial capitalists. Unfortunately, however, poor Whites "did not yet realize" the "truth" that, as Civil War-era Massachusetts Senator Wilson put it, "the man who is the enemy of the black laboring man is the enemy of the

White laboring man the world over."[604] According to Du Bois, then, working-class White people were mistaken in turning to White supremacy as a solution to the problem of economic domination.

This raises a question: how could many working-class White people be mistaken in this manner? How could they mistake White supremacy as a solution to economic domination? Here Du Bois emphasizes that White supremacist culture obscured the reality of elite White economic domination throughout the 19th century, and especially during and after the Civil War. That is, as I discussed above, narratives of innate White superiority/non-White inferiority presented Black people as the agents responsible for the sufferings of working-class White people. In doing so, they diverted attention away from the elite White men who in fact made the political-economic decisions which detrimentally impacted the lives of working-class White people. In this regard, White supremacist culture concealed economic domination as such.

This was especially true during the Civil War, when, Du Bois notes, extreme class inequalities became more apparent as Confederate elites escaped military service. With "intense and growing dissatisfaction," many poor Whites increasingly resented a "rich man's war and the poor man's fight."[605] Thus, Du Bois writes, "it was necessary during these critical times to insist more than usual that slavery was a fine thing for the poor White."[606] And so "it became the fashion to pat the disfranchised poor White man on the back and tell him after all he was White and that he and the planters had a common object in keeping the White man superior."[607] As Du Bois indicates, this narrative of shared White superiority predated the Civil War, but it did intensify with the demand for a massive

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[604] Ibid., 217.

[605] Ibid., 81.

[606] Ibid.

[607] Ibid.

wartime mobilization of the disproportionately poor White Southern population. Once again, White supremacist culture offered working-class White people an explanation for their suffering.

Historian Nancy Isenberg's recent work corroborates Du Bois's claim. Classism was a central and overt feature of Southern elite culture prior to the Civil War, Isenberg shows. Southern planters inherited aristocratic English disdain for the poor, and generally regarded poor Whites as dispensable degenerates and human "rubbish."[608] In her novel *Dred*, for example, Harriet Beecher Stowe depicted – accurately, according to Isenberg - Southern planters' opinions about poor Whites, neatly, if obscenely, captured in the declaration that "there ought to be hunting parties got up to chase them down, and exterminate 'em, just as we do rats."[609] "Many planters," Isenberg writes, "loathed poor Whites for their criminal activity, and especially the role they played alongside slaves in the trafficking of stolen goods."[610]

On Isenberg's telling, narratives of poor White degeneracy declined with the outbreak of the Civil War, when Southern leaders strove to "create a revolutionary ideology that concealed the deep divisions that existed among [the Confederacy's] constituent states" in order to mobilize popular support for the war effort.[611] Among the many regional differences within and among Southern states and populations, extreme wealth inequality posed perhaps the greatest threat to the Southern ruling class, prompting one Confederate author to warn slaveholders of possible "class war" with non-slaveholders.[612] According to Isenberg, "many secessionists viewed nonslaveholders" – who constituted

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[608] Nancy Isenberg, *White Trash* (New York: Viking, 2016), 148, 150.

[609] Ibid., 148.

[610] Ibid., 149.

[611] Ibid., 156.

[612] Ibid., 381, fn. 23.

the vast majority of the Southern population – "as the sleeping enemy within."[613] Thus, Confederate leaders strove to "redirect the hostility of the South's own underclass, the nonslaveholders, many of whom were in uniform."[614] They did this by downplaying the reality of extreme class inequalities within the South and appealing to the role that slavery had played in elevating poor White people "by ensuring their superiority over blacks."[615] According to antebellum Confederate elites such as Jefferson Davis (Mississippi senator before the war), chattel slavery enabled the elimination of class hierarchy within the Southern White population such that "no White man, in a slaveholding community, was the menial servant of anyone."[616] By appealing to Whites' racialized social status as supposed superiors to people of color, Confederate elites diverted attention away from extreme class inequalities within the South. Thus, appeals to innate White superiority/non-White inferiority obscured economic domination and shored up broader popular support for the war.

This narrative of innate White superiority and a shared interest in enslaving (legally or otherwise) Black people continued to obscure economic domination after the war, when, Du Bois writes, it "became a chief ingredient in the division of the working class in the Southern States."[617] Not only had it been a central feature of the culture into which Whites of all classes were socialized; but the war had disastrous economic consequences for White Southerners of all classes, creating material incentives to continue mobilizing this narrative. The general strike, Emancipation Proclamation,

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[613] Ibid., 161. As Du Bois notes, "Seven per cent of the total population of the South in 1860 owned nearly 3 million of the 3,953,696 slaves. There was nearly as great a concentration of ownership in the best agricultural land. This meant that in a country predominantly agricultural, the ownership of labor, land and capital was extraordinarily concentrated." *Black Reconstruction*, 32.

[614] Isenberg, *White Trash*, 159.

[615] Ibid., 157.

[616] Jefferson Davis, quoted on Ibid.

[617] Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction*, 80.

and Thirteenth Amendment stripped planters of their captive labor force, thereby eliminating the source of their livelihood and profits and sending them into a mad scramble to "restore fatal losses of capital and investment."[618] They did retain possession of their remaining capital in land, but its value plummeted with the collapse of the agrarian slave-economy.[619] Similarly, poor Southern Whites lost one of the only paths towards social mobility available to them. Although labor competition with enslaved African American people excluded poor Whites from most work throughout the 19th century, some were able to make a living as "overseer, slave driver, and member of the patrol system" during the antebellum period.[620] These opportunities, too, vanished with the collapse of the agrarian slave-economy, leaving a population of "ignorant, muddled and bewildered White men who had been disinherited of land and labor and fought a long battle with sheer subsistence, hanging on the edge of poverty, eating clay and chasing slaves" "absolutely at sea."[621]

The Civil War thus "brought anarchy in the basic economic activities," spurning planters, former enslavers, and poor Whites into a chaotic frenzy to restore old methods of making a living.[622] The problem, of course, was that the old methods no longer enjoyed the privilege of legal sanction To make matters worse for Southern elites, Reconstruction governments harbored the potential of an unprecedented multiracial labor movement which threatened to strip planters of their land and reduce their disproportionate political power.[623] Committed to the old ways, impoverished planters and former enslavers embarked on what Du Bois characterizes as a continuation of civil war,

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[618] Ibid., 671, 346.

[619] Ibid., 605, 586, 671.

[620] Ibid., 12.

[621] Ibid., 346-347, 130.

[622] Ibid., 585.

[623] Ibid., 591.

resoting to deception and overt violence in an effort to restore as much of their antebellum monopoly on political and economic power as possible.[624] Most important in this regard was their power over other human beings. Planters throughout the South thus aimed to retain control over their former enslaved laborers, striving to drive them "back towards slavery."[625]

This continuation of war, as Du Bois describes it, required the ongoing mobilization of the broader Southern White population. Members of the Southern ruling class thus continued their appeals to innate White superiority. Elite and poor Whites shared an interest in stifling the social, political, and economic advance of formerly enslaved people, they argued. These appeals further obscured the realities of elite White economic domination to neutralize the nascent interracial labor movement. Du Bois had already made this point in an early (1911) article, "The Economics of Negro Emancipation in the United States."[626] The overthrow of Reconstruction had been explained as "simply the natural recoil against a too wide granting of the suffrage in the past," or what we today might call "White backlash."[627] "This," Du Bois wrote, "is only partially true."[628] What this explanation misses, Du Bois points out, is the political economy of that backlash. Powerful economic actors

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[624] Ibid., 670.

[625] Ibid.

[626] W.E.B. Du Bois, "The Economics of Negro Emancipation in the United States" [1911], in Herbert Aptheker, ed., *Writings by W.E.B. Du Bois in Periodicals Edited by Others. Volume 2, 1910-1934*, (New York: Kraus-Thomson Organization Limited, 1982).

[627] Ibid., 57. For recent discussions of "White backlash," see Roger Hewitt, *White Backlash and the Politics of Multiculturalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Matthew W. Hughey, "White Backlash in the 'Post-Racial' United States," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 37, no. 5 (April 16, 2014): 721–30; Marisa Abrajano, *White Backlash: Immigration, Race, and American Politics* (Princeton: University Press, 2015); Vann R. Newkirk II, "Five Decades of White Backlash," *The Atlantic*, January 15, 2018, https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2018/01/trump-massive-resistance-history-mlk/550544/; George Yancy, *Backlash: What Happens When We Talk Honestly about Racism in America* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2018); Lawrence Glickman, "How White Backlash Controls American Progress," *The Atlantic*, May 21, 2020, https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2020/05/White-backlash-nothing-new/611914/.

[628] Ibid.

sought to prevent the emergence and consolidation of a multiracial working-class movement, and

their primary weapon in this battle was White supremacy. Thus, Du Bois writes of Jim Crow:

> The new disfranchisement is in the main a master stroke of concentrated capital
>
> against labour and an attempt *under the cover of racial prejudice* to take a backward
>
> step in the organization of labour such as no modern nation would dare to take in
>
> the broad daylight of present economic thought.[629]

White racial prejudice, enabled and sustained by the broader White supremacist culture, concealed

a systematic political-economic effort on the part of elite White men to maintain as much control

over the multiracial labor force – including, of course, White laborers – as possible.[630] Du Bois em-

phasizes this point throughout *Black Reconstruction*, noting, for example, that while disfranchise-

ment directly targeted and eliminated "the black labor vote," White supremacist appeals "secure[d]

domination over the White labor vote, and thus the oligarchy that ruled the South before the war

would be in part restored to power."[631] White supremacist culture served the essential function of

concealing these relations of domination. Du Bois emphasizes this in his discussion of "the strategy"

of North Carolina political elites after the war: "to unite all Whites against Negroes on a basis of race

prejudice and mob law. Thus "under 'race' they *camouflaged* a dictatorship of land and capital over

black labor and indirectly over White labor."[632] Although that claim appears in Du Bois's discussion

of North Carolina, he makes the same point in a powerful passage from the chapter "Looking

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[629] Ibid., emphasis added.

[630] Here I take "White racial prejudice" to refer to a complex of habitual, negative attitudes towards, opinions of, and affective reactions to people of color. Individuals who display White racial prejudice do so insofar as they have internalized the widely shared meanings, values, and narratives constitutive of White supremacist culture. For the purposes of this chapter, the core element of White supremacist culture in this regard is the conviction that White people constitute a superior race to which non-White people must submit.

[631] Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction*, 428-9.

[632] Ibid., 535, emphasis added.

Backward," which offers a general discussion of Southern planters' postbellum efforts to "substitut[e] for the individual ownership of slaves, a new state of serfdom of black folk":

> It *seemed* after the war immaterial to the poor White that profit from the exploitation of black labor continued to go to the planter. He *regarded* the process as the exploitation of black folk by White, *not of labor by capital*. When, *then*, he faced the possibility of being himself compelled to compete with a Negro wage worker, *while both were the hirelings of a White planter*, his whole soul revolted. He turned, *therefore*, from war service to guerilla warfare, particularly against Negroes.[633]

White supremacist culture, Du Bois suggests, distorted working-class Whites' interpretation of the postbellum political economy.[634] Although they were well aware of labor competition with Black workers, their investment in the myth of innate White superiority and Black inferiority prevented them from recognizing the fact that "profit from the exploitation of black labor" did indeed involve the exploitation of labor by capital, and that they were on the side of labor ("both were the hirelings of a White planter"). Indeed, elsewhere in *Black Reconstruction*, Du Bois says that "the poor White...never *regarded* himself as a laborer, or as part of any labor movement."[635] Here, then, Du Bois reiterates the previous point about how White supremacist culture "camouflaged a dictatorship of labor and capital."[636]

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[633] Ibid., 131, emphasis added.

[634] "Political economy" here refers broadly to the complex, dynamic relationship between politics and economy. More precisely, political economy is "the domain of the objectives of individuals and groups within the polity and the internally structured constraints, posed by the material sphere, to the attainment of those objectives." The objectives in question here are those pertaining to "the provision and utilization of material resources." Ivano Cardinale and Roberto Scazzieri, "Political Economy: Outlining a Field," in Ivano Cardinale and Roberto Scazzieri, eds., *The Palgrave Handbook of Political Economy* (New York, NY: Springer Berlin Heidelberg, 2018), 1, 2.

[635] Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction*, 131, emphasis added.

[636] Ibid., 535.

Du Bois's use of "then" and "therefore" in the above passage then draws a causal relationship between White supremacist culture and practice in this context. In concealing elite White economic domination, White supremacist culture guided social practices accordingly. The confluence of poor Whites' distorted interpretation of the Southern political economy and their exposure to severe economic competition with Black laborers led them to engage in "guerilla warfare" and anti-Black terrorism. Their belief in innate White superiority did not alter the reality of their economic subjection and, therefore, their disproportionate vulnerability to poverty (relative to planters who retained control of vast tracts of land and, in many cases, a captive labor force). White supremacist culture did, however, guide practical measures for coping with economic domination. Du Bois continues, adding that "the poor White"

> joined eagerly secret organizations, like the Ku Klux Klan, which fed his vanity by making him co-worker with the White planter, and gave him a chance to maintain his race superiority by killing and intimidating "niggers"; and even in secret forays of his own, he could drive away the planter's black help, leaving the land open to White labor. Or he could murder too successful freedmen.[637]

They might have been poor and vulnerable to the consequences of economic decisions made by White elites, but the law (or lack thereof) granted them one of the few opportunities they had to exercise some control over their environment: intimidating and murdering Black people with impunity. This, of course, worked for planters, who were intent on controlling Black people as a source of cheap and, if possible, free labor. As Du Bois points out, cooperation with planters in this terroristic endeavor also served the social psychological function of maintaining and reinforcing a sense of White superiority among working-class White people. First, it made them "co-workers" with wealthy,

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[637] Ibid., 131.

powerful planters, thereby elevating their social status. Second, it allowed them to assert their superiority through indiscriminate murder and intimidation.

Working-class White people could also eliminate Black people qua labor competitors in the process, thereby creating some economic opportunities for themselves. This enabled them to improve their standard of living at the expense of Black people, but it did not change the structured social relations of domination which ensured that they remained laborers, in Du Bois's words, "enslaved by poverty."[638] They remained, in other words, subjects of economic domination, captives of "a dictatorship of land and capital" committed to the perpetual accumulation of profit rather than the satisfaction of needs.[639] White supremacist culture thus guided practices which offered poor Whites palliative correctives for their subjection to economic domination.

As the preceding discussion suggests, White supremacist culture was effective and appealing, in part, because it offered working-class White people an explanation for interracial labor competition with Black workers – an explanation which, to some degree, worked. Working-class White people were indeed able to secure a relative competitive advantage at the expense of Black people through their engagement in White supremacist practices. This was not only true after the Civil War, when, Du Bois explains, Southern elites secured the White labor vote "by throwing White and black labourers so far as possible into rival competing groups and making each feel that the one was the cause of the other's troubles."[640] Indeed, Du Bois identifies interracial labor competition as a significant factor in the reproduction of systemic White supremacy in the United States throughout the

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[638] Ibid., 346.

[639] Ibid., 535.

[640] W.E.B. Du Bois, "The Economics of Negro Emancipation in the United States" [1911], in *Writings by W.E.B. Du Bois in Periodicals Edited by Others. Volume 2, 1910-1934*, ed. Herbert Aptheker (New York: Kraus-Thomson Organization Limited, 1982), 59.

19th and early 20th centuries.[641] During the antebellum period, Du Bois writes, "the Negroes were part of a group of millions of workers who were slaves by law, and whose competition kept White labor out of the work of the South and threatened its wages and stability in the North."[642] Here was a structural, economic problem: the ensemble of interrelated social relations and practices that constituted chattel slavery posed a real economic threat to White people who lacked the means to purchase and enslave human beings and were unable to find work assisting enslavers (as overseers, slave drivers, patrollers). To put it simply, it undermined their efforts to make a living. White supremacist culture, however, concealed this structural cause of labor competition. As Du Bois put it,

> The immediate competition *became open and visible because of racial lines and racial philosophy*...while the ultimate and overshadowing competition of free and slave labor was *obscured and pushed into the background.*[643]

White laborers thus interpreted labor competition with captive African American laborers in terms of race - "in the sense of great, separate, pure breeds of men differing in attainment, development, and capacity" rather than racialized social structure and political economy.[644] More precisely, Du

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[641] Du Bois discusses interracial labor competition of the 19th century on *Black Reconstruction*, 18-19, 20, 22, 28, 130, 700-701. He discusses interracial labor competition of the early 20th century in the chapter "Of Work and Wealth" from *Darkwater: Voices from within the Veil* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Howe, 1920), 94.

[642] Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction*, 19.

[643] Ibid., 22, emphasis added.

[644] W.E.B. Du Bois, *Darkwater*, 98. Further discussion of the metaphysics of race goes beyond the scope of this chapter. Suffice it to say, for my present purposes, that Du Bois maintained that biological races in the above sense do not exist. See also W.E.B. Du Bois, *Black Folk Then and Now*, 1. For recent discussions of the metaphysics of race, see Joshua Glasgow, Sally Haslanger, Chike Jeffers, and Quayshawn Spencer, *What is Race? Four Philosophical Views* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019). For discussions of Du Bois's understanding of race, see Anthony Appiah, "The Uncompleted Argument: Du Bois and the Illusion of Race," *Critical Inquiry* 12 (1985): 21-37; Lucius Outlaw, "'Conserve' Races? In Defense of W.E.B. Du Bois," in *W.E.B. Du Bois on Race and Culture: Philosophy, Politics, and Poetics*, ed. Bernard W. Bell, Emily R. Grosholz, and James B. Stewart (New York: Routledge, 1996), 15-38; Tommy L. Lott, "Du Bois on the Invention of Race," *Philosophical Forum* 24 (1992-1993): 166-87; Robert Gooding-Williams, "Outlaw, Appiah, and Du Bois's 'The Conservation of races,'" in *W.E.B. Du Bois on Race and Culture: Philosophy, Politics, and Poetics*, ed. Bernard W. Bell, Emily R. Grosholz, and James B. Stewart (New York: Routledge, 1996), 39-56; Paul C. Taylor, "Appiah's Uncompleted Argument: W.E.B. Du Bois and the Reality of Race," *Social Theory and Practice*

Bois suggests, White laborers socialized into White supremacist culture failed to recognize the soci-

ohistorical and political causes underlying labor competition. Here, in short, was a distorted inter-

pretation of political economy – one which identified real consequences (labor competition) but

misconstrued the causes. The result was a widespread, racialized fear of African American people

which all-too-often translated into anti-Black terrorism.[645]

Here, again, Du Bois suggests that, in providing White workers with a distorted interpretation

of labor competition, White supremacist culture guided and rationalized White supremacist prac-

tices which served as palliative solutions to the structural economic problem. Du Bois continues,

noting that "[t]his situation, too, made extraordinary reaction, led by the ignorant mob and fomented

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26 (2000): 103-128; Chike Jeffers, "The Cultural Theory of Race: Yet Another Look at Du Bois's 'The Conservation of Races,'" *Ethics* 123, no. 3 (2013): 403–26.

I follow Tommie Shelby and Lawrence Blum in understanding racialization as, in Blum's words, "the treating of groups as if there were inherent and immutable differences between them; *as if* certain somatic characteristics marked the presence of significant characteristics of mind, emotion, and character; and *as if* some were of greater worth than others."

See Tommie Shelby, "Ideology, Racism, and Critical Social Theory," *The Philosophical Forum* 34, no. 2 (June 2003), 169; Lawrence Blum, *"I'm Not a Racist, But . . .": The Moral Quandary of Race* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2002), 147. "Racialized social structure and political economy" in the above context thus refers to a social structure and political economy which are constituted, in part, through practices of racialization in Blum's sense of the term.

[645] *Black Reconstruction*, 28. In making these claims, Du Bois echoes the pioneering late 19th and early 20th centuries work of Ida B. Wells, who refuted the racist notion that lynching was a reaction to Black male assaults on White women. Political scientist Megan Ming Francis summarizes Wells's findings: "Worried about being left behind in the industrial revolution taking place in the North, Whites in the post-Reconstruction South needed cheap labor and deeply resented economic competition from African Americans. Wells's writings reveal it was this volatile mix that fueled the increase of lynchings and mob violence." Megan Ming Francis, "Ida B. Wells and the Economics of Racial Violence," *Items: Insights from the Social Sciences*, January 24, 2017, https://items.ssrc.org/reading-racial-conflict/ida-b-wells-and-the-economics-of-racial-violence/. Contemporary economic historians have also corroborated these claims. Summarizing the implications of his 2017 *Explorations in Economic History* study, Cornelius Christian writes, "violent events, like lynchings, can be motivated by labour market concerns and their effects can persist through time. They further indicate that economic shocks can lead to racist violence." Cornelius Christian, "Lynchings, labour, and cotton in the US south: A reappraisal of Tolnay and Beck," Cornelius Christian, *Explorations in Economic History* 66 (2017), 116. For a thorough review of recent historical literature on lynching, including studies of the relationship between lynching and economic competition, see Sarah L. Silkey, "Lynching and Racial Violence in the New South," in James S. Humphreys, ed., *Interpreting American History: The New South* (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 2017): 81 – 111.

by authority and privilege."[646] He reiterates this connection between White supremacist culture, political economy, and White supremacist mob violence in a remarkable passage from the chapter "Back Toward Slavery." Reflecting on the White supremacist terrorism that helped overthrow Reconstruction and establish the Jim Crow System, Du Bois asks, "How is it that men who want certain things done by brute force can so often depend upon the mob?"[647] The answer, Du Bois says, is the fear "of losing their jobs, being declassed, degraded, or actually disgraced; of losing their hopes, their savings, their plans for their children; of the actual pangs of hunger, of dirt, of crime."[648] Thus, Du Bois implies, the "human, honest nucleus" of the White mob copes with fears of downward social mobility and impoverishment, consequences of an economic system of domination predicated on the competitive accumulation of private profit to the neglect of human needs and well-being, through racialized violence.[649] Rather than recognize and address the structural causes of labor competition, downward social mobility, and impoverishment, poor Southern Whites and successive generations of White European immigrants, socialized into and guided by White supremacist culture, resorted to overt violence to reduce and, where possible, eliminate the competition.[650]

It is important to note that Du Bois did not theorize labor competition as a mechanical feature of an abstract economic structure operating behind the backs of social actors. In fact, he explicitly criticized such "sweeping mechanistic interpretations," writing of Charles and Mary Beard's *The Rise of American Civilization*, for example, that "[o]ne reads…with a comfortable feeling that

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[646] Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction*, 22.

[647] Ibid., 678.

[648] Ibid.

[649] Ibid.

[650] W.E.B. Du Bois, "Marxism and the Negro Problem [1933]," in *The Seventh Son: The Thought and Writings of W.E.B. Du Bois, Vol. II*, ed. Julius Lester (New York: Random House, 1971), 293.

nothing right or wrong is involved. Manufacturing and industry develop in the North; agrarian feudalism develops in the South. They clash, as winds and waters strive."[651] Such accounts leave "no room for the real plot of the story," Du Bois writes, for they neglect human agency, responsibility, virtues, ideals, suffering, and struggles, matters which he believed must factor into any attempt to arrive at accurate, detailed evaluation- and action-guiding accounts of human life and action.[652]

Du Bois thus emphasized the active role that White capitalists played in creating and sustaining labor competition, exploiting fears of poverty, hunger, and downward social mobility for their own profit. "[T]he exploiting capitalist, as he put it in a 1910 piece, "transmute[s] race prejudice into the coin of the realm" by threatening White laborers that he will replace them with Black laborers (or vice versa) to maximize profits.[653] "This," Du Bois continued, "leads each class to regard the other as the chief cause of low wages and unfair treatment."[654] The capitalist employer had (and has) the power to hire and fire at will, without regard for his employee's needs. This basic relation of domination, Du Bois implies, enabled the White capitalist's efforts to exploit interracial labor competition, encouraging reactionary and palliative anti-Black solutions to a complex socioeconomic problem. While reactionary White workers certainly exercised some degree of agency, and therefore held some degree of responsibility for their reactions to interracial labor competition, then,

> [t]he deeper, bloodier guilt lies with those Masters of Industry who today, yesterday
>
> and tomorrow plan to make the petty, human jealousies, hatreds, rivalries and

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[651] Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction*, 715.

[652] Ibid., 715, 716.

[653] W.E.B. Du Bois, "Race Prejudice" [1910], in *Pamphlets and Leaflets by W.E.B. Du Bois*, ed. Herbert Aptheker (New York: Kraus-Thomson Organization Limited, 1986), 89. For contemporary corroborations of, and elaborations on, Du Bois's claim, see: David R. Roediger and Elizabeth Esch, *The Production of Difference: Race and the Management of Labor in U.S. History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012); Elizabeth D. Esch, *The Color Line and the Assembly Line: Managing Race in the Ford Empire* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2018).

[654] W.E.B. Du Bois, "Race Prejudice," 89.

starvations of workingmen the foundation of their colossal fortunes. They are the

breeders of mobs and lynchings, of unrest and despair, of race war and class struggle.[655]

White economic elites, Du Bois argued, possessed a disproportionate ability to control economic

relations between people, thereby maintaining and reinforcing interracial labor competition and their

power over the multiracial working class. Thus, their economic domination partially drove White

supremacist violence and the culture which guided and rationalized such violence.

Relatedly, Du Bois emphasizes the role that elite White men played in leveraging their cul-

tural power – that is, their disproportionate ability to produce, disseminate, and shape widely shared

social meanings, narratives, and values (more on this below) - to incite palliative White supremacist

solutions to complex political-economic problems. As I have already discussed, he argued that

Southern elites aiming to restore lost capital and investments and prevent the emergence of a multi-

racial labor movement appealed to poor Whites' sense of White superiority through the Civil War

and Reconstruction periods. One of the reasons these appeals were efficacious and appealing, as I

noted, was that they mobilized real fears rooted in interracial labor competition and, more generally,

offered many working-class White people a framework and practical means for coping with eco-

nomic domination. Beyond this, however, Du Bois emphasizes the cultural power of Southern

White elites. "The planter...dominated politics and social life" in the antebellum South, and "his

subservient religious leaders," "his pseudo-scientists," "his scattered schools and pedantic periodicals"

echoed his rationalization of chattel slavery: innate Black inferiority.[656] During the Reconstruction

period Southern elites deployed "incessant propaganda" blaming widespread corruption on African

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[655] W.E.B. Du Bois, "Dives, Mob and Scab, Limited" [1920], in *The Emerging Thought of W.E.B. Du Bois*, ed. Henry Lee Moon (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1972), 161.

[656] Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction*, 34, 39.

American people.[657] "Race repulsion, race hate, and race pride were increased by every subtle method," Du Bois writes.[658] After the war, "every problem of labor advance in the South was skillfully turned by demagogues into a matter of inter-racial jealousy."[659]

Red Summer

Du Bois retains this analysis of the relationship among White supremacist culture, practice, and economic domination in the fourth chapter of his first autobiography, *Darkwater: Voices from Within the Veil.*[660] "Of Work and Wealth" presents a subtle literary and dialectical analysis of the confluence of sociological, cultural, and political-economic factors that catalyzed widescale anti-Black violence throughout the 1910s, culminating in the Red Summer of 1919, when White supremacist terrorists massacred Black people in cities across the country.[661] Du Bois argues that the combination of White supremacist culture, "the Great Migration" of Black people from the rural South into the major industrial cities of the time (Chicago, Indianapolis, Detroit, Cleveland, Pittsburg, Philadelphia, New York), political and economic constraints on White and European immigrant labor following the start of World War I, interracial labor competition, and the reactionary leadership of racist White labor unions transformed "a fight for wage and protection against industrial oppression" into "the oldest and nastiest form of human oppression – race hatred."[662]

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[657] Ibid., 624.

[658] Ibid. Cf. Ibid., 631.

[659] Ibid., 701.

[660] W.E.B. Du Bois, *Darkwater: Voices from Within the Veil* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Howe, 1920).

[661] On the connection between *Darkwater* and the Red Summer, see Ibram X. Kendi, *Stamped from the Beginning: The Definitive History of Racist Ideas in America* (New York, NY: Nation Books, 2016), 316.

[662] Du Bois, *Darkwater.*, 93-94.

Focusing on the 1917 East St. Louis riots, Du Bois claims that the anger of White workers, initially directed towards industrial capitalists and skilled labor unions, was stifled after a series of political and legal constraints were imposed on the labor movement.[663] Fearing the growing resentment of White workers, Du Bois claims, union leaders blamed Black migrants, who had been entering the city in greater numbers and competing with White laborers for work.[664] White laborers feared the incoming Black migrants as labor competitors, potential causes of socioeconomic stagnation and downward social mobility.[665] This combination of factors turned White workers away from their struggle against "industrial oppression" and towards White supremacist terrorism.[666]

As always, Du Bois's analysis offers much to consider and unpack. For the purposes of this chapter, I simply want to highlight two points. First, Du Bois reiterates the point that White supremacist culture informed distorted interpretations of political economy and, consequently, guided reactionary, palliative practical measures for addressing political-economic problems. White supremacist practices, from this perspective, represented misguided attempts to cope with economic domination. The critical passage reads as follows:

> Everything in the history of the United States, from slavery to Sunday supplements, from disfranchisement to residence segregation, from "Jim-Crow" cars to a "Jim-Crow" army draft – to make men think and willing to think that the venting of their unbridled anger against 12,000,000 humble, upstriving workers was a way of settling

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[663] Ibid., 92-93.

[664] Ibid., 94.

[665] Ibid., 87, 93.

[666] Ibid., 94.

the industrial tangle of the ages. It was the logic of the broken plate, which, seared of

old across its pattern, cracks never again, save along the old destruction.[667]

Here Du Bois identifies the long history of White supremacist practices as one primary sociohistorical condition enabling the immeasurably destructive anti-Black pogroms of the Red Summer. White supremacist practices, and the culture which rationalized and sustained them, conditioned White workers' thoughts and desires, thereby influencing their action-guiding interpretations of their socioeconomic situation. These interpretations, however, were distorted. It was not true, Du Bois implies, that anti-Black terrorism would settle "the industrial tangle of the ages." Yet that was what White workers believed, desired, and acted upon. Instead of pursuing "a fight for wage and protection against industrial oppression" White workers murdered Black people with impunity, repeating the failures of the past ("the logic of the broken plate") and enacting a palliative solution which failed to adequately address the problem of industrial oppression. Here, Du Bois says, was a reaction which "sprung from ancient habit more than from present reason."[668] The consequence was the failure to enact a "real reorganization of industry," to construct an economy that can "satisfy the necessary wants of the mass of men," and the persistence of an economic system in which "a few of the participants come out with more wealth than they can possibly use, while a vast number emerge with less than can decently support life."[669]

Second, Du Bois reiterates his point that elite cultural power played a significant role in activating White supremacist culture and directing White supremacist practices towards and against African American people, just as it had during the Civil War and Reconstruction. Regarding this

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[667] Ibid., 94.

[668] Ibid., 99.

[669] Ibid., 102,

point, Du Bois explains that the same process occurred in the other great industrial centers of the nation (Chicago, Indianapolis, Detroit, Cleveland, Pittsburg, Philadelphia, New York):

> in every one of these and in lesser centers there is not only the industrial unrest of war and revolutionized work, but there is the call for workers, the coming of black folk, *and the deliberate effort to divert the thoughts of men, and particularly of workingmen, into channels of race hatred against blacks.* In every one of these centers what happened in East St. Louis has been attempted, with more or less success.[670]

The other sociohistorical condition enabling anti-Black terrorism in this context, then, was elite White cultural power. Elite White men for whom militant labor struggles meant potential lost wealth, power, and status leveraged their disproportionate cultural influence, enabled in part by their disproportionate access to means of public communication, to offer hyper-simplistic and reactionary solutions to complex political-economic problems.

Summary

Du Bois's analysis of poor Whites' allegiance to Southern elites during the Civil War and the overthrow of Reconstruction, as well as White workers' participation in anti-Black pogroms throughout the 1910s offer fresh insights into the mutually reinforcing relationship among White supremacist culture, practice, and economic domination. To recap, Du Bois argued that White supremacist culture concealed elite White economic domination and generated distorted interpretations of political economy throughout the 19th and early 20th centuries. In doing so, it guided and rationalized White supremacist practices which served many working-class White people as palliative means of coping with economic domination. Anti-Black terrorism, for example, created

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[670] Ibid., 97, emphasis added.

additional opportunities for working-class White social mobility, elevating White standards of living at the expense of Black people. It did not, however, transform the structured social relations of economic domination which partially enabled and motivated them. In fact, as Du Bois continually emphasized, White supremacist practices further enabled elite White men's efforts to accumulate profit as an end-in-itself, thereby intensifying the existing structure of economic domination. When working-class White people engaged in White supremacist practices throughout the 19th and early 20th centuries, then, they inadvertently reinforced their own subjection to White elite economic domination.

White Supremacist Culture as Ideology

The preceding discussion corroborates and complements Andrew Douglas's claim that Du Bois was engaged in "old-fashioned ideology critique."[671] Although, as Douglas notes, Du Bois "never developed a theory of ideology, nor did he pursue any explicit critique of ideology in the Marxist sense," he "seems to counsel a rather strong suspicion, reminiscent of Marx's early reflections on ideology, that publicly embraced ideas and values often obscure real political divisiveness and often work to sustain an imbalance of power, in this case a racial imbalance of power."[672] As Douglas argues,

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[671] Andrew J. Douglas, *W. E. B. Du Bois and the Critique of the Competitive Society* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 2019), 34.

[672] Ibid, 36. In a footnote, Douglas adds that "Marx's *German Ideology* was not published until 1932 and was not translated into English until 1938." Surviving drafts of the syllabi for Du Bois's 1933 graduate seminar "Karl Marx and the Negro" "indicate only that he had engaged with *Capital* and *The Poverty of Philosophy*." Although Douglas does not make this point, Du Bois's study of *Capital* grants some prima facie plausibility to the claim that Du Bois was at times engaged in some form of ideology-critique. After all, as Jorge Larrain, Derek Sayer, and Terry Eagleton have argued, Marx employed some form of ideology-critique throughout *Capital*. It thus seems reasonable to suppose that Du Bois, having studied *Capital*, incorporated and adapted some of Marx's ideology-theoretical methods in his own work. Further consideration of Du Bois as a reader of Marx goes beyond the scope of this project. The modest point I want to make here is simply that it seems reasonable to read Du Bois as a critic of ideology in a broadly Marxian sense of the term. See: Footnote 33, on Ibid., 112; Jorge Larraín, *The Concept of Ideology*, Modern Revivals in Philosophy (Aldershot, Hampshire, England: Gregg Revivals, 1992), 52-63; Derek Sayer, *Marx's Method: Ideology, Science and Critique in Capital*, Marxist Theory and Contemporary Capitalism 17 (Hassocks, England: Harvester Press, 1979); Terry Eagleton,

Du Bois demonstrates that liberal ideas regarding "natural" competition between ostensibly free and equal individuals compel "practices of racialization" as means of "leverag[ing] our competitive advantage over one another."[673] White supremacist practices, in other words, enable many White people to marginalize, reduce, and/or eliminate people of color qua competitors, while notions of innate White superiority rationalize these practices and reify resulting non-White competitive disadvantages as consequences of supposedly innate non-White inferiority. The preceding discussion of interracial labor competition, in particular, corroborates Douglas' account.

As the previous paragraph suggests, Douglas is primarily concerned with the ways in which liberal ideas serve White supremacist functions, namely, the perpetuation of White domination of people of color. In contrast with Douglas, my account focuses on the extent to which White supremacist culture qua ideology conceals economic divisions within the so-called White race to the detriment of working-class White people. Furthermore, I aim to explicate Du Bois's employment of ideology-critique in terms of contemporary discussions of the concept of ideology. This offers the advantage of enhancing our understanding of Du Bois's critique of White supremacist capitalism, since he did not explicate that critique explicitly in terms of ideology-critique, and putting Du Bois into conversation with contemporary theorists of ideology.

The extent to which Du Bois was indeed engaged in some form of ideology-critique becomes clear when we consider his analysis through the lens of the framework established by Raymond Geuss, and more recently employed by Tommie Shelby to conceptualize and critique racism as an ideology. Drawing on Geuss, Shelby proposes an ideology-critique approach which attends to the

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Ideology: An Introduction (London and New York: Verso, 1991), 84-89; John Mepham, "The Theory of Ideology in *Capital,*" in *Ideology,* ed. Terry Eagleton (New York: Routledge, 2013): 211-237.

[673] Andrew J. Douglas, *W. E. B. Du Bois and the Critique of the Competitive Society* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 2019), 40.

epistemological, functional, and genetic features of racist beliefs. [674] The epistemological dimension

centers questions of rationality and cognition. Epistemological analysis and critique identifies and

evaluates, for example, the false beliefs and unjustified empirical claims which constitute the ideol-

ogy. [675] The functional dimension of ideology-critique attends to "the negative practical consequences"

of an ideology "for society or some social group within it." [676] The genetic dimension of ideology-

critique attends to "the negative features that are a part of the etiology or history" of the ideology. Du

Bois's analysis of poor White support for Southern elites during and after the Civil War, as well as

White worker's participation in anti-Black terrorism throughout the 1910s, along with his broader

criticisms of White supremacist culture and practice, touches on all three dimensions of ideology,

as I will now discuss.

First, a brief terminological note: although Tommie Shelby and Sally Haslanger use the term

"racist ideology" throughout their work, it is clear from their examples that the objects of their cri-

tique are the shared beliefs and/or cultural resources, and interrelated social practices and conditions,

through which many White people retain and rationalize social, cultural, political, and economic

advantages at the expense of people of color. In other words, they are not focused on, say, Han

Chinese, Hindu, Hutu, Serbian, Bamar Buddhist, or Yamato Japanese supremacy. [677] Their focus is

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[674] Raymond Geuss, *The Idea of a Critical Theory: Habermas and the Frankfurt School*, Modern European Philosophy (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981); Tommie Shelby, "Ideology, Racism, and Critical Social Theory," *The Philosophical Forum* 34, no. 2 (June 2003): 153–88. Hereafter cited as "Shelby, 'Ideology, Racism, and Critical Social Theory.' For more general approaches to ideology-critique that make use of this framework, see Michael Morris, *Knowledge and Ideology: The Epistemology of Social and Political Critique* (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2016); Matteo Bianchin, "Ideology, Critique, and Social Structures," *Critical Horizons* 0, no. 0 (October 14, 2019): 1–13. Morris and Bianchin are particularly concerned with the relationship between these three features of ideology. That discussion goes beyond the scope of my present purposes.

[675] Shelby, "Ideology, Racism, and Critical Social Theory," 164.

[676] Ibid.

[677] Bamar Buddhists are the majority, dominant ethno-religious group in Myanmar. Bamar Buddhist supremacy played a major role in the genocide and displacement of more than half a million Rohingya Muslim people. See: Faizah Binte Zakaria, "Religion, Mass Violence, and Illiberal Regimes: Recent Research on the Rohingya in Myanmar," *Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs* 38, no. 1 (April 1, 2019): 98–111; Than Toe Aung, "Integration Should Not Be a One-

White supremacy. Although these different supremacies surely rely on racism in some relevant sense of the term, I'm not sure that analyses and criticisms of racism as it has developed in the United States can adequately address important differences among them. I think it is important to be explicit about the focus on White supremacy, lest we forget the historical specificity of the target of critique. Furthermore, Mills' objection to the term "racialized capitalism" applies here: it "is evasive in its failure to name the race that is (generally) created as superior, and fails to register the objectivity, the social existence, of this race...The White working-class's agency" – and that of White people in general, in this context – "and historical complicity in imperialism, colonialism, genocide, apartheid, the 'color bar' and Jim Crow, must be acknowledged and not minimized."[678] For these reasons, I will use the term "White supremacist ideology" in what follows.

Epistemological

The first epigraph to this chapter reads "[A] system of human culture whose principle is the rise of one race on the ruins of another is a farce and a lie."[679] Du Bois was referring, of course, to White supremacist culture. The general epistemological flaw of White supremacist culture, Du Bois maintained, is its reliance on the false proposition that human populations can be permanently and exhaustively categorized in simplistic hierarchical terms, i.e., good/bad, superior/inferior,

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Way Street," *Frontier Myanmar*, August 3, 2019, https://www.frontiermyanmar.net/en/integration-should-not-be-a-one-way-street/. The Yamato people are the majority, dominant ethnic group in Japan. Notions of Yamato supremacy played an important role in rationalizing and guiding the colonization of the Ainu people (indigenous to the northern isles of Japan) as well as late 19th through mid-20th century Japanese imperialism. See: Kate E. Taylor, "Japan: Colonization and Settlement," in *The Encyclopedia of Global Human Migration* (2013). Hiroshi Fukurai and Alice Yang, "The History of Japanese Racism, Japanese American Redress, and the Dangers Associated with Government Regulation of Hate Speech," *Hastings Constitutional Law Quarterly* 45, no. 3 (2018).

[678] Charles W. Mills, "Critical Race Theory: A Reply to Mike Cole," *Ethnicities* 9, no. 2 (2009), 275.

[679] W.E.B. Du Bois, "Jefferson Davis as a Representative of Civilization" [1890], in Nathan Irvin Huggins, ed., *Writings*, The Library of America (New York, N.Y: Literary Classics of the United States, 1986), 812.

slave/free.[680] More specifically, White supremacist culture is organized around two related false beliefs: first, that biological races "in the sense of great, separate, pure breeds of men differing in attainment, development, and capacity" exist.[681] The second is the false belief that White people constitute a superior race to which people of color must submit.[682] Put otherwise, White supremacist subjects – that is, people who have internalized White supremacist culture - hold the false belief that the social, cultural, political, and economic advance of people of color inevitably threatens their well-being. Simply put, White supremacist subjects believe that interracial social relations are necessarily a zero-sum game.[683] This belief, as Du Bois put it, is false, "a cheap inheritance of the world's infancy, unworthy of grown folk. My rise does not involve your fall. No superior interest has interest in inferiority."[684]

These core White supremacist beliefs have implications for interpretations of political economy. The notion that interracial social relations are necessarily a zero-sum game entails the belief that all White people share an interest in preventing the political and economic advance of people

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[680] W.E.B. Du Bois, "The Evolution of the Race Problem [1909]," in Philip S. Foner, ed., *W.E.B. Du Bois Speaks: Speeches and Addresses 1890 - 1919* (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1970), 206; W.E.B. Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction*, 382, 706.

[681] W.E.B. Du Bois, *Darkwater*, 98.

[682] I use the term "submit" here in a broad sense to encompass subjection to overt violence as well as subtler forms of neglect and disregard. The more or less conscious belief that White people matter more than others (what Eddie Glaude, Jr. calls "the value gap") involves submission in the sense that people of color are compelled to cope with its practical consequences. Eddie S. Glaude, *Democracy in Black: How Race Still Enslaves the American Soul* (New York: Crown Publishers, 2016), 31.

[683] W.E.B. Du Bois, "Should the Negro Be Encouraged to Seek Cultural Equality? [1929]" in Phil Zuckerman, ed., *The Social Theory of W.E.B. Du Bois*, (Thousand Oaks, California: Pine Forge Press, 2004), 38-39.

[684] W.E.B. Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction*, 706. Regarding "a cheap inheritance of the world's infancy," Du Bois recognized that White people did not invent the belief that entire human populations suffer from innate inferiority. "Such degrading of men by men is as old as mankind and the invention of no one race or people," he writes in *Darkwater*. "Ever have men striven to conceive of their victims as different from the victors, endlessly different, in soul and blood, strength and cunning, race and lineage." W.E.B. Du Bois, "The Souls of White Folk," Nathan Irvin Huggins, ed., *Writings*, The Library of America (New York, N.Y: Literary Classics of the United States, 1986), 654. See also W.E.B. Du Bois *Black Reconstruction*, 382.

of color. The false belief in shared racial superiority, in other words, entails a belief that what is good for White elites is good for working-class White people. Du Bois maintained that this belief is false. With respect to White and black workers, Du Bois writes in *Black Reconstruction*, "there probably are not today in the world two groups of workers with practically identical interests who hate and fear each other so deeply and persistently and who are kept so far apart that neither sees anything of common interest."[685] Du Bois was referring, of course, to their class interests, that is, their interests as a population of "laborers without capital who must sell their labor."[686] Although Du Bois was well aware that White supremacy generated distinct hardships for people of color, he maintained that White and Black workers shared an interest in the abolition of "private profit" and "the system of exploiting labor," the construction of an economy organized around the satisfaction of human needs, as well as the realization of a substantive (as opposed to merely formal or legal) multiracial democracy (political, cultural, economic) "which alone can ensure peace among men, by the abolition of poverty, the education of the masses, protection from disease, and the scientific treatment of crime."[687] Put otherwise, Du Bois maintained that economic domination had negative practical consequences – for example, poverty, ignorance, crime, and disease – for all workers and, therefore, that White and Black workers alike would benefit from the abolition of economic domination. Furthermore, insofar as White supremacist ideology conceals and reinforces economic domination, both populations would benefit from its abolition as well.

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[685] Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction*, 680. Emphasis added.

[686] W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Negro and Social Reconstruction* [1936], in Herbert Aptheker, ed., *Against Racism: Unpublished Essays, Papers, Addresses, 1887- 1961* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1985), 142.

[687] Ibid., 141; W.E.B. Du Bois, *Darkwater*, 99; W.E.B. Du Bois, *Color and Democracy: Colonies and Peace* [1945], in Henry Louis Gates, ed., *The World and Africa. Color and Democracy. (The Oxford W.E.B. Du Bois) An Essay in the History and Sociology of the Negro Race* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, USA, 2007), 241.

As I showed in section three, Du Bois maintained that White supremacist culture concealed elite White economic domination of working-class White people. Put otherwise, White supremacist culture prevented many working-class White people from recognizing the class-based interests they shared with most people of color. This was accomplished by offering White workers alternative interpretations of economic domination and its effects and displacing historical categories of racialized social structure and political economy in favor of the ahistorical categories of fixed, homogenous biological race.[688] Many White people socialized into White supremacist culture construed interracial labor competition as a matter of struggle between fundamentally incompatible human groupings rather than the result of White elite strategies for maximizing power and capital accumulation. They regarded Black people, and not White political and economic elites, as the primary agents responsible for White poverty and disease. From their perspective, widespread economic precarity – ranging from abject poverty to vulnerability to downward social mobility – among working-class White people was the consequence of the illicit advances of incorrigible racial enemies rather than a structural feature of the White supremacist capitalist political economy, itself sustained through elite decision-making processes. Interracial labor competition and widespread economic precarity were real consequences of economic domination, which constrained working-class people's efforts to provide for their families. Instead of grasping economic domination as the underlying cause of these issues, however, many White people, guided by White supremacist culture, blamed and attacked people of color. In this regard, people socialized into White supremacist culture acquired distorted

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[688] Or, as contemporary social psychologists Lucas Keefer, Chris Goode, and Laura Van Berkel might put it, White supremacist culture inhibits the formation of "class awareness," that is, the "acknowledgment that class is a socially structuring phenomenon." Lucas A. Keefer, Chris Goode, and Laura Van Berkel, "Toward a Psychological Study of Class Consciousness: Development and Validation of a Social Psychological Model," *Journal of Social and Political Psychology*, 3, no. 2 (2015), 258.

interpretations of political economy, that is, interpretations which construed real political-economic relations, conditions, and processes in inaccurate, reified terms.

From this perspective, White supremacist culture persists and prevails in part because it offers many working-class White people with an interpretation of the consequences of economic domination. Although White supremacist culture conceals elite White economic domination as such, it does not eliminate its consequences. Labor competition, lack of control over one's life, economic precarity, etc. persist, and with them so does the need for action-guiding interpretations, which is to say diagnostic explanations and prospective evaluations which can make sense of and orient actions in the face of economic domination and its consequences. White supremacist culture has provided many White people with tools for doing this.

Etiology and False Consciousness[689]

As Tommie Shelby points out, ideology-critique's focus on the persistence, prevalence, and resilience of false beliefs may seem to paint a pessimistic and patronizing picture of human beings. It might seem to rely on the "unflattering and elitist" assumption that most people are "quite credulous and perhaps even stupid."[690] After all, how could anyone continue to believe in the existence of fixed, homogenous biological races or innate racial superiority/inferiority? Why would so many White people rely on reified racial categories to interpret political economy and economic domination? Here, following Shelby, I turn to the concept of *false consciousness*, which, as he argues,

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[689] A brief note on terminology: Geuss and Shelby use the term "genetic" to refer to the noncognitive factors motivating ideological beliefs. In a recent paper Matteo Bianchin first uses the terms "genetic" and "etiological" interchangeably, then opts for the latter term. I follow Bianchin in opting for the term "etiological." Although he does not explain his usage, "etiological" helps avoid any confusions that may arise from the term "genetic," particularly in the context of discussions of race and racist ideology. Matteo Bianchin, "Ideology, Critique, and Social Structures," *Critical Horizons* 0, no. 0 (October 14, 2019): 1–13.

[690] Tommie Shelby, "Ideology, Racism, and Critical Social Theory," 171-172.

enables a non-elitist interpretation of the epistemological dimension of ideology. As he puts it, "[i]t is a mundane fact about human beings that we are sometimes prompted to accept beliefs by motives that have little to do with a concern for truth or justification. Though presumably we do not do so consciously," he continues, "we sometimes believe things because to do so would, say, bolster our self-esteem, give us consolation, lessen anxiety, reduce cognitive dissonance, increase our self-confidence, provide cathartic relief, give us hope, or silence a guilty conscience."[691] The concept of *false consciousness* draws attention to the fact that we sometimes hold beliefs because they satisfy unmet psychological needs.[692] In such cases, false beliefs persist, prevail, and remain resistant to available evidence as long as those psychological needs go unmet by other means.[693] More generally, people act with a false consciousness when they fail to recognize "the real motives" underlying their beliefs.[694]

Although Du Bois did not use the term "false consciousness" or explicitly adopt an ideology-theoretical framework, his Depression-era and later writings continually emphasize that subdoxastic psychological needs and action-guiding motives drive the formation of the beliefs central to White supremacist culture. As he put it in *Dusk of Dawn,* White supremacist culture persists as a constellation of "conditioned reflexes," "long followed habits, customs and folkways," "subconscious trains

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[691] Ibid.

[692] John T. Jost, Christopher M. Federico, and Jaime L. Napier, "Political Ideology: Its Structure, Functions, and Elective Affinities," *Annual Review of Psychology* 60, no. 1 (January 2009), 314.

[693] As "former Neo-Nazi" Shannon Foley Martinez reflects, her prior commitment to White supremacist ideology "had literally nothing to do with the ideology. It had to do with why the ideology was seductive and felt empowering to me in the first place." When asked why White supremacist ideology felt empowering to her, she responds, "Because I needed an explanation for why the world seemed like a threatening and brutal place for me. Because I wanted to believe in something that felt like it mattered and was part of something bigger." Although Martinez does not explicitly use the term here, she is clearly attributing "false consciousness" (as Shelby articulates that notion) to her past self, identifying specific psychological needs which explain her prior commitment to White supremacist ideology. Her present ability to reflect on and reject White supremacy, she suggests, depends upon her acquiring a consciousness of those needs and finding other means to satisfy them. DJ Cashmere, "Deradicalization in the Deep South," *Yes! Magazine*, November 12, 2019, https://www.yesmagazine.org/issue/building-bridges/2019/11/12/deradicalization-in-the-deep-south.

[694] Tommie Shelby, "Ideology, Racism, and Critical Social Theory," 170.

of reasoning and unconscious nervous reflexes."[695] The false belief in innate White superiority/non-White inferiority, in other words, persists, not because White people have consciously and rationally reflected on its validity or carefully studied the available empirical evidence. Du Bois thus points to other social factors underlying this belief, as well the persistence of White supremacist culture more generally.

Sociocultural Habituation

In *Black Reconstruction*, for example, Du Bois points to what I would call "sociocultural habituation" as one reason underlying the belief in innate White superiority/non-White inferiority. He writes,

> It is easy for men to discount and misunderstand the suffering or harm done others. Once accustomed to poverty, to the sight of toil and degradation, it easily seems nor-mal and natural; once it is hidden beneath a different color of skin, a different stature or a different habit of action and speech, and all consciousness of inflicting ill disap-pears.[696]

In other words, social practices produce negative social conditions (poverty, toil, degradation). The persistence and prevalence of these social conditions then tends to produce the belief (among those who are not subject to said conditions) that they are normal and natural.[697] Furthermore, these social

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[695] W.E.B. Du Bois, *Dusk of Dawn*, 680.

[696] Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction*, 52.

[697] Although this pertains more to the explanation of the persistence of ideology, we could go further and note that the reproduction of the aforementioned belief will then tend to reinforce the practices which produce negative social condi-tions, which will reinforce the belief, and so on. In this regard, Du Bois incorporates an account of what Sally Haslanger calls "looping effects." See Sally Haslanger, "Culture and Critique," *Aristotelian Society Supplementary Volume* XCI (2017), 157; Sally Haslanger, *Critical Theory and Practice. Spinoza Lectures* (Assen, Netherlands: Koninklijke Van Gorcum, 2017), 24; Sally Haslanger, "Racism, Ideology, and Social Movements," *Res Philosophica* Vol. 94, No. 1 (2017), 17. Elizabeth Anderson offers a similar explanation when she argues that practices of segregation produce negative

conditions come to be associated with specific human differences. In the context of White supremacy, disproportionate African American poverty and disease is "apt to be thought of as naturally connected to...dark skins."[698] Importantly, Du Bois's preceding remarks identify a further epistemological flaw in White supremacist culture: reification. The association between phenotypic differences– skin color, hair texture, etc. in the case of White supremacist culture – and poor social conditions conceals the latter's underlying social causes. White supremacist culture thus construes poor social conditions as normal and natural rather than the consequences of long-standing social practices.

Rationalization

The preceding passage also points out that White supremacist beliefs often emerge as rationalizations. In this case, Du Bois says that reifying beliefs eliminate "all consciousness of inflicting ill," thereby allowing wrongdoers to retain a positive self-conception as good moral agents despite their active complicity with great social harms.[699] More generally, many people hold White supremacist beliefs because they rationalize social practices guided by ulterior motives. Thus, Du Bois writes, "It is the habit of men, and must be if they remain rational beings, to find reasons, and comforting reasons, for lines of action which they adopt from varying motives."[700] This, of course, was one of the

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consequences for African American people which are then interpreted in terms of supposedly innate characteristics. See Elizabeth Anderson, *The Imperative of Integration* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 2010), 44 – 47.

[698] W.E.B. Du Bois, "The Negro Problems of the United States [1952]," https://credo.library.umass.edu/view/full/mums312-b202-i038, 8.

[699] For a contemporary discussion of this self-affirming feature of ideology, see Jason Stanley, *How Propaganda Works* (Princeton, New Jersey: Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2015), 225, 265.

[700] W.E.B. Du Bois, *The World and Africa,* in Henry Louis Gates, ed., *The World and Africa* and *Color and Democracy: An Essay in the History and Sociology of the Negro Race* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, USA, 2007), 270. Hereafter cited as "W.E.B. Du Bois, *The World and Africa.*" See also W.E.B. Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction,* 14.

primary reasons behind the construction of White supremacist culture: Western European enslavers gradually constructed the belief in innate White superiority/non-White inferiority to rationalize their profit-oriented commitment to settler colonialism and chattel slavery. In Du Bois's words, "[T]he income-bearing value of race prejudice was the cause and not the result of theories of racial inferiority."[701]

Importantly, Western European, and later US American, investment in White supremacist culture was not simply a matter of monetary income for Du Bois. White people "clung" to the belief in their innate superiority because the "modern African slave trade" enabled the rise of "a tremendous economic structure and eventually an industrial revolution...Government, work, religion and education became based upon and determined by the color line."[702] Western European people and their American descendants constructed an entire way of life around the enslavement of African people and the rationalization of innate racial inferiority. A complex ensemble of social practices – economic, political, religious, educational – were thus organized around the slave trade. The myth of innate White superiority thus rationalized practices motivated by the desire to maintain and increase profits through the enslavement of human beings, to be sure, but also the desire to maintain and secure the social order which depended upon that enslavement.

Childhood Socialization

Another reason for the persistence and prevalence of White supremacist culture was (and remains) childhood socialization.[703] Du Bois writes, for example, of "folklore," that is, "the ideas

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[701] W.E.B. Du Bois, *Dusk of Dawn*, 649.

[702] Ibid., 556.

[703] Following Berger and Luckmann, I take "socialization" to refer to the processes through which individuals first acquire social identities ("primary socialization") and, later, acquire, maintain, and adjust knowledges, attitudes, and values pertinent to more complex institutional contexts ("secondary socialization"). "Childhood socialization," in my terms,

which we have of things, which are handed down, without any particular investigation on our part, without any careful line of logic. It is what we have been told concerning facts and ideas, and we have thus received conceptions which we have used in our lives."[704] Du Bois highlights the fact that human beings often inherit beliefs, values, and attitudes which we do not always reflect on, evaluate, and endorse in a conscious, deliberate manner. Such cultural elements are often passed on and guide social practices even though they have not always been investigated through conscious, rational deliberation. They often persist, in part, simply because they continue to be taught.[705] Although Du Bois is referring to ideas regarding wages, wealth, and money in the above passage, he clearly makes the same point about White supremacist culture, writing, for example, that "race antipathy is not instinctive but a matter of careful education."[706] Similarly, he says that Depression-era White laborers were "unwilling to recognize Negro laborers as fellow human beings" "because of inherited cultural patterns."[707] In short, many White people often acquire the conviction that Black people are inferior,

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corresponds to what Berger and Luckmann call "primary socialization." "Top-down socialization," which I use below, is a specific form of what they call "secondary socialization." See Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Reconstruction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge* (New York: Double Day, 1996), 129 – 163.

[704] W.E.B. Du Bois, "Economic Illiteracy," 1947, https://credo.library.umass.edu/view/full/mums312-b273-i076, 6.

[705] I do not mean to imply that people socialized into White supremacist culture do not engage in various forms of reasoning to maintain and justify their beliefs, values, and attitudes. The point here regards the process through which people often *acquire* White supremacist culture. In many cases, people first acquire White supremacist beliefs, values, and attitudes in early childhood and only later engage in various forms of post hoc reasoning to rationalize them. Berger and Luckmann capture the basic idea in their discussion of primary socialization: "Every individual is born into an objective social structure within which he encounters the significant others who are in charge of his socialization. These significant others are imposed upon him. Their definitions of his situation are posited for him as objective reality...The child takes on the significant others' roles and attitudes, that is, internalizes them and makes them his own." Berger and Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality*, 131.

[706] W.E.B. Du Bois, "Does Race Antagonism Serve Any Good Purpose?" in Nathan Huggins, ed., *W.E.B. Du Bois. Writings* (New York: The Library of America, 1986), 1162.

[707] W.E.B. Du Bois, "The Future of Africa in America [1942]," in Herbert Aptheker, ed., *Against Racism: Unpublished Essays, Papers, Addresses, 1887- 1961* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1985), 175.

not through a conscious process of rational deliberation, but through the influence of those responsible for their socialization.

Top-down Socialization

Childhood socialization is, of course, an essential human practice and one which, in the US context, often involves the inculcation of White supremacist culture into many young White children. It is important to note two things, however. First, socialization does not end after childhood.[708] Adults continue to learn from and influence one another, exchanging beliefs and ideas that may adjust or reinforce prior cognitive and emotional commitments.[709] Socialization is an ongoing process that unfolds over the course of an entire lifetime. Second, and relatedly, adults who socialize children (parents, family members, teachers, neighbors, etc.) are themselves being socialized as they shape young hearts and minds. They are being socialized by friends, neighbors, and co-workers, to be sure, but they are also being socialized in a top-down fashion. This top-down socialization is the sense in which, as Tommie Shelby notes (but does not elaborate), "most people...do not have sophisticated views about the relevant phenomena yet will have absorbed – through various media, schools, public rituals, or other revered institutions – many of the core assumptions propagated by elites."[710] In this manner, adults continue to acquire and adjust their beliefs, attitudes, values, etc. in response to their experiences with the media, school, etc. In so far as elites played a disproportionate role in managing and influencing these institutions, they have a significant impact on adult socialization.

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[708] As Berger and Luckmann put it, "socialization is never total and never finished." Ibid., 137.

[709] Jeylan T Mortimer and Roberta G Simmons, "Adult Socialization," *Annual Review of Sociology* 4, no. 1 (1978): 421–54.

[710] Tommie Shelby, *Dark Ghettos: Injustice, Dissent, and Reform* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2016), 23.

Du Bois was emphatic about top-down socialization as a major factor explaining the persistence and prevalence of White supremacist culture. Elite White men, he maintained, played a disproportionate role in the activation, mobilization, and dissemination of White supremacist beliefs, attitudes, and habits, as well as the reproduction of White supremacist practices. Consider, for example, what Du Bois says in a 1923 piece appropriately titled "The Technique of Race Prejudice."[711] The passage is worth quoting at length:

> It is idle to charge up lynching solely to the "poor White trash"; it is silly to talk of race prejudice as simply a child of ignorance and poverty. The ignorant and poor may lynch and discriminate but the real deep and basic race hatred in the United States is a matter of the educated and distinguished leaders of White civilization. They are the ones who are determined to keep black folk from developing talent and sharing in civilization. The only thing to their credit is that they are ashamed of what they do and say and cover their tracks desperately even if ineffectually with excuses and surprises and alibis. But the discrimination goes on and they not only do not raise a hand to stop it – they even gently and politely but in strict secrecy put their shoulders to the wheel and push it forward.[712]

While Du Bois explicitly acknowledges the fact that working-class White people actively sustain White supremacy, he calls our attention to two ways in which elite White power plays an asymmetric role in advancing White supremacist culture and practice. First, although elite Whites could work to prevent discrimination, they have often refused to do so. Federal and state governments, for

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[711] W.E.B. Du Bois, "The Technique of Race Prejudice," in Nathan Huggins, ed., *W.E.B. Du Bois. Writings* (New York: The Library of America, 1986).

[712] Ibid., 1207.

example, could have done much more to enforce desegregation legislation since the 1950s.[713] In this regard, elite Whites *passively* contribute to the persistence of White supremacy.

The second and more important aspect here involves elite Whites' *active* efforts to maintain and reinforce White supremacist culture and practice. Of particular importance to Du Bois in this regard was elite White cultural power, that is, the disproportionate ability to produce, disseminate, and shape social meanings, narratives, and values that stabilize and perpetuate White supremacy. Writing in 1925, for example, Du Bois says that "the curious, most childish propaganda dominates us."[714] "Terrible, ceaseless propaganda," he continues, "buttresses" the belief in innate White superiority/non-White inferiority "day by day," with poets, novelists, scientists, and politicians "united in the myth of mass inferiority of most men."[715] Du Bois reiterates this point over a decade later, in a 1947 speech to the Southern Negro Youth Congress. I quote him at length:

> You must remember that . . . you have allies and allies even in the White South. First
> and greatest of these possible allies are the White working classes about you. The
> poor Whites whom you have been taught to   despise and who in turn have learned
> to fear and hate you. This must not deter you from effort to make them understand,
> because in the past in their ignorance and suffering *they have been led foolishly to*
> *look upon you as the cause of most of their distress.* You must remember that *this*

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[713] Nikole Hannah-Jones, "Living Apart: How the Government Betrayed a Landmark Civil Rights Law," *ProPublica*, 2015, https://www.propublica.org/article/living-apart-how-the-government-betrayed-a-landmark-civil-rights-law.

[714] W.E.B. Du Bois, "Worlds of Color [1925]," in *Writings by W.E.B. Du Bois* in Herbert Aptheker, ed., *Periodicals Edited by Others. Volume 2, 1910-1934* (New York: Kraus-Thomson Organization Limited, 1982), 254, emphasis added.

[715] Ibid.

attitude is hereditary from slavery and that it has been deliberately cultivated ever

since emancipation.[716]

Here Du Bois points to the role that intergenerational socialization plays in the perpetuation of White supremacist culture, noting that anti-Black attitudes are "hereditary from slavery."[717] He also identifies top-down socialization as a major factor, accusing elite White men of "deliberately cultivating" White supremacist culture.

Du Bois does not develop an explicit theory of cultural power, but it is clear from even these few remarks that he identified the division of cultural labor as a major factor in the persistence and prevalence of White supremacist culture in the United States. To be sure, all human beings share stories, tell jokes, reflect on their work, neighbors, and lives, articulate hopes and frustrations, and so on. We all rely on, maintain, and reproduce culture to varying degrees, constructing, sharing, and refining social meanings and narratives regarding our place(s) in the world. However, we do not all exercise similar power when it comes to creating, shaping, and sharing culture. There has long existed a division of cultural labor wherein, to put it simply, some occupy positions of cultural influence and others less so. Those with wealth and political power have a disproportionate impact on cultural production. They own and/or have privileged access to the media - newspapers, publishing houses, radio stations, television channels, and so on – which are essentially means of cultural reproduction. They have platforms to publicly promote and disseminate their interpretations of human differences and ideals regarding the organization of society. Thus, they have a disproportionate ability to

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[716] W.E.B. Du Bois, "Behold the Land" [1947], in Herbert Aptheker, ed., *Pamphlets and Leaflets by W.E.B. Du Bois*, (New York: Kraus-Thomson Organization Limited, 1986), 275, emphasis added.

[717] Du Bois continually emphasized the fact that White supremacist culture is the contingent product of human practices. Thus, I take him to be using the term "hereditary" loosely here to refer to the role that intergenerational socialization plays in the persistence and prevalence of White supremacist culture.

influence large numbers of people, which they often use, directly or indirectly, to maintain and strengthen their dominant social position.[718]

Political Economy and Economic Domination

Finally, there is the etiological contribution that political economy and economic domination make to the persistence and prevalence of White supremacist culture. As I showed in section three, White supremacist culture has served many working-class White people as a palliative means for coping with economic domination. Otherwise constrained in their efforts to make a living due to limited economic opportunity, and generally lacking control over their own lives, many working-class White people have often relied on White supremacist culture as a guide and rationalization for practices which enabled them to attain some degree of social security and mobility at the expense of people of color. In such cases, the desire to cope with economic domination and secure some degree of social security and mobility in the face of limited economic opportunity contributed to the formation and persistence of the belief in innate White superiority/non-White inferiority.

White supremacist culture has served this palliative function even in cases where working-class White people have been unable to attain a substantial degree of *material* security and mobility at the expense of people of color. Put otherwise, the social security and mobility in question has often, but not always, been a matter of wages and working conditions. Here, to be precise, I am referring to the social psychological role that White supremacist culture has played in "compensating" poor Whites for their subjection to economic domination. Du Bois employs the notion of compensation in his famous discussion of "the public and psychological wage" that White laborers received

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[718] As Yves Citton argues, media platforms and organizations are structured in an oligarchic fashion in that they constitute "a regime of power in the hands and at the service of a small, privileged elite who use it to maintain their position of domination." Yves Citton, *Mediarchy*, transl. Andrew Brown (Medford, Massachusetts: Polity Press, 2019), 56.

with the emergence and consolidation of the Jim Crow system.[719] Although subject to economic domination - as evidenced, for example, by low wages – institutionalized segregation conferred upon White workers an elevated social status through racial domination, and especially the marginalization and denigration of Black people.[720] Although this illicit advantage "had small effect upon the economic situation," as Du Bois put it, the social psychological effect was real. Working-class White

[719] W.E.B. Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction*, 700-701.

[720] Prompted by Andrew Douglas' recent book *W.E.B. Du Bois and the Critique of the Competitive Society*, Ella Myers notes that, for Du Bois, "White American workers" are "*both* pawns of the capitalist class who manipulate them *and* knowing collaborators in the enforcement of White supremacy." This both/and formulation is a step in the right direction, and quite accurate as a general description of Du Bois's view, but it does not address the systematic relationship between "capitalist manipulation" and "knowing collaboration," to paraphrase Myers – or, in my terms, economic domination and White supremacist practices. On the account I have been developing, that systematic relationship (or at least one crucial aspect of that relationship) can be formulated as follows: poor and working-class White people accept White supremacist notions and engage in White supremacist practices in part *because of* their subjection to economic domination. Put otherwise, the persistence of elite White economic domination of poor and working-class White people partially contributes to the persistence of racial domination. Racial domination, in turn, reinforces elite White economic domination of non-elite White people, such that racial domination and elite White economic domination are mutually reinforcing phenomena. Ella Myers, "Brutal Competition," in Ella Myers, James Ford, and Aldon Morris, "Du Bois and Racial Capitalism: Symposium on *Andrew J. Douglas, W. E. B. Du Bois and the Critique of the Competitive Society*, Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2019," *Political Theory*, (2020), 4.

I also want to emphasize that my account strives to avoid the systematic limitation of what Charles Mills has called "the orthodox White Marxist tradition," which "has been impaired by a general theoretical failure in appreciating the reality of race as itself as system of oppression." It is true, on my view, that, as Mills put it, "the bourgeoisie dominate the workers *and* that Whites dominate blacks. So," he continues, "as workers, they are exploited by capital; as Whites, they are themselves the beneficiaries of an overlapping but distinct system of exploitation that not only secures personhood and its benefits for themselves but also denies them to others." Once again, however, my account attempts to draw a more systematic connection between the both/and. Class-dominated White workers dominate Black people in part *because of* their subjection to economic domination. Racial domination is very much real on this account, and not reducible to economic domination. (Anti-Black pogroms often involved violent economic domination, but they also involved much more.) To quote Mills again, "White workers participate in, benefit from, and reproduce racial domination, thus making race socially real." Charles W. Mills, *From Class to Race: Essays in White Marxism and Black Radicalism* (Lanham, Md: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003), 154, 165. See also Lucius T. Outlaw, *Critical Social Theory in the Interests of Black Folks* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2005).

people could take some solace in the supposed fact that they were superior to people of color.[721]

Here, again, the desire to cope with economic domination contributed to the formation of White supremacist beliefs.[722]

[721] More generally, as social psychologists have shown, people often feel a reduced sense of control over their lives in the face of economic inequality, instability, and crises. This reduced sense of personal control causes negative psychological consequences (stress, anxiety, depression, etc.). In-group identification and the denigration of out-groups help reduce these negative consequences by restoring a sense of personal control. See: Marcin Bukowski et al., "Who's to Blame? Causal Attributions of the Economic Crisis and Personal Control," *Group Processes & Intergroup Relations* 20, no. 6 (November 1, 2017): 909–23. Immo Fritsche et al., "The Great Recession and Group-Based Control: Converting Personal Helplessness into Social Class In-Group Trust and Collective Action," *Journal of Social Issues* 73, no. 1 (March 1, 2017): 117–37. Immo Fritsche, Eva Jonas, and Thomas Kessler, "Collective Reactions to Threat: Implications for Intergroup Conflict and for Solving Societal Crises," *Social Issues and Policy Review* 5, no. 1 (December 1, 2011): 101–36. Immo Fritsche and Philipp Jugert, "The Consequences of Economic Threat for Motivated Social Cognition and Action," *Current Opinion in Psychology*, Inequality and social class, 18 (December 1, 2017): 31–36. Julia C. Becker, Ulrich Wagner, and Oliver Christ, "Consequences of the 2008 Financial Crisis for Intergroup Relations: The Role of Perceived Threat and Causal Attributions," *Group Processes & Intergroup Relations* 14, no. 6 (November 2011): 871–85. Amy R. Krosch, Tom R. Tyler, and David M. Amodio, "Race and Recession: Effects of Economic Scarcity on Racial Discrimination.," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 113, no. 6 (December 2017): 892–909. Adrian Lüders et al., "Between the Lines of Us and Them: Identity Threat, Anxious Uncertainty, and Reactive In-Group Affirmation: How Can Antisocial Outcomes Be Prevented?" in *Understanding Peace and Conflict Through Social Identity Theory: Contemporary Global Perspectives*, ed. Shelley McKeown, Reeshma Haji, and Neil Ferguson, Peace Psychology Book Series (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2016), 33–53. Katharine H. Greenaway et al., "Perceived Control Qualifies the Effects of Threat on Prejudice," *British Journal of Social Psychology* 53, no. 3 (September 1, 2014): 422–42. Zachary K. Rothschild et al., "A Dual-Motive Model of Scapegoating: Displacing Blame to Reduce Guilt or Increase Control," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 102, no. 6 (2012): 1148–63.

[722] Du Bois's understanding of "the public and psychological wages" of Whiteness seems to parallel and complicate Axel Honneth's account of ideological recognition. Rosie Worsdale helpfully summarizes Honneth's account in a recent article. Quoting Honneth, Worsdale writes, "ideological forms of recognition" simultaneously "consist of the affirmation of positive qualities, which are credible in the eyes of those being addressed, and which draw a contrast with existing recognitional patterns such that the addressee feels like a new positive quality of theirs is being affirmed," while "serv[ing] the ideological function of engendering in those being addressed a 'motivational willingness to subject [themselves] voluntarily' to conditions of domination." On the one hand, what we could call "White supremacist recognition" seems to satisfy Honneth's definition of ideological recognition: the addressees in this case are working-class White people, and the "positive quality" which is affirmed for them is their supposed racial superiority. The consequence, as I have argued, is their self-subjection to economic domination. The complication arises, however, when we consider what Honneth understands to be "genuine recognition," which, as Worsdale summarizes, requires that "institutions and social structures...create conditions in which subjects have the opportunity to exercise their practical agency in all the ways promised to them by the purported act of recognition." The public and psychological wages of Whiteness seem to satisfy Honneth's definition of genuine recognition in that White supremacist institutions and social structures do indeed offer White people the opportunity to enact their supposed superiority over people of color. Would Honneth then consider White supremacy a form of genuine recognition? This, I would argue, highlights the limitations of Honneth's account of "genuine" and "ideological" recognition when it comes to understanding and critiquing White supremacy. A proper discussion of this issue and its implications for Honneth's critical theory, however, will have to wait. Rosie Worsdale, "Recognition, Ideology, and the Case of 'Invisible Suffering,'" *European Journal of Philosophy* 26, no. 1 (2018), 618, 619; Axel Honneth, "Recognition as Ideology," in *Recognition and Power: Axel Honneth and the Tradition of Critical Social Theory*, ed. Bert van den Brink and David Owen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 323–47.

Critical philosophers of race such as George Yancy, Charles Mills, Linda Alcoff, Shannon Sullivan, and Tommie Shelby have emphasized the importance of the belief in innate White superiority/non-White inferiority for working-class White people throughout their writings.[723] I would argue, however, that, with the exception of Tommie Shelby, they have not drawn the causal connection between economic domination and White supremacist culture. That is, they have not addressed the fact that economic domination and, specifically, the desire to cope with economic domination, contributes to the persistence and prevalence of White supremacist beliefs among working-class White people. Although Shelby does highlight this connection, he does not, in my view, draw the implications which I will draw from it below.

In the context of a discussion of "class-based false consciousness," for example, Tommie Shelby writes that "[s]ome members of the White working class use racism to console themselves in their subordinate social position, feeling blessed that they were born with the 'natural' virtue that 'Whiteness' bestows."[724] Importantly, Shelby contrasts this form of White working-class false consciousness with White elite false-consciousness. "The slaveholding aristocracy of the American South," in contrast with working-class White people, "had an interest in maintaining their right to own and exploit the labor of African slaves and their descendants," and thus, unsurprisingly, acquired

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[723] George Yancy, "Fragments of a Social Ontology of Whiteness," in George Yancy, ed., *What White Looks Like: African-American Philosophers on the Whiteness Question* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 22 - 25. George Yancy, *Black Bodies, White Gazes: The Continuing Significance of Race in America*, (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2017), 62. Charles W. Mills, *Black Rights / White Wrongs: The Critique of Racial Liberalism*, (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2017), 134-135. Linda Alcoff, *The Future of Whiteness* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2015), 36. Shannon Sullivan, "White Priority," *Critical Philosophy of Race* 5, no. 2 (2017).

[724] Tommie Shelby, "Ideology, Racism, and Critical Social Theory," 182; Although Shelby does not explicitly define "class," his discussion implies that, on his view, class is a social position within an economic structure. Considering his broadly Marxian approach, as well as his use of terms such as "elites," "ruling class," and "working class," I suspect he adopts a broadly Marxian conception of class as defined in terms of relations to the means of production. On this conception, those who possess nothing but their ability to work and who must, therefore, sell this labor-power in exchange for means of subsistence, viz. wages, constitute the working class. For his usage of these terms, see Ibid., 167, 178, 181, 182, 187.

a belief in innate White superiority/non-White inferiority.[725] In both cases, Shelby suggests, social position – and, more precisely, class position – led to the formation of White supremacist beliefs. Importantly, as Shelby notes, different classes of White people are susceptible to class-based false consciousness, "though often with different consequences for their material interests."[726] He does not, however, flesh this out.

I will return to the practical consequences of White supremacist culture for working-class Whites in the following section. For now, I want to make three points that, on my reading, distinguish my account from Shelby's. The first two concern the etiological dimension of White supremacist ideology. More specifically, I highlight two ways in which economic domination underlies the persistence and prevalence of White supremacist culture. First, elite White men promote White supremacist culture because it stabilizes and perpetuates the system of economic domination from which they benefit at the expense of all working-class people. In Du Bois's words, the public and psychological wages of Whiteness was the "carefully planned and slowly evolved method, which drove such a wedge between the White and black workers that there probably are not today in the world two groups of workers with practically identical interests who hate and fear each other so deeply and persistently and who are kept so far apart that neither sees anything of common interest."[727] From this perspective, institutionalized segregation was a complex, emergent strategy for stabilizing and perpetuating elite White economic domination of working class people of all races. Thus, for example, Du Bois cites the importance of political demagoguery, which "skillfully turned

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[725] Tommie Shelby, "Ideology, Racism, and Critical Social Theory," 182.

[726] Ibid.

[727] W.E.B. Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction*, 700.

every problem of labor advance into a matter of inter-racial jealousy."[728] As I noted, Shelby emphasizes the point that White elites developed White supremacist beliefs due to their interests in maintaining the system through which they benefited at the expense of people of color. I certainly agree with him here, however, following Du Bois I go further and emphasize that White elite desires to maintain control over White workers (in addition to people of color) motivated their promotion of White supremacist beliefs.

Second, working-class White people retain White supremacist beliefs in part because the beliefs compensate them for their subjection to economic domination. Economic domination, in other words, is the specific characteristic of White workers' "subordinate social position," in Shelby's terms, which motivates their commitment to White supremacist beliefs. First, these beliefs provide White workers with a framework for interpreting economic domination and its consequences. Second, these beliefs guide and rationalize practices which constitute palliative means for coping with economic domination.

The third point concerns the practical consequences of White supremacist ideology for working-class White people. Although Shelby mentions difference in material consequences for White elites in contrast with working-class Whites, he does not specify these consequences. On my account, the persistence and prevalence of White supremacist culture intensifies non-elite White subjection to economic domination. To develop this claim, I now turn to the functional dimension of White supremacist ideology.

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[728] Ibid.

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Functional: The White Boomerang Effect

As I mentioned above, the functional dimension of ideology-critique attends to "the negative practical consequences" of an ideology "for society or some social group within it."[729] With regards to White supremacy, the persistence and prevalence of White supremacist culture contributes to the reproduction and reinforcement of unjust relations of domination which harm people of color. If, as Ruth Wilson Gilmore puts it, "racism...is the state-sanctioned or extralegal production and exploitation of group-differentiated vulnerability to premature death," White supremacist ideology guides racist practices and rationalizes unnecessary and unjust racialized death.[730]

Tommie Shelby and Sally Haslanger have emphasized this dimension of the function of White supremacist ideology throughout their writings.[731] In doing so, they have yet to address a question which was, and remains, central to ideology-critique – namely, how we account for the ways in which people come to invest in their own subjection to domination or oppression. This question is implicit in Marx's critique of religion, for example, and explicitly guides Wilhelm Reich's classic but, in my view, underappreciated *The Mass Psychology of Fascism.*[732] Similarly, Terry Eagleton characterized the study of ideology as "among other things an inquiry into the ways in which people may

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[729] Tommie Shelby, "Ideology, Racism, and Critical Social Theory," 164.

[730] Ruth Wilson Gilmore, *Golden Gulag* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 28.

[731] Tommie Shelby, "Ideology, Racism, and Critical Social Theory," *The Philosophical Forum*, XXXIV:2 (2003), 174 – 177; Tommie Shelby, "Racism, Moralism, and Social Criticism," *Du Bois Review*, 11:1 (2014), 70 – 71; Tommie Shelby, *We Who Are Dark: The Philosophical Foundations of Black Solidarity* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2005), 142- 150; Tommie Shelby, *Dark Ghettos: Injustice, Dissent, and Reform* (Cambridge, Massachusetts ; The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2016); Sally Haslanger, "Culture and Critique," *Aristotelian Society Supplementary Volume* XCI (2017), 150, 159-165; Sally Haslanger, *Critical Theory and Practice. Spinoza Lectures* (Assen, Netherlands: Koninklijke Van Gorcum, 2017), 11-12, 35, 38; Sally Haslanger, "Racism, Ideology, and Social Movements," *Res Philosophica* Vol. 94, No. 1 (2017), 16-17.

[732] See Marx's introduction to *A Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right.* Available at: https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1843/critique-hpr/intro.htm#05. Wilhelm Reich, *The Mass Psychology of Fascism*, transl. Vincent R. Carfagno (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1970).

come to invest in their own unhappiness."[733] Michael Rosen's *On Voluntary Servitude: False Consciousness and the Theory of Ideology* begins with a similar question: "Why do the many accept the rule of the few, even when it seems to be plainly against their interests to do so?"[734] More recently, Jason Read, drawing inspiration from neo-Spinozists Frédéric Lordon and Yves Citton, considers the question of why workers subject themselves to exploitation and even "struggle for exploitation as if it were liberation."[735] In general terms, then, various proponents of ideology-critique have been concerned with what we might call the "self-sabotaging" function of ideology, that is, the extent to which a particular ideology has negative practical consequences for the people in its grip.

To be clear, my broadly Du Boisian approach acknowledges the fact that White supremacist ideology functions to stabilize and perpetuate social practices which target and disproportionately harm people of color. In addition, however, it addresses the interrelated detrimental impact that White supremacist ideology and practice have had on most White people. As the epigraphs to this chapter suggest, "the lie" of innate White superiority/non-White inferiority boomerangs back onto White people.[736] Although the lie is propelled towards and against people of color, it ultimately circles back, with negative consequences for many White people. Less metaphorically, White supremacist ideology functions to stabilize and perpetuate social practices which, in targeting and disproportionately harming people of color, simultaneously, albeit indirectly (and in different ways, to be sure), harm most White people.

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[733] Terry Eagleton, *Ideology*, xiii.

[734] Michael Rosen, *On Voluntary Servitude: False Consciousness and the Theory of Ideology* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1996), 15. Cf. Michael Rosen, "On Voluntary Servitude and the Theory of Ideology," *Constellations* 7, no. 3 (2000), 395-396.

[735] Jason Read, "The Order and Connection of Ideology Is the Same as the Order and Connection of Exploitation: Towards a Bestiary of the Capitalist Imagination," *Philosophy Today* 59, no. 2 (2015), 177. Cf. Ibid., 182.

[736] For a powerful contemporary discussion of White supremacy as a lie, see the first chapter of Eddie S. Glaude, *Begin Again: James Baldwin's America and Its Urgent Lessons for Our Own* (New York: Crown, 2020).

I touched on this second function of White supremacist ideology in section three, which argued that White supremacist culture guides and rationalizes White supremacist practices which served working-class White people as palliative means of coping with economic domination. As I discussed, these practices created illicit White opportunities for social mobility at the expense of people of color, but they did not transform the structured social relations of economic domination which partially enabled and motivated them. On the contrary, their consequence was to further elite White efforts to accumulate capital and, therefore, to intensify existing structures of economic domination. This, I propose, is a central function of White supremacist ideology: to stabilize and perpetuate elite White economic domination of non-elite White people. Section three drew on Du Bois's analysis of the Reconstruction period and the Red Summer of 1919 to support this claim. We find further support for this claim in the sixth chapter of *Black Folk Then and Now*, to which I now turn.

Du Bois begins "The Future of World Democracy" with a discussion of the contradiction between "the development of liberalism and democracy in the world" and the African slave trade.[737] This, for Du Bois, is a modern world-historical social problem, a conflict between democratic ideals and a fundamentally anti-democratic reality. On the one hand, Du Bois says, "democracy developed in Europe and the United States in the conscious effort of [the White] laboring classes to equalize income and share in the freedom and power that had come to the new capitalists from the slave trade."[738] In other words, the transatlantic slave trade generated unprecedent wealth, freedom, and power for "the new capitalists." The White laboring classes recognized and organized to democratize this expanded freedom and power, that is, to ensure that they could be more equally distributed among the White population. In short, Du Bois claims that the White European-American labor

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[737] W.E.B. Du Bois, *Black Folk Then and Now*, 263.

[738] Ibid, 263-264.

movement of the 19th and 20th centuries aimed primarily to redistribute the fruits of chattel slavery (and, I would add, settler colonialism). The fundamentally anti-democratic reality which enabled their democratizing efforts, however, ultimately undermined their own liberal and democratic ideals.

It is important to note that the conflict here was not a matter of moral inconsistency – White workers endorsing democratic ideals yet refusing to extend them to people of color. Du Bois is clear that White laborers endorsed a racialized democratic ideal.[739] They struggled for a democracy of and for Whites. The problem, Du Bois argues, is that even this exclusionary democratic ideal could not be realized because of the broader sociocultural impact of chattel slavery. The invention, maintenance, and expansion of chattel slavery directly shaped European-American cultural perceptions of human difference and social hierarchy. Not only, as is well known, did it generate the myth of innate White superiority/non-White inferiority, but it also impacted cultural narratives regarding poverty and labor. Chattel slavery, Du Bois writes, "divided humanity into owners and goods, it made men callous to the sufferings of White men as well as black; to the poverty of White labor, because it was looked upon not as unfortunate and oppressed but inferior and incapable; and with this class of the incapable and inferior were bracketed all members of the darker races."[740] The system of chattel slavery - and, importantly for my purposes, the culture which emerged with it - strengthened and popularized the ancient tendency to see poverty as the inevitable condition of inherently inferior and

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[739] Borrowing from sociologist Pierre van den Berghe, Charles Mills has argued that the United States and other White settler capitalist states have been and remain "*Herrenvolk* democracies," that is, democracies of and for White people. On my Du Boisian account, in contrast, the notion that White supremacist capitalist states have been democracies for most White people is itself an ideological feature of those states. Herrenvolk democracy has been the ideal, to be sure, but the reality has not been democratic – at least not if "democracy" encompasses economic democracy. Although I will not pursue the point further here, I would argue that Mills is engaged in a bit of ideal theory in the ideological sense and, in so doing, inadvertently promoting a narrative which has (among other narratives) supported White supremacy. See Charles Mills, "Under Class Under Standings," in Charles W. Mills, *From Class to Race: Essays in White Marxism and Black Radicalism*, (Lanham, Md: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003), 129. Charles W. Mills, "Ideal Theory' as Ideology," in Charles W. Mills, *Black Rights/White Wrongs: The Critique of Racial Liberalism*, Transgressing Boundaries (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2017): 72 – 90.

[740] W.E.B. Du Bois, *Black Folk Then and Now*, 264.

incapable human subpopulations. This, Du Bois claims, derailed White laborers' efforts to improve their own social conditions. He writes:

> Henceforth the White labor movement beginning as mass emancipation, became subtly transformed so as to enable certain individuals and groups of laborers to escape from their poverty and become either better paid laborers or preferably employers and owners. Even in their ranks, the attitude toward the lowest class of labor and toward colored labor was an attitude of indifference and contempt. The dream of new America came to be not the uplift of labor, but the transmutation of poor White laborers into rich employers, with the inevitable residue of the poor White and black eternally at the bottom. In time men became used to the idea that this submerged mass should form not a tenth, but nine-tenths of all men.[741]

People socialized into White supremacist culture acquired the reifying belief that the enslavement of African people was a necessary, natural fact. At the same time, Du Bois suggests, they acquired a more general reifying belief that poverty and economic domination were unavoidable facts of life. Economic domination and poverty came to seem inevitable, their abolition inconceivable. And so White laborers sought not to transform economic relations but to leverage them for their own racialized advantage. They did not want to abolish the position of wage laborer but to escape subjection to wage labor by becoming employers and owners – and, of course, subjecting others to the same.[742]

Drawing on his understanding of modern human interdependence, Du Bois identifies an insurmountable limitation of this escapist tendency. The problem is that "dark laborers" could not

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[741] Ibid.

[742] In Joel Olson's words, "The White political imagination compels White workers to try to evade exploitation rather than confront it, to scoff at hard work as being beneath them, and to seek pleasure outside of their labor rather than through it." Joel Olson, "The Democratic Problem of the White Citizen," *Constellations* 8, no. 2 (2001), 178.

be definitively segregated from White laborers with regards to economic relations. All working-class people, Du Bois says, are increasingly "bound up" in the same "industrial process," "employed by the same capital," and subject to job competition.[743] Although "their wages can be kept at vastly different levels...the enhanced profit from this low black wage goes only in part to White labor," with the consequence that "cheap colored labor enhances the power of owners and employers over White labor."[744] In this regard, chattel slavery undermined the White labor movement. The endeavor to construct a democracy of and for White people resulted in the worsening subjection of most White people to economic domination.

Du Boisian Contributions

Section four articulated a Du Boisian account of the epistemological, etiological, and functional dimensions of White supremacist ideology. To conclude this chapter, I now highlight four contributions I take this Du Boisian account to make to contemporary discussions of racist ideology.

Top-down approach

First, the concepts of *elite cultural power* and *top-down socialization* I have relied upon throughout this chapter highlight the extent to which elite White men have played a disproportionate role in maintaining and mobilizing White supremacist ideology since the antebellum period. Tommie Shelby has mentioned the fact that elites propagate their own assumptions through the media, schools, etc. and thereby influence the broader population, but he does not incorporate this fact into

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[743] W.E.B. Du Bois, *Black Folk Then and Now*, 264.

[744] Ibid., 263.

his broader theorization of racist ideology.[745] Sally Haslanger, on the other hand, does not address matters of elite power and interests at all, as I argued in chapter two.[746] It would seem, then, that for Shelby and Haslanger, elite White power is in a sense incidental to the persistence of White supremacist ideology. On their accounts, it seems to me, looping effects between culture (Haslanger) or beliefs (Shelby) and social practices/conditions would continue to sustain racist ideology whether or not elite White men existed. On my Du Boisian account, on the other hand, elite White men play a systematic role in the maintenance of racist ideology. From a Du Boisian perspective, a critical social theory which aims to explain the persistence of White supremacist ideology must take this into account.

Systematic scapegoating

Second, the preceding account reveals an undertheorized causal connection between economic domination and racial domination. On this account, working-class White people's subjection to economic domination partially and indirectly motivates their investment in White supremacist culture and participation in White supremacist practices. From this perspective, I agree with Tommie Shelby's claim that "racial scapegoating is a familiar response to economic powerlessness and desperation. The White working-class racist," he continues, "attacks blacks in a similar subordinate economic position and blame them for problems whose real causes lie elsewhere."[747] The Du Boisian account I have been developing goes further, however, making the stronger claim that racial scapegoating as Shelby describes it is constitutive of White supremacist ideology. That is, White

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[745] Shelby, *Dark Ghettoes*, 23.

[746] I mention Shelby and Haslanger here because, to my knowledge, they have elaborated the most systematic contemporary accounts of racist ideology.

[747] Shelby, "Ideology, Racism, and Social Critical Social theory," 171.

supremacist ideology persists in part because it provides working-class White people with a palliative means for interpreting and coping with economic domination. Furthermore, this account centers the systematic and mutually constitutive relationship between White supremacist ideology/practice and economic domination. Economic domination leads many White people to scapegoat people of color. This scapegoating, in turn, reinforces non-elite White subjection to economic domination, which necessitates further scapegoating, and so on.

Self-Sabotage

Third, it highlights the extent to which White supremacist culture and practices have detrimentally impacted working-class White people by intensifying their subjection to economic domination. Shelby and Haslanger, on the other hand, focus on the extent to which racist ideology functions to stabilize and perpetuate White domination of people of color. This is certainly an important endeavor, as I argue above. In focusing on this question, however, contemporary theorists of racist ideology have yet to address a long-standing question underlying ideology-critique, namely, how is it that people sometimes "come to invest in their own unhappiness."[748] From my Du Boisian perspective, White supremacist ideology indirectly leads many working-class White people to invest in their own subjection to economic domination.

Integrated approach to ideology

Fourth - and this, I submit, is a contribution to the broader literature on ideology - my Du Boisian account of White supremacist ideology points towards an integrated approach to explaining the presence and persistence of ideology. In his 2003 essay "Ideology, Racism, and Critical Social

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[748] Eagleton, *Ideology*, xiii.

Theory," Tommie Shelby identifies two primary variants of materialist explanations for the persistence of racist ideology.[749] The functionalist approach focuses on the "self-perpetuating feedback loop" between ideologies and social relations of domination and exploitation. The processualist approach emphasizes political agency, power-relations, and social struggle in the context of relations of domination and differential group interests. Du Bois, I would argue, incorporates both approaches into his analysis and critique of White supremacist ideology. In this regard, his work represents a bridge between functionalist and processual accounts of ideology in contemporary philosophy and political theory. A proper defense of this claim awaits further research, but hopefully the current chapter has persuaded the reader of its plausibility.

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[749] Tommie Shelby, "Ideology, Racism, and Critical Social Theory," *The Philosophical Forum* 34, no. 2 (June 2003), 184. "Materialist" explanations, Shelby notes, account for the presence and persistence of ideologies "in terms of the material conditions of social life," specifically, "those productive resources and social relations that are directly related to the production of goods and services for a given social population or for the market." Shelby contrasts such explanations with "idealist" ones, which focus on "widespread ignorance, faulty reasoning, and failures to appreciate relevant evidence." As Shelby argues, this distinction is important because, among other reasons, it influences our understanding of the appropriate response to a particular ideology. If ideology persists because of widespread ignorance, the solution is widespread education. If, on the other hand, ideology persists because of broader social relations/practices (interracial labor competition, for example), then more systematic social change is required. To be clear, effective materialist approaches do require education – or, if you prefer, "consciousness raising" – regarding, say, the social relations/practices and other factors underlying the persistence of ideology. The materialist point is simply that education alone is insufficient. Concrete social action must also be taken to transform the social relations/practices in question. Furthermore, it is often through concrete social action that we acquire new understandings of social phenomena. Materialists thus emphasize the dialectical relationship between education and practice. Ibid., 185, 184. See also Sally Haslanger, "Racism, Ideology, and Social Movements," *Res Philosophica* 94, no. 1 (2017), 10-11. For a classic materialist discussion of the relationship between education and social change, see Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, transl. Myra Bergman Ramos (New York: Continuum, 1993).

Chapter VI

Conclusion

From Jim Crow to the Great Depression

In the previous chapter I drew on Du Bois to argue that throughout US history many work-

ing-class White people have relied on White supremacist ideology as an action-guiding framework

for interpreting and coping with the consequences of economic domination. According to Du Bois,

I showed, White economic elites deployed White supremacist narratives to conceal economic dom-

ination and explain job competition, poverty, vulnerability to downward social mobility, and a gen-

eral lack of control over everyday life as consequences of incommensurable racial differences. Many

White people drew on these narratives to rationalize social practices that enabled them to attain a

relative degree of social mobility and security at the expense of people of color, often through violent

means.[750] These short-term practical benefits, I maintain, partially explain the efficacy and appeal of

White supremacist ideology.[751]

As I also argued in the previous chapter, however, systemic White supremacy has simulta-

neously had a detrimental impact on many working-class White people. In relying on White su-

premacist practices to improve their socioeconomic conditions and exercise some degree of control

over their lives, working-class White people merely attained positions of relative advantage within a

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[750] Channon Hodge, Breeanna Hare, Tami Luhby, Elias Goodstein, Priya Krishnakumar, Nadia Lancy, Toby Lyles, Amy Roberts and Clint Alwahab, "Burned from the land: How 60 years of racial violence shaped America," *CNN*, May 31, 2021, https://www.cnn.com/interactive/2021/05/us/Whitewashing-of-america-racism/.

[751] "Partially" because White supremacy and White privilege are complex phenomena. A comprehensive account (were such a thing to be possible) would have to address the mutually reinforcing relationships among White supremacy, Christian fundamentalism, nationalism, heteropatriarchy, ableism, etc. I do not claim to offer a comprehensive or exhaustive explanation for systemic White supremacy in this project. I am simply focusing on the relationship between economic domination and White supremacist ideology.

broader system of economic domination. White lynch rioters may have eliminated labor competition, expropriated wealth, stole land, and rejoiced in public displays of obscene solidarity; they did not abolish class relations. Systemic White supremacy has, in this regard, served as a *palliative* means of coping with economic domination

In failing to address economic domination, systemic White supremacy has exacerbated the problem. As Du Bois emphasized, White supremacist ideology prevented many White workers from recognizing the need for multiracial class struggle against systematic economic domination throughout the 19th and early 20th centuries. The South, he wrote in the 1930s, "is for the most part against unions and the labor movement, because there can be no real labor movement in the South; their laboring class is cut in two and the White laborers must be ranged upon the side of their own exploiters by persistent propaganda and police force. Labor can gain in the South no class-consciousness."[752] In pursuing a relative competitive advantage at the expense of people of color, many White workers reinforced the broader profit-oriented system of economic domination from which they, too, suffered. Popular support for, or indifference to, the system of chattel slavery, for example, reinforced a degree of labor competition which tended to push even working-class White people "into the depths of exploited, ignorant poverty."[753] Similarly, the 1876 overthrow of Reconstruction had far-reaching negative consequences for working-class White people, Du Bois argued. In supporting the disfranchisement of Black people, he insisted, White workers transferred "political power from the hands of labor to the hands of capital, where it has been concentrated ever since."[754]

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[752] W.E.B. Bois, *Black Reconstruction in America, 1860-1880* (New York, NY: Free Press, 1998), 704. Hereafter cited as "Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction.*"

[753] Ibid., 633.

[754] Ibid., 704.

Without downplaying the realities of relative White advantage, then, Du Bois argued that White supremacist practices have had the consequence of increasing White elite wealth and power, thereby intensifying economic domination and generating unnecessary suffering and death for many White people as well as people of color. A rich passage from *Black Reconstruction* illustrates the devastating longer-term consequences. Writing amid the Great Depression, Du Bois drew a direct causal connection between the condition many working-class White people faced and the legacy of racialized chattel slavery. He writes,

> Indeed, the plight of the White working class throughout the world today is directly traceable to Negro slavery in America, on which modern commerce and industry was founded, and which persisted to threaten free labor until it was partially overthrown in 1863. The resulting color caste founded and retained by capitalism was adopted, forwarded and approved by White labor, and resulted in the subordination of colored labor to White profits the world over. Thus the majority of the world's laborers, by the insistence of White labor, became the basis of a system of industry which ruined democracy and showed its perfect fruit in World War and Depression.[755]

This passage deftly captures the historical relationship between systemic White supremacy, economic domination, and what I call "the White boomerang effect." As the previous chapter demonstrated, many White workers acted on White supremacist beliefs and values during the postbellum period, supporting the construction and consolidation of the Jim Crow system, which overthrew Reconstruction governments and contributed to late 19th century colonial imperialism, especially in

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[755] Ibid., 30.

Africa.[756] In doing so, they indeed subordinated "colored labor to White profits the world over," thereby attaining a relative degree of social mobility and security at the expense of people of color. The longer-term consequence, however, was the intensification of a system predicated on the perpetual accumulation of profit rather than the satisfaction of human needs. The end results were World War and Depression. Of course, White workers were by no means invulnerable in the face of these catastrophes.

The Postwar Period

By the 1950s, organized labor struggles, New Deal-era government policies, and the wartime expansion of industry had ended the Great Depression. The resulting postwar welfare state enabled many working-class people to acquire relatively secure socioeconomic positions as home-owning, skilled blue- and White-collar workers. These people were, of course, disproportionately White.[757] The mid-20th century thus witnessed the growth of a disproportionately White suburban population exemplified by familiar images of the patriarchal White nuclear family picnicking in their backyard - car in the driveway, vacations planned, retirement fund ensuring some degree of financial independence in old age. What these images conceal, of course, are the structural consequences of White suburbanization. White capital flight from the country's urban centers abandoned a disproportionately Black population to concentrated poverty and disadvantage.

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[756] For a discussion of the relationship among formal emancipation, Jim Crow, and late 19th century colonial imperialism, see W.E.B. Du Bois, "The Negro Question in the United States," in *The Problem of the Color Line at the Turn of the Twentieth Century*, edited by Nahum Chandler (New York: Fordham University Press, 2015), 325; Du Bois, *The World and Africa*; Andrew Zimmerman, "Reconstruction along the Global Color Line," in James S. Humphreys, ed., *Interpreting American History: The New South* (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 2017), 51 – 53.

[757] Heather C. McGhee, *The Sum of Us: What Racism Costs Everyone and How We Can Prosper Together* (New York: One World, 2021), xvi. Hereafter cited as "McGhee, *The Sum of Us*."

Through the mid-20th century, then, many White people continued to attain some degree of relative social mobility and security at the expense of people of color. In historian Jefferson Cowie's words, "The organized, industrial, White, and male sectors enjoyed the benefits of a private welfare system, while the unorganized sectors – often women and people of color in service occupations – were left out of the club."[758] Once again, however, racialized government policies and extralegal White supremacist practices failed to address structural economic domination. Postwar labor leaders' success securing employment, improved wages, and benefits for their predominantly White male rank-and-file members led them to believe that they "had turned the house of labor into a palace...And it had," Cowie continues, "but by the time the seventies came around, it became clear that the entrance was guarded and the foundation lay on shifting sands."[759] The relative advantages many White people enjoyed through their direct or indirect participation in racialized domination were very real, but they were also quite vulnerable.

Neoliberalism

The sands began to shift in the early 1970s, as economic elites embarked on a systematic effort to dismantle the postwar welfare state. For elite White men such as corporate attorney and jurist Lewis F. Powell, Jr., the democratic excesses of the late 1960s threatened to overthrow the so-called free enterprise system. In the now infamous Powell Memorandum, written in 1971, the future Supreme Court Justice called on corporate managers, business organizations, and the National Chamber of Commerce - which, he noted, have "demonstrated the greatest capacity in all history to produce and to influence consumer decisions" - to engage in a systematic and coordinated effort to

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[758] Jefferson Cowie, *Stayin' Alive: The 1970s and the Last Days of the Working Class* (New York: New Press, 2010), 29.

[759] Ibid.

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defend the "free enterprise" system from minority-led social movements.[760] Powell proposed wide-scale educational programs, the surveillance of textbooks, television and radio programs, and campus lectures, the "balancing" of university faculties, as well as direct political action to defend the system against would-be revolutionaries. For Powell, defenders of the "free enterprise system" were engaged in a war on many fronts. "There should be no hesitation to attack the Naders, the Marcuses and others who openly seek destruction of the system," he wrote.[761] "There should not be the slightest hesitation to press vigorously in all political arenas for support of the enterprise system. Nor should there be reluctance to penalize politically those who oppose it."[762]

The ensuing decades witnessed a remarkable, and quite successful, effort to realize Powell's vision. As historian Benjamin C. Waterhouse details, corporate activists across industries and organizations formed a broad political coalition during the 1970s to construct a "business-oriented, neoliberal political culture."[763] Existing business organizations aggressively expanded their membership and rapidly accumulated money for corporate lobbying and research.[764] Corporate CEOs established think tanks to produce empirical and philosophical scholarship in support of policies of "deregulation, privatization, and withdrawal of the state from many areas of social provision."[765] In doing so, they sought to reshape local and national politics to suit their private interests.[766]

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[760] https://scholarlycommons.law.wlu.edu/powellmemo/

[761] Ibid.

[762] Ibid.

[763] Benjamin C. Waterhouse, *Lobbying America: The Politics of Business from Nixon to NAFTA* (Princeton University Press, 2015), 2. Cf. David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (Oxford; Oxford University Press, 2005), 84.

[764] David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (Oxford; Oxford University Press, 2005), 42.

[765] Ibid., 3, 43.

[766] Alexander Hertel-Fernandez, *State Capture: How Conservative Activists, Big Businesses, and Wealthy Donors Reshaped the American States--and the Nation* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2019).

The legitimation and implementation of neoliberal economic policies, as Powell was well aware, entailed a protracted cultural and political struggle. As David Harvey put it, neoliberal politicians, sympathetic corporate partners, and thinktank intellectuals needed to construct "political consent across a sufficiently large spectrum of the population to win elections."[767] Proponents of neoliberal political theory and policies had to contend with a multiracial voting bloc of Democratic Party state organizations, labor unions, and poor and working-class people. By the time Powell wrote his memorandum, members of this electoral coalition had supported candidates promising robust federal spending for public work projects and relief programs aimed at helping the unemployed and poor, strong financial regulation, and progressive taxation for decades. The preservation of the so-called free enterprise system, as Powell understood it, thus required a political realignment.

White supremacist ideology was a central weapon in the struggle to construct political consent for neoliberal policies.[768] As Ian Haney-Lopez has documented, the Republican Party's Southern Strategy delivered a fatal blow to the New Deal coalition. Through deliberate, strategic uses of dog whistle racism – that is, "coded racial appeals that carefully manipulate hostility toward nonWhite people" - Republican Party politicians and strategists validated and enflamed White voters' racialized fears and anxieties.[769] Dog whistle politicians effectively deployed White supremacist

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[767] Ibid., 39.

[768] As Nancy MacLean has shown, White supremacist ideology also played an important role in shaping the deeper political theory which, in part, guided elite-led policy changes during the 1970s. Specifically, her book *Democracy in Chains* traces the influence of antebellum White supremacist John C. Calhoun and American economist James Buchanan, who developed Calhoun's political theory in order to articulate an ostensibly race-neutral argument against desegregation. As MacLean shows, Buchanan was a major intellectual influence on the Koch brothers, who have played a major role in transforming the political, cultural, and economic terrain of the United States since the late 1970s. Nancy MacLean, *Democracy in Chains: The Deep History of the Radical Right's Stealth Plan for America* (New York: Viking, 2017). For a detailed discussion of the Koch brothers' influence on US politics since the 1970s, see Jane Mayer, *Dark Money: The Hidden History of the Billionaires behind the Rise of the Radical Right*, First Edition. (New York: Doubleday, 2016).

[769] Ian Haney López, *Dog Whistle Politics: How Coded Racial Appeals Have Reinvented Racism and Wrecked the Middle Class* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 6. Hereafter cited as "Haney Lopez, *Dog Whistle Politics.*"

ideology to frame progressive taxation, economic regulation, and federal spending on public services as symptoms of an "activist government" manipulated by lazy, undeserving, and narrowly self-interested racial minorities.[770] Politicians such as Ronald Reagan led many White people to believe that people of color wholly benefited from New Deal-style policies at their expense. In so doing, these politicians persuaded many White voters to support massive tax cuts, deregulate the economy, and withdraw federal support for public services – policies which ultimately "wrecked the middle class."[771]

The ongoing devastation inflicted on the disproportionately White middle class has been widely documented.[772] Economic historian Peter Temin, for example, draws on data showing that the share of middle-class income has fallen since 1970 to support his contention that the middle-class is "vanishing."[773] Thomas Picketty's *Capital in the Twenty-First Century* details the rising inequality which has plagued the United States since 1975.[774] Economists Estelle Sommeiller and Mark Price write of "the new gilded age," reporting that unequal economic growth since the 1970s has pushed the top 1 percent's share of all income to levels not seen since 1928.[775] More recently, the RAND Corporation reported "that aggregate income for the population below the 90th percentile

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[770] Ibid, 92.

[771] Ibid, 160.

[772] To be clear, the White middle class has not been the only population to suffer as a result of neoliberal policies. As is often the case, Black and Brown people have suffered disproportionately from the evisceration of public services, militarization of law enforcement, expansion of mass incarceration, etc. The point here is that even the White middle class has suffered in recent decades, and that White middle class suffering is in part a result of many White people's tacit, if not overt, acceptance of White supremacist culture.

[773] Peter Temin, *The Vanishing Middle Class: Prejudice and Power in a Dual Economy* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2017).

[774] Thomas Piketty, *Capital in the Twenty-First Century* (Cambridge Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2014).

[775] Estelle Sommeiller and Mark Price, "The New Gilded Age: Income Inequality in the U.S. by State, Metropolitan Area, and County," *Economic Policy Institute*, July 19th, 2018, https://www.epi.org/publication/the-new-gilded-age-income-inequality-in-the-u-s-by-state-metropolitan-area-and-county/.

over this time period [1975 to 2018] would have been $2.5 trillion (67 percent) higher in 2018 had income growth since 1975 remained as equitable as it was in the first two post-War decades."[776] In short, US economic elites – in particular, "dynastically wealthy families [who have] use[d] their financial, political, and philanthropic clout to advance their dynasty-building agenda[s]" - have enjoyed considerable success in their efforts to effect a massive upward redistribution of wealth and, consequently, a widespread deterioration in standards of living for the vast majority of people in the United States since the 1970s.[777]

Contemporary White Boomerangs

As this brief historical sketch indicates, systemic White supremacy has played a significant role in undermining the basic well-being of many White people as well as people of color. Ian Haney-Lopez's work shows, for example, that White supremacist ideology played a significant role in guiding, legitimating, and rationalizing policies which destroyed middle-class security and stability for many White people. A growing body of more recent empirical literature further verifies the claim. Labor historians, for example, have corroborated and extended Du Bois's insights regarding the detrimental impact that White supremacy has had on labor relations across the country. Specifically, the contributors to *Reconstructing Labor History* detail the complex, long-term impacts chattel slavery and Jim Crow have had on Southern and national labor relations. As Matthew Hild and Keri Leigh Merritt put it in their introduction to the recent volume,

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[776] Carter C. Price and Kathryn A. Edwards, "Trends in Income From 1975 to 2018," RAND Corporation Working Paper, September 2020, https://www.rand.org/pubs/working_papers/WRA516-1.html.

[777] Chuck Collins, Joe Fitzgerald, Helen Flannery, Omar Ocampo, Sopha Paslaski, Kalena Thomhave, "Silver Spoon Oligarchs: How America's 50 Largest Inherited-Wealth Dynasties Accelerate Inequalities," *Institute for Policy Studies*, June 16, 2021, https://ips-dc.org/report-americas-wealth-dynasties-2021/; Wendy Brown, *In the Ruins of Neoliberalism: The Rise of Antidemocratic Politics in the West* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2019).

In many ways, the problems that have beset southern labor for the past century and

a half – unfree labor, low wages, lack of collective bargaining rights, and virulent and

sometimes violent repression of those who have tried to organize unions – have be-

come the problems of workers across the United States, as the regional convergence

of labor markets has pulled wages and conditions for workers across the nation closer

to those of southern workers rather than the reverse.[778]

These consequences have persisted, accumulated, and intensified through the present day, when, as

is amply demonstrated throughout *Reconstructing Southern Labor History*, "the South's long history

of worker exploitation and labor practices have become standard fare throughout America."[779]

As I discussed in the introduction, sociologist and psychiatrist Jonathan Metzl's recent work

supports the White boomerang thesis from the perspective of public health. Economic and social

policy expert Heather McGhee's recent *The Sum of Us* further supports the thesis.[780] As I discussed

in the introduction, her book details, as the subtitle states, "what racism costs everyone and how we

can prosper together." McGhee's account closely follows and expands on that of Ian Haney-Lopez.

Across eight chapters, she details the detrimental impacts that policies and practices shaped by White

supremacy have had on most people. She explains, for example, how increasing student diversity

since 1980 reduced support for well-resourced, affordable public colleges. State legislatures reduced

spending on college affordability, and public colleges have increasingly relied on student tuition

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[778] Matthew Hild and Keri Leigh Merritt, eds., *Reconstructing Southern Labor History* (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2018), 2. Heather McGhee reiterates this point in her recent *The Sum of Us*, writing, "To a large degree, the story of the hollowing out of the American working class is a story of the southern economy, with its deep legacy of exploitative labor and divide-and-conquer tactics, going national." Heather McGhee, *The Sum of Us*, 119.

[779] Hild and Merritt, *Reconstructing Southern Labor History*, 2.

[780] Heather C. McGhee, *The Sum of Us: What Racism Costs Everyone and How We Can Prosper Together* (New York: One World, 2021).

dollars to cover their expenses. This resulted in skyrocketing tuition fees and student debt, which, in turn, have meant fewer home purchases, delayed marriages and families, and reduced retirement savings.[781] Instead of spending money on colleges and universities, many states invested in incarceration and policing. Although mass incarceration disproportionately hurts people of color, McGhee notes, increasing numbers of White people are being imprisoned for drug and property crimes.[782] The economic and social policy expert tells a similar story about worsening healthcare, predatory lending and the housing crisis which triggered the Great Recession, the decline of unions, voter suppression, racialized segregation's impact on local economies, public health, and the environment, and broader systemic failures to address ecological catastrophe.[783] In every case, the story is the same: social practices and policies shaped in part by White supremacist culture have disproportionately harmed people of color but have also had severely negative consequences for many White people.

An abundant (and growing) body of empirical literature now demonstrates that systemic White supremacy has had negative consequences for many White people throughout US history. The Du Boisian account I have developed offers a conceptual framework for interpreting and explaining these empirical data. Specifically, on my account, the negative consequences Haney-Lopez, Metzl, and McGhee have detailed result, in part, from the intensification of White working-class subjection to economic domination. Of course, my discussion of Du Bois focuses on the late 19th and early 20th centuries. More work needs to be done to support the thesis that White supremacist ideology has offered White people an action-guiding framework for interpreting and coping with economic domination during the mid-to-late 20th century. I will elaborate more fully on the mid-to-

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[781] Ibid., 41-45.

[782] Ibid., 45-47.

[783] Ibid., 49-63, 67-100, 113-119, 147-164, 177-184, 193-218.

late-20th century relevance of this account in the book manuscript version of this dissertation. For now, and to conclude, I will briefly discuss the White supremacist Capitol riot of January 6th, 2021, which illustrates the relationship between economic domination, White supremacist ideology, and the White boomerang effect.

The Capitol Riot

On January 6th, 2021, an overwhelmingly White crowd of protestors stormed the Capitol in an attempt to prevent the confirmation of Joe Biden's presidential election victory. The Capitol building was placed on lockdown, with senators and members of the House locked inside their chambers. DC law enforcement disarmed pipe bombs across the city. One officer shot and killed a woman during a standoff with law enforcement in the Capitol building. The physical and symbolic damage was so great that House Democrats introduced an article of impeachment charging Trump with "incitement of insurrection" less than a week later.

White supremacist ideology clearly played a significant role in guiding the rioters' actions. The highly visible symbols of White supremacy in the crowd of protestors were perhaps the most obvious indication of that fact. Protestors carried Confederate flags, wore anti-Jewish sweatshirts and t-shirts, and installed a gallows near the Capitol building. Beyond these visible symbols, however, are the White supremacist implications of the effort to contest and overturn the election. The first and most obvious of these is that the rioters were there to "defend" Donald Trump, who is himself a White supremacist.[784] Less obvious, however, is the fact that Black and Brown voters played a major

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[784] Mehdi Hasan, "Donald Trump Has Been a Racist All His Life — And He Isn't Going to Change After Charlottesville," *The Intercept*, August 15, 2017, https://theintercept.com/2017/08/15/donald-trump-has-been-a-racist-all-his-life-and-he-isnt-going-to-change-after-charlottesville/.

role in Biden's election victory.[785] Many Black people – Black women in particular – exercised a great deal of political intelligence and agency to increase voter turnout and realize Trump's defeat. It is unlikely that Joe Biden could have become the first Democrat to win Georgia in 28 years, for example, without the tireless efforts of Stacey Abrams, Black Lives Matter activists, and Black-led civic organizations.[786] Across the country, the vast majority of Black voters and significant majorities of Latino and Asian voters supported Joe Biden.[787] The attempt to overturn Biden's election victory disregarded and denigrated these facts. The rampant, unsubstantiated claims of widespread election fraud which preceded the January 6th Capitol riot expressed a blatant disregard for Black people as fellow citizens. They denied the legitimacy of Black people's votes, dismissing them as instances of voter fraud and, therefore, criminal acts.[788] They also demonstrated an inability and/or unwillingness to recognize the concrete political intelligence and agency of Black people. In this regard, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi was quite right to say that the rioters chose "their Whiteness over democracy."[789]

White supremacy thus permeated the Capitol riot. But to what extent did White supremacist culture offer rioters an action-guiding framework for interpreting economic domination? Relatedly,

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[785] Rashawn Ray, "How Black Americans saved Biden and American democracy," *Brookings,* November 24, 2020, https://www.brookings.edu/blog/how-we-rise/2020/11/24/how-black-americans-saved-biden-and-american-democracy/.

[786] Gregory Krieg, "Joe Biden becomes first Democrat in 28 years to win Georgia," *CNN,* November 13, 2020, https://www.cnn.com/2020/11/13/politics/joe-biden-wins-georgia/index.html; https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-54875344; Katanga Johnson and Heather Timmons, "How Stacey Abrams paved the way for a Democratic victory in 'New Georgia'," *Reuters,* November 10, 2020, https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-election-georgia/how-stacey-abrams-paved-the-way-for-a-democratic-victory-in-new-georgia-idUSKBN27P17F.

[787] https://www.cnn.com/election/2020/exit-polls/president/national-results

[788] McGhee, *The Sum of Us,* 156.

[789] "The Latest: Pelosi ties rioters' actions to 'Whiteness'," *Associated Press,* January 9, 2021, https://apnews.com/article/donald-trump-media-social-media-crime-mark-warner-28b76438fb5231060ae60091d4e316dd?fbclid=IwAR3UWhyBm_llTOvblWT8KrcfZnE3X0kViVjqgN5KYK3z8qVAJCEKiI6z_0Y.

to what extent were the rioters subject to economic domination at all? After all, several social commentators have argued that many January 6th protestors in fact enjoyed relatively secure socioeconomic positions. *Philadelphia Inquirer* columnist Will Bunch, for example, dismisses the notion that "economic anxiety" (which he does not define) explains the protestors' actions.[790] The presence of a real-estate broker, criminal defense lawyer, and residents of upscale suburbs at the protest, Bunch claims, proves that Trumpism is ultimately an "upper-middle-class affair." Adam Serwer similarly argues that rioters "acted not out of economic desperation, but out of their belief in their inviolable right to rule"[791]

Although, to my knowledge, there are no systematic studies of the class composition of the January 6th protestors (at least as of June 2021), the available evidence verifies Bunch and Serwer's claim that many Capitol riot participants enjoyed relatively advantaged positions within US society. Two political scientists studied the 193 suspects who have been charged with being inside the Capitol building or breaking through barriers to enter the Capitol grounds. They found that 40 percent are business owners or hold White-collar jobs. Many of the people who stormed the Capitol on January 6th are, in their words, "middle-aged, middle-class insurrectionists."[792] The term "middle-class,"

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[790] Will Bunch, "An insurrection of upper-middle class White people," *The Philadelphia Inquirer,* January 12, 2021, https://www.inquirer.com/columnists/attytood/capitol-breach-trump-insurrection-impeachment-White-privilege-20210112.html?fbclid=IwAR3DnO_5PSNLpWiv85SHa8bwRSI_hwc6tTWDrr8oOhk9qUX-LnZs_v2Z12zc&fbclid=IwAR1FSOmYB_xbL3vJ_DC5BikljI_xqNit4r2bmP7M2i1OJSbd2hYqPILjlms.

[791] Adam Serwer, "The Capitol Rioters Weren't 'Low Class'," *The Atlantic*, January 12, 2021, https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2021/01/thoroughly-respectable-rioters/617644/?fbclid=IwAR2aPMvh-uY-kGwjlysIy626nZ_6h1JPnnT9RBMMe73b-Fxxv00M2ZStB468.

[792] Robert A. Pape and Keven Ruby, "The Capitol Rioters Aren't Like Other Extremists," *The Atlantic*, February 2nd, 2021, https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2021/02/the-capitol-rioters-arent-like-other-extremists/617895/?fbclid=IwAR1XiwvbPxzkISigaPQt-drwFfs2uHBx3eD922wQr2oD596-qNGrEaOUyIc.

[793] Todd C. Frankel, "A majority of the people arrested for Capitol riot had a history of financial trouble," *The Washington Post*, February 10, 2021, https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/2021/02/10/capitol-insurrectionists-jenna-ryan-financial-problems/?fbclid=IwAR2dzjNqEyLHgnQg4nY5bSk4idOH16fbMm7ciumM-Ym-a4Z7EdeMNnnTmg0. [For some bizarre reason Microsoft Word decided to duplicate a few footnotes throughout the rest of this document. I haven't yet figured out how to fix it. Apologies for the confusion.]

however, should not lead us to reject the notion that economic concerns factored into this spectacle and, more precisely, that the protestors were indeed subject to economic domination. After all, as one recent *Washington Post* headline states, "A majority of the people arrested for Capitol riot had a history of financial trouble."[793] The article goes on to discuss an analysis of public records for 125 defendants, which found that "Nearly 60 percent of the people facing charges related to the Capitol riot showed signs of prior money troubles, including bankruptcies, notices of eviction or foreclosure, bad debts, or unpaid taxes over the past two decades."

Many of the rioters may be "middle-class," but they are by no means invulnerable to significant economic insecurity, downward social mobility, and to a general lack of control over their own lives. Relative socioeconomic advantages, in other words, do not entail freedom from the constraints of systematic economic domination. As I discussed above, those constraints have intensified over recent decades, generating widespread negative consequences for many, including Trump supporters. It should come as no surprise, then, that the Republican Party has been able to weave together White supremacist narratives and vague criticisms of economic domination in recent years.[794] Foremost among Republican purveyors of this pernicious concoction today is Tucker Carlson, host of the highest-rated program in cable news history on the most trusted news source among Trump

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[793] Todd C. Frankel, "A majority of the people arrested for Capitol riot had a history of financial trouble," *The Washington Post*, February 10, 2021, https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/2021/02/10/capitol-insurrectionists-jenna-ryan-financial-problems/?fbclid=IwAR2dzjNqEyLHgnQg4nY5bSk4idOH16fbMm7ciumM-Ym-a4Z7EdeMNmnTmg0. [For some bizarre reason Microsoft Word decided to duplicate a few footnotes throughout the rest of this document. I haven't yet figured out how to fix it. Apologies for the confusion.]

[794] Benjamin Y. Fong and Dustin Guastella, "The Siren Song of 'Pro-Worker' Conservatism," *Jacobin Magazine*, December 10, 2020, https://jacobinmag.com/2020/12/pro-worker-conservatism-right-wing-labor?fbclid=IwAR0olgDlM-CwTojLw2VO1YwzBIpqfAtAvVnbMAa61wV-Q_1ERt4UeF__zJjo; Victor Bruzzone and Matt McManus, "Far-Right Intellectuals Are Offering Workers a Rotten Deal," Jacobin Magazine, January 17, 2021, https://jacobin-mag.com/2021/01/benjamin-teitelbaum-war-for-eternity-steve-bannon/?fbclid=IwAR2ppfIc_TUptBC493IVAg7RgiM1; Eric Lutz, "Republicans are trying to rebrand themselves as working class heroes," *Vanity Fair*, March 4, 2021, https://www.vanityfair.com/news/2021/03/republicans-are-trying-to-rebrand-themselves-as-working-class-heroes.

voters.[795] Carlson has followed recent Republican efforts to present the GOP as the party of so-called ordinary, working-class Americans. In doing so, he has articulated somewhat radical-sounding critiques of economic domination. Consider the following excerpts from a January 2019 monologue:

> Does anyone still believe that cheaper iPhones, or more Amazon deliveries of plastic garbage from China are going to make us happy? They haven't so far. A lot of Americans are drowning in stuff. And yet drug addiction and suicide are depopulating large parts of the country.[796]

Here he criticizes capitalist consumerism, which is, in part, a function of the fact that a small population makes profit-oriented decisions regarding the production and distribution of consumer goods without regard for their social impact. Carlson then highlights the contradiction between material abundance and unnecessary suffering and death, a further consequence of systematic economic domination. Carlson also turns his attention to the US tax system:

> Under our current system, an American who works for a salary pays about twice the tax rate as someone who's living off inherited money and doesn't work at all. We tax capital at half of what we tax labor. It's a sweet deal if you work in finance, as many of our rich people do.[797]

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[795] "Trump, Clinton Voters Divided in Their Main Source for Election News," *Pew Research Center,* January 18, 2017, https://www.journalism.org/2017/01/18/trump-clinton-voters-divided-in-their-main-source-for-election-news/; Kelsey Sutton, "Pew Study: Fox News was No. 1 news source – for Trump voters," *Politico,* January 18, 2017, https://www.politico.com/blogs/on-media/2017/01/study-fox-news-is-no-1-news-source-for-trump-voters-233773; Mark Joyella, Tucker Carlson Has Highest-Rated Program In Cable News History," June 30, 2020, https://www.forbes.com/sites/markjoyella/2020/06/30/tucker-carlson-has-highest-rated-program-in-cable-news-history/?sh=3477b77b6195.

[796] Tucker Carlson, "Tucker Carlson: Mitt Romney supports the status quo. But for everyone else, it's infuriating," *Fox News,* January 3, 2019, https://www.foxnews.com/opinion/tucker-carlson-mitt-romney-supports-the-status-quo-but-for-everyone-else-its-infuriating.

[797] Ibid.

Here he almost sounds like a late 19th century critic of "wage slavery": economic domination compels some to work their entire lives while those who inherit their wealth are free to live as they please. Carlson continues, ranting that the tax system is

> based on laws that the Congress passed, laws that companies lobbied for in order to increase their economic advantage. It worked well for those people. They did increase their economic advantage. But for everyone else, it came at a big cost.[798]

Here Carlson observes that corporations and corporate lobbyists dominate the political process, exercising their disproportionate economic power to influence social policies for their own gain without regard for widespread negative consequences. This is a criticism of economic domination. Finally, there is his critique of "the market":

> Market capitalism is a tool, like a staple gun or a toaster...We do not exist to serve markets...Any economic system that weakens and destroys families is not worth having. A system like that is the enemy of a healthy society.[799]

Here Carlson highlights market domination as a specific form of economic domination. Markets – or, more precisely, major market actors such as the heads of large financial institutions – make one-sided decisions without regard for the concerns or needs of the many people negatively affected in the process.

Tucker Carlson's monologue clearly touches on some of the realities of economic domination. The problem is that he embeds his critique within a broader White supremacist framework. This becomes clear by the end of the monologue, when Carlson tells his viewers that they want to live in

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[798] Ibid.

[799] Ibid.

a country whose leaders don't accelerate the forces of change purely for their own profit and amusement. A country you might recognize when you're old...A country that listens to young people who don't live in Brooklyn...A country where Lewiston, Maine seems almost as important as the west side of Los Angeles...A clean, orderly, stable country that respects itself.[800]

"What will it take to a get a country like that?" Tucker Carlson concludes. "Leaders who want it. For now, those leaders will have to be Republicans. There's no option at this point."[801] So, what begins as an apparent critique of economic domination ends with a White supremacist misdiagnosis: the real cause of increasing drug addictions, suicides, poverty, and death among the White US population is not systematic, and worsening, economic domination, but elitist Democrats who pander to urban minorities and promote mass immigration to, as Carlson more recently put it, "dilute the political power" of American citizens.[802] I suggest that this misinterpretation, in part, informed the rioters' actions on January 6th.[803]

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[800] Ibid.

[801] Ibid.

[802] Yael Halon, "Tucker: Every time Democrats 'import a new voter,' they dilute Americans' political power," *Fox News*, April 8, 2021, https://www.foxnews.com/media/tucker-carlson-democrats-import-new-voter-dilute-americans-political-power. As the Anti-Defamation League has recently argued, Tucker Carlson promotes "the great replacement theory" on his Fox show. According to this anti-Semitic and White supremacist narrative, a tiny cabal of Jewish elites encourage the mass migration of Black and Brown people into the United States and funds domestic social movements to undermine White Anglo-Saxon interests and, ultimately, destroy "Western civilization". Jonathan A. Greenblatt, "ADL Letter to Fox News Condemns Tucker Carlson's Impassioned Defense of 'Great Replacement Theory'," *Anti-Defamation League*, April 9, 2021, https://www.adl.org/news/media-watch/adl-letter-to-fox-news-condemns-tucker-carlsons-impassioned-defense-of-great; Tucker Carlson, "Tucker Carlson: The real reason mobs across the country are tearing down American monuments," *Fox News*, June 23, 2020, https://www.foxnews.com/opinion/tucker-carlson-the-real-reason-mobs-across-the-country-are-tearing-down-american-monuments.

[803] As far as I am aware, there are no ethnographic studies detailing specific narratives which motivated the rioters, so for now this remains a reasonable hypothesis – "reasonable," because, as I mentioned, Tucker Carlson hosts the highest-rated program in cable news history on the most trusted news source among Trump voters. In my view, it is reasonable to suppose that Carlson's views have helped shape viewers' interpretations of contemporary politics and the economy.

Beyond arrests and possible criminal convictions, the Capitol riot's longer-term social impact remains to be seen. It does appear that the grotesque display has strengthened Trump's influence on the Republican Party, as GOP officials increasingly refuse to challenge the former president's lies regarding voter fraud and Trump loyalists look poised to win contested primaries.[804] To conclude, then, consider some consequences of the zealous Trump support represented by the riot. Trump established the wealthiest presidential cabinet in modern US history.[805] Sweeping Republican tax cuts, approved by Trump, overwhelmingly benefited the highest income earners. The Trump administration's trade war with China negatively impacted US agricultural industry revenue, farm income, and farm bankruptcies, affecting many farmers in the overwhelmingly rural White states which voted him into office.[806] The Trump administration's disregard for, and obstruction of, necessary public health

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[804] Mike Allen and Jim VandeHei, "Institutionalizing Trumpism," *Axios*, May 7, 2021, https://www.axios.com/institutionalizing-trumpism-1289f127-ff6e-4edd-aa34-7a6982d1984b.html?utm_campaign=organic&utm_medium=socialshare&utm_source=facebook&fbclid=IwAR0TKBMABr3Zx7kdP4uDvvLUwAHe74G9F-4-8yS3dv6XnSgexqG3egsUAxA; Chris Cilliza, "Why Republicans won't walk away from the 'Big Lie'," *CNN*, May 6, 2021, http://www.cnn.com/2021/05/06/politics/big-lie-gop-2020-election-trump/index.html.

[805] Taylor Gee and Visual Capitalist, "The Gold-Plated Cabinet," *Politico,* March/April 2018, https://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2018/03/09/trump-wealthiest-cabinet-members-217336/; Julianna Goldman, "Donald Trump's Cabinet richest in U.S. history, historians say," *CBS News*, December 20, 2016,

https://www.cbsnews.com/news/donald-trump-cabinet-richest-in-us-history-historians-say/

[806] Andrew Whalen, "Farmers Union Vice President Says Farmers Have 'Pretty Much Lost All Our Markets Since Trump Took Over'," *Newsweek*, September 3, 2019, https://www.newsweek.com/china-trade-war-trump-farmers-tariffs-bailout-subsidies-1457474; Rich Morin, "Behind Trump's win in rural White America: Women joined men in backing him," *Pew Research Center*, November 17, 2016, https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/11/17/behind-trumps-win-in-rural-White-america-women-joined-men-in-backing-him/; Danielle Kurtzleben, "Rural Voters Played A Big Part In Helping Trump Defeat Clinton," *NPR*, November 14, 2016, https://www.npr.org/2016/11/14/501737150/rural-voters-played-a-big-part-in-helping-trump-defeat-clinton. [For some bizarre reason Microsoft Word decided to duplicate a few footnotes throughout the rest of this document. I haven't yet figured out how to fix it. Apologies for the confusion.]

[806] Andrew Whalen, "Farmers Union Vice President Says Farmers Have 'Pretty Much Lost All Our Markets Since Trump Took Over'," *Newsweek*, September 3, 2019, https://www.newsweek.com/china-trade-war-trump-farmers-tariffs-bailout-subsidies-1457474; Rich Morin, "Behind Trump's win in rural White America: Women joined men in backing him," *Pew Research Center*, November 17, 2016, https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/11/17/behind-trumps-win-in-rural-White-america-women-joined-men-in-backing-him/; Danielle Kurtzleben, "Rural Voters Played A Big Part In Helping Trump Defeat Clinton," *NPR*, November 14, 2016, https://www.npr.org/2016/11/14/501737150/rural-voters-played-a-big-part-in-helping-trump-defeat-clinton. [For some

measures for addressing the COVID-19 pandemic have resulted in hundreds of thousands of preventable deaths.[807] People of color suffered disproportionately, as is so often the case, but many White people, too, suffered and died as a result. In fact, the regions of the country that Trump carried have also been those most plagued by COVID-19 infections (at least from March to November 2020).[808] While so many have suffered, US billionaires increased their total wealth by over $1 trillion since mid-March 2020.[809] The consequences have been catastrophic. Such has been the impact of racism's revenge.

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bizarre reason Microsoft Word decided to duplicate a few footnotes throughout the rest of this document. I haven't yet figured out how to fix it. Apologies for the confusion.]

[807] Maeve Reston, "Birx shares her chilling conclusion as America arrives at a moment of introspection on the coronavirus," *CNN*, March 27, 2021, https://www.cnn.com/2021/03/27/politics/covid-war-deaths-preventable/index.html.

[808] Chris Wilson, "The Political Coronavirus Paradox: Where the Virus Was Worst, Voters Supported Trump the Most," *Time*, November 11, 2020, https://time.com/5910256/covid-19-presidential-election-outcome/.

[809] Tommy Beer, "Report: American Billionaires Have Added More Than $1 Trillion In Wealth During Pandemic," *Forbes,* January 26, 2021, https://www.forbes.com/sites/tommybeer/2021/01/26/report-american-billionaires-have-added-more-than-1-trillion-in-wealth-during-pandemic/?sh=2f4434f62564; Chuck Collins, "Updates: Billionaire Wealth, U.S. Job Losses and Pandemic Profiteers," *Inequality.org*, April 15, 2021, https://inequality.org/great-divide/updates-billionaire-pandemic/.

[810] Naomi Zack, Lewis Gordon, and Michael Monahan, for example, have argued that White privilege discourse conflates rights and privileges. My account complements theirs insofar as it expands on our understanding of the limitations of White privilege discourse. Our accounts differ, of course, in that nine highlights the discourse's negative practical consequences, while theirs focuses on its conceptual issues. In this regard, I adopt more of a pragmatic approach to the issue, that is, one which focuses on the concrete relationship between concepts and social practices – and, more specifically, the practical implications and consequences of specific social concepts. See Lewis Gordon, "Critical Reflections on Three Popular Tropes in the Study of Whiteness," in *What White Looks like: African-American Philosophers on the Whiteness Question*, ed. George Yancy, 173-193 (New York: Routledge, 2004), 176. Naomi Zack, *White Privilege and Black Rights: The Injustice of U.S. Police Racial Profiling and Homicide* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 2015), especially chapter one; Michael J. Monahan, "The Concept of Privilege: A Critical Appraisal," *South African Journal of Philosophy* 33, no. 1 (2014): 73–83. [For some bizarre reason Microsoft Word decided to duplicate a few footnotes throughout the rest of this document. I haven't yet figured out how to fix it. Apologies for the confusion.]

Contributions

The first chapter offered a pragmatic critique of the prominent White privilege approach to understanding White supremacy. A one-sided focus on the advantages White people have earned at the expense of people of color throughout US history, I argued, implies a zero-sum framework for interpreting intergroup relations. The contemporary prevalence of zero-sum Whiteness and White precarity, however, render this approach politically infeasible and potentially quite dangerous due to the likelihood of triggering White backlash reactions. This chapter's contribution, as I see it, is two-fold. First, my pragmatic argument complements recent conceptual criticisms, thereby contributing to a broader understanding of the limitations of White privilege discourse.[810] Second, it reveals the need for a non-zero-sum account of White supremacy, that is, one which attends to the ways in which White supremacy has had negative consequences for many White people throughout US history. Following cues taken from Linda Alcoff's work on Whiteness, I concluded chapter one with a proposal to develop such an account in terms of the concept of *ideology*.

Focusing on Sally Haslanger's recent work, the second chapter critically engaged the prominent practice-oriented approach to racist ideology. I argued that this approach does not adequately address the central importance of power relations, political agency, and interests in the reproduction and maintenance of racist ideology. Consequently, it does not adequately explain the persistence

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[810] Naomi Zack, Lewis Gordon, and Michael Monahan, for example, have argued that White privilege discourse conflates rights and privileges. My account complements theirs insofar as it expands on our understanding of the limitations of White privilege discourse. Our accounts differ, of course, in that nine highlights the discourse's negative practical consequences, while theirs focuses on its conceptual issues. In this regard, I adopt more of a pragmatic approach to the issue, that is, one which focuses on the concrete relationship between concepts and social practices – and, more specifically, the practical implications and consequences of specific social concepts. See Lewis Gordon, "Critical Reflections on Three Popular Tropes in the Study of Whiteness," in *What White Looks like: African-American Philosophers on the Whiteness Question*, ed. George Yancy, 173-193 (New York: Routledge, 2004), 176. Naomi Zack, *White Privilege and Black Rights: The Injustice of U.S. Police Racial Profiling and Homicide* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 2015), especially chapter one; Michael J. Monahan, "The Concept of Privilege: A Critical Appraisal," *South African Journal of Philosophy* 33, no. 1 (2014): 73–83. [For some bizarre reason Microsoft Word decided to duplicate a few footnotes throughout the rest of this document. I haven't yet figured out how to fix it. Apologies for the confusion.]

and prevalence of racist ideology and fails to account for significant obstacles to the critique of ideology and anti-racist social change. Here, then, I contribute a critical understanding of the limitations of one prominent approach to conceptualizing racist ideology. This chapter concluded with a brief discussion of underdeveloped resources in Sally Haslanger's work. I proposed that an approach to racist ideology which centralizes some notion of social problems may offer an integrated framework for conceptualizing social practices, power-relations, and political agency, thereby addressing the limitations of the prominent practice-oriented approach.

Chapters three and four developed a Du Boisian conception of social problems and extended that conception to offer an account of White supremacist ideology. Chapter three drew on Lucius T. Outlaw, Robert Gooding-Williams, and W.E.B. Du Bois to articulate a systemic and agonistic conception of social problems. On this account, social problems are: (1) functions of a system of structured social relations of domination; and (2) sites of ongoing normative struggles over the control and management of social relations; with (3) practical implications for all those who are similarly situated within the broader social system. Chapter four extended this account to reconstruct an account of White supremacist ideology from Du Bois's writings. As I argued in that chapter, White supremacist culture has served, in part, as an action-guiding framework for interpreting and coping with economic domination qua social problem. In doing so, it has concealed and reinforced elite White economic domination of working-class White people. In this regard, my argument continued, White supremacist culture has functioned as an ideology – that is, a constellation of social meanings and narratives that conceal and rationalize White elite domination of non-elite White people and guide palliative social practices which, in perpetuating White domination of people of color, simultaneously intensify non-elite White people's subjection to economic domination.

In general terms, I take chapters three and four to complement recent efforts on the part of Charles Mills, Elvira Basevich, Lawrie Balfour, and Robert Gooding-Williams, among others, to

259

demonstrate W.E.B. Du Bois's importance as a social and political philosopher.[811] My account differs from theirs, however, in that I do not primarily read Du Bois as a normative political philosopher. To simplify, their general aim has been to reconstruct Du Bois's efforts to reconceptualize liberal political values – for example, freedom, justice, dignity - in light of African-Americans' historical experiences of racialized slavery and segregation, and to show how Du Bois appeals to these reconceptualized values in order to conceptualize and justify anti-racist social and political change. While this is certainly an important line of inquiry, I hope to contribute to our understanding of the critical dimension of Du Bois's thought, that is, his analyses of the systematic obstacles to the actualization of these values in social and political life. In other words, following Reiland Rabaka, I contribute to our understanding of Du Bois as a critical social theorist.[812] More specifically, I hope that my account

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[811] Robert Gooding-Williams, *In the Shadow of Du Bois: Afro-Modern Political Thought in America* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2009); Katharine Lawrence Balfour, *Democracy's Reconstruction: Thinking Politically with W.E.B. Du Bois*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011); Charles Mills, "W.E.B. Du Bois: Black Radical Liberal," in Nick Bromell, ed., *A Political Companion to W. E. B. Du Bois* (The University Press of Kentucky, 2018): 19-56; Elvira Basevich, "Du Bois's Critique of American Democracy during the Jim Crow Era: On the Limitations of Rawls and Honneth," *Journal of Political Philosophy*, (forthcoming); Elvira Basevich, "W.E.B. Du Bois's Critique of Radical Reconstruction (1865–77): A Hegelian Approach to American Modernity," *Philosophy & Social Criticism* 45, no. 2 (2019): 168–185, https://doi.org/10.1177/0191453718797371; Nicholas Knowles Bromell, ed., *A Political Companion to W. E. B. Du Bois*, (Lexington, Kentucky: The University Press of Kentucky, 2018).

[812] To be clear, I take normative analysis and critical inquiry to be interrelated but non-identical intellectual activities. I do not mean to suggest, then, that in focusing on Du Bois's normative analyses Mills et al. completely neglect his critical insights. I simply wish to highlight a subtle difference in emphasis when it comes to reading Du Bois. To cite one example here, Elvira Basevich has recently drawn on Du Bois to discuss the "failure" of Radical Reconstruction, claiming that "Du Bois shifts responsibility for the ultimate failure of Reconstruction on to the shoulders of the federal government and the bigoted reassertion of White supremacist power." This formulation overlooks one of the central claims of *Black Reconstruction*, namely, that Radical Reconstruction did not simply fail; it was *overthrown*. Furthermore, in contrast with Basevich's account, which characterizes the overthrow of Reconstruction as a bigoted White supremacist reaction, Du Bois's more nuanced account emphasizes the role that both White supremacy and economic domination played during the postbellum period. In his words,

> There have been repeated and continued attempts to paint this era as an interlude of petty politics or nightmare of race hate instead of viewing it slowly and broadly as a tremendous series of efforts to earn a living in new and untried ways, to achieve economic security and to restore fatal losses of capital and investment.

Elvira Basevich, "W.E.B. Du Bois's Critique of Radical Reconstruction (1865–77): A Hegelian Approach to American Modernity," *Philosophy & Social Criticism* 45, no. 2 (2019), 14; W.E.B. Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction*, 631; Ibid., 346.

For rich discussions of Du Bois as a critical theorist, see: Reiland Rabaka, *W.E.B. Du Bois and the Problems of the Twenty-First Century: An Essay on Africana Critical Theory* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2007); Reiland Rabaka, *Du*

has at the very least persuaded the reader that Du Bois's mid-20th century writings contain underappreciated resources for understanding the relationship between systemic White supremacy and economic domination. More specifically, I propose that his systemic and agonistic conception of social problems centers human agency, power-relations, and social struggles, and thus constitutes an important resource for understanding the persistence and prevalence of White supremacist culture in the United States, as well as the mutually reinforcing relationship between systemic White supremacy and widespread economic domination.

As I discussed in chapter four's conclusion, my account of White supremacist ideology highlights the fact that White supremacist culture and practices have detrimentally impacted working-class White people by intensifying their subjection to economic domination. My approach thus reintroduces a long-standing ideology-theoretical question into contemporary discussions of racist – or, in my preferred terms, White supremacist – ideology, namely, how is it that people sometimes "come to invest in their own unhappiness"?[813] Furthermore, contemporary philosophers such as George Yancy, Charles Mills, and Shannon Sullivan have discussed White supremacy's negative existential, epistemological, and ethical consequences for many White people. My account complements their efforts, approaching this issue from the perspective of social and political philosophy and the critique of political economy. It also contributes to a broader understanding of the negative social consequences of persistent White supremacy and offers additional resources for thinking

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Bois's Dialectics: Black Radical Politics and the Reconstruction of Critical Social Theory (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2008); Reiland Rabaka, *Africana Critical Theory: Reconstructing the Black Radical Tradition, from W.E.B. Du Bois and C.L.R. James to Frantz Fanon and Amilcar Cabral* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2009); Reiland Rabaka, *Against Epistemic Apartheid: W.E.B. Du Bois and the Disciplinary Decadence of Sociology* (Lanham, Md: Lexington Books, 2010).

[813] Eagleton, *Ideology*, xiii.

about White identity-formation "as a normative project for positive change."[814] More specifically, I identify one important reason most White people have for opposing White supremacy: to reduce and, ideally, abolish their subjection to economic domination.

In the conclusion of chapter four I also suggested that my account reveals an undertheorized, mutually constitutive relationship between racialized domination and economic domination. Part of this relationship, I proposed, involves a form of systematic scapegoating, wherein many White people draw on White supremacist culture and practices as means of interpreting and coping with economic domination. In this regard, working-class White people's subjection to economic domination partially and indirectly motivates their investment and participation in systemic White supremacy. Simultaneously, however, White supremacist culture and practices reinforce economic domination, which leads many White people to scapegoat people of color. This scapegoating, in turn, reinforces non-elite White subjection to economic domination, which reinforces the need for White supremacy qua interpretation and coping mechanism, which reinforces economic domination, and so on.

In my view, this account offers potential, if not yet actual, contributions to the broader social and political philosophy literature. Specifically, my Du Boisian account shows that there is a mutually constitutive relationship between racialized domination and economic domination, at least in the United States. It thus makes explanatory and normative contributions to broader understandings of both phenomena. Insofar as White supremacist practices serve, in part, as means of coping with economic domination, economic domination contributes to the persistence of racialized domination. Relatedly, insofar as White supremacist practices ultimately reinforce the broader system of economic domination to which most White people are subject, racialized domination contributes to the

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[814] Linda Martin Alcoff, "The Future of Whiteness," in *Living Alterities: Phenomenology, Embodiment, and Race*, ed. Emily S. Lee (New York: SUNY Press, 2014), 255.

persistence of economic domination. In this regard, my approach highlights the fact that any explanation of the persistence of one phenomenon must also account for the other.

This perspective also enhances our understanding of the normative issues at stake in struggles over economic and racialized domination. First, this account reveals that economic domination is wrong, not only because it undermines social reproduction and generates unnecessary suffering and death, but also because it contributes to the persistence of racialized domination. Similarly, racialized domination is wrong, not only because it inflicts unnecessary suffering and death on people of color, but also because it contributes to the persistence of economic domination. Second, the explanatory insight points toward the inextricable interdependence of racial justice and economic justice. One cannot be realized without the other. Although more work needs to be done to adequately articulate and defend these claims, I hope to least have persuaded the reader of their plausibility.

Finally, this project offers potential contributions to the philosophical literatures on social domination and ideology-critique. Regarding the former, Lillian Cicerchia has recently pointed out that social and political philosophers still lack an account of structural domination that takes agency seriously and, consequently, cannot explain the persistence and reproduction of social domination.[815] A similar issue prevails in the literature on ideology-critique, with structural or "functionalist" explanations generally prevailing over agential or "processual" ones.[816] Sally Haslanger's work offers perhaps the best example here. As I discussed in chapter two, Haslanger's account focuses on looping

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[815] Lillian Cicerchia, "Structural Domination in the Labor Market," *European Journal of Political Theory*, forthcoming, 147488511985109, https://doi.org/10.1177/1474885119851094.

[816] As I mentioned in chapter four, Tommie Shelby draws this distinction in his 2003 essay "Ideology, Racism, and Critical Social Theory." The functionalist approach focuses on the "self-perpetuating feedback loop" between ideologies and social relations of domination and exploitation. The processualist approach emphasizes political agency, power-relations, and social struggle in the context of relations of domination and differential group interests. Tommie Shelby, "Ideology, Racism, and Critical Social Theory," *The Philosophical Forum* 34, no. 2 (June 2003), 184.

effects between social meanings and social practices to the neglect of agency, power-relations, and social struggles, and therefore fails to explain the persistence of racist ideology and overlooks significant obstacles to anti-racist social change.[817] Although I cannot fully defend the claim here, I would argue that accounts by Rahel Jaeggi, Michael Morris, and Robin Celikates suffer similar limitations.[818]

I suggest that the Du Boisian account I have developed points towards an integrated account of social domination and ideology, one which attends to both structure and agency, social practices and social struggles. A full discussion of this account goes beyond the scope of the current project. For now, then, I offer a few preliminary theses: individuals tend to internalize the beliefs, values, and attitudes which purport to explain and justify the social relations and practices into which they are socialized. This acquired culture generally guides actions which sustain these social relations and practices. When individuals encounter social problems, they often reflect on and adjust their social relations, practices, and acquired culture. Relative social position shapes individual abilities to develop and share interpretations of, and proposed solutions to, social problems. Some individuals dominate others insofar as they possess wealth and other resources which grant them a disproportionate ability to unilaterally adjust social relations and practices in a manner that affects others. In

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[817] I want to note here that this problem is not unique to philosophy; it has recently emerged in sociology and labor history as well. The sociologists Joe R. Feagin and Kimberley Ducey, for example, have recently published a book motivated by their experience of the fact that "almost no social analysts have made regular and systematic use of a specific term and concept like "elite White men," for those who constitute the overwhelming majority of the most powerful decision-makers whose everyday choices and actions have regularly shaped both the United States and other societies across the globe." Similarly, historians Matthew Hild and Keri Leigh Merritt partially motivate a recent collection of essays on Southern labor history by citing Eric Arnesen's decades-old argument that "the current rage is to blame White workers for their own racism, while letting 'capital off the hook, with workers dividing themselves and capital merely walking away with the proverbial shop'." Joe R. Feagin and Kimberley Ducey, *Elite White Men Ruling: Who, What, When, Where, and How* (New York and London: Routledge, 2017), 2. Matthew Hild and Keri Leigh Merritt, eds., *Reconstructing Southern Labor History* (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2018), 4-5. For the Arnesen essay, see Eric Arnesen, "Up From Exclusion: Black and White Workers, Race, and the State of Labor History," *Reviews in American History* 26, no. 1 (1998): 146–174. https://doi.org/10.1353/rah.1998.0001.

[818] Rahel Jaeggi, *Critique of Forms of Life* (Cambridge, MA and London, England: Harvard University Press, 2018); Robin Celikates, *Critique as Social Practice: Critical Theory and Social Self-Understanding*, (London; Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2018); Michael Morris, *Knowledge and Ideology: The Epistemology of Social and Political Critique* (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2016).

doing so, these elite individuals often promote narrative explanations which they take to justify their desired outcomes. These narrative explanations constitute ideologies insofar as they entail episte-mological distortions which conceal and rationalize unjust social practices. The realization of elite-desired social change, although sometimes imposed, often requires the broader acceptance of said narrative explanations. One way to earn this broader acceptance is to construct narratives which resonate with more widespread experiences of social problems. In this regard, the persistence of social domination and ideology entail both agential and structural factors – agential because individ-uals actively sustain, negotiate, and contest social relations, practices, and their associated explanatory and justificatory narratives; structural because patterned social relations, practices, and associated narratives shape individual paths through the social world.

Future Research

My primary research project for the next two years involves developing my dissertation into journal articles and a book manuscript. First, I will submit revised excerpts of each chapter for pub-lication in such journals as *Critical Philosophy of Race*; *Theory, Culture & Society*; *Philosophy To-day*; and *Constellations*. Next, I will complete a book manuscript based on this dissertation. This will involve adding a chapter on the prison-industrial complex. This chapter will draw on Angela Davis and Ruth Wilson Gilmore, who have studied the prison-industrial complex as a false solution to social problems, to extend this Du Boisian conception of White supremacist ideology to the post-Civil Rights era. I will also address what Enzo Rossi and Olúfẹ́mi Táíwò have recently called "woke racial capitalism" – roughly, a form of capitalism in which political and economic elites make

symbolic feminist and anti-racist appeals without addressing the social conditions which reproduce anti-feminism and White supremacy.[819]

I also plan on revisiting lines of inquiry which I was not able to fully develop within the scope of this project. These include the "potential" contributions discussed above. Specifically, I hope to articulate more precise concepts of *racialized domination* and *economic domination* and elaborate on what I take to be the explanatory and normative insights of Du Bois's account of their mutually constitutive relationship. I also hope to make good on my claims regarding the integrated character of this Du Boisian account of social domination and ideology. In doing so, I will elaborate on the ways in which it addresses both agency and structure, social practices and social struggles (pertaining to the distinction between functional and processual accounts of ideology discussed above).[820] Finally, throughout chapter four and the conclusion I claim that White supremacist culture and practices have offered many White people a means for coping with a lack of control over their own lives, in reality the consequence of economic domination. In future research I will draw on contemporary social psychology to take a closer look at this dimension of economic domination and the ways in which White supremacy has served as a means of coping with this lack of control. In doing so, I will interpret the relevant social psychology literature in terms of a concept of alienation, which I will articulate in relation to the concept of *economic domination.*

My next major project will continue my engagement with W.E.B. Du Bois and Angela Davis to develop a political theory of abolition-democracy. I anticipate beginning with a reconstruction of Du Bois' negative consequentialist account of social freedom and democracy, that is, his account of the catastrophic consequences of persistent social unfreedom and oligarchy. Du Bois develops this

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[819] Enzo Rossi and Olúfẹ́mi Táíwò, "What's New About Woke Racial Capitalism (and What Isn't)," *Spectre*, December 18, 2020, https://spectrejournal.com/whats-new-about-woke-racial-capitalism-and-what-isnt/.

[820] See footnote 68.

negativist account, I will argue, to justify abolition-democracy – roughly, a form of social, cultural, political, and economic democracy constructed through the abolition of the enduring social, cultural, political, and economic effects of the transatlantic slave trade. Once again, I will draw on Angela Davis to extend this account to the post-Civil Rights period.

I also aim to complete several secondary projects within the next year or two, including articles on interracial solidarity and philosophical anthropology. I am currently preparing an article manuscript on the Attica Prison Uprising and George Jackson for submission to *Theory, Culture & Society*. This article explores Jackson's account of interracial solidarity as a shared recognition of the common need to: (1) abolish conditions engendering unnecessary and unjustifiable suffering; and (2) challenge the social actors who perpetuate, and profit from, those conditions. I argue that this shared experience enabled interracial solidarity in the prison movement through the formation of superordinate group identities – for example, "prisoner class," "convict races," or "imprisoned men" – which affirm common needs that cut across racial differences without eliding those differences.

Another article under preparation (for submission to *The Pluralist*) explores Du Bois's account of racism as an impediment to human evolution. I begin with a discussion of his account of the dangers of mutual racial violence, which, I show, he roots in the subtler danger of mutual racial isolationism. Drawing on evolutionary biologists Eva Jablonka and Marion Lamb, I then argue that mutual racial isolationism impedes human evolution because it inhibits intergroup social learning processes, which are essential to human survival (not to mention flourishing) in the face of novel environmental challenges. I close the paper with a discussion of the implications of this analysis in light of the ongoing ecological catastrophe.

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