Relational Understanding and White Antiracist Praxis

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In this article, we argue that, in order for white racial consciousness and practice to shift toward an antiracist praxis, a relational understanding of racism, the "self," and society is necessary. We find that such understanding arises from a confluence of propositional, affective, and tacit forms of knowledge about racism and one's own situatedness within it. We consider the claims sociologists have made about transformations in racial consciousness, bringing sociological theories of racism into dialogue with research on whiteness and antiracism. We assert that sociological research on white racism and "whiteness" tends to privilege propositional and tacit/common sense knowledge, respectively, as critical to shifting white racial consciousness. Research on antiracism privileges affective knowledge as the source of antiracist change. We examine some of Perry's recent ethnographic research with white people who attended either multiracial or majority white high schools to argue that the confluence of these three types of knowledge is necessary to transform white racial praxis because it produces a relational understanding of self and "other," and, by extension, race, racism, and antiracist practice.

The last four decades have seen a proliferation of research about the complex and largely hidden ways that white racism and white racial dominance pervade U.S. culture and institutions. Sociologists, in particular, have played an instrumental role in revealing how white people's feelings, attitudes, and behaviors consistently reproduce the laws and structures that privilege them, even when they conscientiously espouse principles of equality. An implicit goal of this research has been to generate greater understanding of how to eradicate racial inequalities, and frequently sociologists have formulated sophisticated and important accounts that support this kind of social justice work. However, as we show, there has not yet been sufficient conversation between various branches of sociological studies of whiteness and racism, and this lack of discourse has produced only partial accounts of what type of knowledge and understanding is necessary to effectively cultivate white antiracist praxis.

In this article, we consider claims sociologists have made about the roots of transformations in white racial consciousness, bringing sociological theories of racism into dialogue with research on whiteness and antiracism. We examine three overlapping tendencies in recent sociological research, focusing on what form of knowing each claims is critical, prescriptively, to shifting white racial consciousness. We argue that, first, research on white racism tends to privilege propositional knowledge as a route toward antiracism. Second, what we call "whiteness literature" focuses on the role of structurally situated, commonsensical, or tacit knowledge. Finally, research on

antiracism privileges affective knowledge and, in some cases, places a focus on relationally situated affective knowing. We constellate these three tendencies, arguing that it is the confluence of experiences and understanding that effectively produces a relational awareness of "self" and "other," which results in white antiracist praxis. We consider some of Pamela Perry's long-term, ethnographic research on the racial politics of white people who attended either multiracial or majority white high schools in support of the argument for *relational understanding* as a key resource in antiracist transformation. Such an understanding of self and other, we argue, arises from a confluence of propositional, affective, and tacit forms of knowledge about racism and one's own situatedness within it.

In order to situate this work, we begin with some definitions of the core terms at play in this article. By "antiracist praxis," we mean conscious thought and action to dismantle racism and end racial inequities in U.S. society. We refer not only to direct-action antiracism by whites but also "everyday" behaviors, from voting to making choices about where to live and work. We hesitate to use the term "antiracism" because it implies a reactive politics that is not always true of successful practices for social justice. As such, "antiracism" elides the relational character of "racism" and "antiracism": as opposing poles, "antiracism" is predicated on "racism," perhaps precluding nonreactive action for social justice. We use the term for expedient purposes, but in what follows, we will be arguing for an understanding of antiracism based on a nondual theory of social justice and social justice action.

By "propositional knowledge," we refer to knowledge that can be expressed in and received by words and evaluated by conceptual reason. It attends to verifiable claims about the world and appeals to individuals as rational beings. By "affective knowledge," we refer to knowing experienced as feelings or structures of feelings. It manifests in our emotive, often inarticulate or inarticulable responses to the world around us (de Sousa 1987; Frye 1983; Lorde 1984). By "common sense" or "tacit" knowledge, we mean presuppositional, assumed knowledge of the form that can be schematized and put in propositional form, but that usually is normalized and relatively incognizant to the knower (Shotwell 2006; Babbitt 1996; Polanyi 1962, 1967). While affective and tacit kinds of knowing are somewhat contested epistemic categories,[1] we consider them salient to propositional knowledge more conventionally conceived (as, for example, true and justified belief, with caveats) and thus as at least epistemically relevant (see Shotwell unpublished).

We use the term "relational understanding" to name the implicit or explicit recognition of the dialogical co-constitution of a historically situated self, "other," and society. There are two dimensions of this phenomenon. The first is best understood as the interrelationship between the individual and society and the social construction of self and group subjectivity. Lived experience within social, institutional, and discursive structures shapes individual consciousness and behaviors in ways that, in turn, reproduce the social order (Bourdieu 1977; Foucault 2003; Hall 1996). The social construction of race, class, gender, and sexual identities fundamentally happen

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[1] "Knowledge" is frequently ascribed (only) to some subject's (S's) true and justified belief that some proposition (p) is the case. The phrase "S knows that p" would be understood as true if S were to be justified in believing that p, and if p were in fact true (perhaps with appropriate caveats to respond to current debates in epistemology arising from Edmund Gettier's counterexamples). Within a conventional epistemic frame, then, the notions of affective and tacit knowledge may strike some readers as incoherent, as neither form of understanding is making overt, evaluable propositional claims about the world. We are following our archive's colloquial use of these forms of understanding as also forms of knowing, and simultaneously questioning the idea that only propositional knowledge is relevant to racial formation.

through this relational process between the individual and "society." Understanding these social-institutional processes of subject formation and the ways power is implicated in them can lead to critical self- and group-reflection and deconstruction, and greater awareness of where one is situated within the complex matrix of power and hierarchy (Hartigan 2005).

The second dimension of relational understanding is enmeshed with the first but is more specifically observed as the interrelationships between individuals themselves in processes of co-constitution. The "self" and "other" (including the racial self and Other) are not separate; they co-arise relationally and are mutually entangled and interdependent. This conception of relationality draws from symbolic interaction, feminist, and deconstruction theories, and non-Western epistemologies that challenge the notion of a rational, autonomous self, which is hegemonic in U.S. culture (Callero 2003; Klein 1995; Powell 1997; Qin 2004). Self-awareness and self-identity are fundamentally shaped through personal interactions governed by (socially generated) interpretive frameworks (Cahill 1998; Gergen 1991), relations of power (Foucault 1977; Qin 2004), and interdependent relations with others (hooks 1989; Lorde 1984). The bounded "self" is but a momentary instantiation of otherwise fluid, permeable, and elusive boundaries between self and other (Gergen 1991; Perry 2002). In some Confucian and Buddhist traditions, the more attached one is to his or her individuality, the further s/he is from a true sense of self (Tu 1985; Klein 1995).

Fundamentally, we are arguing for the development of sociological theories of race, racism, and antiracism that go beyond the liberal, rational conceptualization of the self, and that contribute toward more nuanced, layered, and explanatory accounts of race, racism, and social change. In this article, we assert that the transformation of white racial consciousness and practice toward "antiracist" social justice praxis comes about through the integration of propositional, affective, and commonsense forms of knowledge into a new relational understanding of race, racism, and antiracist practice. These three types of knowledge are interdependent and interpenetrating—each is shaped by the other. Perry's recent research, alongside the discussion we offer subsequent to the sociological literature, suggests that when one of them is weak with respect to antiracist understanding, the shift to an antiracist praxis does not occur.

PROPOSITIONAL KNOWLEDGE IN SOCIOLOGY OF WHITE RACISM

The body of literature we are calling "white racism" is that which is most engaged with analyzing the attitudes, opinions, beliefs, and/or ideologies of whites; the structural and institutional factors influencing white attitudes and beliefs; and how whites' attitudes and beliefs influence their political behavior. Drawing either on the theory of group position advanced by Herbert Blumer (1958) or variations of group-conflict/social-dominance theory (see Bobo 1988; Sears, Sidaneous, and Bobo 2000), scholars of white racism agree that in hierarchically structured societies like the United States, members of the privileged group will develop practices and ideologies that maintain their self-interests and preserve the status quo. Among these scholars, there is considerable debate over the function and/or relevance of "prejudice" and other sentiments in cultivating and reproducing white "racism;" despite this difference, the majority tends to ignore the affective dimension of antiracist transformation and to privilege the role of propositional knowledge—more or different information—in shifting white racial consciousness.

Herbert Blumer's (1958) "group position" analytical framework guides many of the studies that assert the ongoing relevance of "prejudice" in contemporary race relations and politics (Bobo 1988, 1999, 2004; Bobo, Kluegel, and Smith 1997; Tuch and Hughes 1996). Blumer posited that dominant group members, upon feeling that their social status and entitlements are threatened by an outgroup, will develop hostile feelings and exclusionary practices. Following Blumer, Lawrence Bobo and associates have argued that the post civil rights era is marked by a "kinder, gentler" form of racism, which he calls "laissez-faire" racism (Bobo 2004; Bobo and Smith 1998; Bobo et al. 1997). Laissez-faire racism is based on a notion of black cultural inferiority, and is expressed in terms of blaming black people's imputed laziness, lack of intelligence, tendencies for violence, and such for their disadvantaged socioeconomic standing. His argument departs from social psychological theories (see Kinder 1986; Kinder and Sanders 1996; Kinder and Sears 1981; Sears 1988, 1993) by arguing that antiblack feelings and the shift from Jim Crow to modern racism did not arise independently of self- and group-interests. Government policies in the 1960s intended to decrease prejudice and discrimination changed to having a focus on the redistribution of economic and educational resources. According to Bobo, whereas whites could readily stand behind the moral character of the former, the redistribution of wealth and status posed a more tangible threat to their group position (Bobo 1988; Bobo and Smith 1998; Shuman et al. 1997; Sears, Sidanius, and Bobo 2000). Hence, Bobo argues that racism persists under a new guise, fitting more appropriately within the contemporary political climate.

Recently, Forman (2004) has added an important variation on this discussion. Drawing on large scale, longitudinal surveys of young people in the United States, Forman finds that since 1976, the racial apathy of young whites has increased. By "racial apathy," he refers to a "lack of feeling or indifference toward societal racial and ethnic inequality and lack of engagement with race-related social issues" (2004:44). Racial apathy, Forman suggests, is another way of understanding the "subtle" racism of the post civil rights era: indifference to and/or ignorance of the social reality of race is enough to keep that reality intact.

Racial apathy and this "kinder, gentler racism" can be seen as forms of (perhaps unthinking) white prejudice. Several prominent sociologists emphatically challenge the notion of prejudice and, instead, emphasize *racism,* which Wellman ([1977] 1993) defines as culturally acceptable beliefs that defend social advantages that are based on race. The difference between "prejudice" and "racism" in this respect is that the latter need not involve hostile beliefs and feelings at all. Moreover, according to Wellman, "racism" must be defined not only by intent, but also consequence—by the beliefs and ideologies that seem race neutral in content but, in practice, reproduce white racial privilege. Bonilla-Silva's work (2003a, 2003b, 2001, 1997) resonates with Wellman's. At the core of Bonilla-Silva's argument is that "color-blind" ideological frames shape the way white people interpret race and their own actions. Color-blind frames, which include abstract liberalism, naturalized preferences, cultural racism, and the minimization of racism as a serious social problem, explain persistent racial inequalities without implicating white people and often without implicating "race" at all (Bonilla-Silva 2003a).

Jackman (1996, 1994; Jackman and Muha 1984) poses a somewhat different twist on the arguments above, while also underscoring the role of social structures and ideologies, and not affect, in reproducing white racism. She argues that the root cause of racial inequality is not prejudice and hostility because those emotions are not functional for preserving the group interests of whites. For the status quo to

reproduce itself, dominant and subordinate groups must have an amicable, accommodating relationship. Hence, dominant group members must accommodate the self-interests of the subordinated by developing "inclusive ideologies," such as individualism, that cordially contain the demands of subordinates by denying the "existential or moral credibility of group-based demands" (1994:92) and by shifting discussion of redistributive "equality" to "equality of opportunity," which naturalizes unequal outcomes.

Implications for Antiracist Theory and Praxis

The main contribution of the sociology of white racism is that material, social-economic structures, and the ideologies that legitimize, them play a decisive role in reproducing racial inequalities. This is an important challenge to tendencies, especially within social psychology, to attribute prejudice and racism to individual dispositions, psychologies, and feelings (see Bobo 1988; Sears 1988). Revealing the historical, structural, and ideological roots of prejudice and racism suggests that racism is not a hard-wired inevitability or individualized problem, but a social problem that can be countered and abolished through practical activity. What emerges, specifically, in this literature is the need for radical social change (Bonilla-Silva 2003a, 2003b, 2001, 1997; Hughes 1996; Jackman 1996, 1994). Starting points toward that end include changing the ideological frames with which people make sense of social structures and addressing people's ignorance of the material realities of racism.

Bonilla-Silva (2003a), for example, argues that a critical strategy for affecting change in the current ideological climate is to call into question the ideology of color-blindness on multiple fronts. Color-blindness must be "undress[ed]…before a huge mirror" by making visible the "myriad facts of contemporary whiteness" (2003a:183). Others argue that ignorance is a core obstacle to changing white people's consciousness, rationalizations, and attitudes about race (Gallagher 2005; DiTomasio et al. 2003; McKinney 2005; Perry 2002). Factual information about the persistence of racial oppression and discrimination is, thus, widely seen as necessary (Bonilla-Silva 2003; Forman 2004; Tuch and Hughes 1996). Feagin (Feagin and McKinney 2003; Feagin et al. 2001) emphasizes that knowing that racism persists is not as effective as knowing what it *costs*. He takes a particular twist on group interest theory by elaborating on how racism places a heavy cost on all Americans, including whites. Though in general Feagin emphasizes the importance of affect—particularly empathy—in shifting white racialized consciousness (which we discuss subsequently), in this respect he also highlights the importance of certain kinds of propositional knowledge in the form of different and better information.

A weakness of this school of thought is, however, its oversubscription to a group-conflict theoretical understanding of the role of social-institutional structures in shaping racial subjectivity. The scholars here view social structures primarily with respect to the unequal distribution of resources and how that engages self-interests in a rational way. The tacit and "irrational" relationships between social structures and subjectivity are not critically engaged. Furthermore, although some scholars discuss the role of affect in constituting forms of racism, they do not consider how affect constitutes forms of antiracism or what role it plays in antiracist transformation. Underlying group conflict theory is a belief in a rational, liberal self whose actions will shift as a result of reasoned cognition. Hence, these scholars tend to overestimate the role of propositional knowledge—or more and better information—in transforming white racial consciousness. Finally, group conflict theory cannot

adequately explain how "self-interested" whites *do* take on antiracist social justice work.

TACIT KNOWLEDGE IN WHITENESS STUDIES

In the early 1990s, a new, multidisciplinary field of study emerged with a core mission of revealing "whiteness" and its socially constructed nature. White privilege, according to whiteness scholars, resides not only in access to and control over material resources, but in the ways that "white" culture, epistemology, values, linguistic and somatic styles, and interests silently iterate and legitimize white supremacy in the seemingly neutral guise of "the norm" (Doane 1997; Dyer 1997; Frankenberg 1993; Perry 2002; Roediger 1994; Roman 1993; Goldberg 1993). Whiteness scholars in the social sciences have been particularly interested in the social construction of tacit knowledge about the self, other, and society, with the "normalization" of white racial consciousness and identity as a core concern. An underlying assumption of the majority of this research is that through lived, practical activity within social and institutional structures that are imbued with racial meanings, racial subjects and racial (including racist) subjectivities are constituted.

Ruth Frankenberg's germinal study (1993) revealed how white identity and culture are constructed as common sense among white people and, therefore, experienced as "empty" or nonexistent by them (see also Doane 1997; Kenny 2000). Frankenberg argues that centuries of colonial discourse have produced an unmarked white/Western self that is defined by and in opposition to a marked, "racial" and cultural Other. As such, whiteness provides the standard by which to mark, judge, and exclude those not fitting the proper measures (Goldberg 1993; powell 2000; Roman 1993).

White normativity is understood to structure other beliefs and behaviors of whites that reproduce the racial status quo. Scholars have asserted that because whites see themselves as "raceless" ("normal"), they will not see how they benefit from racial structures or possibly even see that race matters for people of color (DiTomasio et al. 2003; Doane 1997; Gallagher 2005; Kenny 2000; Lewis 2003). Perry's (2002) comparative study of white youth in predominantly white and racially diverse schools, argues that a "color-blind" orientation does not stem as much from the youths' self-interests as from what resonates as "truth" derived from limited experience of racialized difference and inequality. Gallagher (2003a, 2005) argues that the norm of color-blindness can lead to rearticulations of white identity and experience that disavow white privilege and racism in contemporary American society. For example, whites may rearticulate their identities as the "new victims" (Gallagher 1995, 1997) of race-targeted policies, such as affirmative action, or as once-victims who have risen above hardship and discrimination through hard work (Gallagher 2003b).

Research in education has long been interested in the ways that schools help produce tacit forms of knowledge that reproduce social—especially class—inequalities in surreptitious ways. Recent studies have provided further insight into how white privilege and racial inequalities are reproduced in schools through processes that cannot be reduced to what students are explicitly "taught" (Blau 2003; Carter 2005; Kenny 2000; Lewis 2003; Morris 2006; Perry 2002; Pollock 2004). Lewis's ethnographic study (2003), for example, of three different elementary schools—one predominantly white, another racially diverse, and the third a politically "progressive" Spanish immersion school—reveals the importance of examining the particularities of *context* to understand how white racial attitudes and consciousness are shaped. Other studies attend to such matters as the absence of discussions about race and/or acknowledgments

of how race matters in the school and wider society (Kenny 2000; Pollock 2004).

What we learn from whiteness studies, then, is that commonsense, tacit knowledge can shape white racial consciousness and reproduce racial inequalities in ways that may not engage "rational" self-interests in a direct way, if at all. Further revealed are the fundamentally *relational* processes by which tacit knowledge is constructed. The literature discussed thus far illuminates how tacit knowledge about the self and society is developed through individuals' lived experience within and dialogical interaction with specific institutional and cultural configurations. Also illuminated within this literature are the ways individuals, in interaction with one another, engage in intersubjective processes of co-construction (Carter 2005; Dolby 2001; Hartigan 1999; Perry 2002; Morris 2006). This is most vividly illuminated in studies of youth cultures and intergroup relations (Carter 2005; Dolby 2001; Perry 2002). Young people, in creative dialogue with one another, invent, deploy, cast off, and reinvent racial meanings through their consumption practices. They show that racial identity formation is a give-and-take process of negotiation between actors that never fully settles into fixed boundaries, and that "otherness" is a fundamental constituent of the "self," if only by its negation. Elsewhere, Perry (2002) employs the term "the multiracial self" to codify the interdependency and inseparability of racialized identities.

Implications of Whiteness Research for Antiracist Theory and Praxis

Whiteness scholarship identifies itself as an antiracist project, an effort to demystify and make apparent common sense white privilege and racial domination and, by doing so, create the conditions for their demise (Hartigan 2000; Rasmussen et al. 2001; Delgado and Stefancic 1997). The implication of this research is that deconstructing whiteness happens at the individual and institutional level. At the individual level, it involves processes of self-awareness and critical self- and group-reflection to unpack one's personal and intersubjective situatedness within relations of power. At the institutional level, it involves changing normative practices that center whiteness and mystify white privilege.

Among the research discussed above, schools are a key site for addressing the reproduction of racial inequality. However, the emphasis is not *what*, propositionally, children are taught but *how* they are taught and in what context. Within schools, change needs to occur in the organization of space and bodies, the pedagogical norms and expectations, the ways race is talked about and when, and how "difference" is implicitly and explicitly represented in the curriculum (Lewis 2003; Perry 2001, 2002; McCarthy 1993; Fine, Weis, and Powell 1997).

Overall, whiteness scholarship advances sociology of racism by revealing how tacit knowledge about self, others, and society is socially and institutionally produced. This improves our understanding of how—in what contexts, by what processes, with what types of knowledge—white racial attitudes and consciousness can be constructed as "antiracist" or be oriented toward such a position. Propositional knowledge is an important component in such transformations, but can only go so far if people's commonsense does not jibe with what they hear. We understand whiteness theorists to thus argue for a shift in the common sense, provisionally tacit contents of white people's assumptions and practices: the aspects of their knowing that come without saying and, thus, go without saying (Bourdieu 1977). Paying attention to people's situated experience and creating alternative conditions that shape experience are

also necessary. However, although whiteness scholarship importantly illuminates the intersubjective relationality of self and other, it undertheorizes the role of affect in protecting tacit knowledge or in deconstructing it. Although scholars discuss the guilt and anger whites often express about race and/or whiteness, the opportunities those feelings offer for shifting white racial consciousness are not explored. The next set of literature we examine, sociological studies of white antiracism, offers some insights in this regard.

AFFECTIVE UNDERSTANDING IN SOCIOLOGICAL RESEARCH ON WHITE ANTIRACISM

In comparatively recent years, empirical studies of white antiracism have been emerging, shedding considerable light on what moves white people toward an antiracist praxis. What stands out prominently in this research is the decisive role played by affective knowledge—a felt recognition of the wrongs of racism. This is experienced through such emotions as empathy (Feagin 2000, 2004; O'Brien 2001), intersectional connection (Anthias 2001; Anthias and Lloyd 2002; Bonnett 1993; Moon and Flores 2000), or through the "political" becoming "personal" (Thompson 2001)—emotions that carry a felt sense of connectedness with others. Central to fostering these experiences, according to this literature, is close relationships with people of color and/or first-hand witness of race-based social suffering.

Affective Knowledge and Cross-Racial Relationships

In *Racist America* (2000), Joe Feagin argues that the cultivation of empathy is critical for fostering antiracist action. He lays out three stages of empathetic identification across the color line, arguing that there can come a point at which a white person "personally feels some of the pain that comes from being enmeshed in the racist conditions central to the lives of the oppressed others" (2000:255). Drawing on Feagin's work in her study of 30 self-identified white antiracists, O'Brien examines moments of "epiphany" in which white people recognize something about racialization and begin to "develop the empathy needed to start them on their antiracist path" (2001:40). O'Brien rests her analysis on a framework laid out by Hogan and Netzer in an unpublished but widely cited presentation, "Knowing the Other: White Women, Gender and Racism" (unpublished, cited in Feagin et al. 2001:232). According to O'Brien (2001), Hogan and Netzer argue that white antiracism arises from a recognition of "approximating experiences"—conceptual or analogous understandings of what it might be like to be subject to racism, in which a subject extends an empathetic understanding toward the pain of racism, based on his or her own experience of suffering.

   While Feagin and O'Brien's work accurately explains many white people's self-described shifts in racial consciousness, we would argue that the notion of empathy, when understood as putting one's "self" in the "other's" shoes, remains troublingly self-referential, and potentially recenters white subjecthood. Alternate accounts emphasize awareness of the ways one is multiply positioned by race, class, gender, and sexuality (Anthias 2001; Anthias and Lloyd 2002; Bonnett 1993; Moon and Flores 2000; Dei 1999, 1996). Moon and Flores argue for a movement "from additive to multiplicative assessments of identity and power" (2000:110). The difference between the emphasis on intersectionality and on "approximating experiences" marks a different understanding of the "self." The intersectional "self" and "other"

are interconnected through co-entanglements and co-constructedness amidst complex webs of oppression and liberation. Further, notions of intersectionality offer stronger explanatory resources to the complex ways class, religion, gender, ability, and sexuality shift and determine the valence of whiteness (Lorde 1984; Crenshaw 1991). Rather than approximating experiences, sociologists theorizing intersectionality offer accounts of coming to see relational co-constitution as a felt sense of one's social situatedness.

Becky Thompson's (2001) concept of an "ethic of accountability" also offers a more nondual, co-relational understanding of the processes and types of knowledge that shift white racial practices. In her study of U.S. white activists working against racism and political oppression, Thompson observed among her respondents a tendency to attribute the roots of their radicalism to personal contact with people of color or political struggles against racism. She found that whites develop an "ethic of accountability" (2001:369) that makes political action against racism a personal issue for them. In her words: "those who stand up for injustices as a matter of principle . . . eventually feel those injustices personally because the people who are personally injured are their lovers, friends, children, and close neighbors" (2001:368). An "ethic of accountability," like the concept of intersectionality, underscores an experience that is not a putting of oneself in the other's shoes, but of the "other's" experiences and problems becoming or being recognized as intimately related to the formation of one's own "self."

Relations with People of Color and Counterhegemonic Frameworks

Much of this work on antiracism asserts, then, that cross-racial contact and interpersonal relationships can be centrally important to white people coming to understand how they are intertwined with people of color in processes of racialization. A transformative aspect of close contact with people of color is that it can give whites a greater or very different awareness of their co-relationality with people of color as well as of societal racism, power relations, and the racial order (Eichstedt 2001). O'Brien and Korgen (2004) note that such experience, for example, can demystify "color-blind" and other discourses that claim institutional racism to be nonexistent.

However, although interpersonal contact with racialized people or race-based social suffering can be a critical component in shifting white racial consciousness and praxis, it is not sufficient alone. Scholars of white antiracism agree with white racism scholars in asserting the importance of counterhegemonic frameworks and, thus, propositional forms of education about racism in society and how to understand it. Many antiracist scholars agree that experiences or types of education that actively support religious or secular-humanist democratic principles (O'Brien 2001) or introduce whites to counterideological frames of analysis (McKinney and Feagin 2003; O'Brien and Korgen 2004) are key to white antiracism. Indeed, this may necessarily accompany relationships with people of color for a transformation of consciousness to occur. O'Brien and Korgen (2004) argue that because color-blind ideology is hegemonic in U.S. society today, it is possible for white people to have close associations with people of color and still believe that race doesn't matter in the society or that it's people of color who now have all the advantages (see also Bonilla-Silva 2003a). As mentioned previously, sociologists also highlight the usefulness of giving whites evidence about the "costs" of racism to their own well-being (Feagin, Vera, and Batur 2001; Feagin 2000; Eichstedt 2001; Luft 2005). These "costs" include the ways

racism undermines social movements that would benefit many whites (like labor and women's movements), negatively impacts the wider community (such as poorly functioning schools), or creates uncomfortable feelings of guilt or fear that can be paralyzing (Luft 2005). These scholars argue that articulating these various costs can help whites reason that racism in not rational and in their self-interest after all. Alternatively, we suggest that understanding the personal and universal "costs" of racism helps support awareness of the relational, interdependent character of race relations and inequalities.

This relatively recent research on white antiracism makes an important contribution to our understanding of what types of experiences and knowledge can transform white racial consciousness and racial practice. Affective understanding, especially feelings of empathy and compassion, is a critical element of antiracist transformation. We suggest that the power of these feelings lies in their ability to produce a felt sense of one's interdependent, relational, and social-political connections with others. And, as these scholars point out, a potent and necessary combination is affective knowledge along with propositional knowledge that helps give antiracist language to affective experiences and reconfigures one's ideological interpretive frameworks. Our research shows, however, that unless this combination shifts one's tacit knowledge about the world, then antiracist transformation will not occur.

TOWARD MULTIFACETED RELATIONAL UNDERSTANDING

Our own research on this question concurs with and refines these findings. Shotwell's work examines racial formation and white antiracist activist theoretical work, and focuses on the forms of implicit understanding we have discussed previously in relation to the sociological literature (Shotwell 2006 unpublished). In this section, we turn to a discussion of Perry's long-term, ethnographic study examining life experiences that lead to progressive, "antiracist," shifts in racial consciousness and practice. Perry initially conducted ethnographic research in two high schools in the mid 1990s, comparing the racial identities and consciousness of white youth attending either a predominantly white or a racially diverse high school (Perry 2002). Starting in 2004, she conducted follow-up interviews with 20 alumni from each school (40 total); half of these were "case studies"—individuals with whom she had spent extra time in high school and whom she followed closely in the years leading to the follow-up study.

Unlike studies before it, this was of individuals who were not activists (to begin with, anyway) or self-identified as antiracists, and Perry was able to compare respondents who had little or no shift in racial consciousness and practice to those who did. Among the latter, the most salient catalyst of change was the constellation of tacit, affective, and propositional knowledges into a relational understanding of race, racism, and antiracist practice. Unless the respondents had, through some cognitive breakthrough on the level of their "common sense," developed a critical awareness of power and their own social location within that, *and* experienced a felt sense of compassion and accountability, *and* were provided alternative ideological, conceptual, and interpretative frameworks with which to give language and structure to their cognitive and emotional shifts, then an antiracist praxis did not catalyze. To illustrate this, we focus on two individuals who attended the predominantly white high school in Perry's study. As we discuss, the divergent paths their own racial formation took after high school tell us something important about relational

understanding. We will then speak more generally about some alumni from the multiracial school.

"Billy" and "Howie" are two white males who attended the same predominantly white high school in a predominantly white community. In high school, they both identified as politically conservative (following their parents) and highly religious (involved in youth religious groups). They both expressed an affective distaste for racism and economic inequality, but had very little to no knowledge about contemporary racial inequalities and injustices. Their tacit view of the world was that societal racism and discrimination ended with the civil rights movement, race did not have a bearing on economic and educational disparities between certain groups, and they, as whites, had no racial identity or accountability for social inequalities.

Ten years later, Perry met again with Howie, who was living in a low-income, multiracial community in an east coast city. He was an antiracist, global justice political activist and seeking a double major in clinical social work and practical theology (influenced by liberation theology). He was an avid antiracist who took seriously the importance of continually examining his privileges as a white male, deconstructing his own racism, cultivating close friendships with people of color, and making a life commitment to contributing to racial and global justice. In short, Howie had come to a relational understanding of his own situatedness within racist social structures and the importance of working simultaneously at the personal, interpersonal, and structural-political levels of antiracist engagement.

The first shift in Howie's consciousness and practice came when he moved into a low-income community composed predominantly of immigrant Sudanese to do "missionary" work for his conservative church. While there, he witnessed poverty and structural disadvantage to a degree he could not imagine before, and he developed close relationships with community members who enlightened him on issues of global injustice and U.S. racism. He said, "I really started to encounter . . . the concept of social justice. In some ways it was new to me. And just living in that community and going to community meetings and seeing some of the effects of economic issues that were really happening and affecting people, I couldn't help but get involved in that." Hence, Howie's practical activity in the low-income community challenged his commonsense understanding, and that shift simultaneously gave birth to feelings of concern and compassion.

The next pivotal moment for Howie happened in graduate school. Up until then, "just a lot of issues came up in front for me that I didn't really have a language for." Courses he took in graduate school, including a course on spirituality and social justice and one titled "Racism, Oppression, and Diversity," helped give language to Howie's experience and forced him and other students "to come out of our comfort zones and to encounter our own personal issues." That is, the courses gave Howie the conceptual tools to further deconstruct his tacit understanding and to examine his own situatedness within webs of oppression and liberation and recognize his accountability within them. They provided new propositional information, which, in combination with the shifts in affective and common sense knowledge he experienced in his community work, transformed what he had not "had the language for."

Billy, on the other hand, took a different trajectory, though he, too, had made some shifts since high school. Perry met Billy in his new home, located in a predominantly white and affluent bedroom community, into which he and his wife of one year had just moved. He still identified as Republican though now as a more

"moderate" conservative. When Perry brought up issues of unequal opportunity and what can be done to make a more even playing field, he did not categorically dismiss government intervention. He did not really know how to address the issues, but agreed that social-economic inequality existed, and should not. Billy's experience of being white and his sense of white privilege had shifted, too. He expressed feeling somewhat guilty about slavery (he did not have this feeling in high school), and although he believed he "didn't have anything to do with that," he nonetheless believed that he needed to "just keep respecting that, you know, as I go right now." In other words, Billy had some affective knowledge about the wrongness of slavery and an inchoate "ethic of accountability." However, he had not really developed any deep concern about racial injustice and/or a political will to do anything about it. As in high school, he still rejected affirmative action, and although he felt bad about schooling inequalities, he could not condone government efforts to address them.

Overall, at the core of Billy's slight shift to the left was a greater appreciation and respect for cultural differences and a belief in the necessity to keep an "open mind" about people. This was catalyzed by experiences traveling in foreign countries after high school and, now, working closely with co-workers of color, namely, immigrants from India and the Middle East. However, when Perry asked him if he and any of his co-workers and friends ever talked about racism or experiences of racial profiling and discrimination, he said: "Not really. That doesn't come up." It seemed, then, that while Billy and his co-workers likely experienced the effects of racial inequity, they did not express an immediate, direct, conceptual counterpoint to Billy's belief that race didn't matter. And when asked if he ever took a college course in ethnic studies, women studies, or "cultural appreciation," he said he had not. In short, in Billy's lived experience, racialized differences and inequalities were not sufficiently salient to challenge his tacit understanding of a "color blind" and, hence, egalitarian society. He had some "factual" knowledge about racial inequalities and some feelings of guilt, but without a shift in this "color blind" commonsense, no substantive shift in his racial praxis occurred.

We understand the differences between Howie and Billy to mark significant differences in the constellation of emotion, common sense assumptions, and propositional knowledge that we are calling relational understanding. The capacity to undergo shifts in this matrix is related to the systemic and structural conditions in which people find themselves: in other words, it is not that Howie developed antiracist practices in the years after high school because he is fundamentally a better person than Billy. Rather, his social conditions opened up a space of possibility within which his conceptual, affective, and tacit understandings were put into play. Within the social structures we all occupy, of course, different people take up antiracist practices to different degrees. But our research suggests that people are most able to effect transformations in their racialized understanding and action when they have available multi-axial resources for self- (re) making. For example, consider a different social context: white subjects who attended a multiracial high school.

As Perry illustrated in *Shades of White* (2002), many white alumni from the racially diverse school graduated with very different tacit, affective, and propositional racialized knowledge. Societal racism and white privilege were not mystified for them; their common sense view of the world was that individual and institutional racism was still alive and well, and they, as whites, had some accountability to address that, although they lacked knowledge about how, exactly. Like their counterparts in the predominantly white school, they had a visceral distaste for inequality, but

many more also expressed feelings of guilt or, alternatively, anger. In many cases, that anger was directed toward students of color, particularly African Americans, who comprised nearly a majority of the school population. And while these students had considerable factual knowledge about the realities of racism past and present, they did not have access to ideological frameworks beyond hegemonic "blame the victim" interpretive frames. Hence, they struggled with their own contradictory understandings and feelings, believing themselves to be simultaneously "racist" and "antiracist."

Ten years later, most of the respondents were political activists for social justice or public school teachers in low-income communities. Two, however, were removed from politics and expressed deep-seated resentment and hostility toward African Americans and, in one case, toward immigrants. For the sake of brevity, what the individuals in the first group experienced that the two individuals in the second did not was some education in critical theory that provided counterhegemonic frameworks that helped reshape their interpretation of their experiences and cultivate a sense of structural- and, especially, co-relational situatedness. The revised interpretive framework had a profound effect on the strong emotions, whether of guilt or anger, that the respondents felt in high school, transforming them into feelings of responsibility, compassion, and connection.

For example, one respondent, Jessie, who expressed hatred and anger toward black male students as a teenager, told Perry of how critical theory and sociology courses in college helped her think critically about the effects of power differences in society. That, in turn, helped her come to terms with her struggles around her bisexuality and gain greater compassion for herself, which in turn made her re-interpret her experience in high school. She said: "Now I see where [the bullying] comes from. It doesn't come from the heart. You know? That comes from...anger and it comes from not knowing how to be angry with the people you're really angry at, so you're going to be angry at his little skinny White girl instead." She saw her anger at her offenders as her own displaced anger, and, in short, had come to recognize her mutual entanglement with the African-American students in relations of power and domination. Today, Jessie is seeking an advanced degree in education with a focus on language, power, and inequalities in schooling.

CONCLUSION

We have argued that sociological research on racism, whiteness, and antiracism each offer only partial accounts of the epistemological ingredients important to producing an antiracist praxis. When counterhegemonic propositional and tacit knowledge combine with a felt sense (affective knowledge) of the "wrongs" of racism, a relational understanding of self, society, and "other" can emerge; this understanding supports an antiracist consciousness and practice. We would like to expand on the implications this has for sociological theory and methods and for practical application.

First, we recommend a shift away from the overemphasis on group conflict theory and a Western liberal concept of the self within sociological studies of white racism. The concept of the self as an individuated and rational being who is motivated by self-interests is a social construction that arose out of Western modernity and is deeply tied to the secular-humanist, liberal-democratic (and "internally" imperialistic and racist) ideologies that the sociologists of white racism are rightly critical of (Mehta 1999:20; see also Dumont 1994; Goldberg 1993). If we are going to undress

the ideologies of individualism, egalitarianism, and universality, then we should also seriously question our notion of the "self" and what impulses constitute it. Furthermore, if we understand the self to be always entangled and inseparable from others—other humans, other types of beings, the earth, social institutions—then this troubles the notion of "self-interests" as predominantly conceived by sociologists of race. Certainly, people can be and are cultivated to protect that which is theirs in the liberal-democratic, consumer-oriented society in which we all live. But they may equally be cultivated to recognize where their individuality ends and their co-dependence and intersectionality with others begins. At least, that is what the stories of white antiracists tell us.

Second, we call for a shift in how sociologists approach the question of affective and intersubjective dimensions of racism and "antiracist" interventions. Sociologists who recognize the significance of prejudice, unspeakable and unspoken racism, and the complex intersectionality that produces whiteness must not restrict their prescriptive arguments to recommendations for offering white people more or better information, as some sociologists of white racism do. Likewise, sociologists who understand the affective dimensions of white antiracist praxis as most significant should expand their prescriptive accounts to include not only empathy-centered transformations, but also propositional and political "ingredients" in these transformations. We call for more attention to the multifaceted sources of whiteness and white racism, and the accordingly complex sources of antiracist change.

One practical implication of our argument points to the notion that an antiracist "education" of white people needs to attend to the three dimensions of understanding we have proposed: propositional, tacit, and affective. In classrooms, for example, instructional materials need to debunk hegemonic ideologies by providing counterfactual information and alternative interpretive frameworks. At the same time, courses can be centered around engaged-learning activities that take students outside of their "comfort" zones, whether that be in political-action work in their community or in joint collaborative projects with peers whose experience and common sense understandings differ from one another. Finally, teachers need to be prepared to facilitate and work with complex emotions. Anger, sadness, guilt, frustration, and defensiveness will all arise as students' tacit understandings become challenged, but these are all opportunities for creating deeper awareness and understanding of the relationality between self, other, and society.

Overall, we see a real need for nonreductive theories of white racism and whiteness that honor the full complexity of human experience and behavior.[2] Sociology, obviously, is well positioned to continue the important work it has begun in this direction. A greater understanding of the integrated relationship between propositional, affective, and common sense forms of understanding is present in each strand of thinking on whiteness and race we have examined here. A thicker articulation of the multifaceted relationality present to one degree or another in current work on white racism, whiteness, and white antiracism can assist in designing types of social action and education that can avoid stimulating white defensiveness and reactionary postures and effectively transform white racial consciousness and practice toward progressive social change.

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[2]For a parallel discussion among cultural anthropologists, see Hartigan (2000) and Mullings (2005).

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