

HOW SHOULD WE THINK ABOUT PERSISTING RACISM?

By

Ronald Keith Warren

A DISSERTATION

Submitted to  
Michigan State University  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of

Philosophy—Doctor of Philosophy

2017

## ABSTRACT

### HOW SHOULD WE THINK ABOUT PERSISTING RACISM?

By

Ronald Keith Warren

Civil Rights legislation prohibited certain kinds of racism. Scholars disagree over the extent to which racism remains a persisting problem that impedes African Americans' access to goods, services, and opportunities. Some scholars deny that racism remains a problem that impedes African Americans' freedom and equality. Some scholars maintain that racism continues to be a persisting problem that impedes African Americans' access to goods, services, and opportunities. I argue that both of these groups of scholars thinking is to some extent adequate and inadequate for thinking about the persistence of racism. In this dissertation, I introduce some standards that an adequate conception should meet. I argue that the dialectic of recognition conception of racism is an adequate conception of racism because it allows us to think about the persistence of racism, while it avoids one-sided, atomistic, and static thinking.

Copyright by  
RONALD KEITH WARREN  
2017

This dissertation is dedicated to  
Sister, Groma, Mama, and Uncle Carter.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost, I thank God. I thank God for my graduate journey, which has been filled with blues. For without the blues I experienced on my journey, I would be a lesser quality of a learner. My journey has been impacted by many throughout this process.

In memory of Celie L. Carter my maternal great-aunt, I want to acknowledge her presence in her absence. Although she had been prohibited from access to political, economic, and educational opportunities on the basis of race, she believed in the value of education. So, she consistently encouraged me to read early and often as an adolescent. Thank you for that and for the greatest gift there is in life, providing me with an opportunity and your trust to serve you at your most vulnerable time during your life. In memory of Edwin J. Carter, my great-uncle, shared a particular pearl of wisdom during one of our fishing excursions. On one of our fishing excursions, he shared with me that he would not always be around to help me disentangle my fishing line. So, this time was as good as any to get started learning to disentangle my line. I have come to understand that I had work through my own internal conflict to be able to disentangle fishing lines for and by myself. When I was five years old or so, he taught me that I have a choice whenever my fishing line became entangled. I could disentangle my fishing line and continue fishing; or, I could leave it entangled and stop fishing. The choice was mine. He taught me, I would recall some decades later, that the concept of fishing line extended beyond fishing, who knew. There would be many situations that I experienced long after I hung-up my rod and reel some that I had created, consciously or subconsciously and some that I did not which I would have a choice to disentangle. These experiences continue to shape and inform my

being through my graduate journey in general and my dissertation process in particular. In Memory of Grace “Honey” Ballard, my maternal grandmother, who loved in spite of myself. Her love is what has gotten me over even when I did not like myself as a thinker, philosopher, writer, or scholar. In memory of Juanita M. Warren, my mother, who engaged in dialectic dances with me during my adolescence. Those past dialectic dances afforded me with a mirror from which I could see my true self-consciousness, selfish, recalcitrant, reluctant to work hard, and too willing to give up without a fight. While becoming a young adult, your mirror would later help me to see my many cognitive blindspot that were impeding my development. Only when I was open to de-centering my selfish, recalcitrant, and reluctant self with the reflections that I saw in your mirror could I begin to develop in areas of life where my development was stunted. Upon reflection on my earlier selves, I am beginning to see what you probably always saw in me, potential. I thank Amye, my wife and friend for allowing me time away our family to read, write, and rewrite my dissertation. But most of all, thank you for putting up with my moodiness. You continue to be my muse of excellence. I thank Kenneth “Chubby” Moore for teaching me, among other things, to prepare, dedicate, and be consistency in what I do. I thank Ronald Warren, my father, for his patients, steadiness, and encouragement during the genesis of my adult life in general and my dissertation project in particular. I thank my sister, Rhonda M. Warren for reading all the manuscript and using her razor sharp analytical skills to help me comb through and refine my rough and imperfect arguments. How fitting you have been involved in my last academic assignment, given that you helped me comb through a paper during my freshman year of undergrad. I recall you helping me draft and comb through tangles in my writing and thinking. Now, as I conclude my dissertation,

you have been invaluable as you pose penetrating questions and force me to think about the practical applications of my arguments.

Outside of my family, I thank my dissertation committee, Richard “Dick” Peterson, Chairperson and advisor, Marilyn Frye, Steve Esquith, and Fred Gifford. I want to give a particular shout-out to Dick because outside of my wife he is someone who not only knows how temperamental I am but who gave me latitude to figure out the various tangles that I experienced in my “fishing line”. I thank you for your advocacy, encouragement, and support during this process. I thank Marilyn Frye. When Marilyn assisted me in obtaining a dissertation completion fellowship from Michigan State University, she let me know that there was the expectation that these funds were for *successfully* completing my dissertation. Whenever I thought about giving up, I reflected on the time when I gave Marilyn my word. Marilyn, my word is my bond, and my bond is my security. Although completing my dissertation has been a long and arduous process, I remain committed to my word. Because after all, my word and will are all I really have. I thank Steven Thompson, who while teaching at Howard University turned me on to Bill Lawson, a former dissertation committee member. Lawson was, at the time, in the process of leaving the University of Delaware for Michigan State University. I thank Bill Lawson for the kindness he showed me before he ever knew me. He drove from East Lansing to Flint, Michigan where I lived to talk with me about entering the PhD program at Michigan State University. He also created a summer reading group. Then, he and Rene, his wife, invite the reading group to their home on regular weekends. Once the reading group completed the book, *On Race and Philosophy*, Lawson facilitated a visit by the author, Lucius Outlaw, Jr. Outlaw came to East Lansing one summer weekend to discuss his book with graduate students.

There have been people from my Vernon Chapel African Methodist Episcopal church family who have their hands in my successful completion my dissertation. I want to single out a few members such as Pastor Robert Blacke, Derenda Collins, Earnest “Garrison” Nia, Bessie Straham, Mrs. Bingham, Jeff Bingham, and Chris Wilson. As part of my immediate and church family, I want to than Ruth N. Boone, Isaiah Leavy, Leah R. Dunlap, and Ahriah A. Bradley. In addition to my church family, I thank several friends who have at times poked and prodded me to complete my dissertation Anthony Veasey, David Bullock, Glenn Cotton, Eric Matlock, Christy Rentmeester, Steve Wandmacher, Kobie Coleman, and Tony Givhan. I even must thank all the blues that I experienced during this journey, and I know that there were many. Although this phase of my journey has been completed, I am sure that there will be more blues to come. For they have truly helped shape me. Finally, although Dick and Rhonda read the entire manuscripts, I take full responsibility for any errors in this manuscript.



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| Chapter one: Introduction.....  | 1   |
| Chapter two: Two individualist conceptions of racism .....  | 10  |
| 1. Introduction.....  | 10  |
| 2. Thinking about racism with an individualist conception of racism.....  | 13  |
| 3. Thinking about racism with a liberal conception of racism.....   | 23  |
| 4. Conclusion.....  | 34  |
| Chapter three: Social and individualist conceptions of racism.....  | 35  |
| 1. Introduction .....   | 35  |
| 2. Thinking about racism with a genealogical conception of racism.....  | 37  |
| 3. Thinking about racism with a psychological conception of racism.....   | 58  |
| 4. Conclusion.....  | 74  |
| Chapter four: Constructing a dialectic of recognition conception of racism.....   | 76  |
| 1. Introduction .....   | 76  |
| 2. The role G.W.F. Hegel's conception of dialectic of recognition plays in the<br>formation and development of individuals' self-understanding..... | 79  |
| 3. The role W.E.B. Du Bois's conception of dialectic of recognition plays in the<br>formation and development of racism.....                        | 98  |
| 4. Conclusion .....   | 123 |
| Chapter five: Thinking with a dialectic of recognition conception of racism.....  | 124 |
| 1. Introduction.....  | 124 |
| 2. Thinking about racism in political contexts.....   | 126 |
| 3. Thinking about racism in economic contexts .....   | 143 |
| 4. Thinking about racism in cultural contexts.....  | 161 |
| 5. Conclusion .....   | 174 |
| BIBLIOGRAPHY.....   | 176 |

## **Chapter one: Introduction**

Civil Rights legislation outlawed certain kinds of racism in American society. For example, the 1964 Civil Rights Act outlawed racism in employment contexts such as hiring, promotions, and firing. The 1965 Voting Rights Act outlawed racism in political contexts such as registering to vote and voting. The 1968 Civil Rights Act outlawed racism in the buying housing, renting, and lending. Scholars disagree over to the extent to which racism remains a persisting problem impeding African Americans' access to goods, services, and opportunities. I divided four scholars into two camps. On the one hand, some scholars deny that the persistence of race and racism remains a problem impeding African Americans' access to resources and opportunities. William J. Wilson claims that racism –individual persons' conscious racial prejudices –is not the problem that impedes African Americans' access to goods, services, and opportunities. Instead, Wilson claims that class-based factors are the reasons that African Americans continue to experience impediments to their access to good, services, and opportunities. Moreover, Dinesh D'Souza denies that racism understood as liberal conception of racism is a reason for African Americans' lack of access to goods, services, and opportunities. He, however, maintains that rational discrimination and cultural pathologies are the reasons African Americans continue to experience inequalities in access to resources and opportunities. On the other hand, some scholars maintain that the persistence of race and racism continues to be a problem that blocks African Americans' access to goods, services, and opportunities. Cornel West asserts that racism continues as a cultural and institutional phenomenon that blocks African Americans from being treated equally in cultural contexts. Jorge Garcia argues that racism continues as hatred and ill-will individuals and

institutions have toward other individuals based on race, and which injures racial individuals. Both groups of scholars' conceptions of racism have different conceptual advantages for thinking about the continuity of some aspects of racism. And, they have different conceptual disadvantages that impede our ability to think about changes to and continuity of some aspects of racism. Although these conceptions of racism are adequate for thinking about the continuity of some aspects of racism, they are inadequate for thinking about changes to and continuities of some aspects of racism. Based on the conceptual advantages and disadvantages of the four conceptions of racism, I identify some requirements of an adequate conception of racism. To construct an adequate conception of racism, I turn to Hegel and Du Bois's conceptions of dialectic of recognition. From these conceptions of dialectic of recognition, I draw on elements that allow us to think about changes to and continuities of race and racism. Drawing on elements drawn from these conceptions of dialectic of recognition, I show that an adequate conception of racism allows us to think about how racism changes and maintains continuity from the Civil Rights period to the Post-Civil Rights period.

In chapter two, I examine two scholars' who deny that racism persists. I argue that the conceptions of racism with which they use to understand racism are adequate because they allow us to think about the continuity of some aspects of racism and they are inadequate because they do not allow us to think about changes to and continuities of some aspects of racism.

The first conception of racism that I examine is what I call an "individualist conception." An individualist conception of racism consists of both an individual person's psychological and discriminatory components. The psychological components refer to

individual persons' attitudes and ways of thinking about races. It includes but is not limited to racial prejudices, attitudes, expectations, beliefs, stereotypes, and values. When psychological components, consciously and subconsciously, shape and inform individual persons' behaviors, they become discriminatory actions because they treat individuals and groups differently based on race or a racial proxy. The individualist conception of racism is adequate insofar as it allows us to think about the continuity of racism as individual persons' conscious negative attitudes towards an individual who belongs to a subordinate racial individual or racial group, although neither the racial individual nor the racial groups need to belong to a subordinate racial group. The individualist conception of racism is also adequate insofar as it allows us to think about the continuity of racism as individual persons' discriminatory actions against another individual or group on the basis of race, which produces inequalities based on race in access to goods, services, and opportunities. Although the individualist conception of racism is adequate because it allows us to think racism as individuals' conscious prejudices and inequalities based on race, it is inadequate because it impedes our ability to think about changes to and continuity of some aspects of racism. First, the individualist conception of racism is inadequate because it does not allow us to think about changes to and continuity of racism as constituted by relations between institutions and racial individuals, and between dominant and subordinate racial groups. Second, the individualist conception of racism is inadequate because it does not allow us to think about changes to and continuities of interconnectedness of prejudices, power relations, and inequalities based on race. Consequently, the individualist conception of racism is both adequate and inadequate. Wilson argues that while racism is no longer a significant factor impeding racial

individuals and segments of racial groups' access to goods, services, and opportunities, class-based factors have replaced racism as the reasons that racial individuals or segments of racial groups are not taking advantage of the gains of the Civil Rights Movement.

The second conception of racism examined is what Dinesh D'Souza calls the liberal conception of racism." The liberal conception of racism is another version of the individualist conception of racism. It argues that racism involves individual persons having racial prejudices and racial stereotypes that motivate their racial discriminatory behavior, and this results in differences in outcomes for individuals by race. Dinesh D'Souza denies that racism continues to block racial individuals' and groups' access to goods, services, and opportunities in the Post-Civil Rights period. According to him, the sense of racism that a liberal conception of racism allows us to think about –prejudices and stereotypes that animate an individual's discrimination–has been eliminated. I disagree with D'Souza on this point. On the liberal conception, if such prejudices and stereotypes have been eliminated, then racism will have ceased to exist. I disagree with D'Souza on this point as well. But the liberal conception of racism is adequate for thinking about the continuity of some aspects of racism. First, it allows us to think about the continuity of racism as an individual person's racial prejudices. Second, it allows us to think about the continuity of racial inequalities in access to goods, services, and opportunities produced by individual persons. Although the liberal conception of racism is adequate in these ways, it is an inadequate conception of racism because it impedes our ability to think about changes to and continuity of some aspects of racism. First, it does not allow us to think about the role power relations play in the formation and

development of self-understanding and in access to goods, services, and opportunities in political, economic, and cultural contexts. Second, it is static; it does not allow us to think about changes to and continuities of constitutive some elements of racism such as prejudices, power relations, and inequalities. Consequently, the liberal conception of racism too is both adequate and inadequate for thinking about racism.<sup>1</sup>

Both of these individualist conceptions of racism are adequate insofar as they allow us to think about the continuity of some constitutive elements of racism such as individual persons' racial prejudices, individual persons' motivations to racially discriminate against individual persons, and racial individual persons' inequalities. These conceptions of racism are also inadequate. They are static. This means that they do not allow us to think about changes to individual persons' racial prejudices, power relations, and inequalities. And, they do not allow us to think about changes to and continuity of racism as expressed by institutions and groups.

In chapter three, I examine two scholars' conceptions of racism who maintain that racism persists in American society. I argue that their conceptions of racism are adequate for thinking about the continuity of some aspects of racism, but are inadequate for thinking about changes to and continuity of some aspects of racism.

The third conception of racism that I examine is Cornel West's genealogical conception of racism. His genealogical conception of racism is social. By 'social' I mean

---

<sup>1</sup> For example, see Daniel Patrick Moynihan's "The Negro Family: The Case for National Action, Office of Planning and Research, United States Department of Labor (March 1965). Orlando Patterson, *The Ordeal of Integration: Progress and Resentment in America's "Racial" Crisis*, (Washington D.C.: Civitas, 1997). William Julius Wilson, *The Declining Significance of Race: blacks and changing American institutions*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1978). *The Truly Disadvantaged: The Inner City, the Underclass, and Public Policy*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1987). Stephen Thernstrom and Abigail Thernstrom, *America in Black and White: One Nation, Indivisible*, (New York, NY: Touchstone, 1999).

that a conception of racism defines race and racism as constituted by intercourse among individuals, groups, and institutions. West's genealogical conception of racism is adequate for thinking about racism because it allows us to think about the social nature of racism. It allows us to think about the continuities of racial groups' racial prejudices toward a given racial group, a racial group's use of cultural institutions' power relations over and against another racial group, and racial inequalities in cultural contexts. West's genealogical conception of racism is inadequate for thinking about racism. First, it does not allow us to think about changes to racial groups' racial prejudices, power relations, and racial inequalities. Second, it does not allow us to think about the continuity of racial groups' racial prejudices, power relations, and racial inequalities that occur in political and economic contexts. Consequently, West's genealogical conception of racism is adequate insofar as it allows us to think about continuity of cultural institution's power relations that produces racial inequalities in cultural contexts but it is inadequate because it impedes our ability to think about changes to and continuity of political and economic institutions' power relations and racial inequalities produced by political and economic institutions.

The fourth and final conception of racism that I examine is Jorge A. Garcia's conception of racism. I refer to Garcia's conception of racism as individualist for two reasons. First, it refers to racism in its central and most vicious form as hatred or ill-will. Hatred and ill-will are psychological phenomena. Second, it refers to racism in its derivative form as racial discrimination by individuals and institutions but it stems from or originates in the human minds. Thus, Garcia's psychological conception of racism is adequate and inadequate for thinking about racism. First, it is conceptually adequate

insofar as it allows us to think about the continuity of racism as individual persons' racial prejudices toward racial individual persons or racial groups. Second, it is conceptually adequate because it allows us to think about the continuity of racism as institution's racial discrimination against racial groups. Third, it is conceptually adequate because it allows us to think about the continuity of racism as injuries that racial individuals or groups suffer at the hands of individuals and institutions. Despite these conceptual advantages, I argue that Garcia's psychological conception of racism is conceptually inadequate for thinking about the changes to racial prejudices, power relations, and racial inequalities.

Individualist and social conceptions of racism are adequate for thinking about some aspects of racism and inadequate for thinking about some aspects of racism. How should we think about persisting racism? I argue that an adequate conception of racism should allow us to think about changes to and continuities of racial prejudices, power relations, and racial inequalities in political, economic, and cultural contexts, while avoid thinking about racism in exclusive individualist or psychological terms, in exclusive cultural contexts, and as static. To construct an adequate conception of racism, I turn to chapter four where I draw concepts from two thinkers that allow us to think about individualist and social conceptions of racism adequacies and avoid their conceptual inadequacies of conceptions of racism.

In chapter four, I draw some concepts from two thinkers. First, I draw on some concepts from G.W.F. Hegel. Hegel's conception of dialectic of recognition is important because it allows us to think about some elements of racism. Crucial here is Hegel's conception of *recognition*. Hegel's conception of recognition allows us to think about the formation and development of individual persons, self-understanding, and



understanding of the other are produced by expressions of oppression by dominant individuals. Hegel's conception of recognition is dialectic in practice. The dialectic of recognition allows us to think about changes to and continuity of individual persons' self-understanding, understanding of others, and material inequalities between individual persons.

Although Hegel used his dialectic of recognition to theorize about the formation and development individual persons' agency, he did not use it to theorize race and racism. For that, I turn to William Edward Burghardt (W.E.B.) Du Bois who adopted Hegel's conception of dialectic of recognition to think about race and racism.<sup>2</sup> Du Bois's conception of dialectic of recognition is important. It allows us to think about racial prejudices, power relations, and racial inequalities in recognition terms. It also allows us to think about the formation of Whites' denied recognition of American Negroes and that denied recognition changes and maintains continuity from the Post-Reconstruction period to the Civil Rights period.

In chapter five, I pick up Du Bois's conception of dialectic of recognition baton to show that race and racism have changed and maintained continuity from the Civil Rights period to the Post-Civil Rights period. I use Du Bois's conception of dialectic of recognition to think about changes to and continuity of racism, understood as misrecognition, persists in main three spheres of American life, political, economic and cultural. In each sphere, I explain how racism during the Civil Rights period was constituted in these three spheres of life and how it persisted into the Post-Civil Rights

---

<sup>2</sup> Although Du Bois adopts some elements of Hegel's dialectic of recognition, he does not adopt Hegel's metaphysics, which shows individuals moving toward the end of independence or freedom. I follow Du Bois on this point.

period. By 'persist' I mean that some misrecognition relations that existed in the Civil-Rights period have been *eliminated* and some misrecognition relations that existed during the Civil-Rights have *changed* in some respects but *maintained continuity* from the Civil Rights period to the Post-Civil Rights period.

## Chapter two: Two individualist conceptions of racism

### 1. Introduction

Two thinkers deny that racism persists from the Civil Rights period to the Post-Civil Rights period. One thinker who denies the persistence of racism is William Julius Wilson. The other thinker who denies the persistence of racism is Dinesh D'Souza. I maintain that while these two thinkers' conceptions of racism are adequate for thinking about the *continuity* of some elements of racism, they are inadequate for thinking about the *changes and continuity* of some elements of racism.

I have divided my exposition of these two thinkers' arguments into two sections. In the first section, I discuss the conception of racism that Wilson introduces; that is, what does it mean and how does it work. I attribute the label *individualist* to Wilson's conception of racism because it has the earmarks of an individualist conception of racism. Working with this conception, Wilson denies that racism can explain the persistence of inequalities that African Americans in general and the African American under-class in particular experience. He argues that thinkers have not shown the continuity of what he calls "historical" racism with "contemporary" racism. Even if Wilson is correct that racism as conceived by the individualist approach is not adequate for thinking about the persistence of racism from the Civil Rights period to the Post-Civil Rights period, it does touch on some aspects of the continuity of racial prejudices and racial inequalities embodied by individual persons. However, I also argue that this conception of racism is inadequate for thinking about the continuity of racial prejudices, power relations, and

racial inequalities as embodied by groups and institutions in political, economic, and cultural contexts.

In section two, I given an exposition of another conception of racism. D'Souza attributes the label "liberal" to this conception of racism. I draw this argument from his book *The End of Racism: Principles of a Multicultural Society*<sup>3</sup>. I attribute the label of individualist to this conception of racism for the same reason as I do for the conception of racism that Wilson introduces. While D'Souza claims that the liberal conception of racism is inadequate to explain the persistence of inequalities that African American experience, it is adequate for thinking about the continuity of racial prejudices and racial inequalities embodied by individual persons. In these respects, it is similar to the individualist conception of racism used by Wilson. While the liberal conception of racism is adequate for thinking about the continuity of elements of racism, it is nonetheless inadequate for thinking about racism in two main ways. One, it does not allow us to think about the continuity of racial prejudices, power relations, and racial inequalities as embodied in groups and institutions in political, economic, and cultural contexts. Two, it does not allow us to think about changes to the continuity of racial prejudices, power relations, and racial inequalities as embodied by groups and expressed by institutions in political, economic, and cultural contexts.

These thinkers' conceptions of racism are problematic for our ability to try and eliminate racism. They encourage understandings of racism that hide and conceal groups and institutions responsibilities in the role that racism plays in the persistence of racial

---

<sup>3</sup> Dinesh D'Souza, *The End of Racism: Principles of a Multicultural Society*, (New York: Simon & Shuster, 1995).

inequalities that African Americans experience. They shift the blame from victims of racism to purveyors of racism. They create for some people and sustain for others the idea that racism ceases to be a factor in individuals' and groups' access to goods, services, and opportunities. If these thinkers' understandings of racism and counterarguments win the day, then observers may make ill-advised inferences. Some observers may infer that only African Americans' personal choices are impeding their opportunities, not race and racism. Some observers may infer that the United States has turned the proverbial corner and is now a color-blind society and should no longer enact race-conscious public policies such as such Executive Order 11246.<sup>4</sup> Instead, the United States need only enact public policies that reflect a commitment to color-blindness. Let us turn to a discussion of the first individualist conception of racism.

---

<sup>4</sup> Executive order 11246 was issued by Lyndon B. Johnson on September 24, 1965. It prohibits discriminatory practices in hiring and employment by contractors who execute government contracts. Although executive order 11246 is sometimes refers to as affirmative action legislation that designation really emerges out of an earlier executive order, 10925, which was signed by President John F. Kennedy March 6, 1961. In executive order 10925, it has language imbedded in it that recommends that contractors who are employed by the government take affirmative steps not to differentiate between people based on races, color, creed, and national origin.

## 2. Thinking about racism with an individualist conception of racism

Wilson denies that racism<sup>5</sup> persists because the implementation of Civil Rights legislation eliminated laws that sanctioned racism. According to Robert C. Smith, Wilson draws his definition of racism from Carl Gresham's exchange with Kenneth Clarke. For Gresham, racism "refers to the 'conscious refusal of whites to accept blacks as equal human beings and their willful, systematic effort to deny equal opportunity.'" I label this way of thinking about racism the *individualist conception of racism* because it treats racism as embodied in individual persons' consciousness and individual persons' behaviors. One individual person makes negative judgments about either an individual or group on the basis of race. These negative judgments are embodied by individual persons and expressed through individual persons' discriminatory behavior against individuals or groups based on race. The individualist conception of racism is adequate for thinking about the continuity of racism.

First, the individualist conception of racism is adequate for thinking about racism insofar as it allows us to think about the continuity of racial prejudices held by individuals. It depicts racism, in part, as a conscious refusal<sup>6</sup> by White Americans to think and treat African Americans as equal, although the conscious refusal to accept African Americans as their equal is certainly not exclusive to White Americans. Thus, racism, in part, is a conscious phenomenon. By 'conscious' I simply mean its advocates are claiming that racism involves the life of the mind, which includes but is not limited to thinking,

---

<sup>5</sup> William Julius Wilson, *The Truly Disadvantaged*, p. 11.

<sup>6</sup> While Gresham and Wilson focus only on conscious refusal to accept African Americans as equal human beings, neither identifies "subconscious refusal" to accept African Americans as equal human beings which is called implicit bias. Implicit bias is a bias that operates in individuals' actions of which individuals' are not aware. I do not explore them here.

understanding, and judgment. A narrow interpretation of ‘conscious refusal’ refers to an individual person who is aware of his or her negative attitude toward to a racial individual or group. If conscious refusal only applies to an individual person, the conscious refusal may only form and develop within the mind of individuals. On this narrow interpretation, racism becomes manifest as conscious phenomena. In Gresham’s/Wilson’s characterization, racism becomes manifest as individuals’ awareness and judgments, which undervalue or underestimates, or marginalizes someone on the basis of race. Hence, the individualist conception of racism is adequate because it allows us to think about racism as negative judgments that one individual holds about another individual person or group on the basis of race.

Second, the individualist conception of racism is adequate for thinking about racism because it allows us to think about the continuity of racial inequalities. The conscious refusal to treat African Americans equally is embodied in individual persons in political, economic, and cultural contexts. For example, an individual person can deny an African American access to employment opportunities based on race. The individualist conception of racism allows us to think about differences between White Americans and African Americans in access to employment opportunities. For some individuals who are aware of their prejudices or bias based on race may be motivated to not hire an African American for a given position or may be motivated to allow some African Americans access into some employment opportunities but either hire them to fill the “African American” position or hire a limited number of African Americans and no more than a predetermined number. In the former case, the conscious refusal to perceive African Americans as equal human beings leads to excluding African Americans from equal economic opportunities. In the latter scenarios, some African Americans receive access to

some economic opportunities but within this economic opportunity, they become pigeon-holed or branded as the “African American” and thereby experience limited upward mobility.

The individualist conception of racism is adequate insofar as it allows us to think about the continuity of conscious racial prejudices that are expressed through individual persons’ actions toward individual and groups of African Americans. Although this conception of racism is adequate for thinking about the continuity of individual persons’ conscious racial prejudices, it is inadequate for thinking about some elements of racism that emerge in political, economic, and cultural contexts.

While there are reasons to say the individualist conception of racism is adequate for thinking about the continuity of racism, there are reasons to say that it is inadequate for thinking about changes and continuity of racism.

First, the individualist conception of racism is inadequate because it does not allow us to think of racial prejudice, power relations, and inequalities as embodied in groups or institutions. In *Racism in the Post-Civil Rights Era: Now You See It Now You Don’t*,<sup>7</sup> Robert C. Smith criticizes Wilson’s appropriated conception of racism.<sup>8</sup> He writes that it “is drawn not from the extensive academic literature on the subject but from Carl Gresham in a debate with Kenneth Clark.”<sup>9</sup> Gresham’s definition asserts that racism “refers to the ‘conscious refusal of whites to accept blacks as equal human beings and their willful, systematic effort to deny equal opportunity’.”<sup>10</sup> Smith claims that Gresham’s

---

<sup>7</sup> Robert C. Smith, *Racism in the Post-Civil Rights Era: Now You See It Now You Don’t*, (New York: State University Press, 1995).

<sup>8</sup> Ibid. See especially chapter 6 “Racism in the Emergence and Persistence of the Black Underclass: A Critique of the Wilson Paradigm,” 105-39.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 124.

<sup>10</sup> William J. Wilson, *The Truly Disadvantaged*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1987), 10-11.



definition is inadequate to explain the persistence of the African American underclass' material condition because it is not comprehensive enough, but deals with only one type of racism –individual.”<sup>11</sup> I agree with some of Smith's charges. I agree that an individual person's conscious refusal to treat African Americans as equal human beings in economic life is not comprehensive and cannot explain the persistence of the African American underclass' material condition. It does not allow us to think about African Americans' experiences with institutional patterns and practices. And institutions' pattern and practices adversely affect not only the African American under-class's economic opportunities. But they can adversely impact African Americans in political and cultural contexts. And institutional patterns and practices do not, as Wilson thinks, apply evenly across all demographics of African Americans by virtue of being African American. This is important because Wilson's comments suggest that if racism impacts all African Americans, the consequence will be the same among African Americans. In other words, racism, when operative, affects all African Americans in the same ways.

At a minimum, the individualist conception of racism is constituted by conscious phenomena. This narrow interpretation of the individualist conception of racism allows us to think about individuals' conscious refusal to think about African Americans as equal human beings refers to individual persons' conscious racial prejudices that become an expression of individual persons' discriminatory actions. If Wilson meant the narrow interpretation, this would show that Robert C. Smith's criticism of the individualist conception of racism that Wilson introduces is sound.

---

<sup>11</sup> Robert C. Smith, *Racism in the Post-Civil Rights Era: Now You See It Now You Don't*, (New York: State University Press, 1995), 124.

The individualist conception of racism is inadequate because it does not allow us to think about the continuity of racism that emerges in political, economic, and cultural institutions. The individualist conception of racism does not allow us to think about the African American under-class's material condition nor the material condition of middle-class and elite-class of African Americans because it cannot account for institutional practices that impede African Americans' access to goods, services, and opportunities in political, economic, and cultural contexts. Neither Wilson nor Gresham explains whether we are talking about the systematic efforts of groups or institutions. Another reason the individualist conception of racism is inadequate for thinking about the persistence of racism is that Gresham's "concept [of racism] is too narrow, ignoring altogether the rich literature on institutional racism."<sup>12</sup> For the African American under-class to persist would take more than mere individuals to keep them in poverty and away from access to material resources and access to power to determine their own destinies. Therefore, the individualist conception of racism does not allow us to think about the continuity of racial prejudices, power relations, and racial inequalities as embodied by groups and institutions in political, economic, and cultural contexts.

Second, the individualist conception of racism is inadequate because it is *static* or does not allow us to think about *changes* to racial prejudices, power relations, and racial inequalities as embodied by groups and institutions. In *The Truly Disadvantaged*, Wilson writes that

it is not readily apparent how the deepening economic class divisions between the haves and have-nots in the black community can be accounted for when this thesis [that contemporary racism explains the deepening gulf between African American haves' and the African American have-nots' material conditions] is invoked,

---

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 124.

especially when it is argued that this same racism is *directed with equal force across class boundaries in the black community*.<sup>13</sup> Nor is it apparent how racism can result in a more rapid social and economic deterioration in the inner city in the post-civil rights period than in the period that immediately preceded the notable civil rights victories. To put the question more pointedly, even if racism continues to be a factor in the social and economic progress of some blacks, can it be used to explain the sharp increase in the inner-city social dislocations since 1970? Unfortunately, no one who supports the contemporary racism thesis has provided adequate or convincing answers to this question.

The problem is that the proponents of the contemporary racism thesis fail to distinguish between the past and the present effects of racism on the lives of different segments of the black population. This is unfortunate because once the effects of historic racism are recognized it becomes easier to assess the importance of current racism in relation to nonracial factors such as economic-class position and modern economic trends.<sup>14</sup>

From this passage, there are three important and interrelated questions that emerge. First, what exactly is what Wilson calls “historic racism” and “contemporary racism”? Wilson does not seem to think that the historic racism that existed during the Civil Rights period is connected to the racism that exists today in the Post-Civil Rights period. For, if he thought that historic racism was connected to contemporary racism, he would already have an answer to his own question: can historic racism be connected to contemporary racism? And if he already had the answer to this question, then why does he even pose the question at all? The reason he poses this question is that he does not think that historic racism is connected to contemporary racism. Not only does Wilson think that historic racism is not connected to contemporary racism, but the lack of continuity between historic and contemporary racisms is that it makes his class-based division argument more attractive than race and racism as conceptual explanatory tools. The class-based divisions that exist between the African American haves’ and have-nots’ material

---

<sup>13</sup> These italics are mine.

<sup>14</sup> Wilson, *The Truly Disadvantaged*, 11.

condition seem more decisive than race and racism. He does not deny that some elements of historic racism remain in contemporary racism; but, lacking some elements of historic racism, contemporary racism is less potent than historic racism. Working with the individualist conception of racism, he fails to include in racism institutional practices and institutional power relations. With a conception of racism restricted to individual prejudices and discrimination, it is no wonder that Wilson does not think that the African American haves' and have-nots' material condition is caused by racism. There is too little in individualist conception of racism to explain how and why these inequalities persist.

The second question that this passage implicitly raises is this: why is the relation between what Wilson calls historic racism and contemporary racism significant? It is significant because Wilson acknowledges that during earlier historical periods historic racism was the cause of the African American underclass's material condition. But if, in the Post-Civil Rights period, important constitutive elements of historic racism do not persist, then we need a different explanation for the inequalities between the African American haves and have-nots. That is, what explains the difference in material condition between these two groups? According to Wilson, the impersonal economic shifts in the American economy explain the difference between the African American haves and have-nots. Although Wilson concedes that racism exists in the Post-Civil Rights period, it is insufficient to explain the persistence of the African American under-class's material condition. The individualist conception of racism does not allow us to think about the reproduction of class-based divisions between the African American haves and have-nots in the Post-Civil Rights period. Since he relies on the individualist conception of racism to explain class-based divisions between the African American haves and have-nots which does not allow us to think about the persistence of these class-based divisions, he

concludes that something other than race and racism must explain class-based divisions between the African American haves and have-nots.

I agree with two aspects of Wilson's position. First, for reasons already stated, the individualist conception of racism is inadequate to explain the persistence of the African American under-class's material conditions. Second, if we can show that what he calls historic racism changes but also maintains continuity from the Civil Rights period to the Post-Civil Rights period, then we may be able to offer an answer that involves race and racism to Wilson's question: can racism be used to explain the sharp increase in the inner-city stratification among African Americans since 1970? My point here is that the individualist conception of racism that Wilson uses to think about the African American under-class experiences with racism does not allow us to see how historic racism changes and maintains continuity and becomes contemporary racism because of its conceptual blind-spot. What we need is a way to think about how prejudices, power relations, and inequalities, constitutive elements of racism, change and maintain continuity from the Civil Rights period to the Post-Civil Rights periods and how these constitutive elements of racism work within economic institutions with which Wilson is exclusively concerned, as well as political and cultural institutions.

The third question explicit in the passage above is as follows: "even if racism continues to be a factor in the social and economic progress of some blacks, can it be used to explain the sharp increase in the inner-city social dislocations since 1970?" While Wilson does not cite someone he believes to be a proponent of the contemporary racism thesis,<sup>15</sup> as a proponent of "contemporary racism," I would say that impersonal shifts and

---

<sup>15</sup> Eduardo Bonilla-Silva, *White Supremacy & Racism: in the Post-Civil Rights Era*, (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2001) especially chapter 4 The New Racism: The Post-Civil Rights Racial Structure in the United States and chapter 5 Color-Blind Racism and Blacks. Joe R. Feagin *Systemic Racism: A*

contemporary racism can both be factors in the African American underclass's material condition. Let me be clear. I am neither claiming that the existence of contemporary racism alone means that class is excluded as an explanatory factor in the persistence of the African American underclass's material condition. Nor am I claiming that contemporary racism explains all that ails African American communities in general and the African American under-class in particular. But, even though contemporary racism does not explain all that ails African American communities, it does not follow that contemporary racism is not a major factor in the persistence inequalities experienced by African Americans in general and the African American under-class in particular in the Post-Civil Rights period. For both claims can be true simultaneously.

Therefore, the individualist conception of racism is inadequate because it does not allow us to think about changes to and continuities of racial prejudices, power relations, and inequalities expressed by groups and institutions from the Civil Rights period to the Post-Civil Rights period. Since the individualist conception of racism does not allow us to think about the changes and continuities of African Americans' experience with the interconnectedness of race, prejudices, power relations, and inequalities expressed by institutions, it is no wonder that Wilson does not understand why proponents of contemporary racism continue to maintain that historic racism and contemporary racism remain a significant factor in class-based divisions between the African American haves' and have-nots material condition in the Post-Civil Right period.

In my exposition of the individualist conception of racism, I have attempted to highlight some ways that it is adequate for conceptualizing the continuity of racism. It is

---

*Theory of Oppression*, (New York: Routledge, 2006). Michael K. Brown, Martin Carnoy, Elliott Currie, Troy Duster, David B. Oppenheimer, Marjorie M. Shultz and David Wellman, *White-Washing Race: The Myth of a Color-Blind Society*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003).

adequate for conceptualizing the continuity of racial prejudices, racial discrimination, and racial inequalities embodied by individual persons. But, it is inadequate for thinking about changes to racial prejudices, power relations, and racial inequalities embodied by individual persons, groups, and institutions. It is also inadequate because it does not allow us to think about the continuity of racial prejudices, power relations, and racial inequalities embodied by groups and institutions that are expressed in political, economic and cultural contexts.

### **3. Thinking about racism with a liberal conception of racism**

D'Souza denies that racism (which he understands with the liberal conception) is adequate for thinking about the persistence of racism because it cannot explain the persistence of the African American under-class's material condition. While I agree with D'Souza on this point, I disagree with D'Souza's assumption that since the liberal conception of racism is inadequate for explaining the persistence of the African American under-class's material condition, therefore no conception of racism allows us to think about the persistence of the African Americans under-class's material condition. In what follows, I discuss some ways that the liberal conception of racism is adequate because it allows us to think about the continuity of some elements of racism. I will also discuss some ways that the liberal conception of racism is inadequate because it does not allow us to think about the persistence of some elements of racism as expressed by groups and institutions in political, economic, and cultural contexts in the Post-Civil Rights period. Let us turn to my exposition of D'Souza's understanding of the liberal conception of racism.

D'Souza claims that "racism and discrimination are fundamentally different now [in the Post-Civil Rights period] than in the past [in the Civil Rights period]."<sup>16</sup> <sup>17</sup> Before we can understand why racism and discrimination are fundamentally different in the Post-Civil Rights period, we need to know what D'Souza means by 'racism'. When D'Souza

---

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 246.

<sup>17</sup> This claim of D'Souza's is unexpected at least for a political conservative. By 'political conservative' I do not mean anything pejorative. Rather, I simply mean that political conservatives usually argue that people should be perceived as individuals and as bearers of individual rights. They also claims that individuals are successful or fail because of their individual choices, behaviors, and work ethic. While D'Souza asserts that racism exist during the Post-Civil Rights period, I am not claiming that D'Souza does not embrace these political conservative sentiments. But, I am claiming that D'Souza's political conservative assertion that racism exists is something that is a rare occurrence.



discusses racism, he has in mind what he calls a liberal conception of racism.<sup>18</sup> There are many Civil Rights activists and scholars whom he identifies as standard-bearers of the liberal conception of racism. Michael Sovern is one. He characterizes racism near the end of the Civil Rights period in the following way. He claims “that racial discrimination is ‘unfair, inhumane, and utterly without justification of any kind. Assessed in the light of these damages it does to our society, it is costly, wasteful, and explosive.’ ”<sup>19</sup> D’Souza says that “[m]ost of us take for granted that what we call ‘racism’ is based on [1] irrational hostility, that its sources are [2] ‘prejudice’ and [3] ‘stereotypes,’ and their consequence is unwarranted ‘discrimination.’ ”<sup>20</sup> Based on Sovern’s definition of racism, D’Souza claims that people understand racism as Whites’ behaviors toward African Americans to be irrational because Whites’ behaviors are no longer informed by such prejudices and stereotypes. So, when D’Souza claims that racism is no longer the central problem facing the African American under-class, he denies that prejudices and stereotypes based on race are the motivating forces for discrimination since they have significantly declined.

Now that we have some idea what D’Souza has in mind when he talks about ‘racism’, why does D’Souza claim that racism and discrimination are fundamentally different in the Post-Civil Rights period than in the Civil Rights period? D’Souza claims that “[t]he question of whether whites consider blacks to be inferior and hence deserving of a subordinate place in society *must*<sup>21</sup> be separated from the question of how whites treat blacks. The first is an issue of racism, the second of discrimination.”<sup>22</sup> Racism, for D’Souza, is constituted by psychological phenomena such as prejudices and stereotypes

---

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 268.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 246.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 246.

<sup>21</sup> These are my italics, not D’Souza’s.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 253.

that Whites have about African Americans. Discrimination, for D'Souza, refers to Whites' treatment of blacks. But, why does D'Souza claim that Whites' prejudices against and stereotypes of African Americans must be separated from how Whites treat blacks? They must be separated because Whites' attitudes toward African Americans have dramatically improved on several metrics since the Civil Rights period (1930s and 1940s) and because they no longer drive Whites behaviors in the Post-Civil Rights period. As proof that Whites' attitudes about African Americans have dramatically improved since the end of the Civil Rights period, he cited a study conducted by Howard Schuman, Charlotte Steeh, and Lawrence Bobo, *Racial Attitudes in American*.<sup>23</sup> Based on Schuman, Steeh, and Bobo's survey data, he argues that "white[s'] attitudes have changed dramatically."<sup>24</sup> These survey of data "document a largely peaceful social revolution that would seem to be some cause for modest celebration of the American capacity for change and measured optimism about the future for black equality."<sup>25</sup> According to *Racial Attitudes in America*, during the Civil Rights period, "more than half of all whites said that blacks were less intelligent than whites;" during the Post-Civil Rights period, however, "more than 75 percent of whites assert that both whites and blacks are equal in intellectual capacity."<sup>26</sup> Further, during the Civil Rights period, "[m]ore than 60 percent favored segregated schools;" but during the Post-Civil Rights period, "[a]t least 90 percent [of Whites] say that blacks and whites should have the same rights to public accommodations and to attend the same schools."<sup>27</sup> As a result of Whites having changed their attitudes toward

---

<sup>23</sup> Howard Schuman, Charlotte Steeh, and Lawrence Bobo, *Racial Attitudes in American*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1985).

<sup>24</sup> Dinesh D'Souza, *The End of Racism: Principles of a Multicultural Society*, (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1995).

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 254.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 253.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 253.

African Americans, D'Souza argues that racism as constituted by prejudices and stereotypes is no longer what motivates Whites in their interactions with African Americans.

Therefore, D'Souza decouples prejudices and stereotypes from discriminatory actions because White attitudes toward African Americans have dramatically improved from the Civil Rights period to the Post-Civil Rights period. Since Whites' prejudices and stereotypes have dramatically diminished, according to D'Souza, Whites' discrimination against African Americans is no longer based on race.

D'Souza identifies other scholars whom he treats as standard-bearers of the liberal conception of racism. For example, Henry Louis Gates, Jr. Gates writes that "[r]acism exists when one generalizes about attributes of an individual, and treats him or her accordingly."<sup>28</sup> As proof that prejudices and stereotypes are still operative, Gates offers some specific examples of prejudice and stereotyping. For example, "Skip [Louis Gates Jr.'s nickname], sing me one of those Negro spirituals," "you people sure can dance," and "Black people play basketball remarkably well."<sup>29</sup> These three examples rely on the assumption that African Americans, generally speaking, are good singers, dancers, and basketball players. Even if one gives the speaker of these examples the benefit of the doubt about the truth-value of his or her claims, when these claims are applied to Gates, or to some other African American, these assumptions may be false. D'Souza claims that Gates's examples are illustrative of the liberal conception of racism

[b]ecause contemporary liberalism is constructed on the scaffolding of cultural relativism, which posits that all groups are inherently equal. Since all groups are

---

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 268.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 268.

equal, adverse group judgments are presumed to constitute ‘prejudices’ and ‘stereotypes’ that are almost always regarded as wrongheaded and ignorant.<sup>30</sup>

This passage illustrates what D’Souza takes to be at the heart of the liberal conception of racism, namely that liberals think that racial discrimination is *inherently irrational*.

This bears for D’Souza on how liberals think about racial discrimination in the Post-Civil Rights period. He points to Gates’ discussion of the routine indignities suffered by African Americans, such as “the unwillingness of cabdrivers to pick us up” as well as systematic racial discrimination in hiring, in the availability of loans and credit, and in workings of the criminal justice system.<sup>31</sup> Similarly, D’Souza cites Cornel West’s claim of racism when a taxi cabdriver refused to pick him up on his way to a photo shoot for the cover of his seminal book *Race Matters*. D’Souza also cites prominent African American journalists who claim they have experienced racial discrimination, for example, columnist Clarence Page of the *Chicago Tribune* and Gregory Wright of *The Washington Post*. In Wright’s personal testimony he recounts moments of frustration. He writes about being fed up with the number of taxi cabdrivers who refused to pick him up and who claimed they were “off duty” as the reason they refused to pick him up. Many of these drivers were from Africa, Caribbean, and Middle East.<sup>32</sup>

D’Souza claims that “[t]he alleged racism of cabdrivers who refuse to pick up black males is virtually a mandatory entry in the ledger of [racial] discrimination maintained by many black scholars and activists.”<sup>33</sup> In response to such allegations of racial discrimination by cab drivers, D’Souza sympathizes with their experiences which can be

---

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 250.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

seen as “an unacceptable denial of the right of law-abiding citizen to fair and equal treatment in the daily business life.”<sup>34</sup> But, in analyzing their allegations of racism, D’Souza denies that racial discrimination is the reason that they were not picked up by cabdrivers. D’Souza argues that taxi cabdrivers are not engaging in racial discrimination because they do not act on the belief that African Americans are inferior to Whites and should hold a subordinate place within American society. Rather, they are engaged in what D’Souza calls “rational discrimination.” ‘Rational discrimination’ refers to a person’s perception of an individual based on group traits, which are borne out by empirical evidence, personal experience, or some other feature besides skin color.<sup>35</sup> Based on D’Souza’s rationale, if someone’s actions are grounded in empirical evidence, he or she does not engage in racial discrimination.<sup>36</sup> Rather, he or she engages in rationally justified behavior. Therefore if treating individuals differently based on empirical evidence is rationally justified, as D’Souza argues, then the liberal conception of racism does not apply because Whites (but not only Whites) have other grounds for discriminating discriminate against African Americans.

I agree with D’Souza that the liberal conception of racism does not allow us to think adequately about the persistence of the African American under-class’s experiences with racism in economic life. But, unlike D’Souza, I neither conclude that the liberal conception of racism is entirely irrelevant nor that racism does not play a role in the persistence of the African American under-class’s material condition or in other African American experiences of discrimination. The liberal conception of racism has one main

---

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 251.

<sup>36</sup> In my exposition of D’Souza’s rational discrimination thesis, I say more about what this argument of D’Souza’s mean.

virtue that helps us to think about the persistence of race, prejudices, power relations, and inequalities that African Americans experience in the Post-Civil Rights period.

The main conceptual advantage of the liberal conception of racism is that it at least offers us a way to think about the interconnection of racial difference and prejudice, and inequality between individuals in political, economic, and cultural life. It allows us to think about prejudices based on race as the refusal by individuals to think of and to treat African Americans as their equals.

The problem is not that Whites think about African Americans as different based on race or color relative to themselves. Differences do exist. African Americans may belong to a different race or be a different color. Believing this is not necessarily problematic. Reference to race or color becomes problematic when an individual thinks that African Americans are deficient human beings because of their race. The assumption of African Americans' racial difference becomes problematic when it allows individual to treat African Americans as being entitled to less than other humans. If a non-African American thinks of himself or herself as the paradigm of humanity and compares African American's humanity to himself or herself, this can be problematic for African Americans too. This comparison allows individuals, although not exclusively non-African Americans, to determine who qualifies as fully human, who is an embodiment of humanity, and who is not.

The liberal conception of racism does allow us to think about the combination of individuals' race-conscious prejudices and the inequalities that African Americans experience in the Post-Civil Rights period. Sometimes individuals hold race-conscious

prejudice and hold subconscious racial prejudices<sup>37</sup> toward African Americans. Whether racial prejudices are conscious or subconscious, they are embodied in human beings and they can inform individual behavior that denies African Americans' equal access to political, economic, or cultural resources and power. In this way, the liberal conception of racism allow us to think about the combination of race, prejudices, and inequalities between individuals in political, economic, and cultural life.

At the same time, the liberal conception of racism has two main conceptual disadvantages that do limit our ability to think adequately about the combination of race with the prejudice, power relations, and inequalities that African Americans experience in political, economic, and cultural life in the Post-Civil Rights period.

The first conceptual disadvantage of the liberal conception of racism is that it does not allow us to think about the combination of race prejudices, power relations, and inequalities as this involves groups and institutions. This is because the liberal conception of racism lacks a conception of power with which to understand the experiences of African Americans. A conception of power is important because it can help us understand why the African American haves' and have-nots' material condition differs from one another, as well as from that of similarly situated White Americans. It would help us to understand how racial groups are invested in their racial identities. One form this investment takes or assumes is social struggle. A dominant racial groups' self-understanding develops through the power relations in which it stands to a subordinate racial group. A dominant racial group attempts to maintain its self-understanding and political, economic, and

---

<sup>37</sup> Neither advocates of the liberal conception of racism nor D'Souza have in mind subconscious prejudices or what is now sometimes referred to as "implicit bias." Implicit bias refers to someone whose behavior is animated by either a bias in favor of something or against something. Implicit biases are concepts, notions, categories or norms with which someone is unaware that his or her actions are animated by his or her concepts, notions, categories or norms about a given subject matter.

cultural interests by exercising power over and against a subordinate racial group. While the dominant group exercises power relations over the subordinate group, the subordinate racial groups' self-understanding can develop through forms of resistance. Through forms of resistance, the subordinate racial group is trying to secure its political, economic, and cultural interests and power. The dominant racial group's self-understanding is tied to that of the subordinate racial group; and, who the subordinate racial group understands itself to be is tied to who the dominant racial group is. Without a conception of power as a constitutive element of racism, the liberal conception does not allow us to understand how power relations produces racial groups. It does not allow us to think about how power relations embodied by racial groups produce the inequalities that African American haves and have-nots experience in political, economic, and cultural life. Moreover, without a conception of power, the liberal conception of racism does not allow us to understand that White Americans' self-understanding, possibilities, and political, economic, and cultural interests are tied to African Americans' self-understanding, possibilities, and political, economic, and cultural interests, and vice versa. Power as constituted by groups' relations to other groups and institutions' relations to groups are hidden and concealed or appear to be non-existent because the liberal conception of racism does not have a conception of power as a constitutive element. Consequently, the liberal conception of racism does not allow us to understand the complexities of racial formation, development, self-understanding, and political, economic, and cultural interests by thinking one-sidedly, as Wilson's and D'Souza's understandings of racism do, namely thinking about the emergence of the African American haves, and have-not by only looking at either class-based factors or cultural



factors independently of one another, and failing to take both factors into account to understanding how and why the African American stratifications persists.

The second conceptual disadvantage of the liberal conception of racism is that it does not allow us to think about the *persistence* of the combination of race with prejudices, power relations, and inequalities that African Americans experience in relationships with institutions in political, economic, and cultural life from the Civil Rights period to the Post-Civil Rights period. By ‘persistence’ I mean that the combination of race with prejudices, power relations, and inequalities that existed during the Civil Rights period has both changed and maintained continuity in the Post-Civil Rights period. Some elements of racism that existed during the Civil Rights period change have been eliminated or abolished before or during the Post-Civil Rights period. Some of these elements of racism that existed during the Civil Rights period have changed in quality or quantity before or during the Post-Civil Rights period. Some elements of racism in the Civil Rights period have been preserved in the Post-Civil Rights period. Consequently, since the liberal conception of racism lacks a conception of power, we cannot use it to grasp change and continuities to power relations that African Americans experience in their relationships to institutions. Furthermore, it does not allow us to think about ways that the combination of race relations, prejudices, power relations, and inequalities that African Americans experience has changed, and maintained continuity in political, economic, and cultural life from the Civil rights period to the Post-Civil Rights period.

The liberal conception of racism has conceptual advantages that help us think about the combination of race with prejudices and inequalities that African Americans experience in political, economic, and cultural institutions in the Post-Civil Rights period. It also has conceptual disadvantages that do not allow us to think about the combination

of race, prejudices, power relations, and inequalities that African Americans experience in political, economic, and cultural institutions in the Post-Civil Rights period. While I am maintaining that racism helps explain African Americans' material conditions, D'Souza maintains that racism as active discrimination has ended. Therefore, racism is not a factor in the African Americans' material conditions. Rather, he thinks rational discrimination and pathological cultural behaviors are the causes for African Americans' material conditions.

#### **4. Conclusion**

This chapter examined conceptions of racism introduced by Wilson and D'Souza for thinking about the persistence of racism. The conception of racism with which both of these thinkers' identify are adequate in the same ways. They claim that racism is constituted by racial prejudices are embodied by individual persons, which produce racial inequalities. However, both conceptions of racism are inadequate in the same ways. Neither conception of racism allows us to think about the continuity of racial prejudices, power relations, and inequalities as embodied by groups and institutions. Neither conception of racism allows us to think about changes and continuities of racial prejudices, power relations, and inequalities as embodied by groups and institutions. Since they cannot accomplish these task, they should be rejected.

## Chapter three: Social and individualist conceptions of racism

### 1. Introduction

Two thinkers agree that racism persists from the Civil Rights period to the Post-Civil Rights period. One thinker who agrees that racism persists is Cornel West. The other thinker who agrees that racism persists is Jorge Garcia; he claims that racism persists as hatred and ill-will that are expressed by both individual persons and institution practices, which injure individuals on the basis of race. In this chapter, I argue that while their conceptions of racism are in certain respects adequate for thinking about the persistence of the continuity of the interconnectedness of some elements of racism, they are inadequate for thinking about the continuity of the interconnectedness of some elements of racism and changes to the continuity of the interconnectedness of some elements of racism.

In the first section, I discuss ways that Cornel West's genealogical conception of racism is adequate for thinking about the continuity of racism. He claims that racism persists as culturally specific norms that are manifested through institutional practices, which produce racial inequalities for racially subordinate groups in terms of beauty, intelligence, and culture. In spite of the ways that the genealogical conception of racism is adequate for thinking about some elements of racism, I argue that it is inadequate for thinking about some elements of racism. One, it does not allow us to think about the *continuity* of the interconnectedness of racial prejudices, power relations, and racial inequalities that exist outside of cultural contexts, namely the continuity of the interconnectedness of racial prejudices, power relations, and racial inequalities that occur in political and economic contexts. Two, it does not allow us to think about *changes to* the

continuity of the interconnectedness of racial prejudices, power relations, and racial inequalities that occur in political and economic contexts.

In the second section, I discuss ways that Jorge Garcia's psychological conception of racism is adequate for thinking about the continuity of the interconnectedness of racial prejudices embodied in both individual persons and institutions and expressed through treating individual persons differently on the basis of race. Consequently, this difference in treatment injures individual persons. Despite the ways that the psychological conception of racism is adequate for thinking about the continuity of some elements of racism, I argue that it is inadequate for thinking about some elements of racism. One, it is inadequate because it does not allow us to think about *continuities* of power relations. Two, it is inadequate because it does not allow us to think about *changes* to the continuity of elements of racism that exists in political, economic, and cultural contexts.

Now, let us turn to my discussion of how West's genealogical conception is adequate for thinking about the continuity of the interconnectedness of racial prejudices, power relations, and racial inequalities that emerge in cultural contexts.

## 2. Thinking about racism with a genealogical conception of racism

The foci of this section are twofold. First, I argue that West's genealogical conception of racism allows us to think about African Americans' experience with racism as cultural phenomena. Second, I argue that his conception of racism does not allow us to think about African Americans' experiences with racism as political and economic phenomena. In what follows, I present an exposition of what West's genealogical conception of racism means and how it worked during the modern period. I, then, discuss conceptual advantages followed by my discussion of conceptual disadvantages of his conception of racism for thinking about African Americans experiences with racism in the Post-Civil Rights period.

My exposition of West's genealogical conception of racism is drawn exclusively from his book, *Prophesy Deliverance: an afro-american revolutionary Christianity*.<sup>38</sup> There, West focuses on what he deems an insufficiently examined element of racism, namely the origin of white supremacy.<sup>39</sup> According to West, white supremacy is a pattern of thinking that is always *historically constituted* and *contingent*, which is shaped and informed by categories, notions, norms, and metaphors of race. It advantaged White people and disadvantaged Black<sup>40</sup> people by creating and maintaining the dominant conception of beauty, culture, and intellectual capabilities. West claims that categories, notions, norms, and metaphors that Whites created prevented them from being able to

---

<sup>38</sup> Cornel West, *Prophesy Deliverance! an afro-american revolutionary Christianity*, (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1982) pp. 47-65.

<sup>39</sup> West's use of the term 'modern' does not refer to what is happening in contemporary society. Rather, it refers to a discrete span of time in history, which is often characterized as modernity. Modernity is a period of time in which humans were wrestling with changes in their ability to grasp truth and knowledge.

<sup>40</sup> In this chapter, I use the terms Blacks, Negro, and African American interchangeably. Although they are used interchangeably, they really pick out a racial groups at various stages of progress.

think about Black lives as equal to Whites in terms of beauty, culture, and intellectual capabilities<sup>41</sup> because of race or color.

In addition to those psychological elements of racism, West's genealogical conception of racism subscribes to a conception of power,<sup>42</sup> which he claims is drawn from Michel Foucault. According to West, power is "neither simply based on individual subjects –e.g., heroes or great personages as in traditional historiography –nor on collective subjects –e.g., groups, elites, or classes as in revisionist and vulgar Marxist historiography."<sup>43</sup> Rather, it is subject-less. By 'subject-less' West does not mean that individuals or group cannot and do not express power over other individuals or groups. He means that power in the Modern period operated

within the structures of modern discourse [as] behavioral practices that prohibit, develop and delimit, forms of rationality, scientificity, and objectivity which set parameters and draw boundaries for the intelligibility, availability, and legitimacy of certain ideas.<sup>44</sup>

Within Modern structures of discourse, power is constituted by human praxis –ways of thinking, behaving, and creating that change society. Power resides in "a history made of the praxis of human subjects [which] often results in complex structures of discourses which have relative autonomy from (or is not fully accountable in terms of) the intentions, aims, needs, interests, and objectives of human subjects."<sup>45</sup> From West's perspective,

---

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 48.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 49.

<sup>43</sup> Michel Foucault's conception of power is expressed in *Society Must Be Defended: Lectures at The Collège De France 1975-1976* (New York: Picador, 2003), *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews & Other Writings 1972-1977*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1980), *Discipline & Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1995), and *The History of Sexuality Volume 1: An Introduction*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1990), 49.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 49.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 51.

thinking about power as the intentions, aims, needs, interests, and objectives of human subjects reduces and distorts power itself and its impact. He writes

[t]his reductionism is not wrong; it is simply inadequate. It rightly acknowledges noteworthy concrete effects generated by the relationship between powers in discursive structures and those in non-discursive structures, but it wrongly denies the relative autonomy of the powers in discursive structures and hence reduces the complexities of cultural phenomena.<sup>46</sup>

For West, thinking about power as individual or group actions that are informed by intentions, aims, needs, interests, and objectives distorts how power is constituted and reconstituted in discursive and non-discursive structures. ‘Discursive structures’ are formal and accepted standards of thinking and reasoning which have been established by particular disciplines. These formal and accepted standards of thinking and reasoning were used as methods for the pursuit of truth and knowledge. Examples of discursive structures for West include but are not limited to formal and informal ways of thinking and reasoning that emerged in academic disciplines such as natural history,<sup>47</sup> anthropology,<sup>48</sup> and Greek cultural norms. Non-discursive structures are less formal ways of reasoning that rely on intuition and beliefs which shape and inform individuals’ judgment about truth and knowledge. For West, power is constituted by discursive and non-discursive metaphors, notions, categories, and norms that emerged in the Modern period. And these metaphors, notions, categories, and norms shaped and informed White peoples’ conception of truth and of knowledge about reality in general but race in particular.

---

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 49-50.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 55.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 57.



So, for West, racism is constituted by metaphors, notions, categories, and norms that through academic institutions practices legitimate, valorize, and normalize White bodies, minds and cultures, on the one hand, and de-legitimize, undervalue, and marginalize African Americans' bodies, minds, and cultures, on the other hand. These ideas were created and maintained by White Europeans and expressed through their behaviors in cultural institutions over African Americans. As a result of the manifestation of these ideas in cultural institutional relations, they not only prevented Whites who created and maintained these ideas from thinking about and treating African Americans equally in cultural life; they infected others' thinking about African Americans too.

Having presented West's genealogical conception of racism, I now turn to its bearing on the workings of racism in the Modern period. According to West, the first stage of white supremacy is marked by what he calls the *normative gaze*. Normative gaze is "an ideal from which to order and compare observations. This ideal was drawn primarily from the classical aesthetic values of beauty, proportion, and human form and classical standards of moderation, self-control and harmony."<sup>49</sup> Classical aesthetic values were assigned by White Europeans as normative categories of beauty, culture, and intelligence. Although White Europeans assigned classical aesthetic values as normative categories of beauty, culture, and intellectual capabilities, West points out that thinkers did not even bother to justify their claims of what defined beauty, culture, and intellectual capabilities. For example, West points to J. J. Winckelmann as an influential Enlightenment writer, artist, and scholar who espoused white supremacy. West wrote that

[i]n his [Winckelmann's] widely read book, *History of Ancient Art*, Winckelmann portrayed ancient Greece as a world of beautiful bodies. He laid down rules –in art

---

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 53-54.

and aesthetics –that should govern the size of eyes and eyebrows, of collarbones, hands, feet, and especially noses.<sup>50</sup>

Winckelmann's writings, according to West, illustrate how European cultural aesthetic values shaped, informed, legitimized, and valorized modern thinking about what defined beauty, culture, and intellectual capabilities. According to West, while Winckelmann's notions of beauty, body types, and body proportion legitimized and normalized the beauty, culture, and intellectual capabilities of Whites, at the same time they delegitimized and undervalued Black peoples' beauty, bodies, cultures, and intellectual capabilities. Winckelmann's notions legitimized and delegitimized White and Black people respectively by establishing Whites' beauty, culture, and intellectual capabilities as norms. With Whites' beauty, culture, and intellectual capabilities as norms, when Black bodies and Black cultures are compared to White bodies and White cultures, Winckelmann and other scholars concluded that Whites' beauty, culture, and intellectual capabilities were superior to Black bodies, cultures, intellectual capabilities. In essence, Winckelmann created proverbial beauty, cultural, and intellectual "yardstick" which used Whiteness as the standard by which people should have used to judge beauty, culture, and intellectual capabilities. Since Winckelmann's judgment assumed that White Europeans were the paradigm of beauty, body form, and body proportion, he concluded that all other races' beauty, body form, and body proportion were inferior to Whites'.

Winckelmann's thinking about race, according to West, illustrates what West calls white supremacy. It involved, in this case, White Europeans' assumptions that Whites' beauty, bodies, culture, and intellectual capabilities were the paradigm of beauty, bodies,

---

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 54.

culture, and intellectual capabilities without having justified such a position. Their judgment, shaped and informed by assumptions about race, became normalized through cultural institutional practices that regarded Whites as superior and Blacks as inferior.

Although West contends that Europeans' normative gaze was manifested through art,<sup>51</sup> it also emerged through other cultural institutional practices. For example, natural historians used scientific methods to obtain knowledge and seek truth about the natural world in general and about races in particular. They assumed that races were analogous to natural objects and could be brought under the reins of science like natural objects. In fact, natural historians' gaze was shaped and informed by prevailing categories, notions, norms, and metaphors of beauty and body proportion. These provided the categories, notions, norms, and metaphors they used to observe and compare non-White-Europeans to White Europeans. Their observations and comparisons of non-Europeans to White Europeans determined that the Black race was different from the White race on these metrics. Based on these differences, the natural historians concluded that the Black race was inferior to Whites. The normative gaze, according to West, was significant because the classical aesthetic values, cultural norms, and pseudo-science provided authority for the idea of white supremacy, but no justification.

For West, white supremacy was displayed in what he called the second stage of Modern discourse. White supremacy operated explicitly in emerging Modern discursive thought, unlike the white supremacy that previously operated only implicitly. West wrote that

new disciplines –closely connected with anthropology –served as an open platform for the propagation of the idea of white supremacy not principally

---

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 55.

because they were pseudo-sciences, but more importantly because these disciplines acknowledged the European value-laden character of their observations. This European value-laden character was based on classical aesthetics and cultural ideals.<sup>52</sup>

The then-emerging discursive practices of anthropology, phrenology, and physiognomy became increasingly important, according to West, because they “linked particular visible characteristics of human bodies, especially those of the face, to character and capacities of human beings.”<sup>53</sup> The pseudo-scientists of anthropology, phrenology, and physiognomy were aware of the European value-laden racial or color assumptions. These discursive thinkers articulated overtly what “naturalist[s] and anthropologist[s] assumed: [namely that] the classical ideals of beauty, proportion, and moderation regulated the classifying and ranking of groups of human bodies.”<sup>54</sup> These classifications and rankings of groups of human bodies impeded Whites from being able to think about the Black race as their equal in beauty, body proportion, and moderations. West cites Johann Friedrich Blumenbach, an early anthropologist, as an example of the explicit expression of white supremacist notions in an academic institution. “Blumenbach praised the symmetrical face as the most beautiful of human faces precisely because it approximated the ‘divine’ works of Greek art, and specifically the proper anatomical proportions found in Greek sculpture.”<sup>55</sup> West identifies another pseudo-scientist who expressed white supremacy. He wrote

Pieter Camper, the Dutch anatomist, made aesthetic criteria the pillar of his chief discovery: the famous ‘facial angle.’ Camper claimed that the ‘facial angle’ –a measure of prognathism—permitted a comparison of heads of human bodies by way of cranial and facial measurements. For Camper, the ideal ‘facial angle’ was a

---

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 57.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 58.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 57.

100-degree angle which was achieved only by the ancient Greeks. He openly admitted that this ideal conformed to Winckelmann's classical ideal of beauty.<sup>56</sup>

West's point here is that Camper used ancient Greeks' facial angle as the norm of beauty for all humans. He takes this as evidence of Camper's expression of white supremacy because Camper used Greeks as the ideal of beauty from which to order and to compare Africans or the Black race to White Europeans and rank White Europeans over Africans or Blacks. In this way, Camper used the authority of pseudo-science to make White culture superior to Black culture.<sup>57</sup> Once the facial angle was cloaked in "science," Camper's application of Greeks' understanding of beauty legitimized and valued Whites' beauty, values, and body proportions and de-legitimized and undervalued Blacks' and others'. Furthermore,

Camper further held that a beautiful face, beautiful body, beautiful nature, beautiful character, and beautiful soul were measured about 97 degrees and those of black people between 60 and 70 degrees, closer to the measurements of apes and dogs than to human beings.<sup>58</sup>

Camper's judgments about beauty relied on Greek norms of beauty, human nature, and character. These Greek norms of beauty, human nature, and character not only provided Whites with background assumptions against which to judge beauty, human nature, and character; they legitimized the explicit usage of white supremacy.

Finally, West claims white supremacy is further illustrated by several prominent Enlightenment period thinkers. He identifies some prominent French, Scottish,

---

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 57-58.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

American, and German Enlightenment period thinkers as exponents of white supremacist attitudes.

West cites two French Enlightenment thinkers. He cites Montesquieu, a French Enlightenment thinker, as an exponent of white supremacy in France.<sup>59</sup> West wrote

Montesquieu's satirical remarks in *Spirit of Laws* about black people and his revision of these remarks may seem to suggest an equivocal disposition toward the idea of white supremacy. Yet his conclusion leaned toward support of the idea [of white supremacy].<sup>60</sup>

West further cites a passage from *The Problem of Slavery in Western Culture*<sup>61</sup> as evidence of Montesquieu's white supremacist sensibilities. "It is impossible for us to suppose that these being [i.e., Black people] should be men; because if we suppose them to be men, one would begin to believe we ourselves were not Christians."<sup>62</sup> West's point is that Montesquieu's remarks illustrate white supremacy because Montesquieu assumed that White Christians were correct in their assumption that the Black race was inferior to the White race. Based on this assumption, Montesquieu concludes that White Christians were "justified" in having enslaved the Black race.

West claims that Francois Voltaire, a French Enlightenment thinker, was an exponent of white supremacy in France too.<sup>63</sup> He claims that Voltaire was unequivocal in his defense of white supremacy.<sup>64</sup> According to West, based on Voltaire's essay "The People of America," Voltaire claimed that Black people were inferior to White Europeans on several metrics such as beauty, body type, and character. Voltaire wrote that

---

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 61.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> David Brion Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in Western Culture*, (Cornell University Press, 1966), p. 403

<sup>62</sup> Cornel West, *Prophesy Deliverance*, p. 61.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 61

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

[t]he Negro race is a species of men as different from ours as the breed of spaniels is from that of greyhounds. The mucus membrane, or network, which nature has spread between the muscles and skin, is white in us and copper-colored in them ....

If their understanding is not of a different nature from ours, it is at least greatly inferior. They are not capable of any great application or association of ideas, and seemed formed neither for advantages nor the abuse of philosophy.<sup>65</sup>

These passages reveal Voltaire's beliefs and attitudes about Negroes' intellectual capabilities. According to him, Negroes' intellectual capabilities are "greatly inferior" to White European's and "are not capable of any great application or association of ideas." The problems with Voltaire's claims is that he does not justify that the Negro race belonged to a different species, that the Negro race was an inferior species to the White race, and that the Negro race's intellectual capabilities were inferior to the White race's. However, color or race alone seems to be the reason that the Black race is inferior to the White race.

David Hume, a Scottish Enlightenment thinker, was an exponent of white supremacy. Hume's remarks about the Negro race resembled those of French Enlightenment thinkers. In "On National Characteristics," Hume stated

I am apt to suspect the negroes, and in general all the other species of men (for there are four or five different kinds) to be naturally inferior to whites. There never was a civilized nation of any other complexion than whites, not even any individual eminent either in action or speculation. No ingenious manufactures amongst them, no arts, no sciences....

In Jamaica indeed they talk of one negroe<sup>66</sup> as a man of parts and learning; but 'tis likely he is admired for slender accomplishments, like a parrot, who speaks a few words plainly.<sup>67</sup>

---

<sup>65</sup> Cornel West, *Prophesy Deliverance*, p. 12.

<sup>66</sup> Sic.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 62.

Although Hume claimed that the Negro race was naturally inferior to the White race as did French Enlightenment thinkers Montesquieu and Voltaire, West claimed that he too neglected to offer any argument or justification for this claim. Although West claims that Hume did not offer any argument or justification for his claim, unlike West I see Hume as having offered some substantiation for his central claim –Negroes were naturally inferior to Whites. Hume offered three reasons why Negroes were naturally inferior to White Europeans. (1) Negroes had not produced a civilization; (2) Negroes had not produced any eminent intellectuals of note. And, (3) if Negroes had acquired knowledge they were not aware that they had acquired it and were not endowed with the intellectual acumen to appropriate and repurpose it. While I interpret Hume as having offered these claims as evidence of Negroes’ natural inferiority to White Europeans, West’s critique applies to each one of these claims. In West’s critique of Hume’s claim, West claims that Hume offered no argument or justification that substantiated his claim that the Negro race’s inferiority is natural. Hume’s central claim is an articulation of white supremacy because the inferiority of the Negro race and the superiority of the White race was based on color, not reason, which he believed was naturalized.

Thomas Jefferson, an American Enlightenment thinker’s thoughts on race, illustrated white supremacy in America, according to West. In *Notes on Virginia*, Jefferson wrote that

[c]omparing them [the Negro race] by their faculties of memory, reason, and imagination, it appears to me, that in memory they are equal to whites; in reason much inferior... and that in imagination they are dull, tasteless and anomalous ....



Never yet could I find a black had uttered a thought above the level of plain narration; never seen even an elementary trait of painting or sculpture.<sup>68</sup>

This passage explicitly expresses Jefferson's white supremacy. While it explicitly expressed Jefferson's belief that the Negro race and the White race were equal to one another where memory was concerned, however it explicitly expressed Jefferson's attitude that the Negro race's intellectual capability was inferior to the White race's. Jefferson's thoughts illustrated a hallmark feature of white supremacy, the presumption that the White race's intellectual capabilities were always superior to the Negro race's. This presumption like his fellow Enlightenment thinkers was not accompanied by any justification whatsoever.

Finally, West claims that Immanuel Kant's remarks expressed white supremacy. West cited a passage from Kant's *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime* where Kant agreed with Hume's white supremacy.<sup>69</sup> Kant wrote

Mr. Hume challenges anyone to cite a simple example in which a negro has shown talents, and assertions that among the hundreds of thousands of blacks who are transported elsewhere from their countries, although many of them have even been set free, still not a single one was ever found who presented anything great in art or science or any other praiseworthy quality, even though among the whites some continually rise aloft from the lowest rabble, and through superior gifts earn respect in the world. So fundamental is the difference between the two races of man, and it appears to be as great in regard to mental capacities as in color.<sup>70</sup>

For West, Kant agreed with two of Hume's claims. First, the Negro race's nature was inferior to the White race's. Second, the Negro race lacked intellectual capability in arts and in sciences. Kant claimed that, although some of the members of the White race who

---

<sup>68</sup> Cornel West, *Prophesy Deliverance*, 62.

<sup>69</sup> Cornel West, *Prophesy Deliverance*, 62.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 62-63.

were in the lowest economic class have risen from their condition, no free Negroes had. Based on their empirical observations, Kant and Hume concluded that the Negro race lacked intellectual capabilities whereas the White race possessed superior intellectual capabilities. West cites another passage of Kant's that expressed white supremacy. Kant wrote, "it might be that there was something in this which perhaps deserved to be considered; but in short, this fellow was quite black from head to foot, a clear proof that what he said was stupid."<sup>71</sup> Although West did not say explicitly why Kant's remarks expressed white supremacy, it may be because color and black bodies, for Kant and other Enlightenment thinkers, was synonymous with inferior intellectual capabilities. And, since Negroes' color or race made them intellectually inferior, then Whites' color made them intellectually superior. Kant's remarks not only expressed white supremacist sentiments. They echoed the sensibilities of natural historians on race. Race or color was implicit in natural historians thinking about racial groups' ability, while race or color was explicit in Kant's thinking about racial groups. Kant inferred that the remarks uttered by the Negro of some nationality were stupid solely on the basis of that Negro's color. Even if we granted Kant the benefit of the doubt that the Negro's remarks were stupid because of color, this inference is invalid. This inference is invalid because there is no reason why the Negroes would be stupid on the basis of their color. Intellectual capabilities does not agree with color, as Kant's remarks assume. For Kant to avoid having made this error in reasoning, we would have to have concordance between race or color and intelligence. There would have to be agreement between race or color and being stupid such that all Negroes would be stupid by virtue of being Negro. But, there was none.

---

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

To this point, I have presented an exposition of Cornel West's genealogical conception of racism and how he believes it emerged in the Modern period. I attempted to show that West argues that white supremacy, a neglected element in other explanatory models of racism in the literature, was created and sustained by discursive praxis. For example, some natural historians were theorizing about racial differences, which were shaped and informed by their implicit racial prejudices in favor of the White race and against the Negro race. Their implicit racial prejudices regarded the White race as paradigmatic of beauty, of culture, and of intellect, while simultaneously having precluded the Negro race from being perceived and treated as their equal in these respects. In the second stage, West argued that anthropologists, phrenologists, and physiognomists expressed white supremacy through discursive practices. Anthropologists, phrenologists, physiognomists made White European values of beauty, culture, and intelligence the paradigm. In the final stage, Enlightenment period thinkers maintained white supremacy. Their white supremacy was shaped and informed by White European attitudes about the nature of beauty, culture, and intellectual capabilities based on race or color.

Having explained what West's genealogical conception of racism means and how it worked during the modern period, now I turn to discuss conceptual advantages of his conception of racism. In what follows, I argue that West's genealogical conception of racism has conceptual advantages that allow us to think about the interconnectedness of racial prejudices, cultural power relations, and inequalities that African Americans experience in cultural contexts.

The first conceptual advantage of West's genealogical conception of racism is that it allows us to think about racial prejudices. In the Modern period, White natural

historians' perceptions and judgments about beauty, body types, facial angles, and body proportions were shaped, informed, legitimized, and valorized by White Europeans understanding of race. They used Greek aesthetic values of beauty, body types, facial angles, and body proportions as the standard by which to define and judge body types, facial angles, and body proportions. With Greek aesthetic values as the standard by which to define and judge beauty, body types, facial angles, and body proportion, they implicitly were using a conception of race by which to observe, compare, and order human populations they called racial groups. The category of race was implicit in their judgments about beauty, culture, and intelligence. In this way, race was an oppositional category. Being White meant that it existed in relation to races that were non-White. The culture, beauty, and intelligence of the White race was an implicit background assumption by which White Europeans observed, compared, ordered, and ordered racial groups. In this way, if White Europeans thought about Blacks their racial category forced them to conclude that the White racial group's beauty, culture, and intelligence was superior to non-Whiteness and that non-Whites' beauty, culture, and intelligence was inferior to White Europeans. This rationale was the standard way of thinking about the meaning of race, which permitted natural historians to rank or order racial groups.

While natural historians' racial categories allowed them to claim that the Black race was inferior to the White race, this categorization was normalized in the thinking of academicians in cultural institutions. For example, White Europeans assumed that one's beauty, culture, and intelligence was determined in relation to the White race. Racial categories emerged in Anthropologists', phrenologists', and physiognomists' thinking about races, which favored Whites and disfavored Blacks. This thinking was evident in Dutch anatomist Pieter Camper's understanding of racial categories. Camper's

understanding of racial categories permitted him to make judgments about racial groups in which he judged Whites as aesthetically pleasing and Blacks as aesthetically displeasing. Camper used Whites' facial angles, for example, as the standard by which to distinguish what was aesthetically pleasing from what was less or not aesthetically pleasing.

West's genealogical conception of racism allows us to think about Enlightenment thinkers who explicitly distinguished between races. The Enlightenment thinkers, according to West, assumed that color or race was a marker that distinguished White Europeans as a superior race relative to African Americans and African Americans as inferior relative to White Europeans. Their assumptions about race or color became the normalized. That is, they operated from the assumption that race or phenotypes communicated something deeper about races' beauty, character and intellect. Not only was color or race understood by White Europeans as what distinguished superiority and inferiority of Whites and African Americans respectively; they offered no justification why color or race distinguished one from the other. For it was never in doubt by Enlightenment thinkers. In this way, West's genealogical conception of racism allows us to think about White Europeans' racial prejudices. On West's genealogical conception of racism, White Europeans' racial prejudices manifest as an oppositional phenomenon, where the category of White existed opposition to the category of Black.

West's genealogical conception of racism allows us to think about the interconnectedness of racial prejudices and power relations. Animated by racial prejudices, White Europeans exercised power relations over Blacks through cultural institutional practices. Prominent thinkers from academic disciplines such as anthropology, phrenology, physiognomy, and philosophy created and maintained categories, notion, metaphors, and norms of race that legitimized and normalized White

peoples' minds, bodies, and intellectual capabilities, while delegitimized and de-normalized African American peoples' minds, bodies, and intellectual capabilities. In this way, discursive categories, notions, metaphors, and norms shaped and informed knowledge and truth about African American race's inferiority and White race's superiority. Power relations are constituted by academicians' understandings of race which are expressed through their relations to Black lives, culture, beauty, and intellectual capabilities. As understandings of race emerged through academic disciplines relations to Blacks' access to cultural institutional levers of power. And so, power is expressed through cultural institutional power that understandings of race exert over Blacks' cultural and intellectual capabilities.

Despite the conceptual advantages of West's genealogical conception of racism for thinking about the interconnectedness of prejudice and power, there are also two conceptual disadvantages of this conception of racism. The conceptual disadvantage of West's genealogical conception of racism is that it does not help us think about the changes to and continuities of racism from the Civil Rights period to the Post-Civil Rights.

The first conceptual disadvantage of West's genealogical conception of racism is that it does not focus on African Americans' experiences of racial prejudices, power relations, and inequalities in political and economic life. Only if a conception of racism allows us to think about these constitutive elements of racism in Black political experience can we understand racism as a complex phenomenon that shapes the unequal relation to political power that functions along racial lines. The following example illustrates how racial prejudices, power relations, and inequalities create an unequal access for African Americans. In the "Voting Law Changes in 2012" article, Wendy R. Weiser and Lawrence Norden argue that legislation by the states restricts African Americans' agency as citizens

to exercise political power. The authors cite several ways that state legislation has diminished African American access to the right to vote. State legislators have taken race into account in the creation of new laws that adversely impacted African Americans, access to political power. For example, state legislators instituted photo identification as a pre-condition for voting, and this disproportionately denied African American communities access to the right to vote in the 2012 elections. State legislatures also reduced the number of early voting days, an opportunity for voting that has been typically used more by African American citizens than Whites. Consequently, African Americans are disproportionately affected by this policy. The Texas state legislature restricted African American citizens' access to voting by authorizing a concealed handgun license as a bona fide proof of identity. This legislation disproportionately favors White Texans because they disproportionately hold concealed handgun licenses. At the same time, Texas's state's legislature precluded student from using their university student identification, which is a form of identification that African Americans hold. Consequently, Texas's state legislation that requires photo identification, that reduce the number of days to early vote, and that allow concealed handgun license as legitimate identification, advantage White citizens at the same time it disproportionately and adversely impacts African Americans access to voting. West's cultural emphasis in his genealogical conception of racism does not help us to think the relation of racism to political power.

Moreover, West's genealogical conception of racism does not help us think about the interconnectedness of racial prejudices, power relations, and inequalities that African Americans experience in economic life. Being able to do is necessary if we are to grasp the impact that the complexity of racism has on African Americans. Since West's genealogical

conception of racism focuses exclusively on the interconnectedness of racism and cultural institutional power, his conception of racism neglects the interconnectedness of racial prejudices, economic power relations, and racial inequalities that African Americans experience. By neglecting to think about the interconnectedness of these constitutive elements of racism, we miss a dimension of the complexity of racism. The following example attempts to illustrate how the interconnectedness of racial prejudices, economic power relations, and racial inequalities that African Americans experience in the housing market. Patricia J. Williams, in her book *Seeing a Colorblind Future: the paradox of race*, described a lending institution's attempt to deny her capital to purchase a home. Williams, a law professor, filled her mortgage application out entirely by phone with the lending agent. She applied for a mortgage loan and was later approved. The mortgage agent sent Williams the mortgage contract in the mail for Williams' signature. Williams read the contract and realized that the mortgage agent had marked her as White. Williams changed her racial assignment on the mortgage contract and returned it. Once the lending institution received it, the lending institution changed the terms of the agreement. The lending institution wanted Williams to pay more for points, pay a higher down payment, and pay higher interest rate. Why? When the lending institution "believed" Williams was White, Williams was asked to pay less of a down payment, interest rate, and points than she was asked to pay when the lending institution learned she was African American. We know that the lending agent had race on the brain, given that the mortgage contract identified Williams marked as White. Once the lending institution learned that Williams was African American, she was asked to pay higher down payment, pay higher interest rates, and pay more for points than Williams was expected to pay when the lending institution believed she was White. In these ways, race was a determining factor that the



agent of the lending institution used to either dissuade Williams' from moving into the predominately White neighborhood by trying to make the purchase of the desired home too expensive to purchase so that she could not afford it or take economic advantage of an unsuspecting home buyer who might not question whether the reasons the lending institution gave were legitimate or not. The lending institution attempted to exert its power over Williams through the lending agent. The lending agent, as an agent of the lending institution, treated Williams differently based on the lending agent's understanding of race. Consequently, the lending institution required more money from Williams as an African American than Williams as a White person.

West's genealogical conception of racism does not help us understand the relevant interconnectedness of racial prejudices, power relations, and inequalities. Neglecting to think about the interconnectedness of these constitutive elements of racism hides and conceals how racism, constituted in part as an economic phenomenon, contributes to the formation and development of not only African Americans' agency but also the formation and development of White purveyors' agency. Having discussed two components of the first conceptual disadvantage of West's genealogical conception of racism, let us turn to the second and final conceptual disadvantage of West's genealogical conception of racism.

The second conceptual disadvantage of West's genealogical conception of racism is that it neglects the interconnectedness of race with prejudice, power relations, and inequality in the ways political and economic life changes while maintains continuity from the Civil Rights period to the Post-Civil Rights period. West's thinking about racism focuses on the earlier history of cultural phenomena. By doing so, his analysis of racism leaves changes to and continuities of race, prejudice, power relations, and inequality in the political and economic life of African Americans hidden and concealed. If these

constitutive elements of racism remain hidden and concealed, we are left with a distorted understanding of the racism African Americans experience.

I have discussed conceptual advantages and disadvantages of West's genealogical conception of racism. First, I discussed how West's genealogical conception of racism allows us to think about racial prejudices, power relations, and inequalities that African Americans experience in their relations to cultural institutions. Second, I discussed two conceptual disadvantages of West's genealogical conception of racism. West neglects to think about racial prejudices, power relations, and inequalities that African Americans experience in their political and economic life and how these constitutive elements of racism change and maintain continuity in political and economic life from one historical period to another. Now, let us turn to the final thinker's conceptualization of racism to see if it is helpful for thinking about the changes to and continuities of racism that African Americans experience in the Post-Civil Rights period.

### **3. Thinking about racism with a psychological conception of racism**

In this section, I maintain that Jorge Garcia's psychological conception of racism has some conceptual advantages that allow us to think about African Americans' experiences with racism. It allows us to think about the interrelatedness between how an individual's racial prejudices toward African Americans produces a difference in the way that individuals treat African Americans and Whites, which disadvantage African Americans and advantage Whites. It also allows us to think about how individuals' racial prejudices infiltrate institutions' practices and cause them to treat African Americans differently than Whites, which provides African Americans with less access to political, economic, and cultural resources and power than Whites. Consequently, African Americans experience inequalities based on race in their in political, economic, and cultural life. Despite these conceptual advantages of Garcia's psychological conception of racism, I also maintain that it has conceptual disadvantages. His psychological conception of racism does not conceptualize power. And, his psychological conception of racism does not allow us to think about changes and continuities of the interrelatedness of racial prejudices, power relations, and inequalities that African Americans experience in the Post-Civil Rights period.

My exposition of Garcia's conception of racism is drawn from his often cited article "The Heart of Racism."<sup>72</sup> I call Garcia's conception of racism psychological because it reduces racism down to psychological phenomena. In its most vicious form, racism is exclusively an individual's attitudes, hatred, beliefs, feelings, negative thoughts held about an individual based on race. In its derivative form, racism ill-will towards an

---

<sup>72</sup> Jorge Garcia, "The Heart of Racism," in *Race and Racism* ed., Bernard Boxill (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001) 257-296.

individual because of race. Although racism manifests as discrimination based on race, treating individuals differently based on race stems from or originates in human minds. Consequently, individuals' thinking or thoughts about race and institutions' patterns and practices of treating individuals or groups differently on the basis of race advantage Whites and disadvantage African Americans, although not uniformly across the race.

For Garcia, racism occurs as two forms between individuals. First, in its *central* and *most vicious form*,<sup>73</sup> it is hatred or ill-will that one person directs against another person or persons because of race.<sup>74</sup> Second, in its *derivative form*, it emerges in three ways. (1) An individual is racist if he or she tries to intentionally injure someone because of race. (2) An individual is racist if he or she “does not *care*<sup>75</sup> at all” (i.e., does not care as much as morality requires) for someone because of that other person's racial assignment.”<sup>76</sup> And, (3) an individual is racist if he or she “does something that stems in significant part from a belief or apprehension about other people, that one has because of one's disaffection toward them because of race.” According to Garcia, “[r]acism, then, is something that essentially involves not our beliefs and their rationality or irrationality, but our wants, intentions, likes and dislikes and their distance from the moral virtues.”<sup>77</sup> Since Garcia locates racism in individuals' wants, intentions, likes, and dislikes and these phenomena are psychological, racism is for him too primarily a psychological phenomenon.

---

<sup>73</sup> My emphasis.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 259.

<sup>75</sup> My emphasis.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 259.

For Garcia, racism occurs as two forms between individuals and institutions. Racism that occurs between individuals and institutions exists in two forms. In its *central and most vicious form*, it

(a) tries to injure people assigned to a racial group because of their [racial assignment], or (b) objectionably fails to take care *not* to injure them (where the agent harm to R1s<sup>78</sup> because she disregards the interests and needs of R1s because they are R1s).<sup>79</sup>

According to Garcia, racism expressed by institutions in its derivative form

(c) does something that (regardless of its intended, probable, or actual effects) stems in significant part from a belief or apprehension about other people, that one has (in significant part) because of one's disaffection toward them because of (what one thinks to be their) race.<sup>80</sup>

For Garcia, institutional practices are not racist because of their intended, probable or actual effects. They are racist because their intended, probable, and actual effects stem in significant part from individuals' beliefs or apprehension toward someone because of race.

So, for Garcia, racism has two forms. In its central form, it emerges as individuals' and institutions' intentional acts of commission that injures individuals because of race. It also emerges as individuals' and institutions' intentional acts of omission –not caring at all or not caring enough for an individual because of race, which consequently injures individuals. In its derivative form racism stems in significant part from individuals' and institutions' negative beliefs and apprehensions that they have towards individuals because of race.

---

<sup>78</sup> For Garcia, R1 is symbolic of a racial group.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., 264.

I have explained what Garcia's psychological conception of racism means and how it works in theory. Now, I turn to a discussion of a key conceptual advantage. I contend that Garcia's psychological conception of racism has conceptual advantages that help us think about some African Americans' experiences with racism.

A main conceptual advantage of Garcia's psychological conception of racism is that it allows us to think about African Americans' experiences with the interconnectedness of racial prejudices or prejudgments and inequalities that African Americans experience. Garcia's psychological conception of racism allows us to think about the interrelatedness of an individual's racial prejudices that produce racial inequalities. It thinks of racism as an individual's hatred or ill-will towards another individual on the basis of race. Hatred, as a background assumption, shapes and informs an individual's judgment about an individual or a groups based on race. Garcia's psychological conception of racism helps us to understand that individuals' prejudices based on race are shaped and informed by hatred or ill-will that African Americans experience. As an individual's prejudices are shaped and informed by hatred of African Americans, an individual expresses an ill-will toward individual African Americans. The individual's ill-will may emerge as difference in treatment of African American, or refusing to act when action is require by morality. Consequently, individuals' hatred animates their behaviors during interactions with African American individuals, thereby injuring African Americans.

Garcia's psychological conception of racism allows us to think about African Americans' experience with the interrelatedness of institutional patterns and practices that rely on racial prejudices and which produce racial inequalities. It links institutions' reliance upon race, hatred, which injures a racial individual or group. According to Garcia, institutions can become infected by individuals who have hatred or ill-will towards an

individual or group on the basis of race. Once racial individual's hatred infiltrates institutions' practices, they cause an institution to engage in either acts of commission or acts of omission. Sometimes these institutions' practices rely on distinctions based on race, in which case individuals operating within institutions intentionally try to injure particular groups because of race. Sometimes institutions' practices rely on distinctions based on race in which individuals within a given institution intentionally injures a racial individual or group by refusing to act. Consider the following example, which I have already mentioned in a previous chapter, as an illustration of an individual and institution act of commission. Patricia J. Williams attempted to purchase a home in a different state from where she then lived. She completed a mortgage application entirely over the phone with a lending institution. According to her, her credit score at the time of the home purchase was in good or excellent condition. Williams was approved for the mortgage, all she had to do was sign and return the mortgage contract. The lending agent sent the mortgage contract to Williams for her signature. After she read it, she corrected an error the lending agent made while filling out the mortgage application. The error was that the lending agent marked Williams as White. After Williams read and corrected the error, she returned it to the lending institution. When the lending institution received and reviewed the signed contract, all of a sudden it attempted to change the terms of the agreement. It *now* wanted her to pay more for points, pay a higher down payment, and pay a higher interest rate. Why did the lending institution change the terms of the agreement? The only thing that changed was that Williams went from being marked as White to African American. The lending agent made a prejudgment about Williams's race. The lending agent perceived Williams as White. The lending agent was aware that he or she marked Williams as White. And so, by marking Williams as White, the lending agent must have

used some basis for drawing this conclusion. I conclude that there were features of Williams that the lending agent had learned prior to ever encountering Williams such as Williams' speech pattern, occupation, employment history, and financial history. The lending agent believed that these features served as proxies for race. In the agent's mind, Williams's speech pattern, occupation, employment history, and her good-to-excellent credit score have been associated with being White people. And by logical implication, with these data points, Williams was not likely an African American. Based on these features, the lending agent drew the conclusion that Williams was "White." How does Garcia's psychological conception of racism help us understand the interconnectedness of racial prejudices, and inequalities? It helps us understand the interconnectedness of racial prejudices, and inequalities by relying on the assumption that racism is relational. When racists express their intent or desire to injure racial individuals or racial groups, their hatred or ill-will ceases to be just subjective psychological states of mind. Their subjective psychological states of mind emerge as an individual discriminating against another racial individual or groups. And, individual subjective psychological states of mind emerge as an institutions treating individuals differently based on race. These relations shape and inform racists' self-understanding as well as his or her understanding of the other racial individual. In this way, Garcia's psychological conception of racism helps think about race as a psychological phenomenon because institutions and individuals sometimes knowingly and unknowingly take race into account in their interactions with African Americans. When individuals or institutions show a disregard or no regard for individuals because of race, they treat those who they have a disregard or no regard for differently than they do those whom they show regard for. Thus, by showing



regard and disregard and no regard, institutions and individuals are injuring those they disregard and those they show no regard.

So, Garcia's psychological conception of racism has advantages that allow us to think about African Americans' experiences with racism. The first conceptual advantage allows us to think about prejudgments about race that individuals possess and institutions express. As a psychological phenomenon, it provides a way to think about prejudices or prejudgments based on race, which are sometimes implicit and sometimes explicit. The second conceptual advantage of Garcia's psychological conception of racism is that it relies on the assumption that racism is constituted by relations between individuals and institutions, as well as between individuals. The third conceptual advantage of Garcia's psychological conception of racism is that it implies that races and racial agency are relational phenomena.

Despite the conceptual advantage of Garcia's psychological conception of racism that helps us to understand African Americans' experiences with the interconnectedness of racial prejudices, and inequalities, it also has some inherent conceptual disadvantages. In what follows, I argue that his psychological conception of racism has conceptual disadvantages that do not allow us to think about African Americans' experiences with individuals and institutions' expressions of power relations.

The first conceptual disadvantage of Garcia's psychological conception of racism is that it neglects to discuss the role that a conception of power plays in racism. In particular, he neither discusses how a conception of power operates within individual racism and institutional racism. How a conception of power operates within both individual and institutional racism is important in a conception of racism because it helps us understand how power expressed through individual racist and institutions' racist practices

advantage some racial groups and disadvantaged other racial groups. For example, the housing scenario involving Patricia J. Williams discussed above illustrates how power expressed through economic relations can operate at both the individual and the institutional level. At the individual level, the lending agent, who works for a lending institution, displays economic power as an agent of the lending institution. The lending agent made assumptions about race, namely that there is concordance with speech patterns, economic data, and race. That is, someone who speaks Standard English, has a “moderately higher” income, has a good or excellent credit score, can afford to put down a certain amount, etc. is White. Based on these assumptions that equates high economic achievement with being White, the lending agent translated these assumptions into discriminatory behavior because the lending agent demands that Williams as an African American pay more in down-payment, interest, and points than Williams, as a White American. In this way, the lending agent illustrates power relations as expressed through economic relations between a lending institution and a consumer. The power was the attempt to make the African American Williams pay more for the same mortgage as the White American Williams. On the basis of prejudgments based on racial proxies, the lending agent exerts economic power over Williams and thus advantages the White Williams while she disadvantages Williams as an African American. Since Garcia’s psychological conception lacks a conception of power, it cannot help us understand how and why African Americans are disadvantaged.

The lending institution’s actions toward Williams display power relations between lending institutions and consumers. Given Williams’s reporting about her own experience, we do not know whether the lending agent’s behavior is widespread throughout the lending institution. But, let us assume for the sake of argument that the

lending agent's racial prejudice and racial discrimination does not exist anywhere else within the lending institution except in the mind and behavior of the lending agent. The lending agent is an employee of the lending institution, and not an independent contractor. Since the lending agent is an employee of the lending institution, and is not an independent contractor, the lending agent's behaviors are not just an expression of an individual. They are also an extension of the lending institution, even though the lending agent may not have received explicit or implicit authorization from a superior or a formal institutional policy. The lending agent's behavior is an expression of the lending institution because the lending agent is acting as an agent of the lending institution. As an agent of the lending institution, the lending agent transacted the original terms and modified terms of agreement, and presumably other financial transactions in other cases. Although Williams obtained the original terms of agreement because she threatened to sue the lending institution, having obtained the original terms of agreement does not exclude this scenario from being an expression of institutional racism. Again even though this lending institution was unsuccessful at getting Williams to pay more down-payment, interest, and points, by employing this particular agent the lending institution empowered him or her to execute mortgages. Thus, these tactics illustrate that lending institutions disadvantage some African Americans while advantage some White Americans through economic. Since Garcia's psychological conception of racism lacks a conception of power, it cannot help us understand how power relations as constituted through individuals and institutions adversely impacts African Americans not only in economic relations, but political and cultural relations too.

The second conceptual disadvantage of Garcia's psychological conception of racism is that it does not allow us to think about *changes and continuities* of the

interconnectedness of racial prejudices, power relations, and inequalities that African Americans experience. The interconnectedness of racial prejudices, power relations, and inequalities change and continue from one historical period to another. Being able to think about changes to and continuities of racism in general and power relations in particular is important because power relations change the nature and impact of racism on African Americans' access to political, economic, and cultural resources and power. Economic relations between a lending institution and consumers have change. Some power relations that existed during the Civil Rights period have been *eliminated* by the start of the Post-Civil Rights period. During the Civil Rights period, White Americans controlled access to public and private lending for mortgages. In doing so, they used public and private institutions to control where African Americans could live and their material condition. Nicole Hannah-Jones in her book *Living Apart: How the Government Betrayed a Landmark Civil Rights*<sup>81</sup> discusses the role that public institutions, as well as local, state, and federal governments, played in segregating residential neighborhoods. According to Hannah-Jones, in the first decade of the 1900s 6 million African Americans left the oppressive South for what they believed were increased opportunities to housing, employment, and quality of life for the North<sup>82</sup> White citizens and officials in "cities and towns began adoption zoning codes that designated neighborhoods as all-white and all-black." Although the United States Supreme Court struck down zoning codes as unconstitutional, however real estate agents created

'codes of ethics' that included bans on selling homes to African Americans outside of black areas. In some cities, white residents responded to the arrival of black families with riots, home bombings and cross burnings. They formed associations

---

<sup>81</sup> Nicole Hannah-Jones, *Living Apart: How the Government Betrayed a Landmark Civil Rights*, (New York: ProPublica, 2012).

<sup>82</sup> Ibid., 87.

dedicated to blocking a single black family from moving in. White communities also embraced racial covenants –legal language in deeds that bared any subsequent purchaser from selling to African Americans.<sup>83</sup>

Some White citizens' power was expressed through terror. They used terror to get African Americans to remain in boundaries circumscribed by Whites' desires. Their brand of terror included lynching, cross burnings, bombing, and murder. White public officials' power was expressed legislatively. As local municipal legislative bodies, White public officials created and maintained local ordinances in the North that denied African Americans access to housing and rental properties in neighborhoods where predominately Whites lived. By using terror and local legislation, Whites were able to deny African Americans access to predominantly White neighborhoods. In this way, terror and local municipal ordinances created and maintained segregated neighborhoods. In addition to White citizens and White public officials use of terror and ordinances to segregate neighborhoods, Nicole Hannah-Jones discusses the federal government's role in segregating neighborhoods. Neighborhoods were segregated in "Northern Cities, primarily through New Deal programs."<sup>84</sup> For example,

[t]he Home Owners' Loan Corporation, created in 1933, introduced the practice of redlining, marking in red ink swaths of cities in which it would not lend. It rated white neighborhoods as the least risky and black neighborhoods as the most. It would not lend to a black person seeing to buy in a white neighborhood, or vice versa.

The Home Owners' Loan Corporation, while making homeownership more accessible, used economic power to set the economic norms for lending practices for home

---

<sup>83</sup> Ibid., 76.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid., 76-97.

mortgages. The Home Owners' Loan Corporation's economic policy segregated neighborhoods by refusing to lend African Americans capital to purchase a home in White neighborhoods and to lend Whites capital to purchase a home in African American neighborhoods, although this was not a desire for many Whites. Hannah-Jones cites another federal agency that contributed to segregated neighborhoods in Northern cities. "When the Federal Housing Administration opened its doors a year later, it adopted the same practices [as the Home Owners' Loan Corporation]. As a result, 98 percent of the loans the FHA insured between 1934 and 1962 went to white borrowers." Not only did the FHA mortgage lending practices, during the Civil Rights period, legally discriminate for Whites and against African Americans; they also advantaged Whites and disadvantaged African Americans in another way. FHA's mortgage policy advantaged Whites because they facilitated Whites' ability to accumulate wealth through homeownership. Homeownership was, and remains, an asset that generally appreciates in value, which can be transmitted from one generation to the next. FHA's mortgage disadvantaged African Americans because it impeded their ability to acquire a home and by extension their ability to acquire and transfer wealth through homeownership. Finally, according to Hannah-Jones, the GI Bill was another public policy that further exacerbated segregated neighborhoods during the Civil Rights period.

With the end of World War II, a grateful nation made available vast amounts of credit to returning soldiers, who could borrow money through the GI Bill to buy their dream homes in the suburbs. But banks often refused to approve loans for black soldiers attempting to use the GI Bill to buy homes. The Veterans Administration and the FHA officially supported racial covenants banning African Americans in new suburban developments until 1950, refusing to underwrite loans that would bring 'incompatible' racial groups into newly created white areas.<sup>85</sup>

---

<sup>85</sup> Ibid., 97.

While the GI Bill had the goal of providing loans to facilitate homeownership, at the same time those in positions of authority used economic power of the Veterans Administration to give Whites access to capital to purchase a home in the then-newly-created suburbs and denied African Americans access to capital to purchase a home in the same communities. This practice by the VA did not take place in just one newly created community. It was a practice that existed throughout the Northern region of the United States. My point has been that Garcia's psychological conception of racism neglects to include a conception of power in his conception of racism. Without a conception of power, his psychological conception of racism is unable to help us think about the roles that power in general and economic power in particular played in the segregation of housing. Hannah-Jones's reporting highlights and illustrates the role that government played in segregating neighborhoods. Local municipalities created racial covenants to restrict African Americans from purchasing and renting properties in White neighborhoods. The Federal Housing Administration and Veteran Administration granted Whites access to mortgages to purchase a home, while it had denied African Americans access to mortgages to purchase a home in White neighborhoods.

In the Post-Civil Rights period, among the other constitutive elements of racism, power played a significant role in expressions of racism. Power was expressed through relations between local, state, and federal institutions, on the one hand, and consumers, on the other hand. My contention has been that racism in general and power relations in particular change and continue. This means that the power relations can, and do, change. One way that power relations change is by being eliminated, while other power relations continue qualitatively or quantitatively. The way that local municipalities exercised their power to segregate neighborhoods has been eliminated. Racial restrictive covenants cease

to exist; lending institutions no longer explicitly use race to deny African Americans access to homes and rental properties; the Veterans Administration and Federal Housing Administration seems to have ended the practice of treating consumers differently based on race.

Although some power relations have been eliminated, other power relations have changed but maintained continuity from the Civil Rights to the Post-Civil Rights period. For example, power relations in general but economic power relations in particular between institutions and African American consumers have changed but maintained continuity from the Civil Rights period to the Post-Civil Rights period. The example involving Patricia Williams illustrates the way that power relations have changed and maintained continuity. A *proxy for race* is something that impacts economic relations in the Post-Civil Rights period. When the lending institution decided to change the terms of the agreement, it did not use race as a reason. According to Williams, it told her that the property values in that neighborhood were falling and it needed more money to cover the “risk.” So, “risk” and not race was the reason Williams was required to pay more. “Risk” is an economic reason. By giving “risk” as the reason for the increase prices, the lending institution provides a reason to deny African Americans access to capital and creates the impression that it is not racist, but financially prudent.

*Resistance* to such power is a way that economic relations could be modified without eliminating the continuity of racism. Williams resists the lending institution’s change of the terms of agreement. She used her right to sue the lending institution to force the lending institution to honor the original terms of agreement. But her right to sue is only as strong as African Americans’ standing in the legal system allows.



*Legal standing* in the courts can contribute to challenges to economic relations. In the Post-Civil Rights period, the legal system may be more inclined to be fair to African Americans' in general and Williams's claim of racial discrimination in housing in particular than they were during the Civil Rights period. For both Williams and the lending institution are aware that Whites' prejudices have declined since the Civil Rights period. This means that courts are more likely to be fair to those that come before it. And by both the lending institution and Williams being aware that courts are more likely to be fair to an African American plaintiff gave Williams a way to demand that the lending institution treat her respectfully. In the Post-Civil Rights period, power relations between lending institutions and African American consumers changed. In the Post-Civil Rights period, the lending institutions use a proxy for race such as "risk" and may not explicitly use race as a reason for action as it did during the Civil Rights period. In this way power relations shifted from economic institutions which used to act with impunity in the Civil Rights period to economic institutions that could be held to account in the Post-Civil Rights for acting unfairly toward African American consumers.

So, Garcia's psychological conception of racism is inadequate for thinking about the changes and continuities of racism in general and power relations in particular because it lacks a conception of power. Without a conception of power, we are not allowed to think about African Americans experiences with racism in general and power relations in particular change and maintain continuity from the Civil Rights period to the Post-Civil Rights period.

My discussion of Garcia's psychological conception of racism argued for two theses. First, I argued that a conceptual advantage of Garcia's psychological conception of racism is that it helps understand the interconnectedness of racial prejudices and

discrimination based on race that injures African Americans. Second, I argued that a conceptual disadvantage of Garcia's psychological conception of racism is that it does not allow us to think about changes and continuities of racism in general and power relations between African Americans and institutions.

#### **4. Conclusion**

This chapter discussed two conceptions of racism. Although West's is thinking about racism as it emerged during the modern period, we can see how it might help us understand racism in the Post-Civil Rights period. I argued that West's genealogical conception of racism has conceptual advantages for thinking about racism. It helps us understand that racial prejudices as expressed by institutions and cultural power relations as constituted by academicians' relations to African Americans produce cultural inequalities that African Americans experience. However, West's genealogical conception of racism has conceptual disadvantages. It does not help us think about racial prejudices, power relations, and inequalities that African Americans experience outside of their cultural experiences such as political and economic. It does not help us think about changes to and continuities of racial prejudices, power relations, and inequalities that African Americans experience. The other conception of racism that I discussed belonged to Jorge Garcia. I argued that Garcia's psychology conception of racism has a key conceptual advantage. It helps us to understand the how both institutions' and individuals' racial prejudices manifest into discriminatory behaviors that injure African Americans. Despite the conceptual advantages of Garcia's psychological conception of racism, it has conceptual disadvantages for thinking about changes to and continuities of racism. It neglects a conceptualization of power and an understanding of how it figures into a psychological conception of racism. And, since it neglects a conceptualization of power, it cannot help us understand how African Americans' experience differences in access to political, economic, and cultural resources and power and their self-understanding are shaped and informed by their relations to individual racists and institutions' practices that shaped and informed by racists' thinking. It also does not help

us understand that racists' access to political, economic, and cultural resources and power and their self-understandings are shaped and informed by their relations to African American individuals and institutions' practices that shaped and informed by African Americans' thinking.

To this point, I have discussed different conceptualizations of racism. In chapter two, I discussed an individualist and liberal conceptualization. In chapter three, I discussed a genealogical and a psychological conception of racism. In each conceptualization of racism, I found that they are helpful for thinking about African Americans' experiences with some expressions of racism. I have also found that each one has not been helpful for thinking about African Americans' experiences with other expressions of racism. In chapter four, I explain what a dialectic of recognition conceptualization of racism means and how it works in theory. And in chapter five, I argue that the dialectic of recognition conceptualization of racism is superior to those that I considered in chapters two and three.

## Chapter four: Constructing a dialectic of recognition conception of racism

### 1. Introduction

Let me recap the ground that we have covered so far. I have shown that the individualist and social conceptions of racism are both to some extent adequate and inadequate for thinking about the changes to or continuity of racism. The individualist conceptions of racism are adequate for thinking about racism insofar as they allow us to think about continuity of such elements of racism as individuals' racial prejudices, individuals' behaviors and institutions' practices that treat individuals differently based on race, and racial inequalities produced by individual persons and institutions. The social conception of racism is adequate to some extent for thinking about racism insofar as it allows us to think about the continuity of racial prejudices, cultural power relations, and racial inequalities within cultural contexts. In addition, both the individualist and social conceptions of racism are problematic for thinking about racism because they are one-sided, although not necessarily in the same ways. By 'one-sided,' I mean that these conceptions of racism allow us to think about some elements of racism but ignore or underplay other elements of racism. Some of them are one-sided because they focus exclusively on individual persons' racial prejudices, but ignore groups' racial prejudices or groups' racial prejudices operating within institutions. Some are one-sided because they allow us to think about racism as *individual persons'* racial prejudices or discrimination but ignore institutions' patterns and practices as constitutive elements of racism; or they allow us to think about racism as *cultural institution's patterns and practices* but ignore political and economic institutions' patterns and practices as

constitutive elements of racism. Finally, individualist and social conceptions of racism are inadequate because they do not allow us to think about both changes to individuals' or groups' racial prejudices, power relations, and racial inequalities.

An adequate conception of racism should help us to think about changes to and continuities of individuals' and groups' racial prejudices, power relations between individuals, groups, institutions and individual, and racial inequalities produced by individual persons, groups, institutions, and to avoid one-sided, atomistic, and static thinking. For concepts that allow us to think about these constitutive elements of racism, I draw conceptual assistance from two thinkers, G.W.F. Hegel and W.E.B. Du Bois. I divided my exposition of Hegel and Du Bois into two main sections. In the first section, I draw on some elements from Hegel's conception of dialectic of recognition. Hegel's conception of dialectic of recognition allows us to think about individuals' self-understandings is constituted by *relations* of conflict or struggle, which are *asymmetrical power*, and which are always *mutual, reciprocal, and changeable*. Thinking about individuals' self-understanding in this way is helpful in two ways. First, it connects racial prejudices, power relations, and racial inequalities as embodied in economic relations between the dominant and subordinate individuals. Second, it allows us to think about how racial prejudices, power, and racial inequalities, embodied in struggles between individuals over economic relations, changes and maintains continuities, while avoiding one-sided, reductionism, and atomistic thinking attributed to individualist and social conceptions of racism.

Hegel used his conception of dialectic of recognition to think neither about race nor racism. For that, I turn to W.E.B. Du Bois. In section two, I discuss that Du Bois's appropriation of some elements of Hegel's conception of dialectic of recognition is helpful

in two ways. First, it is helpful because it allows us to think about racial prejudices, power, and racial inequalities as connected by struggle over political, economic, and cultural recognition. Second, Given Du Bois's conception of dialectic of recognition, allows us to think about how racial prejudices, power and racial inequalities, as embodied in groups and institutions, change and maintain continuity from the Post-Reconstruction period to Civil Rights period. By drawing from Du Bois's conception of dialectic of recognition, we avoid the one-sided, reductionism, and atomistic thinking that I attribute to individualist and social conceptions of racism, while simultaneously grasping the adequacies of the individualist and social conceptions of racism. Let us turn to my exposition of Hegel's conception of dialectic of recognition.

## **2. The role G.W.F. Hegel's conception of dialectic of recognition plays in the formation and development of individuals' self-understanding**

Individualist conceptions of racism are to some extent inadequate, in part, because they think of individuals as atomistically. On this approach, an individual's self-understanding, ontologically speaking, is a rational self-interested decision maker. Misha Strauss points out why this way of thinking about individuals' self-understanding is problematic. She writes,

[i]t is tempting to think that an individual's self-understanding is simply a matter of assertion, of looking into one's heart and declaring oneself to be that which one finds there. But this heroic vision that has proved so captivating is misleading and obscures the many ways in which the successful construction and sustaining of an individual's self-understanding depends upon external factors.<sup>86</sup>

Strauss highlights problems with the individualist conception of individual self-understanding. The individualist conception is problematic because it distorts how the self-understandings of individuals form and develop. One version of this conception assumes that who an individual was, is, and can be is determined by rational-decision making and rational-decision makers' actions. An implication of the individualist conception is that if individual persons are successful, it is because they have made good choices and executed them along the way. The converse would seem to be true too. If individuals are unsuccessful, then they have not made good choices and have not executed them along the way. Individualists who implicitly or explicitly think that racial individuals are successful or unsuccessful because they either did or did not make good choices and executed their plan of action on their journey are thinking inadequately about the

---

<sup>86</sup> Misha Strauss, "The Role of Recognition in the Formation of Self-Understanding" in *Recognition, Responsibility, and Rights: Feminist Ethics and Social Theory*, eds. Robin N. Fiore and Hilde Lindemann Nelson, (Roman & Littlefield Publishers, 2003), p. 37.



formation and development of individual self-understanding. This way of thinking about the formation and development of the self-understanding of individuals is inadequate because it does not allow us to think about how factors other than individual persons' thinking and acting shape and inform individual persons' self-understanding. In particular, it omits or downplays the significance of what Strauss refers to as external factors on the formation and development of individual self-understanding. If the individualist conceptions were sound, then its supporters would be committed to saying that individual persons are who they assert or declare themselves to be. However, this claim is false. For who an individual person is or what an individual person is capable of achieving has never been solely determined by individual desires or initiatives. Hence, the individualist conception of individual persons' self-understanding is inadequate because it fails to account for the role that social relations play in the formation and development of individual persons' self-understanding.

Hegel's conception of dialectic of recognition is important because it allows us to think about the formation and development of individuality not only as persons' self-understanding but also as persons' ability to exercise their agency in ways that they have freely decided can help them bring their desires into existence. Thus, it helps us to avoid reducing individuality down to that of rational self-interested decision making. To show this, I draw on some elements of Hegel's conception of dialectic of recognition from his discussion of the master-slave relationship in the Lordship and Bondage section of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*.<sup>87</sup> Although I am drawing on some elements of Hegel's conception of dialectic of recognition, I am not trying to give a comprehensive account of

---

<sup>87</sup> G.W.F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A.V. Miller, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977).

his dialectic of recognition. Let us turn to my exposition of the role that dialectic of recognition plays in the formation and development of individual persons' self-understanding.

First I want to describe briefly his conceptions of dialectic and recognition and to discuss how they function in general terms. In this section, I will discuss how they operate in particular terms of the master-slave relationship. By 'dialectic,' Hegel asserts an implicit presence of reason in reality in general and in the organization of particular categories of being. The categories that emerge in Hegel's master-slave dialectic are organized as forms of individuality. Several elements of Hegel's dialectic are operative in the formation and development of his master-slave relationship. They include but are not limited to thinking about all individuality as constituted by (1) *inter-personal recognition relations*, (2) *conflicts or struggles*, and (3) *change*. Let us see how these constitutive elements of dialectic are embodied in practices of recognition between the master and slave.

While these elements are parts of Hegel's dialectic, they play out through recognition between two individual persons, one is the master and the other is a slave. For Hegel, recognition is the process of giving and receiving acknowledging that someone is an independent person. This process of acknowledging always occurs through *mutual* and *reciprocal* relations in which both individual persons are *giving* recognition to and *receiving* recognition from the other individual. In this way, mutual recognition is occurring while both individuals are asserting their independence while assessing the independence of the other. As both individuals are expressing their self-understanding of themselves in relation to the other, each individual initially acknowledges the other individual as independent in their own right. Within this process, each individual is

learning that acknowledgement from the other individual is necessary for the each's independent and ability to be who he or she asserts himself or herself to be. Reciprocal recognition takes place when both individuals are receiving acknowledgment from the other. In this way, both are confirming from themselves that who each individual understanding himself or herself to be depends on giving and receiving acknowledgement to and from the other individual.

Hegel's inaugural discussion of the dialectic of recognition occurs in interpersonal relations between two individuals. Both individuals desire to confirm their self-understandings as persons who are independent.<sup>88</sup> By 'independent' I mean that both individuals understand themselves as the sole author of their own desires and destinies. At this early junction in the process of recognition, the self-understanding of both these individuals is subjective. They do not see the importance that the other individuals' self-understanding has to their own self-understanding. Strauss notes that external factors are essential to individual persons' self-understanding and to be able to actualize how individuals understand themselves. For who individuals are and what they are capable of achieving has never been solely determined by individual subjective attitudes, desires or initiatives. She writes,

[j]ust as the slave cannot make herself free by declaration alone, neither can any individual make some aspect of herself mean something particular by assertion alone. What it means to be a woman, a good father, to be courageous or pious will depend on social agreements concerning the meaning of those terms.<sup>89</sup>

Strauss observes that thinking about who someone is and can become is up to the individual obscures social factors that contribute to the formation development

---

<sup>88</sup> *PhS.* § 179-181.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, 42.

individual persons' self-understanding and agency. Those who hold this view obscure social, environments, and social interactions that are instrumental in shaping and informing individual persons' self-understanding and agency. Strauss's example of the slave woman is a counterexample to individualist thinking. In this example, the slave woman cannot be who she desires to be while others impede her from making choices or being able to express her own will or desires. Invariably the slave's agency is, in part, shaped and informed by her understanding of herself as someone who is not free to behave in ways that she sees can bring her self-understanding to actualization. But, her possibilities are also dependent on other's understanding and treatment of her. To the extent that her possibilities are not only dependent on what she does or does not do, it would be foolish to simply say the slave woman can be anything she desires or can achieve anything she desires.

In addition, Strauss notes that being a woman or a mother is not simply determined by a female's self-understanding. Rather, being a woman or mother involves *social agreement* between or among those who are allowed to speak and those who have authority to speak on these matters. Those who have authority to speak as well as those voices that are understood go beyond just the individual woman who is working out what this means for herself through actions that she expresses and do not express. The social agreement on what attributes constitutes a woman or a "good" mother involves power. Who has the power to say what should be included in womanhood? Who has a voice in the community to determine who is a woman or "good" mother? Whose voice matters in determining what a woman or mother is? Clearly, the slave woman has been dispossessed of power to speak about what constitutes "womanhood" or a "good" mother. The slave woman did not simply abdicate her responsibility to play the role of advocate. She was

excluded by dominant and subordinate Whites. They exclude her from the community of individuals who is socially acceptable to participate in defining what constitutes “womanhood” or a “good” mother. So, Strauss’s point is that conceptions of individuality that rely on an individualist notion self-understanding hide and conceal ways that social relations contribute to the formation and development individuals’ self-understanding and agency.

While individualist conceptions of racism omit or downplay the significance that individuals have one another, Hegel’s dialectic of interpersonal recognition helps understand this significance. The dialectic of interpersonal recognition reveals in both individuals an instability about their independence. As they think about who they are and what is possible for them, they think of themselves as someone who desires independence. Although they desire to prove to themselves that they are independent, achieving this is another matter. Both individuals face a dilemma. On the one hand, they may continue to choose to think of themselves as independent individuals. This is only subjectively true. That is, they are thinking that they are individual persons whose self-understanding is determined only by what they do as individual persons, and not dependent on factors that are external to themselves. This way of thinking only allows them to obtain a subjective truth about who they are. However, if they desire to achieve an objective truth about who they are, they will have to relinquish the notion that their subjective self-understanding is sufficient. Being satisfied with a subjective truth about who they are only leaves them devoid of the very thing they seek, objective independence. On the other hand, they can decide on pursuing an objective independence. This means that an individual will give up on their subjective understanding of who they are. If they choose this route, they must replace their subjective self-understanding with an objective self-understanding. If they

choose an objective self-understandings, one that is dependent on another individual person's acknowledgment, then they also have to give up thinking that the only things that are important to and for them is what they desire. What they desire still remains important; it is just decentered. That is, their desire ceases to be solely what they want, but it is now informed by the presence of another individual who is independent too. Thinking in this way acknowledges that the other's existence is essential for them to satisfy their own desire, and to obtain objective self-understanding. So, both individual persons desire an objective self-understanding, which can only be achieved through mutual and reciprocal recognition of the other individual. If they both acknowledge their own limitations, they may be inclined to give up on a subjective truth of self-understanding in favor of an objective truth of self-understanding. Neither individual person can achieve an objective self-understanding without the other, which requires each to give and receive acknowledgment by both individuals that they are independent. If both individuals accept the acknowledgment from the other individual person, then both individuals may achieve their desire of an objective self-understanding. Hegel emphasizes the importance of *mutual* and *reciprocal* recognition. He writes that

the movement is simply the double movement of the two self-consciousnesses. Each sees the *other*<sup>90</sup> do the same as it does; each does itself what it demands of the other, and therefore also does what it does only in so far as the other does the same. Action by one side only would be useless because what is to happen can only be brought about by both.<sup>91</sup>

Thus the action has a double significance not only because it is directed against itself as well as against the other, but also because it is indivisibly the action of one as well as the other.<sup>92</sup>

---

<sup>90</sup> These italics are the author's.

<sup>91</sup> § 182.

<sup>92</sup> § 183.

Hegel's remarks are important because they focus our lens on the essential role that the dialectic of recognition plays during the formation and development of individual self-understanding and agency. It allows us to understand a more complex picture of self-understanding than the individualist approach provides because it allows us to understand that an individual person's self-understanding forms and develops during mutual and reciprocal relations between separate persons. Since individuals desire to prove to themselves that they are independent and have an objective self-understanding, they choose to stake and potentially risk their life in exchange for obtaining the objective self-understanding. Hegel writes that

[t]hey must engage in this struggle for they raise their certainty of being for themselves to truth, both in the case of the other and in their own case. And it is only through staking one's life that freedom is won; only thus is it proved that for self-consciousness, its essential being is not [just] being, not the *immediate* form in which it appears, not its submergence in the expanse of life, but rather that there is nothing present in it which could be regarded as a vanishing moment, that it is only pure being-for-self.<sup>93</sup>

Hegel's point here is that both individual persons desire to show that each has an objective self-understanding. This cannot be achieved subjectively or individualistically. Do they choose a subjective self-understanding or do they choose an objective self-understanding? Choosing an objective self-understanding invariably results in conflicts or struggles between the two individual persons and it is the only route that leads them toward accomplishing their desires of obtaining an objective truth about their self-understanding. Both individuals come to realize that their objective self-understanding depends on giving and receiving recognition. But, neither individual is satisfied with a

---

<sup>93</sup> *PhS*. § 187.

subjective truth about their self-understanding and agency. So, rather than maintain a self-understanding that is subjective, each desires to eliminate the subjectivity of the other because each sees the other as a threat to each's independence. By eliminating the subjectivity in the other individual person, each individual thinks that he/she is no longer dependent on giving and receiving acknowledgment. But each individual also realizes that if either is successful at eliminating the other, then neither one of them can obtain and sustain an objective self-understanding because the very condition that is necessary for their objective self-understanding, namely giving and receiving acknowledgement, would cease to exist. In this way, the "successful" elimination of the other is really unsuccessful because if it eliminates the other existence, it simultaneously eliminates the opportunity to achieve objective self-understanding too. This is the paradox that both individuals experience. So, rather than lose the possibility of objective self-understanding, both individuals make drastically different calculations and decisions about resolving the paradox themselves.

These two individuals' relationship illustrates another element of the dialectic of recognition, namely that recognition relations *change*. Their recognition relation changes from pre-social and subjective self-understandings to a social and objective self-understandings. For Hegel, dialectical change entails three things. First, some or all aspects of their relationship may be *eliminated or abolished*. Some or all aspects of their relationship that existed at some point in time cease to exist at some later point in time. Second, some or all aspects of their relationship may change *quantitatively*. That is, some aspects of their relationship may *increase or decrease*. Third, some or all aspects of their relationship may change *qualitatively*. The conditions or terms of their relationship may *improve or decline*. Claiming that the two individuals' relationship has changed means



that their self-understandings go from pre-social and subjective to social and objective. For Hegel, the change to their relationship plays out in economic contexts. In economic contexts, their recognition relations changed. One way that recognition relations changed is that both individuals' deliberations about how badly each desired objective self-understanding led them down different paths. One individual, willing to stake his/her life in order to have his/her freedom acknowledged,<sup>94</sup> was not afraid of being killed in the struggle. Consequently, this individual becomes the master. The other individual, also willing to stake his/her life in order to have his/her freedom recognized, was afraid of death and clung to the immediacy of life.<sup>95</sup> This individual becomes the slave. Their relationship change. It has changed because now the two individuals who at an earlier time were different and equal to different and unequal. The master enjoys the benefits of power over objects or things the slave produces. "The master relates to the world by interposing the slave between himself [/herself] and the world. The prototypical world-relation in the *Phenomenology* is that of desire. But now the slave labors for the master, procuring and fashioning objects desire by the master, who is spared the labor necessary to satisfy his [/her] desire."<sup>96</sup> "But the lord is the power over this thing, for he [/she] proved in the struggle that it is something merely negative; since he is the power over this thing and this again is the power over the other, it follows that he holds the other in subjection."<sup>97</sup> Here, Hegel is showing that freely giving and receiving acknowledgement is a necessary condition for each individual to show himself/herself as well as to the other individual that he/she has an objective self-understanding. In this new relationship, both

---

<sup>94</sup> Robert R. Williams, *Hegel's Ethics of Recognition*, (Berkeley: University of California, 1997), p. 61.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, 61.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, 62.

<sup>97</sup> *PhS*, §190.

the master's and slave's self-understand and self-actualization form. The master's self-understanding and self-actualization form because he/she "won" the struggle for recognition. The master accepts inadequate recognition from the slave. The only recognition the slave can offer the master is inadequate. It is inadequate because in the master-slave relationship the slave is not free to satisfy his/her own desires. He/she is compelled or forced to recognize the master's freedom. Simultaneously, the slave's self-understanding and self-actualization emerges. When the slave chooses a life of servitude, implicitly he/she also gave up on having its freedom recognized by the master. The slave chooses to give up being recognized by the master because slave lacks any power to compel the master to recognize its freedom. As a consequence of the slave's choice, the slave is forced to satisfy the master's desire. Consequently, he/she can only inadequately recognize the master's desires. Hence, the emergence of the master-slave relationship reveal changes. One change is that the two emerging individual's self-understanding and self-actualization change. That is, how they perceive themselves has qualitatively changed. One individual thinks of himself/herself as needing to satisfy his/her own desires, while the other individual thinks of himself/herself as needing to satisfy the other's desires, not his/her own. Moreover, the conditions for their existence has changed qualitatively. The master's material condition is made possible by the things the slave labors to produce. The slave's material condition is worse off because he/she does not control the things that he/she makes. Consequently, the master's material conditions allows him/her to produce material inequalities for the slave.

As we are witnessing the formation and development of the master and slave, we need to remain cognizant that, for Hegel, both the master's and slave's self-understandings and self-actualizations are not merely subjective. Rather, both of their

self-understandings and self-actualizations are mutually and reciprocally dependent on the recognition that they give to the other and the recognition they both receive from the other. In this way, their self-understanding and self-actualizations are indivisible. That is, the master's and slave's self-understanding and self-actualizations cannot be understood apart from one another without distorting both. They cannot be understood apart from one another because who each individual understands himself/herself to be and what each individual can become depends on the recognition that they both give and receive. Although each gives and receives recognition, this seems to provide each with the recognition to confirm each individual's freedom. But it does not. It does not because the slave acknowledges the master's freedom; however, the master does not recognize the slave's freedom. For the slave does not enjoy freedom. Consequently, recognition between the master and slave does not emerge. These expressions of recognition are inadequate because the slave is not recognizing the master out of a respect for the master as an individual; rather, the slave is recognizing the master out of a compulsion by the master, not out of the slave's willingness to do so. Similarly, the master is not recognizing the slave out of respect for the slave as an individual; rather, the master is not recognizing the slave's freedom at all. To the extent that the master is "recognizing" the slave, the master is recognizing the slave as an object that can be used to serve his/her own desires. In this way, the master neither thinks of nor treats the slave as an individual with his/her own desires and aspirations independent of the master's.

How does the master's desires show up in the slave's self-consciousness as expressions of the master's power? The master's desires shows up in the slave's self-understanding and self-actualizations as expressions of power because of the slave's earlier choices to cling to the immediacy of life at the expense of becoming the master's

slave. The individual who became the slave chose the immediacy of life and did not choose to resist. In this way, the slave suppresses its own desires and replaces them with the master's desires. The actions by the slave and master has a double significance. One individual eliminates its own desire for independence, but because of its choice it winds up changing the quality of life it would lead. At the same time, the other individual becomes the master because it remains resolute in its desire. Hegel describes this phenomenon this way:

they exist as two opposed shapes of consciousness; one is the independent consciousness whose essential nature is to be for itself, the other is the dependent consciousness whose essential nature is simply to live or to be for another.<sup>98</sup>

And so, the slave chooses a life of dependency, which leave the dependent individual person enslaved to the desire to live as someone whose existence is to satisfy the dominant individual's desires. Consequently, adequate recognition does not emerge. For the slave does not adequately recognize the master; and the master does not adequately recognize the slave either. The slave does not adequately recognize the master because the slave is not free to make a choice other than serving the master's desires. In this way, the master controls the slave's self-understanding and by doing so the master infiltrates the slave's self-understanding and the slave's understanding of the master. Thus, the slave, who used to be able to make its own decisions, represses its decisions in favor of the master's. Now, the slave thinks and acts in ways that only serves the master, not itself. But the master does not adequately recognize the slave, but for a very different reason. In *The Psychic Life of Power: Theories in Subjection*,<sup>99</sup> Butler characterizes the reason in this way.

---

<sup>98</sup> *PhS*. § 189.

<sup>99</sup> Judith Butler, *The Psychic Life of Power: Theories in Subjection* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1997, p. 34).

In a sense, the lord postures as a disembodied desire for self-reflection, one who not only requires the subordination of the bondsman in the status of an instrumental body, but who requires in effect that the bondsman *be*<sup>100</sup> the lord's body, but be it in such a way that the lord forgets or disavows his own activity in producing the bondsman, a production which we will call a projection. This forgetting involves a clever trick. It is an action by which an activity is disavowed, yet, as an action, it rhetorically concedes the very activity that it seeks to negate. To disavow one's body, to render it 'Other' and then to establish the 'Other' as an effect of autonomy, is to produce one's body in such a way that the activity of its production –and its essential relation to the lord –is denied. This trick or ruse involves a double disavowal and an imperative that the 'Other' become complicit with this disavowal. In order not to be the body that the lord presumable is, and in order to have the bondsman posture as if the body that he is belongs to himself – and not be the orchestrated projection of the lord –there must be a certain kind of exchange, a bargain or deal, in which ruses are enacted and transacted. In effect, the imperative to the bondsman consists in the following formulation: you be my body for me, but do not let me know that the body you are is my body. An injunction and contract are here performed in which a way that the moves which guarantee the fulfillment of the injunction and contract are immediately covered over and forgotten.<sup>101</sup>

Butler argues that the fact that the master does not adequately recognize the slave is based on of two interrelated problems. First, the master “forgets or disavows” its own role in the subordination of the slave. That is, the master who perhaps either executed actions or gave directions to others who executed actions contributed to the subordination of the slave. While the master is subordinating the slave, the master disavows any role in the subordination and any challenges that the slave faces. Second, the slave's subordination is augmented by the slave's complicit role in its own subordination. The master's disavowal is complimented because the slave's subordination is not only being carried out by the master's actions or inactions, the slave has embraced a complicit role in this ruse. Therefore, the slave does not challenge the master, but acquiesces to the master's desires.

---

<sup>100</sup> Butler's emphasis.

<sup>101</sup> Judith Butler, *The Psychic Life of Power*, 35.

Let me recap the problem with which we started. I asserted that the individualist and social conceptions of racism are to some extent adequate and inadequate for thinking about changes to and continuity of racism. I maintain that they are adequate insofar as they depict the continuity of racism as constituted by individual person's racial prejudices that manifest through power relations, which produce racial inequalities. However, I maintain that they are inadequate for thinking about racism because they do not allow us to think about changes to racism and they think one-sidedly about individual persons' expression of racism. In the case of individualist conceptions of racism, they think of racism as individual racial prejudices at the expense of thinking about the role that groups and institutions play in the formation and development of racism. Because these conceptions of racism think about racism as individual phenomenon, this way of thinking about racial individuals makes no reference to the role that racism, as constituted by groups and institutions, plays in the formation and development of individual.

Having identified some inadequacies of individualist and social conceptions of racism, now I want to discuss how some elements of Hegel's conception of dialectic of recognition help us grasp the ways that those conceptions of racism are adequate for thinking about racism, while avoiding the problems regarding thinking about change and continuity of racism that arise with these conceptions of racism.

Hegel's dialectic of recognition allows us to think about the formation and development of individuality without reducing it to rational self-interested decision making. It allows us to think about the formation and development of individuality as constituted by mutual and reciprocal relations of struggle. The mutual and reciprocal recognition is often, although not always, struggles over identity claims. In the master-slave relationship, neither the master nor the slave give and receive adequate recognition.

The slave gives and receives inadequate recognition to the master because she is forced to her labor relations to the master. As the slave, her self-understanding may have formed and developed in such a way that she does to herself what the master does her, namely think and treat her as an instrument to obtain the master's desires. The master gives and receives inadequate recognition to the slave because the master neither thinks nor treats the slave as someone who is independent. Rather, the master thinks and treats the slave as an instrument that exists to serve the master.

I have explained what some relevant elements of Hegel's conception of dialectic of recognition mean in general terms and how they work in practice. Up to this point, I have implicitly connected racial prejudices, power, and racial inequalities. In what follows, I want to make the connection among these constitutive elements explicit but in general terms. Hegel's conception of dialectic of recognition allows us to connect these constitutive elements of racism.

Hegel's dialectic of recognition allows us to think about racial prejudices, power, and racial inequalities as unified. Since Hegel's dialectic of recognition, as it applies to the master-slave relationship, applies to interpersonal relationships, it gives us a framework for thinking about racism that emerges between individual. Let me briefly sketch this framework. In the master-slave relationship, both individuals are who they are, who they can become, and what their material conditions are is dependent on the recognition of their freedom that each gives and receives. But, neither the master nor the slave gives and receives recognition of the other's freedom. The master does not receive recognition from the slave because the master exerts power over and against the slave which compels the slave to "recognize" the master. In this way, the integrity of the slave's agency has been compromised. It has been compromised by the master because the slave has replaced his

or her own desires with the master's. So, the slave's body, choices, and actions are done to satisfy the master's desires. Therefore, as long as the slave is compelled by the masters he or she cannot express his or her own freedom, which suggests that he or she is acting under his or her own volition. Similarly, the master does not recognize the slave's freedom. The slave's body, thoughts, and behaviors are controlled by the master. In this way, the slave does not freely recognize the master's freedom because this "recognition" is forced or compelled by the master. Therefore, since neither the master nor the slave give and receive acknowledgement, who each individual is and becomes is dependent on the acknowledgement they give and receive.

With this dialectic of recognition framework, we can use it to unify racial prejudices, power, and racial inequalities. Remember that with this framework, racism becomes an interpersonal relationship, which is typically characterized by conflicts or struggles by a dominant and a subordinate individual. Their relationship is characterized by conflicts or struggles over recognition. As the struggle for recognition unfolds, the dominant individual does not give acknowledgement to the subordinate individuals because the dominant individual's personal attitudes about race. Consequently, the subordinate individual's self-understanding and agency are not valued, undervalued, or marginalized by the dominant individual. In this way, the subordinate individual does not receive acknowledgment that how he or she understands himself or herself and what he or she can do are not valued by the dominant individual because of the subordinate individual's race. This denied recognition can infiltrate the subordinate individual's self-understanding and impact his or her self-actualization.

Moreover, racism is not limited to the realm of personal attitudes of the dominant individuals. Racism is also expressed through objective relations. That is, racism is



expressed through asymmetrical power relations between the dominant and subordinate individuals. In Hegel's master-slave relationship, the master exerts power over and against the slave. The master, rather than recognize the slave's freedom, uses his or her power over the slave's mind, body, labor, and objects to control the slave. In short, the master's personal attitudes about the slave are expressed through economic relations. By analogy, the way that the master uses power over and against the slave applies to race relations between a dominant and a subordinate individual whose relationship is predicated on an imbalance of power. A dominant person judges a subordinate person as not measuring up to his or her subjective judgment in a given contexts because of the dominant individual's understanding of race. Again, just like recognition in the master-slave relationship is not limited or reduced to personal judgments; they are carried out through economic relations. Similarly, the dominant individual's judgment about subordinate individual capabilities can also emerge in practical economic relations, but they are limited to being expressed in economic context. They can also be expressed in political and cultural relations at the same time that exist as economic relations. The dominant individual's judgment about the subordinate individual can be expressed in concrete economic relations. For example, the dominant individual may control the subordinate individual access to goods, services, or opportunities on the basis of race. Consequently, when a dominant individual provides access to goods, services, or opportunities on the basis of race, this action invariably creates racial inequalities that disadvantage the subordinate individual, while simultaneously advantaging the dominant individual.

Hence, Hegel's conception of dialectic of recognition is helpful thinking about racism because it allows us to think racial prejudices, power, and racial inequalities as

unified. It unifies these constitutive elements of racism interpersonal struggles over being denied access to goods, services, and opportunities on the basis of race. The difference in treatment given to individuals on the basis of race disproportionately advantages the dominant individual while simultaneously disadvantaging the subordinate individual.

Hegel's conception of dialectic of recognition allows us to avoid some pitfalls of the individualist and social conceptions of racism, but it does not allow us to think about other aspects of racism such as racism embodied by groups, institutions, as well as changes to and continuity of racism in political, economic, and cultural contexts. I turn to W.E.B. Du Bois for help to confront resolve these challenges.

### **3. The role W.E.B. Du Bois's conception of dialectic of recognition plays in the formation and development of racism**

The individualist and social conceptions of racism are both to an extent adequate and inadequate for thinking about changes to or continuity of racism. The social conception of racism is adequate so far as it allows us to think about the continuity of constitutive elements of racism such as racial prejudices, power relations, and racial inequalities produced by groups and institutions. The individualist and social conceptions of racism are inadequate because they do not allow us to think about changes to racism as expressed by groups and institutions. In what follows drawing on “The Conservation of Races” and *The Souls of Black Folk* in general but “Of Our Spiritual Strivings in particular,”<sup>102</sup> I explain how Du Bois adopts some elements of Hegel’s conception of dialectic of recognition that allows us to think about changes to and continuity of race and racism.

In “The Conservation of Races” Du Bois argues that race and racism are always constituted through mutually, reciprocally, and historically contingent conflicts or struggles between racial groups. In this article, Du Bois raises the following question: “[t]he question, then, which we must seriously consider is this: what is the real meaning of race?”<sup>103</sup> Du Bois is interested in what he refers to as the *real* meaning of races. But, what does he mean by “the real meaning of races”? This seems to refer to that which divides human populations into certain kinds of groups.<sup>104</sup> But how are we to grasp that which divides humans into races? In this text, Du Bois claims that science can help grasp

---

<sup>102</sup> Two texts of Du Bois’s where recognition and dialectic are at play include but are not limited to “The Conservation of Races, (The American Negro Academy, Mar. 1897), *The Souls of Black folk*, (New York: Random House, Inc., 1903).

<sup>103</sup> W.E.B. Du Bois, “The Conservation of Races,” in *The Idea of Race*, ed. Robert Bernasconi and Tommy Lott, (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company), p. 109.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, 109.

what divides humans into groups. He claims that the final word that 19<sup>th</sup> century science had on races was that “we have at least two, perhaps three, great families of human beings –the whites and Negroes, possible the yellow race. That other races have arisen from the intermingling of the blood of these two.”<sup>105</sup> If races were constituted by biology, then to the extent that science’s domain involves physical aspects of human existence is the extent to which science could grasp the real meaning of races. This suggests that races are differentiated from one another based on something in their blood or genetic make-up. Only if races could be differentiated based on their biology or genetic make-up, then one could conclude that science would have something to say about the real meaning of races. But, Du Bois’s discussion of how science might explain the real meaning of races is ambivalent. On the one hand, Du Bois suggests that the mere phenotypes would be insufficient, as a tool, to differentiate races. He writes that “so far as purely physical characteristics are concerned, the differences between men [and women] do not explain all the differences of their history.”<sup>106</sup> According to Du Bois “[a]ll these physical characteristics are patent enough, and if they agreed with each other it would be very easy to classify mankind. Unfortunately for scientist these criteria of race are most exasperatingly intermingled.” On the other hand, Du Bois suggests that 19<sup>th</sup> century science could differentiate one race from another based on common blood of human populations. While Du Bois does not go so far as to explicitly claim that races are biologically determined, he suggests that the scientific community of the 19<sup>th</sup> century believed and tried to demonstrate that races were. Du Bois points to some of his

---

<sup>105</sup> Ibid.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid.

contemporaries<sup>107</sup> who were claiming that races seemed to be biologically determined. Du Bois's stance, however, on whether science had the wherewithal to determine the real meaning of race is unclear, at least based on his discussion in "The Conservation of Races." But, what seems clearer is that Du Bois did not believe that science, all by itself if at all, could explain the real meaning of races. He writes that

[a]lthough the wonderful developments of human history teach that the grosser physical differences of color, hair and bone go but a short way toward explaining the different roles which groups of men [and women] played in Human Progress, yet there are differences –subtle, delicate and elusive, though they may be –which have silently but definitely separated men [and women] into groups. While these subtle forces have generally followed the natural cleavage of common blood, descent and physical peculiarities, they have at other times swept across and ignored these. At all times, however, they have divided human beings into races, which, they perhaps transcend scientific definition, nevertheless, are clearly defined to the eye of the Historical and Sociologist.<sup>108</sup>

This passage suggests that at least at times science could not adequately grasp what Du Bois refers to as the real meaning of races. Du Bois might have thought 19<sup>th</sup> century science was not able to grasp the real meaning of races because there would have to be something in the nature of races that was hidden and concealed from science, or, at least, from what was referred to as hard sciences or hard scientists. Hard sciences treat their objects as natural kinds. Objects are natural kinds because they share the same essential elements as every other member of their kind. If an object fails to possess an essential element of a certain kind, then the object in question that does not possess the same essential element is not the same kind as the objects as the objects that do possess the same essential elements as other members of its kind. Du Bois does not appear fully

---

<sup>107</sup> Some of his contemporaries who attempted to demonstrate that races were biologically determined include but is not limited to Charles Darwin and Johann Friedrich Blumenbach.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid., 109-110.

committed to the idea that races were natural kinds.<sup>109</sup> He claims that races no longer possess something that all and only members of a given race possess. He wrote that human beings vary by color, head measurements, hair type, and language.<sup>110</sup> In light of these variances, if races were natural kinds, then we should expect concordance among these phenotypes among all members of all the same races. However, Du Bois pointed out that there was no concordance of phenotypes. Since there was, and still is, no concordance among phenotypes within all races, concluding that races cannot be natural kinds is reasonable for Du Bois. Since races are not natural kinds, then hard science or hard scientists cannot determine the real meaning of races because the nature of races falls outside of their scope. While Du Bois does not think that hard sciences or hard scientists can grasp the real meaning of races, he leaves the door open for soft sciences and scientists as potentially capable of grasping the real meaning of race.

Notwithstanding Du Bois's bias toward historians and sociologists and that he himself is a historian and sociologist by training, might there be a more substantive reason why Du Bois thinks that soft sciences or social scientists are better equipped than hard sciences or scientists for grasping the real meaning of races? There does appear to be evidence in the text why Du Bois claims that soft sciences or social sciences, such as historians and sociologists, are better equipped for thinking about the *real* meaning of races. The evidence, in part, lies in the fore mentioned passage. That is, when thinking about the family of human beings, Du Bois suggests that human phenotypes (color, hair texture, facial features, cranial measurements, etc.) were only partially helpful for explaining the different *roles* which groups of men [and women] have played in Human

---

<sup>109</sup> Lucius Outlaw Jr., *On Race and Philosophy*. (New York: Routledge, 1996).

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*, 109.

Progress.”<sup>111</sup> Phenotypes might have been partially used as a mechanism to organize an “in-group” as well as an “out-group.” In this way, one observes that individuals who look alike have the same thoughts, experiences, and language, etc. Du Bois, here, is not claiming that everyone who looks similar has the same thoughts, experiences, language, etc. Rather, he does seem to intimate that looking alike was neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition for hard scientists to grasp that which divides human populations into races or determines the real meaning of races. For Du Bois what divided humans into races was not something that hard scientists’ tools could grasp, namely the nuances about *belonging* to given a race or races. Belonging is a constitutive element of the real meaning of races, which is outside the bounds of what hard scientists’ tools allow them to examine. So, we can conclude that races are not biologically determined or biologically true.

Therefore, since hard scientists can only examine natural kinds, and races are not natural kinds, Du Bois concludes that they are not going to be able to help us understand the real meaning of races.

If races are not natural kinds, someone may want to conclude that races are not real. But this would be a hastily drawn conclusion because there may be a way in which races may be real but not natural inds. According to Du Bois, there is evidence that social scientists are equipped to grasp the real meaning of races. Du Bois asserts that

while race differences have followed mainly physical race lines, yet no mere physical distinctions would really define or explain the deeper differences –the *cohesiveness*<sup>112</sup> and *continuity*<sup>113</sup> of these groups. The deeper differences are spiritual, psychical, differences –undoubtedly based on the physical, but infinitely transcending them. The forces that bind together the Teuton nations are, then, first their race identity and common blood; secondly, and more importantly, a common

---

<sup>111</sup> Ibid., 109.

<sup>112</sup> These are my italics, not Du Bois’s.

<sup>113</sup> These are my italics, not Du Bois’s.

history, common laws, and religion, similar habits of thought and a conscious striving together for certain ideals of life.<sup>114</sup>

Social scientists are equipped to grasp the real meaning of races because they can presumably grasp *roles*, *cohesiveness*, and *continuity* of races. According to Du Bois, all races have a role to play, which is to share their messages and contributions with society and the world.<sup>115</sup> But in order for races to be able to share their messages and contributions with the world, they will need to cultivate their physical and mental skills and talents.

The real meaning of races can be grasped with Du Bois's conception of dialectic of recognition. Drawing on Du Bois's conception of dialectic of recognition, the real meaning of races is constituted by conflicts or struggles between racial groups over recognition as citizens, laborers, and cultural producers. By thinking about the meaning of race with Du Bois's conception of dialectic of recognition we are not thinking about the real meaning of races as if they have some *a priori* existence, isolated from social relations to other races or from social relations in given historical contexts. Rather, we are committed to thinking about the meaning of races as defined by conflicts in specific historical contexts, where recognition is not given and received between a dominant race and a subordinate race. Consequently, as the dominant individual inadequately recognizes a subordinate individual on the basis of race, the conflict emerges over racial identity. As races are trying to share their messages and contributions with the world, simultaneously they are seeking, perhaps demanding, recognition from other races. Their goal is to show that their messages and contributions are meaningful to society and the world. But, a conflict

---

<sup>114</sup> Ibid., 111.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid., 112.



emerges between races, when a dominant race, rather than working cooperatively with a subordinate race, inadequately recognizes the subordinate race, which impedes the subordinate race from being able to develop and cultivate its talents and skills to share their messages and contributions with society and the world. Simultaneously, in response to the dominant race's inadequate recognition, the subordinate race may refuse to acquiesce to the dominant race's desire and actions to impede their ability to share their message with the world. Du Bois contends that

[t]he history of the American Negro is the history of this strife, --this longing to attain self-conscious manhood [and womanhood], to merge his [and her] double self into a better and truer self. In this merging he wishes neither of the older selves to be lost. He would not Africanize America, for America has too much to teach the world and Africa. He would not bleach his Negro soul in a flood of white Americanism, for he knows that the Negro blood has a message for the world. He simply wishes to make possible for a man [and woman] to be both a Negro and an American, without being cursed and spit upon by his [and her] fellows, without having the doors of Opportunity closed roughly in his [and her] face.<sup>116</sup>

The dominant White race, as Du Bois writes, “looks on in amused contempt and pity”<sup>117</sup> at the subordinate Negro race. The subordinate Negro race had been held in bondage in the United States or colonies for two hundred and forty-six years. While the American Negroes were held in bondage against their will, the dominant White race did not allow them to acquire requisite skills to determine their destiny. The dominant race seemed to think that since the subordinate Negro race did not possess requisite skills to make something out of itself, it had no messages and contributions to share with society and the world. It then concluded that there was something wrong with the subordinate Negro

---

<sup>116</sup> W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, p. 9.

<sup>117</sup> W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, p. 9.

race. As Judith Butler pointed out in the quotation above, the dominant White race “forgets or disavows” its role in the creation of the subordinated Negro race. Although the dominant White race could see that the subordinate Negro race’s immediate conditions were deplorable, it was unwilling to recognize their own role in creating, maintaining, and reproducing impediments that held the subordinate American Negroes back from developing their message and contributions for society and the world.

While the dominant White race inadequately recognized the subordinate Negro race, conflicts between them emerge. Du Bois suggests that the conflict created conditions that drew members of both races more cohesively to other members of their respective races. On the one hand, while the dominant White race thought of its message to society and the world as the best or ideal, it also perceived that its way of life was being threatened by subordinate Negro race. And, it used power to ensure its dominance over Negroes. For example, the White race used its power in political contexts to preclude Negroes from being citizens, and all the rights privileges, and immunities conferred upon citizens; and it used power to force Negroes into a life in which they served their masters in economic relations. On the other hand, the subordinate race may choose to resist the dominant race’s acts of power. The subordinate race simultaneously perceived its freedom as threatened by the dominant White race. In this asymmetrical power relations, Whites’ recognition of Negroes is inadequate. The recognition is inadequate because Whites, without Negroes’ consent or consultation, enslaved them. This enslavement in effect communicated to Negroes that they, as a group and not individually, were different and inferior to Whites. American Negroes realized they shared common aims, common strives, common ideals, common language that they could use to resist the existential threats they faced as well as obtain their freedom.

Consequently, each race's self-understanding and self-actualization was expressed through inadequate recognition relation with the other. Whites' racial prejudices toward Negroes were not merely subjective attitudes; they were objective truths that were expressed through power relations in political and economic contexts. Whites' ability to exert power over Negroes in political and economic contexts defined the real meaning of race. For Whites it became associated with freedom and superiority, which allowed them individually or collectively to actualize their own desires and aspirations. For Negroes, race became associated with non-freedom, servitude, and inferiority.

Du Bois discusses changes to and continuity of racism understood as inadequate recognition. The changes to and continuity of racism between Whites and Negroes occurred throughout the Reconstruction and Post-Reconstruction periods. As the conflicts changed and continued, both races' self-understandings and self-actualizations were being reconstituted by their position in conflicts they experienced.

During the Pre-Reconstruction period, which started roughly from the founding of Jamestown, Virginia in 1607 through 1865, Whites inadequately recognized American Negroes. To the extent that they could, American Negroes worked in solidarity with one another to create, cultivate, and sustain their physical and mental skills and talents. The development of their mental and physical skills and talents enabled them to share their messages and contributions to society and with the world. American Negroes desired to determine for themselves who they would be and how they would live. While American Negroes were trying to do this, American Whites were working in opposition to American Negroes' desires. Du Bois characterized the conflict this way.

Away back in the days of bondage they [American Negroes] thought to see in one divine event the end of all doubt and disappointment; few men ever

worshipped Freedom with half such unquestioning faith as did the American Negro for two centuries. To him, so far as he thought and dreamed, slavery was indeed the sum of all villainies, the cause of all sorrow the root of prejudice.<sup>118</sup>

Du Bois's point is that for well over two centuries American Negroes desired freedom all the while American White southerners, although not exclusively by American White southerners, forced them into bondage. American White southerners created a system of American slavery in which they forced American Negroes into bondage. A significant form of power at the disposal of elite and non-elite Whites was political and economic power. American Whites fought American Negroes to enslave and sustain their own desires.

The forced enslavement of American Negroes by American Whites impacted both. Enslaved American Negroes were adversely impacted because they were not allowed to exercise their freedom to develop and cultivate their mental and physical skills and talents. Their enslavement impeded American Negroes' political, economic, and cultural opportunities. Perhaps the most disadvantage American Negroes experienced impacted their psychic life. Du Bois expressed the impact that race and racism had on them. In perhaps the most often quoted passage from *The Souls of Black Folk*, he writes,

...the Negro is a sort of seventh son, born with a veil, and gifted with second-sight in this American world, --a world which yields him no true self-consciousness, but only let him see himself through the revelation of the other world. It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his two-ness, --an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder.<sup>119</sup>

---

<sup>118</sup> W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1903).

<sup>119</sup> W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, 9.

Du Bois's rhetoric in this passage about the adverse impact that Whites' power had on American Negroes was not merely hyperbole. American Negroes were born into an American society that had already been plundering their mental and physical skills and abilities. This occurred in political contexts. Upon the black Africans arrival to the colonies, Whites of the north and south excluded Negroes of the north and south from the rights, privileges, and immunities that were conferred upon citizens of the colonies. These exclusions negatively impacted Negroes. Being excluded from citizenship excluded them from protection from other citizens and the state, from participating in shaping the societal laws that legislators would create, from participating in selecting both political and legal representatives who could and would represent their political, economic, and cultural interests. Being excluded from citizenship excluded them from serving on juries. These exclusionary actions communicated American Whites' desires loudly and clearly to American Negroes. Their message communicated that they neither thought about American Negroes nor treated them as though they were humans entitled to all the rights, privileges, and immunities that the United States Constitution afforded its citizens. And because of their American Negroes' race they were perceived as deficient and excluded from being a member of the American political contexts. This is why Du Bois writes that the American Negro lacks true self-consciousness. While the American Negro had done nothing to deserve to be excluded from American political contexts, everywhere and every day American Negroes were kept in the life of bondage. This was a life which they did not choose; a life that did not allow them to develop and cultivate their physical and mental skills and abilities; a life that denied them opportunities to determine those who would represent them as well as the laws that would govern those who held them in bondage. American Whites' racial prejudices toward American Negroes permeated every

conceivable interaction in society between them in political, cultural, and economic contexts.

Not only were American Negroes impacted by these conflicts. American Whites were positively and negatively impacted too. One impact that these conflicts had on American Whites was that they enjoyed access to power. These forms of power provided them with opportunities to participate in determining their future and their progeny's future. As they participated in electoral politics, for example, Whites decided who they voted for candidates that they believed, if elected, would represent their political, economic, and cultural interests. One negative impact that race and racism had on American Whites was a distorted self-understanding. American Whites created images of American Negroes out of their own racial prejudices about the "real" meaning of races. These negative images of American Negroes were created and sustained by American Whites as their own reflection of who American Negroes were. As a result of distorted self-understanding of American Negroes, Whites thought of themselves as a different race than others in general but American Negroes in particular. Race was a political phenomenon. By this, I mean that belonging to the White race conferred citizenship on those who were designated as such by those who made the laws. Although American Negroes recognized American Whites as masters, this form of recognition could only have been inadequate recognition because American Negroes were not autonomous in recognizing them as masters. In these conflicts American Whites self-understandings were false. They were false in thinking that by belonging to the American Negroes race that American Negroes were incapable of self-governing, among other things. They were false in thinking that by belonging to the American White race that they were the paradigmatic race. For belonging to the American White race was not why they were able

to make certain contributions to society and the world. Rather, they were free physically and mentally to exercise their collative wills in ways that they decided.

Du Bois showed that race and racism were constituted through specific conflicts during the Pre-Reconstruction period. These conflicts emerged when American Negroes' who desired and strove toward freedom were met with resistance by American Whites. American Whites thought about and treated American Negroes as though their bodies were objects to serve Whites. These conflicts over having recognized American Negroes as objects, and not humans, not only adversely impacted American Negroes and Whites practical activities; they adversely impacted their self-understanding and American Negroes' self-understanding.

Du Bois continued tracing the general contours of race and racism that changed and maintained continuity as the Pre-Reconstruction period ended and the Reconstruction period began. Using his dialectic of recognition, Du Bois argued that the meaning of race and of racism that were constituted at the end of the Pre-Reconstruction period changed. By changed, using the conception of dialectic, I mean that Du Bois was grasping relations that *changed qualitatively* or *quantitatively* but *preserved* while also grasping relations that were *abolished*.

Some of the conflicts that subordinated Negroes were *preserved* from the Pre-Reconstruction periods and some were *abolished* during this same time. One conflict that changed and maintained continuity was Whites' use of power. Whites had access to state's power over American Negroes. State's power became the chief way American Whites controlled and restricted American Negroes opportunities and movement in society. While American White southerners and northerners used the state's power to control and restrict American Negroes opportunities and movement in society, they had access to and

used the state's power to further their own political, economic, and cultural interests, which came at the expense of American Negroes.

One conflict was abolished occurred between American White southerners and newly freed American Negroes. American White southerners' livelihoods, which depended on American Negroes' free labor, changed. Former slave owners no longer enjoyed free labor to plant, maintain, harvest their crops, and domestic help with their homes and families.

Another aspect of the American White southerner and American Negroes' relation was preserved. American White southerners enjoyed an influence on the elected political officials. The impact that they had on elected officials was important because elected officials created public policies which was binding on citizens. Many of these elected officials desired not just to be elected, but re-elected too. An election or re-election meant that these politicians would have been more responsive or attentive to the interests of their voting constituents. Their constituents wanted public policy that advantaged former slave owners. In so far as elected officials could deliver on public policies that advantaged former slave owners they could get the political support from their voting constituents. In this way, American White politicians and American White southerners and northerners relationship with representatives was mutually and reciprocally beneficial to both White former slave owners as well as elected officials. However, unlike American White southerners and northerners, newly freed American Negroes, while now constitutionally guaranteed the right to vote, were still not allowed to participate in political processes.

Control over American Negroes opportunities in American society was a relation that was preserved. Many White southerners' and northerners' controlled American Negroes' freedom. Some Whites worked in solidarity with like-minded people such as the



Klu Klux Klan to control American Negroes who exceed their places. Instead of masters demonstrating their control over American Negroes, the Klu Klux Klan, a new control agent, was how Whites reigned down terror on American Negroes.<sup>120</sup> Not only did many White southerners retain their negative attitudes toward free American Negroes through lynching and intimidation. White southerners developed negative attitudes toward northerners as a proxy for the Union. They saw the Union, as a symbol of the North, as having dismantling their way of life. Their way of life heavily depended on enslaved American Negroes. After American Negroes were freed, White southerners' way of life could not be sustained without that free labor. So, the emancipation of American Negroes changed not only the master-slave relation between American Whites and American Negroes; the mater-slave relation was replaced by new control mechanisms, namely political power.

At the same time Whites controlled American Negroes' opportunities; Whites used political power to restrict American Negroes from access to material resources and access to the levers of power. As evidence of this claim, American public institutions neither thought about nor treated American Negroes with the respect that citizens should be accorded. The executive, legislative, and judicial branches, at all levels of government, left American Negroes vulnerable and unprotected from other citizens who wished and inflicted harm upon them. There was nowhere for harmed American Negroes to seek redress for their harm. Local, state, and federal legislators were not responsive to them. Again their local, state, and federal courts did not recognize American Negroes as citizen and therefore, they had no standing in the United States court system.<sup>121</sup> Since American

---

<sup>120</sup> Ibid., 11.

<sup>121</sup> The United States Supreme Court decision in the Plessy verse Ferguson case is indicative of denied rights of someone who was a citizen.

Negroes were precluded from voting, they were precluded from holding American White legislators accountable for their actions in some instance, and inaction in others. For this reason American White legislators did not really fear that American Negroes would expel them from office.

While some American White-American Negro relations were preserved, some of them were abolished too. One specific relation was the one that American Negroes had with the government in general but the executive branch in particular. For many American Negroes' judgments about the executive branch of the federal government changed in a positive direction. Once the president codified his desire to free American Negroes from bondage, a significant barrier had been removed from the path of American Negroes' strivings. The passage of the War Amendments, 13<sup>th</sup>, 14<sup>th</sup>, and 15<sup>th</sup>, conferred political rights upon American Negroes. In 1864 the 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment was adopted, which prohibited the enslavement of American Negroes. In 1868 the 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment was adopted; it endowed American Negroes with constitutionally guaranteed rights, privileges, and immunities. Finally, in 1870 the 15<sup>th</sup> Amendment was adopted; it provided American Negroes with the right to vote, a voice to determine who they wanted to represent them. As American public policy increasingly recognized American Negroes as full citizens, Du Bois contended that American Negroes' strivings changed. He claimed that

[t]he ideal of liberty demanded for its attainment powerful means, and these the fifteenth Amendment gave him. The ballot, which before he had looked upon as a visible sign of freedom, he now regarded as the chief means of gaining and perfecting this liberty with which war had partially endowed him.<sup>122</sup>

---

<sup>122</sup> Ibid., 11.

Du Bois was referencing changes that were occurring within the American Negro race. That is, the state's power was redirected from being used against American Negroes to being used to help them. This changed relation helped American Negroes and Whites realize their race. As the state recognized American Negroes as humans entitled to the rights, privileges and immunities that were conferred upon American citizens, this communicated the message to American Negroes that they were recognized by another race and by the state as worthy of citizenship.

Another relation that American Negroes experienced was abolished, namely their sole desire for freedom. While American Negroes were experiencing bondage, they desired freedom and strove toward it. As a result of the nation's internal conflict, American Negroes desired for freedom had been satisfied. However, this singular focus on freedom had been augmented with a thirst for freedom and equality. Du Bois captured this gradual change with the American Negro race. He wrote that

slowly but steadily, in the following years, a new vision began gradually to replace the dream of political power, --a powerful movement, the rise of another ideal to guide the unguided, another pillar of fire by night after a clouded day. It was the ideal of "book-learning."<sup>123</sup>

When American Negroes existed in conditions of bondage they strove for the common ideal of freedom. Once freed, they realized they were still not *really* free. For the real meaning of freedom meant the absence of bondage, the ability to access to material resources, and access to the reins of power. The theoretic rights, privileges and immunities had been secured through the Emancipation Proclamation, Civil War, and War Amendments. Facing new impediments, American Negroes created new common

---

<sup>123</sup> Ibid., 12.

ideals, namely pursuit of formal education. Formal education displaced their former ideal of freedom. However, this displacement was not wholesale. That is, the ideal of freedom was not replaced completely by the new ideal of formal education. Rather, for Du Bois, formal education decentered freedom as the sole American Negro ideal. But, formal education became more central to American Negroes' ability to make progress toward achieving access to material resources and access to power. As it was becoming more central for their survival and development, their desire to be free from bondage gradually receded. In this way, they did not choose between being free or being formally educated. American Negroes acquired the new ideal of access to formal knowledge, which allowed them to develop and cultivate their physical and mental skills and abilities. Access to formal education became the way that they could control their own survival and growth. However, as American Negroes were striving toward formal education, they met with resistance from White Southerners, and Northerners too. Both White Southerner and Northern impeded American Negroes' access to material resources and access to power that would have enabled them to determine their own destinies. Southern Whites, on the one hand, resorted to lynching and terror directed at American Negroes to keep them subordinated physically and always thinking about being intimidated.

Du Bois has shown that race and racism were inseparable from each other during the Reconstruction period. Du Bois understood race as having developed into conflicts over recognition about freedom and equality. Racism was the mechanism by which American Whites exercised control over American Negroes' opportunities to access material resources and access to power. Moreover, he showed that the state's recognition of American Negroes had been preserved, namely negative attitudes about American Negroes' abilities for self-governance and fear about what they might do with power once

they obtained it. While attitudes and Whites' control were preserved, other recognition relations were abolished, namely the executive branches' indifferent attitude toward American Negroes was abolished and American Negroes recognition of freedom as their sole common striving or ideal was abolished.

Du Bois argued that races and racism *changed and maintained continuity* as the Reconstruction period ended and the Post-Reconstruction period began. This means that some conflicts over recognition were preserved from the Reconstruction to the Post-Reconstruction period, and other conflicts over recognition were *abolished* during this same time frame.

First, the role that race played early on during the beginning of Post-Reconstruction period was preserved. For Du Bois, Whiteness, understood as a race, was constituted by recognition of and by American Negroes. During recognition relations, Whites experienced contradictions. Although Du Bois referred to the word 'contradiction', this can be misunderstood. Du Bois does not use the term contradiction in its traditional logical use. The traditional logical use refers to two declarative claims, which when conjoined with each other, cannot both be true simultaneously. This is the narrow sense of contradiction. Rather, the sense of contradiction that is inherent in Du Bois's work in *Souls* in general and "Of Our Spiritual Strivings" in particular refers to two categories of existence, which were taken to be mutually exclusively. That is, a person or persons belongs to the category of Whiteness, e.g., but is being categorized as White presumably precluded one from belonging to the category of Negroeness, or the reverse is true. In "Alienation and the African-American experience,"<sup>124</sup> Howard Mc Gary writes,

---

<sup>124</sup> Howard Mc Gary, *Race and Social Justice*, (Malden, MA.: Blackwell Publishers, 1999), p. 11.

“Du Bois is pointing to what he takes to be the mistaken belief held by many blacks and whites, namely that a person cannot be both black and an American.”<sup>125</sup> Du Bois’s understanding of race as constituted by contradictory relations was borne out of American Whites’ inadequate recognition of American Negroes. Whites who occupied positions of authority fought to keep American Negroes from full protection of the canopy of citizenship. Why? For to allow American negroes’ admittance into the hallowed grounds of American citizenship would have been an affront to Whites’ belief system that not only did Negroes and Whites belong to different races. But, Negroness, from Whites’ perspectives, was different from Whites. This way of thinking was prejudging American Negroes. Implicit in such a perspective was the assumption that Whiteness was the paradigm of humanity. Although Du Bois emphasized political contexts, his dialectic of recognition traversed other areas of life such as economics and cultural too. In the case of politics, being recognized as Negro, in the minds of Whites, disqualified one from exercising the practical rights, privileges, and immunities of citizenship. For admittance of Negroes into the political category of American citizenship both Negroes and Whites would have to be political equally to one another. But, Whites were unwilling to recognize Negroes as their political equals. Since Whites were unwilling to recognize Negroes as their political equals, Whites concluded that the Negro race was not a full member of the political community who should share in all the rights, privileges, and immunities.

Du Bois argued that American White’s *attitudes* about American Negroes were *preserved*. American Whites’ attitudes about American Negroes created the condition in which Negroes were living and were facing during the Reconstruction.<sup>126</sup> Within the

---

<sup>125</sup> Ibid.

<sup>126</sup> Although it does not seem as though Du Bois indicts all white people, he did lay the blame on white people that shaped and molded an unfaltering image of Negroes, as a race of people.

White world, certainly White Southerners inherited attitudes that held Negroes in very low esteem. These attitudes were expressed through various social practices. One type of social practice was politics. Du Bois pointed to political practices. At the dawn of the Reconstruction period, Negroes were disqualified from voting by Whites, even though they were newly emancipated people. In this way, being Negro had political significance. It had become synonymous with being inferior to Whites.

Du Bois argued that American Whites' exercised *control* over American Blacks' was *preserved*. Politically dominant Whites erected a new system to control American Negroes access to material resources and access to power, namely Jim and Jane Crow. Jim and Jane Crow attempted to preclude all American Negroes from being able to participate in political processes, despite the fact that there were laws on the books that conferred the right to vote upon them. Jim and Jane Crow were codified in laws at the city, state, and federal levels. They were laws expressed in city ordinances that restricted where American Negroes could rent or buy a home. Jim and Jane Crow were expressed at the state level. States were forced to educate American Negro students. However, educating them did not mean American Negro students would attend the same elementary, middle, and high schools as White students. In this way, American Negro students and American White students would receive "separate but equal" education opportunities. The "separate but equal" doctrine really meant that they would have separate and unequal educational opportunities. Finally, Jim and Jane Crow were expressed at the federal level. At the federal level, American Negroes were not recognized by American courts as having rights that Whites had to respect. But outside of the realm of politics, traditions and customs also contributed to the formation of ways that Whites controlled Negroes access to material resources and access to power. In conspicuous

displays Whites walled off areas within American society that limited American Negroes mobility.

Du Bois argued that the *impacts of race* and *racism* had on American Blacks and Whites were *preserved*. For Du Bois, race and racism not only impacted races external worlds; they also impacted races' conscious life. He asserted that American Negroes were disadvantaged, but all American Negroes were disadvantaged in the same way. In *Souls*, Du Bois writes about recognition he received. This particular recognition experience occurred between Du Bois, a Black youth, and one of his White schoolmates. During this particular experience, the young people were exchanging what Du Bois called "visiting-cards." Du Bois recalled one tall girl "refused my card, --refused peremptorily, without a glance"<sup>127</sup> Du Bois viewed this experience as a way in which his White schoolmate recognized him as different from her, the tall White girl. How the tall White girl recognized Du Bois communicated a message to him. The message communicated to him originated from her consciousness. Through her actions, Du Bois deduced that the White girl recognized him in a way that she did not recognize her other White schoolmates. This encounter of Du Bois's "made" him feel self-conscious about his blackness or worse how his blackness was transferred to an object, for example, the visiting-card. He writes, "[t]hen it dawned upon me with a certain sadness that I was different from others."<sup>128</sup> Du Bois's remarks are insightful about how conflicts adversely impact their targets. Du Bois, as thought about himself, recognized himself as being different from the others, presumable because of his race. If this is true, then it would suggest that Du Bois absorbed the thinking of Whites who perceived American Negroes as different and inferior to

---

<sup>127</sup> *Souls*, 8.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*



Whites. If American Negroes were different from Whites, then Whites were different from Negroes too. However, when this logic is applied one way and not two ways, the person using it is placing the race higher in the racial hierarch. During this particular experience, they all were exchanging visiting-cards. Du Bois recalled one tall girl “refused my card, -- refused [it] peremptorily, without a glance.”<sup>129</sup> It formed the background against which he used to perceived, deliberate, image, judge, and frame his thoughts about himself, his race, and raced others. And if his cognitive perceptions of himself, his race, and raced others shaped his cognitive perceptions of himself, his race, and raced others, then this way of reasoning will have distorted his ability for social intercourse with himself, his race, and raced others. For the idea that the American White race was paradigmatic when it comes to self-governance, intellectual, cultural, economic, and political endowments may become absorbed by his consciousness in a way that he is not aware. So, when he thought of himself, he drew comparisons based on American Whites’ paradigm of someone who as potential wherewithal to make progress in politics, economic, and cultural contexts.

While Du Bois identified that (1) race, (2) attitudes, (3) control, and (4) impacts of race and racism have been preserved, he also identified elements of race and racism that were abolished. One significant element that was abolished was legal segregation. In 1948, President Harry S. Truman ended legal segregation in the American military. In 1954, the United States Supreme Court ended the “separate but equal” doctrine that had existed since the 1896 Plessy verses Ferguson decision. In 1964, the United States Congress passed and President Johnson signed the 1964 Civil Rights Act into law. A year later, the United States Congress passed and President Johnson signed the 1965 Voting

---

<sup>129</sup> Ibid.

Rights Act. Finally, in 1968 the Fair Housing Act, which prohibited discrimination based on, among other things, race. It was passed by the United States Congress and signed by President Johnson. All of these legislative acts were significant in American life. They were, and remain, significant because all states' legislation must be consistent with federal laws. So, technically, states and local municipalities were prohibited from passing ordinances and laws that contradicted federal laws. The passage of these federal laws was significant for another reason. They codified civil rights for American Negroes and Blacks. American Negroes and Blacks were sanctioned by federal laws, had access to new material resources. They were supposed to have equal access to public education; they were supposed to have equal access to employment opportunities; they were supposed to have equal access to voting. For Du Bois, even though the United States federal government recognized American Negroes as full citizens, American Negroes would still need to be adequately recognized by Whites in private as well as public spheres, in addition to adequate recognition of Negroes by federal, state, and local municipalities. In spite of the elements of race and racism that have been abolished, the significance of Whites' and Negroes' attitudes and judgments about race, control over Negroes opportunities, Negroes have had more access to employment, housing, education, politics, and culture at the end of the Civil Rights period than at any other time in American history.

As I draw my exposition of Du Bois's dialectic of recognition approach to a close, Du Bois provided a way to think about the formation and development of race and racism. His dialectic of recognition approach argued that races are constituted through conflicts between groups, Whites and Negroes. Conflicts emerged because American Whites formulated prejudices of American Negroes because they perceived Negroes as different and therefore inferior to them. Not only did Whites form prejudices of Negroes, they

exercised control or power over Negroes. The concept of recognition, employed by Du Bois, provided a way to explain how Whites' prejudices and power were interrelated aspects of the effective ongoing blockage of Negro opportunities. In addition to ways that race and racism impacted Negro access to material resources and power in a disadvantageous way while impacting Whites access to material resources and access to power in an advantageous way, race and racism also impacted Whites' and Negroes' psychic life.

#### **4. Conclusion**

This chapter draws on concepts from two thinkers. This first thinker from which it draws is Hegel. Hegel's dialectic of recognition showed that self-understanding is partly shaped and informed by individual's choices. But, it also showed that individuals' opportunities in life are shaped and informed by factors beyond the individuals' control or beyond individuals' own awareness. Individual's self-understanding does not form by mere individuals' good choices and poor choices. We must remain mindful that what opportunities individuals have or do not have has never been solely a function of their choices. Individuals' choices have always been situated in social contexts of conflicts in which individuals exert their control over individuals' self-understanding. This interferes with their ability to participate fully in a given social context.

While Hegel provided a way to think about individual persons' self-understanding and how they are affected by social relations, he did not apply his conception of dialectic of recognition to race and racism. Du Bois dialectic of recognition conception of racism is helpful because it allows us to think about the formations and development of racism as it existed during, say the Post-Reconstruction period and persisted through the Civil Rights period. Moreover, it allows us to think about racism as racial prejudices, power relations, and racial inequalities as embodied by individuals, groups and institutions.

In the final chapter, I want to take the dialectic of recognition conception of racism and show that it allows us to think about changes to and continuity of racism that existed during the Civil Rights period and persisted into the Post-Civil Rights period.

## **Chapter five: Thinking with a dialectic of recognition conception of racism**

### **1. Introduction**

Let me summarize what I have argued. I have argued that the individualist and social conceptions of racism are to some extent adequate but also inadequate for thinking about racism. They are adequate because they allow us to think about the continuity of racial prejudices embodied by individuals or groups, power relations, or racial inequalities. They are inadequate because each conception of racism does not allow us to think about the changes to and continuity of racial prejudices, power relations, and racial inequalities as they emerge in political, economic, and cultural contexts. In response to these deficiencies in the individualist and social conceptions of racism, I introduced in chapter four some conceptions from thinkers that I think are helpful for thinking about how racism changes and maintains continuity from the Civil Rights period to the Post-Civil Rights period. Drawing some elements from Hegel's and Du Bois's conceptions of dialectic of recognition, I argued that they allow us to think about changes to and continuity of racism. In this chapter, I appropriate the elements of their respective conceptions of dialectic of recognition and apply them to racism. I am calling it the dialectic of recognition conception of racism. In this concluding chapter, I argue that the dialectic of recognition conception of racism is an adequate conception of racism. It is an adequate conception of racism because it allows us to think about changes to and continuity of racial prejudices, power relations, and racial inequalities that are expressed by individual persons, groups, and institutions. It is also an adequate conception of racism because, unlike the individualist and social conceptions of racism, it is *not atomistic*, *one-sided*, and *static*. Let us turn first to an example that illustrates racism in the American

political context in the Post-Civil Rights period and see how the dialectic of recognition conception of racism helps us think about changes and continuity of racism.

## **2. Thinking about racism in political contexts**

In this section I will attempt to describe how the dialectic of recognition conception of racism allows us to think about persisting racism. In what follows, I first describe racism as it existed in the context of voting during the Civil Rights period. Then, I attempt to show that racism that existed in the context of voting during the Civil Rights period has changed and maintained continuity through the Post-Civil Rights period so far.

During the Civil Rights period, many White voters and elected White officials denied recognition to Blacks. Their denial of recognition to Blacks is evidenced by their refusal to treat them as citizens. And because they thought this way about Black Americans, they behaved in ways that were consistent with this thinking. A majority of the White electorate prejudged Blacks on the basis of race. Their racial prejudices were expressed through their relations to local, state, and federal officials. Constituents of local, state, and federal officials recognized their White constituents. Their recognition of their White constituents was communicated back to them by continuing to deny Black Americans access to the vote, among other things. White elected local, state, and federal officials expressed their racial prejudices toward Black Americans through public policies. Although elected officials were responsible for protecting United States citizens' right to register to register to vote and to vote, their denied recognition of Black Americans is expressed by the refusal to protect their constitutional rights in general and the right to vote in particular. In these ways, elected White officials at every level of government and the majority of the White electorate denied recognition to Black Americans, which blocked their access to their constitutional right to vote.

Many Black Americans resisted Whites' refusal to acknowledge their citizenship. Their resistance to Whites eventually developed into the Civil Rights Movement. This movement resisted White elected officials and the majority of the White electorate through organized efforts, such as the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (N.A.A.C.P.), Southern Christian Leadership Conference (S.C.L.C.), Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (S.N.C.C.), Congress of Racial Equality (C.O.R.E.), the Black Panthers, and others. The Civil Rights Movement resistance emerged as marches, protests, and demonstrations against Whites who refused to acknowledge Blacks as fellow citizens. While the United States Constitution guarantees political freedoms and equality to its citizens without regard to race, color, creed, and religion, these Democratic tenets were attainable for Black Americans. Consequently, the Civil Rights Movement's marches, protests, and demonstrations were the catalyst to eliminate laws that impeded Black Americans' access to citizenship. For example, federal legislators who drafted the 1964 Civil Rights Act<sup>130</sup> and the 1965 Voting Rights Act prohibited White Americans from erecting barriers to Black Americans' access to vote. These pieces of landmark federal legislation that were designed to enforce the right to vote for all United States citizens guaranteed by the Fifteenth Amendment to United States Constitution. The 1964 Civil Rights Act gave the United States Congress the authority

[t]o enforce the constitutional right to vote, to confer jurisdiction upon the district courts of the United States to provide injunction relief against discrimination in public accommodation, to authorize the Attorney General to institute suits to protect constitutional rights in public facilities and public education, to extend the Commission on Civil Rights, to prevent discrimination in federally assisted

---

<sup>130</sup> "The Voting Rights Act of 1964," (public law 88-110), The Eighty-ninth Congress of United States Congress, July 6, 1964.



programs, to establish a Commission on Equal Employment Opportunity, and for other purposes.<sup>131</sup>

The 1964 Civil Rights Act provided the United States Congress with the power to enforce what the Fifteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution asserted in 1870, but remained toothless for nearly a century. The 1965 Voting Rights Act also enforced the Fifteenth Amendment. In particular section 2 of the Voting Rights Act stipulates that there should be

[n]o voting qualifications or prerequisite to voting, or standard, practice, or procedure shall be imposed or applied by any State or political subdivision to deny or abridge the right of any citizen of the United States to vote on account of race or color.<sup>132</sup>

These victories obtained by the Civil Rights Movement were not inevitable. People, in general and Black people in particular, made conscious choices to struggle and die for acknowledgement of their citizenship, as well as their children's and grandchildren's citizenship.

These two Civil Rights Acts were significant. Black Americans' self-understanding no longer meant being legally denied access to the ballot, among other things. It indicated that Black individuals could exercise their right to vote. These Civil Rights victories positively impacted White Americans. The White electorate's and elected White officials self-understanding was changing too. Those who had refused to acknowledge Blacks as American citizens were increasingly acknowledging Blacks' right to register and to vote.

---

<sup>131</sup> "The Voting Rights Act of 1964," (public law 88-110), The Eighty-ninth Congress of United States Congress, July 6, 1964.

<sup>132</sup> The Voting Rights Act of 1965.

These newfound freedoms and equality provided Black individuals with opportunities to participate in shaping the American democracy and their own destinies.

Having discussed what racism looked like in the context of voting during the Civil Rights period, let us turn to a discussion of what racism as constituted by racial prejudices, power relations, and racial inequalities look like in the context of voting during the Post-Civil Rights period. Then, I will use the dialectic of recognition conception of racism to explain how these constitutive elements of racism *change* and *maintain continuity* in the Post-Civil Rights period.<sup>133</sup>

Racial prejudices are constitutive elements of racism. By ‘racial prejudice’ I mean a racial individual or group who either consciously or subconsciously formulates a judgment about a racial individual or group based on race or a racial proxy that does not apply to the racial individual that they are about or intended for.<sup>134</sup> The dialectic of recognition conception of racism allows us to think about racial prejudices.<sup>135</sup> It allows us to think about racial prejudice as thought, attitude, belief, expectation, assumption, intent, and motivation that a dominant racial individual or group has about subordinate racial individual or group, which does not hold for the group, although it may hold for some individuals of that race. Or, racial prejudices might be perfectly applicable to a

---

<sup>133</sup> While my focus is on racial prejudice that dominant racially embodied individuals or groups judges a subordinate racially embodied individual or group, a subordinate racially embodied individual or groups can also hold adverse assumptions, expectations, beliefs, intentions, and motivations of dominant racially embodied individuals. However, subordinate racial groups cannot be racist in the way as I am attributing to White Americans because as a racial group they do not hold political, economic, and cultural power to do so.

<sup>134</sup> Camara Phyllis Jones, “Levels of Racism: A Theoretic Framework and a Gardener’s Tale,” *American Journal of Public Health*, August 2000, Vol. 90, No. 8, 1212-1215. I want to thank Professor Trina Gipson-Jones for turning me on to this text.

<sup>135</sup> Racial groups are automatically assigned to a dominant and subordination position. Rather, their position emerges out of conflicts or struggles and political, economic, and cultural accumulated to maintain their position. Since the political, economic, and cultural power relations have already been determined, I use the dominant-subordinate relationship to describe White-African American relations respectively. By no means am I suggesting that these power relations are permanent.

particular individual or segment of a racial group, but do not apply to an entire racial group. Prejudged thought, attitude, belief, expectation, assumption, intent, and motivation shapes and informs a racial individual's or group's behaviors. Our concept of racial self-understanding is learned. Depending on the environment, we learn that color and other phenotypes have meanings, and that people assign meaning to biological attributes of race. In this way, race becomes a concept with varied meanings for different people. On the dialectic of recognition conception of racism, race is a concept that is defined by conflicts. If the dominant racial group thinks of itself as dependent on the subordinate a racial group, then it may respect them as such at best and tolerate them at worst. In this way, it will recognize them. And, if the subordinate racial group thinks of itself as dependent on the dominant racial group, then it may respect the way that it is treated by the dominant racial group. However, if a dominant racial individual or group thinks that it is independent of a subordinate racial individual or group, then it may for adverse attitudes, expectations, beliefs, intentions, or motivations to the other racially embodied individual or group and express these adverse attitudes, expectations, beliefs, intentions, or motivations through power relations to the other racially embodied individual or group. If a subordinate racial individual or group resists the way that the dominant group treats them, then the subordinate racial individual or group will struggle with the dominant racial individual or group to achieve freedom and equality. The conflicts between the dominant and subordinate racial groups that emerge are the result of a dominant racial individual or group misrecognizing a subordinate racial individual or group. Furthermore, their relationship is irreducible to some atomic or singular relation as what defines either of them. That is, who and what a dominant racial group or member of a dominant race is, can become, or can achieve is dependent on the group's or

individual member's relation to a subordinate racial group or member of the subordinate racial group. Similarly, who and what a subordinate racial group or member of the subordinate race is, can become, or can achieve is dependent on their relations to the dominant racial group or a member of the dominant racial group. In this way, each's existence is always *interdependent* on their relations to the other.

Moreover, the dialectic of recognition conception of racism provides a way for thinking about the meaning of racism. The dialectic of recognition conception of racism is denied recognition by a dominant racial individual or group of a subordinate racial individual or group. The dominant racial group denied recognition occurs when it prejudices and uses its power against a subordinate racial group, for example. Consequently, when the dominant racial individual or group prejudices and uses its power over and against subordinate racial individual or group, it produces inequalities in access to political opportunities for dominant and subordinate racial individuals and groups. In this way, the dialectic of recognition conception of racism thinks about racial prejudice, power, and racial inequality as unified.

Now that we are clearer about how to think about racism as denied recognition and how racism becomes significant in the formation and development of dominant and subordinate racial individuals and groups, let us turn our attention to how the dialectic of recognition conception of racism allows us to think about changes to and continuity of racism from the Civil Rights period to the Post Civil Rights period.

The dialectic of recognition conception of racism allows us to think about changes to and continuity of elements of racism in the Post-Civil Rights. Consider some of the recent legislation regarding voting rights. White elected officials attempted to hide and conceal their intent to impede African Americans citizens from voting. At the conclusion

of the 2008 presidential election, members of the Republican Party claimed that voter fraud was occurring and that new restrictions on voting were aimed to eliminate it. According to Justin Levitt, “‘voter fraud’ occurs when individuals cast ballots despite knowing that they are ineligible to vote, in an attempt to defraud the election system.”<sup>136</sup> Many Republican state legislators were asserting that “voter fraud” was widespread and threatened the integrity of the American democracy. For this reason they pursuing legislation that would eliminate the perceived “voter fraud.” However, voter fraud was a ruse. Voter fraud was a ruse because the Republican Party created a solution to a problem that had not existed, at least not with any statistical significance, according to Levitt. Because “voter fraud” was allegedly eroding the integrity of the American democracy, states controlled by Republicans state legislators and governors seem to feel compelled to create legislation that would eliminate it. However, the legislation they proposed restricts eligible African American citizens from voting, although it does not exclusively disqualify African American citizens from voting. The dialectic of recognition conception of racism allows us to think about White Republican state legislators’ racial prejudices, power relations, and racial inequalities as struggles for recognition for citizenship between White Americans and African Americans. For instance, many Whites in the electorate

---

<sup>136</sup> Justin Levitt, “The Truth about Voter Fraud, (New York: The Brennan Center for Justice at New York University School of Law, 2007), p. 4. Levitt writes that what is called “voter fraud is conflated, intentionally or unintentionally, with others forms of election misconduct or irregularities.” He writes that many problems are automatically dumped into the categorical trash bin as “voter fraud” such as ‘technological glitches, whether sinister or benign: for example, voting machines may record inaccurate tallies due to fraud, user error, or technical malfunction. Some results from honest mistakes by election officials or voters: for example, a person with a conviction may honestly believe herself eligible to vote when the conviction renders her temporarily ineligible, or an election official may believe that certain identification documents are required to vote when no such requirement exists. And some irregularities involve fraud or intentional misconduct perpetrated by actors other than individual voters: for example, flyers may spread misinformation about the proper location or procedures for voting; thugs may be dispatched to intimidate voters at the polls; missing ballot boxes may mysteriously reappear. These are all problems with the election administration system... but they are not ‘voter fraud.’”

elected White Republican candidates to represent their political, economic and cultural interests. They are obviously motivated to defeat their Democratic opponents, which is not problematic by itself. But, they want to eliminate some of the Democratic Party's constituent groups from participating in electoral processes, most notably African Americans. By doing so, they increase the likelihood of winning political contests. Republican elected officials express their racial prejudices toward African Americans through power relations vested in political offices which they hold. With the blessing of their predominately, although not exclusively, White constituents they created public policies that restricts African Americans' access to vote. Since the creation of the Voting Rights Act of '65 prohibits anyone from being denied access to voting based on race or color, the Republican Party used photo identification as a proxy for race to suppress African American voter turnout. While the Republican Party is explicitly race-conscious, their intentions to deny many African Americans the right to register and to vote rearrange political power are hidden and concealed in plain sight, namely through democratically elected processes. For Republicans, suppressing the vote provided them with a justification for instituting new restrictions on voters. These new pieces of voter legislation, at the state level, provide them with a solution to a problem that did, and does, not exist in any significant way. While state legislators have claimed that "voter fraud" is the real reason they have instituted restrictions on voting, they have failed to present evidence that illustrates that significant voter fraud exists. Justin Levitt examined claims of voter fraud and concluded that "only a tiny portion of the claimed illegality is

substantiated –and most of the remainder is either nothing more than speculation or has been conclusively debunked.”<sup>137</sup>

The dialectic of recognition conception of racism unifies racial prejudice and power. It unifies these constitutive elements of racism by showing that racial prejudice can be expressed through power relations that both the Republican Party and many in the White electorate exert over and against African Americans. By ‘power,’ a constitutive element of racism, I mean the ability that a racially embodied individual or group has to control the agency of a racially embodied individual or group. There are three main ways that power has changed and maintained continuity from the Civil Rights period to the Post Civil Rights period.

The first change to power relations is the composition of the oppositional or contradictory parties involved during the conflicts or struggles. By ‘oppositional or contradictory’ I mean that the dominant White race made up virtually all of the racial demographics of the Republican Party during the Civil Rights period. This did not mean nor should be interpreted to mean that all White political officials worked in opposition to Black Americans’ access to the right to vote. During the Civil Rights period, White Americans denied recognition of Black Americans denied them access to register and to vote for them. In this ways, Black Americans were not treated as United States citizens. They were not always accorded all the rights, privilege, and immunities that the United States Constitution guaranteed to its citizens. And because White electorates, candidates, and elected officials did not treat Blacks as citizens, Blacks experienced unequal treatment under the law. At the conclusion of the Civil Rights period, ways that White Americans

---

<sup>137</sup> Justin Levitt, “The Truth About Voter Fraud,” (New York: The Brennan Center for Justice at New York University School of Law, 2003), p. 3.

denied recognition to Black Americans were eliminated, which made possible more political opportunities for Black Americans. These opportunities included not only access to the ballot, but it allowed many of them to become political and elected candidates as well as greater access to political participation. Although most Black elected and appointed folks became democrats, some of them became Republicans too. These Black Republicans probably helped recruit, retain, and reproduce other Black Republicans at all levels of government. By the commencement of the Post-Civil Rights period, not only did Whites make up the largest racial block of Republicans; they are now flanked by African Americans and other racial minorities. But, at the dawn of the Post-Civil Rights period, the meaning of being an African American and being a Black American is no longer locked in constant struggles or conflicts with a homogenous racial group of Whites. Now, African Americans are engaged in struggles with a predominantly White racial group, although not exclusively White. In some instances, the dominant group is not homogeneously white; it can be composed of other racial minorities within the Republican Party, some of which are African Americans.

As the Civil Rights period gave way to the Post Civil Rights period, Black Americans began and continued to make significant strides toward political equality, and political freedom. But, despite the inclusion of racial minorities within the Republican party, the heterogeneous Republican party exercises its power over and against African American citizens is illustrated by the proliferation of new voter legislation in a majority of states that restrict segments of the African American electorate.

A second way that power relations in American political contexts have changed and maintained continuity from the Civil Rights period to the Post Civil Rights period involves African Americans' political autonomy. Political autonomy is someone's or some group's



ability to make a decision that reflects the individual's or group's interests, and to bring them into fruition. While many more African Americans can exercise their franchise in the Post-Civil Rights period than did during the Civil Rights period, some African Americans are being impeded from exercising their agency when it comes to voting. This is documented in Weiser's and Norden's article "Voting Law Changes in 2012." According to Weiser and Norden, Republicans who controlled state legislative and executive branches supplemented their racial prejudices, intentions, and motivations with their power relations over and against African Americans. In the Post-Civil Rights period, White Americans do not need to deny all African Americans access to the ballot to win political contests. If they can reduce the number of African Americans who vote for Democratic candidates or issues important to Democratic constituencies, this can also result in winning political contests. During the Post-Civil Rights period, the Republican Party created new voting rights legislation that snares vulnerable demographics of African Americans. These legislative actions attempt to deny a few hundred thousand or a few million votes in heavily Democratic districts. When Republicans create public policy that denies African Americans access to the ballot, this makes winning political contests easier for Republicans. Weiser and Norden note that "[a]t least thirty-five states introduced legislation that would require voters to show photo identification in order to vote,"<sup>138</sup> and seven states have passed such legislation and now have been enacted into law in Alabama, Kansas, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, and Wisconsin. "At least twelve states have introduced legislation that would require proof of citizenship, such as a birth certificate, to register or to vote. Proof of citizenship laws passed in Alabama, Kansas, and

---

<sup>138</sup> Wendy R. Weiser and Lawrence Norden, "Voting Law Changes in 2012," p. 2.

Tennessee.”<sup>139</sup> Moreover, “[a]t least thirteen states introduced bills to end highly popular Election Day and same-day voter registration, [which] limit voter registration mobilization efforts, and reduce other registration opportunities.”<sup>140</sup> Public policy in general and these newly introduced voter legislation in particular are ways that Republican elected officials express their power over and against African.

The dialectic of recognition conception of racism allows us to unify racial prejudice, power and inequalities in political contexts. There are three examples that illustrate racial inequalities in access to the right to vote. During 2011, state legislatures passed legislations that illustrate inequalities in access to voting. These new pieces of legislation restrict eligible United States citizens’ access to vote emerged out of Republican state legislatures.<sup>141</sup> Jennifer Page, a journalist for *The Center of Media and Democracy*, wrote

---

<sup>139</sup> Ibid.

<sup>140</sup> Ibid.

<sup>141</sup> The following are passed legislation and now are law. In Alabama, H.B. 19 requires photo identification to vote absentee. H.B. 56 requires proof of citizenship. In Florida, H.B. 1355 requires 62 of 67 counties to have restrictions on individuals collecting signatures for a given candidate. Those who are not immediately related to the said candidate must register electronically with the state, place information identifying the candidate on the petition, deliver petition to Florida officials within 48 hours of getting signatures, and account for all state and federal forms used. H.B. 1355 reduces early voting. This law “[p]rohibits registered voters from making a cross-county address update at the polls. Previous early voting period “Began the fifteenth day before Election Day and ended on the second day before Election Day (a period of approximately fourteen days.)” The new early voting laws “Begins on the tenth day before Election Day for state or federal races, and ends on the third day before Election Day (this reduces access to vote by eight days.) The supervisor of elections may provide early voting for elections that are not held in conjunction with state or federal elections; however the supervisor has the discretion to determine the hours of early voting for such occasions.” In Georgia, H.B. 92 becomes effective once it has cleared the U.S. Department of Justice or a federal district court challenge. Previous early voting period “Began in person absentee voting forty-five days prior to a state or federal election and twenty-one days before a local election (a period of approximately forty-five days) and ended the day before Election Day.” The new early voting “Begins on the fourth Monday prior to each primary or general election and as soon as possible prior to a runoff, and ends on the Friday immediately prior to each primary, general election, or runoff (a period of approximately twenty-one days).” In Illinois, there are restrictions on registration. S.B. 1586 shortened the number of an organization can return completed registration material to state officials from seven to two. In Kansas H.B. 2067 requires photo identification, requires proof of citizenship to be able to register as a legal voter. In Maine, there are restrictions on voter registration. L.D. 1376 no longer allows voters to register the same day they voter. The new law requires that voter registration ends two days before the election. There are approximately eight other states with similar restrictions on voters rights. They are not all uniform; some restrict hours to vote; some required photo ID; some have restricted early voting and the like.

about this phenomenon. In “Voter Suppression Bills Sweep the Country,”<sup>142</sup> she highlighted legislative actions that have passed in states such as Wisconsin, Ohio, North Carolina, Maine, and Texas.<sup>143</sup> These states’ new legislative acts restrict eligible voters’ access to vote because they require voters to obtain photo identification. Among those whose access they could restrict include segments of racial minorities, students, and elderly. According to Page, “the law would require a photo ID for the first time in Wisconsin’s history and only a very narrow range of IDs would qualify.”<sup>144</sup> Qualifying identifications are state-issued ID cards, military IDs, passports, or IDs issued by a Native American tribe based in Wisconsin, or certain students IDs. Wisconsin is not alone in its efforts to restrict access to voting. In Ohio, “House Bill 159 passed March 23, 2013 by the Republican led Assembly and is now awaiting a senate vote.”<sup>145</sup> If H.B. 159 passes the Senate, it “would require all voters to show a government-issued photo ID to cast a ballot in person.” In Ohio, five forms of government-issued ID qualify, such as Ohio driver’s license, state ID card, military ID, U.S. passport, new ID issued by Ohio Bureau of Motor Vehicles.<sup>146</sup> However, “[t]hose who oppose the bill [H.B. 159] say close to 1 million voters in Ohio will be disenfranchised”<sup>147</sup> Because they do not possess any of the government-issued identifications. Rock The Vote estimates that 25 % of African Americans and 18 % of seniors would not have the right kind of photo ID under Bill 159.<sup>148</sup> Texas also has enacted new voter legislation that restricts voting. Page notes that

---

<sup>142</sup> Jennifer Page, “Voter Suppression Bills Sweep the Country,” *The Center for Media and Democracy*, May 10, 2011. [www.prwatch.org/news/2011/05/10711/voter-suppression-bills-sweep-country](http://www.prwatch.org/news/2011/05/10711/voter-suppression-bills-sweep-country).

<sup>143</sup> Ibid.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid., 1.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid., 1.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid.

<sup>148</sup> Ibid., p. 2.

S.B. [senate bill] 14 is awaiting the governor's signature to become law. The bill amends the Texas Election Code to 'require a voter to present an acceptable form of photo identification in order to cast a ballot. Acceptable identification include driver's license or personal identification card issued by the Department of Public Safety, a U.S. military card, a U.S. citizenship with photograph, a U.S. passport, or a state-issued concealed handgun license. Exception to these requirements are made for those 70 years of age or older and who have a disability of 50 percent or greater.<sup>149</sup>

In "Voting Law Changes in 2012," Wendy R. Weiser's and Lawrence Norden's analyses of the new Texas law claim that it is likely to produce differences in access to voting for African Americans compared to other races. They wrote that

the new Texas voter ID law, permits voters to use a concealed handgun license as proof of identity, but precludes voters from using student ID, even if the student was issued by a state university. As the Texas Department of Public Safety recently noted, African Americans are significantly under represented among the state's handgun license holders. Of the more than 100,000 concealed handgun licenses issued in Texas last year, only 7.69 % were issued to African Americans, even though African Americans constitute 12.1 % of the state's voting age population. In contrast, African Americans are more likely to attend a public university in Texas than whites. According to the 2009 American Community survey, 8.0 % of voting-age African Americans in Texas attended a public university compared with only 5.8 % of voting-age whites.<sup>150</sup>

Weiser's and Norden's analyses corroborate Jennifer Page's claim that Texas' new photo identification requirement disproportionately and adversely affects various African American students.<sup>151</sup> Weiser and Norden's observe that "[a]t least thirty-four states introduced legislation that would require voters to show photo identification in order to vote."<sup>152</sup> Some of the thirty-four states include but is not limited to Alabama<sup>153</sup> Kansas<sup>154</sup>,

---

<sup>149</sup> Jennifer Page, "Voter Suppression Bills Sweep the Country," 2.

<sup>150</sup> Wendy Weiser and Lawrence Norden, "Voting Law Changes in 2012," p. 24.

<sup>151</sup> Wendy R Weiser and Lawrence Norden, "Voting Law Changes in 2012," (Brennan Center for Justice, New York University School of Law, 2012).

<sup>152</sup> "Voting Law Changes in 2012," p. 1.

<sup>153</sup> H.B. 19, 2011 General Assembly, Regular session, Al, 2011.

<sup>154</sup> H.B. 2067, regular session 2011.

Rhode Island,<sup>155</sup> South Carolina, Tennessee,<sup>156</sup> Texas,<sup>157</sup> and Wisconsin.<sup>158</sup> According to Weiser and Norden, the most restrictive voter ID laws, which only allow a small number of specified government issued photo IDs to vote, seems certain to create more burdens for minority citizens.<sup>159</sup>

A second example involving new voter legislation produces racial inequality in accessing voting. Weiser and Norden's research claims that some of the new voting laws restrict early voting. Early voting is defined as casting a ballot prior to an actual election. According to Weiser and Norden, "[o]pponents of these restriction have been particularly angered by the effort to eliminate Sunday early voting, which they see as explicitly targeting African American voters."<sup>160</sup> Many African Americans cast their ballot on Sundays. In an effort to capitalize on this demographic of African Americans voters, activists began to organize them and take them to vote; this has become known as "souls to the polls" Sunday. As evidence of restrictions on Sunday early voting, opponents point to two examples. One example of restrictions on Sunday early voting occurs in Florida, which "eliminated early voting on the last Sunday before Election Day."<sup>161</sup> Another example occurs in Ohio, which "eliminated early voting on Sundays entirely."<sup>162</sup> According to this article

[t]here is substantial statistical evidence that African Americans (and to a lesser extent Hispanics) vote on Sundays in proportionately far greater numbers than whites. For instance, in the 2008 general election in Florida, 33.2 % of those who

---

<sup>155</sup> S.B. 0400A, General Assembly, Jan., session, 2011.

<sup>156</sup> S.B. 16 107th general assembly, 2011 regular session.

<sup>157</sup> S.B. 14, Texas Legislature online.

<http://www.capital.state.tx.us/BillLookup/History.aspx?Legsess=82r&bill=SB14>

<sup>158</sup> Assembly Bill 7: History, Wis. Leg. data, <http://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/2011/rp/psa/ab7>, as of July 12, 2011.

<sup>159</sup> Weiser and Norden, "Voting Law Changes in 2012," p. 24.

<sup>160</sup> Ibid., p. 24.

<sup>161</sup> Ibid.

<sup>162</sup> Ibid.

voted early on the last Sunday before Election Day were African American and 23.6 % were Hispanic, whereas African Americans constituted just 22.7 % of all early voters for all early voting days, and Hispanics just 11.6 %.<sup>163</sup>

Weiser and Norden noted that these are two of the times in which African American vote at a significant rate. This suggests that African Americans who vote on these days will certainly have fewer days. While reducing the number of early voting days does not preclude African Americans from voting, it does place an unnecessary barrier in front of their access to vote, but which is not placed in front of White Americans' access to vote. In this way, Republican legislators' public policy disproportionately and adversely impact African American voters.

Finally, new voter legislation of barring former convicted felons produces racial inequality in access to voting. New voter laws disproportionately and adversely affect African Americans convicted of felony crimes. After African Americans have been tried, convicted, and served their time, many remain disenfranchised. Weiser and Norden corroborate this claim.

Nationally, 5.3 million American citizens are not allowed to vote because of a criminal conviction; of those, 4 million have completed their sentences and live, work, and raise families in their communities. This disenfranchisement disproportionately impacts African American men. Nationwide 13 % of African American men have lost the right to vote, a rate that is seven times the national average.<sup>164</sup>

These data suggest that African American men are disproportionately and adversely affected by laws that prevent felons from voting after they have served their time. And

---

<sup>163</sup> Ibid.

<sup>164</sup> Wendy Weiser and Lawrence Norden, "Voting Law Changes in 2012," p. 34.

these African American convicted felons who tend to vote for Democratic candidates and on issues important to Democratic candidates.

At the outset of this section, I claimed that the dialectic of recognition conception of racism allows us to think about unifying racial prejudices, power relations, and racial inequalities. First, it allows us to think about racial prejudice, power relations, and racial inequality as unified political contexts in general and in access to voting in particular during the Civil Rights period. Second, it allows us to think about changes to and continuity of the unified elements of racism from the Civil Rights period to the Post Civil Rights period. Since the dialectic of recognition conception of racism allows us to think about racial prejudices, power relations, and racial inequalities as unified, change, and maintain continuity, it allows us to think about changes to and continuity of racism that the individualist and social conceptions of racism leave hidden and concealed.

### **3. Thinking about racism in economic contexts**

Racism persists in American economic contexts from the Civil Rights period into the Post-Civil Rights period. When I use the word ‘economic context’ I am referring to areas of life that involve processes or systems by which goods and services are produced, sold, and bought, including access to employment opportunities, to equal pay, to equal promotions, to sound housing, etc. In chapters two and three I showed that individualist and social conceptions of racism are conceptually inadequate in two ways. First, they do not allow us to think about racial prejudices, power relations, and racial inequalities as unified in economic contexts. Second, they do not allow us to think about changes to and continuity of racial prejudices, power relations, and racial inequalities as unified in economic contexts. Given these conceptual inadequacies, the focus of this section will be to show that the conception of dialectic of recognition of racism allows us to solve these two conceptual inadequacies.

My thesis of this section is that racism changed and maintained its continuity from the Civil Rights period to the Post Civil Rights period. This claim implies that the racism that existed during the Civil Rights period in American economic contexts in general and housing in particular have been eliminated by the end of the Civil Rights period. The 1968 Civil Rights Act, in general and Title VII in particular, prohibits discrimination in the sale or rental of housing.<sup>165</sup> Title VII prohibits the sale or rental of housing because of “race, color, religion, sex, familial status, national origin, or an intention to make any preference, limitation, or discrimination.”<sup>166</sup> Furthermore, the Civil Rights Act claims that

---

<sup>165</sup> This act is codified in The Civil Rights Act of 1968.

<sup>166</sup> Section 804b.



[i]t should be unlawful for any person or other entity whose business includes engaging in residential real estate-related transactions to discriminate against any person in making available such transaction, or in the terms or conditions of such transaction, because of race, color, religion, sex, handicap, familial status, or national origins.<sup>167</sup>

According to section 805a, 'real estate-related transaction' includes all of the following.

(1) The making or purchasing of loans or providing other financial assistance--(a) for purchasing, constructing, improving,..., or maintaining a dwelling; or (b) secured for residential real estate. (2) The selling, brokering, or appraising of residential real property.<sup>168</sup>

As a consequence of the federal Civil Rights Act of 1968, private property owners, real estate agencies, landlords, and lending institutions were put on notice that housing discrimination would no longer be legally permissible. In fact, after the creation of the Civil Rights Act of 1968 in general but the Fair Housing Act in particular, potential renters, home owners, and lending customers would have legal recourse if they believed they had experienced housing discrimination. The Fair Housing Act in particular now provides legal enforcement and legal recourse against housing discrimination in all fifty states and territories. It also eliminated laws that were vehicles that drove racial discrimination in the housing market. However, other constitutive elements of racism that existed during the Civil Rights period that were not eliminated have changed and maintained continuity from the Civil Rights period to the Post Civil Rights period. These constitutive elements of racism are racial prejudices, power, and racial inequalities. If these constitutive elements of racism can be shown to exist in housing today, then we can

---

<sup>167</sup> Section 805a.

<sup>168</sup> Section 805 A sections 1 and 2.

safely say that racism exists in the Post-Civil Rights period. Although racism in housing emerges in several ways,<sup>169</sup> I will not attempt to discuss all of them. Rather, I focus on how racial prejudices, power relations, and racial inequality emerge in lending practices of financial institutions. Let us revisit the example that I have discussed before that involves Patricia J. Williams. Williams provides a personal testimony of her experience with racism in her book *Seeing a Colorblind Future: the paradox of race*.<sup>170</sup> Remember, Williams applied for a mortgage by phone in a different state than where she then resided. According to Williams, she was a good credit risk. She was gainfully employed as a law professor; she had good credit scores and had squirreled away savings. Since the transaction was conducted by phone, the mortgage agent had no visual contact with Williams. Through phone conversations *alone* the mortgage agent *marked* Williams as White on the mortgage contract. After the bank completed the paper work, the bank mailed the mortgage contract to Williams. After Williams read the mortgage contract did she realize that she had been marked as White. By ‘marked’ I mean, someone other than Williams assigned her to a racial category. As a result of having assigned Williams to the

---

<sup>169</sup> By the end of the Civil Rights period in 1970, some constitutive elements of racism that existed, say in American economic life in general and in the housing market in particular, have been eliminated. The 1968 Civil Rights Act prohibited discrimination in housing based on race, color, religion, and language. According to the 1968 Civil Rights Act, housing discrimination includes differences in treatment by private real estate agents by race, color, or language. It involves private real estate agents refusing to tell potential renters about rental properties. Even when real estate agents show racial minorities properties, they may show racial minorities fewer rental properties relative to their similarly situated White counterparts. Private real estate agents may treat racial minorities more negatively in person than their White counterparts when making an appointment to view rental properties. The 1968 Civil Rights Act covers the purchase of a house. Housing discrimination includes being treated differently based race, among other identities, when buying a house. Private real estate agents could tell racial minorities about fewer homes for sale; they can show racial minorities fewer homes for sale; they steer racial minorities away from homes in neighborhoods with a higher percentage of racial minorities reside. Finally, housing discrimination may also refer to differences in treatment that racial minorities experience while trying to secure lending to purchase a house. While housing discrimination involves each of these experiences enumerated, African Americans ‘ability to secure lending to purchase a house during the Post-Civil Rights period is the focus here.

<sup>170</sup> Patricia J. Williams, *Seeing a Colorblind Future: the paradox of race*, New York: The Noonday Press, 1997).

White racial category, the mortgage agent had determined the terms and conditions that Williams would receive on her mortgage contract. Williams crossed out the racial classification White. She classified herself as Black and returned the mortgage contract to the bank. When the bank received and reviewed the contract, it now wanted her to pay more for “points,” to pay more on her “down payment,” and to pay a “higher interest” rate for the same exact mortgage days earlier it had approved. When Williams inquired as to why the bank wanted her to pay more for points, down payment, and higher interest rate, the bank did not give race as the reason, according to Williams. Rather, the bank told her that the terms of the mortgage contract changed because the “prices” of the houses and “property values” were steadily declining in this particular neighborhood. And, since property values were steadily “declining” in this neighborhood, the bank wanted more financial investment from Williams to cover the risk of their property in this neighborhood further “declining.” According to Williams, she did not initially understand what was actually happening to her, although she is a scholar on law, race and racism. In spite of her intellectual acumen, she had to rely on her real estate agent who, Williams tells us, schooled her on what was happening to her. Williams’ real estate agent told her that her blackness was the real reason the value of the houses in this neighborhood were declining. Williams writes “[t]he bank was proceeding according to demographic data that show any time black people move into a neighborhood in the States, whites are overwhelmingly like to move out.”<sup>171</sup> This phenomenon is “called a tipping point, this thing that happens when black people move into white neighborhoods.”<sup>172</sup> After a real estate friend informed Williams about what was going on, Williams could see how race

---

<sup>171</sup> Patricia J. Williams, *Seeing a Colorblind Future: the paradox of race*, (New York: The Noonday Press, 1997), p. 40.

<sup>172</sup> Ibid.

was a determining factor and why she was being asked to pay more to purchase the home she wanted than presumable White homebuyers. Consequently, Williams identifies two deficiencies in the way that racism is often discussed today.

[W]hat was fascinating to me about the whole incident was the way in which it so exemplified the new problems of the new rhetoric of racism. For starters, the new rhetoric of racism never mentions race. It wasn't *race*<sup>173</sup> but *risk*<sup>174</sup> which the bank was concerned. Second, since financial risk is all about economics, my exclusion got classified as just a consideration of class, and there's no law against class discrimination, after all, for that would present a restraint on one of our most precious liberties, the freedom to contract or not.<sup>175</sup>

Although Patricia J. Williams recounts her personal testimony, some observers may be skeptical that Williams experience is widespread in the United States. Consider additional examples of the prevalence of racism in housing in general but in mortgage lending in particular.

In the article "A Comment on Bank of American/ Countrywide's Discriminatory Mortgage Lending and its Implications for Racial Segregation," Richard Rothstein, an economic policy analyst for Economic Policy Institute, explains the persistence of housing discrimination in mortgage lending against African American and Hispanics.<sup>176</sup> According to Rothstein, widespread racially discriminatory subprime lending targeted racial minorities,<sup>177</sup>

many of the victims were in California, and of Mexican origin. Those in the East and Midwest were mostly African American. Although not specifically detailed

---

<sup>173</sup> This is my emphasis.

<sup>174</sup> This is my emphasis.

<sup>175</sup> Patricia J. Williams, *Seeing a Colorblind Future: the paradox of race*, (New York: The Noonday Press, 1997), p. 41.

<sup>176</sup> Richard Rothstein, "A Comment on Bank of American/ Countrywide's Discriminatory Mortgage Lending and its Implications for Racial Segregation," Economic Policy Institute Briefing paper # 355, January 23, 2013, Washington D.C., Economic Policy Institute.

<sup>177</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2.

in the government's complaint, many lost their homes to foreclosure when they were unable to meet the harsh repayment terms which they agreed, mostly unwittingly.<sup>178</sup>

In his article, Rothstein writes that

[t]he Justice Department's complaint alleges that Bank of America's Countrywide subsidiary had charged 200,000 minority homeowners higher interest rates and fees than white borrowers who were similarly qualified, with similar credit ratings. The Complaint also alleges that Countrywide had failed to offer [racial] minority homeowners conventional mortgages for which they qualified and which they would have been offered, were they white.<sup>179</sup>

But, why were racial minorities disproportionately not offered conventional mortgages like their White counterparts? In Countrywide's case,

the design of Countrywide's broker compensation system inclined incentives to pressure borrowers into accepting subprime mortgages, without the brokers fully disclosing the consequences. Brokers received bonuses, in effect kickbacks (called 'yield spread premiums or YSPs), if they made loans with interest rates higher than those recommended by the bank on its formal 'rate sheet' for borrowers with similar characteristics. The brokers were not required to disclose to borrowers what the bank's rate sheet specified.<sup>180</sup>

These compensation mechanisms existed throughout the mortgage lending industry and were not eliminated until the Consumers' Protection Agency bill became law in 2010 with the Dodd-Frank law.<sup>181</sup> The Consumers Protection Agency that now exists was championed by the then Harvard University professor of law, Elizabeth Warren. The Consumers Protection Agency, as Warren saw it, would *really* be an advocate for United States consumers in their financial relationships with lending institutions. It was

---

<sup>178</sup> Ibid.

<sup>179</sup> Ibid.

<sup>180</sup> Ibid., p. 3.

<sup>181</sup> Ibid., p. 3.

designed to ensure lending institutions did not take advantage of unsuspecting consumers; and if they did and were caught, the Consumers Protection Agency or the Department of Justice could enforce stiff penalties for their pattern and practices of abuses in general but racially discriminatory ones in particular. According to Rothstein,

[b]rokers and loan officers at Countrywide and other institutions manipulated borrowers by convincing them they could take advantage of perpetually rising equity to refinance their loans before the teaser rates expired and take cash out of their increased equity (with a share left as profit for the lending institution).<sup>182</sup>

While many consumers were targeted by these seductive offers, some “were promoted and sold to African American homeowners who lived in distressed neighborhoods where little or no value appreciation or gain in equity –even before the housing bubble burst.”<sup>183</sup>

Furthermore, Rothstein observed that

[t]he lending industry seems to have systematically target African Americans and Hispanics for these risky subprime loans<sup>184</sup>. The Countrywide complaint was based on statistical evidence –a strong correlation between race (or Hispanic ethnicity) and loan terms, even after available and relevant borrowers characteristics were taken into account. The settlement agreement notes that top official at Countrywide were aware, or should have been aware, of the racial discrimination and yet did nothing to interfere.<sup>185</sup>

Countrywide, while then the largest settlement for racial discrimination in mortgage lending, is not alone in these pattern and practices of racial discrimination. Rothstein

---

<sup>182</sup> Ibid.

<sup>183</sup> Ibid.

<sup>184</sup> “A [subprime mortgage](#) is a type of loan granted to individuals with poor [credit histories](#) (often below 600), who, as a result of their deficient [credit ratings](#), would not be able to qualify for [conventional mortgages](#). Because subprime borrowers present a higher risk for lenders, subprime mortgages charge interest rates above the [prime lending rate](#). There are several different kinds of subprime [mortgage](#) structures available. The most common is the [adjustable rate mortgage](#) (ARM), which initially charges a [fixed interest rate](#), and then convert to a floating rate.” based on an index such as [LIBOR](#), plus a margin. The better known types of ARMs include [3/27](#) and [2/28 ARMs](#). Read more: [What is a subprime mortgage?](#) <http://www.investopedia.com/ask/answers/07/subprime-mortgage.asp#ixzz4xYeYFTQ4>

<sup>185</sup> Ibid.

cites two additional examples of lending institutions that engaged in a pattern and practices of housing discrimination in mortgage lending. First,

a suit by the City of Memphis against Wells Fargo Bank, now working its way through the Federal Courts, is supported by affidavits of bank employees stating that they referred to subprime loans as ‘ghetto loans’ and instructed by bank supervisors to target their solicitations to heavily African American zip codes, because residents there ‘weren’t savvy enough’ to know they were being exploited.<sup>186</sup>

A second case involving Wells Fargo Bank displays a similar pattern and practices of racial discrimination as the example of Patricia Williams above. According to Rothstein, the City of Baltimore sued Wells Fargo because of a pattern and practice of racial discrimination in housing. The city’s complaint alleges

that the bank established a special unit staffed exclusively by African American bank employees who were instructed to visit black churches to market subprime loans. The bank had no similar practices of marketing such loans through white institutions.<sup>187</sup>

A third and final example displays racial discrimination involving subprime mortgage loans. The Department of Justice (DOJ) reached a settlement with Wells Fargo, which resulted in \$175 million dollars in relief for homeowners to resolve unfair lending allegations. The DOJ claims

that Wells Fargo Bank, the largest residential home mortgage originator in the United States, engaged in a pattern or practice of discrimination against qualified African American and Hispanic borrowers in its mortgage lending from 2004 through 2009 (cite the DOJ settlement).

---

<sup>186</sup> Ibid., p. 4.

<sup>187</sup> Ibid., p. 4.

Wells Fargo’s pattern and practices of racial discrimination were on display when it steered wholesale borrowers “into subprime mortgages who paid higher fees and rates than white borrowers.” According to the DOJ,

the department’s complaint, which alleges that between 2004 and 2008, Wells Fargo discriminated by steering approximately 4,000 African Americans and Hispanic wholesale borrowers, as well as additional retail borrowers, into subprime mortgages when non-Hispanic white borrowers with similar credit profiles received prime loans).

In addition to these 4,000 African Americans and Hispanics who were steered<sup>188</sup> into subprime mortgages who qualified for prime mortgages,

[t]he United States also alleges that between 2004 and 2009, Wells Fargo discriminated by charging approximately 30, 000 African American and Hispanic wholesale borrowers higher fees and rates than non-Hispanic white borrowers because of the race or natural origins rather than the borrowers’ credit worthiness or other objective criteria related to borrowers risk.<sup>189</sup>

These brokers and lending officials at Wells Fargo, according to the DOJ, were “aware of the fees and interest rates it was charging discriminated against African American and Hispanic borrowers, but the actions it took were insufficient and ineffective.”

A fourth example of housing discrimination in mortgage lending is illustrated in the case the DOJ brought against GFI. The DOJ alleges racial discrimination against African American and Hispanic homeowners. GFI mortgage Bankers Inc. is a large independent home mortgage company that draws its customers primarily from New York, New Jersey and Florida. The DOJ and the United States Attorney’s Office for the Southern

---

<sup>188</sup> Steering refers to lending institutional practice of placing loan applicants into a subprime loan even though the applicant qualifies for a prime loan.

<sup>189</sup> See <https://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/justice-department-reaches-settlement-wells-fargo-resulting-more-175-million-relief>.



District of New York filed a lawsuit that alleged “that GFI engaged in a pattern or practice of discrimination by pricing residential mortgage loans for qualified African American and Hispanic borrowers higher than similarly qualified non-Hispanic white borrowers between 2005 and 2009” (cite DOJ settlement). According to this lawsuit “approximately 600 African American and Hispanic GFI borrowers identified by the United States as paying more for a loan based on their race or national origin”<sup>190</sup> In the DOJ’s settlement,

GFI admits that an analysis of the note interest rates and fees that it charged on mortgage loans to qualified borrowers showed statistically significant disparities between non-Hispanic white borrowers and both African American and Hispanic borrowers that could not be explained by objective borrower characteristics or loan product features. The company also admitted that it provided financial incentives to its loan officers to charge higher interest rates and fees to borrowers and it did not have fair lending training and monitoring programs in place to prevent those interest rate and fee disparities from occurring.<sup>191</sup>

These patterns or practices were investigated by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). HUD reviewed GFI’s loan data as well as interviewed GFI’s employees. Based on the disparities in pricing and fees, HUD referred these findings to the DOJ, who later sued GFI for housing discrimination. <sup>192</sup>

---

<sup>190</sup> See <https://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/justice-department-reaches-lending-discrimination-settlement-gfi-mortgage-bankers-inc>.

<sup>191</sup> See <https://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/justice-department-reaches-lending-discrimination-settlement-gfi-mortgage-bankers-inc>.

<sup>192</sup> A final example of housing discrimination in mortgage lending is illustrated in the law suit that the DOJ brought against C & F. The DOJ found “that C & F charged greater interest rate markups (overages) and gave discounts (underages) on home mortgage loans made to African Americans and Hispanic borrowers. The markups and discounts were determined relative to similarly situated White Americans. These patterns or practices are violations of the Fair Housing Act (FHA) and Equal Opportunity Act (EOA). According to the DOJ “in 2007, C & F used rate sheets to calculate a ‘par’ or standard interest rate for each borrower based on objective factors related to the borrower’s credit risk and the loan terms.” While C & F provided criteria to ensure objectivity and fairness for all mortgage loan applicants, it also gave their employees sufficient discretion to treat African Americans and Hispanics in ways that disadvantaged them, while simultaneously advantaging equally qualified White mortgage loan applicants.

These examples are a representative sample of how Whites, although not exclusively Whites, regarded African American and Hispanic mortgage consumers. The settlements the DOJ obtained from Countrywide financial corporation, where 200,000 African Americans and Hispanics were adversely affected, from Wells Fargo where approximately 30,000 African Americans and Hispanics were adversely impacted, from GFI mortgage bankers where approximately 60 African Americans and Hispanics were adversely impacted by residential mortgage loans for qualified homebuyers, suggests that racism in residential mortgage lending exist in the United States housing market and that Patricia J. Williams's experience with racism is not merely anecdotal.

Now I want to explain how the conception of dialectic of recognition allows us to unify racial prejudices, power relations, and racial inequality and allow us to understand how they changed and maintained continuity from the Civil Rights period to the Post Civil Rights period. Reconsider Patricia J Williams's attempt to secure lending to purchase a home. The banking agent misrecognizes Williams as White. This suggests that the agent had to have been thinking in racial terms, at some point during the conversation with Williams. What could have shaped and influenced the agent's thinking? For the agent to draw the conclusion that Williams was White, the agent had to base the decision on non-visual evidence of Williams's race. The evidence had to be non-visual because the transaction took place over the phone. So, it could not have been based on the agent's perception of Williams' color or physical features. Rather the mortgage agent misrecognized Williams based on an assumption about what it means to be White. Since the agent drew the conclusions that Williams was White based on non-visual assumptions what information did the agent have had at his or her disposal to draw this conclusion? The agent could have considered Williams' economic factors as a constitutive feature of

being White. Based on Williams's financial data that was available to the agent, the agent could have made the inference that Williams is an upper-middle to high-middle White woman. In this way, race is assumed, at least by the agent, to correlate with income or occupation. Or, perhaps, the agent made the inference that Williams is White based on other factors, for example, Williams's credit score or FICO rating. As long as the agent assumes that the meaning of being middle-class or upper middle-class is associated with these characteristics, the agent may continue misrecognizing the consumer as White. When the agent recognized Williams as someone who possesses these characteristics and on the basis of this misrecognition, the agent gives the White consumer favorable mortgage terms but not the African American consumer.<sup>193</sup> Even if the agent believed that all or most African Americans have poor credit scores, low FICO scores, and talk a certain way, and whatever other economic factors that suggests that Williams was a good credit risk, the bank concluded that *she* was not credit-worthy and should pay a higher mortgage interest rate. But when the agent receives confirmation from Williams that she is African American, the bank changed the terms of agreement, giving economic risk and declining housing prices as the "reason" to change the mortgage contract, and not race as the real reason.

Another non-visual piece of evidence that the agent may have used to draw the provisional conclusion that Williams is White is language and diction. The language and diction variance used by the agent is one that has been ascribed to the way Whites speak.

---

<sup>193</sup> I have attributed the actions of bank official solely to the bank official. At another level, one could make the case that the bank official was not acting on her own attitudes. Rather, she was reflecting corporate policy where black people are concerned. Or, it might be the case that she did reflect her own personal attitudes and she did reflect corporate's policy where black people are concerned. The complexity of the argument that I'm trying to articulate does require that I show that racism metastasizes in social systems of which humans are hosts, so to speak. This is outside my scope here.

From the standpoint of the agent, Whiteness refers to a racial group of people who are understood as “speaking.” Speaking connotes and denotes people who have standard language and diction skills, whereas people whose language and diction deviate from the standard may be understood as “talking.” Again, one way the agent can arrive at the conclusion that Williams is White is for the agent to assume that Whiteness is associated with speaking with standard language and diction. Assuming Whiteness is associated with speaking standard language and diction, one inference that the agent seems to have drawn was that because Williams spoke what the agent perceived was Standard English language and diction, she was a White person.<sup>194</sup> If Williams was African American, the agent would have noticed her as being African American by the way she *talked*. The agent’s assumption or expectation that Standard English language and diction are associated with being White disqualified Williams from being African American, at least in the agent’s mind. Williams could not be African American because she used Standard English language and diction, at least in the agent’s mind and these characteristics are not associated with being African American or Blackness.<sup>195</sup> On the one hand, the agent uses Blackness to classify people whose language variance – style of speech – is abnormal. On the other hand, the agent uses Whiteness to classify people whose language variance is normal. In these ways, normal and abnormal speech patterns can become markers or proxies that individuals use to distinguish racial individuals and groups. Whiteness

---

<sup>194</sup> I am not claiming that using Standard English is a necessary and sufficient condition for being White. Rather, I am claiming that the agent, while unaware of this particular background assumption or expectation that when someone speaks in a ways that uses Standard English language and diction, this person is White. There may be other qualifiers but Standard English language and diction appear to be reliable characteristics of being White for this agent.

<sup>195</sup> This does not reflect my own mental gymnastics. Rather, it is my interpretation of those of the bank official. I certainly believe one can be mixed race, that is, both black and white. So, I’m not suggesting that people only come as members of a “pure” race.

classifies language variances as normal, whereas Blackness is classifies language variances as abnormal.<sup>196</sup>

Therefore, since the agent assumes that this mortgage consumer's language and diction is understood as Standard, the mortgage agent concludes that this mortgage consume is White, which distorted the agent's ability to recognize Williams on her own credit worthiness and African American-ness.

While the conception of dialectic of recognition allows us to think about the bank agent's racial prejudices as one person's denied recognition of Patricia J. Williams, it also allows us to unify the bank's agent's racial prejudice and power over Williams. Power, on the conception of dialectic of recognition, is always understood as mutual and reciprocal relations through which a dominant individual person controls another individual person's agency. This is on display in Patricia J. Williams experience when she tried to secure funding to purchase a home. In Patricia Williams attempt to obtain a home mortgage, the bank agent, at the very least, exerted power over Williams's desire to obtain a mortgage and ultimately the residence of her choice. This is evidenced by the agent's decision to change the original terms of the mortgage contract. By increasing the interest rate, dollars to purchase points, and down payment requirement, the agent expressed racial prejudices toward Williams through power relations. The bank, through the agent, controls who receives a mortgage and the terms of the mortgage. In this case, the agent exercises power over and against Williams's economic means or material means. Williams, perhaps, could have afforded the additional expenses; but for many African Americans mortgage consumers, who were persuaded to enter into subprime mortgage

---

<sup>196</sup> I don't want to be misunderstood. I am not for one minute suggesting that race can be defined *exclusively* in terms of relation in general and styles of language in particular. I am merely pointing out that language can be one way that race relations are expressed.

contracts, these additional expenses would have been more difficult to prevent their homes from entering in to foreclosure when the teaser rates expired for these subprime mortgages. Despite her financial ability to afford the additional expenses, what this strongly says loud and clear is that being African American cost more than being White.

However, Williams did not just accept the agent's explanation why the bank asked for higher interest rates, more money for points, and more money for her down payment. She resisted giving into the bank's demands. Her struggle with the bank manifested in the form of a threat to sue them. Had the bank not acquiesced to its original terms of the mortgage contract, perhaps she would have sued them. Although Williams was able to win her struggle with this bank which had more financial resources than she, we should not merely assume that all African American consumers would have had the same wherewithal as Williams to pursue a strategy to sue. Some may never become aware of what banks do to African Americans; some may have become aware, but not been able to muster the strength to resist the bank. Although Williams did not initially see that race was the dominant factor in her own situation, her agency meets the bank's action. This was evidenced by her threat to sue the bank. Perhaps no less important is her familiarity with the law and the legal system. She learned that the bank's demand more money for higher interest rates, more money for points, and more money for the down payment were a ruse. Since African Americans in the Post-Civil Rights period are recognized by legal institutions, Williams could meet the bank's exercise power over her material interests. I am neither claiming that a law degree and familiarity with the law is necessary nor sufficient for consumers to decide to engage in a fight with the bank. Rather, I am claiming that these characteristics were important in the formation and development of Williams's agency. Her law degree, legal skill-set, and knowledge of the law empowered her to resist

the bank's desire to impose financial requirements on her because of her race. As a result of Williams's resistance to the banks' enormous power, she was awarded the original terms of the mortgage contract.

Having shown that the conception of dialectic of recognition unifies racial prejudice and power, now let us see how it unifies racial prejudice, power, and racial inequality. The racial inequality in treatment that African Americans and White Americans experience when applying for and receiving a mortgage loan becomes apparent in the example involving Williams, as well as the suits filed by the Department of Justice on behalf of American mortgage consumers who were unaware of what banks were doing to them. At the moment when the bank received the mortgage contract back from Williams and became aware of Williams's race, it acts differently on finding itself in relation to an African American and not a White American mortgage customer. When the bank thought that Williams was White, the White Williams was eligible for favorable mortgage terms. While Williams does not disclose the terms of her mortgage in her book, we can infer that they were less favorable than they were when the bank thought she was White. According to Williams's account, after the bank was made aware of her race, then and only then did the bank require her to pay more for points, pay more on her down payment, and more interests over the life of the mortgage loan.

Based on this account, we are in a better position to see how race advantaged White American and disadvantaged African American mortgage consumers in their economic relationships with banks and other lending institutions on the basis of race or a racial proxy. The White Williams received several economic advantages. First, she would have not only enjoyed the original terms of the mortgage contract; she would have potentially saved thousands of dollars over the life of the mortgage loan because she would have

benefited from lower interest rates over the life of the loan. Second, she would remain non-race-conscious. That is, she would be unaware that her and other Whites' race privileges or advantages Whites economically on the basis of race. Third, she would avoid any psychological stress of having to decide how to fight a financial goliath and endure the accumulation of stress associated with what Du Bois calls double-consciousness, being African American and an economic consumer. On the other hand, the African American Williams would actually be disadvantaged because she would have paid out actually thousands of dollars over the life of the mortgage loan. Second, she would have become more race-consciousness. Third, she might likely encounter psychological and physical stress having to deal with the demands of the bank because of her race. Finally, she is very likely to spend her entire life dealing with the accumulation of race-consciousness and stress in her American economic contexts because of new and improved ways that banks use race to exploit African Americans for economic gains.

The conception of dialectic of recognition allows us to think about racial prejudice, power relations, and racial inequality as denied recognition. Denied recognition involves mutual and reciprocal recognition that dominant racial individuals and groups give and receive from subordinate racial individuals or groups. Consequently, subordinate racial individuals and groups experience differences in access to economic goods, services, and opportunities.

The aim of this section was to show that dialectic of recognition has advantages for thinking about racism because it allows us to do two things that the individualist and social conception of racism do not. First, the dialectic of recognition conception of racism allows us to think about racial prejudice, power relations, and racial inequalities as unified. Economically dominant Whites' racial prejudices cause them to deny recognition



to African Americans. Their racial prejudices are expressed through their power relations over subordinate racial individual and groups. While White Americans occupy position of power over African Americans, they are not the only ones. We saw in the other mortgage lending examples where African American, employed by banks and other lending institutions, also exercised power over African American consumers. This is relevant because racism is not only practiced White over Black; it is practiced Black over Black. Consequently, White Americans' and African Americans' racial prejudices expressed as denied recognition to African American consumers produced inequalities in access to the same mortgage terms as similarly situated White consumers.

Second, the dialectic of recognition conception of racism allows us to think about changes to and continuity of racial prejudices, power relations, and racial inequalities. Although racism existed in economic contexts during the Civil Rights period, by the dusk of the Civil Rights period and with the resistance of the Civil Rights Movement, legal sanctioning of racial discrimination in the housing market had been eliminated. While it had been eliminated, racism had not. Racial prejudice, power relations, and racial inequality changed and maintained continuity from the Civil Rights period to the Post Civil Rights period.

#### **4. Thinking about racism in cultural contexts**

Racism has been persisting from the Civil Rights period into the Post-Civil Rights period in American cultural contexts. By the word ‘culture’ I am referring to practices that involve ways of learning and transmission of knowledge, which shape and inform individuals’ or groups’ thoughts and behaviors. Chapters two and three examined how individualist and social conceptions of racism think about the persistence of racism. They are adequate for thinking about the continuity of individual persons’ and groups’ racial prejudices, individual persons’ and groups’ discriminatory behaviors, and racial inequalities. However, they are also inadequate for thinking about racism in two ways. First, they do not allow us to think about racial prejudices, power relations, and racial inequalities as unified in cultural contexts. Second, they do not allow us to think about changes to and continuity of the unified elements of racism in cultural contexts. In what follows, I apply the dialectic of recognition conception of racism to some examples in education to show that it allows us to think about changes to and continuity of racial prejudices, power relations, and racial inequalities as unified.

What were the constitutive elements of racism during the Civil Rights period? During this period, racism was constituted by state actors, racial prejudice, power, racial inequality, and allowed White Americans to operate with impunity. By “state actor” I mean exclusively dominant White Americans who were expressing their racial prejudice towards Black Americans and using power over and against them through various state institutions, which produced racial inequalities for African Americans in American cultural contexts in general and in access to educational opportunities in particular.

As evidence of dominant White Americans’ racial prejudice and power over and against Black Americans, we can look at some examples when Black Americans

experienced differences in access to educational opportunities because of their race. Although the Civil Rights Movement started roughly in 1955, there are some court cases that commenced prior to 1955 that crystallized and normalized White Americans racial prejudices and behaviors toward Negro Americans. When racial prejudices and racial discrimination became normalized, it provided the framework through which to view White and Black Americans' access to educational opportunities during the Civil Rights period.

In 1849 the Massachusetts Supreme Court in *Robert v City of Boston*<sup>197</sup> ruled that segregated schools were legally permissible under Massachusetts's states constitution.<sup>198</sup> In 1857 the United States Supreme Court in the *Dred Scott v. Sanford* case ruled that enslaved Negro Americans were not citizens of the United States and their precious progeny were "so far inferior [to White Americans] that they had no rights which the white man was bound to respect."<sup>199</sup> In 1896 the United States Supreme Court in the *Plessy v. Ferguson* case ruled that "separate but equal" public accommodations were legally permissible. Homer Plessy was born a Slave; he engaged in an act of civil disobedience when he challenged the constitutionality of a Louisiana state law. The Louisiana state law codified in law the public policy that racial segregation was legally permissible in railway transportation. Although Massachusetts State Supreme Court made "separate but equal" legally permissible at the state level, the 1896 United States Supreme Court decision made "separate but equal" legally permissible at the federal level. In these decisions, White Supreme Court Justices denied recognition to Negro Americans. That is, the Majority of Justices who rendered these decisions for the Court held prejudices against Negro

---

<sup>197</sup> <http://www.tolerance.org/supplement/timeline-school-integration-us>.

<sup>198</sup> <http://www.tolerance.org/supplement/timeline-school-integration-us>.

<sup>199</sup> *Dred Scott v. Sanford*, 60 U.S. 393 (1857).

Americans and were expressed through the highest judicial institution in the United States. Their prejudices toward Negro Americans were executed, in part, by determining that enslaved Negro Americans and their precious progeny were not citizens because the Founders did not intend to include them as citizens, despite the United States Congress's intent to accord them citizenship rights<sup>200</sup> through several Civil Rights Acts. Furthermore, the White majority of Justices of the Supreme Court communicated to American citizens that Negro Americans had no rights that White Americans had to respect. Since the White majority of the Court did not believe that Negro Americans were entitled to be treated equally by White Americans as any United States citizen under the law, we should not have been troubled by state laws to segregate Negro Americans from White Americans. The majority of White Justices' racial prejudices toward Negro Americans were on display in *Bera College v. Kentucky*. In 1908 in the *Bera College v Kentucky*, the United States Supreme Court said that a state has the authority to require a private college to operate on a segregated basis.<sup>201</sup> *Gong Lum v Rice* is another case further expresses their power over and against Negro Americans. In *Gong Lum v Rice*, the United States Supreme Court finds that states have a right to define Chinese students as non-White for the purpose of segregating public education.

---

<sup>200</sup> The United States Congress enacted the 1866 Civil Rights Act. It provides protection for U.S. citizens. It claims "[t]hat all persons born in the United States and not subject to any foreign power, excluding Indians not taxed, at hereby declared citizens of the United States; and such citizens, of every race and color, without regard to any previous condition of slavery or involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime...shall have the same right, in every State and Territory in the United States, to make and enforce contracts, to sue, be parties, and give evidence, to inherit, purchase, lease, sell, hold, and convey real and property, and to full and equal benefit of all laws and proceedings for the security of person and property, as is enjoyed by white citizens, and shall be subject to like punishment, pains, and penalties, and to non-other, any law statute, ordinances, regulations, or custom, to the contrary notwithstanding." The United States Congress enacts the 1875 Civil Rights Act.

<sup>201</sup> <http://www.tolerance.org/supplement/timeline-school-integration-us>.

The White majority of Justices exerted their power over and against Negro Americans through the authority vested in each individual United States Supreme Court Justice. While each individual Justice's acts with the authority of his (or her) position, power was constituted by the Justices as a group. They were vested with power to determine who could be a United States citizen and be allowed to participate in determining the collective meaning of being an American, and the direction of the nation.

In these United States Supreme Court decisions, this judicial body created and maintained segregation in public accommodations. These legal decisions denied Negro Americans access to educational opportunities, but which were afforded to White Americans students. Since Negro Americans were subjected to inferior schools, facilities, material, and teachers' pay, Negro children were denied access to equal access to educational opportunities.

In response to the legally sanctioned segregation in access to educational opportunities, Civil Rights Activists resisted White Justices denied recognition of Negro Americans. Several legal struggles resulted in the gradual decline and ultimately death of Jim and Jane Crow. Though generally unknown, Charles Hamilton Houston was a main assassin of Jim and Jane Crow. In 1936 Houston put a team of lawyers together to challenge legal segregation in educational opportunities. For example, in *Murray v. Maryland*, Charles Hamilton Houston and Thurgood Marshall, NAACP legal and Education fund attorneys, sued and won their case against the University of Maryland law school. Donald Gains Murray, a graduate of Amherst College, wanted to become a lawyer. He tried to enroll in the University of Maryland's law school but was denied. The Court decided that the University of Maryland law school engaged in a pattern and practice of denying Negro Americans in general and Donald Gains Murray in particular access to an

accredited laws school. They later won this case on the grounds that segregating law schools contradicted the Fourteenth Amendment. *Gains v Canada* is another legal case in which Houston played a significant role in dismantling Jim and Jane Crow. Lloyd Gains was a college graduate; he had been denied admittance into the University of Missouri law school by Cy Woodson, registrar of the law school, because he was Black.<sup>202</sup> As a response to the *Gains v Canada* decision, White State officials attempted to protect segregated laws schools primarily and secondarily placate Negro Americans by opening a law school at the Historically Black College and University (HBCU) University of Lincoln, MO. As a consequence of *Gains v. Canada*, in 1938, the United States Supreme Court ordered the Missouri Law School, which was all White at the time, to admit Lloyd Gains.<sup>203</sup> While Charles Hamilton Houston was Vice Dean of the Howard University School of Law, he set out to cultivate the mind and talents of young attorneys to become Civil Rights Activists who would struggle against the “separate but equal” doctrine codified in the *Plessy v Ferguson*, a United States Supreme Court decision. Thurgood Marshall, perhaps Houston’s most notable protégé, followed Houston’s lead. He, and his team at the NAACP Legal Defense and Education Funds, developed strategies to eliminate racially discriminatory practices of legal segregation in access to educational opportunities. Houston’s legacy yielded a victory not only because the Civil Rights Movement was instrumental in eliminating separate but equal in education but because *Brown v the Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas* eliminate the “separate but equal” doctrine in access to educational opportunities established by the Supreme Court in *Plessy v. Ferguson* in 1896.

---

<sup>202</sup> [http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/reconstruction/activism/ps\\_1875.html](http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/reconstruction/activism/ps_1875.html).

<sup>203</sup> <http://www.tolerance.org/supplement/timeline-school-integration-us>.

While Charles Hamilton Houston was successful in eliminating the legal basis for the segregation of White and Black Americans' access to educational opportunities, racism was changing from the Civil Rights period to the Post Civil Rights period and maintaining continuity as racial prejudice, power relations, and racial inequality in access to educational opportunities.

The dialectic of recognition conception of racism allows us to think about changes to and continuity of the unified elements of racism. It involves processes through which a dominant racial individual or group denies recognition to a subordinate racial individual or group. The relations that exist between a dominant and subordinate racial group during the process of denied recognition shape and inform how racial individuals and groups think of themselves, of other racial individuals and groups, as well as how they exercised their agency.

The dialectic of recognition conception of racism allows us think about the changes to the unified elements of racism involves two processes that occur concurrently. One process is the *elimination* of some constitutive elements of racism that existed during the Civil Rights period. We saw this unfold in the discussion of Charles Hamilton Houston's resistance and strategy to eliminate legally sanctioned racial segregation. The other process that occurs is *change*. Change to denied recognition can be qualitative. This means that the number of conflicts or struggles during denied recognition either increases or decreases. Denied recognition can change qualitatively. This means that conflicts or struggles during denied recognition can either improve or decline. Consider the following examples in educational opportunities to illustrate how racism changed and maintained continuity from the Civil Rights period to the Post Civil Rights period. The Bolivar County Board of Education illustrates how racial prejudice, power relations and racial

inequalities have maintained continuity from the end of the Civil Rights period to the Post Civil Rights period. In 1965, a private citizen files a law suit against the Bolivar County Board of education for failing to desegregate public education. According to the Department of Justice's brief, the United States intervened in the case in 1985. In 2011, the United States filed a motion asking for further relief.<sup>204</sup> The motion for further relief asked that the court find that the Bolivar County Board of Education in general, and the Cleveland, Mississippi School District in particular, "violated its desegregation obligations under several previously entered desegregation orders governing the District, and to compel the District's compliance with federal law."<sup>205</sup> The United States' legal brief claimed that the Cleveland, MS, School district, one of several school districts that fall under the Bolivar County Board of Education, had failed to dismantle the vestiges of segregation in its schools, and that schools that were racially segregated by law in 1969, when the District was originally ordered to desegregate, remain segregated today. The brief also asserts before 1969 "schools on the west side of the railroad tracks that ran through Cleveland were white schools segregated by law." Fifty-seven years after Cleveland entered into a desegregation order, the Cleveland, Mississippi School District remains segregated in the Post-Civil Rights period. Similarly, schools on the east side also remain segregated by race. The "schools on the west side of the railroad tracks –originally black schools segregated by law –have never been integrated; and remain all black or virtually-all-black schools today."<sup>206</sup> According to the brief the United States filed May 2, 2011 "[n]early six decades after *Brown*, relatively little has changed. With isolated

---

<sup>204</sup> <https://www.justice.gov/sites/default/files/crt/legacy/2012/04/11/clevememorandumoflaw.pdf>.

<sup>205</sup> <https://www.justice.gov/sites/default/files/crt/legacy/2012/04/11/clevememorandumoflaw.pdf>, pp. 8-9.

<sup>206</sup> <https://www.justice.gov/sites/default/files/crt/legacy/2012/04/11/clevememorandumoflaw.pdf>, p. 1.



exceptions, the schools that were “black schools” in Cleveland’s old dual school system have never been racially integrated and remain all black or virtually all black schools today. “The schools in Cleveland that were de jure white schools” are integrated, but they remain ‘racially identifiable’ as white schools with student bodies that are disproportionately white.”<sup>207</sup> By ‘racially identifiable’ the brief

means that due to certain factors, including a percentage of one race of students or faculty in a school or class that is disproportionately to the percentage of that race in the system as a whole, a school is perceived as a ‘white school’ or a ‘black school.’<sup>208</sup>

Another fact asserted in the brief is that

almost every school in the District is an enduring vestige of Cleveland’s former dual school system, the segregation of Cleveland’s high school and middle schools is particularly pronounced. Cleveland has two high schools: Cleveland High school and East Side High School. Cleveland High School was a white school in the former dual school system; it is a racially identifiable white school today. East Side High School was a black school in the former dual school system; today its student body is 99.7 % black. The two high schools are 1.3 miles apart. Cleveland also has two middle schools: Margaret Green Junior High School and D. M. Smith Middle School. Margaret Green Junior High School was a white school in the former dual school system; it is a racially identifiable white school today. D.M. Smith Middle School was a black school in the former dual school system; today its student body is 100 % black. The two middle schools are 1.2 miles apart.<sup>209</sup>

According to the brief,

[i]n a decision on March 28, 2012, the court determined that two schools, a middle school and high school that were formerly de jure black schools, had never been desegregated. The court also found that the ratio of black and white faculty at every school in the district deviated from the district-wide faculty ratio.<sup>210</sup>

---

<sup>207</sup> Ibid., 1.

<sup>208</sup> Ibid., 1. See footnote number 1 in the United States’ brief.

<sup>209</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>210</sup> <https://www.justice.gov/crt/about/edu/documents/clevememoopinion.pdf>.

The Cleveland School District Board of Education embodies the persistence of the unified constitutive elements of racism, namely racial prejudice, power, and racial inequality from the Civil Rights period to the Post Civil Rights period.

How does the dialectic of recognition conception of racism allow us to think about changes to and continuity of racial prejudice, power relations, and racial inequality unified? It allows us to think about changes to and continuity of these elements of racism as unified in the Cleveland School Board example. First, racial prejudice has changed quantitatively. Whites' racial prejudice has changed quantitatively because fewer Whites in the Post-Civil Rights period openly or explicitly deny recognition to African Americans because of race than did during the Civil Rights period. Thus, although to the quantity of White Americans' denial of recognition to African Americans have declined, they have maintained continuity from the Civil Rights to the Post Civil Rights period. While the quantity of White Americans who deny recognition to African Americans has declined, White Americans' denial of recognition to African Americans has changed and maintained continuity. In the Cleveland, Mississippi School District case, the quality of White Americans' attitudes on the School Board has improved. They do not openly and explicitly express much, if any, hostility toward African Americans in general but African Americans students in particular. In this way, the rhetoric on race, as Patricia Williams noted, is not mentioned.

Second, we can think about changes to racism using the dialectic of recognition conception of racism. During the Civil Rights period, Whites openly and boastfully expressed their intention to bar Black Americans from integrating White educational institutions from K-12 through professional school. During the Post-Civil Rights period,

the Cleveland, Mississippi School Board made some qualitative improvements towards desegregating Whites' and African Americans' school buildings. For example, in the last forty-seven years since it was ordered by the United States Department of Justice "to 'take affirmative action to disestablish all school segregation and eliminate the effects of the dual school system,' " the Cleveland, Mississippi School District perpetuated the dual school system, despite the 1969 and 1985 consent orders. According to the 1989 consent order the Cleveland, Mississippi School District "established an unwritten 'dual residency policy' whereby white students could avoid attending a majority –black school in their residential zone by establishing a second 'weekday residence' in an area where the zoned school was majority white." Even after the School District created and "adopted a new written attendance zone policy on January 1, 1984 that defined a students' residence as 'the place where the students' parents reside on a permanent basis, where the parents claim homestead exemption, or where the parents are registered to vote," the new written policy did not significantly alter the Cleveland, Mississippi School District's racial demographics. These actions by the Cleveland, Mississippi School District embody the qualitative nature of denied recognition. They thought that they were providing access to qualitatively better educational opportunities for Black K through 12 students. To this end, the Cleveland, Mississippi School District constructed three new schools –"Eastwood Junior High School, Cypress Park Elementary, and Bell Elementary Schools –in areas such that black students continue to attend schools with 100 % black enrollments." The 1969 consent order required that if the Cleveland, Mississippi School District built any schools, it should not recreate the dual school system. But, the Cleveland, Mississippi School District, acquiesced to White families, maintained segregated school systems by building new schools but in residential zones where African Americans already resided.

Even though law, in the Post-Civil Rights period, no longer segregates White and African American students, the Cleveland, Mississippi School Board continued to compel White Americans and African Americans to attend different schools through residency requirement and locations of new schools.

Let me summarize what this section has attempted to accomplished. I have attempted to show that the dialectic of recognition conception of racism allows us to think about the persistence of racism from the Civil Rights period to the Post-Civil Rights periods in cultural contexts. In accomplishing this end, I attempted to show that the dialectic of recognition conception of racism allows to think about the persistence of racism in the cultural context of education as struggles over access to decent educational opportunities. During the Civil Rights periods, White residents and White School Board members of Cleveland, Mississippi held were racially prejudice attitudes against African Americans, which were expressed by Whites power develop and maintain segregated neighborhoods, which translated in to segregated school systems. At the close of the Civil Rights period, The United states Justice Department sued Cleveland, Mississippi school district to desegregate schools on behalf of the African American residents living there. In the Post-Civil Rights period as late as May, 2011, White residents and School Board members had maintained segregated neighborhoods, which maintain segregated Cleveland, Mississippi schools from kindergarten through twelfth grade because students could only attend schools where their residence were located.

This dissertation posed the following question: how should we think about persisting racism? The individualist and social conceptions of racism answer this question in ways that are both similar and dissimilar. On the one hand, individualist conceptions of racism think about persisting racism exclusively as an individual activity, in which individuals

hold racial prejudices against another individual or group on the basis of race. These racial prejudices are then expressed through individuals' discriminatory behaviors. On the other hand, the social conception of racism thinks persisting racism can be understood as cultural norms as expressed by cultural institutions. These practices produce racial inequality as it relates to beauty, intelligence, and culture. The individualist and social conceptions of racism are adequate for thinking about the persistence of racism to some extent. Some of them are adequate for thinking about the persistence of racism to the extent that they allow us to think about the continuity of racism as racial prejudices embodied by individuals. Some of them are adequate for thinking about the persistence of racism to the extent that they allow us to think about the continuity of racism as constituted by power as relations among individuals in cultural contexts. Finally, some of them are adequate for thinking about the persistence of racism to the extent that they allow us to think about the continuity of racism as racial inequalities that are produced by individuals and institutions.

However, these conceptions of racism are inadequate for thinking about racism. They do not allow us to think about the continuity of racism as embodied in power relations, by groups, and by institutions.

In an attempt to resolve the inadequacies of the individualist and social conception of racism, I draw upon some elements from both Hegel and Du Bois that allow us to think about changes to and continuity of racism. When I use elements of both Hegel's and Du Bois's conceptions of dialectic of recognition for thinking about changes to and continuity of racism I call this new concept *the dialectic of recognition conception of racism*. I argue that it is superior to the individualist and social conceptions of racism because it allows us to think about the changes to and continuity of racism from the Civil Rights period to

the Post-Civil Rights period. I attempt to show that racism as constituted by racial prejudices, power relations, and racial inequalities, existed in American political, economic, and cultural contexts during the Civil Rights periods persisted into the Post-Civil Rights period. The dialectic of recognition conception of racism allows us to think about the persistence of racism by thinking about way that racial prejudices, power relations, and racial inequalities are always constituted by interpersonal conflicts over claims about recognition. As I tried to show that racism in political, economic, and cultural contexts were really about recognition of racial individuals' and groups' claims for equal treatment as citizens, borrowers, and students.

## 5. Conclusion

This dissertation posed the following question: how should we think about persisting racism? The individualist and social conceptions of racism answer this question in ways that are both similar and dissimilar. On the one hand, individualist conceptions of racism think about persisting racism exclusively as an individual activity, in which individuals hold racial prejudices against another individual or group on the basis of race. These racial prejudices are then expressed through individuals' discriminatory behaviors. On the other hand, the social conception of racism thinks persisting racism can be understood as cultural norms as expressed by cultural institutions. These practices produce racial inequality as it relates to beauty, intelligence, and culture. The individualist and social conceptions of racism are adequate for thinking about the persistence of racism to some extent. Some of them are adequate for thinking about the persistence of racism to the extent that they allow us to think about the continuity of racism as racial prejudices embodied by individuals. Some of them are adequate for thinking about the persistence of racism to the extent that they allow us to think about the continuity of racism as constituted by power as relations among individuals in cultural contexts. Finally, some of them are adequate for thinking about the persistence of racism to the extent that they allow us to think about the continuity of racism as racial inequalities that are produced by individuals and institutions.

However, these conceptions of racism are inadequate for thinking about racism. They do not allow us to think about the continuity of racism as embodied in power relations, by groups, and by institutions.

In an attempt to resolve the inadequacies of the individualist and social conception of racism, I draw upon some elements from both Hegel and Du Bois that allow us to think

about changes to and continuity of racism. When I use elements of both Hegel's and Du Bois's conceptions of dialectic of recognition for thinking about changes to and continuity of racism I call this new concept *the dialectic of recognition conception of racism*. I argue that it is superior to the individualist and social conceptions of racism because it allows us to think about the changes to and continuity of racism from the Civil Rights period to the Post-Civil Rights period. I attempt to show that racism as constituted by racial prejudices, power relations, and racial inequalities, existed in American political, economic, and cultural contexts during the Civil Rights periods persisted into the Post-Civil Rights period. The dialectic of recognition conception of racism allows us to think about the persistence of racism by thinking about way that racial prejudices, power relations, and racial inequalities are always constituted by interpersonal conflicts over claims about recognition. As I tried to show that racism in political, economic, and cultural contexts were really about recognition of racial individuals' and groups' claims for equal treatment as citizens, borrowers, and students.



## **BIBLIOGRAPHY**

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Alexander, Michelle. 2011. *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*. New York: The New Press.
- Beiser, Frederick C. ed. 1993. *The Cambridge Companion to Hegel*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Bell, Linda A. and David Blumenfeld. *Overcoming Racism and Sexism*. Boston: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc.
- Berman, Ari. 2015. *Give Us The Ballot: The Modern Struggle for Voting Rights in American*. New York: Picador.
- Bernasconi, Robert and Tommy L. Lott ed. 2000. *The Idea of Race*. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc.
- Bonilla-Silva, Eduardo, 2001. *White Supremacy & Racism: in the Post-Civil Rights Era*. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc.
- Bonilla-Silva, Eduardo. 2001. *White Supremacy and Racism in the Post-Civil Rights Era*. Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers.
- Bonilla-Silva, Eduardo. 2006. *Racism without Racist: Color-Blind Racism and the Persistence of Racial Inequality in the United States*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. New York: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc.
- Boxill, Bernard R., 1992. *Blacks and Social Justice*. Boston: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc.
- Boxill, Bernard R., ed. *Race and Racism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Brion, David. 1966. *The Problem of Slavery in Western Culture*. Cornell University Press.
- Brown, Michael K., Martin Carnoy, Elliott Currie, Troy Duster, David B. Oppenheimer, Marjorie M Shultz, and David Wellman. 2003. *White-Washing Race: The Myth of A Color-Blind Society*. Berkeley: University of Californian Press.
- Bunche, Ralph J. 1968. *A World View of Race*. New York: Kennikat Press, Inc.
- Butler, Judith. 1997. *The Psychic Life of Power: Theories in Subjection* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press.

- Cochran David C. 1999. *The Color of Freedom: Race and Contemporary American Liberalism*. New York: State University of New York Press.
- Collins Patricia Hill. 2009. *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the politics of empowerment*. New York: Routledge. pp. 76-106, 1-7-132.
- Cose, Ellis. 1995. *The Rage of a Privileged Class: Why are middle-class blacks angry? Why should America care?* New York: Harper Perennial.
- Cress-Welsing, Frances. 1991. *The Isis Papers: The Keys to the Colors*. Washington, D.C. C.W. Publishing.
- D'Souza, Dinesh. 1995. *The End of Racism: Principles for a Multiracial Society*. New York: Free Press a Division of Simon & Shuster. pp. 245-288, 289-336.
- D'Souza, Dinesh. 1995. *The End of Racism: Principles of a Multicultural Society*. New York: Free Press Paperback.
- Daniel Patrick Moynihan's "The Negro Family: The Case for National Action, Office of Planning and Research, United States Department of Labor (March 1965).
- Daniel Tatum, Beverly. 1997. *Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?*. New York: Basic Books.
- Daniel Tatum, Beverly. 2007. *Can We Talk about Race?*. Boston: MA: Beacon Press.
- Dred Scott v. Sanford, 60 U.S. 393 (1857).
- Du Bois, W.E.B. "The Conservation of Races," in *The Idea of Race*, ed. Robert Bernasconi and Tommy Lott. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company.
- Du Bois, W.E.B. 1903. *The Souls of Black Folk*. intro. Arnold Rampersad. New York: Alfred A. Knopf.
- Du Bois, W.E.B. 1940. *Dusk of Dawn: An Essay Toward An Autobiography Of A Race Concept*. New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers
- Engels, Frederick. 1972. *Anti-Duhring*. New York: International Publishers.
- Fanon, Frantz. 1963. *The Wretched of the Earth*. trans. Constance Farrington. Preface Jean-Paul Sartre. New York: Grove Press.
- Fanon, Frantz. 1967. *Black Skin White Mask*. New York: Grove Press, Inc.
- Fiore, Robin N. and Hilde Lindemann Nelson. 2003. *Recognition, Responsibility, and Rights: Feminist Ethics and Social Theory*. New York: Roman & Littlefield Publisher, Inc.

- Foucault, Michel. 1980. *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews & Other Writings 1972-1977*. New York: Vintage Books.
- Foucault, Michel. 1990. *The History of Sexuality Volume 1: An Introduction*. (New York: Vintage Books.
- Foucault, Michel. 1995. *Discipline & Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. New York: Vintage Books.
- Foucault, Michel. 1997. *Society Must Be Defended: Lectures At the Collège De France 1975-1976*. New York: Picador.
- Foucault, Michel. 1997. *Society Must be Defended: Lectures at the College De France 1975-1976*. trans. David Macey. Ed. Arnold I. Davidson. New York: Picador.
- Fraser, Nancy and Axel Honneth. 2003. *Redistribution or Recognition?: A Political-Philosophical Exchange*. New York: Verso.
- Fredrickson, George M. 2002. *Racism: A short History*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Gutmann, Amy. 1994. *Multiculturalism: Examining the Politics of recognition*. Princeton, New York: Princeton University Press.
- Hacker, Andrew. 1995. *Two Nations: Black and White, Separate, Hostile, Unequal*. New York: Ballantine Books.
- Hannah-Jones, Nicole. *Living Apart: How the Government Betrayed a Landmark Civil Rights*. ProPublica,...
- Harris-Perry, Melissa V. 2011. *Sister Citizen: Shame, Stereotypes, and Black Women in America*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Hegel, G.W.F. 1977. *Phenomenology of Spirit*. trans A. V. Miller. foreword J.N. Findlay. Oxford University: Oxford University Press.
- Honneth, Axel. 1996. *The Struggle for Recognition: The Moral Grammar of Social Conflicts*. Cambridge MA.: The MIT Press.
- hooks, bell. 1994. "Back to Black: Ending Internalized Racism" in *Outlaw Culture: Resisting Representations*. New York: Routledge.
- Jones, Camara Phyllis Jones. "Levels of Racism: A Theoretic Framework and a Gardener's Tale," *American Journal of Public Health*, August 2000, Vol. 90, No. 8, 1212-1215.
- Jorge A. Garcia. "The Heart of Racism" in Boxill, Bernard R., ed. *Race and Racism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 257-296.

- King, Martin Luther Jr. 1968. *Where Do We Go From Here: Chaos or Community?* Boston: Beacon Press.
- Lawson, Bill ed. 1992. *The Underclass Question*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- Levitt, Justin. 2003. "The Truth about Voter Fraud. New York: The Brennan Center for Justice at New York University School of Law.
- Lukács, Georg. 1971. *History and Class Consciousness: Studies in Marxist Dialect*. trans. Rodney Livingstone. Cambridge: The MIT Press.
- Lukács, Georg. 2000. *A Defense of History and Class Consciousness: Tailism and the Dialectic*.
- Marcuse, Herbert. 1960. *Reason and Revolution: Hegel and the Rise of Social Theory*. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Marx, Karl. 1978. *The Marx-Engels Reader*. ed. Robert C. Tucker. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. New York: W.W. Norton and Company.
- McGary, Howard. 1999. *Race & Social Justice*. Malden, Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishing, Inc.
- Mills, Charles W. 1997. *The Racial Contract*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Mills, Charles W. 1998. "What Are You Really" in *Blackness Visible: Essays on Philosophy and Race*. New York: Cornell University Press.
- O'Neill, John. ed. 1996. *Hegel's Dialectic of Desire and Recognition: Text and Commentary*. New York: State University of New York Press.
- Oliver, Kelly. 2001 *Witnessing: Beyond Recognition*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Ollman, Bertell. 1976. *Alienation: Marx's Conception of Man in Capitalist Society*. 2nd. ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Ollman, Bertell. 2003. *Dance of the Dialectic: Steps in Marx's Method*. Chicago: University of Illinois Press.
- Outlaw, Lucius T. 1996. *On Race and Philosophy*. New York: Routledge.
- Parekh, Bhikhu. 1982. *Marx's Theory of Ideology*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

- Page, Jennifer, "Voter Suppression Bills Sweep the Country," *The Center for Media and Democracy*, May 10, 2011. [www.prwatch.org/news/2011/05/10711/voter-suppression-bills-sweep-country](http://www.prwatch.org/news/2011/05/10711/voter-suppression-bills-sweep-country).
- Patterson, Orlando. 1997. *The Ordeal of Integration: Progress and Resentment in America's "Racial" Crisis*. Washington D.C.: Civitas.
- Pietila, Antero. 2010. *Not in My Neighborhood: How Bigotry Shaped Great American City*. Chicago: Ivan R. Doe.
- Plotkin, Wendy. 1999. Deeds of Mistrust: Race, Housing, and Restrictive Covenants in Chicago 1900-1953. Ph.D. dissertation, University of Illinois at Chicago.
- Popper, Karl. "What is Dialectic?" *Mind*, New Series, Vol. 49, No. 196 (Oct., 1940), pp. 403-426. Published by: Oxford University Press on behalf of the Mind Association Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2250841>
- Richard Rothstein, "A Comment on Bank of American/ Countrywide's Discriminatory Mortgage Lending and its Implications for Racial Segregation," Economic Policy Institute Briefing paper # 355, January 23, 2013, Washington D.C., Economic Policy Institute.
- Schuman, Howard, Charlotte Steeh, and Lawrence Bobo. 1985. *Racial Attitudes in American*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Shelby, Tommie. 2005. *We Who are Dark: The Philosophical Foundations of Black Solidarity*. Cambridge: MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.
- Smith, Robert C., 1995. *Racism in the Post-Civil Rights Era: Now You See It, Now You Don't*, New York: State University of New York Press.
- Strauss, Misha. 2003. "The Role of Recognition in the Formation of Self-Understanding" in *Recognition, Responsibility, and Rights: Feminist Ethics and Social Theory*. Eds. Robin N. Fiore and Hilde Lindemann. New York: Roman & Littlefield Publisher, Inc.
- Taylor, Charles. "The Politics of Recognition" in *Multiculturalism: Examining the Politics of recognition*. Princeton, New York: Princeton University Press.
- Thernstrom, Stephen and Abigail. 1999. *America in Black and White*, New York: Simon & Schuster.
- Wellman, David T. 1993. *Portraits of White Racism*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Wellman, David. 2003. *White-Washing Race: The Myth of a Color-Blind Society*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

- Wendy R Weiser and Lawrence Norden. 2012. "Voting Law Changes in 2012." Brennan Center for Justice, New York University School of Law.
- West, 1982. *Prophesy Deliverance!: an afro-american revolutionary christianity*. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press.
- West, Cornel. 1993. *Race Matters*. New York: Vintage Books A Division of Random House, Inc.
- William, Patricia J. 1997. *Seeing A Color-Blind Future: The Paradox of Race*. New York: Noonday Press.
- Williams, Patricia J. 1991. *The Alchemy of Race and Rights: The Diary of a Law Professor*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Williams, Patricia J. 1997. *Seeing a Colorblind Future: the paradox of race*. New York: The Noonday Press.
- Williams, Robert R. 1997. *Hegel's Ethics of Recognition* Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Wilson, William J. 1980. *The Declining significance of Race: Blacks and Changing American Institutions*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Wilson, William J. 1997. *When Work Disappears: The World of the New Urban Poor*. New York: Vintage Books.
- Wilson, William. 1987. *The Truly Disadvantaged: The Inner City, the Underclass, and Public Policy*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.