# "Every Place Has a Ghetto…": The Significance of Whites' Social and Residential Segregation

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*The residential and social segregation of whites from blacks creates a socialization process we refer to as "white habitus." This white habitus limits whites' chances for developing meaningful relationships with blacks and other minorities spatially and psychologically. Using data from the 1997 Survey of College Students' Social Attitudes and the 1998 Detroit Area Study, we show that the spatial segregation experienced by whites from blacks fosters segregated lifestyles and leads them to develop positive views about themselves and negative views about blacks. First, we document the high levels of whites' residential and social segregation. Next, we examine how whites interpret their own self-segregation. Finally, we examine how whites' segregation shapes their racial expressions, attitudes, cognitions, and even their sense of aesthetics as illustrated by their views on the subject of interracial marriage.*

The deleterious consequences of America's residential apartheid for minorities have been well documented in the literature (Johnson and Shapiro 1993; Massey and Denton 1993; Wilson 1987; Yinger 1995). Although racial segregation itself does not explain the totality of racial dynamics in this country (cf. Massey and Denton 1993), few analysts would deny that it plays a central role in explaining minorities' disadvantages in society. This includes disadvantages in the labor market (Feagin, Vera, and Imani 1996; Hacker 2003; Kirschenman and Neckerman 1991), in education (Lewis 2003; Tatum 1997), in the housing market (Conley 1999; Johnson and Shapiro

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2003), and in wealth accumulation (Oliver and Shapiro 1997). Furthermore, social scientists in various fields have argued that the spatial and social isolation experienced by minorities contributes to the development of a host of cultural distortions and behavioral pathologies. For example, observers of black ghetto life in the 1960s argued vigorously that the segregation experienced by blacks had led them to live in a "culture of poverty" (Harrington 1962; Lewis 1966; Moynihan 1969). In the late seventies and eighties, this idea resurfaced in the work of conservative commentators such as Charles Murray (1984) and Lawrence Mead (1986), liberals such as William Julius Wilson (1987) and Ken Auletta (1999), and even radicals such as Cornel West (1993). All these authors have argued that blacks segregated in ghettoes have developed a cultural outlook that does not foster a sense of personal responsibility, produces pathological behavior, and creates a profound sense of despair and nihilism (West 1993). Other commentators have argued that segregation and isolation has led blacks in ghettos to develop a unique style ("cool pose"; see Majors and Billson 1993), an anti-intellectual strategy embodied in an "oppositional identity" to deal with educational barriers and to protect their self-esteem (Ogbu 1978), and even a "code of the street" to conduct public interactions (Anderson 1990). Some scholars have made analogous arguments about Latinos living in similar circumstances.[1]

One of the best examples of this type of analysis appears in Massey and Denton's *American Apartheid* (1993). In this book the authors show the incredibly high levels of residential segregation and isolation experienced by blacks and speculate, based on work done by other scholars, that these realities have fostered in poor blacks a "culture of segregation" or "a set of behaviors, attitudes, and values that are increasingly at variance with those held in the wider society" (pp. 165–66). According to these authors, the major implications of this culture for poor blacks are little concern with marriage, a drug-related lifestyle, and a "language of segregation" that does not allow them to communicate with middle-class (white) America.

Despite the serious limitations of this subcultural approach to poor blacks' lifestyle (for a review, see chapter 2 in Bonilla-Silva 1993), few doubt that, in general, the social and spatial isolation of one group leads to differentiation from groups as well as the development of group cohesion and identity of the segregated group. If this idea applies to racial minorities, it must apply to whites, too, and because whites experience even higher levels of social and spatial isolation than blacks, the "racial problems" related to their "confinement in the prison built by racism" must be as consequential as those produced by black and Latino ghettoization.

Therefore, our main goal in this article is to begin examining how racial segregation affects whites' perceptions of and prejudice toward blacks. We contend that whites' segregation and isolation from minorities (Massey and Denton 1993) creates a "white habitus,"[2] a racialized uninterrupted socialization process that conditions and creates whites' racial taste, perceptions, feelings, emotions, and views on racial

matters.[3] One of the central consequences of the white habitus is that it promotes a sense of group belonging (a white culture of solidarity) and negative views about nonwhites (Kalmijn 1998). Furthermore, in accordance with the findings of research on identity formation and whiteness (Frankenberg 1993; Lemert 1994; López 1996; Tatum 1997),[4] we hypothesize that whites, as members of the dominant racial group, will be oblivious to the racial components of their own socialization and how that may affect their perceptions of blacks. Nevertheless, a white habitus during whites' formative years, other things being equal,[5] will beget a white habitus in adulthood regardless of the level of assimilation of blacks they encounter in their social milieus. Simply put, a life centered on whites in youth will lead to a life centered on whites in adulthood. Whites whom as adults live, work, or study in more integrated settings will still tend to associate with whites because they expect their primary associates to be "normal" like themselves.[6]

This article is organized in the following fashion. First, we outline the data and methods employed. Second, we examine whites' levels of residential segregation and personal association with blacks. Third, we explore how whites interpret their racial segregation and isolation from blacks. Finally, we present an illustration that suggests one of the potential consequences of whites' limited level of interaction with blacks.

## METHODS AND DATA

The data for the analysis comes from two projects on racial attitudes: the 1997 Survey of College Students Social Attitudes and the 1998 Detroit Area Study (DAS). The first is a convenient sample of college students at three universities (Pacific Northwest, Midwest, and South) enrolled in social science courses. The size of the target group (whites) was 410.[7] Although this sample is not representative, the bias, if any, is toward racial tolerance, since researchers have documented that tolerance increases with education (Bobo and Licari 1989; Schuman et al. 1997), particularly among those in liberal arts (Quillian 1996).[8] Of the white students who provided contact information (about 90 percent), 10 percent of them were randomly selected for interviews (41 students altogether). Of the forty-one students, seventeen were men and twenty-four women, thirty-one were from middle- and upper-middle-class backgrounds and ten were from working-class backgrounds.

The 1998 DAS is a probabilistic survey based on a representative sample of 400 black and white Detroit metropolitan-area residents ($n = 400$; 323 whites and 67 blacks). The response rate to the survey was 67.5 percent. As in the case of the 1997 survey, we included post-survey in-depth interviews with a random sample of 21 percent of the respondents ($n = 83$, 66 whites and 17 blacks).

Since our goal is to examine whites' interpretations of whites' racial segregation and isolation, we rely almost exclusively on the interview data. The responses we draw upon emerged mostly spontaneously in discussions on race-related issues such

as affirmative action, residential and school segregation, interracial friendship, and interracial marriage. Respondents inserted them to reinforce points and underscore the salience of an issue, or as digressions in the middle of racially sensitive discussions.

The interviews for these two studies were race-matched, followed a structured interview protocol, were conducted in respondents' homes or in neutral sites, and lasted between forty-five minutes and two hours. After the interviews were completed, project assistants transcribed the interviews exactly as the respondents uttered their responses, and, therefore, nonlexicals, pauses, mistakes, and intonation are part of the transcripts. These elements are crucial data in interview-based research (Kvale 1996; Riessman 1993) that deals with sensitive topics such as race (van Dijk 1984; Wetherell and Potter 1992). However, to improve the readability of the quotes, we edited them in this article. When all the material was transcribed, one of the authors read all the interviews to extract common themes and patterns. At that stage, the same author and project assistants performed a basic content analysis to locate all the instances where respondents inserted these racial stories.

Finally, the principal investigator read all the transcripts and extracted major themes by questions in the interview protocol. The answers were then coded in a two-stage process following the "grounded theory model" (Glaser and Strauss 1967). First, two assistants performed an initial rough coding of the responses on subjects such as friendship (whether students have black friends), schools (whether they attended segregated schools), affirmative action (whether they support affirmative action), and interracial marriage (whether they support interracial marriage). After this initial coding was done, it became clear that on the most sensitive or politically charged issues, students' responses seemed confusing, ambivalent, and at times flat-out contradictory.[9] In an effort to "make sense" of these answers, we read the respondents' answers throughout the entire interview and used a "critical commonsense understanding" (Kvale 1996:214) to determine their positions on these issues. This process of within-interview cross-validation was crucial in deciphering confusing answers and helped us to develop scales to some questions (e.g., scale on intermarriage). Although all data, qualitative and quantitative alike, are subject to multiple interpretations, we believe that our interpretations are "reasonably documented and logically coherent" (p. 217).

Whereas all samples have limitations (ours, for example, are not "natural" samples of "speech acts" and do not have as many blacks as we would have liked), ours have advantages over most of those used by qualitative researchers on racial matters. First, our samples are systematic (randomly selected subjects from those who participated in surveys). Second, one of the survey samples has a bias toward racial tolerance (the students' sample), but the other is a random sample. Third, the age (adults between eighteen and eighty in the DAS sample and college-age students in the other), gender, and regional (students' sample) representation in these samples allow us to be confident that the findings are not peculiar to one subpopulation. Fourth, our subsamples for the interviews (representing 10 percent of students in

the survey and 21 percent of the DAS respondents) as well as the 134 total respondent interviewed are large by qualitative standards. Therefore, we believe that the data for this study allow us to gain insight into the kinds of responses whites deploy in thinking about racial matters.[10]

## FINDINGS

### Whites' Racial Segregation and Isolation

In surveys whites express their willingness and, for many, even preference for an interracial lifestyle (Schuman et al. 1997). The answers of both college students and DAS respondents to questions about residential and school integration as well as in other items indicating support for the principle of integration bear this out (see Table 1).[11] Similarly, on traditional "social distance" questions such as whether respondents object to a family member inviting a black friend for dinner or approve of interracial marriage between blacks and whites,[12] large number of whites agreed with the racially tolerant response. Thus, 92 percent of the students indicated they had "no objection" to the former (87.2 percent of DAS respondents) and 80.4 percent approved of the latter (57.7 percent of DAS respondents).

However, based on their answers to questions dealing with their own behavior, whites seemed less committed to an interracial life. For example, when students were asked for the five people with whom they interact most on a daily basis, 67.7 percent stated that none of these five people were black. Similarly, to the social distance question, "Have you invited a black person for lunch or dinner recently?" 68.5 percent said "no" (see nontraditional items in Table 1 above). In line with these findings, 87 percent of white DAS respondents admitted that none of their three closest friends were black, 89 percent said that they had never had a romantic relationship with a black person, and 94.5 percent had a white spouse at the time of the interview.[13] Of the 323 white respondents in the DAS survey, only one was married to a black person at the time of the interview. In the following section, we attempt to deconstruct the apparent "paradox" between whites' commitment to the principle of interracialism and their mostly white pattern of association based on their answers to a series of questions about their past and present life.[14]

### *"It was a white neighborhood": Facts of Whites' Segregation and Isolation*

If the survey results suggest that few whites live an integrated life, the interview data confirm it.[15] For example, only four of the forty-one white students interviewed reported having resided in neighborhoods with a significant black or minority presence (i.e., neighborhoods where minorities comprised at least 20 percent of the neighbors). Similarly, only eight of the sixty-six whites interviewed for DAS grew up in racially mixed neighborhoods. These findings are consistent with research on residential segregation (Farley 1996; Kalmijn 1998; Massey and Denton 1994).

## Table 1.   White Students' Views on Social Distance Items

| Social Distance Questions | Survey Sample (N of whites = 451) | Interview Sample (N = 41) | DAS Sample (N of whites = 323) |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Traditional Items** | | | |
| B2. If a Black family with about the same income and education as you moved next door, would you mind it a lot, a little, or not at all? | | | |
| 1. Not at all[1] | 92.40% | 95.10% | 90.9% |
| B12. Do you approve or disapprove of marriage between Whites and Blacks? | | | |
| 1. Approve | 80.40 | 90.20 | 57.50 |
| 2. Not Sure | 12.9 | 4.90 | [2] |
| 3. Disapprove | 6.70 | 4.90 | 42.50 |
| B7. How strongly would you object if a member of your family had a friendship with a Black person? | | | |
| 1. No objection[1] | 92.40 | 92.70 | 87.20 |
| **Nontraditional Items** | | | |
| A13. Think of the five people with whom you interact the most on an almost daily basis. Of these five, how many of them are Black? | | | |
| 1. None | 67.70 | 68.30 | |
| 2. One | 20.0 | 24.40 | N.A. |
| 3. Two or more | 12.20 | 7.30 | |
| A15. Have you invited a Black person for lunch or dinner recently? | | | |
| 1. No | 68.50 | 75.00 | N.A. |
| 2. Yes | 31.50 | 25.00 | |
| A6. Think of your three closest friends, other than relatives. How often do you engage in social activities with them? | | | |
| 1. More than once a week | | | 21.70 |
| 2. Once a week | | | 29.50 |
| 3. Once a month | | | 28.90 |
| 4. Less than once a month | N.A. | N.A. | 17.10 |
| 5. Never | | | 2.80 |
| A7. How many of these (three) friends are FILLS (white/black)? | | | |
| 1. None | | | 87.00 |
| 2. One | | | 11.20 |
| 3. Two | | | 1.20 |
| 4. Three | | | .60 |
| H10. Does your spouse consider FILLS (himself/herself) primarily White or Caucasian, Black or African American, American Indian or Alaskan Native, Asian or Pacific Islander, or something else? | | | |
| 1. White | N.A. | N.A. | 94.50 |
| 2. Black | | | .50 |
| 3. Native | | | .50 |
| 4. Asian | | | 1.50 |
| 5. Other | | | 3.00 |
| Have you ever had a romantic relationship with a FILLS (black/white) person? | | | |
| 1. Yes | N.A. | N.A. | 10.30 |
| 2. No | | | 89.70 |

Source: 1997 Survey of Social Attitudes of College Students and 1998 Detroit Area Study
[1]Percentages in other categories were insignificant and thus are not reported here.
[2]The option of "not sure" was not included in the survey.

As perplexing as these numbers are, the facts of "whiteness" (levels of racial isolation and segregation from blacks) get more disturbing yet. For instance, two of the four college students who grew up in racially mixed neighborhoods did not associate with minorities, and another one related to minorities in a racialized way.[16] Of the eight DAS respondents who grew up in mixed neighborhoods, two did not have any meaningful interactions with blacks and four had very limited interactions.

Not surprisingly, given whites' racial isolation, few reported having close minority or black friends. Although "friendship" is a hard concept to operationalize, given its historically and culturally contingent nature and unclear boundaries, most researchers agree that close friends exhibit a high degree of interaction, interdependence, and closeness (Argyle and Henderson 1985; Fehr 1996). In fact, when researchers ask people about good friends, they have found that the most common metaphor for describing closeness is kinship. Thus, good friends are like family members (see Rubin 1985 for more information on this notion).

Based on these criteria and on respondents' self-reports on interracial "friendship," thirty-four of the forty-one college students did not have black friends while growing up (schools and neighborhoods). After we cross validated the answers of those who reported friendship with blacks, only three of the remaining seven students had black friends while growing up. Among DAS respondents, sixty of the sixty-six reported not having close black friends in their neighborhoods. Moreover, as with college students, after we carefully examined the answers of the six respondents who claimed to have had black friends, only three could be regarded as having a close black friend. We cross-examined whites' self-reports of friendship with blacks because previous research suggests that race is among the most salient factors upon which friendships are based (Gouldner and Strong 1987; for a similar finding in schools, see Quillian and Campbell 2003). Moreover, survey research has found that few whites (7 to 10 percent) have black friends (Jackman and Crane 1986), and self-reports by whites on friendship with blacks are highly unreliable (DeMott 1995). Thus, we followed up every respondent's self-report of friendship with blacks with questions such as "what kinds of things do you do with your black friend?" and "how often?"

One example illustrating how this process works can be seen through our interview with Sally, a student at MU. Sally grew up in Novi, Michigan, a neighborhood she described as "a hundred percent white and upper middle class." Consequently, all her neighborhood friends were white. Yet Sally attended mostly "integrated" schools while growing up. When asked "who did you hang out with in school?" she responded:

> It wasn't bad. Everyone hung with everyone. In particularly, I'd have to say my three best friends were white girls, but I definitely had an excellent girlfriend that was African American and I had several acquaintances that were Asian. That's about it, never really any . . .

Sally's "excellent" African American friend did not participate in any of the activities she enjoyed with her three best friends on the weekends such as playing tennis,

going shopping, or just hanging out. Neither did Sally point to anything that indicated closeness or interdependence between her and her black friend.

These findings are consistent with research on interracial friendship that usually finds that fewer than 10 percent of whites have black friends (Hallinan and Williams 1987; Jackman and Crane 1986). Furthermore, the promotion of black associates into friends is also consistent with recent research by the survey expert Tom W. Smith (1999). He shows that when whites are asked directly if they have black friends, a large proportion say they do (about 20 percent). When the question is filtered (i.e., by asking first if the respondent has friends), the proportion of respondents declines significantly. Finally, when the respondents are asked if they have friends, what are their names, and if any of their friends are black, the proportion of whites who include a black among her or his friends declines precipitously (about 5 percent).

Can the low proportion of whites befriending blacks be attributed to "hypersegregation," as some researchers suggest (Farley 1996; Massey and Denton 1993)? Alternatively, if whites had the demographic chance of interacting with blacks of similar status, would they do so? Based on the data from our two studies, neither students nor Detroiters who had the demographic chance of interacting with blacks did so.[17] For example, of the twenty-one students who attended "integrated" schools, only two developed meaningful associations with blacks. A higher proportion of DAS respondents (50/66) attended predominantly white schools, but of the sixteen who attended integrated schools, five had black acquaintances, five had no black associates, and only six had black friends.

### "It's just the way things were": Whites' Interpretation of Their Own Racial Segregation

Thus far, we have showed that whites have very little contact with blacks in neighborhoods, schools, colleges, and jobs. However, we need to address the central question: how do whites interpret their segregation and isolation from blacks? How do they feel about the racial reality that seems to contradict their endorsement of color blindness? The most significant finding in this section is that whites do not interpret their isolation from blacks as a problem because they do not interpret this as a racial phenomenon. Instead, they normalize this crucial aspect of their lives by either not regarding it as an issue or by interpreting it as "normal," as "just the way things are." For instance, most respondents who lived in segregated neighborhoods described them as "all white," "predominantly white," or "primarily all white," but when asked how they felt about this fact, few stopped to think this was problematic at all. Among college students, only five thought that the racial composition of their neighborhood was a problem, and, among DAS respondents, only eight made such comments. Among the eight DAS respondents who commented negatively on the whiteness of the racial composition of their neighborhoods, one was a Jewish woman who complained about anti-Semitism, another was a Dutch person, who complained

about feeling isolated as a foreigner, and two other were whites who lived in minority neighborhoods while growing up. Therefore, only four DAS respondents recognized their racial isolation from minorities as a problem.

The typical college students described their feelings about their neighborhoods' racial makeup with statements such as: "I liked it, it was fine to me" (Kim, SU); "When I was growing up, I didn't think about it much. I mean, it was fine for me, it doesn't really bother me that much" (Brian, SU); "I really didn't think about it" (Mary, MU); "Yeah, really comfortable" (Kara, MU); "I didn't care, which is pretty standard, I think, for the kids. It's taken for granted" (Bill, WU). The interpretation of segregation as a normal, matter-of-fact affair was expressed by students with statements such as: "It's like the perfect American neighborhood," "the sort of white upper-middle class, *Leave It to Beaver* is what I think of" (Ray, MU); "It was a middle class normal neighborhood" (Rick, WU). DAS respondents' answers to a similar question produced responses such as: "I loved it! Everybody was one big happy family" (Jill); "Well, it's a very comfortable town because if anybody had a problem, then the rest of the town was there to help you" (Monica); "Oh, it was great. They were all basically the same kind of people" (Don); "They were good people. It was a good neighborhood" (Pat).

This lack of reflexivity is not surprising since (see Tatum 1997) dominant identities tend to remain inarticulate precisely because they are seen as the "norm" (see also Doane 1997). Thus, whereas whiteness is not perceived as a racial category, other categories are; whereas a white neighborhood is a "normal" neighborhood, a black neighborhood is segregated. Nevertheless, besides white racial progressives who recognized racial segregation and isolation as a problem, a few other respondents realized in the interview that the racial composition of their neighborhoods or network of friends could be regarded as problematic. For these respondents, however, the issue was explaining these matters as not involving prejudice on their part. For instance, Carol, an SU student, said about the racial mix of her neighborhood, "Never, never entered my mind, it was just my neighborhood" and stressed that her community was thoroughly mixed. However, when asked who her friends were, she pointed out that they were almost all white (she had one "Hispanic" friend). At this point, Carol seemed to realize the contradiction between claiming that she lived in a mixed neighborhood and having virtually all-white friends. Hence, Carol remarked in a rather indignant tone: "I mean, I don't think it, like me being friends with them had anything to do with them being I guess white, it's just they lived like next door and across the street from me." Carol added that her friends' race was just the result of "location."

Sonny, an MU student, explained the limited interaction among blacks and whites in her school as a product of demography.

> I don't think we had any black friends. I don't know why. It kind of stuck together and, I don't know, it wasn't that we, it wasn't that we wouldn't be, like allowing to black people, it's just that there was never, like, an opportunity. There's no population like around where I lived.

Ray, the MU student cited above, addressed the same issue in a rather defensive way:

> I don't think there was any type of prejudice involved, I just think that we really didn't know these kids. Ya know what I mean? They lived in different neighborhoods, they went to different schools. And there was never any effort made to exclude, and if anything, there was effort made to cultivate these kids. Any type of discrimination in terms of anything was really just taboo at East Lansing. It wasn't like people were trying to exclude them, it's just that they didn't know them. It's just the way things were.

Naturalizing whites' racial isolation was a strategy adopted by most college students to rationalize their limited contact with blacks. For example, Daniel, a WU student and a recent immigrant to this country, stated about segregation: "I guess in American society it seems sort of it sort of comes natural, it appears to be the way of things." Andy, another WU student, said about segregation that "I would agree that we don't, or Caucasian people, or the majority does not make things necessarily comfortable for them, but not like intentionally so I think it just sort of comes up that way."

The few DAS respondents who noticed that their limited interaction with blacks could be interpreted as "racist" were also keen in pointing out that race had no bearing in their lives. As college students, many used the demographic excuse to explain why they don't interact with minorities. For example, Kim, a housewife in her late twenties, had a racial life typical of DAS respondents. Kim grew up in various cities in Michigan with few blacks around and had not interacted with them. She now lives in a neighborhood she describes as "mostly white." When asked if she had black friends in school, Kim said: "I never had close black friends." Kim then inserted a personal story about her father being racist. Later on, when discussing with whom she interacts as a homemaker, Kim said:

> Yep, yep, my husband has some black friends in, you know. You just don't see 'em (respondent is referring to blacks here). They move or whatever, we don't see 'em. It's just—I wished I did so I could just say, you know, "I do" [have black friends]. They are just not around, they don't live in our area.

Rita, an underemployed worker at a cookie company in her twenties, explained her lack of black friends while attending racially mixed schools in Detroit as follows:

> No, but it wasn't because I didn't want to. It's not, it's not because—I didn't have a problem with them. It just, I never socialized with them. Yeah more like they actually never socialized with me.

"Yeah more like they actually never socialized with me." Like Rita, whites' lack of reflexivity about how race fractures their own lives is evident in their racial projections on a variety of issues. For example, Kara, an MU student, commented on so-called black self-segregation. She remarked, "They just kind of clique with those people and at first I was like, I guess you are always kind of taken aback by it when you see, like, a whole table of minorities, it's harder to go up to people and talk to

them when there's a whole group of them." Mickey, another MU student, said on the same issue: "I've definitely seen that. I think the one thing that sticks out the most, the one example, is just like, like dining facilities. Like it's never, it's never integrated. It's always, they're always they have their own place to eat." The interviewer asked Mickey if he thought this practice was exclusive to blacks and he answered, "That's mainly just African Americans people, yeah." Finally, Dan, another student from WU, noted the fact that blacks have "their own dorms, activities, clubs and such might be a contributing factor because it kind of encourages them to spend more time with each other and not worry [to] interact with other people." In each case, the students do not acknowledge the occurrence of "white cliquing," "white tables," or "white solidarity."

Many DAS respondents also projected racial motivations onto blacks. For example, Ian, a manager of information security for an automotive company in his fifties, addressed this issue as follows:

> I think they're hard to approach at times. At least the ones I have dealt with and deal with on a day-to-day basis. If you question 'em, they take it personally, very defensive. And I try not to, not to make race an issue because I do have to deal with, you know, Indians and Chinese and everything and, as long as, you know, they can do the job, I have no problem with it. But when you constantly go to somebody and say—just follow up with 'em, "Did you do this, did you do that, did you make sure of this?," and they take it personally, I have a problem with that. You know, 'cause it's not, you know, we're not bothering to check anybody's integrity. It's just, "Did you get the job done?," and, at times they don't like to be questioned.

When asked if he thought this was "more a problem of self-segregating or a problem of not feeling welcomed (by whites)," Ian answered without any hesitation: "Self-segregating." Matt, a city worker in his twenties, provided a similar one-sided explanation.

> Yeah right. I don't know about hard to approach but from ah, where I've worked in the past and presently, it seems they're not open to any information or ideas from white folks. That they're, you know, set in their own way or maybe their way is a better way, which may or may not be true. But they're, they're not hard to approach. I have no problem approaching them, but when I do, it's like it goes in one ear and out of the other. They don't really, you know, take what you have to say as either encouragement or support or help. And, you know, just view a white guy talking for no reason.

Finally, various respondents made direct statements that signify they regard whiteness as "normal" and, therefore, nonracial. For example, Rick, a WU student, said that blacks are into the "me syndrome," which he thinks is "so stupid" and added that in his dealings with people from other ethnic groups the question of segregation "wasn't even approached, we were just friends and because I grew up in a White neighborhood, I really didn't see race." What allows Rick to say that because he "grew up in a White neighborhood," he "didn't see race" is that he interprets "race" as something that only racial minorities have.

Lee, another WU student, complained about the monotony of his neighborhood because it was "all white people, but we lived pretty close to Washington, D.C., and there was a lot of culture there I mean." Therefore for Lee, culture, which he defines narrowly as music, food, and arts, was the prerogative of D.C., an area that is over two-thirds black. For Lee, then, "blacks" and "Latinos" have "culture," but whites (who are not a race) do not.

Many DAS respondents also saw blacks and minorities as being the only actors who could be regarded as racial. Although we can derive this from their answers, a few used expressions that showed this directly. For example, Susie, a social worker in her late forties, said about the racial mix in her school, "I don't think there was *any* racial children in my, you know, public schools." Susie repeated the expression (racial children) when describing the racial makeup of her workplace:

> Oh geez, I just had an employee with that. Umhum [raises voice] I think it's probably 52/48 , 52 being Caucasian, 48 being black, close to 50/50. But she indicated [referring to a black "friend" at work] there's a few blacks missing, one of my racial friends.

The data presented in this section indicate that whites do not see or interpret their own racial segregation and isolation as a racial issue at all. This blindness is central for understanding their views on a host of racial matters. Whites' lack of realization that race matters in their lives, combined with their limited interracial socialization, helps decipher the apparent contradiction between their stated preference for a color-blind approach to life (which corresponds to their perception of how they live their own lives) and the white reality of their lives. We further examine this apparent contradiction by focusing on their views on the sensitive matter of interracial relations.

### *"If two people are in love . . . ": Whites' Views on Interracial Marriage*

Despite whites' stakes in color blindness, they are more likely to oppose interracial marriage in surveys than any other form of interracial association (Schuman et al. 1997). For example, only 57.5 percent of white DAS respondents approved of interracial marriage in the survey. Although the approval rate was higher among college students—80 percent for white-black unions and 86 percent for white-Mexican unions, it was still lower than for other social distance questions (see Table 1 on page 328). This latter finding about college students fits research that suggests educated people are more likely to express approval for the principles of integration (Schuman et al. 1997).

Nevertheless, most DAS respondents and even the few college students who admitted they had problems with interracial marriage in the interviews brandished a laissez-faire or color-blind view on love. Love was described as a matter of personal choice between two people and, thus, as no one else's business because "love conquers all obstacles" (see Yanick 1998). Yet, this endorsement of color blindness in romantic relationships cannot be interpreted in a straightforward manner.

Most respondents qualified their support in such a way, or lived such segregated life-styles, that their laissez-faire position on this subject seemed rather empty. Further-more, too many whites expressed an aversion for blackness ("negrophobia") that casted doubt on their professed color blindness.

In the case of college students, the typical response was expressing reservations toward interracial marriage. That is, these respondents usually qualified their support of interracial marriage with expressions of concern for the welfare of the children, reactions of their family, where the interracial relationship transpired (e.g., South vs. North), or with rhetorical maneuvers that indicated little personal commitment to these unions ("They can have all the fun they want, it doesn't bother me at all").

Among DAS respondents, the typical response was expressing reservations toward interracial marriage (32 percent) followed closely by respondents who opposed interracial marriage (22 percent). A similar proportion of DAS respondents and college students stated their support for interracial marriage in the interviews (32.5 percent to 33 percent).

Since the responses to this sensitive question are complex, we present various examples from each category. First, we provide examples of respondents who approved of interracial marriage and had an interracial lifestyle.[18] For example, Kay, a student at MU, answered the interracial question in the following manner: "I don't see anything wrong with it (laughs)." Kay laughed because she had said before this question was posed to her that her boyfriend was black (the only white dating or married to a black among the 107 whites interviewed in these two projects). Similarly, Franci, a homemaker in her twenties, answered the question as follows: "As long as they're happy, go for it!" Although many other whites used expressions such as this one, they immediately added long-winded statements qualifying their support. In contrast, respondents in this category answered without hesitation and had an interracial lifestyle that included in some cases having dated across the color line. Franci, for example, had dated four minority men, one of whom was black.

However, even in this category, which was the most internally consistent, there was some variance. For instance, Scott, a mechanical drafter in his twenties, answered the interracial question as follows:

> If you are comfortable with it, do it. You know, I mean, I'm looking for a Vietnamese—half-Vietnamese, half-Chinese right now. That's my dream woman right there. I love Asian woman.

Scott, who had dated Asian (half-Vietnamese), Latino, and Arab woman in the past, seems like a clear example of a respondent who supported interracial unions. Yet, Scott's fascination for Asian woman was highly racialized—he stated he liked them because (1) their food "is awesome," (2) they are "just so attractive to me," and (3) he "just love the Asian race, it's mystical to me in a way" and, therefore, in tune with the racist way many white men think of Asian women nowadays.[19] Even more problematic was Scott's response in a follow-up to the interracial marriage

question. After stating that he would have "no problem" marrying someone of a different race, the interviewer asked him, "So what do you think about people who are absolutely against it, you know, who want to keep the races pure or whatever?" His answer was:

> I mean, I kind of, I feel that way also because I kind of, I don't know, I kinda wanna stay with my nationality in a way, you know. I think once, once you start breaking away, you start losing your own like deep home family values and in a way, you get mixed emotions, you know. But then again, it's just like the old times are gone, you know it's all modern day now. So really your nationality really don't, shouldn't count. But then again some people don't want to have so much blood within their family, within their name, you know. I know people that will not marry unless they're a hundred percent Italian. I got a couple of people who will not date anyone unless they're hundred percent Italian so . . .

Based on this response and the fact that Scott was classified as having an interracial lifestyle because he had one black friend while growing up, he could have been classified as someone who opposes interracial marriage.

Respondents who approved of interracial marriage but associated primarily with whites had more diverse answers. Some were respondents on the "racial progressive" side such as Sam, a warehouse laborer in his twenties, who answered the intermarriage question as follows: "I have no problems with it. I just did it." Sam was married to a Mexican American woman and stated he had been "attracted (to black women) but I've really never dated anyone like that."

Others were supportive of interracial marriage but had a racial preference for white mates. For example, Ray, the MU student cited above, answered the interracial marriage question as follows:

> I think that there's, I think that interracial marriage is totally legitimate. I think if two people love each other and they want to spend the rest of their lives together, I think they should definitely get married. And race should in no way be an inhibitive (sic) factor.

Although Ray seems supportive of interracial marriage (despite using some indirectness), his life before college and in college was centered on whites. He grew up in a midsize city in the Midwest in an upper-middle-class neighborhood that he characterized as "all white" and described his friends as "what the average suburban kid is like nowadays." More significantly, Ray, who was extremely articulate in the interview, stuttered remarkably on the question (asked before the one on intermarriage) about whether he had ever been attracted to blacks. Ray's hesitation was due to the fact he is not attracted to black women, something that clashes with his self-proclaimed color-blind approach to love and his apparent support for interracial marriages.

Other typical responses include respondents who expressed reservations about interracial marriage. Although these respondents can be further divided into respondents who had an interracial lifestyle and respondents whose primary associations were with whites, we discuss them together because there were no meaningful

variations in the two categories. Most of the respondents in these categories stated that they had no problems with interracial marriage but proceeded to cite reasons why these marriages were more difficult. A typical example is Olga, a software salesperson for an insurance company in her forties, who answered the interracial marriage question in the following way:

> Well, I guess my only concern is always if there's children and how those children will be accepted or not accepted. And it would be nice to think that the world would be lovely and wonderful but, you know, I think people should be allowed to do whatever they want to do. I don't think you should look at people's skin color or their origin or anything to determine what it is you want to do. However, what are you putting those kids through when they're a mixed race that *neither* culture would accept because the cultures are sometimes just as bad about sticking together as they are about claiming that no one will let them in and out of each other's areas. So sometimes that really affects the kids and neither culture will accept the child as being their culture or the other. So that concerns me, but in general, I don't have any problem with any of that.

Another example is Joann, a clerk in a department store in her early sixties, who stated that, "except for some one that might be extremely young, I think that [if] they want to marry outside their race and put up with what they [will face], that's their problem." Nevertheless, Joann acknowledged that interracial marriage could not have happened in her own family because

> I, that I never even though—because my husband was "Whites marry Whites, Blacks marry Blacks," he was very prejudiced about it. He grew up with that made up in his mind and that was it. Any white could marry any whites but blacks marry blacks and that is the way it was.

College students in these categories answered in similar fashion. For instance, Sally, an MU student, stated her stance on interracial marriage as follows:

> I certainly don't oppose the marriage, not at all, depending on where I am, if I had to have a concern, yes, it would be for the children. Ya know, it can be nasty and then other kids wouldn't even notice. I think I could care less what anyone else does with their lives, as long as they are really happy. And if the parents can set a really strong foundation at home, it can be conquered, but I'm sure, in some places, it could cause a problem.

Sally's apprehension matched the nature of her life and her specific views on blacks. Sally's network of relationships was, in terms of interactions, relationships, and residence, an almost entirely white one. When asked about her romantic life, Sally said she had never dated a person of color and recognized that "I've never been attracted to a black person" and that "I never look at what they look like, it just hasn't occurred in my life."

Carol, the SU student previously cited, said the following about interracial marriage:

> I have no problem with interracial marriage. I mean, if you are gonna, if you love someone, then you love someone, and I don't think—I think the only possible consequences it could have for children is maybe their own friends and how

people would possibly look at them, I mean, I don't look at children of interracial marriages any different than other children. You know, I mean, I know that some kids can be cruel, but I don't really think that should be a big factor in determining whether to marry someone from another race. I mean, it should be about whether or not you love the person.

Carol's answer, despite her expression of concern about the children, seems supportive of interracial marriage. But Carol, who basically had a life devoid of meaningful interactions with blacks before and while attending college, stated as part of her response to a question on her romantic life that she is not attracted to blacks.

Interviewer:  OK. Now we want to talk briefly about your romantic life. Can you briefly review for me your pre-college romantic life?
Carol:  My romantic life is kind of dry [laughs] I mean, as far as guys go, I mean, I know you're looking for white versus minority and I can, I don't want to look like a prejudice thing or anything . . .
Interviewer:  No!
Carol:  It's just I kinda, I don't know, I mean, there have been black guys that have been interested in me, but I just didn't, I wasn't interested in them. I mean, I guess, I guess as far as a preference thing, I kind of look at it as maybe a particular hair color or a particular eye color, I mean, if a guy comes along and he's black and like I love him, it's not gonna, I mean, I, it's not, I don't think the white-black issue's gonna make a difference, you know what I mean? There are guys that I prefer with a certain hair color or you know . . . I guess beggars can't be [choosers], but [laughs], you know what I mean, you have a certain ideal type in your mind but, I don't know, there haven't been any minority people.

Some of the respondents in these two categories could have been classified as people who opposed interracial marriage even though they did not say it in so many words. For example, Mandi, a nurse working in a nursing home in her thirties, answered the question on intermarriage by saying, "I wouldn't do it." When asked for her general position, she said: "I don't think I could tell people what to do. I think it's hard on people when they marry outside their race. The children." Thus, Mandi relied on abstract liberalism for her general position, but is clear that interracial marriage is not for her.

Finally, we present respondents who opposed interracial marriage. The first example is Janet, a married student at SU. Janet, as did a number of respondents, accused people in those relationships of being selfish.

I would feel that in most situations they're not really thinking of, of the child. I mean, they might not really think anything of it, but in reality I think most of the time the child is growing up, he's going to be picked on because he has parents from different races, and it's gonna, and it's gonna ultimately affect the child and, and the end result is they're only thinking of them–of their own happiness, not the happiness of the kid.

The interviewer followed up by asking, "How do you think your family would deal with it if you or someone else in your family became involved with someone of another race?" Janet answered, "They would not like it at all!"

Many of the older respondents expressed their disapproval of interracial marriage without hesitation and relied on Jim Crow tenets to justify their position. For example, Jim, a retired man in his seventies, stated:

> Well, I'm against it. I think scripture says that we should be very careful how we should choose our mates. I may love the girl I want to marry and she's black, but I just can't look at that situation. I have to look at what's going to happen afterwards, what's going to happen to our kids. They're the ones who take a beating. You're not white, you're not black.

Other older respondents expressed their opposition in a more refined manner. For instance, Rhonda, a part-time salesperson of Jewish background, used the movie "Fiddler in the Roof" to state her view on this matter.

> "A bird and a fish can fall in love but where do they go to nest?"

After saying this, Rhonda narrated a story to suggest blacks and whites should not marry because it causes many problems for the children. She then commented:

> The children are the ones that are—they're the ones that are not going to be, they're the ones that don't [know] where they belong. They don't know if they are white, they don't know if they're black.

As the previous examples illustrate, the argument of the children (or concerns for how the family would react) are not much different from those of respondents in categories 3 and 4. More significantly, a few respondents in this category used the jargon of color blindness in their responses. For example, Henrietta, a transsexual schoolteacher in his fifties, answered the question on intermarriage as follows:

> If two people . . . are . . . [in love] . . . I see nothing wrong with it. It's their business.

However, Henrietta proceeded to discuss the problems he has seen among biracial children in his school. In this discussion, Henrietta seemed to change his mind and said, "I would have to be against it." The interviewer then asked him, "So then it sounds like you yourself would not consider marrying someone of another race?" Henrietta responded:

> It depends. It depends on how I feel about the person due to my upbringing; could I, if you're asking me could I marry a black man? No. If you are asking me if I could marry an Asiatic man or an American, Native American man? Yes.

There are three things clear from the answers of the respondents in these studies. First, although most whites, even many who opposed interracial marriage, use the language of color blindness ("I have no problem with it" or "If two people are in love"), their answers reveal a deep level of reservation if not outright opposition toward these unions. Second, a large number of whites express a clear preference for whites as mates, a position that violates their professed color blindness. Third, even though whites do not have much contact with blacks or with people in interracial

marriages, they reject these unions because of presumed "problems" that transpire in these marriages. Interesting, the fact that the racial problems they predict for these unions do not match their claim that the United States is a color-blind country does not cross the minds of these respondents.

We suggest that whites' answers to the interracial marriage question are prima facie evidence of one of the consequences of the white habitus. Whites, through a variety of ways, signify they have serious difficulties in thinking about these relationships as normal. From a social psychological perspective, this is not a mystery. How can whites fall in love with people whom they never see, with people whom they regard as "different," with people with whom they hardly associate? Hence, what their answers to the interracial question betray is that whiteness as a lifestyle fosters whiteness as a choice for friends and partners. Their answers also reveal concerns for not sounding "racist," concerns that fit well with what we have discussed about color-blind racism.


## CONCLUSION

In this article, we argued that whites live a white habitus that creates and conditions their views, cognitions, and even sense of beauty and, more importantly, creates a sense of racial solidarity ("we whites"). This postulate fits the arguments and findings of the status construction and social identity theories. Whereas work in the social identity tradition (Rabbie and Horwitz 1969, 1988; Sherif et al. [1961] 1988; Tajfel 1970; Tajfel and Turner 1986) has amply demonstrated how little it takes to create antagonistic groups, work in the status construction tradition (Ridgeway 1991; Ridgeway and Balkwell 1997; Ridgeway et al. 1998) has showed that once there are two or more status groups in a social system, those at the top tend to adjudicate the status differences to nominal characteristics such as race and gender. Research in these traditions has also uncovered that when status differences between groups exist, as in the case between whites and blacks, the advantaged group develops its own "groupthink," values, and norms to account for and rationalize these differences.

We documented three things related to the white habitus. First, we showed that whites experience tremendous levels of racial segregation and isolation while growing up in neighborhoods and schools. That early segregation and isolation continues in colleges and in the workplace even when blacks are present in these environments. Second, we documented how whites, for the most part, do not interpret their racial isolation and segregation from blacks as something racial. Instead, they either do not see any need to explain these things at all or explain them away ("Race has nothing to do with it" or "That's the way things are"). Finally, we examined their answers to the interracial marriage question and suggested that they indicate whites are very unlikely to engage in interracial unions with blacks.

The social psychology produced by the white habitus leads to the creation of a positive self-view and a negative other-view. The more distant the group in question is from the white "norm," other things being equal, the more negative whites will view the group (for work on how whites view other minorities and its implications for race relations, see Bonilla-Silva 2003). For example, whites regard blacks as lazy and welfare dependent, and as receiving preferential treatment. Whites also believe that blacks complain too much about racism and discrimination. This negative view on blacks extends to the most personal realm: close interracial associations as friends and significant others. Albeit most whites rely on color-blindness ("race doesn't matter"), free market logic on human relationships ("if two people are in love"), and liberal individualism ("I don't think that anyone should have the right to tell anyone else whether or not they should marry") to articulate their views on interracial marriage, few seem to support these relationships. More significantly, few are in a position to ever engage in them or be neutral in case a close member of their family enters into them.

Whites' lack of true empathy for or interest in interracial marriage with blacks should not be a shock or a mystery to readers. Whites cannot like or love those whom they don't see or interact with in a meaningful way. This truism has been corroborated by social psychologists who for years have maintained that friendship and love emerge when people share activities, proximity, familiarity, and status (Sabini 1992). Thus whites' extreme racial isolation from blacks does not provide a fertile soil upon which primary interracial associations can flourish regardless of blacks' level of assimilation. Therefore, whites' abstract support for interracial associations with blacks is not likely to lead to significant increases in their personal associations with blacks.

The social and political implications of the white habitus are very significant. The racial universe of whiteness in which whites navigate everyday fosters a high degree of homogeneity of racial views and even of the manners in which they express these views. Despite the civil rights revolution, whites, young and old, live fundamentally segregated lives that have attitudinal, emotional, and political implications.

## NOTES

1. This stand can be seen in Vigil 1988 but, more clearly, in Bourgeois 1995.
2. Bourdieu (1984:170) defines habitus as "not only a structuring structure, which organizes practices and the perception of practices, but also a structured structure: the principles of division into logical classes which organizes the perception of the social world is itself the product of internalization of the division into social classes." The most important contribution of this concept, however, is that it shapes actors' "perception, appreciation and action" through routinization, without express calculation, and with little need for external constraints. We extend his class-inspired notion of habitus to the field of race. See Bourdieu 1984, 1997.
3. We recognize the difficulties in making this claim. However, we also note that witnessing a socialization process is impossible, but the interviews point to a point in a person's life from which we are able to make generalizations about how race works in America.

4. Research on identity formation suggests that dominants, whether capitalists, men, or whites, see themselves as the norm and thus do not see their practices, views, and values as problematic (Lemert 1994; Tatum 1997).

5. Adult resocialization is always possible, but, as Webster observes (1992:206), by early adulthood "most of us are settled into a social situation and patterns of living that we shall maintain for the rest of our lives."

6. This argument follows from the findings of the literature on socialization and expectation states. On socialization, see Berger and Luckman 1967. On expectation states, see Berger et al. 1972 and Webster 1992.

7. There were few blacks, Asians, and Latinos in the sample to be able to conduct any meaningful analysis.

8. It may also be true that higher relative education levels may lead to more sophisticated articulations of collective story lines. Yet, insofar as respondents insert any of the story lines, the quality or sophistication of the story line seems less important than the fact that respondents use the story line.

9. Although ambivalence is typical to all natural speech (Billig 1987, 1991; Wetherell and Potter 1992), all communicative events have goals and relate to larger ideologies (Thompson 1984; van Dijk 1984, 1998).

10. No one has systematic data on private nonnormative interactions on race among whites or nonwhites. The available (unsystematic) data suggest, however, that whites' private race-talk is much more racial in tone and content (see Graham 1995, Embrick 2005, and particularly Myers 2005).

11. Recent surveys, however, have found that whites and blacks are growing increasingly comfortable with the idea of segregation so long as it is not enforced through violent means, that is, so long as it is by "choice." See Grier and Thurman 1999.

12. See Allport 1954.

13. This proportion is in line with the general population, as 93 percent of whites do not intermarry. See Moran 2001.

14. Schuman et al. in their *Racial Attitudes in America* (1997) labeled the gap between the number of whites who approve of the principle of integration and the policies to implement integration a "paradox." We suggest this is just an apparent paradox whose mystery becomes clear within an ideological framework. Whites adopt an abstract notion of liberalism that has little import to their life, relations, and attitudes about a variety of real and concrete racial matters.

15. For brevity's sake, we did not include the questionnaire for both studies here. However, interested parties can obtain it directly from the first author or from ICPSR at the University of Michigan.

16. Kara, the respondent in question, referred to her Asian friend as "Oriental" and had very stereotypical views on blacks. In the survey, however, she claimed that she interacted almost daily with a black person. This person was her black maid.

17. The recent work of Quillian and Campbell (2003) suggests that school contexts matter: the rate of cross-racial friendship increases significantly in schools that are more mixed. Yet, they also point out that white students still have more white than nonwhite friends even in these racially mixed schools. Thus, as they conclude, this finding is "consistent with the basic prediction of propinquity" (548).

18. We were flexible in the classification of respondents as having an interracial lifestyle. Hence, respondents who had one black friend at any point in time were regarded as having an interracial lifestyle.

19. Asian women are viewed by most white men as highly "desirable" because they are supposed to be subservient and sensual, as "China Dolls," the label given to this stereotype by the Media Action Network for Asian Americans. See Media Action Network for Asian Americans, A Memo from MANAA to Hollywood: Asian Stereotypes.

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