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RACE AS A SYMPTOM OF INJUSTICE

by

Henry K. Weiss

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ABSTRACT

RACE AS A SYMPTOM OF INJUSTICE

by

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It is often assumed that racial distinction – the existence of racially distinct populations within the same society – will persist after the elimination of racial injustice. This paper disputes that assumption. I adopt a framework under which racial distinction may persist due to three broad causes: racial segregation, pressure from social institutions to practice racial endogamy, and personal preferences for racial endogamy. I examine the conditions under which each of these causes is likely to obtain and argue that each is characterized by injustice. I conclude that racial distinction is a symptom of injustice, and is unlikely to persist after the achievement of racial justice.

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The mainstream vision of racial justice in North America, the one described in Martin Luther King Jr.'s dream of "little black boys and black girls [joining] hands with little white boys and white girls as sisters and brothers" (1963), is one in which the physical features of race persist but cease to mark some races as superior and others as inferior.¹ This vision is common in sociopolitical philosophy as well. Jeffers (2019), for example, denies that distinct races' "ceasing to exist is a necessary condition for or consequence of the end of racism" (71). And Hardimon (2017) advises that we "find a solution to racism that is compatible with the continued existence of races" (123). Even Haslanger (2012), who hopes for the elimination of (what she calls) race, cautions that "this is not to say that we should [...] impose a 'khaki' appearance on everyone" (252); instead, she says, "we should hope [that in a just future] people will come in the broad variety of skin tones, shapes, and appearances they do now" (269).

Implicit in this vision is a speculative sociology that sees it as possible for racial distinction to persist without the injustices that are today associated with it. The purpose of this paper is to dispute that possibility. The persistent racial distinction that characterizes the United States and many other multiracial societies is, I argue, a symptom of injustice. If that injustice is eliminated, the disappearance of racial distinction – the realization of Haslanger's "khaki" society, in which there exist no groups that are racially distinct from each other – will likely soon follow.

My discussion is divided into three sections. In Section 1, I define the central concepts at use in this paper: persistent racial distinction and injustice. In Section 2, I adopt

¹ There has recently been debate over whether the first letter in the names of races referred to by color should be capitalized (e.g., "black" vs. "Black"). In this paper, I will capitalize the first letter in the names of all races, but I will not change quotations by authors whose practice differs from mine.

a framework under which racial distinction may persist due to three broad causes: racial segregation, pressure from social institutions to practice racial endogamy, and personal preferences for racial endogamy. I examine the conditions under which each of these causes is likely to obtain and argue that each is characterized by injustice. Thus I conclude that racial distinction is a symptom of injustice. In Section 3, I briefly discuss the normative implications of my arguments.

§1. Preliminary concepts

There is considerable disagreement among philosophers over the referent of the term “race”, with positions ranging from race realism, which holds that our everyday racial categories refer to something real; to race eliminativism, which holds that “race” refers to nothing that exists in the world. But, as Hardimon (2017:70) notes, even the “arch-eliminativist” Appiah recognizes the existence of “groups defined by skin color, hair, and gross morphology corresponding to the dominant pattern for these characteristics in the major subcontinental regions” (Appiah 1996:73). These are the groups and characteristics I am aiming to discuss, and so in this paper I will use the term “race” in the “minimalist” way Hardimon defends, on which “[a] race is a group of human beings that, as a group, is distinguished from other groups of human beings by *patterns of visible physical features*, whose members are linked by a *common ancestry* peculiar to members of the group, and that originates from a *distinctive geographic location*” (Hardimon 2017:31, prefixes omitted). Thus a society characterized by *racial distinction* is one in which there exist multiple races, each with distinctive patterns of visible physical features, distinctive

ancestries, and distinctive geographic origins.²

Racial distinction occurs when human groups are reproductively isolated for long enough that they develop visible differences in phenotype. Such differences typically originate when groups are geographically separated for long periods of time and evolve different physical features in response to different environmental pressures (e.g., when populations exposed to less ultraviolet radiation develop lighter skin) (Hardimon 2003). Racial distinction persists for as long as these groups remain reproductively isolated, i.e., for as long as they practice racial endogamy (i.e., the practice of mating within one's group; as opposed to exogamy, i.e., the practice of mating outside one's group).

When groups practice racial endogamy due to geographic isolation, it is not typically cause for great concern; there are few justice concerns raised if, for example, there are racial differences between the inhabitants of several isolated islands who interact with each other minimally or not at all. But racial endogamy is more worrisome when it persists between formerly geographically isolated populations who now live in close proximity to each other, as is the case in the United States and other persistently multiracial societies. In these circumstances, the racial endogamy that leads to the persistence of racial difference can no longer be attributed to something as innocent as geography. Instead, there must be social forces that keep group members from intermixing and racial distinction from melting away after a few generations (Hardimon 2003:448). If these social forces are strong

² Note that Hardimon's conception of race does not incorporate any talk of culture, identity, or hierarchy; it is in this sense that it is minimalist (though see Hardimon (2023) for an argument that social constructionists, who do make things like culture, identity, or hierarchy central to their accounts of race, should – and often implicitly do – make use of the minimalist conception of race). This is not to make the implausible claim that none of these things are *related* to race; indeed, the central claim of this paper is that oppressive racial hierarchy plays a definitive role in maintaining racial distinction. But it is to say that race, for Hardimon and for the purposes of this paper, should be understood in strictly biological terms (see Hardimon (2017:60) for an argument that minimalist race's reference to geography does not compromise its status as a biological concept).

enough, there will be so few mixed-race couples having mixed-race children that the existence of separate racial groups persists into perpetuity.³ In the next section, I argue that such social forces must be a symptom of injustice, and thus that the persistent racial distinction they cause is also a symptom of injustice.

The working conception of justice I will employ here is one inspired by Young (1990:ch. 2), in which justice is defined as the absence of any of six “faces of oppression”: exploitation, marginalization, cultural imposition, group stigmatization, violence, and powerlessness.⁴ I implicate four of these – exploitation, marginalization, group stigmatization, and violence – in the persistence of racial difference due to racial endogamy. Exploitation and marginalization are broadly economic in nature. In exploitation, one group rigs systems of production such that they unfairly reap the benefits of labor performed by another group.⁵ In marginalization, one group excludes another from participating in economic and social systems at all. In both cases, one group effectively robs another of the ability to achieve equal levels of prosperity, either by taking the fruits of their labor or by

³ Precisely how long it would take for racial difference to melt away absent such social forces is not a question that can be answered in the abstract. If in a given multiracial society race is not a factor in mating decisions (i.e., if mating occurs randomly with respect to race), and there is no immigration by racially distinct populations, then the length of time it will take for racial distinction to disappear is a function of the number of racial groups that exist in that society and their relative sizes (Kalmijn 1998:402).

⁴ As readers of Young will notice, I differ from Young in speaking of *six* faces of oppression, while Young speaks only of five; in place of cultural imposition and group stigmatization, she speaks only of cultural imperialism. I follow Anderson (2010:15-16) in seeing in Young’s concept of cultural imperialism two distinct forms of injustice. One is cultural imposition, in which one group forces their norms on another group. The other is group stigmatization, in which one group adopts contemptuous attitudes toward another. (I mourn the loss of the alliterative flair of Young’s “five faces”, but such are the sacrifices of the philosopher.)

⁵ Young’s conception of exploitation is decidedly Marxian, emphasizing the difference between a worker’s contribution to production and their pay. But Anderson (2010) argues against this conception, saying that in modern economies, “where everyone’s efforts contribute jointly to the production of the economy’s total output, and everyone’s efforts causally contribute to others’ productivity, it makes no sense to credit bits of production to the independent efforts of specific producers” (12-13). Anderson (2010) does not fully develop an alternative conception of exploitation, but see Anderson (1990:189) for remarks that suggest a conception that emphasizes market manipulation (e.g., through discrimination based on irrelevant features such as race). I tend to favor an Andersonian conception, but I will not attempt to develop one here.

preventing them from laboring in the first place. Group stigmatization is the adoption, by an individual or by a group, of hateful or aversive attitudes toward another group. Violence as a face of oppression is not just any violent act, but rather terroristic violence that systematically targets members of a specific group, often for the purpose of enforcing social hierarchy.⁶

§2. Racial endogamy in a multiracial society as a symptom of injustice

In this section, I will argue that the each cause of racial endogamy in a multiracial society is a symptom of at least one of these four faces of oppression. Kalmijn (1998) identifies three possible reasons a social group might tend to practice endogamy: (1) homogeneity in the set of people one encounters (essentially the condition of group segregation), (2) pressure against exogamy by interested “third parties” such as families and social institutions, and (3) personal preferences against exogamy. Section 2.1 argues that Kalmijn’s first cause (1) is a symptom of group stigmatization, violence, exploitation, and marginalization. Section 2.2 argues that (2) is a symptom group stigmatization. And Section 2.3 argues that (3) is also a symptom of group stigmatization. I conclude that racial endogamy is a symptom of

⁶ The two faces of oppression that I do not discuss are cultural imposition and powerlessness. Cultural imposition is the imposition of one group’s norms and beliefs on members of another group. While cultural imposition may be implicated in racial injustice when the races in question also differ culturally, it is largely a homogenizing force and so is not directly involved in maintaining racial distinction. Powerlessness describes the condition of those whose ability to influence their conditions is suppressed in all aspects of life: personal, professional, and political. Powerlessness provides the background conditions that enable the perpetuation of the worst forms of racial injustice, since the racial underclass lacks the power to prevent its members from being victimized, but I will not discuss it as a cause of persistent racial distinction in its own right. Note also that Young thinks that justice is characterized not only by the absence of the five faces of oppression, but also by the absence of what she calls *domination* – essentially the prevention of a group from having a say in the ordering of society. However, I find it difficult to see why Young does not characterize domination as one of the faces of oppression, either in its own right or as a less severe form of powerlessness, and a full exploration of this aspect of her view is beyond the scope of this paper. In any case, I will not discuss domination here for the same reason I will not discuss powerlessness.

injustice, and thus that the persistent racial distinction that racial endogamy causes is a symptom of injustice as well.⁷

§2.1. Racial segregation as a symptom of injustice

The likelihood that one will practice endogamy depends first and foremost on the composition of one's community. In a homogeneous community, most people will practice endogamy by default, because most interactions will be between people of the same ingroup (Kalmijn 1998:402). When multiple communities share the same broad geography but members of each community encounter mostly members of their own community, we say that the communities are *segregated*. When those communities are races, such that society as a whole is multiracial but most people interact only with members of their own race, we say that that society is characterized by *racial segregation*.

There is widespread recognition that the specific circumstances of racial segregation in the United States, especially between Blacks and Whites, are unjust (see, e.g., Anderson 2010, among many others). But the question of the normative status of any one instance of racial segregation is distinct from the question of whether racial segregation is *in principle* incompatible with justice. And here there is less agreement, and perhaps even a tendency to claim that in some cases racial segregation *can* be just.⁸ Shelby (2016), for example, argues that “blacks, including poor blacks, should be free to self-segregate in

⁷ Note that I do *not* claim the inverse, i.e., that racial exogamy can only occur in contexts of justice. No one would say that Thomas Jefferson's racially exogamous relationship with Sally Hemings was anything other than grossly unjust. My claim is that the elimination of racial injustice leads to racial exogamy, not that racial exogamy is in every case desirable.

⁸ Note, however, that such claims are *not* characteristic of many traditional Black nationalist arguments in favor of segregation, which are motivated less by the thought that racial segregation and justice are compatible than by a pessimism that Whites could ever accept Black social equality to the extent that would be required to achieve integration (McGary 1999:ch. 3).

neighborhoods and that this practice is not incompatible with justice” as long as it is accompanied by “social equality and economic fairness” (67). Young (2000) extends this logic to argue that self-segregation

is not wrong even when [practiced] by privileged or formerly privileged groups [as long as] it can be distinguished from the involuntary exclusion of others and the preservation of privilege. To take a particularly contentious but important example, the desire of white Afrikaners in the new South Africa to preserve their language and retain a sense of continuity with how they interpret their history is a legitimate desire, and may require some residential and civic group clustering to be fulfilled. (217)

But I argue the opposite: rather than being a legitimate goal we might choose to pursue, just racial segregation should be understood as a practical impossibility. This is because the structural features of racial segregation interact with a cluster of powerful psychological tendencies to reliably engender racial inequality and group stigmatization, both of which then motivate violence, exploitation, and marginalization. These faces of oppression then quickly come to supplant factors compatible with justice as the main causes of the perpetuation of racial segregation, such that racial segregation comes to be a symptom of injustice. Thus we have good reason to view any persistent racial segregation as a symptom of injustice, and the racial endogamy and persistent racial distinction that result from such segregation as symptoms of injustice as well.

To see why, consider first that people are systematically susceptible to biases favoring ingroup members. Ingroup members need not necessarily be of the same race, but

under conditions of racial segregation, few people are likely to have the opportunity to consider members of other races as part of their ingroup. Ingroup bias leads people to view ingroup members' desirable traits as stemming from their disposition and excuse undesirable ones as being due to circumstances outside their control. These judgments are reversed for outgroup members: desirable traits are viewed situationally, such that the outgroup member should not be praised for them; and undesirable ones dispositionally, such that they should be criticized for them (Anderson 2010:46). Thus negative interactions with outgroup members are likely to engender stigmatizing representations of that outgroup.⁹

Consider next that racial segregation reliably causes racial inequality. This is because segregated groups by definition live and do business in separate spaces, such that they have access to different sets of unevenly spatially distributed resources, which sets are extremely unlikely to be equal in value. Because people have more social and economic connections to ingroup members than to outgroup members, the benefits of any individual making use of these resources will tend to redound more to members of that person's ingroup than to members of any outgroup. Thus the inequality in the sets of resources to which segregated groups have access will cause inequality between the groups.¹⁰

Racial inequality is likely to activate two more cognitive biases: stereotype incumbency and system justification. The stereotype incumbency bias causes people to

⁹ See Zheng (2018) for an argument that *all* analyses of behavioral causes as either dispositional or situational are ideologically inflected.

¹⁰ This gives lie to Young's idea that we can distinguish between privileged groups' self-segregation and the "involuntary exclusion of others and the preservation of privilege" (2000:217). Of course, a multiculturalist might counter that hierarchical equality between groups should be maintained by state intervention, but there are good reasons to think that such intervention would be politically difficult to sustain, due to powerful groups' material interest in undermining it (see, e.g., Darby 2019:§V). So we still have good reason to doubt that racial segregation could take place without material racial inequality.

generalize from the fact of racial inequality to the idea that a race that occupies a certain position or set of roles in society is particularly well-suited for that position or those roles, and that members of other races would be ill-suited for them. Stereotype incumbency is a species of the broader system justification bias, in which people tend to view their society's social arrangements as just because the idea that they are unjust is unpleasant (Anderson 2010:46). In a racially unequal society, both biases involve conceiving of racial inequality as in some sense appropriate, which requires conceiving of a given race's position in society as appropriate. When one of the races in question occupies an undesirable or subordinate position, these biases necessarily lead to group stigmatization.

Finally, remember that racial segregation occurs in the context of two or more races sharing the same geography – a city, say – that is likely to have some polity that governs it. Politics, as the saying goes, is the process of determining who gets what when and how. Political thinkers increasingly recognize that the “who” in that phrase properly refers not to individuals but to groups; so Achen and Bartels (2016), in their landmark study of voter behavior, conclude that “[m]ost citizens support a party [...] because ‘their kind’ of person belongs to that party” (307).¹¹ Brewer (1999) argues that such a group-based politics is likely to contribute to group stigmatization. Given that negative emotions are more powerful motivators in politics than positive ones, a group-based politics provides incentives for political leaders to foment fear of and contempt for outgroup members as a way to mobilize and strengthen solidarity within their group (437-438). And even when racial groups share common goals, group-based politics can still lead to group

¹¹ But I do not mean to imply that this third way in which racial segregation leads to group stigmatization can only occur in democracies; there is no shortage of examples of authoritarian leaders using the sorts of group-based politics I discuss here to further their or their group's political ends.

stigmatization if those groups do not share a common identity strong enough to support the construction of a coalition; in such a case, the presence of common goals can actually increase conflict by making salient the absence of interracial trust, leading to stigmatizations of outgroups as dishonest and unreliable (436-437; see also Brewer and Miller 2000). In the context of racial segregation, the groups that structure politics are highly likely to be racial groups. Thus political psychology in the context of racial segregation leads to group stigmatization as well.

As Anderson (2010:46) notes, these processes do not operate only in racialized contexts. But racial difference provides especially fertile ground for cognitive processes that lead to group stigmatization for two reasons. First, cognitive processes that tend to stigmatize outgroups can kick into gear only when one's group membership is apparent. One's race is (usually) apparent upon sight, meaning that when race is the basis for ingroup-outgroup distinction (as is likely the case under conditions of racial segregation), stigmatizing processes are activated in every face-to-face encounter one has. Thus the phenotype of the oppressed race comes to serve as a mark of stigma that it is impossible to shed. And second, race's heritability means that racial difference occurs *between* communities rather than *within* communities, making it less likely that people will have family members and friends of different races who can disconfirm stigmatizing stereotypes.¹²

¹² Compare race here with sexual orientation, differences in which appear essentially at random within ancestral groups. Arguably the gay rights movement has benefitted enormously from the fact that, after taboos around homosexuality became more fragile thanks to the sexual revolution, many people who once would have stigmatized homosexuality learned that they had family members who were gay and thus became more sympathetic to gay rights. (Call this the Cheney Effect.) But while it is a common occurrence to find out that one's child or sibling or friend is gay, it is decidedly uncommon to find out that they are of another race. The lesson here is that stigmatization on the basis of heritable group differences is structurally easier to entrench than stigmatization on the basis of non-heritable ones.

Group stigmatization tends to justify violence and, when groups are in a position to effectuate them, exploitation and marginalization. If one buys into the stigmatizing representations of an outgroup, one is motivated to react strongly, even violently, when members of that outgroup threaten to encroach upon one's space. One will be able to justify manipulating the market in order to keep them in positions they are "suited for" (a form of exploitation). Or one might attempt to consign them to societal irrelevance by cutting them off from economic and social opportunities (textbook marginalization). Notice that each of these contributes to racial segregation: group stigmatization and violence by discouraging racial outgroups from attempting to escape their segregated bubbles; and exploitation and marginalization by depriving them of the means to do so. In other words, the injustices that are caused *by* segregation will reliably become causes *of* it: segregation and injustice are mutually reinforcing. Furthermore, as group stigmatization, violence, exploitation, and marginalization become more entrenched, they will tend to take on a larger and larger causal role in maintaining segregation, such that any justice-compatible original cause of it is eclipsed in causal efficacy. This is why it is appropriate to regard racial segregation (and the racial endogamy and persistent racial distinction that result from it) as a symptom of injustice: since segregation and injustice are mutually reinforcing, the proximate cause of segregation will reliably be some form of injustice.

One might object to this grim view of the relationship between racial segregation and injustice by saying that these biases can be overcome, perhaps with education. But that misunderstands their nature. These biases are not simply mistakes. They are heuristics for understanding and maintaining ingroup advantage. To the extent that people understand themselves as part of an ingroup to whom they have greater obligations than an outgroup

(groups that in racially segregated societies will fall along racial lines) these biases are highly effective at improving relative group prospects. They provide the psychic ground for the dehumanization of the outgroup, so that the ingroup is able to maximize its advantage without being hamstrung by empathy for an outgroup it may have an interest in oppressing.

If these biases are mistakes at all, they are *moral* mistakes, because they seek to represent acts that are good for the ingroup as morally good.¹³ To that extent they function as built-in engines for ideology in the sense used by Haslanger (2017): they construct networks of social meanings that both launder and further oppression. The insight of ideology theory is, of course, that ideology grounded in group interest is extraordinarily resilient to efforts at moral education. Thus I consider it highly likely that racial segregation will lead to these sorts of injustices in every instance. (I suspect that this is why there exist no examples in history of racial segregation characterized by racial harmony – at least, none that I can name.) Because these injustices then come to *cause* racial segregation via the mutual reinforcement I have described, we should regard racial segregation as a symptom of injustice.

§2.2 *Third-party pressure against racial exogamy as a symptom of injustice*

We can now move on to Kalmijn's second potential cause of endogamy: the influence of interested "third parties" such as families and social institutions. Because we have shown

¹³ Of course, it is often the case that the good these biases optimize for is *relative* good – i.e., the maintenance of a privileged group's place atop a hierarchy – even when doing so leaves the advantaged group worse off in absolute terms. But that still does not make these biases *mistakes* in a practical (rather than moral) sense if the group is in fact more interested in maintaining hierarchy than they are in material betterment. As McGhee (2021) shows, this is the revealed preference of Whites in the United States.

that racial endogamy due to racial segregation is a symptom of injustice, we can exclude cases of third-party pressure for racial endogamy that involve racial segregation (e.g., third-party pressure to practice neighborhood endogamy in a racially segregated neighborhood). Thus we will confine our considerations here to cases characterized by racial integration.

One sort of case is easy to evaluate: when families and social institutions counsel against racial exogamy because they hold stigmatizing views about other races,¹⁴ this is clearly a symptom of injustice, as such views constitute group stigmatization. Thus we should confine our considerations further: the cases we will consider are not only those characterized by racial integration, but also those characterized by the absence of racial group stigmatization, both in the public square and in private. What else could cause third parties to pressure group members to practice racial endogamy in this sort of society?

Let us first observe that race alone is not enough to provide reason to pressure for racial endogamy. The mere fact that a person belongs to a particular race furnishes no reason for third parties to discourage someone over whom they have influence from entering into an intimate relationship with that person, any more than would that person's having a large nose or blond hair. But one thing that might come to mind as potentially furnishing legitimate reasons for third parties to pressure for racial endogamy is *culture*: if racial difference correlates with cultural difference, then any pressure from families or social institutions to practice cultural endogamy will have the effect of promoting racial endogamy, but for (supposedly) defensible reasons of cultural preservation.

In order to evaluate this possibility, we need to get clear on how culture relates to race. Race, you will recall, is for the purposes of this paper the existence of groups of people

¹⁴ Or, conversely, because they feel pressure to practice group solidarity via endogamy in the face of such stigma in the way described by Mills (1994).

characterized by a distinctive pattern of physical features, a common ancestry, and distinctive geographic origin (Hardimon 2017:31). For a working definition of culture we can turn to Sewell (2005), who characterizes culture as the set of meanings that have been agreed upon by a given community – a cultural community – such that certain symbols and practices are imbued with semiotic content that is legible to the members of that community (see also Haslanger 2018).

In racially and culturally diverse societies, it is often the case that cultural and racial distinction occur together, i.e., that cultural difference correlates with racial difference.¹⁵ But this is not because either causes the other. Rather, it is because they are both caused by a third phenomenon: segregation. As we have seen, segregation causes persistent racial distinction when it exists between racial groups because it causes racial endogamy. And segregation causes cultural distinction – i.e., the existence of separate semiotic networks – because it creates conditions of social closure, in which people in a given segregated community are able to learn semiotic meanings only from members of that community, rather than from a set of people representative of society as a whole. But groups do not remain culturally distinct in the context of *integration*, for the conditions of integration are exactly the conditions that engender cultural diffusion between – and, ultimately, the merging of – groups.

When races are segregated, then, their segregation will also render them culturally distinct from each other. Insofar as racial segregation is sustained by the politics of group interest (as we saw in the previous section), this is what charges cultural differences between segregated races with *political* significance. In the American context, it explains

¹⁵ Indeed, this is so often the case that many authors define “race” in part in terms of culture (e.g., Jeffers 2019).

what Taylor (2016) describes as

[t]he ease with which practitioners of black aesthetics can accomplish [the] slippage from the “merely” cultural to the political. This slippage occurs quite readily because black aesthetics is an unavoidably political subject. *It exists as a cultural phenomenon and as a subject of philosophical study because of political conditions.* (79, emphasis mine)¹⁶

But here we are asking whether cultural difference could cause racial endogamy in the context of racial *integration*. The answer should now be obvious: cultural difference between races cannot *give reason for* racial endogamy in the context of racial integration because cultural difference between races cannot *persist* in the context of racial integration.¹⁷ Thus it cannot furnish reasons for third parties to pressure individuals over whom they have influence to practice cultural (and thus racial) endogamy.

¹⁶ And it also, I think, explains controversies over cultural appropriation: as Jackson (2019) says, “if appropriation is everywhere and everyone appropriates all the time, why does any of this matter? The answer, in a word: power” (3).

¹⁷ Think here of the experience of the so-called “White ethnics” during American suburbanization: Italians and Jews and Poles fled their old, ethnically segregated urban neighborhoods to live side-by-side in new suburbs, where group animus was minimal and groups were (thanks to a postwar welfare state that showered subsidy after subsidy upon Whites) relatively socioeconomically equal. Very quickly cultural differences between the groups broke down, so much so that within a few decades Gans (1979) could describe them as merely “symbolic”, consisting largely in “ancestral memory, or an exotic tradition to be savored once in a while in a museum or at an ethnic festival” (6). In Sewell’s terms, the shift from pre-integration true ethnicity to post-integration symbolic ethnicity is the shift from the existence of separate White ethnic cultural communities, with separate networks of semiotic meanings (one for Italians, one for Jews, etc.); to the existence of one White community with one network of semiotic meanings. In this new community, “Italianness” or “Jewishness” did not describe separate semiotic networks, but rather designated a collection of nodes within a single network; they became roles internal to a single culture, analogous to “woman” or “barber”. And, subsequently, White ethnics did in fact begin to practice ethnic exogamy at extremely high rates, such that such that today very few young White Americans can trace their ancestry back to only one European ethnic group, as your German-Irish-Polish-Swedish American author can confidently report (see Alba and Golden (1976) for empirical evidence).

I conclude that under conditions of integration there are no plausible justice-compatible reasons for third parties to promote racial endogamy. Thus any third-party pressure for racial endogamy that persists under conditions of integration should be regarded as the product of group stigmatization and therefore unjust, and the racial endogamy (and persistent racial distinction) that it causes should be regarded as symptoms of that injustice.

§2.3 Personal preferences against racial exogamy as a symptom of injustice

Let us turn, then, to Kalmijn's final potential cause of endogamy: personal preferences against racial exogamy (and/or for racial endogamy). Because we have shown that racial endogamy due to racial segregation (and its consequences, e.g., cultural distinction between races) or third-party pressure is a symptom of injustice, we can exclude cases of personal preferences against exogamy that involve either phenomenon (e.g., cases in which one's preference to please one's family interacts with one's family's stigmatizing view of racial outgroups to produce a preference for racial endogamy). And once again we can easily evaluate as unjust cases in which preferences against exogamy stem from stigmatizing views about racial outgroups; any racial endogamy that results from this is clearly a symptom of injustice. Thus, as in the previous section, we are considering a society characterized by racial integration (and thus an absence of cultural difference between races) and the absence of racial group stigmatization.

What could cause so many people in such a society to have preferences against exogamy that racial distinction could persist in perpetuity? The sole reason that I can think of is that members of at least one racial group have an aesthetic preference for members of

their own race or against members of another, such that they tend to practice racial endogamy. Are such racial aesthetic preferences compatible with justice?

It is tempting to condemn all instances of having or acting upon such racial aesthetic preferences as instances of group stigmatization. Such a judgment would seem to be correct in cases of what Matthew (2021) calls *impure* racial aesthetic judgments – i.e., cases in which aesthetic judgments are polluted by non-aesthetic attitudes, as when one’s negative opinion about Asians causes one to dislike typically Asian phenotypes. But in cases in which racial aesthetic preferences are *pure* – i.e., not influenced by some non-aesthetic attitude – it is difficult to distinguish them from aesthetic preferences we think are perfectly legitimate bases for romantic discrimination, such those prizing androgyny, muscularity, or short stature (Halwani 2017).

What are we then to say about pure racial aesthetic preferences? Let us start by observing that racial aesthetic preferences, whether pure or impure, cannot cause persistent racial distinction if they occur at random in a multiracial population. For example, if White women are just as likely to aesthetically prefer Black men as they are to aesthetically prefer White men, then racial exogamy will occur at a rate identical to that at which it would have occurred if no one held racial aesthetic preferences at all. Racial aesthetic preferences can only cause elevated rates of endogamy when the members of at least one racial group are systematically more likely to prefer their own race’s phenotype to the phenotypes of other races. Such a situation might obtain because members of each racial group tend to have homophilous racial aesthetic preferences. Or it might obtain because all members of a group containing people of multiple races tend to prefer or disfavor the phenotype of one of the races represented in that group. In either case, we will

say that a group that is characterized by a widespread and disproportionate aesthetic preference for or against a particular racial phenotype is characterized by a particular *racialized aesthetics*. (Thus the former example is one in which each racial group is characterized by its own particular homophilous racialized aesthetics.)

Taylor (2016) speaks of the emergence of a racialized aesthetics as tied up with the treatment of race as synecdoche – the way that “societies use racial discourse to assign meanings to various aspects of human being,” especially in the context of creating or maintaining hierarchy (10).¹⁸ It is through this incorporation of racial synecdoche into a society’s aesthetics that a particular racialized aesthetic preference can become sufficiently widespread to promote endogamy at rates high enough to cause persistent racial distinction. But notice that this treatment of race as an arbitrary symbol is exactly what creates *impure* aesthetic preferences: attitudes toward the non-aesthetic (e.g., a distaste for the unclean and stigmatizing attitudes toward Blacks) infect attitudes toward the aesthetic (the Black phenotype is arbitrarily linked with the unclean). Absent such synecdotal thinking, I cannot see what could cause the emergence of a racialized aesthetics, which is just to say that I cannot see what could cause the emergence of a (supposedly justice-compatible) pure racialized aesthetics. This is not to say that individually-held pure racialized aesthetic preferences are impossible, or that no one in a just society would hold them. I think that they are, and I suspect that they would. But it *is* to say that a *society-wide* pure racialized aesthetics is impossible: without the (impure) use of race as synecdoche,

¹⁸ Note that the construction of a racialized aesthetics thus seems to be a *cultural* phenomenon, such that any group that is characterized by a particular racialized aesthetics must be a *cultural* group (as opposed to, for example, a racial group within a multiracial culture). Given that we established in the previous section that cultural distinction between racial groups cannot persist in the absence of segregation, the sole sort of racialized aesthetics that could persist absent racial segregation is one in which members of all races tend disproportionately to favor the phenotype of one racial group.

the widespread valuation or devaluation of one racial phenotype such that racial endogamy is widespread enough to cause persistent racial distinction is unlikely to obtain. Thus the only cause of widespread personal aesthetic preferences for or against a particular racial phenotype is group stigmatization. Thus it seems unlikely that this last cause of racial endogamy could persist absent injustice.

I conclude that racial differentiation is highly unlikely to persist in a society that has achieved racial justice. Indeed, racial distinction should be thought of as a *symptom of injustice*, as incompatible with justice as fever is with health.

§3. Conclusion

There is a sense in which my task in this paper has been a purely descriptive one: I have simply considered whether one phenomenon – racial distinction – is compatible with another – justice as the absence of any of six faces of oppression. I concluded that they are not, because the conditions under which persistent racial distinction is possible are uniformly unjust conditions. The normative implications one draws from my analysis depend upon the value one places in these phenomena. I hold that justice is intrinsically valuable, but that racial distinction is not. Therefore I conclude that we should not worry that our pursuit of justice will tend to undermine the conditions that make racial distinction possible. But some do hold that racial distinction or the conditions that cause it are valuable. I hope this paper serves to challenge those thinkers to interrogate whether they would truly prefer a world in which they trade some amount of justice for the persistence of racial distinction.

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