The National Association for Ethnic Studies

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Editor's Notes

The idea for this issue was conceived shortly after the conclusion of the panel, “Battling White Supremacy with Ethnic Studies” at the 34th annual conference of the National Association for Ethnic Studies in San Francisco. A suggestion was made to publish a special issue on a subject exploring “Critical Race Studies” or “Critical White Studies.” As it turned out three of the original panel presenters were interested in participating in the initiative; hardly enough for a publication. The articles by Reiland Rabaka, R. Sophie Statzel and Isabell Cserno are based on their conference papers. As it further turned out, I had other papers in the review process which were thematically consistent with the panel papers. I believe the articles comprising this issue make a valuable contribution to the ongoing discourse about the continuing significance of “race” in the United States and other societies.

The contributors to this issue bring our attention to some of the continuing and pressing matters relating to the domestic and international ramifications of white supremacy. In “The Souls of White Folk: W.E.B. DuBois’s Critique of White Supremacy and the Contributions to Critical White Studies” Reiland Rabaka provides an analysis of DuBois’s article “The Souls of White Folk” and its critique of white supremacy. The author argues just as did DuBios, Africana Studies must join the critical white studies discourse. R. Sophie Statzel’s article “The Apartheid Conscience: Gender, Race, and Re-imagining the White Nation in Cyberspace” explores the extent to which an apartheid morality exists in the United States. By drawing on insights from critical white studies she examines the discourse carried out through the online hub of a contemporary white nationalist movement, Stormfront.org. The author observes that there are historical and contemporary reasons for organizations such as this to flourish. Jonathan Gayles and Sarah Tobin’s article, “White Conceptions of Racial Hierarchy: Temporary versus Permanent Preferences” is an empirically based argument that some white Americans hold to a persistent belief that African Americans are a socially distant group. “Whiteness Studies and the Colonial Aesthetic: Western Popular Culture and the Representations of Race” by Isabell Cserno is an analysis of and commentary about how the aesthetic of “whiteness” was/is used to maintain colonial dominance of indigenous peoples’ cultural products. In the final article, “Reflections on Racial Identify and the Black Movement in the United States and Brazil” David Covin brings to our attention how the construct of race is understood and experienced in the African diaspora. This article brings to the forefront how African people can develop different conceptions of themselves in different spaces, places and times.

These articles draw our attention to the ongoing discourse on race and challenge scholars to be mindful of the wide swath covered by the conversation about “race studies.”
Contributors

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Isabell Cserno is completing the Ph.D. in American Studies at the University of Maryland where she is an Ann G. Wylie Dissertation Fellow. She was awarded a previous fellowship from the Smithsonian National Museum of American History.

David Covin is professor emeritus of Government and Pan African Studies at California State University, Sacramento. A prolific scholar on the subjects exploring the experiences of African Americans he is becoming a recognized expert on the subject of Afro-Brazilian politics. His most recent publication is a book on the subject of the Black movement in Brazil.
White folks know niggers talk, an they dont mind jes so long as nothing comes of it, so here goes. (Toomer, 1993, p. 90)

This race talk is, of course, a joke, and frequently it has driven me insane and probably will permanently in the future; and yet, seriously and soberly, we black folk are the salvation of mankind.

(Du Bois, 1995, p.470)

Anti-Racism and Radical Politics, White Supremacy and Critical Social Theory

Traditionally “white supremacy” has been treated in race and racism discourse as white domination of and white discrimination against non-whites, and especially blacks. It is a term that often carries a primarily legal and political connotation, which has been claimed time and time again to be best exemplified by the historic events and contemporary effects of: African holocaust, enslavement and colonization; the “failure” of reconstruction, the ritual of lynching and the rise of Jim Crow segregation in the United States; and, white colonial and racial rule throughout Africa, and especially apartheid in South Africa (Cell, 1982; Fredrick-
son, 1981; Marx, 1998; Shapiro, 1988). Considering the fact that state-sanctioned segregation and black political disenfranchisement have seemed to come to an end, “white supremacy” is now seen as classical nomenclature which no longer refers to contemporary racial and social conditions. However, instead of being a relic of the past that refers to an odd or embarrassing moment in the United States and South Africa’s (among many other racist nations and empires’) march toward multicultural democracy, it remains one of the most appropriate ways to characterize current racial national and international conditions. Which, in other words, is to say that white supremacy has been and remains central to modernity (and “postmodernity”) because “modernity” (especially in the sense that this term is being used in European and American academic and aesthetic discourse) reeks of racial domination and discrimination (Goldberg, 1990, 1993; Mills, 1998, 2003; Outlaw, 1996, 2005). It is an epoch (or aggregate of eras) which symbolizes not simply the invention of race, but the perfection of a particular species of global racism: white supremacy. Hence, modernity is not merely the moment of the invention of race, but more, as Theodore Allen (1994, 1997) argues in The Invention of the White Race, it served as an incubator for the invention of the white race and a peculiar pan-Europeanism predicated on the racial ruling, cultural degradation and, at times, physical decimation of the life-worlds of people of color.

In “The Souls of White Folk,” which was initially published in the Independent in 1910, then substantially revised and published in Darkwater in 1920, Du Bois (1995) stated, “Everything considered, the title to the universe claimed by White Folk is faulty” (p. 454). Long before the recent discourse on critical race theory and critical white studies, Du Bois called into question white superiority and white privilege, and the possibility of white racelessness and/or white racial neutrality and universality. He was one of the first theorists to chart the changes in race relations from de jure to de facto forms of white supremacy, referring to it, as early as 1910, as “the new religion of whiteness” (p. 454).

White supremacy would or will not end unless and until the values and views endemic to it and associated with it were or are rejected and replaced by radical – and, I am wont to say, following the critical pedagogue Peter McLaren (1997), “revolutionary” multicultural and uncompromising ethical views and values. The rejection of white supremacy and the replacement of white supremacist views and values involves not only blacks and other people of color, but whites as well. As the examples of the Emancipation Proclamation, Reconstruction, and the Civil Rights movement indicate, changes in the law and its interpretation and application do not always translate into racial justice and social transformation (Berry, 1994; Higginbotham, 1978, 1996; King, 1995). White supremacist social views and values linger long after amendments have been made and laws
changed. Therefore, law-focused critical white studies, and critical race theory provide at best only part of the picture (Bonilla-Silva, 2001; Delgado, 1995; Delgado & Stefancic, 1997; Essed & Goldberg, 2001).

The conception and critique of white supremacy that I develop here does not seek to sidestep socio-legal race discourse as much as it intends to supplement it with Du Bois and others’ work in radical politics and critical social theory (Clark & O’Donnell, 1999; Doane & Bonilla-Silva, 2003; Hill, 1997; Nakayama & Martin, 1999; Sefa Dei, Karumanchery & Karumanchery-Luik, 2004; Rabaka, 2007, forthcoming). One of the main reasons this supplemental approach to critical white studies (and critical race theory) is important is because typically legal studies of race confine theorists to particular national social and political arenas, which is problematic considering the fact that white supremacy is an international or global racist system (Mills, 1999). Du Bois (1995) declared, “whiteness is the ownership of the earth forever and ever, Amen!” (p. 454). Here he is sardonically hinting at the cardinal difference between white supremacy and most other forms of racism: its worldwide historical, cultural, social, political, legal, and economic influence and impact. White supremacy serves as the glue that connects and combines racism to colonialism, and racism to capitalism. It has also been illustrated that it exacerbates sexism by sexing racism and racing sexism, to put it unpretentiously. Thus, white supremacy as a global racism intersects and interconnects with sexism, and particularly patriarchy as a global system that oppresses and denies women’s human dignity and right to be humanly different from men, the ruling gender (Davis, 1981, 1989, 1998; hooks, 1981, 1984, 1991, 1995; Lorde, 1984; Rabaka, 2003c, 2004).

With regard to Du Bois’s critique of white supremacy, it is not simply a global and social phenomenon, but a personal and political one as well. That is to say that for Du Bois white supremacy is simultaneously systemic and systematic, and also a matter of racist cultural mores and manners, which teeter-totter between idealist, materialist, and constructionist accounts of race. An idealist account of race says simply (or, not so simply) that white racism against non-whites, and especially blacks, is not so much a matter of race as it is of culture. Racial idealists argue that European culture and its pre-colonial history of color-symbolism and religious views – such as, Europeans’ conceptions of themselves as “civilized” whites and non-whites as “wild,” “savage” Others; the positive and negative associations regarding the colors white and black; and, the ways in which their racist cultural interpretations of Christianity support not only the white/black color valuations and devaluations but the “civilize and Christianize” missions of European colonialism and imperialism – set the stage for what would later become racism and white supremacy (Fredrickson, 1987; Horsman, 1986; Jordan, 1977).

Materialist accounts of race, which are primarily inspired by Marxist
theory, maintain that racism does not have to do with culture as much as it does political economy. Europeans needed a cheap labor force to extra-exploit and work their newly and imperially acquired continents, countries, colonial settlements and plantations. For the racial materialists it was not about religion or civilization or science, but an economics and politics reduced to its lowest and most racist level (Cox, 1959, 1987; Genovese, 1965, 1969, 1974, 1979; C.L.R. James, 1963, 1995, 1996; E. Williams, 1966). Finally, racial constructionists contend that race is an outgrowth of human beings’ inherent ethnocentrism, but that racism is a result of Europe’s push for global dominance. In this view, no matter who invented race, its reasons for origination, and whether it is scientifically sound, it is an artifact that most modern (and “postmodern”) human beings use, either consciously or unconsciously, to make interpersonal, socio-cultural and politico-economic decisions. “Whites” and “non-whites” do not exist prior to the imperial expansion that helped to birth, raise and rear European modernity. But, this is all beside the point to the constructionists. What is relevant is the invention of whiteness and its classical and contemporary uses and abuses, and the ways it has evolved over several centuries, transitioning from de jure to de facto form, and transforming the racial rules and ethnic ethics of who counts as “white” and “non-white” (Allen, 1994, 1997; Goldberg, 1993, 1997, 2001; Harris, 1999; Lopez, 1995, 1996; Omi & Winant, 1994; Roediger, 1994, 1999).

Critical Race Theory, Critical Social Theory, and “The Souls of White Folk”

Du Bois’s writings on race do not fit nicely and neatly into any of the aforementioned accounts of race. As even a cursory review of his concepts of race and critiques of racism reveal, at different intervals throughout his long life and career he harbored what would currently be considered aspects of each of the three accounts of race discussed above. For Du Bois, as I intimated earlier, white supremacy was not simply a global and social phenomenon, but a personal and political one as well. Hence, his assertion, in “The Souls of White Folk”: “The discovery of personal whiteness among the world’s peoples is a very modern thing” (1995, p. 453). Take special note of the connection Du Bois makes between “personal whiteness” and “modernity,” to use the latter term loosely. His dialectical approach to white supremacy accents its interconnections with other systems of oppression because in his critical socio-theoretical framework racism is one of several “very modern” intersecting hegemonic variables. But, it is white supremacy’s globality, the fact that it is a racist global system or “racial polity,” as Charles Mills (1999) maintains, that marks it for much-needed critical theoretical consideration.
In his critique of the global aspects of white supremacy, Du Bois engaged its origins and evolution(s), locating its genesis, uniqueness and ubiquitousness in European imperial global expansion, domination, and colonization (Rabaka, 2003a, 2005). What distinguished white supremacy from local, national and regional racisms, such as those that exist between certain non-white groups, is its international imperial nature and modern world-historic influence and effects. At the heart of the history of white supremacy, as quiet as it is kept, is a prolonged practice and promotion of an extremely acute form of cultural racism and cultural theft. For Du Bois (1995), whites were “super-men” and “world-mastering demi-gods” with “feet of clay” (p. 456). By which he meant, whites, with all their claims of superiority and “super-humanity,” were or appeared super-strong because they built their empire(s) on the inventions and innovations, and on the cultures and contributions of the people of color they colonized (p. 457). But, as the “super-men” with “feet of clay” comment reveals, the colored and colonized were well aware of whites’ weakness(es), of their Achilles’ heel(s): Their imperial push for global domination, that is, their centuries-spanning project(s) of setting up systems of oppression unwittingly and ironically created intra-imperial cultural tensions, racist sibling rivalries amongst themselves, and also created the context and laid the foundation for the very anti-imperial colored/colonized hammer that would smash the imperial white “super-men’s” “feet of clay.” In “The Souls of White Folk,” Du Bois (1995) asserted:

The greatness of Europe has lain in the width of the stage on which she has played her part, the strength of the foundations on which she has built, and a natural, human ability no whit greater (if as great) than that of other days and races. In other words, the deeper reasons for the triumph of European civilization lie quite outside and beyond Europe — back in the universal struggles of all mankind. Why, then, is Europe great? Because of the foundations which the mighty past have furnished her to build upon: the iron trade of ancient, black Africa, the religion and empire-building of yellow Asia, the art and sciences of the “dogo” Mediterranean shore, east, south, and west, as well as north. And, where she had built securely upon this great past and learned from it she has gone forward to greater and more splendid human triumph; but where she has ignored this past and forgotten and sneered at it, she has shown the cloven hoof of poor, crucified humanity — she has played, like other empires gone, the world fool! If, then, European triumphs in culture have been greater, so, too, may her failures have been greater. (p. 459)

Here Du Bois notes major “gifts” or contributions to culture and civilization that various people of color have made throughout human history, many of them in their pre-colonial (or, rather pre-European colonial) periods. He does not diminish or attempt to downplay the “greatness of Europe,” but observes that
The Souls of White Folk

"the triumph of European civilization lie quite outside and beyond Europe." From Du Bois's (1986) racial frame of reference, each ethnocultural group or, rather, each "race" has a "great message...for humanity" (p. 820). He was extremely confident in the greatness of Africana peoples’ past and present gift(s) and spirit of giving, even in the face of and often, it seemed, in spite of their endurance and experience of holocaust, enslavement, colonization, segregation, and so forth.

One of the main reasons Du Bois believed black folk were uniquely "gifted," and their "gifts" were especially valuable with regard to world culture and civilization was because their anti-racist (and anti-colonial) struggle strategies and tactics had historically and consistently been different from those of any other human group. This is so, in Du Bois's cultural gift theory, on account of the fact that in white supremacist social hierarchy Africans are the antithesis of Europeans, or blacks are the subhuman opposite of white humans. Again, it is a cultural as opposed to biological conception of race that Du Bois opts for to critique and combat white supremacy and advocate Africana unity. In The Education of Black People, he stated: "Biologically we are mingled of all conceivable elements, but race is psychology, not biology; and psychologically we are a unified race with one history, one red memory, and one revolt" (1973, p. 100).

His “gift theory,” like his overall philosophy of race, hinged on a conception of culture that was increasingly informed by continental and diasporan African history, radical politics, and social theory. Just as he rhetorically asked and answered the question, “What, then, is a race?,” in “The Conservation of Races,” Du Bois’s burgeoning anti-biological and pro-sociocultural conception of race critically queried culture. If race is not biological and it is indeed cultural, as Du Bois came to claim, then, one of the first things we need to find out is how he conceived of culture. I will leave it to Du Bois to elaborate his philosophy of culture and its connection(s) to his philosophy of race. In The Education of Black People, he rhetorically queried, "What is a culture?" Then, he contended:

It is a careful Knowledge of the Past out of which the group as such has emerged: in our case a knowledge of African history and social development—one of the richest and most intriguing which the world has known. Our history in America, north, south and Caribbean, has been an extraordinary one which we must know to understand ourselves and our world. The experience through which our ancestors have gone for four hundred years is part of our bone and sinew whether we know it or not. The method which we evolved for opposing slavery and fighting prejudice are not to be forgotten, but learned for our own and others’ instruction. We must understand the differences in social problems between Africa, the West Indies, South and Central America, not only among the Negroes but those affecting Indians and other minority groups. Plans for the future of our group must be built on a base of our problems, our dreams and frustrations; they
cannot stem from empty air or successfully be based on the experiences of others alone. (1973, pp. 143-144)

Beginning with “a careful Knowledge of the Past,” both continental and diasporan, Du Bois’s definition of culture takes a hard turn toward “experience” and he states that the lived-experiences of “our ancestors” are “part of our bone and sinew whether we know it or not.” In fact, “we must know” “[o]ur history” in Africa, the Americas – for Du Bois this is the United States north and south, Central and South America – and the Caribbean, in order to “understand ourselves and our world.” So, besides being grounded historically in continental and diasporan African lived-experiences, Du Bois’s concept of culture gravitates and grows toward an experiential and existentiel exploration and explanation of Africana life-worlds, of Africana actualities, past and present. In other words, if indeed culture has to do with “a careful Knowledge of the Past out of which the group as such has emerged,” the “Past” in Du Bois’s thinking was much more than historical, it was also cultural.

Culture is the totality of thought and practice by which a people creates itself, celebrates, sustains and develops itself and introduces itself to history and humanity. Moreover, culture is the thought-, belief- and value- systems and traditions that people create, extend and expand to not only make sense of the world, but also to alter it in their own and others’ best interests. That is why Du Bois asserted above: “The method which we evolved for opposing slavery and fighting prejudice are not to be forgotten, but learned for our own and others’ instruction.” Here he is suggesting that classical Africana anti-racist and anti-colonial liberation thought and practice in the fight against white supremacy (“slavery” and “prejudice”) could and should be instructional for contemporary Africana and other oppressed people. In Du Bois’s gift theory, this is one of Africana peoples’ greatest gifts and/or cultural contributions: their spirit of struggle, sacrifice, and service in the interest of social transformation and human liberation.

In “The Conservation of Races,” Du Bois (1986) declared: “We believe that the Negro people, as a race, have a contribution to make to civilization and humanity, which no other race can make” (p. 825). He held this belief primarily for two reasons. First, it was based on Africa’s past, “one of the richest and most intriguing which the world has known.” Most race and/or racist scientists at the turn of the twentieth century either had no knowledge of Africa’s past, or they were aware of it and developed their racist theories to counter claims of the greatness of African antiquity. As Du Bois (1995) put it in his classic 1923 essay “The Superior Race”: “Lions have no historians” (p. 474). By which he wished to imply that even though the lion is universally revered as the “king of jungle,” it is nonetheless an animal and, therefore, has no history and, thus, no need of historians. It is only human beings who can make history and create culture, and in
a white supremacist world blacks are not human, but subhuman. Therefore, the
history and culture that Africans did in fact produce in ancient epochs, or in the
pre-colonial period, is viewed as either influenced by or derivative of European
culture, or a “primitive” attempt to imitate and emulate European culture, usually
Greco-Roman culture. Du Bois’s critique of and counter to these claims can be
found in his watershed works in the area of African historiography. For example,
works such as, The Negro (1915 [2001]), Africa, Its Geography, People and Prod-
ucts (1930), Africa—Its Place in Modern History (1930), Black Folk Then and
Now: An Essay on the History and Sociology of the Negro Race (1939), Color and
Democracy: Colonies and Peace (1945), The World and Africa (1947 [1965]), and
Africa: An Essay Toward a History of the Continent of Africa and Its Inhabitants
(1961).

The second reason Du Bois believed that Africana peoples had a signifi-
cant contribution to make to culture and civilization was because of their endur-
ance and experiences of holocaust, enslavement, colonization, segregation and
so on, had “gifted” them with “second-sight,” as he put it in The Souls of Black
Folk (1986, p. 364). This “second-sight” enabled black folk to see things that
others could not on account of the specificities of their historicity. That is to say,
Du Bois believed that blacks’ contemporary “gift” to culture and civilization had
to do with their particular and peculiar position in and struggle(s) against one of
the major systems of oppression plaguing people in the modern moment: white
supremacy. Du Bois’s belief that Africana people have a “great message...for
humanity” led him to a life-long critique of white supremacy that is best exem-
plified by works such as: “Race Friction Between Black and White” (1908), “The
Souls of White Folk” (1910), “Of The Culture of White Folk” (1917), “White Co-
Workers” (1920), “The Souls of White Folk” (1920), “The Superior Race” (1923),
“The White Worker” (1935), “The White Proletariat in Alabama, Georgia, and
Florida” (1935), “The White World” (1940) and “The White Folk Have a Right
to Be Ashamed” (1949). Of these works, “The Souls of White Folk,” published in
Darkwater: Voices Within the Veil (1920), and which recasts and combines Du
Bois’s 1910 essay by that name and his freshly penned piece, “Of the Culture of
White Folk” (1917), offers his most sustained and sophisticated statement against
white supremacy, as it not only critiques white supremacy, but represents and
registers as one of the first attempts to expose white supremacy’s influences on
and interconnections with other systems of oppression, such as colonialism and
capitalism.

As his philosophy of race and critique of white supremacy evolved, so
too did Du Bois’s gift theory. It began innocently enough as a claim that Africana
people, “as a race, have a contribution to make to civilization and humanity, which
no other race can make” (1986, p. 825). Then, it grew gradually into a charge to
contemporary Africana people to emulate and audaciously endeavor to surpass their ancestors’ contributions to culture and civilization. In “The Conservation of Races,” Du Bois (1986) declared:

Manifestly some of the great races of today – particularly the Negro race – have not as yet given to civilization the full spiritual message which they are capable of giving. I will not say that the Negro race has as yet given no message to the world, for it is still a mooted question among scientists as to just how far Egyptian civilization was Negro in its origin; if it was not wholly Negro, it was certainly very closely allied. Be that as it may, however, the fact still remains that the full, complete Negro message of the whole Negro race has not as yet been given to the world. (pp. 819-820)

From Du Bois’s optic, blacks had been unable to give “civilization the full spiritual message which they are capable of giving” primarily because of white supremacy and its enormous and unfathomable effects on Africana life-worlds and lived-experiences. His early uncertainty regarding the African origins of ancient Egyptian civilization was laid to rest as a result of the research of Franz Boas, Leo Frobenius, and Harry Johnston, among others. If Egypt, undoubtedly one of the greatest classical civilizations, was African or, at the least, initiated by Africans – as Du Bois documented in The Negro, Black Folk Then and Now, and The World and Africa – then, it would be a great disservice to modern Africana people to argue that they have “given no message to the world.” As he studied and learned more of Africa’s ancient and pre-colonial past, Du Bois’s gift theory shifted its emphasis from Africana people giving “the full, complete Negro message...to the world,” to accenting and highlighting classical African contributions to culture and civilization with an eye toward: first, confronting and combating the white supremacist theses of, of course, white superiority and black inferiority and, also, blacks’ purported lack of history and culture; second, providing contemporary Africana people with classical Africana cultural paradigms and traditional motifs; and, finally, offering a caveat to continental and diasporan Africans that their task is not so much to give the definitive Africana message to the world (something, on second thought, that may never really be possible), but to contribute to and continue the Africana struggle for freedom and justice in their age and leave a legacy for succeeding generations.

Generic racism, if there is such a thing, essentially entails racial domination and discrimination. White supremacy does not simply racially oppress, as Du Bois asserted above. Being the fraternal twin (or, at the least, a sibling of some sort) of capitalism it racially oppresses in the interest of nonpareil racialized economic exploitation. It symbolizes the intensification of economic exploitation by adding a racist dimension to capitalist greed and colonial gain. Hinging on a
diabolical dialectic that sees whites as superior and non-whites as inferior, white supremacy consumes the world of color and claims non-whites’ contributions to human culture and civilization as European or white contributions to culture and civilization. This is so because from the white supremacist point of view, non-whites do not now and have never possessed culture and civilization and, therefore, could not possibly contribute to the (re)construction of something they do not now and have never possessed. Further, white supremacy enables and utterly encourages whites to theoretically and culturally loot the knowledge banks and cultural treasure troves of the colored world, similar to the way whites did when they established racial colonialism and colonial capitalism, because it is a global system that rewards based on the embrace of white hegemonic views and values, white conquest and racialized colonization.

Moving beyond a strictly materialist (politico-economic and/or class-centered) account of race and racism, and hitting at the heart of white supremacy, Du Bois (1995), in “The Souls of White Folk,” queried the “colored world” and those whites who would open themselves to moral and materialist questions: “How many of us today fully realize the current theory of colonial expansion, of the relation of Europe which is white, to the world which is black and brown and yellow? Bluntly put, that theory is this: It is the duty of white Europe to divide up the darker world and administer it for Europe’s good” (p. 459). Part of Du Bois’s critique of white supremacy reveals his reliance on racial materialist arguments, where the other portion of his critique revolves around his own homegrown cultural nationalism, which was more often later in his life, what I will term, a cultural internationalism that sought to accent and highlight commonalities and kinships amongst people of color based on their endurances and experiences of, and struggles against European imperial expansion and all out white (cultural, social, political, legal, educational, religious, aesthetic and economic) domination and discrimination. Du Bois’s critical comments in “The Souls of White Folk” deserve quotation at length, as his argument is elaborated throughout several carefully constructed paragraphs that poignantly capture the crux of his critique of white supremacy:

The European world is using black and brown men for all the uses which men know. Slowly but surely white culture is evolving the theory that “darkies” are born beasts of burden for white folk. It were silly to think otherwise, cries the cultured world, with stronger and shriller accord. The supporting arguments grow and twist themselves in the mouths of merchant, scientist, soldier, traveler, writer, and missionary: Darker peoples are dark in mind as well as in body; of dark, uncertain, and imperfect descent; of frailer, cheaper stuff; they are cowards in the face of mausers and maxims; they have no feelings, aspirations, and loves; they are fools,
logical idiots — “half-devil and half-child.”

Such as they are civilization must, naturally, raise them, but soberly and in limited ways. They are not simply dark white men. They are not “men” in the sense that Europeans are men. To the very limited extent of their shallow capacities lift them to be useful to whites, to raise cotton, gather rubber, fetch ivory, dig diamonds — and let them be paid what men think they are worth — white men who know them to be well-nigh worthless.

Such degrading of men by men is as old as mankind and the invention of no one race or people. 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. It has been left, however, to Europe and to modern days to discover the eternal world-wide mark of meanness — color!

Such is the silent revolution that has gripped modern European culture in the later nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Its zenith came in Boxer times: White supremacy was all but world-wide, Africa was dead, India conquered, Japan isolated, and China prostrate, while white America whetted her sword for mongrel Mexico and mulatto South America, lynching her own Negroes the while. (p. 460)

The “civilized” (read: whites) are simultaneously a race in a socio-cultural and politico-economic sense, though they do not think of themselves in racial terms, and they throw temper tantrums when they are thought of in racial terms or, as being racialized or raced. They can steal and kill the “uncivilized” (read: people of color) without regard to rank or reason, and they can at any moment change the rules of the racial hierarchy and racial history because they alone are decidedly and definitively the authors of human culture and civilization, and most certainly the architects of science and technology. As Du Bois demonstrates above, white supremacy is not simply about racial domination and discrimination. Which is to say, white supremacy cannot quickly be reduced to racism, and especially as it is understood in contemporary racial discourse. Much more, white supremacy robs the raced or people of color of their right to be human, of their right to self-definition and self-determination. It reduces human beings to the status of things, which is one of the reasons, as Frantz Fanon observes in The Wretched of the Earth, when they are discussed in the discursive arenas of the white world, both academic and non-academic, people of color are referred to, (re)presented and (re)imagined in “zoological terms” — in the terms in which animals are discussed, dissected and dominated. Fanon (1968) famously wrote:

In fact, the terms the [white colonial] settler uses when he mentions the native [the raced, or the colored] are zoological terms. He speaks of the yellow man’s reptilian motions, of the stink of the native quarter, of
breeding swarms, of foulness, of spawn, of gesticulations. When the settler seeks to describe the native fully in exact terms he constantly refers to the bestiary. (p. 42)

Critical White Studies and the Riddle(s) of Critical Race Theory

Du Bois’s critique of white supremacy also hits head-on the issue of white personhood and black (or people of color) subpersonhood. He asserted: “They [the colored and colonized] are not simply dark white men. They are not ‘men’ in the sense that Europeans are men.” Whiteness and maleness are prerequisites for personhood in the world that modernity made. A person, in this world, is one who is rational, self-directing and morally and legally equal with a white male. Since white males created the laws of this world, none but white males are equal and given moral, legal and extralegal consideration. Therefore, as the Dred Scott decision demonstrates, “a black man has no rights which a white man is legally bound to respect” (see Dred Scott, 1857, pp. 403-407). White rights are intimately intertwined with the denial of black rights. Or, to put it another way, white personhood is inextricable from black subpersonhood. In The Racial Contract, Charles Mills (1997) contends:

Whiteness is defined in part in respect to an oppositional darkness, so that white self-conceptions of identity, personhood, and self-respect are then intimately tied up with repudiation of the black Other. No matter how poor one was, one was still able to affirm the whiteness that distinguished one from the subpersons on the other side of the color line. (pp. 58-59)

And, who or what are these “human things,” to borrow a phrase from Du Bois’s (1995) discourse, on the “other side of the color line” (p. 456)? Mills (1997) maintains:

Subpersons are humanoid entities who because of racial phenotype/genealogy/culture, are not fully human and therefore have a different and inferior schedule of rights and liberties applying to them. In other words, it is possible to get away with doing things to subpersons that one could not do to persons, because they do not have the same rights as persons. (p. 56)

Even in its mildest and most unconscious forms, white supremacy is one of the extremest and most vicious human rights violations in history because it plants false seeds of white superiority and black inferiority in the fertile ground of the future. It takes human beings and turns them into the subhuman things, making them colored means to a white imperial end. Du Bois’s critique of white supremacy then, registers as not only a radical criticism of an increasingly illusive
and nebulous racism, but an affirmation of black humanity and an epoch-spanning assertion of Africana and other oppressed peoples’ inherent right to human and civil rights.

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The Apartheid Conscience: Gender, Race, and Re-imagining the White Nation in Cyberspace

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It is not just that the limits of our language limit our thoughts; the world we find ourselves in is one we have helped to create, and this places constraints upon how we think the world anew.

David Theo Goldberg

American equality began as an oxymoron. Although American nationalism is dedicated to the proposition of freedom, liberty, equality, and the pursuit of happiness, this proposition originally extended exclusively to a circumscribed community determined by race. While citizenship is now defined by more equitable means, racial inequality remains the norm. This is clear in a variety of ways but is especially visible spatially in that race continues to provide the organization of U.S. urban geography. Forty years after the striking down of the Jim Crow laws that legalized segregation, self-segregation is ensuring that cities in the United States remain the "most racially segregated urban areas in the world." Despite massive racial changes following the civil rights movement and the contemporary widespread acceptance of multiculturalism, massive segregation persists. As Jessie Daniels writes, whereas statistically whites are contemporarily more likely to be tolerant of racial diversity, "white people vote with their moving vans" whenever people of color represent more than seven percent of the population.
in their neighborhood. David Goldberg shows that residential racial segregation has persisted despite massive demographic shifts, from the creation of urban ghettos in the 1950s and 60s and white flight to the suburbs, followed by white “urban renewal” programs resulting in gentrification of those same urban spaces and a movement of color to the suburbs.

Such racial segregation has always characterized U.S. urban geography. The United States legally condoned racial segregation from its founding through the Civil Rights movement of the 1950’s and 60’s. The Jim Crow laws, put in place after the abolition of slavery to defend all-white businesses, schools, and neighborhoods, were not struck down until the landmark decision in Brown v. Board of Education in 1954 and the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Although today no national laws define the relationship between race and residence, statistically segregation remains the rule. Acknowledging California as emblematic of the country, Dale Maharidge writes that California’s “white communities form ‘islands’ that are surrounded by vast ethnic or transitional communities.” Such elaborate racial segregation requires widespread participation and intricate organization. Although a variety of institutional phenomenon exacerbate the problem of segregation, the most significant factor continues to be informal pressure by whites to maintain white neighborhoods. It is important to ask what secures this investment by whites to participate in segregation and other racially exclusive practices. Why, despite the increasingly racially tolerant beliefs by whites and the public embrace of multiculturalism and condemnation of racism does the racial “melting pot” of America continue to reproduce virtually all-white spaces?

David Goldberg asserts that such extreme racial segregation is a product of the modern West. He argues that racial apartheid is far from only a South African phenomenon and attempts “to show just how deep a certain kind of experience of racial marginality runs in ‘the West’.” Although the term “apartheid” was created to describe the specifically South African system of legalized racial segregation the idea it was based on, of keeping races physically apart, is prevalent throughout the West. While South African apartheid was extreme in the level of violence employed to enforce segregation, the United States also clearly practiced its own similar version of segregation that could also be referred to as apartheid. As a tour through any major U.S. city will show, American apartheid continues today, but is now enforced by other means than jurisprudence.

Apartheid secured both white supremacy and the racial concept of whiteness, yet the majority of whites historically would not have described their motivations for living in segregated communities in these terms. How was such widespread support for apartheid secured and what continues to motivate whites to support segregation despite increasingly tolerant racial views and a public dis-
avowal of racism? What I am suggesting is a key to understanding this question is the idea that racial segregation is perpetuated not as much by overtly racist belief, but through other forms. The first one hundred and fifty years of building a national U.S. culture imagined the nation as legitimately white and justified the racist practices and racial segregation that secured this white nation fantasy. Not only was racism practiced in the form of genocide, slavery, segregation and disenfranchisement, but its justification was actually central to the creation of a national culture. Alongside legal codes demanding racial segregation and racist practices, moral codes also served to justify racism by making racist behavior the ethical option for whites. At different periods of U.S. history the moral and popular choice for whites was to support slavery, condone genocide as justified by the inherent savagery of First Nations people, and utterly refuse the humanity of blacks, First Nations, and other people of color by denying them the right to integrated schools, businesses, and communities and criminalizing the potential for legitimate romantic relationships with whites.

The realm in which this exclusion was justified is morality. Although legislation now criminalizes the majority of racist practices, the moral system created by the legitimization of such widespread racist practices is more difficult to change. Similar to Claudia Koonz, who argues in The Nazi Conscience that the Nazi Party actually succeeded in shifting the German public conscience to exclude Jews from the moral agreement of reciprocity, I argue that a racial conscience has always defined a racially exclusive national American community. Despite the seeming contradiction between the role of conscience in governing moral action while simultaneously necessitating racist exclusion, Koonz argues that conscience is actually always defined by borders and the “universe of moral obligation, far from being universal, is bounded by community.” The race line determines the parameters of this community.

As this American racial conscience is both determined by and determines racial segregation it should be thought of as an apartheid conscience. This cultural phenomenon is inherently connected to a spatial imperative and spatial segregation, limiting the social agreement of reciprocity to only within the white community. Koonz writes:

Across cultures, an ethic of reciprocity commands that we treat others as we wish to be treated. Besides instructing us in virtue, the conscience fulfills a second, and often overlooked, function. It tells us to whom we shall and shall not do what. It structures our identity by separating those who deserve our concern from alien “others” beyond the pale of our community. Our moral identity prompts us to ask, “Am I the kind of person who would do that to this person?” Historically a white person ought to see people of color and First Nations
peoples as residing in a separate category than other whites and to understand the agreement of moral reciprocity as limited to only within the white community. The role of conscience however is not simply to designate who belongs inside or outside of the community, but also to regulate behavior within the community. Although this conscience regulates apartheid by pushing people of color outside of the bounds of the moral community, it is not conceptualized as a racist conscience by its adherents but as a moral conscience. The emphasis is not on racial exclusion, but community and moral regulation. Apartheid and racism are the effects of this conscience yet the emphasis is on encouraging moral behavior as expressed not just through race but through respectable gender roles and sexual codes. To understand the way that this conscience is elaborated we need to look at the way it functions not only to racially segregate, but also to internally regulate the white community. For, is it not clear that segregation is important not just for what is kept out but also what is defended within?

This type of analysis, on the production of a white racial identity as a central component of white supremacist society, would be impossible without over a century of writings and scholarship showing the socially constructed and relational nature of race as the constituent element of racism. As early as the 1890’s W.E.B. Du Bois was writing that race was socially constructed and not a biological fact: “perhaps it is wrong to speak of it [race] at all as a concept rather than as a group of contradictory forces, facts, and tendencies.” In the tradition of Du Bois’ critical anti-racism scholarship, a body of theory interrogating the socially constructed nature of race has developed, furthered by the work of Derrick Bell, Kimberly Krenshaw, Cheryl Harris, among others, which is called collectively Critical Race Theory. While originally focusing on racism and the law, it has come to be more broadly understood as theories attempting to critically grapple with the reality of racism in the post-Civil Rights United States. Together these works explore how racism continues to structure US society despite the de-codification of overt white supremacy and changes in popular understandings of race in the contemporary United States.

Out of critical race theory has grown a field of study specifically focused on exploring the construction of whiteness as a racial category. While whiteness studies have tended to focus on the everyday forms of racial privilege and prejudice which structure white identity and its relations to white supremacy, there have also been several studies focusing on organized white supremacist thought and activism. Particularly useful to this study has been David Goldberg’s Racist Culture and Charles Mills’ The Racial Contract. Both works are largely focused on showing the racially exclusive roots of philosophy, modernity, and liberalism.

This study attempts to build on the insights developed in critical race theory and critical whiteness studies about the social construction of whiteness,
but expands the analysis through an engagement with theories of nationalism to explore the variegation of whiteness. Benedict Anderson’s Imagined Communities highlights the way that nationalism serves to actually construct an imagined community, creating what Ernest Renan calls “a large-scale solidarity” through regulating the legitimate roles and identities of community members. Ghassan Hage challenges that all racial practices are actually better described as nationalist practices. He writes that the concept of “racially motivated practices” is a fallacy as “even the belief that there is a hierarchy of races or cultures, is not in itself a motivating ideology. Racism on its own does not carry within it an imperative for action.” Racist action is connected to a “white nation” fantasy, where nationalists yearn for a clearly established privileged relationship with a nation-state. This sense of entitlement is inherently linked to the national’s self-concept, therefore their behavior is seen as self-motivated as opposed to connected to a racially privileged nationalism. The link between racial prejudice and a need to act on them is more connected to national rather than simply racial identity. To this end, race is always spaced and whiteness is committed to reproducing white spaces. Studying the nationalist elements of whiteness as opposed to just its supremacist aspects is insightful, showing that while whiteness is about culture and supremacy it also functions as an imagined community that is expressed spatially and is regulated by gendered subjectivities and sexualized identities. Such an analysis thus allows for an exploration of the way whiteness is lived in varied meanings and identities.

Like all communities, the national imagined community is organized by gender, sexuality, and class as well as race. Studies of nationalism allow for an analysis of the ways that these different identity categories are tied together through moral regulation. Linking studies of Western nationalism, particularly the work of George Mosse, to this study of an apartheid conscience elucidates how a fear of degeneracy and desire for respectability fuel and tie together a dedication to racist, heterosexist, and sexist practices and identities. Through this imagining, nationalism functions as a regulation of morality, and the imagined white nation ensures that this morality is bounded by race. Sherene Razack writes, “Race contaminates morality through infecting the very premise of personhood.” It is the translation of embedded racist differentiation into a governing conscience that facilitates white involvement in both perpetuating and defending racial apartheid and white supremacy. These racial foundations and their resulting relationships both serve to create a white identity. As David Goldberg writes:

Social relations are constitutive of personal and social identity, and a central part of the order of such relations is the perceived need, the requirement for subjects to give an account of their actions. These accounts may assume the bare form of explanation, but they usually tend more imperatively to legitimate or
to justify acts (to ourselves or others). Morality is the scene of this legislation and justification.

Thus, whites who are both constituted by the apartheid state but who also legitimate and cement this segregation, describe and understand their motivations and actions as following a specific morality. But, morality implies not just a motivation to distinguish between good and evil and right from wrong, but also a focus on good or right conduct. Although I am working to show the way that race serves as the moral boundary marker around the white community, I do not mean to imply that this apartheid conscience regulates all whites equally and in the same way. To truly understand the configuration of this conscience we must interrogate the ways which race intermingles with and enforces other aspects of this national conscience, particularly the convergence of class, gender, and sexuality in defining morality and identity.

Racism was historically justified not as a way to defend white power, but as a defense of white morality and respectability. The links between morality, gender, sexuality, and racism are evident throughout the history of U.S. racism as racial violence was consistently justified as defending white women from the perceived threatening nature of black and First Nations male sexuality. Andrea Smith quotes Ann Laura Stoler that imperial and racist societies “cast white women as the bearers of moral racist imperial order.” Smith writes that American colonialism conceived of Native bodies as “immanently polluted with sexual sin,” framing Native men as posing a sexual threat to white women despite the fact that such a threat was virtually nonexistent. Similarly, the lynch campaigns which secured white supremacy after Reconstruction in the South were virtually all organized around the perceived threats black men posed to white women. Showing these connections exposes that much racist violence and racist belief, though accomplishing racial privilege and oppression, are clearly tied to sexuality and gender and are motivated by a fear of safety and of moral transgression. Conceptualizing bodies of color as inherently morally and sexually threatening forecloses even the thought of their inclusion in the moral community and perpetuates apartheid through continually recycling the fear of racial Others.

To explore this apartheid conscience and its connection to white nationalism I have chosen to study the group most adamantly committed to defining, elaborating, and defending this conscience and the link between whiteness and nationalism: the contemporary white nationalist movement. While many denounce the white nationalist movement as a peripheral group, in this study I recognize that although the movement exists on the fray, that understanding its weave is informative of what is inscribed in the broader social fabric. Although the movement represents an ossification and amplification of broader racist and nationalist dynamics, as the fray it also has much to tell us about the patterns that shape and
reproduce white supremacy. My intention is then not to simply denounce the site and its participants, but to trace its inner logic. Despite their core founders having begun racial activism in the KKK, as a movement white nationalism defines itself not as a supremacist movement but a nationalist one. Although racism clearly organizes the discourse on the site, the discussion also focuses on elaborating the perceived need for apartheid and articulating what apartheid protects. Through showing the meaning of the movement and the motivation to participate by its members my goal is to show the organization of this apartheid conscience.

There are several problems with studying a fringe group like white nationalism with the intent of understanding more mainstream practices and identities. As I mentioned above, the fringe is often defined against the mainstream as opposed to representing it. We cannot guarantee that white nationalism as a fringe social movement is simply an extreme version of more popular beliefs and practices. They are on the fringe because of their dedication to changing dominant practices not supporting them. An example is the extreme anti-Semitism found throughout the website blaming Western states and global problems as being controlled by ZOG, white supremacist shorthand for the Anti-Semitic conspiracy of a Zionist Occupation Government. Although anti-Semitism is widespread throughout the United States, the level of anti-Semitism, particularly seen in a loathing of Israel and a violent hatred of Jews as non-white, is not matched in broader society and is certainly not represented in policy. I contend that despite these challenges this comparison’s usefulness outweighs its potential problems.

In an essay about her study of women in white supremacist movements, Kathleen Blee writes that although the “ideas that racist activists share about whiteness are more conscious, elaborated, and tightly connected to political action than those of mainstream whites they also reflect the views of whiteness dominant in mainstream culture.” Although white nationalism is not entirely representative of the mainstream, it is part of a history of white racial organizing that stems back to the abolition of slavery. The founder of Stormfront, Don Black, and the political leader of the movement, David Duke, both began their racist careers in the Ku Klux Klan. Since the year following the end of the Civil War, the KKK has been the organizational manifestation of white resistance to racial change through every major period of potential racial change in the U.S. White nationalism is thus part of a century long tradition of defending whiteness and the white community from racial change and racial Others. As the self-defined border guards of whiteness, white nationalists have much to contribute about what this resistance to racial change is about, about the importance to whiteness of segregated space, and of the white justification of this segregation.

This paper is based on monitoring and analyzing the discourse of the online hub of this movement, the bulletin boards of stormfront.org. I have chosen
to analyze the discussion in this online community for many reasons. Stormfront is not a formal group, but an electronic meeting grounds with just under 100,000 white racial activist members from a variety of different organizations; it is thus an ideal site for tracing the broadest beliefs of the movement, as opposed to just studying one organization. The online venue also provides a unique possibility for the study of white nationalism as it is both semi-private (individuals can engage in extended, heated and seemingly personal debates) but also semi-public (anyone online can watch these debates unfold and often can contribute to them). I thus had access to a wide variety of rants and dialogues, between new members and old movement comrades, potential recruits and senior moderators, and anti-racist challengers and member’s responses. Stormfront member’s demographics covered a broad range of beliefs and geography, with neo-pagans, National Socialists, and Christian Identity enthusiasts conversing together across North and South America, Europe, South Africa, and Australia. The topics ranged from banal conversations to esoteric philosophical rants to heated and ongoing debates. Through this diversity of types of writing and writers the bulletin boards cover the breadth of white nationalist beliefs and serve as an excellent site to study the meaning of this movement. The goal in attempting to understand the logic of the white nationalist movement is not to increase its acceptability, but to understand its draw. To better understand how to challenge white supremacy we should learn how it is organized. To recognize the paradox of American equality for what it is, a racially bound concept of equality, we have to understand the moral regulation which perpetuates the continued belief in equality alongside practices of inequality. I believe that studying what the defenders of whiteness believe they are defending can offer insights into how whites understand and perpetually defend their whiteness. By hearing the motivation of this call to white nationalism, understanding what at base these seekers are seeking, I am hoping to reveal some insights into how best to expose and challenge all manifestations of white nationalism.

Contributions

Although a variety of scholars have studied the link between white supremacist activists and broader manifestations of white supremacy, this study contributes to this literature by engaging with a new form of data (online bulletin boards instead of interviews or literature reviews) and connecting the literature about white supremacy with that of nationalism. I believe this focus on nationalism also allows for a new type of interrogation of the meaning of the movement. Unlike an analysis of race and supremacy, studying nationalism opens up the inquiry to show the way that various identities (race, gender, class, and sexuality)
are intricately woven together in the imagining of the community/nation and thus reinforce and are dependent upon each other. This is significant because white supremacist and white nationalist movements have never only focused on race as a separate or singular identity, but rather framed whiteness as a moral community defined by sexual codes and gender roles. Studies of nationalism help to show the way that these various identities are regulated by shared morality, which when applied to studies of white nationalism allows for a better interrogation of the motivation and meaning of the movement. Scarcely little has been written about the nationalist elements to this new white supremacist movement.

There are two other significant contributions that this study makes to the scholarship exploring white supremacy and white nationalism. The first is showing the qualitatively different roles that anti-Semitism and racism play in the white supremacist. There are two other significant contributions that this study makes to the scholarship exploring white supremacy and white imagination. Although not enough literature explores the relationship and distinction between racism and anti-Semitism, the conversations on Stormfront show that Jews play a distinctly different role in white nationalism than do people of color/indigenous people. Whereas people of color are viewed in white nationalism as aliens or what Charles Mill’s calls “subpersons,” inspiring fear in whites but posing a threat easily contained through protecting racial difference and distance, Jews are conceived as strangers who trouble the very concepts of race and nation upon which white nationalism is based. White nationalists appear to be obsessed with Jews and with attempting to teach other whites to view Jews not just as non-white, but as evil. In this study I attempt to elaborate the differences between racism and anti-Semitism in white nationalism. And, the final significant contribution this study makes is in further exploring the nature of the racial threats feared by white supremacists. This paper focuses on the major themes I found on Stormfront and explores the broader implications this study suggests.

**Family values**

At the core of the moral order, of the imagined white nation, is the heterosexual family which is seen as the apotheosis of white morality, the biological and moral reproduction of whiteness. And while the movement on Stormfront is defined by its opposition as hate inspired, it could just as easily be described by its members as focusing on family values, though a type of values framed by unacknowledged violence. In the white nationalist imagination the family is the metonym of white morality, representing racial purity and respectability. Critical scholars Jennifer Fluri and Loarraine Dowler write “the family trope represents the foundation of white purity, because it is the embodiment of racially ‘pure’
reproduction and the idyllic construction of the white nation." The discussion throughout the Stormfront website is highly gendered and focused on reproduction. Deviant sexualities and gender roles, legalized abortion and divorce, and non-nuclear family forms are all seen as direct attacks on whiteness, one member writes, “The displacement of our traditional family structure has been our enemy’s most powerful weapon against us.”

The racial warriors on Stormfront see themselves as defenders of the white race, thus protectors of their history, culture, and sense of self. They frame themselves as vigilantes, like the cowboy heroes in Western dramas, protecting their homes and communities from the uncertain dark threats which linger on the outskirts of their community, ready to attack or be attacked. This articulation is based on the hyper-masculine warrior, the strong man, willing to defend his family by whatever means possible. As Abby Ferber writes, the “central project of the contemporary white supremacist movement is the articulation of a white male identity.” But, just as crucial in white nationalism, what these warriors are defending, is the feminine white mother and the home and children she cultivates. This division of whiteness, between reproduction and border protection is highly gendered in itself. Within the home women bear and raise children while men defend and protect it.

A women’s commitment to the movement is called into question if she doesn’t take her first responsibility, procreation, seriously. One member writes “if you have no children and desire no children, unless you are physically unable to bear/produce children, I personally will have a hard time taking you seriously as a WN.” Another member responded, “EXACTLY! All this talk about preserving the White race, but not actually wanting to produce the next generation that will preserve us. I just don’t get it. I know I am thought ‘divisive’ with these beliefs but this sums it ALL up: Without the next generation of White children, our race WILL die and there will be nothing left to fight for.” Breaking with this strict understanding of gender is seen as unquestionably defying the natural order. Another woman writes, “We don’t want or respect little boys who are afraid to act like a man.” This implies that the focus of child-rearing is not simply on reproducing white babies, but on training white babies in their proper gender identity. The implication of not respecting “little boys who are afraid to act like a man” is that these women will teach boys about improper masculine behavior, and likely do the same for girls. The drive for whiteness is also a call to challenge changing gender roles. One young women writes:

As a young adult, it’s disappointing to see the roles of men and woman turn inside out. The ZOG machine shaping the today’s woman to be more viciously snobby, greedy, mean, trashy and one could say uncaring and unwomanly. Men also turned this way. Certain persons have predicted
this inside out and backwards reverse roles. It’s not healthy, logically right, or what nature intended.
In this schema any threat to patriarchal gender roles is seen as a racial threat. Take for instance the following quote discussing feminism:

Men have lost their way. Men were once considered the breadwinners. Now they are the replaceables often making less than and being dependent on their wives. Poverty rates rising, those holding onto the dream of a two parent home struggling, it’s all just a bi-product of a movement designed to destroy us.

Throughout the site the breakdown of patriarchal gender roles is framed not only as a threat to whiteness but also as destroying white male economic power. In this naturalized racial, heterosexual logic, gender provides the organization of whiteness and helps to protect economic stability. It is in the performance of these strict gender categories that whiteness will be protected and, through the heterosexual reproduction of white babies, the white race will be saved.

To Stormfront women the only way to maintain a sense of respectability is to date and mate with white men. One member writes that although she wasn’t raised “racially aware,” the white nationalist descriptor for whites who are consciously white nationalist, that she “was taught respectable values and instilled with a sense and importance of honourability.” For her then a commitment to respectability and honor are implicitly connected to a commitment to whiteness. This theme of honor is also connected to moral degeneracy:

I fight the fight to maintain the White heritage and culture for future generations. Why is that important? I see the degeneration of morals, certain urban areas are no longer considered “civilized”, racemixing has caused violence in public schools and the American people have become pacified as we lose more and more rights for the sake of “public safety”. I find it interesting how there are no quarantines of drug resistant, highly infectious diseases for the sake of “public safety”.

This leap from white culture to moral degeneracy, threats to civilization, and disease is not a unique connection. As Ann Laura Stoler demonstrates it is discourses of sexuality which define both the bourgeois self and the borders of the nation, correlating diseases and miscegenation as biological threats. And as George Mosse explicates in his study of the emergence and dominance of nationalism in Europe, respectability serves as the national unifier, connecting sexuality, gender, and race roles. Whiteness, sexual purity, and traditional gender roles all form a nexus of respectability. As one Stormfront member writes she is drawn to white nationalism with “[t]he hope to have good clean White babies with a good clean White man.”
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This moral purity is intimately tied to the heterosexual family. A thread about the issue of gay marriage defends marriage as a preeminent heterosexual institution important to the maintenance of white culture. One member writes, “The whole promotion of gay marriage is just one more, of many attempts to destroy our society and redefine our definitions of right and wrong, so they can further weaken and demoralize us.” Another post explains that white nationalists should oppose gay marriage by bringing the discussion back to procreation. They write, “I’ll tell you why queers should not be married, nor accepted. It’s very simple. Marriage isn’t about the two people involved, whether they’re queer or straight. It’s about the children such a union would produce, and/or care for.” The post continues that two men cannot raise a “socially-stable adult” and “whether the child is raised by queer men or queer women, he will be raised with seriously disharmonious values—values which are ultimately deadly to our race.” Although there is some disagreement about whether or not gay marriage should be accepted, the arguments keep coming back to the idea that marriage is really a contract between a man, a woman, and the state whose purpose is about safeguarding children. One member asserts, “Homosexuality and National Socialism do not come together. NS rejects this disease and shameful behavior and so does WN.”

Aliens and Strangers

Although there are similarities between the fears of people of color and of Jews in white nationalism, there are qualitative differences between anti-Semitism and racism in the movement. Although both inspire fear and animosity, racism and anti-Semitism have different historical meanings. Philosopher Charles Mills argues that a racial contract supplements the social contract in the West, casting people of color outside the realm of humanity, eternally marking the body of color as alien and other. This division between alien subpersons and persons required elaborate conceptual and physical framing of bodies and ideas, particularly in colonial societies where there was much interracial contact. Such is the case in the United States, where the institution of slavery required that African Americans live in intimate proximity to whites, serving domestic duties and even raising white children. Although seen as aliens, people of color were tolerated within a restrictive framework where their movements and options were almost entirely controlled by whites. White nationalists fear that this control has slipped and these dark bodies, no longer totally controlled by whites, are imagined as threatening to destroy white society. The fear is that the “aliens” will spread their perceived immoral and chaotic nature and transform the nation into something alien and foreign itself. The two most popular manifestations of this alien invasion
discussed on Stormfront are the fear of increasing numbers of immigrants of color and the idea that people of color are violent and are engaging in a race war with whites.

The fear of immigrants of color is the theme of the continually popular thread entitled “News from the Border (and why it should be protected).” This thread focuses on the U.S./Mexico border, which also serves as the metaphorical limits of the white nation and the frontier of whiteness. The borderlands are portrayed as the new frontier, a lawless place rife with violence full of dangerous bodies attempting to cross over and attack the white nation. The thread begins with an article link about a farmer living on the U.S. side of the border whose cabin was attacked with gunfire after the farmer shot at drug-smugglers crossing his property. This story exemplifies the conception that a porous border allows for the infiltration of a criminal and chaotic element into the United States. Members respond to this post with comments such as “I cannot think of a better reason to mine the border” and “Mining it is an excellent idea! Also behind the minefield and razorwire fences, a road with Hummers and Army soldiers taking pot-shots at the Mexicans.” The posts portray all Mexican undocumented immigrants as drug smugglers or inherently prone to violence, and as this last post shows, advocate violent solutions.

Anti-Semitism takes a different form. In Black Skin, White Masks Franz Fanon characterized the difference between racism against blacks as a bodily and sexual phobia versus Anti-Semitism as focused on a fear of economic exploitation. As Fanon wrote regarding racism from a psychoanalytic perspective, “In the case of the Jew, one thinks of money and its cognates. In that of the Negro, one thinks of sex.” This seems to apply fairly well to the white nationalist movement, with people of color framed as physical threats or sexual threats, with immigrants also framed as economic threats, and Jews framed as economic and cultural threats. White nationalists also recognize that people of color pose a more contained threat than Jews to white supremacy because the race line effectively segregates whites from people of color spatially and relationally. While at different points in U.S. history Jews were viewed as racially other, in How Jews Became White Folks & What that Says about Race in America, Karen Brodkin writes that deliberate policies in the post-WWII United States changed the racial status of Jews from non-white to white. While the majority of Americans now view Jews as white, white nationalists maintain a view of Jews as non-white and see their current status in the racial majority as immensely threatening. Thus, part of the difference between anti-Semitism and racism in the movement is responding to the fact that Jews are not segregated racially in the same way as people of color. While the anti-Semitism on the site is historically precedented, it must be taught to many of the new members. This issue is summed up in the following post:
For the average white person, the blacks & Mexicans are much more of a real threat. They will murder, rape and rob you, these facts are in the newspapers every single day. And, yes they need to be dealt with first. That said, to help develop a person into a WN, they do need to understand that the Jews do the same thing, using much subtler methods. Naturally, the vast amount of the people in the US are oblivious to this threat, despite their very obvious control of the media, Wall Street and banking. When are they ever going to wake up??

Although most whites share in racist fears of people of color, white nationalists are the more astute racists in broadening their racist awareness to include Jews. Although similar and related to racism, Anti-Semitism is of a different quality even though racism and anti-Semitism both endorse a violent expulsion. While the racialization of people of color ensures that white nationalism is defended through securing segregation, the slippery racial categorization of Jews mandates different means for securing white supremacy. The following discussion thread from Stormfront explains the nature of white nationalism’s rampant anti-Semitism. In the thread “My feelings on Jews,” Stormfront member Indefens writes that he doesn’t understand the anti-Jewish obsession on the site. He acknowledges that he’s “stepping into a snakes’ den” when he writes that he wants to post his confusion around the “whole ‘Jewish thing’” but wants to hear arguments for anti-Semitism. He begins:

Let me say that having grown up in an upper-class southern New Jersey town, I know a lot of Jews, and my two best friends growing up literally were Jewish. I attended their bar mitzvahs, went with them down the shore, etc...I became racially aware after living in a mostly black neighborhood, so when I first began identifying as a WN, I didn’t see the big deal about Jews but I kept my mouth shut because I didn’t want to jump right into the pool and start making waves. Also, I wanted to keep an open mind and hear what people had to say on the issue.

Indefens continues that although he recognizes that as a group Jews “pulled their weight as scholars, historians, entertainers and so forth throughout history,” he also recognizes that they are also “largely responsible for the multiculturalism that is destroying our western nations” thus have likely caused more damage than good in the Western. He recognizes that there is a qualitative gap between his views against the role of Jews in supporting multiculturalism and the vehement anti-Semitism in white nationalism and asks, “So, is there something important I’m missing, here?”

The Neo-Nazis and Hitler supporters undertake Indefens’ education about the significance and meaning of anti-Semitism, with the first reply giving a link to the American Nazi Party. Through the ensuing exchanges he shows he fails to grasp the true threat of the Jew in the white nationalist imagination and so another member coins in with this clarification, “Just in case it hasn’t been
stated directly... They are EVIL!!” Through more posts interspersing accusations about deceit, greed, an anti-white imperative, support for multiculturalism, and plans to take over the world, along with comments about their threats to white morality, Stormfront members coax Indefens into anti-Semitism. Responding to a suggestion that he search the site for similar previous posts he responds, “Thanks! Will do.” His comment implying that Indefens is taking his anti-Semitic lessons seriously from this online community. Similar conversations and conversions are found throughout the website, suggesting the site is relatively successful at recruiting new Anti-Semites.

These differences between racism and anti-Semitism are confusing to those of us who do not ascribe to them. Zygmant Bauman’s Modernity and the Holocaust is useful in helping to clarify these distinctions. Bauman describes modern Western societies as being organized like a garden, with race designating the dangerous and chaotic weeds from the beautifully cultivated rows of the gardening state. Given that Jews are now commonly considered white, the designation between who belongs in the moral “garden” versus who is actually threatening that order through their impure racial essence becomes blurred. The de-racialization of Jews then is seen as incredibly threatening. On the other hand the extreme racialization of people of color continues to clearly designate those who do not belong in the society and effectively segregates society along the race line. While the racial status of Jews poses a different form of racial threat, the concept of the Jew actually troubles the very idea of race which also exacerbates anti-Semitism.

Bauman conceives of the Jew as the “stranger” who unsettles racial and national identity categories. When national identity became so important in the Modern era, the Jews were, as Arendt noted “a non-national element in a world of growing or existing nations.” As nationalism grew in prominence, the internationality of Jews challenged the binaries holding the notion of the national community together and, “The world tightly packed with nations and nation-states abhorred the non-national void. Jews were in such a void: they were the void.” Thus the Jews are strangers in Europe, their very existence belying the categories which personhood and nationhood were predicated upon. But, unlike the other races which were clearly and consistently defined as unassimilable problems in Europe in the early 1900’s, Jews “were an anti-race, a race to undermine and poison all other races, to sap not just the identity of any race in particular, but the racial order itself.” Jews posed an insurmountable challenge to the creation of the utopic rational dream of order and fixity, their mass exodus from Europe was the purported only solution and thus the Holocaust when that became unfeasible.

White nationalist hatred of Jews is then not simply about policing the borders of the racial contract, but securing the very notion of race that governs
those borders. Through combining this fear of the strangeness of Jews with tradi-
tional anti-Semitic ideology of accusing Jews of possessing nearly omnipotent
power, Stormfront members combine critiques of what they refer to as “Jewish
supremacy” with more emotionally laden insecurities about the destructive po-
tential of Jews; fearing their “parasitic nature,” their “embodiment of evil,” their
“cancerous” essence. Jews are blamed for the “plague of multiculturalism,” for
supporting multicultural policies which challenge white supremacy, a conspiracy
which fits strikingly into the historical fears fuelling anti-Semitism. As the race
that destabilizes the very notion of race and nationalism and the race most con-
spiratorially depicted as possessing increasingly omnipotent control over white
nations and challenging whiteness and white supremacy.

The nature of the threats

Racial Others invoke fear in white nationalists because they represent
threats to respectability, purity and thus the moral order of society. To further
understand the meaning of these threats and their perceived destructive nature
it is useful to look at political philosopher Eric Voegelin’s argument that the rise
of secularism allowed for the growth of the race idea. Voegelin writes that with
the rise of secularism, “we see the first symptoms of a process that we may call
the externalization of evil,” in which racialized others come to embody not just
difference, but an evil or sinful essence. The demarcation of racialized peoples
as “Other” left whiteness, the unmarked racial category, as the racial norm while
its racialized foil allowed for whiteness to be imagined as good and moral as op-
posed to the inherently evil racial Other. Voegelin continues, “Parallel with the
positive race idea we find the evolution of a counter-idea, the idea of a coun-
ter-race. The Satanistic idea of the Jew is a theologically essential part of the race
symbol.” Taking Voegelin’s concept of race and the externalization of evil along
with Mills’ concept of the racial contract and its designation of persons from
subpersons shows the way that the racial Other serves to define whites as moral
and good as well as rational and autonomous. Externalizing evil provides a double
purpose, both leaving the externalizing community clear of evil thus morally good
while also providing this community with a constant foil as a reminder of just
how good that community is as compared to the inherently dark and evil Other.
The construction of a subperson population serves the same double purpose for
establishing the population of full persons as moral and rational in contrast to the
inchoate mass of subpersons.

While both construct people of color as racially other or alien, they are
also both projections which secure white subjectivity as moral, rational, autono-
mous, and good. I am suggesting that to better understand the terror that the
racial other inspires in the white nationalist imagination we must explore the relationship between whiteness and projection. As the race concept emerged concomitant to European colonial expansion, it is clear that racial classification served to defend colonial violence. Through framing colonized populations as possessing a racialized essence which was irrational, sub-human, and inherently evil, the race concept justified European colonial violence while shielding Europeans from the guilt that such violence would induce. By framing racialized peoples as savages and sexual threats to white women colonial violence was actually construed as defending respectability. Yet prolific and horrifying savage violence was condoned and committed by whites in the United States as well as globally throughout colonization and through the institution of slavery. A strange inversion occurred however; whereas the violence needed to secure colonialism was immense the colonized population was always depicted as the violent and savage community. This inversion seems to hinge on projection.

Projection is defined as the process of externalizing negative feelings outside the self. The projection must be constantly secured as an external object so that the subject is not overtaken by the internal battle. While all projections are seen as external to those projecting but in actuality stem from the fears within the projector themselves. Drawing on Lacanian psychoanalysis, Teresa Brennan argues that the projection of internal negativity is connected to the need to dominate external space, that “the various pressures and fears produce a sense of spatial constriction and a fear of loss of territory. Since the sense of self depends on a certain spatial definition these pressures have a persecutory feel; they jeopardize that spatial definition.” This fosters paranoia as the subject is both defined by, thus reliant upon, external objects and spatial control to maintain a sense of self and also generates fear that either the objects will shift or the external projections may return to persecute the one who projects. There is thus a need to control space in order to secure the projection.

Racially, the projection of evil as well as chaos, disorder, and immorality onto people of color is dependent on as well as inspires a need for segregation. Due to fear of encountering the other, social distance is maintained which secures the projection as natural and uncontested by relationships. Although spatial control through segregation helps to secure the projection this is never complete. So, “the passifier fears retaliation for the badness projected onto the other.” The significant fear of people of color in white nationalism alludes to the question if the fear of racial Others and racial integration is actually a fear of retaliating projections. It is thus useful to ask what the racial Other represents to white morality and subjectivity, a question which points to the reliance on distance from people of color to secure the projections which define whiteness morally. As James Baldwin so aptly articulated the plight, “If I am not who you say I am, then you are not
who you think you are, and that is the crisis.”

It is evident from the conversations in Stormfront that white nationalists are terrified of a break-down in the racial contract because they fear that what whites have done to others will now be done to whites. One member warns, “To you race-traitors, do you believe that when the white race falls there will be a place for you in a dark world? No... They will do to you everything we have ever done them and worse. The race war is already upon us. Just look at Rhodesia and South Africa.” Not only is the fear that the violence will turn onto whites, but that the persecution will be genocidal, not just eventually destroying the white race but extinguishing whites today. Extreme paranoia is thick in the conversations and denotes a fear of destructive returning projections. One member writes: “Don’t make me extinct! Why do I have to justify my existence? When someone says they don’t care if whites disappear, point at a white child and say, ‘So you don’t care if she becomes extinct?’ There is no comeback to that, and if they try, they then become easy to tear apart. I fight for whites because I want to live and I do not have to justify my life to anyone.” The individual themselves and the imagined white girl are portrayed as somehow threatened with death by this dark onslaught.

The theme that whites are actually threatened with genocide is visible throughout the conversations on the site. One thread is specifically dedicated to the question “Is the US Federal Government committing Genocide?,” meaning genocide against whites. The symmetry between white America being founded on the genocide of Native Americans and the present phobia by white nationalists that they themselves are experiencing genocide is stark. Of the nearly two-hundred respondents to this question of white genocide, 85% concur that there is currently a genocidal campaign against whites by the U.S. government. Uncannily associating this fear of ethnic persecution with genocide committed by whites in the making of America, one member writes, “Like the Cherokee trail of tears we are being forced out of our own communities by invading armies of illegal immigrants... and the steady loss of jobs, forcing us to live in non-white communities.” Throughout the site the violence originating in white supremacy is projected out and imagined instead as a threat to whites.

**Concluding thoughts and broader ramifications**

The white nationalism on Stormfront represents an extreme group, yet the nation they imagine and the fears they fan, of external dark threats bent on destroying the nation, immigrants stealing jobs, and attacks on the family values of patriarchal heterosexuality are widespread throughout contemporary popular politics and culture. And, even with the increasing difficulty of maintaining seg-
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regulated space given racial demographic changes, the racial segregation needed to maintain a white nation fantasy continues. According to an article in The New York Times Magazine from 1995, “whites this time are not just fleeing the cities for the suburbs. They are leaving entire metropolitan areas and states—whole regions—for whiter destinations… The whites leaving high-immigration areas are those most likely to be competing with immigrants for jobs, space, and cultural primacy.” By the year 2025 while demographic trends show that twelve states will have populations that are less than 60 percent white, twelve states will have white populations exceeding 85 percent. Although four decades have passed since the striking down of Jim Crow laws and multiculturalism is now mainstream, whites continue to prove their allegiance is to living in racially homogenous communities even when that requires moving trans-regionally.

White supremacy has not been destroyed in the post-Civil Rights America it has simply been transformed. I believe that the apartheid conscience seen in the white nationalist movement is helpful to understand this reproduction of white supremacy in America. In the past forty years many civil rights laws have been implemented and school curriculum has changed to incorporate a broader understanding of American history which recognizes racism. But can this legislation change the culture created over a century and a half of legalized racism which was organized not only around institutionalized supremacy but also internalized symbolically on an individual level and imbedded in morality? While multiculturalism challenges some aspects of white supremacy, it stops well short of recognizing the way that whiteness as a supremacist concept and conglomeration of practices is inseparably connected to nationalist practices and identity. Unlike anti-racism which explicitly points to the relation between power and race, multiculturalism is not directed at ending white supremacy but on representing or celebrating different races, thus whiteness remains the unnamed and oppressive norm left invisible to whites.

Exploring the relationships between white supremacy and nationalism complicates both anti-racist strategies for challenging white supremacy as well as points to some disturbing potential future trends in race relations in America. It seems that efforts at anti-racist education and organizing will be hampered without understanding the role that subconscious fears and irrational projections may play in securing a white identity. There is great irony of course in understanding whiteness as based on racial fears and morality, for whiteness is itself the cause of widespread racial terror and a moral system based on violent exclusions. As David Roediger writes, whiteness is the “terrifying attempt to build an identity based on what one isn’t and what one can hold back,” whiteness has always required significant violence to bolster the façade of racial difference. What I believe this study is useful in explicating is that while white supremacy is clearly perpetuated
by a sense of white racial superiority and entitlement, that much racist action may also be perpetuated by terror, a terror based on exposing white morality as having an inherently mendacious character and for perpetuating tragedies of epic proportions. What white nationalists also show us is the difficulty in talking about whiteness without also talking about gender as a structuring element of white racial identity.

On the level of broader cultural politics there are also many concerns. With the continued disintegration of communities, traditional gender roles, and economies due to the constant destabilizing potential of globalized late-capitalism there are many reasons for all of us to feel uncertain of our very locations and identities. For whites, this social and economic dissolution, coupled with racial transformation and a slow, if slight, loss of racial privilege may be a motivation to blame changing racial concepts for the broader social and economic instability of capitalism. Noam Chomsky argues that in the U.S., “a deliberate policy is driving the country toward a kind of third world model, with sectors of great privilege, growing numbers of people sinking into poverty or real misery, and a superfluous population confined in slums or expelled rapidly into the prison system.” In response to these growing crises, “people who would have been working to build the CIA 60 years ago are now joining paramilitary organizations.” Xenophobia and sectarianism may well be more appealing, comforting, and easy to grasp than the massive flux and inequality created by neoliberal global capitalism.

With pressure on states to decrease social spending, effectively cutting safety networks, the fear of destabilization is indeed a real one. The comfort found in imagining and defending the image of the nation as a secure racial home governed by one’s core values may be the appealing option. McLaren writes, “Whiteness offers a safe ‘home’ for those imperiled by the flux of change. Whiteness can be considered as a conscription of the process of positive self-identification into the service of domination through inscribing identity into an onto-epistemological framework of ‘us’ versus ‘them.’” Whereas McLaren hints that it is capitalism which must be contested in order to challenge racism, I believe it is clearly the opposite which we must be wary of, that it is racism which will inhibit our ability to challenge the monopoly of war-driven capitalism and its devastating effects on humanity and the environment.

For whites, this social and economic dissolution, coupled with racial transformation and a slow, if slight, loss of racial privilege may be a motivation to blame changing racial concepts for the broader social instability of capitalism. Coupled with decreasing public space to openly discuss this significant phenomenon, Stormfront’s capitalization of the internet may prove a successful tactic. As Swain argues, the anonymity of the internet may be one of the last places where many whites feel they may freely express their ambivalence, frustration,
and confusion about race. Many whites end up on Stormfront seemingly with a positive intention of finding a way to feel proud of their history, culture, and race and discuss their concerns. The limited framework and representation of views in the chatrooms lead many to become indoctrinated into white nationalist ideology. But, the broader cultural milieu also encourages this phenomenon. Swain concludes that the current social dynamic in America can only “nourish white racial consciousness and white nationalism” which she argues is “the next logical stage for identity politics in America.” The white nationalist movement is successfully peddling its divisive and violent message and expanding its base through bolstering racist morality, my hope is that the anti-racist movement does a better job of dismantling it.

43. Charles Mills, the racial contract (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1997).
44. <http://www.stormfront.org>, Forum Opposing Views, Thread “News from the Border (and why it should be protected),” Posts 03-21-2004, 02:58 AM #3
54. Ibid.: 53 (emphasis in original).
55. Ibid.: 68.
58. See Sharpe, Jenny. Allegories of Empire: The Figure of the Women in the Colonial Text (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 1993).
60. Ibid.: 59.


White Conceptions of Racial Hierarchy: Temporary versus Permanent Preferences

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Studying Hierarchy

Ideas of race, racial identity, and racial categorization, reflect the inconsistent, context-specific and fluctuating nature of racial meaning (Nagel, 1986; Forbes, 1990; Davis, 1991; Nagel, 1994; Haney-Lopez, 1995; Ignatiev, 1995; Kibria, 1996, 1998; Niven & Zilber, 2000; Morning, 2001; Lacy, 2004). Studies of racial hierarchy, specifically, enable an understanding of not only the social construction of race, but also the manner in which ideas of race operate to influence human reality. Within the United States, race “permeates the lives of the native-born and immigrants alike” (Bashi & McDaniel, 1997, p. 686, see also Bashi, 1998). More specifically, a continuum between white and black persists and is a critical conceptual schema grounding the many manifestations of racism in the United States. This white-to-black continuum is hierarchical as well with whites at the top and blacks at the bottom (Feagin, 2000, p. 220). While the specific history of the United States facilitates this hierarchy, it has also been found beyond the borders of the United States (Small, 1994, Twine, 1998).

Further framing this white-to-black hierarchy is the assertion that some
groups are neither white nor black, yet fill an intermediary space that entrenches the opposition of the two poles between which they are placed (see Almaguer, 1994 for a historical treatment of this topic). An excellent example of this situating is the research regarding the unique or even “model minority” status attributed to Asian-Americans (Chae, 2004; Edles, 2004; Ho, 2003; Tuan, 1998; Yamato, 1999). Min (1999) explicates the origins of much of this research as follows:

In the 1970s, the U.S. media and many scholars portrayed Asian-Americans as successful minority groups that overcame disadvantages through hard work, family ties, and emphasis on children’s education. Largely in reaction to this “model minority” thesis, Asian-American scholars began to emphasize the structural barriers facing Asian-Americans. The revisionist critique of the model minority thesis currently has a powerful influence in Asian-American scholarship (195).

This “revisionist critique” critically engages the reductionist, monolithic and de-contextualized construction of the model minority and presents a more complete understanding of dynamic Asian-American experiences in the midst of racial group struggles. Lee (1994) for example, suggests that the representation of the model minority is not static, and represents a complex combination of contextual influences in the schooling experience of Asian American youth.

Arab-Americans provide another example of an emergent intermediary group. Particularly visible since September 11, 2001, Arab-Americans have come to the fore of race relations in a politically charged atmosphere. As Domke et. al (2003) describe, post September 11, 2001 representations in the popular and mass media outlets may have reproduced racial hierarchy in the United States and worked to support a position endorsing racial profiling. They found that prior to September 11, 2001, “policing” was a primary focus of news coverage on racial profiling, and constituted 82% of the discourse on the topic. After September 11, 2001, however, “terrorism” and “policing” occupied 95% of the racial profiling discourse. Their results indicate that while white Americans are more likely to speak on racial profiling from positions of social power or leadership than African-Americans or Arab-Americans, the post- September 11, 2001, discourse granted Arab-Americans a relatively higher and more powerful position to speak on the topic than African-Americans have historically been granted. Ultimately, the location of whites at the top of the hierarchy remains untouched while other racial groups, specifically Arab-Americans and African-Americans, compete for much lesser positions of authority.

Scholarship on racial hierarchy extends the boundaries of national dialogue regarding race beyond the binary constraints of black and white. In a scathing critique of binary constructions of race, Forbes asserts that such constructions reflect “an erroneous construction based upon an ahistorical acceptance of late
nineteenth and twentieth-century generalizations and terminology” (1990, p. 12). Although “erroneous,” the singular and unique experiences of members of groups that are neither singularly black nor white are important to our understanding of the multifaceted reality in which we live. Feagin suggests that white-on-black oppression is definitive for everyone in the United States. It is, he states:

a comprehensive system of exploitation and oppression originally designed by white Americans for black Americans, a system of racism that for centuries has penetrated every major area of American society and thus shaped the lives of every American, black and nonblack (2000, p.204).

Consistent with Feagin’s argument, while it is important to pursue an expanded conception of human diversity, we must also recognize the persistent and current consequences of present-day conceptions of race.

Recent research on whiteness extends our understanding of these consequences in an important way for it reveals whiteness as a coherent racial reality critical to the maintenance of systems of white domination (Igantiev, 1995; Sleeter, 1995; Giroux, 1997; Lipsitz, 1998; Roediger, 2004). The implications of this research further reveal that racial hierarchies situating whites at the top represent more than simply a specific historical outcome. Rather, these hierarchies represent ongoing participation by white people in systems of privilege that solidify their position at the top of these hierarchies.

Although there is an abundance of research addressing racial hierarchy in its manifestations as racial inequity and inequality, “there is little discussion of what exactly racial hierarchies are and how they operate” (Song, 2004, p. 860) although social dominance theory has served as a theoretical lens through which racial hierarchy is examined. Social dominance theory focuses on both individual and structural factors that contribute to various forms of group-based oppression (Sidanius, 1993; Sidanius & Pratto, 2001, Sidanius et al, 2004). A key explanatory component of this theory is behavioral asymmetry which asserts that more powerful members of society are inclined to act in their own interest more than the less powerful do. The construct of social dominance orientation reflects the tendency of the group to desire group-based domination (Sidanius & Pratto, 2001).

Other scholars question the utility of social dominance theory in examining social hierarchy (Schmitt, Branscombe & Kappen, 2003; Turner & Reynolds, 2003; Wilson & Lui, 2003). In particular, Turner and Reynolds (2003) assert that behavioral asymmetry cannot be supported empirically and that social identity theory is more useful in explaining the response of subordinate groups to inferior positions on social hierarchies. Social identity theory (Turner, 1982; Tajfe & Turner, 1986) focuses on the meaning derived from group membership and the
manner in which this membership influences relations with, and perceptions of, nonmembers.

Examinations of racial hierarchy are also present in research on racial intermarriage. The work of anthropologist Kingsley Davis (1941) examines patterns of intermarriage in societies that maintain racial and non-racial stratification. His comparative analysis serves as the genesis of what came to be known as the status exchange hypothesis. This hypothesis suggests that groups holding lower positions on the hierarchy compensate higher-position spouses with resources valued in that society. In this sense, a status exchange occurs as one spouse marries someone with a higher racial or ethnic status and the partner spouse marries someone that possesses additional resources (i.e. education). In an “improved” test of the status exchange hypothesis, Vincent Fu found support for the status exchange hypothesis in marriages between whites and blacks and between whites and Mexican Americans. In short, Fu found that “in a sphere of social interaction as intimate as marriage, racial stratification still is present for blacks and Mexican Americans; racial boundaries reduce their attractiveness to potential spouses” (2001, p. 157). That such “boundaries” were not as apparent between whites and Japanese Americans indicates that conceptions of racial hierarchy influence marriage patterns as well.2

While distinctions can be made between these theoretical orientations, neither theory is inconsistent with the widely accepted notion that race is socially constructed. Much convincing scholarship indicates that it is not only useless to attempt to divide humanity into discrete biological categories based on skin color; it is impossible (Montagu, 1942; Gould, 1981; Graves, 2003, 2004). Further, some authors assert that the continued use of static racial categories reify these categories and the hierarchies that they imply (Forbes, 1990; Verkuylten, Masson & Elfers, 1995). The implication of such assertions is that racial categories “must be totally discarded as part of the process of personal and popular liberation they must also be pruned away from scholarship” (Forbes, 1990, p. 36). The authors do not believe that the concept of race itself should be discarded in investigating racial hierarchies if for no other reason than the fact that ideas of race remain pertinent to human interaction. We, like Mukhopadhyay and Moses, feel that it is “naïve and empirically inaccurate to imagine a simple relationship between a belief in races and racial discrimination” (1997, p. 358). The study of racial hierarchy is valuable because it assists us in unraveling the nature of human interaction, not because race itself represents a valid scientific construct. Race is salient because humans make it salient. Its salience impacts our behaviors toward one another and therefore it is dangerous to discard it as a focus of research.

Research on racial hierarchy cannot be characterized by any one discipline, methodology or perspective. Racial hierarchy is both a result of historical
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circumstance and present-day interaction. It lends itself to biogenetic, cultural, political, economic, psychological, and mass media interpretations. No one theoretical framework is likely to offer a fully panoptic perspective of racial hierarchy. In an effort to contribute meaningfully to the understanding of racial hierarchy, the primary purpose of the research reported here is an empirical examination of attitudes of preference and aversion towards racial group membership, expressed racial hierarchy, and the implications of those choices by white students.

Methodology

The primary research problem that we investigate involves understanding the current, that is post-September 11, 2001, perceptions of racial hierarchy by white undergraduate students at the University of South Florida (USF). More specifically, this research seeks to examine temporary versus permanent patterns of preference and aversion among respondents. The results of this research reflect the current conceptions of racial hierarchy among the participants. The research was guided by three primary hypotheses:

1. Given an opportunity to be a member of a racial group other than their own, black group membership will be the least preferred group in both temporary and permanent conditions.
2. Being forced to be a member of a racial group other than their own, black group membership will be the most aversive group in both temporary and permanent conditions.
3. The respondents will be less inclined to indicate “I have no preference” in the permanent conditions.

The survey

A survey was administered to 446 undergraduate students at the University of South Florida during the 2004 academic year. Respondents were students in five classrooms of lower-level Anthropology courses. Of the 446 respondents, 221, or 54, were self-identified as white. 100 of those respondents indicated that they were also categorized as white by others. This is important for consonance between self and other-identified white group membership increases the likelihood that their responses are indicative of their experiences as whites rather than the experiences of those who identify as white but do not necessarily experience the world in this way.3 As we are primarily interested in connecting this research to the growing body of scholarship on whiteness and racial hierarchy, we focus exclusively on the responses of the white participants.

The available categories of race on the survey were generated by an
White Conceptions of Racial Hierarchy: Temporary versus Permanent Preferences

Introduction to Anthropology class section that was not included in the research. When asked to free-list the racial categories they perceived, those with the highest aggregate counts were selected. As a result of this pilot test, and in conjunction with the most recent categories used by the United States census, the following list of categories was used:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 1: Available Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a) Arab</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) Asian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c) Asian Indian</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Although “Arab,” “Asian Indian,” “Hispanic,” and “Jew” are not represented as separate racial categories in the U.S. census listing, they were frequently indicated as distinct racial categories by students in our pilot test. Although this research relies on recognizable racial categories, the categories used are informed by the participants instead of being limited by static and traditional conceptions of race (Verkuyten, Masson & Elffers, 1995). To potentially assuage trepidation that respondents may have had regarding the limiting nature of these categories (as well as similar trepidation on behalf of the researchers), an explanatory caveat introduced the survey:

The racial categories used here, although limited, reflect a combination of the evolving categories used by the United States census and categories identified by other USF students. For matters of consistency, familiarity and simplicity, these terms are very general. Although the racial categories do not adequately capture the rich diversity that is found in the United States or in humanity, these categories provide us with an important reference point to examine attitudes on racial group membership in the United States.

Ultimately, of the 211 participants, 126 women and 85 men participated. Nearly all (204) of the participants indicated that they were born in the United States. Finally English was the first language of the overwhelming majority of the participants (194).

The survey consisted of sixteen questions. Twelve of the questions asked about conceptions of racial privilege and the perceived race of children of mixed racial heritage. The remaining four questions were demographic and asked for self-identified and ascribed racial categories. Of the sixteen questions on the survey, four of them are the focus of the research reported here. They include:

1. “If you had one opportunity to be a member of a racial group other than
your own for a temporary period of time, returning to your own group when you wanted, which one of the groups from TABLE 1 would you most want to be? (Remember that you cannot choose your own group.)"

2. “If you had one opportunity to be a member of a racial group other than your own for a temporary period of time, returning to your own group when you wanted, which one of the groups from TABLE 1 would you least want to be for a temporary period of time? (Remember that you cannot choose your own group.)"

3. “If you were forced to be a member of a racial group other than your own permanently, never returning to your own group, which one of the groups from TABLE 1 would you most want to be? (Remember that you cannot choose your own group.)"

4. “If you were forced to be a member of a racial group other than your own permanently, never returning to your own group, which one of the groups from TABLE 1 would you least want to be permanently? (Remember that you cannot choose your own group.)"

Results

Figure 1: Temporary Preference

![Bar Chart: Temporary Preference]
Hypothesis One

The first hypothesis, “Given an opportunity to be a member of a racial group other than their own, black group membership will be the least preferred group in both temporary and permanent conditions” is not supported. In terms of temporary group membership, Pacific Islander was the most preferred group (n=41, 19.43). Temporary preference for Pacific Islander was followed closely by temporary preference for black membership (n=39, 18.48). Clearly, the least preferred is Arab group membership (n=2, .95). Although there was a considerable preference for black group membership, we must not lose sight of the fact that this response reflects only the temporary condition. Still, the “temporary preference” portion of the first hypothesis clearly cannot be supported as temporary Arab group membership is the least preferred.

Figure 2: Permanent Preference

In response to the permanent condition for the first hypothesis, the results in Figure Two reveal some important differences. Pacific Islander membership is again the most preferred response and Arab group membership the least preferred although it is now matched by Asian Indian (n=1, .47). Temporary preference for black group membership no longer closely follows Pacific Islander, dropping from the second most selected racial group in the temporary condition to the sixth most selected racial group in the permanent condition. Despite this fact, the “permanent preference” portion of the first hypothesis also cannot be
supported.

In order to more fully examine the differences between temporary and permanent preference, and further test the first hypothesis, it is necessary to compare the temporary and permanent preference responses. First, we note that Arab group membership was the least frequently selected response in both the temporary and permanent condition. Secondly, while temporary preference for black group membership nearly matched that of the most preferred group (Pacific Islanders; Figure 1), moving to the permanent condition reveals a severely negative impact on the selection of black group membership. The decrease in the percentage of white students indicating a preference for black group membership in the permanent versus the temporary condition (-9.95) was more than ten times the nearest such decrease. Figure 3 illustrates this change. From a descriptive perspective, moving from the temporary to the permanent condition had the most impact on the expression of preference for black group membership, and this impact was clearly negative. While these results still do not confirm the first hypothesis, the impact of moving from temporary to permanent on the selection of black group membership has implications for the interpretation of the results.

Figure 3:
Hypothesis Two

The second hypothesis, “Being forced to be a member of a racial group other than their own, black group membership will be the most aversive group in both temporary and permanent conditions” is also not supported. The percentages of responses that were given for each answer are demonstrated in Figure 4: Temporary Aversion.

When forced to become a member of another racial group for a temporary period of time, respondents were overwhelmingly averse to temporary Arab group membership (n=113, 53.55). In fact this aversion is more than five times that of the next most frequently selected group, which is black group membership (n=22, 10.43). The remaining selections of racial groups for this question are nominal. This distinguishes Arab and black as the two most aversive racial groups, with Arab group membership as the considerably more aversive of the two. Therefore, the second hypothesis that black group membership will be the most aversive of all the racial categories, or the “temporary aversion” portion of the second hypothesis, is not supported.
In the permanent condition, the percentage of respondents indicating that they were averse to permanent Arab group membership decreased as compared to the temporary condition (from n=113, 53.55 to n=105, 49.76) while the percentage of respondents expressing aversion to permanent black group membership increased as compared to the temporary condition (from n=22, 10.43 to n=39, 18.8). In a similar manner to the temporary condition, moving to the permanent condition reveals Arab and black group membership as the most aversive. Still, these results also fail to confirm the second hypothesis that black group membership would be the most aversive.

As with the preference questions, an important pattern is revealed when comparing the temporary and permanent conditions for aversion. Figure 6 illustrates the change in responses when moving from the temporary to the permanent condition. The increase in aversion to black group membership when moving from the temporary to the permanent condition is the largest increase for any racial group (15.17). It is nearly five times the nearest increase (Hispanic, 3.32). Again, the second hypothesis that black group membership would be the most aversive choice cannot be confirmed but the results of the comparison necessitate further consideration.
Hypothesis Three

The third hypothesis, “Respondents will be less inclined to indicate “I have no preference” in the permanent condition is supported. Figure 7 illustrates the percentages of respondents that indicated no preference for each condition.

Figure 7:
In order to test our third hypothesis, binomial tests were administered in SPSS. As indicated in Figure 7, respondents were more inclined to express some preference in the permanent rather than temporary conditions. The results were highly significant (p<.001) in both the preference and aversion prompts. This indicates that the difference in the number of respondents selecting “no preference” in the temporary versus permanent conditions cannot be reasonably be attributed to chance. The third hypothesis is confirmed.

Discussion

In relation the hypotheses set forth above, contradictory results are apparent. At first glance, the results do not support the first and second hypotheses as Arab group membership is clearly the least preferred in both the temporary and permanent conditions and the most aversive in the temporary and permanent conditions. These results run counter to the assertion that a white-to-black continuum exists with blacks entrenched at the bottom. However, the emergent aversion to Arab is remarkable. Song (2004), for example, acknowledges that the attacks of September 11th have resulted in “heightened awareness of racial prejudice against people deemed Arab or Muslim,” also asserting that “the evidence of Islamophobia” is not likely to challenge fundamentally…The widespread consensus is that there is a racial hierarchy in the USA, with whites at the top and African Americans at the bottom” (p.863). The results of this research suggest caution in adhering to such traditional notions of racial hierarchy in the United States and further, researchers should attend to the current experiences of people self-identified and ascribed as “Arab” to inform our understanding of race in the United States (see Anker, 2005; Domke, et al 2003; Witteborn 2004).

Despite the emergence of Arab aversion, our results indicate that the impact of shifting from temporary to permanent conditions in both the preference and aversion prompts appears to suggest support for blacks’ bottom-rung position on a racial hierarchy. The difference between the selection of black group membership between the temporary and permanent conditions implies a cost associated with being permanently black that is more pronounced than any other group. Therefore, although Arab group membership is indeed the least preferred and most aversive selection, the notion of permanent blackness negatively impacts preference for black group membership. Indeed, black group membership is the only group selected with less frequency in the temporary versus permanent preference condition while also selected with more frequency in the permanent versus temporary aversion condition. This is only true with black group membership. Figure 8 is illustrative of this fact.
The strong preference for temporary Black group membership may be explained by what Cornell West calls the “Afro-Americanization of White youth” (1994, p. 121) and what Bill Yousman refers to as “Blackophilia” (Yousman, 2003). The increasing popularity of hip hop music and hip hop culture provides White youth with an external point of reference with which they identify (Cutler 1999, Jones 1988, Kitwana 2005; Ledbetter, 1995). This is not a new phenomenon and extends back, perhaps, to the anthropological focus on people of color, the popularity of southern minstrelsy and even through to the fascination expressed in Norman Mailer’s White Negro (1959). Considering the fact that the respondents are college-aged, it is most likely that hip hop music culture influences respondent willingness to be temporarily Black. Citing the longstanding fascination with Black culture, Tricia Rose asserts that:

Like generations of white teenagers before them, white teenage rap fans are listening in on black culture, fascinated by its differences, drawn in by mainstream social constructions of black culture as a forbidden narrative (1994, p.5).

Although the temporary preference is clear, it is also clear that the idea of permanent preference is unacceptable. This fascination dissipates in the face of permanence.
Full consideration of the consistent preference for Pacific Islander membership and relative absence of expressed aversion to this membership extends beyond the limits of this analysis. However, the work of Edles (2004) and Desmond (1999) are useful as an initial point of reference for understanding this particular outcome. Edles critically examines the complex reality of race and ethnicity in Hawai‘i. This reality stands in stark contrast to the myth of Hawai‘i as the "model minority state the state that “epitomizes” what a multiracial, multiethnic, multicultural “melting pot” should look like (p. 40, emphasis in original).” It is possible that an idealized conception of a multiracially harmonious Hawai‘i influenced the respondents’ preference for Pacific Islander group membership.

What may be a more likely influence is the continuing presentation of Hawai‘i that is “pictured” primarily as a tourist destination. Just as Edles presents the contradiction between the simplistic presentation of Hawai‘i as a melting pot and the complex racial reality present there, Desmond presents a similar contradiction. In discussing the origins of tourism in Hawai‘i, Desmond engages the contradiction between the presentation of Hawai‘i as a welcoming tourist paradise and the “strong anti-colonialist sentiments of some branches of today’s Native Hawaiian Sovereignty Movement” (1999, p. 460). In the origins of Hawai‘i’s tourist industry

Native Hawaiians were seen as attractive, warm, welcoming, unthreatening, generous hosts. Importantly, Euramericans perceived them as “brown,” not “black,” “red,” or “yellow,” in the colorist terminologies of the day. For elite, white mainlanders Hawaiians seemed to offer and alluring encounter with paradisical exoticism, a nonthreatening soft primitivism primitive, yes, but delightfully so (pp. 40-461).

Perhaps the influence soft primitivism of tourist-driven marketing persists and has an impact on the selection of Pacific Islander group membership. Only additional research can effectively seek an answer to this question.

**Conclusion**

It is clear that both specific group membership and the permanence of group membership influence the selections of the respondents. This further challenges the notion of a colorblind society (see Brown et al, 2003 for an excellent critique of colorblindness). These respondents have constructed a coherent racial hierarchy where Arabs have emerged as a viable racial category and are situated at the bottom. Further, the idea of permanent blackness has particular negative salience. Ultimately, these results suggest that white students are aware of a racial hierarchy in American society and the potential costs and benefits of where one falls on this hierarchy. These two contested positions for Arabs and blacks
at the bottom of the racial hierarchy would best be examined with additional research. More specifically, qualitative research will allow respondents to present more complete renderings of their ideas of racial hierarchy and racial meaning that are not directed by prescribed categories. Still, this research indicates that colorblindness is a myth for the respondents.

Notes

1 We do not mean to suggest that scholars conducting research on race and racial hierarchy (including ourselves) are unaware of its social construction. Rather, we simply attempt to acknowledge the persistent conceptual salience of race in research.
3 Two of the demographic questions on the survey were:
   Being limited to the categories in TABLE 1, in which one of the above racial categories do people most often place you?
   Being limited to the categories in TABLE 1, which one of the racial categories would you use to describe yourself?
   In order to select respondents whose experience would be most characteristic of a “white” racial group, only those respondents selecting “white” for both questions were included.
4 According to the census, the prior minimum racial categories were American Indian or Alaskan Native, Asian or Pacific Islander, black, and white. In addition to two ethnicity categories: Hispanic origin and Not of Hispanic origin. The current minimum racial categories are American Indian or Alaska Native; Asian; black or African America; Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander; and white with two minimum categories for ethnicity: Hispanic or Latino and not Hispanic or Latino.
5 A one-sample binomial test is a nonparametric test that allows us to determine whether or not two categorical dependent variables significantly differ from a hypothesized proportion. In this research, the hypothesized proportion is .50 which assumes that half of the respondents should indicate some preference and half should indicate “I have no preference.” Significant results indicate a violation of this assumption.
References


of Communication, 623.


Books.


The study of “whiteness,” as equally as racialized a category as “blackness,” has generated a number of anthologies, monographs, and other publications in the past decades, culminating in a field often referred to as Critical Whiteness or White Studies. The commonality in all these publications is a concern to understand the role of “whiteness” as a racialized and ethnic category equal to “black” or African American, Latina/o, American Indian, Asian American, et al. Whiteness Studies explores the social, cultural, and political privileges of whiteness in a world dominated by Western markets and politics over the past centuries. The academic movement of Whiteness Studies materialized in the decades post-World War II and has since trickled into mainstream popular culture. In the past year, for example, the FX Network series Black & White has pointed out
not only the existing racism that people of color are exposed to on a daily basis, but the multiple racial privileges of whiteness. As the title suggests, the series narrates the experience of two families, one White American, the other African American, who are transformed into members of the opposite racial group. The simultaneous exploration of racial oppression and privilege highlights the fact that the social constructions of opposing racial and ethnic categories are interdependent. Drawing on Ethnic Studies, focusing on racially and ethnically marginalized groups, and Whiteness Studies, analyzing the materialization of white privilege, simultaneously, this article analyzes selected representations of colonial, imperial, and exotic landscapes and subjects in Western popular culture. With this analysis, I wish to demonstrate that Whiteness Studies can be an important element of an Ethnic Studies methodology. Through an exploration of material and visual culture artifacts, I wish to demonstrate the benefit of reading visual culture as an area where racial and ethnic meaning is produced and disseminated. The surviving legacy of exotized imagery in popular culture casts white and non-white groups in relationships that are controlled by century-long dynamics of discrimination, prejudice, and privilege based on constructions of racial and ethnic hierarchies. Casting Whiteness Studies as an integral part of Ethnic Studies inquiry is an important project to understand the complex dynamics of race and ethnicity in cultural representations, social structures, and cultural production, particularly for the study of popular culture.

Drawing on Ethnic Studies and Critical Whiteness Studies scholarship, the following analysis is based on the premise that the legacy of European colonialism created a colonial aesthetics that has survived in numerous expressions of Western popular cultures. In order to “study the cultural realities of [ethnic and racialized groups in the US], their relation to the body politic, and their unassimilated status because of racism and ethnocentrism intertwined with sexism, heterosexism, and classism, as well as religious, age, and physical ability discrimination”, as Johnella Butler describes the task of Ethnic Studies, understanding the legacy of visual representations is essential. The depiction of colonial encounters, often uncritically reproduced in popular culture, firmly engraves the superiority of whiteness in Western ideologies and popular beliefs. Considering that we live in a “global village” grown out of colonial encounters, questions about the impact of colonialism’s visual tropes and material environments on contemporary cultural expressions deserve our attention. Notwithstanding their intent, contemporary images, relying on colonial aesthetics, bear witness to century-long echoes of colonial exploitation and denigration of non-Westerners.

Often, the material and visual world as well as the realm of representations, although acknowledged by scholars in the social sciences and humanities, is subsumed by or incorporated into a wider conversation about social structures.
Until recently, a systematic examination of popular culture and its visual and material manifestations has been absent in most Ethnic Studies scholarship, which has grown out of the social sciences with a natural concentration on non-visual source material. Although the theories of sociology, anthropology, psychology, and other related fields have created a conceptual language and practice for understanding social structures, identity formations, and cultural practices, the study of popular culture deserves to play a pivotal role in Ethnic Studies. Popular culture, and in particular visual and material culture, represent important areas of cultural formation. They contribute to the dissemination and creation of belief systems, identity formations, and social structures. As film scholar Richard Dyer reminds us in his seminal work White, "The study of representations is more limited than the study of reality and yet it is also the study of one of the prime means by which we have any knowledge of reality."

Despite these limitations inherent in the world of representations, this article, through a close reading of selected visual material, wishes to invite a conversation among Ethnic Studies and Whiteness Studies about the surviving legacies of exoticized imagery. This imagery is saturated with overt explicit racial or ethnic references as well as with indistinct and underlying references to cultural constructions of racial otherness and privilege. These surviving legacies have become explicit marketing tools for a variety of merchandise such as chocolate products, drawing on colonial and imperial landscapes with century-long histories in Western popular culture. The article connects contemporary neo-colonial imagery in artwork, product packages, and material artifacts of day-to-day life with a century-long history of Western perceptions of tropical sceneries, non-white populations, and landscapes of luxury and indulgence. These artifacts and images offer a window into Western constructions of individuality and their dependence on racial and ethnic categories and hierarchies. According to Pieterse in White on Black, an extensive and unparalleled study of racialized imagery in Western popular culture, "[we need to ask] who are the producers, and consumers of these images, and only then to question who are the objects or representations. The key that unlocks these images is what whites have made of blacks and why." Cultural representations in visual and material culture tell important stories about how (white) people have and still are imagining complex relationships between various cultural and racial or ethnic groups. They reveal how whites picture relationships among each other as well as with other non-white groups. To summarize, Ethnic and Whiteness studies can take on the critical task to uncover and detangle the complexities of racialized white identities and their interdependence on representations of non-whites. Together, they can scrutinize social and cultural structures, of which visual representations form a critical part, about their continuous dependence on the white-non white binary that gives meaning to most.
Western cultural formations.

**Colonial Aesthetic: “Imperial Kitsch” and “Tropical Plenty”**

The development of a colonial aesthetics was instrumental in Western cultures' experiences of colonial landscapes and subjects as well as of themselves. Anne McClintock discusses various manifestations of racism during British colonialism in her influential monograph *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest*. She points to the racial attitudes and prejudices in nineteenth century consumer spectacles. Advertising culture, as she continues, had been a main site for the manifestation of organized racism: “Imperial kitsch as consumer spectacle [...] could package, market and distribute evolutionary racism on a hitherto unimaginable scale. No preexisting form of organized racism had been able to reach to reach so large and so differentiated a mass of the populace.”

The images in nineteenth century advertising that McClintock describes as “imperial kitsch” drew on recognizable tropes of exoticism and otherness. Images and descriptions of exotic landscapes with abundant natural resources, farms or plantations nestled into these lush panoramas, were widely used in travel narratives, natural history texts, paintings, lithographs, illustrations and other published accounts starting in the sixteenth century. In the epitaph at the beginning of the article, Coleridge, in his 1825 travel narrative *Six Months in the West Indies*, expressed common awe and admiration for the panoramas of colonized territories “the other world of peace and plenty and joy” here referring specifically to the subtropical landscape of the Caribbean island Dominica located in the Lesser Antilles. By the late nineteenth century, these visual and textual representations of colonial sceneries had become common motifs in a variety of popular culture forms of Western nations. Advertising for items that bore a connection to production sites in the tropics and subtropics, such as cocoa, was full of these themes, as large-scale industrialization enabled mass production and mass distribution of items such as chocolate and coffee formerly restricted to smaller markets. Even contemporary consumer culture produces imagery of untouched, pristine landscapes, in which exotic merchandise full with nature’s riches and tropical delights originate.

The connection of these exotic landscapes with black slave labor is not only reinforced in textual passage from various travel narratives, but also in the visual evidence that many of these texts supply. In John Augustine Waller’s text from 1820, *A Voyage in the West Indies*, several illustrations represent different aspects of his travels. One illustration in particular connects the exotic landscapes, black labor, and the enabling of white leisure by black servitude. Entitled
“A Spanish Planter of PortoRico luxuriating in his hammock”, the planter sits in the hammock while being served by one of his black slaves. The slave seems to carry a beverage of some kind, maybe coffee, maybe tea, that he is extending to his master. Non-whites cast as servants or slaves were naturally common elements in depicting colonial or imperial scenes and became a standard way or representations for non-whites: “Personal service by natives forms an essential component of the colonial ambience which is also psychologically satisfying.” The simultaneous inscription of white superiority and non-white inferiority strengthened the racial hierarchies of colonial nations and created a visual legacy that affects visual representations of non-Western locations to this day.

Tropical landscapes such as the plantation scenery in Waller’s illustration, or Coleridge’s “other world of peace and plenty and joy,” became associated with peacefulness, luxury, and comfort. This “imperial kitsch” or, as Pieterse calls it, images of “tropical plenty” carried messages of racialized hierarchies that supported the privileges of whites and the domination of non-whites. Similar to the illustration in Waller’s text, the visual and textual elements in material and visual culture artifacts as well as textual descriptions often placed non-Western, non-white subjects as the enablers of this luxurious world, cast into roles of servants and laborers, inferior to the portrayed symbols of Western, white subjectivity. These symbols could range from actual representation of whites themselves, usually in positions superior to depicted natives, or inanimate objects, representing Western cultures such as factories or other technological machinery.

In contemporary Western cultures, the constructions of whiteness still play an important role in normalizing white identities and in marginalizing people of color. Despite commercial culture’s use of apparent multicultural motives, often via a conglomeration of black, brown, yellow, red, white, and multiracial models, such as advertising campaigns for the Italian fashion mogul Benetton or U.S. companies like Tommy Hilfiger, these images remain one-dimensional and obscure the realities of economic, political, and social inequities based on ethnic and racial difference. Remnants of “imperial kitsch” and visions of “tropical plenty” are rampant in visual representations of popular culture. The subtexts of luxury tied to a system of colonial and imperial power augments the normalization of whiteness, largely because colonial systems had to justify the subjugation of non-white natives because of inferiority that became attached to racial difference. In the past, representations of non-whites and whites, created by white people, are likely to cast people of European descent as superior to their non-Western counterparts. Infantilizing people of color, portraying them in positions of servitude, and ridiculing their cultures and habits were common strategies. The underlying impetus of non-white inferiority and white superiority has survived in contemporary representations, despite a rising awareness of derogatory im-
Whiteness Studies and the Colonial Aesthetic: Western Popular Culture and the Representations of Race

Although crass racial and ethnic caricature are seldom widely publicized, especially in contemporary advertising campaigns, the habitual usage of exotic landscapes, sometimes including native people, sometimes not, conveys a world view of imperial and colonial paradigms about racial inferiority and difference.

Consumption of Leisure and Luxury: Chocolate, Coffee, and Tea

Contemporary consumer culture often evokes an imagery of untouched, pristine landscapes for products that originate in non-Western locations. These items such as tea, coffee, and chocolate are often associated with nature’s richness and tropical delights. The history of origin of the products and their introduction to Western markets are of course strongly linked with the course of colonial trades, especially those of the transatlantic slave trade, and thus with mechanisms of racialization and racial disenfranchisement. Franchises such as Starbucks Coffee have specialized in catering to the pleasure of consuming coffee and tea and offer a large variety of pricey coffee products. An image of a large elephant for Starbucks’ popular coffee brand “Kenya”, for example, dominates the brand’s logo. The automatic connotation of Kenya, a Central African state, with the animal world, and its automatic implication of primitivism and inferiority to European civilizations, stems from the legacy of the colonial encounter and the production of visual imagery of Africa during the eighteenth and nineteenth century.

Products such as tea, coffee, and chocolate have always had an exotic value to people on the European continent and in North America, mainly because the raw materials for any of these products cannot be grown solely in neither of those continents. The discovery of all three items falls during the period of colonial expansion on the African, Asian and South American continents. Chocolate, for example, depends on the growing, harvesting, and roasting of cocoa beans that grow on cocoa trees, with the Latin name Theobroma Cacao. The plant is native to South and Central America, and Spanish colonists, who “discovered” South America, are usually accredited with the introduction of cocoa to Europe. Hernan Cortes’ excursions to the Americas under the protection and finance of the Spanish crown brought the delightful pleasure of cocoa, and later on chocolate consumption first to the aristocracy and subsequently to the wealthy bourgeois in a variety of places. Technological innovations enabled the mass production of both cocoa and chocolate, which, by the early twentieth century, became regular products in many European households. Tea originated on the Asian continent, most notably in part of present-day China and Japan. The tea plant, under its Latin name Camellia sinensis thrives best in tropical and subtropical climates. Tea
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seemed to have made its way to European society during the 16th century and led to a spread of tea plantations under European colonial rule, most notably the British throughout Asia, including India and China. Coffee is the third of these products referenced in this article. There are two main species of the coffee plant, Coffea arabica and Coffea canephora. The drink brewed from the plants’ roasted seeds was brought to Europe via North African and Arabic cultures during the 17th century, where it was a popular beverage before its introduction in Europe.

There is an implicit association of luxurious indulgence evoked by the consumption of chocolate, coffee, and tea that runs deep in Western cultures. Coffee breaks, tea time, and snacking on a piece of chocolate often serve as brief escapes from strenuous and demanding twenty first century lifestyles. The food and beverage industry uses ideas of indulgence and treating oneself as recurring tropes in its advertising for any of these items. In addition to these themes, exoticized imagery of tropical and subtropical locations that, in a Western context are exoticized, contribute to the fantasy world that some of the advertising strategies create for their consumers. What often falls under the table, however, is the fact that the idealized version of the colonial world and its exotic landscapes obliterates the existence of complicated networks of power relationships that would disturb the peaceful and serene quality of the fantasy world. Further, the historical legacy of colonialism is made invisible by an apparent celebration of these “wonderful” places. Contemporary Western visual depictions of colonial or imperial worlds build on the various illustrations and paintings by artists who traveled to the colonies, often hired to document the natural riches of the natural landscapes. Beginning in the 16th and 17th centuries, illustrations of exotic flora and fauna became standard themes in paintings, illustrations, and on other genres of decorative arts such as porcelain, embroidery, and domestic art work continuing to gain in popularity throughout eighteenth and nineteenth century Western societies. Despite their scientific desire to accurately portray the natural environments, these images are suffused with the cultural and social etiquettes and ideologies of their time. As many of these botanical studies depicted plants not native to Europe, the images are permeated with the gaze of imperialism. By the late nineteenth century, images with botanical elements had long entered not only the realm of artistic production, but also made their entrance to consumer culture.

Portable Colonial Aesthetics: Nineteenth Century Trade Cards

Advertising media in the nineteenth century utilized the visual inventory established by artists and scientists of the previous decades to promote products that bore connections with exotic landscapes, drawing on the common tropes
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identified as “imperial kitsch” and “tropical plenty”: “In people’s minds, however, chocolate remained entrenched in its colonial and precolonial origins, signifying the tropics, exoticism, and even sex appeal – all characteristics highlighted and mythologized by nineteenth-century American advertisers.” Trade cards were one form of advertising media that benefited from the appeal of visual imagery and utilized the power of the visual world to market products. They drew on widely circulated and established forms of portraying foreign and exotic landscapes as well as populations. Foreign and exotic cultures had been accessible to late nineteenth century Europeans and North Americans through World Fair’s, circus shows like P.T. Barnum’s shows in the United States or Hagenbecksche Voelkerschauen in Germany, and, among others, book, newspaper, and magazine illustrations. Advertising ephemera were part of a larger visual and material culture of portraying “otherness.” Products such as coffee or cocoa, which were native to non-Western locations, almost always territories under colonial or imperial rule, drew on standard imagery of exotic and foreign people, landscapes, and objects associated with these cultures abroad.

Trade or advertising cards were a common and wide-spread form of advertising in the nineteenth century. The advances in printing technology and especially the development of chromolithography enabled the wide distribution of trade cards in the United States as well as in other parts of the Western world, such as England, France, and Germany. Motifs ranging from flowers and children to interior designs and specific products such as iron stoves were displayed on these cards that would usually come in a rectangular shape measuring approximately 5 x 8 inches. Racial and ethnic stereotypes as well as national and patriotic motifs were also very popular. Produced in an era of imperialism and colonization, trade cards represent an interesting and often understudied source to shed light on the formation of ethnic and racialized identities in the late nineteenth century and their legacy for contemporary questions and paradigm in Ethnic Studies and related fields. Their wide distribution among a large variety of people from different social and cultural background make them into fascinating and revealing windows to gain insight about cultural ideologies and social structures of the late nineteenth century.

An example of such a depiction of “tropical plenty” is the trade card by the London based company Taylor Brothers for its product Maravilla cocoa. By showing a comprehensive process of the entire production process, from cultivation to industrial production, this card stresses the achievements of Western cultures. The main part of the card is occupied by an illustration of two cocoa pods, the fruit of the cocoa tree, placed in a tropical landscape with a small mill in the background, placing the product in the cultural context of its place of origin. The card does not provide specific information about the exact location of this
floral landscape; the natural environment, however, suggests that this plantation is located in the West Indies, considering England’s large number of colonies in that area and the cultivation of cocoa from places like Trinidad. The smaller image on the very top of this card shows the London factory of the Taylor Brothers company. The “natural” and exotic landscape, which takes up more than half of the card’s space, is juxtaposed with the smaller display of the factory in England. Despite the smaller size, the placement of the London factory on the very top of the card, a place where the viewer’s sight is automatically drawn, dominates the card, despite the fact that the natural landscape of the cultivation site covers more space on the card.

The composition of the card suggests a teleological reading of the product’s creation, from the raw produce to the refined consumer product, that establishes the economic and, in extension, cultural superiority of industrialized cultures over its overseas colonies and territories. Starting with the cocoa fruit in its natural state on the bottom, a path leads through the natural landscape of cocoa trees toward the manufacturing building, a mill operated by water power, as the large wheel on the right side of the building suggests. Two native workers are placed in front of it, suggesting that the building in the back indeed is the main house of the cocoa plantation. The actual path becomes a metaphorical route, leading in extension the top of the card symbolizing the superior environment of Western industrialization represented here by the Taylor Brothers Mills in London, England, which does not longer operate with water-power as the more primitive mill on the actual plantation. The smoking chimneys of the British factory mark the triumph of the industrialized West over the archaic indigenous and natural landscapes of its colonies. The display of industrial landscapes such as this factory was a common trope for many manufacturers in the late nineteenth century. The business world was eager to demonstrate its modernist methods of mass production and ensure its consumers of its success. By visual differentiation with the site of cultivation, where the raw product, the cocoa plant, dominates the view on the very bottom of the card, the site of industrial production, on the top on the card and placed in an oval frame, emerges as the superior place of economic, cultural and social lifestyle.

In addition to the portrayal of natural landscapes, almost untouched by Western industrial improvements, nineteenth century trade cards also depicted scenes in which the consumer could inscribe her- or himself more actively into the portrayed scenery and partake, by projection, in the opulent and luxurious lifestyle and especially consumption of food made possible by colonialism. The trade card for Noix de Coco, dating from approximately the same time period than the Taylor Brothers advertisement card, does not stress the connection to the industrialized West, but, rather, represents a landscape of luxurious indulgence.
in an exoticized framework, depicting McClintock’s category of “imperial kitsch”.

Its motif is reminiscent of the illustration in Waller’s travel narrative.

This trade card presents several interesting elements typical for landscapes of Western colonial fantasies. The division of labor between members of the ruling class and the indigenous inhabitants of colonized territories, the gendered landscape of consumption, and the reference to of a larger market structure outside the portrayed setting are important aspects of this image. By arranging different elements in the image representing consumption and production, the card ultimately stresses the aspect of consumption by inviting the consumer to imagine herself as the leisurely consumer who enjoys the attention of her servants. Where the focus in the Taylor Brothers card was on production and industrial processes to stress Western superiority, the main narrative of this advertising card suggests an environment of leisure and indulgence enabled by the use of Noix de Coco only accessible to whites. Non-whites, in this image, only exist to help create the atmosphere of luxury and comfort for the white consumer. All three servants in this picture contribute to the white woman’s pleasure, either by fanning her, serving her, or laboring to create the product that contributes to the fantasy world of exotic comfort. The lower half of the card references a simplified production cycle of the product, represented by the native worker and the boxes toward his left. The young male sorting through a bucket of coconuts can be read as a reference to the actual labor of harvesting the raw product that is needed to produce Noix de Coco. His labor, however, is in direct connection with consumption of the product, since his location at the feet of the reclining woman links him with her, the consumer, who occupies the center of the picture. Next to him, boxes that seem to contain the finished product are located in the lower left corner of the picture. A coconut is placed on top of these boxes to draw attention to the fact that these boxes, which seem to be ready for shipment, contain the product advertised. The tray of products that are served by a native female servant to the white woman in the hammock is right next to the boxes. The proximity of the boxes and the serving platter suggest that Noix de Coco, the content of these boxes, was used to prepare to these delicious treats, which the reclining white female is indulging in. The production cycle of the product, from right through left on the bottom half of the card, is linked with consumption of the product. Again, native non-white labor generates products that establish a landscape of leisure and consumption confirming the superiority of Western lifestyles.

Both cards draw on depictions of “tropical plenty” and “imperial kitsch. They share visual strategies that support the general belief of Western cultural superiority, firmly establishing whiteness as the cultural norm. On both cards, the natural landscapes of the non-Western, colonized sceneries are full of plants. On the Noix de Coco trade card, exotic animals are added to enhance the foreign
quality of the environment. The closeness of non-Western cultures to a more “natural” environment excludes them from the more civilized spheres of Western nation-states. Westerners had conquered nature, as is suggested by the factory on the Taylor Brothers trade cards, and asserted themselves into their surroundings, non-Westerners had not. For Western cultures, natural and pristine landscapes became places that could be used for resources to enable mass production. Conquests of untamed environments were an implicit part of civilized societies, which seemed to offer a more refined lifestyle. Because the reclining white woman represents Western cultures that have successfully tamed wild landscapes and subordinated non-whites, she is able to indulge in leisurely consumption. The marginalization of people of color, who represent the workforce, is enhanced not only by their depiction of servants of farm workers (as in the background on the Taylor Brothers trade card), but also by the assertions of Western civilization in both depictions.

The Taylor Brothers card symbolizes civilized conquest over nature with its representation of the London factory, whereas on the Noix de Coco card, several elements in the surroundings, such as the Greek statue and the water fountain in the background, attest to the present of Western civilization. Ultimately, the creation of exotic landscapes full of luxury and leisure fail to portray the actual labor needed in the production process of both cocoa and Noix de Coco. Both images disguise the dependency on non-Western labor and resources to enable Western superiority by drawing attention to the natural and primitive landscape of non-Western environments.

**Plantation Chocolate**

The depiction of plantation life in the tropics or subtropics, which was so predominantly displayed on the late nineteenth century trade card for Maravilla coffee, reappears on a brand of chocolate in Germany almost more than a century later. In 2000, the renowned chocolate manufacturer Rausch developed a new product of mass-marketed chocolate. The company launched a series of different chocolate brands named after the place of origin of its cocoa beans. Each individual kind of this series is different from the other in its cocoa content. All kinds, however, are wrapped in the same packaging (picture 4). Each chocolate brand of the eight kinds that are available is named after a different location, depending where the cocoa seeds used for this particular brand are grown. Despite the different names, the image of the plantation scene appears on every wrapper. It seems to serve as an imaginary place that can be applied to each of these locations, although the location that served as the model for the original picture might have been neither of these places. The nostalgia involved in the plantation scenery
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might also serve as a reminder of Rausch’s century-long tradition as a chocolatier. In 1890, Wilhelm Rausch, senior, opens his first pastry shop in the Rhineland. In 1918, his son, Wilhelm Rausch, junior, expands the family business and opens the company Wilhelm Rausch in Berlin. In 1999, a year before launching the successful brand of Rausch’s plantation chocolate, the company merges with another well-known chocolate business and establishes the Schokoladenhaus Fassbender & Rausch am Gendarmenmarkt (House of Chocolate by Fassbender & Rausch on the Gendarmenmarkt) in Berlin. The store, with an adjacent restaurant that specializes in chocolate dishes, carries a larger, colored reproduction of the plantation scene displayed on each wrapping.

Each plantation chocolate package, aside of different sizes, includes the copy of the nostalgic plantation illustration or painting on it. On the “original” image, displayed in the Berlin store, the inscription Theobroma Cacao, L., the Latin name for the cocoa plant, is printed on the upper margin of the framed picture. The plantation landscape – yet another example of sceneries of “tropical plenty” – between the two different depictions of the cocoa plant seems to portray a cocoa plantation. A number of laborers are represented on the image: a worker in front of the plantation in the background, a woman, accompanied by a small child, who balances a full basket on her head, and other workers harvesting cocoa trees on both sides of the image. The curving road leads from the left corner of the image to wards its destination in front of the plantation house, past an orchard of cocoa trees. The entire scene describes the cycle of cocoa planting, the main ingredient for Rausch’s plantation chocolates. The abundant natural landscape suggests a pristine environment largely removed from the contemporary production of cocoa. The selection of this scene for the company’s plantation chocolate seems to be motivated to place the product into the century-long tradition of chocolate and cocoa production. However, this context of nostalgia also, similar to the trade cards in the late nineteenth century, stirs up Western colonial aesthetics that are saturated with stereotypes of non-Western primitive and archaic themes.

Rausch’s practice of colonial nostalgia does not stop with the plantation image that gives the product its name. In addition to this ubiquitous image, other visual representations are used that link the chocolate product to their countries of origin and, as I suggest, to a colonial imaginary that is so central to the marketing of these products and others of its kind. On the backside of the package wrappers of each specific brand, a map highlights the location in which the cocoa seeds used for the specific kind of chocolate are grown (picture 4). Areas north of the Tropic of Cancer are left out. The image is divided into half by a discontinuous line that represents the equator. On the Madagaskar chocolate wrapper, a red dot points out the location of the cocoa plantation, accompanied by the location (and chocolate brand) name and an image of a cocoa fruit. This map becomes a repeti-
tive image in the company’s packaging design. It is also used as a sticker sealing a wooden cigar-like box that contains twelve chocolate sticks from four different plantation chocolate brands. Contrary to the map reproduced on the back of each chocolate bar, this map includes all eight plantation locations. Further, this map is also painted as a mural on one of the walls at the Rausch-Fassbender store in Berlin. None of these maps includes Europe or Germany, where the final product is actually produced. The Rausch Company owns an extensive chocolate factory in Peine, Germany, where, most likely, the majority of the merchandise is created. The imaginary connection to tropical and exotic places seems obvious when marketing for products based on raw materials grown in these areas. However, it is undeniable that the visual imagery (the historical plantation illustration and the map) that is utilized to market these products is deeply rooted in a colonial aesthetic that, uncritically consumed, stands the chance of replicating Western assumptions and stereotypes about these locations.

The use of maps as marketing tools for products based on raw materials that are native to the tropical and subtropical regions of the world, such as cocoa-based products, seems to be a common strategy. A coffee cup used at a coffee vending machine at a autobahn (“highway”) rest-stop serves as another example. Although this map includes the Northern Hemisphere, the proportions of the different continents seem skewed. Similar to the map on Rausch plantation chocolates, this map highlights seven locations where coffee is grown, such as Mexico, Columbia, Brazil, Ivory Coast, Kenya, Indonesia, and the Philippines. Each name is accompanied with an image of a coffee bean, not unlike the Rausch map of cocoa plantations. Again, this map, despite its inclusion of the continents north of the Tropic of Cancer, highlights countries located in tropical and sub-tropical regions. All of the countries named on this map were, at one time or another, subjugated to the colonial rule of one or more European nations. Thus, both maps, one specifying cocoa plantations, one coffee plantations, serve as visual reminders of European colonialist expansion and imperialist politics that have shaped global economic structures to the present.

Sarotti Chocolate

Other chocolate companies have also started to emphasize the tropical origins of their chocolate products. Sarotti chocolate, a traditional German chocolate manufacturer, now in the hands of a French-Swiss company, introduced a new brand of fine chocolate, more affordable than the much more selectively produced items sold in specialty stores. Similar to Rausch’s plantation chocolate, the names of the five variations designate the locations of the cocoa seeds used to manufacture these products: Java, Ecuador, Papau-Neuguinea, St. Thome, and
Santo Domingo. Contrary to Rausch plantation chocolate, the visual design of the Sarotti products are minimalist and focus on the printed logo and an actual image of the product on the bottom half instead of evoking a nostalgic exoticism. However, the text on the back of Sarotti’s Santo Domingo brand suggests the natural riches and exotic delights of the Caribbean island: “The Caribbean climate gives the Santo Domingo cocoa bean a gentle and mysterious taste, while the influence of the Atlantic Ocean underscores the sturdy and wholehearted nuances of the Santo Domingo cocoa.” The text positions the city of Santo Domingo on the island Hispaniola, which today is divided into Haiti on its Western part and the Dominican Republic on its Eastern part, as the meeting point of the Caribbean Sea and the Atlantic Ocean.

These two places serve as metaphors for the New World’s indigenous and slave cultures and the Old World’s European civilizations, respectively. The Caribbean environment, according to the description, supplies the “gentle” and “mysterious” qualities of the product, whereas the Atlantic Ocean, and its connections to the Old World of European cultures, brings out the “sturdy” and more wholesome (“wholehearted”) characteristics of the product. This cocoa bean seems to be the perfect hybrid of the colonial encounter that has shaped the history of the island and has affected its economic, social, and political conditions to this day. This text subtly inscribes the “soft,” almost feminine qualities of gentleness and mysteriousness traditionally associated with simplistic ideas of exotic landscapes and their cultures with the Caribbean and assigns more masculine attributes to the Atlantic Ocean and its closer proximity to European civilization. This juxtaposition repeats the blueprint of colonial imagination that informs Western perceptions of former colonized locations. Unconsciously, this description by Sarotti in combination with the visual materials used by Rausch plantation chocolate insinuate a colonial and imperialist aesthetic that is often accountable for cultural differentiations of “us” versus “them” that lies at the core of racially infused cultural and economic politics.

The strategy of differentiating between refined European or European-based cultures and wild and untamed colonial settings is a recurring motif in Sarotti’s advertising strategies. Approximately a century before, the company Sarotti, with its then headquarters in Berlin, issued a trade card series consisting of six different cards. This series drew on images that established clear lines between “us” and “them.” These cards were mostly placed in chocolate packages that could be purchased in vending machines. The chocolate manufacturer Stollwerck in Cologne, one of Sarotti’s competitors, is often credited for the innovative and extensive use of these sammelbilder (“collector’s cards”) or advertising cards. These trade card series, often with accompanying albums, started appearing in the late nineteenth century. As the twentieth century progressed, the albums’
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Themes and pictorial works grew more and more sophisticated.

Stollwerck published one of its first cards series with accompanying album in 1898. From year to year, the production of these paper ephemera grew more and more sophisticated. By the early 1900s, the albums were not only used to collect individual series of cards that usually consisted of six single cards. Albums with overarching themes such as Das neunzehnte Jahrhundert ("the nineteenth century") from 1902/03 or Helden-Album ("album of heroes"), from 1908/09, were designed to assemble card series that could consist of up to 100 cards or more. Sarotti issued a card series call Die Siegesalle ("Avenue of Victory") in the early twentieth century.

Stollwerck, Sarotti and other companies issued trade card series that were meant to educate its consumers, mostly children, about their own culture and history, but also about different cultures and nations. Often, cards dedicated to displaying non-European people drew on distinguishing their subjects from the "civilized" worlds of the consumers. The six-card series by Sarotti mentioned above illustrates this poignantly. The series is entitled Kriegsfuehrung bei wilden Voelkern ("warfare among the wild people"). Each card represents a different population, accompanied by a written explanation of each motif on the back of the card. All six population groups are of non-European origin. Picturing and describing population groups outside of European cultural heritage as "wild" and keen on warfare impressed a clear us-versus-them understanding of global communities that are continued, albeit more implicitly, in contemporary consumer culture. These illustrations supported Western cultures' overall belief in the moral inferiority and inadequacy of non-Western communities, which in turn provided the West with a foundation to celebrate its dominance and justify the necessity of controlling people of color.

Conclusion: Colonial Aesthetics and Contemporary Art

Unexamined colonial aesthetics that repeat the racialized imagery of "imperial kitsch" and "tropical plenty," can, often unwillingly, perpetuate racial hierarchies that cast non-whites in positions of cultural dependence and primitivism and project whiteness as the norm. Photographer and Multimedia artist Gregory Colbert's recent work is a good example. Colbert is a very well-known photogapher from Canada whose recent show "Ashes and Snow" has received a lot of critical acclaim. The interactive exhibition includes Colbert's photographs, a one-hour film and several shorter films, installations, and a letter-novel written by Colbert. It originated in Venice in 2002 and has since then traveled as a "Nomadic Museum" to New York in 2005 and Santa Monica, California, in 2006. His black-and-white pictures portray animals and humans in unusual situations and
in close proximity to each others. The artwork that is part of “Ashes and Snow” originated during Colbert’s travel to thirty-four different countries over the past fourteen years, among them Kenya, Borneo, and Tonga. Colbert’s philosophy is to show the animals in their natural habitat in harmony with human beings. His philosophy is to bring humanity closer to nature, a relationship that, he claims, we have lost. Colbert creates fantastic landscapes that show humans and animals in harmony with each other, but his well-intentioned project generated a variety of criticism.

On an internet blog called “Listening for Change”, a number of individuals expressed their uneasiness with the show, especially the fact that not one human being shown with an animal in any of the pictures or films seemed to be a person of European descent. Women, men, and children of color, from various parts of the world, are the human subjects of Colbert’s artistic photographs and film material. In the exhibit, the visual material is accompanied by a number of fictional letters written to his wife by a man who traveled the world on a year-long journey. The text stress a desire for harmony and peace between different species of the world and an overall yearning to develop a closer and more authentic relationship to nature. Colbert himself is keen about the exhibit’s desired effects on its viewers to carry a message about peacefulness and harmony: “In exploring the shared language and poetic sensibilities of all animals, I am working towards rediscovering the common ground that once existed when people lived in harmony with animals. The images depict a world that is without beginning or end, here or there, past or present.” Colbert’s desire for the a-historic nature of his project, however, raises deep concerns about the actual history behind colonial encounters and resulting power relationships not so much between humans and animals, but between the humans shown in Colbert’s artwork, people of color, and the ones absent from it, white people.

Colbert’s work exemplifies the complicated racialized politics of representations. His pictures seem to re-inscribe whiteness by utilizing centuries-old visual traditions of representing exotic panoramas, animal, and human beings. Colbert’s artwork as well as other objects of everyday life’s material world are carriers of the historical legacies of colonial encounters. Consumer culture is no exception. The iconography of “imperial primitivism” in patent medicine and in material culture around sugar and confectionary in nineteenth century U.S. culture have persisted into the twenty first century, re-designing eighteenth and nineteenth century iconography of “tropical plenty” and “imperial kitsch.” The study of popular culture, especially of visual and material culture, deserves a central place in critical inquiries about the processes of racialization, the interdependence of racialized categories such as blackness and whiteness, and the manifestations of racial privilege and oppression in social and cultural structures.
Contemporary imagery in popular culture has continued the representational practices of colonial and imperial aesthetics that are based on racially exclusionary structures, placing the racialized construction of whiteness on top of social and cultural hierarchies. The continuous use of “imperial kitsch” and imagery of “tropical plenty” in areas of popular culture other than consumer culture can serve as prospective case studies for Ethnic Studies and Whiteness Studies alike.

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2. I will use the term Whiteness Studies during the article, but this term refers to all the various fields called Critical White Studies, Critical Whiteness Studies, and so on.


13. Ibid., 91.


25. The exact date of this trade, as those of most paper ephemera, is difficult to identify. Most likely, this card was printed during the 1880s, probably not later than the mid 1890s and not earlier than 1876, the year of the Centennial Exhibition in Philadelphia that marked the explosion of advertising cards on the
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U.S. consumer markets.


28. The card advertised a baking supplement based a coconut extract that could be used, as the card announce, for “puddings, pies and pastry.” Noix de Coco is the French expression for coconut. Warner & Merrit trade card, Philadelphia, late nineteenth century, Warshaw Collection. The trade card probably dates between 1876 and 1893. The trade card business in the US exploded after the World Expo in Philadelphia, continued to be very popular throughout the 1880s, and, by 1893, the Chicago World Expo, started disappearing.

29. The history of the company as well as the most current product information can be found on the company’s webpage, http://www.rausch-schokolade.de, accessed September 15, 2006.

30. The illustration on the wrapper turns out to be a section of a framed picture that is on display in Rausch’s Berlin store (see picture 5). The origin of this picture is, at this point, unknown. Contacting the company’s headquarter has been unsuccessful. Judging from the composition of the image, it seems as if the particular scene is part of a larger creation. The illustrations of the plants on the upper left and right corners seems cut-off, and the framing of the landscape scenery dominating the picture give the impression as if the illustration actually continued beyond the borders of its frame. Based on the drawing on the cocoa plant, this image might be part of a larger work on exotic plants. The image seems inspired by botanical drawings of exotic plants from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries as well as by illustrative accounts of plantation life in the colonies.

31. The eight brands of Rausch plantation chocolate are differentiated by the percentage of cocoa used in each individual brand: Noumea (New Guinea), 39%, Java (Indonesia), 37%, Madagaskar (Madagascar), 39%, Puerto Cabello (Venezuela), 43%, Amazonas (most likely Brazil), 60%, Arriba (Ecuador), 70%, Tobago, 75%, Trinitario (Trinidad), 80%. The wrapper in my collection date from 2004. At that time, Madagaskar chocolate was one of the milk chocolate products without any specification of its cocoa content. The other wrapper in my collection, Santo Domingo, is not manufactured anymore.

32. The chocolate business established by Heinrich Fassbender in 1863, which
grew to a business with a number of production sites in the twentieth century, specialized in the production of fine filled chocolate and chocolate truffles, which quickly earned him the status of royal supplier.

33. The label of each chocolate product states that it was produced in Germany ("Made in Germany"), although it is left unclear as to which factory manufactures the final product.

34. It is unclear why these seven locations were chosen and others, such as Ethiopia and Costa Rica, also two well-known coffee producers, are left out.

35. My translation of the German text on the packages backside comes from a package purchased in Muenster, Germany, in April 2006: "Das karibische Klima verleiht de Santo Domingo Kakaobohne eine sanfte und geheimnisvolle Geschmacksnote, wahrend die Einflueses des atlantischen Ozeans die kraeftigen und vollmundigen nuancen des Santo Domingo Kakaos untermalen."


37. The discussion is posted on the blog "Listening for Change: Ending Racism and Classism through Closeness" on the webpage www.blogspot.com.

38. This quote appears on Colbert’s sophisticated and innovative webpage http://www.ashesandsnow.org. It opens the brief narrative on the project’s vision.

REFLECTIONS ON RACIAL IDENTITY
AND THE BLACK MOVEMENT
IN THE UNITED STATES AND BRAZIL

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“... we shall gradually recognize that the racialization of democracy is as important as the democratization of race.”
Howard Winant, 1999*

Introduction

These reflections are based on a long history of study and involvement in the Black movement in the United States, on friendships with militants in the Brazilian Black movement, and on study of that movement. They arise directly from musings occasioned by comments made by an undergraduate white student in my course, Politics of the African Diaspora, and by my observation of a couple on the Avenida Sete de Setembro in Salvador, Bahia.

In a paper for my politics of the African diaspora course, one of my students made an argument which contradicted everything I knew and understood about the conditions of Afro-Brazilians in Salvador. More troubling was the reality that his analysis was sound and systematically substantiated. The essay grew out of an assignment to critique Kim Butler’s book, Freedoms Given, Freedoms Won, particularly her comparative analysis of racial identity and resistance in the
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two cities of Sao Paulo and Salvador in the post abolition period.

The student’s central analysis with respect to Salvador was that the percentage of Africans in the population was so high that it was literally impossible to restrict Africans solely to the most menial and degraded conditions of work. For a society to operate, tasks have to be performed, and the reality in Salvador was that some of those tasks which were not offensive had to be carried out by Black people. There was no alternative. No other persons were available in the population pool.

Because I have seen Salvador and the actual conditions experienced by most Black people there; because I am familiar with the high rates of disease, illiteracy, unemployment, incarceration, infant mortality, sexual exploitation, and social subjugation in Salvador - now, at the beginning of the 21st century - his position of what it was over 100 years ago clashed with my more informed opinion. He had, nevertheless, done an adequate job of supporting it. I asked him, therefore, to explore the question more fully in a prepared oral discussion. He did, he did a substantial job, and he came to the same conclusion.

My delayed recognition that his analysis was substantially correct alerted me to the need to keep the complexity of the Black condition always at the forefront of my thinking. While it was true that poverty, oppression, exploitation, physical degradation, illiteracy, abysmal housing, and being held in contempt by whites were the general and primary conditions of Black people in Salvador, those conditions could not characterize the Black experience because it was more complex than that. The generalization about miserable circumstances could be an important part of the characterization, but only a part. In the variations and character of the variations of Afro-Brazilian lives in Salvador lay perhaps the most critical factors for an informed analysis.

Because I turned in my final grades for that course on May 19th, 2000, and I arrived in Salvador on May 21st, 2000, the student’s point was very much a part of my thoughts upon my return to Bahia.

I turn now to the couple I observed on a street corner about a week after my arrival in Salvador. They were standing, holding hands, waiting for the light to change. Both were in their early twenties. He was Black and she was white. That is not an unusual combination in Salvador. Nor is the reverse - a white man and a Black woman. In fact, because the operational definition of race in Brazil is appearance, not ancestry, it is not unusual to have brothers and sisters, some of whom are Black and others of whom are white. The Reitora (President) of the State University of Bahia, a Black woman, and the first and only Black President of any Brazilian university, invited members of the National Conference of Black Political Scientists (NCOBPS) to her house for a birthday party. The other people present were principally family members. Two-thirds were Black and one-third
were white. To speak of racial identity in such a situation is to bring the question of race into the most intimate of human relations, the family. Nor in Salvador is this condition of a family which is at once Black and white a preserve of a single family. On the contrary, there are literally tens of thousands of families of similar description.

In the Reconcavo, the area of plantations, forests, and small towns to the south of the city of Salvador, and surrounding the bay, the Bahia de Todos os Santos, many settlements have populations that are 99% Black. In such circumstances, when white people look for mates, their options are very much expanded if they regard Black people as prospective husbands and wives. Indeed, that is what happens. Rare is the case of a Reconcavo white person who has no Black relatives.

This is my student’s point, made another way. The African presence in Bahia is so extensive that it cannot be entirely excluded from any segment of white life, including the family.

**Race as an Identifier of Persons**

In Salvador and in many places in Brazil, to speak of race as an identifier of persons is to give different identities to people who are closely involved with each other as neighbors, friends, workers, lovers, and relatives. If people have to choose between an abstract identity such as race and identification with human beings with whom they are intimately involved, there is little doubt about which choice they will make. This reality has profound consequences for the Black movement in Brazil.

This joining of people of different races in the most important human relationships is evermore the case in the United States. The rigid barriers which used to act as formidable obstacles to deep and sustained commitments across racial lines have weakened. Increasingly families are composed of people from more than one racial group. Again, in such circumstances, to speak of race as an identifier is to speak of persons within the social unit which is the primary source of people’s identity as essentially different, antithetical, if you will.

In the U.S. this is new. In the past Tiger Woods would have had no choice about his identity. Nor would Wardell Connerly. Now they do. Today if people choose to accept a single racial identity, in many ways they alienate some of those to whom they are closest. A non-Black parent can feel very much threatened by a child, for example, choosing a racial identity entirely different from that parent’s. Parents don’t want to be alienated from their children. They, their spouses, and their children understand that. The children don’t want to alienate their fathers or mothers and therefore may be extremely reluctant to choose a
single racial identity.

As such trends persist in Brazil and as they increase in the United States, they reduce the number of people who experience no contradiction in self-identifying as Black. They reduce the number of potential participants in the Black movement.

This is a question worthy of analysis for movement activists in both countries. It is not going away. It is one which both movements have a responsibility to address, and to address in the most forthright and rigorous fashion. The question must not be side-stepped. It must be embraced in its full complexity.

Here is a particular role for Black intellectuals in the movement. We must take the initiative and wrestle with the difficulties. We must state our thinking unambiguously. We must do it now - before the ground is totally taken over by others. This essay is a modest effort to target some key elements in the struggle to conceive of a vital Black movement in racially complex societies.

Alienation

A key recognition to make in developing a conceptualization of the problem which is faithful to a commitment to the Black movement is that assuming a Black identity does not require one to alienate oneself from one’s intimates who are not Black. Here I’m not going into the genetic evidence which renders race useless as a scientific category, nor into the characteristics of race as a social construct. Regardless of views of race held by biological and social sciences, race remains a powerful social and political concept throughout the contemporary world.

In racially focused societies it is difficult for most people to accept the idea that race is not an establisher of antithetical sets of persons. It is nonetheless true. To accept the idea requires a greater conscious recognition and tolerance for the complexity and contradictions of life than most people are inclined to make. We all live with these complexities and contradictions but we do it primarily without acknowledging them - often, by denying them, much as I was wont to do with my student’s work. That is why political contestations are often so farcical. Candidates and their supporters attack their opponents for being human. We expect people to be what we know they are not and, indeed, cannot be.

People love each other across racial lines. People have friendships across racial lines. People raise children across racial lines. None of this is new. Nor need race alienate people from each other.

To identify as a Black person does not mean that one hates white people, dislikes white people, or is contemptuous of white people. It is easier to conceive of differences in those terms - alienation, hatred, dislike, contempt - but it is
neither necessary nor practical. People may generally think in such dichotomous terms, but rarely do they live that way. Surely, there are great tensions between women and men. They are different - if in nothing else, in their physiology. Women and men are different, but they don't have to hate each other. They do have to live together. People who differ racially don't have to hate each other, but as a practical matter, they do have to inhabit the same societies. It is therefore important to put aside the equivalence of racial difference with racial animosity. It is important to do that explicitly.

If it is the case that racial differences are not representative of contradictions between people, that people can and do develop close relationships with people of other races, that people can, do, and must live and work with those of other racial groups, then why is it important to assume any racial identity at all? Why is important to have a Black identity? That there are many answers to this question is a marker of its significance. But for this essay, in so much as is possible, I will restrict my consideration to the political dimensions of this question. For political purposes, why is it necessary to assume a Black racial identity? Why do we need a Black movement?

Racial Identity and the Black Movement

First of all, I must assert that conditions of cross-racial intimacy are far and away the great exception to the physical circumstances of most Black people both in the U.S. and Brazil. That is the deep observation on which both this analysis and the Black movement rest.

Although in the post abolition period in Bahia some Black people escaped oppressive working conditions, most did not. Although some Black people in the U.S. and Brazil have multi-racial families, most do not. Therefore, to characterize a population by a condition of only a small percentage is to lead one deeply astray with respect to the meanings and possibilities of political acts. Most Black people in both the U.S. and Brazil work with other Black people, are friends almost exclusively of other Black people, live in neighborhoods populated primarily by other Black people, and are members of families which are entirely Black. There is no contradiction between their deepest identities.

A related point which has been made by many perceptive analysts with respect to Black people in the U.S. is that it is their racial identity which gives them their greatest political salience, their most effective basis for political education, and the most powerful motive force for political mobilization.

When Black political activity is stripped of racial identity as a central element, it is denied its principal strength, its single most important attribute.

Put another way, the people who are affected most uniformly by those
conditions which minimize life’s possibilities for Black people in the aggregate are robbed of their most effective weapons to struggle against those conditions and to propose new realities when they are denied their racial identity, or when they are denied their racial identity as a legitimate vehicle for political organization and mobilization.

Racial identity is perhaps the most significant element of Black politics in the U.S.

The Black Movement in Brazil

That is true for the Black movement in Brazil as well. But the Black movement in Brazil is quite different from Black politics in the U.S. The Black movement in the U.S., with respect to its political attributes, is much more comprehensive than the Black movement in Brazil. This is not to associate a higher value with either, but to point to the reality that there are significant differences between them which cannot be wished away.

Kim Butler’s sustaining analysis - as well as Jonatas Conceicao’s - is that in the Brazilian context, cultural autonomy, cultural resistance, is inherently political. This may well be the case, but to the extent that it is, it is a perception, a conclusion reached by the analyst. It is used to label feelings, thoughts, actions that are not couched in those terms. Many people whose participation in the Brazilian Black movement is self-consciously in the cultural arena, do not see themselves as engaging in politics. Others may observe such cultural activities and label them political, but that is not how many of the participants in these practices characterize themselves.

Others do. In Salvador, Ile Aiye and Oludum are perfect cases in point. There are many others. But many cultural organizations do not call themselves political. Many Candomble terreiros, many capoeira schools, many carnavaal groups, do not see themselves as political. In Voltaire’s terms, they are cultivating their own cabbage patches.

For those Afro-Brazilians who do characterize themselves as political, many do not associate their politics specifically with Black people. They are simply political activists. They are Brazilians. Their politics may be left, right, or center. They may be associated with the trade union movement. Theirs are politics not centered on Black people. Nor do they conceive of such a centering as part of their responsibility. Though this kind of political orientation prevails among Black political figures in Brazil, it is not associated with the Black movement.

Those people whose politics, specifically, can be associated with the Black movement in Brazil tend to constitute a comparatively narrow focus. Most
of them are associated with the left, particularly the two major leftist parties, though they often are associated with other formations on the left, including the Communist party. Some are deeply involved in the trade union movement. There are exceptions to this generality, but it is accurate to characterize Black movement politics as generally a politics of the left. The Black movement includes few elected or appointed officials. Again, there are exceptions to this tendency, the most notable being Abdias do Nascimento, Benedita da Silva, Paulo Paim, and Luiz Alberto dos Santos. But most elected Black officials don’t identify with the Black movement or with any specifically Black-oriented politics, though there are some interesting developments along those lines.

Many people in the Brazilian Black movement are intellectuals, associated with universities, colleges, NGOs, private foundations, and various cultural groups. In no sense can the Black movement be said to constitute a mass movement, or to have a mass base.

Nevertheless, the influence of the Brazilian Black movement far exceeds its numbers or demographic representation. This may well be because of the articulate, focused, and savvy attributes of its participants. Whatever the reason, over the course of 29 years they have changed the very nature and quality of the discourse on race in Brazil. They have made it a significant feature of public life.

The Black Movement in the U.S.

In the U.S., “Black movement” may be a misnomer, because despite the presence of widespread Black political activity, there is little currently going on that represents a broad-based social movement with generally agreed upon goals. On the other hand, there is a tradition of such movements in the country which still animates much political life.

In addition to the congeries of Civil Rights organizations, hoary with battle flags and legends; the remnants of the Black Power movement and symbols of its victories such as Black Studies programs and the assertion of the right to autonomy in various settings; there are ongoing mobilizations to combat the death penalty, DWB, police brutality, hate crimes, and various manifestations of the contempt in which Black people are generally held by the society at large. The tradition can be drawn on with great effect in every arena from cultural productions - Malcom X - to mass mobilizations - the Million Man March and its progeny. This movement tradition is now deeply imbedded in the culture and is manifested in various ways, but it is not an ongoing social movement.

Currently, Black politics consist of a wide range of activities concerned with influencing power, perceptions, and the quality of life for Black people. The
U.S. does not really have a political left, but to the extent that it does, that is where Black politics are located. Both mass and elite Black political orientations are far to the left of their compatriots on issues of social responsibility, social justice, and economic egalitarianism. Though social values associated with private behavior tend to be conservative among Black people, those predispositions are not sufficient to override the general liberal tenor of Black people on the role of the state, the public sector, in society. Activities in Black politics include electoral politics; lobbying; public speaking; op-ed pieces, mobilization around specific causes at every level - local, state, national, international; cultural expressions; political education; networking; infrastructure building; and a wide range of self-help activities. They also reside in using political office to foster policies which benefit Black people.

In many senses Black political organization is physically less demanding in the U.S. than in Brazil because Black people constitute a much smaller segment of the national population. At around 12% of the U.S. population there is a much more manageable group to organize than over 50% of the population as is the case in Brazil. Additionally, the physical infrastructure of the U.S. is much more highly developed than that of Brazil. Infrastructure facilitates organization. The Black population in the U.S., comparatively, has more material resources at its command. This last point, however, should not be exaggerated. Those material resources which Black people in the U.S. have are, for the most part, newly won and still greatly underdeveloped. It is likely a fair assessment that the comparative material resources of the two Black populations were roughly equivalent only fifty years ago.

On the other hand, Black political organization in the United States has always been facilitated by the hegemonic ideology which declared that everyone with any African ancestry at all was Black, and that all Black people were the same, subject to the same contempt and despicable treatment at the hands of whites. This ideology was bolstered by the whole system of Jim-Crow terror.

No counterpart for this generation of a collective Black identity has existed in Brazil. Therefore, Black identity is not as salient an element for mobilizing political activity in Brazil as it is in the U.S.

Racial Identity and Black Politics

While we know that racial identity and the character of racial identity are changing in both countries, it is important to consider the magnitude, the direction, and the likely rates of such changes. Such factors will have tremendous implications for the Black movement in both countries.

Tate, Smith and Seltzer, and Dawson all establish the centrality of Black
identity as a basis for Black political mobilization and efficacy in the U.S. It is the one advantage Black people have as a group in the U.S. amidst a plethora of disadvantages. Racial identity can be used to mobilize people across class, regional, religious, party, cultural, and at times even language and national origin divides in the U.S. Therefore, a diminution of racial identity speaks to the reduction of the ability of Black people in the aggregate to actconcertedly for their common interests. As long as politics, society, and culture operate to lessen life possibilities of all Black people qua Black people, such lessened possibilities have extraordinarily negative effects for Black people.

What is frequently argued is that as life circumstances for Black people change, they will have less in common as Black people and more in common with other sectors of the society who share their status in other respects, e.g., income, education, wealth, occupation, religion, neighborhood, language, national origin.

This supposition might make sense if Black people were isolated individuals. But such a supposition is far from the existential condition. People are linked to families, churches, neighborhoods, friendships, cultural affinities, private associations, all of which, together, override individual considerations. The greater the intensity with which persons are engaged in such relationships and the greater the extent to which those relationships reinforce each other, the less likely a person's individual status will determine his or her orientation.

For example, I might be a person who doesn't consider himself discriminated against by income because my income might be high; but my mother, brother, aunt, cousin, and best friend might be discriminated on the basis of income because their incomes might be low. In such a situation, I might well support policies which benefit not my situation, but the situations of those to whom I am closely tied. I might consider myself to be free of discrimination based on education because I might have a high level of education; but my father, sister, uncle, and niece might be discriminated against on that basis because they have low levels of education. Again, my policy position might be directed more by the needs of my relatives than my own.

Not only that, but I might prefer to be with members of my church than with other residents of my neighborhood. I might prefer to socialize with people in social organizations I belong to rather than people in my profession. I might, subsequently, identify politically more with my personal acquaintances than with people whose only connection with me is membership in common abstract categories.

In short, we do not live alone as isolated abstractions, but in sets of relationships - and weighted relationships - with other people. These associations effect our political dispositions. This is true even if we remove the variable of disparate racial treatment.
Why do working class Northern Irish kill working class Northern Irish? Why do Rwandan Hutu farmers kill Rwandan Tutsi farmers? Why do educated Jews in Israel kill educated Muslims in Israel? Clearly, some identities have more substance, resonance, weight, salience, intensity than others.

These factors - present in societies where they are mutually re-enforced - make certain kinds of conceptual, perceptual, and identity change more difficult than others.

It is likely, therefore, that perceptions about race and racial identity will be slow to change among most populations in the U.S. - Black and non-Black. While currently changes in racial perceptions lean towards giving less significance to race than earlier, that tendency is not irreversible. Moreover, change is uneven in all population groups and there is little indication that a sea-change is under way.

In Brazil circumstances are considerably different. There, in so far as a change is abroad with respect to perceptions of race, it is to the effect of recognizing the role that race played and still plays in Brazilian state, society, and culture. This change, however, tends to be most pronounced among intellectuals who study such phenomena, those lay people who are highly informed about racial matters, and in militants of the Black movement.

Conclusions

The rationale for Black racial identification in the political sphere is twofold: (1) it is as the result of racial categorization in the aggregate that Black people face their greatest obstacles as human beings; (2) racial identity is the single greatest instrument that Black people have for mobilizing and addressing factors that have the greatest common impact on their lives.

With respect to religion, secular beliefs, income, wealth, education, physical location, occupation, culture, Black populations in the U.S. and Brazil are quite heterogeneous. That heterogeneity constitutes a formidable obstacle to common action, one which is mitigated primarily by the unifying effects of shared racial identity. Remove or weaken the racial identity and the efficacy or possibility of efficacious political activity is greatly reduced. In the case of Brazil, racial identity has to overcome threats to its enhancement in order to increase political efficacy.

In both countries there are powerful forces at work tending to the diminution of Black racial identity and political organization on the basis of Black racial identity. Should these forces continue to extend their influence, the possibility for improving the life circumstances of the Black populations at large will be reduced. The Black movement in both countries is critical to maintaining and increasing a
sense of Black identity. Its adherents, therefore, must focus on developing the most effective ways to achieve that objective.

One step which must be taken in this regard is to popularize the scholarly recognition of the complexity of the human condition - to make plain that it is not only possible but imperative to organize and mobilize to achieve political objectives for Black people without excluding people of other races from our lives, or making them our personal antagonists.

There will always be people in the Black movement who are anti-white. That does not make the movement anti-white any more than a few, Black Brazilian engineers marked the post abolition Afro-Brazilian population as highly educated. We must foster and popularize an appreciation for human complexity. We must articulate explicitly why and how this complexity is an important feature of the Black movement. There are powerful challenges to the continued existence of the Black movement in both the U.S. and Brazil. Left unanswered, those challenges portend a dismal future for African descendants in both countries.

Notes


1. I began my formal study of Black politics in the U.S. as a graduate student in 1967. I have been involved in the Civil Rights Movement, the Black student movement, the Black power movement, and Black politics generally since 1960. I began formal study of Afro-Brazilian politics in 1986 and my friendships with Afro-Brazilian activists date from that year. While much of my academic work on these subjects has not been published, a sample of relevant publications is listed in Sources, below.

2. The classic articulation of this position is found in Oracy Nogueira, Tanto Preto Quanto Branco: Estudos de Relacoes Raciais. Sao Paulo: T. A. Queiroz, Editor, 1985.


4. This point is made most pointedly in Tate, Katherine, From Protest to Politics. NY: Russel Sage Foundation, and Cambridge Mass. and London: Harvard U. Press, 1995; and Dawson, Michael C. Behind the Mule: Race and Class in Afro-


6. Ile Aiye and Oludum are blocos afros, carnaval groups which deliberately and explicitly take political stances from a self-consciously Black point-of-view.


8. Interestingly enough, they have developed from a pattern remarkably familiar to Black people within the U.S.: accusations of criminal wrong-doing and prosecutions of Black, elected officials. This propensity is dramatized by the investigation launched against Celso Pitta, the former Black Mayor of Sao Paulo. Black politicians have characterized the moves against Pitta as anti-Black, as racial persecution. A caucus of elected Black politicians from around the country held a press conference on May 22, 2000, to declare, unequivocally, that race plays a significant role in Brazilian politics.

9. See, especially, Dawson, Behind the Mule.


12. Tate and Dawson specifically make this case. See note 4 above.

13. Dawson’s discussion includes such a perspective. See, particularly his use of a “black utility heuristic,” beginning on pp. 10 - 11.

Sources


Hasenbalg, Carlos, and Nelson Do Valle Silva, “Notes on Racial and Political In-


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