

# Racism as Disrespect\*

*Joshua Glasgow*

Racism can be subtle or overt, it can be intentional or unintentional, and it can be conscious or unconscious. Actions can be racist. Policies can be racist. Arguably even whole countries can be racist. And, of course, people can be racist. While there is some excitement over the proposition that only the most powerful members of a society can be racist within it, a consensus seems to be emerging that just about anyone can be racist. Perhaps, then, as racism is capable of worming its way into so many diverse corners of life, it should not come as a surprise that there is considerable disagreement over what is common to racism's variegated forms. Indeed, some recent writings embrace the prospect that the nature of racism may resist being captured in a single, monistic formula.<sup>1</sup>

Here I want to go against that trend and propose a unified account of racism. The essence of my proposal is that racism can be understood in terms of disrespect. A couple of background methodological principles are assumed in making the case for this proposal. As an attempt to capture the content of our current, ordinary concept of racism, the adequacy criterion operative here is that an analysis should accommodate ordinary usage of relevant terms, terms like 'racism'. I will return to this point at the end of the article, but privileging analyses that accommodate ordinary usage does not entail that we cannot make mistakes in how we deploy the relevant terms—a point that is especially

\* Prior versions of this article were presented at Claremont-McKenna College and the Bay Area Forum for Law and Ethics (BAFFLE). I am grateful to the participants in those sessions, as well as to J. L. A. Garcia, Sally Haslanger, Edouard Machery, anonymous referees for *Ethics*, and several of *Ethics*' associate editors, for valuable feedback that prompted improvements to this article.

1. Lawrence Blum, "What Do Accounts of 'Racism' Do?" in *Racism in Mind*, ed. Michael P. Levine and Tamas Pataki (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2004), 56–77; Clevis Headley, "Philosophical Approaches to Racism: A Critique of the Individualistic Perspective," *Journal of Social Philosophy* 31 (2000): 223–57, and "Philosophical Analysis and the Problem of Defining Racism," *Philosophia Africana* 9 (2006): 1–16; Paul Taylor, *Race: A Philosophical Introduction* (Cambridge: Polity, 2004).

*Ethics* 120 (October 2009): 64–93

© 2009 by The University of Chicago. All rights reserved. 0014-1704/2009/12001-0004\$10.00

salient when the term in question is often used in contested ways, as is the case with ‘racism’. Instead, the adequacy criterion merely states that, other things equal, the more that an analysis can accommodate ordinary usage, the better. Thus, the basic argument for my analysis is that it accommodates ordinary usage better than rival views do, as measured by cases that are intended to resonate with the reader. Some defenders of rival views will perhaps see revising ordinary usage as an acceptable by-product of other concerns or commitments. Such moves are understandable, but I maintain that those revisions nonetheless count as a cost of those views. At the same time, since this measure of adequacy requires that other things have to be equal, I will also try to show that my account captures some features commonly attributed to racism, including most prominently its apparent immorality. I begin with three analytical desiderata that emerge from considering some alternative accounts of racism.

## I. THE LANDSCAPE AND THREE OBJECTIVES

### A. *The Location Problem: Cognitive, Behavioral, and Attitudinal Accounts*

One intuitive and popular view gives racism a cognitive or doxastic analysis, according to which racism always ultimately traces to, in one way or another, a certain kind of belief, ideology, theory, doctrine, or judgment, such as the belief that a race is inferior or worthy of exclusion from full political participation.<sup>2</sup> While there is much to be said on behalf of cognitivist accounts, it appears that they are uniformly vulnerable to counterexamples. J. L. A. Garcia has repeatedly called to our attention the case of a racist who simply hates black people without harboring any beliefs or judgments about them.<sup>3</sup> We can similarly imagine a person who has not internalized any racist beliefs or judgments but who consistently and without justification treats members of his own race preferentially. Thus the point of Garcia’s examples can be driven home by considering someone who, when accused of being racist be-

2. Harry M. Bracken, “Philosophy and Racism,” *Philosophia* 8 (1978): 241–60; Dinesh D’Souza, *The End of Racism: Principles for a Multi-Racial Society* (New York: Free Press, 1996); David Theo Goldberg, “Racism and Rationality: The Need for a New Critique,” *Philosophy of the Social Sciences* 20 (1990): 317–50; Tommie Shelby, “Is Racism in the ‘Heart’?” *Journal of Social Philosophy* 33 (2002): 411–20.

3. J. L. A. Garcia, “Current Conceptions of Racism: A Critical Examination of Some Recent Social Philosophy,” *Journal of Social Philosophy* 28 (1997): 5–42, 13, “Racism as a Model for Understanding Sexism,” in *Race/Sex: Their Sameness, Difference, and Interplay*, ed. Naomi Zack (New York: Routledge, 1997): 45–59, 49, “Philosophical Analysis and the Moral Concept of Racism,” *Philosophy and Social Criticism* 25 (1999): 1–32, 4, 10, “Racism and Racial Discourse,” *Philosophical Forum* 32 (2001): 125–45, 135–36, and “Three Sites for Racism: Social Structurings, Valuations, and Vice,” in Levine and Pataki, *Racism in Mind*, 35–55, 39–40, 43, 45.

cause he is perpetually and exclusively hateful of nonwhites, responds by saying, "But I don't believe anything racist about nonwhites." For many such people we will, of course, suspect that they do hold racist beliefs. But it would not be beside the point to additionally insist, "Even if that's true, your hatred is by itself racist." These cases suggest that, at least as a conceptual matter, it is possible for racism to be found in noncognitive attitudes or behaviors.

In his defense of an ideological account, Tommie Shelby suggests that, while racist hatred might not have to be accompanied by a well-formed belief, it is intelligible only if it exists against a widespread, background racist social ideology. However, it does seem that a person in a thoroughly nonracist closed society, who has formed no racist beliefs, could have a unique hatred toward people of other races. Shelby holds that such attitudes would be "puzzling" and that such a person might have to be "psychotic."<sup>4</sup> But even if we grant that such a person is psychotic, his attitudes might still be racist. We can, for example, imagine a world that became racist because of some *first* racist, who rationalized his psychotic racist hatred of (say) nonwhites by formulating, ex post, a doctrine of white supremacy. There is, prior to the attempted rationalization, no judgment that grounds his apparently racist hatred, but, as it is hatred of nonwhites as nonwhites, it still appears to be racist.<sup>5</sup>

One alternative to cognitivism is some sort of behavioral account, such as that provided by Michael Philips, according to whom "racist" is used in its logically primary sense when it is attributed to actions. All other uses of 'racist', I believe, must be understood directly or indirectly *in relation to* this one."<sup>6</sup> But while Philips marshals several points in favor of this understanding, Garcia's counterexample to cognitivism has the same force for behaviorism: someone who deeply hated some other race but who was unable, whether through an internal or external mechanism, to act in a racist manner should be considered racist all the same. Impotence in directing, or even in intending to direct, one's racism toward a target does not render one's racism any less racist. To make this point, John Arthur has us imagine a racist stuck on a deserted island without anyone

4. Shelby, "Is Racism in the 'Heart'?" 415. Cf. Lewis Gordon, *Bad Faith and Antiblack Racism* (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities, 1995), 79.

5. This is not the place to give a theory of the emotions, but I should acknowledge that I am claiming here that emotions like racial hatred can manifest themselves in ways that do not include racist cognitive elements. Notice, however, that this claim allows that we might have to harbor some nonracist beliefs in order to harbor hatred, be it racial or any other kind of hatred (cf. n. 12 below).

6. Michael Philips, "Racist Acts and Racist Humor," *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 14 (1984): 75–96, 77 (emphasis in original).

toward whom he can direct his racism,<sup>7</sup> and it is not farfetched to suspect that some people in our midst resist acting on their racist attitudes simply in order to avoid earning a bad reputation. Since we can certainly conceive of such people, it appears to be conceptually possible for racism to exist without racist behavior.<sup>8</sup>

With these kinds of considerations as his evidence, Garcia has argued, over a series of articles, that racism is essentially found “in the heart.”<sup>9</sup> That is, for Garcia racism is at bottom always derived from noncognitive states, which I will refer to generally as ‘attitudes’. (This label is somewhat misleading, since, of course, beliefs are attitudes, too, but it has the virtue of economy.) More specifically, “racism, at its core . . . consists in racial disregard, including disrespect, or most gravely, ill will. Racially based or racially informed disregard (or ill will) is an indifference (or opposition) to another’s welfare on account of the racial group to which she is assigned.” Because racism on this account boils down to a person’s wishes, wills, and wants, Garcia labels his view a “volitional conception,” one that is meant to capture the many ways in which racism can be vicious, and in particular offend “against the moral virtues of benevolence and justice.”<sup>10</sup>

Of course, the volitional conception is only one way of specifying an attitudinal account. Arthur, for further example, analyzes racism as “racial contempt in the form of either hostility or indifference.”<sup>11</sup> But while attitudinal accounts like these can accommodate the hate-filled racist, it is not clear that they can capture the phenomena to which cognitivism and behaviorism are most responsive, namely, racist beliefs and actions. As Lawrence Blum notes, it seems that practices, among other things, can be racist even when they are not generated by racist attitudes; and Shelby and Charles Mills point out that we can imagine a well-intentioned racist who nonetheless persists in having racist beliefs.<sup>12</sup> This last kind of case

7. John Arthur, *Race, Equality, and the Burdens of History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 17.

8. Gordon understands racism as a certain kind of choice to have certain beliefs (*Bad Faith*, 2). Garcia-style counterexamples are compelling against this kind of view, whether we understand it as focusing on the belief chosen or on the act of choosing (see Garcia, “Philosophical Analysis,” 7–10).

9. Garcia, “The Heart of Racism,” in *Racism*, ed. Leonard Harris (Amherst, NY: Humanity, 1999): 398–434, “Current Conceptions,” “Racism as a Model,” “Philosophical Analysis,” and “Three Sites.”

10. Garcia, “Three Sites,” 43, 45.

11. Arthur, *Race, Equality, and the Burdens of History*, 14.

12. Blum, “What Do Accounts of ‘Racism’ Do?” 72; Shelby, “Is Racism in the ‘Heart?’” 418; Charles W. Mills, “‘Heart’ Attack: A Critique of Jorge Garcia’s Volitional Conception of Racism,” *Journal of Ethics* 7 (2003): 29–62, 51–57; cf. Philips, “Racist Acts,” 89–90. These objections differ from the objection that the racist has to have some relevant beliefs, such as beliefs about the racial identity of the target of the racism (Mills,

can be given some flesh by imagining a good-hearted person who ignorantly believes that the members of some other race are uniformly lazy or unintelligent. Garcia insists that, in the absence of “any contempt or insensitivity,” we should not call such a belief racist.<sup>13</sup> But this puts considerable strain on our usage of the term: it does not manifest conceptual confusion to claim, for instance, that some white people have held racist beliefs about black people without being contemptuous of, or even insensitive to, them. They may have simply been nonnegligently ignorant. (Mills compellingly argues that at least some white racists have had truly benevolent aims that were corrupted by false beliefs about the inferiority of nonwhites, but if this does not fit your understanding of real-world racism, imagine a less malevolent version of it.)

At times Garcia responds to the objection that nonnegligently ignorant people can perform racist acts or perpetuate racism by maintaining that “mere causation is without moral import.”<sup>14</sup> However, acting in ignorance is not tantamount to merely being a causal toggle without moral import. If I utter something to a friend that is meant to be complimentary but comes off as insulting, given linguistic norms of which I am ignorant, my remark is no less insulting just by virtue of the fact that I did not have

---

“Heart’ Attack,” 37). This latter objection appears not to be decisive, for Garcia’s attitudinal thesis is consistent with the claim that racism is exclusively found in attitudes that are, as it happens, always accompanied by certain nonracist but race-related beliefs. This point notwithstanding, it is worth noting a further objection from Mills (“Heart’ Attack,” 42–51): race-related ill will is sometimes not racist, such as when a nonwhite person who has observed a great deal of white racism holds that most white people are bad and should be punished for their racist crimes. Among other implications, Mills notes that cases like these show that whether an attitude is racist often depends on what beliefs ground the attitude.

13. Garcia, “Three Sites,” 38; cf. Garcia, “Philosophical Analysis,” 5, and “Racism and Racial Discourse,” 133–34. Thomas W. Schmid (“The Definition of Racism,” *Journal of Applied Philosophy* 13 [1996]: 31–40) agrees that beliefs and behaviors borne out of ignorance cannot be racist. Schmid also holds that one is a “true racist” only if one rejects evidence that exposes heretofore unknown evidential or rational flaws in one’s racism (36–37). K. A. Appiah (“Racisms,” in *Anatomy of Racism*, ed. David Theo Goldberg [Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1990], 3–17, 8) and Garcia (“Current Conceptions,” 15–16), following him, adopt a similar line, such that if a heretofore ignorant person gives up his racist-seeming beliefs in the light of new evidence, he (Appiah says nothing about the belief itself, but only about the person) should not be considered racist. While this may be appropriate as a judgment about the person, as a judgment about the belief it seems excessively narrow: it does not appear conceptually confused for someone to say, “That compelling evidence is new to me; I am embarrassed that I endorsed racist beliefs until just now; I hope you will forgive my ignorance.” (Cf. Blum, *I’m Not a Racist, But . . .*: *The Moral Quandary of Race* [Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2002], 183 n. 7.) Furthermore, it may even be too narrow as a judgment about the person, for it seems the same person could coherently say, “I am ashamed that I used to be an ignorant racist; at least I can take comfort in the fact that I stopped being a racist once I became fully informed.”

14. Garcia, “Three Sites,” 49; cf. Garcia, “Heart of Racism,” 410–11.

insult in my heart. (Although, of course, I may be less insulting as a *person* by virtue of my good intentions.) Garcia also suggests that the well-meaning paternalistic racist (one particularly salient version of the ignorant racist) “acts with the instrumental intention of stunting and infantilizing the ‘beneficiary’ she victimizes. So we should not assume that immoral paternalism involves nothing that offends against the virtues of goodwill.”<sup>15</sup> But surely we can at least *imagine* a paternalist who does not intend to stunt or infantilize the object of his paternalism. The paternalist may in fact think that paternalism is the only way to avoid stunting or infantilizing the object of his paternalism. Such a thought might even be grounded on the best evidence that the paternalist could reasonably obtain. In these cases, then, it is at least conceptually possible for there to be what some call “benevolent racists.”<sup>16</sup>

In short, we call beliefs ‘racist’ even when they neither issue in racist behavior nor issue from racist noncognitive attitudes; we call attitudes ‘racist’ even when they fail to effect racist behavior and are unaccompanied by racist beliefs; and we call some behavior ‘racist’ even when it takes place in the absence of racist beliefs or attitudes. Thus, despite the hard-won gains made by the various cognitivist, behaviorist, and attitudinal proposals put forth in recent years, there seems to be a residual *location problem*: it seems difficult to figure out where—beliefs, attitudes, behaviors—racism is fundamentally located. This problem gives rise to our first objective: we should find an analysis that can make room for the various apparently irreducible locations of racism.

One strategy for solving the location problem is to hybridize. Michael Dummett, for example, conjoins behavioral and attitudinal elements when he holds that racism, “in the strict sense of the word,” always comes down to “prejudice against one or more racial groups that manifests itself in hostile behavior toward all members of those groups (or, sometimes, toward all but a very few rich or powerful ones),” where ‘prejudice’ covers desires, reluctances, states of disgust or hatred, and so on. In a different but equally conjunctive manner, J. Angelo Corlett has adopted a self-styled “cognitive-behavioral theory of racism,” according to which a racist is, necessarily, someone who both has prejudicial beliefs or attitudes and who acts on them in a discriminatory manner.<sup>17</sup> The problem with con-

15. Garcia, “Racism and Racial Discourse,” 142 n. 22, cf. 137.

16. Cf. Mills, “‘Heart’ Attack.”

17. Michael Dummett, “The Nature of Racism,” in Levine and Pataki, *Racism in Mind*, 27–34, 28; J. Angelo Corlett, *Race, Racism, and Reparations* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2003), chap. 4. Schmid might also be plausibly read as advancing the hybrid view that being racist involves not only an action (“the infliction of unequal consideration”) but also an attitude (“the desire to dominate”). George Frederickson’s otherwise behaviorist account is also conjunctive insofar as he makes it a condition of racism that the racist group must believe that the group it seeks to dominate is characterized by “differences that [the racist

junctive approaches is that they are even less capable than nonconjunctive analyses of accommodating phenomena ordinarily identified as racist. Requiring that any instance of racism have both features *F* and *G* (say prejudicial belief and discriminatory behavior), where *F* and *G* are not coextensive, will only exclude even more phenomena from being racist than are excluded by requiring either simply *F* or simply *G*.<sup>18</sup>

Thus, given the diversity of racist phenomena, the natural maneuver seems to be to *disjoin* the various analyses that individually are incomplete. That is, we seem pushed toward a cluster-style analysis. Lawrence Blum, for example, suggests that racism always “can be related to” either inferiorization, which seems to be the content of a belief or doctrine (Blum is not explicit on this question), or antipathy, a noncognitive attitude.<sup>19</sup> However, this particular disjunctive account appears to exclude some of what we ordinarily consider racism. For instance, it seems coherent to describe as racist the kind of comment that comes from those too quick with the benevolent, but ignorant, stereotype. Blum is clear that he doesn’t think positive stereotypes can be racist (although they can still be, on his account, objectionable), as they are not instances of antipathy or inferiorization.<sup>20</sup> This stance renders Blum’s account unable to accommodate those remarks that we often call ‘racist’, not because they put down the target racialized group, but because they homogenize that group.<sup>21</sup>

---

group] believes are hereditary and unalterable,” in *Racism: A Short History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002), 170; cf. Appiah, “Racisms.”

18. Corlett is particularly concerned with analyzing the kind of racism that can be legally prohibited, and although this constraint might make a narrowly behavioral account more appropriate for these narrower concerns, it is unclear how beliefs can be legally prohibited, and it is unclear why he takes a narrowly law-oriented analysis to be a rival of analyses that simply aim to analyze racism *tout court* (such as those advanced by Appiah and Blum).

19. Blum, “*I’m Not a Racist, But . . .*,” 8. A condensed version of Blum’s view can be found in Blum, “Racism: What It Is and What It Isn’t,” *Studies in Philosophy and Education* 21 (2002): 203–18. It should be noted that in “*I’m Not a Racist, But . . .*,” 7–8, Blum does hedge his bets, holding that, while his account is meant to capture the “core meaning,” usage of ‘racism’ is so varied that we cannot get to “the ‘true meaning’ of ‘racism,’” and in “Systemic and Individual Racism, Racialization, and Antiracist Education: A Reply to Garcia, Silliman, and Levinson,” *Theory and Research in Education* 2 (2004): 49–74, he holds that the search for the “core meaning” of racism may be fruitless. He sometimes also indicates that his analysis attempts to balance ordinary usage of the term ‘racism’ with the goal of providing the most useful way of construing racism, and to the extent that this aim is not so much to descriptively analyze the concept RACISM as to provide a prescription for better usage, our views are not inconsistent, as I discuss below in Sec. III. For the time being, I proceed on the supposition that it is instructive to examine whether Blum’s account could be descriptively adequate. (I use small caps to name concepts and single quotes when mentioning words.)

20. Blum, “Racism,” 211.

21. A prominent professional football player, Reggie White, was excoriated along just these lines, when he meant to issue the following ‘compliments’: “[White] said that Hispanic people ‘are gifted at family structure. You can see a Hispanic person and he can put 20 or

And, to step back from the trees for a moment, it seems as though most parties to this discussion would prefer that we converge on a monistic analysis, other things being equal. It's not that cluster analyses are necessarily bankrupt; rather, it's that they are analyses of last resort. We might, for example, patch up Blum's analysis by saying that all instances of racism are instances of antipathy or inferiorization or homogenization. But we know where this leads: for each new counterexample, we need a new patch, and while an indefinitely completed disjunction of patches might be the best we can get, it is not the best we can hope for. (Homogenization is not likely to be the only patch needed for Blum's account. Arthur points out that being indifferent is a way of being racist, and racism can also be found in marginalization and exclusion.)<sup>22</sup> Some go further than this and hold that cluster analyses are downright unacceptable. Garcia insists that 'racism' cannot be a "family resemblance" word, since then two kinds of racism might have nothing in common, in which case, "there can be little reason to think racism as such, i.e., every racism, is morally objectionable."<sup>23</sup> I don't follow this reasoning, for otherwise disparate forms of racism might have distinctive morally objectionable features. Nevertheless, I share the preference for a monistic analysis, other things being equal, so I want to remain open to the possibility that the different forms of racism so far considered might be unified in some way.<sup>24</sup>

*B. Institutional Racism, the Location Problem Expanded, and the Second Objective*

Before getting to a unified account, note the further and more fundamental point that cognitivist, attitudinal, and behaviorist accounts, as

30 people in one home.' Asians, he said, know how to 'turn a television into a watch.' American Indians, he said, 'have been very gifted' in 'spirituality'." "Remarks by Packers' White Draw Criticism in Wisconsin," *New York Times*, March 26, 1998; <http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9503E6D91F38F935A15750C0A96E958260#>. An interesting question on this front is whether all (or maybe only all false) racially homogenizing but well-intended statements are racist; I don't address this question here.

22. Arthur, *Race, Equality, and the Burdens of History*, 15.

23. Garcia, "Racism and Racial Discourse," 129; cf. 127–28, "Philosophical Analysis," 21 n. 8.

24. In my contrast between monistic and cluster analyses, I am assuming a broad understanding of cluster analyses. On this understanding, a cluster analysis might consist of a disjunction not only of a few properties that are separately sufficient for racism but also of simply all of the properties of being all of the (otherwise irreducible) particular instances of racism. The latter case, where 'racism' turns out to be something like a directly referring term, is plausibly the limit case of a cluster concept, but in any event that is how I am using the term here. So a concept might have monistic content (a property or conjunction of properties that details necessary and sufficient conditions for membership), pluralistic content (a possibly very long disjunction of properties that detail separately sufficient conditions for membership, including potentially just *being i instance of racism*, disjoined for every *i*), or no content.



well as hybridized versions of them, all share a common focus on what Sally Haslanger has called “agent oppression.” I’ll modify Haslanger’s label and say that the cognitive, attitudinal, and behavioral accounts are all committed to agent-based analyses of racism. That is, whether we focus on a racist belief, attitude, or behavior, each of these is manifested in people.<sup>25</sup>

As a group, agent-based analyses might be open to certain counterexamples involving institutional racism.<sup>26</sup> To be sure, some instances of institutional racism won’t present a problem for agent-based accounts, namely, those where the institutional racism is traceable to agent-based racism. For instance, Haslanger identifies Jim Crow segregation policies as a form of institutional (or, on her parsing, structural) racism, and Jim Crow laws were unquestionably enacted and sustained by agents seeking to entrench a white supremacist social order in the United States.<sup>27</sup> This traceability allows Garcia to make theoretical space for institutional racism by stating that, on his account, “institutional racism exists when and insofar as an institution is racist in the aims, plans, and the like that people give it, especially when their racism informs its behavior. . . . What matters is that racist attitudes contaminate the operation of the institution; it is irrelevant what its original point may have been, what its designers meant it to do. If it does not operate from those [racist] motives (at time T1), then it does not embody institutional racism (at T1).”<sup>28</sup>

So on this kind of theory, for any slice of time, all institutional racism derives from agent-based (and, on Garcia’s particular theory, attitudinal) racism operative at that time. I’ll call such theories ‘reductionist’. To show that reductionism is false, it must be shown that, while institutional racism may often be perpetuated by racist agents, it need not be (as Haslanger suggests). That is, antireductionism requires cases of “pure” institutional racism, cases where the racism “bottoms out” at the institutional level. Consider

*Real Estate.* For centuries, members of  $R_1$  systematically targeted the economic resources of members of  $R_2$  for (unjust) suppression, first through a state-supported system of slavery, then through a state-supported system of segregation. Eventually, there was a racial rapprochement, where all state-supported means of  $R_2$ ’s economic re-

25. Sally Haslanger, “Oppressions: Racial and Other,” in Levine and Pataki, *Racism in Mind*, 97–123. Haslanger uses the term ‘individualistic approach’ to mark this class of theories. I use ‘agent-based’ only in order to capture the point, driven home by Haslanger among others, that groups as well as individuals can be the agents of racism and oppression.

26. Cf. Headley, “Philosophical Approaches,” 101.

27. Haslanger, “Oppressions,” 101.

28. Garcia, “Heart of Racism,” 404, cf. 416–18, 423–24, “Racism as a Model,” 50, “Philosophical Analysis,” 16–18, “Racism and Racial Discourse,” 136–37, and “Three Sites,” 51.

pression (including criminal laws, voting rights, and tax-and-transfer schemes) were abolished. However, the rapprochement was not complete in the sense that no reparations were made to members of  $R_2$ , and therefore the postrapprochement era begins with  $R_1$ s uniformly having more wealth than  $R_2$ s. Two hundred years later, there are no longer any attitudes, behaviors, or beliefs, among either  $R_1$ s or  $R_2$ s, which we would ordinarily identify as racist. However, there also is no change in mortgage policies, which ensures that more, and more beneficial, mortgages go to those with better credit ratings, and better credit ratings are assigned to those with greater assets. As a direct result of this state of affairs,  $R_2$ s still have fewer good homes, less wealth, and a weaker sense of economic security than  $R_1$ s have.

The institutional forces at work in Real Estate can apparently be legitimately described as racist: because the two races do not start, even after the rapprochement, at just relative starting points, and because the relevant credit institutions perpetuate existing inequality, those institutions perpetuate (indeed, exacerbate) a socioeconomic structure in which members of  $R_1$  systematically and unjustly have greater access to housing, to a comparatively accessible vehicle for growing personal wealth, and not least to a source of perceived security and well-being than do members of  $R_2$ . Thus, while, by hypothesis, the mortgage industry has policies that are, other things being equal, just, other things are not equal, because of the society's racist past. Further, imagine that everyone is well aware of the problem and wants to fix it, and at the moment they are just waiting to vote in a referendum that will select policies aimed at solving the problem, perhaps to determine the exact monetary amount that should be paid to each  $R_2$  in order for their society to have a racially just economic distribution. So, despite the fact that no one agent is racist at this moment, a troubled past means that their otherwise just institutions perpetuate an unjust racial inequity. This seems to qualify those institutions as racist.<sup>29</sup>

Reductionism thus counterintuitively implies that it is conceptually impossible to have a society whose members are wholly committed to eliminating their racist institutions, for if all of the agents are antiracists, then reductionism means that the institutions that are served by those

29. My data point here is that we frequently do refer to these kinds of social structures as racist. (Perhaps in this respect 'racism' has come to cover some of what used to be called 'racial injustice' but not 'racism'.) The discussion in the text is partly meant to speak to readers who don't have a firm intuition that the institutions in Real Estate really are racist. However, my account of institutional racism will not resonate with readers who firmly believe that those institutions are definitely not racist. For example, Dinesh D'Souza simply insists that institutional racism is a "nonsense phrase" (*The End of Racism*, 336). For an argument that D'Souza's understanding of institutional racism is not compelling, see Garcia, "Philosophical Analysis," 5–6.

agents are not racist. Put slightly differently, the claim that institutions are racist at a given time only if some participants in the institutions are racist at that time would implausibly mean that the institutions are racist only until the last racist person dies off, at which point, despite there not being any change to their structure or to their effects on real lives, those institutions magically convert to being nonracist.

Now some might plausibly insist that, while these considerations show that none of the *present* members need to have attitudes or beliefs that are responsible for this society's racist institutions, institutions like those in Real Estate must always have been generated or sustained by *some* person's racist attitudes, behaviors, or beliefs at *some* time in order to be fairly called 'racist'. Garcia suggests this kind of genetic response, although it appears to be distinct from his insistence that "if [an institution] does not operate from [racist] motives (at time T1), then it does not embody institutional racism (at T1)." Reductionism is a time-slice thesis, which holds that for every institution at every moment it is racist, its racism is based in the racism of some agent at that moment; the genetic thesis is a historical thesis, which holds that for every institution at every moment it is racist, its racism at least partly originated in the racism of some agent at some point up to the moment at which the institution is racist.<sup>30</sup>

I find the genetic thesis plausible. Imagine a society just like the

30. Garcia, "Current Conceptions," 27, and "Heart of Racism," 424–25. At another point, Garcia calls lingering, post-agential institutional racism "rather marginal and insignificant" ("Philosophical Analysis," 17). Views that seem to suggest a commitment to reductionism but that might be interpreted as committing instead to the genetic thesis include Kurt Baier, "Merit and Race," *Philosophia* 8 (1978): 121–51, 129; Corlett, *Race*, 69–70; and Shelby, "Is Racism in the 'Heart'?" 416. See also Blum, "I'm Not a Racist, But . . .," 22–26, and "Systemic and Individual Racism." To clarify, the most plausible version of the genetic thesis will allow that the racist institution might have been either originally created under the umbrella of agential racism or created originally in a nonracist manner but later sustained in some agentially racist manner. Thus, to falsify the genetic thesis, there must be some case where no agential racism has "infected" the racist institution at any point in its history, but which remains racist nevertheless.

A very different kind of agent-based view holds that talk of institutional racism can be understood as personifying institutions, in the way that, say, corporations are sometimes legally treated as persons. According to Arthur, when asking whether some institution is racist, we are "asking whether *if we were to assume that an action taken by an institution had been performed instead by a single person, would that person [in his attitudes] be racist?*" (*Race, Equality, and the Burdens of History*, 33). The particular shortcoming of this approach is that, while personification might be a useful heuristic, it does no explanatory work in accounting for the actual wrongness of actual institutional, rather than agential, racism. It can say why institutional arrangements would be racist, and would be wrong, were they arranged by an agent, but not why they are racist, and are wrong, when not arranged by agents. Furthermore, since people can produce any given outcome with a number of different attitudes, it is also, I think, difficult to speculate on what attitude would have motivated an institution were it a person instead of an institution.

society in Real Estate, but where the relevant institutions arose out of unintentional mismanagement, perhaps even by mismanagement on the part of  $R_2$ s themselves. Call this version of the case *Unintentional Real Estate*. Fans of the genetic thesis insist that we should not call institutions like those in Unintentional Real Estate ‘racist’. Dummett, for example, writes that “indirect discrimination may occur when some rule unintentionally disadvantages members of some racial group; plainly, when this has happened by accident, it is due to thoughtlessness rather than racism.” And Garcia holds that (1) harm caused unintentionally is morally condemnable only if it springs from “vices” like “carelessness, negligence, or recklessness” for which we can be held responsible, in which case, if we believe (as both he and I do) that (2) racism is always morally condemnable, this suggests that (3) harm from an unintentionally structured institution that is not caused carelessly, negligently, or recklessly should never be called ‘racist’.<sup>31</sup>

One way to save Garcia’s intuitive (if not uncontroversial) 1 and 2 without having to accept 3 is to construe ‘morally condemnable’ differently in 1 and 2. Assertion 1 is at its most plausible if ‘condemnable’ is construed narrowly to mean something like ‘condemnable as a wrong action’. However, institutions and social structures might be condemnable in a broader sense that doesn’t presuppose agential culpability. Consider, for example,

*Accident.* At time  $t$ , a society is arranged such that one person has almost all of the wealth and power, while the other million people live in dire poverty with no power. This distribution fails to maximize utility or real freedom, was not arrived at through free transfers, can be reasonably rejected by just about everyone, and fails to conform to principles that would be chosen from a fair initial position. (In short, the distribution fails to satisfy any remotely plausible theory of distributive justice.) It arose when a freak accident killed off everyone except those trapped in a mine plus its one bunker-protected media baron, who alone can open the mine. The media baron has no way of knowing that the accident spared but trapped those in the mine, so he does not know that he has all the power.

Some might judge that such a distribution is unjust at  $t$  even though it was generated and sustained unintentionally. Even if some substantive

31. Dummett, “The Nature of Racism,” 30; Garcia, “Racism and Racial Discourse,” 132; cf. Garcia, “Current Conceptions,” 24. At one point, Garcia writes: “I see no future for an account of oppression in which there are no agents of the oppression, for oppression is not something that merely exists or happens, but is done and therefore done by some agents” (“Three Sites,” 39 n. 2; cf. Garcia, “Racism as a Model,” 48). Paul Taylor puts a slightly different spin on this line by identifying institutions as racist when stakeholders in those institutions are confronted with evidence of “asymmetric operations” but won’t do anything to correct them (*Race*, 35).

theory of distributive justice entailed that this distribution were just, there seems to be no conceptual mistake in making such a judgment. This clears the path to consistency for those who want to say that racist institutions are morally condemnable (preserving 2), that (~3) they can arise unintentionally, and that (1) agential harm is wrong only if done intentionally, negligently, carelessly, or recklessly: we might want to say that such institutions are, though not the product of culpable and wrong actions, at least unjust. Since the moral scope of racism covers not only individual ethics but also social justice, there is room to say that institutions can be unjustly racist without tracing to any specific agent's morally wrong action.

Thus, there may be plausible ways to reject the genetic thesis. However, I don't want to reject it; I suspect that in Accident there is badness but not injustice (unless and until the media baron knowingly perpetuates the distribution). Nevertheless, even if the genetic thesis is correct, that is, even if rightly calling institutions 'unjust' or 'racist' is contingent on their having come about or being sustained in such-and-such a manner, we still have reason to deny that the injustice or racism themselves consist in the beliefs, attitudes, or behaviors of the individuals who once generated or sustained such institutions. Most directly, those who are otherwise engaged in a dispute over whether racism is subject to the genetic constraint can come to an independent agreement on what cases to recognize as cases of racism: they can agree that the racism is not necessarily found in the agents themselves. And, most fundamentally, it is plausible that what makes the present state of affairs in Real Estate objectionable is not that long-dead generations had racist attitudes that led to it but that it itself is racist. We don't look at a society like that in Real Estate and object that the ancestors who set things in motion were racist but that it is, at present, perpetuating unjust racial inequality.<sup>32</sup> Thus it seems that institutional racism can be present at *t* without any agents who interact with the institution at *t* being responsible for that racism. Contrary to reductionism, institutional racism seems capable of outliving agential racism.

Just as reductive agent-based accounts fail to adequately accommodate the phenomenon of pure institutional racism, theories that understand all racism as institutional are, as others have decisively argued, also doomed, precisely because they commit the opposite error:

32. Haslanger, "Oppressions," 105. Indeed, even if all the racists are gone, institutions can perpetuate economic inequality in a way that revives the myth that different races are not equal in ability to create wealth, a myth by which people might newly become racist. So institutional racism can foster agent-based racism. See Tommie Shelby, *We Who Are Dark: The Philosophical Foundations of Black Solidarity* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap, 2005), 156–57. Thanks to Paul Hurley for discussion here.

they cannot handle cases of purely agential racism. Someone who desired a racial hierarchy but lived in, and couldn't help but perpetuate, a racially egalitarian society should be considered racist (or at least the desire should), as should the powerless person who cannot find a way to institutionalize her bigotry.<sup>33</sup>

To return to the larger picture, then, our first desideratum is not only to account for multiple forms of agent-based racism but also to analyze racism in a way that encompasses institutional forms of racism. This is to confront the location problem writ large. Neither agent-based nor institution-based reductive analyses can do the trick.

The location problem results from failing to adequately grapple with what Blum calls the "categorical plurality" of racial phenomena: many categories of entity—beliefs, attitudes, behaviors, agents, institutions, and so forth—can be irreducibly racist.<sup>34</sup> Finding a way to deal with this plurality has been the primary focus in the literature. Garcia highlights the attitudes of ill will and disregard, Dummett makes prejudice the key to his attitudinal/behaviorist account, Shelby's cognitivist account features ideologies about racial superiority and essentialism that function to rationalize oppression, and so on. Each taps into compelling intuitions about the nature of racism, but by focusing only on a proper subset of racism's categorical plurality, each not only fails, as we have seen, to accommodate all of racism's categorical plurality but also, therefore, to find a property (or properties) that is (or are) necessary and sufficient, or (if we resort to a cluster analysis) an exhaustive set of properties that are each individually sufficient but not necessary, for racism. Thus a task that has not yet been accomplished, our second desideratum, is to make sure we can find such a property or properties. It might seem that these first two objectives are just the same objective described differently. As we will see in Section II, however, this is not the case, and separating them will be an important part of meeting the first objective.

### C. *Racism's Moral Status*

I believe that an adequate understanding of racism must meet one final objective: it must accommodate the judgment that 'racism' is, *inter alia*, a term of moral disapprobation. In this regard, I follow others, such as Blum, Garcia, and Philips, in holding that racism is always at least de-

33. Blum, *"I'm Not a Racist, But . . ."* 9–10; "What Do Accounts of 'Racism' Do?" 62–63; Garcia, "Current Conceptions," 11–13, "Racism as a Model," 47, and "Three Sites," 39; Haslanger, "Oppressions."

34. Blum, "What Do Accounts of 'Racism' Do?" 72.

feasibly morally condemnable.<sup>35</sup> Shelby and Mills think that racism should be defined in a nonmoral manner, and only after such a definition has been laid out should we independently identify its moral status.<sup>36</sup> One case that might be marshaled against the conceptual tethering of immorality and racism is the proud racist, who considers himself an upstanding person, of firm moral conviction, and who, believing that his race is superior to all others, seeks to entrench members of his race in positions of power. He not only happily embraces his racism; he additionally believes it to be morally justified. And, all the same, he identifies himself and his goals as racist. If it is true that racism is morally wrong by definition, then he is not only mistaken but actually incoherent to claim both that his supremacist goals are racist and that they are not wrong. So saying that such a person is conceptually confused is one bullet that I must bite. If I'm going to bite this bullet, I must at least explain where such a person makes his error, and the explanation must be that he mistakenly thinks either that he is a racist or that he is not morally corrupt. I opt for the latter: he is incorrect to think that he is not morally corrupt.

Arthur's main rationale for conceiving of racism's normative status in terms of its lacking an epistemic or rational justification, rather than its being immoral, seems to be that we can imagine a "reluctant racist" who despises his own racism, deeply regrets his racist upbringing, and undertakes a rigorous therapy program to eliminate his racism, but who, for all that, cannot avoid feeling racist hostility. Arthur thinks we should not judge such a person morally blameworthy and instead should simply say that the reluctant racist persists in epistemic error.<sup>37</sup>

However, as ordinarily used, the term 'racist' seems to carry moral weight even in this context. To be sure, this usage may require us to

35. Can the wrongness of an instance of racism sometimes be defeated? Perhaps. If a very powerful alien reliably told you that he would kill all *R*s unless you daily refer to all *R*s only by using a racist slur, or unless you successfully internalize an attitude of hatred toward *R*s, perhaps it would be obligatory, all things considered, to perform such racist speech acts or to cultivate such an attitude. Garcia holds that "racism is immoral, not just presumptively but conclusively" ("Current Conceptions," 12). If presumptive immorality maps onto defeasible wrongness, and if conclusive immorality maps onto all-things-considered wrongness, then cases like this one suggest that it overstates the immorality of racism to say that it is always conclusively immoral. To say, however, that an obligation to avoid racism might be overridden in some contexts is not to deny that all racist acts retain traces of wrongness. Accepting the latter proposition would only require adopting (at least a local kind of) moral generalism.

36. Shelby, "Is Racism in the 'Heart'?" 411–13; Mills, "'Heart' Attack," 58. Shelby emphasizes that we should understand "the history, structure, psychological mechanisms, and social consequences" of racism, but this goal is compatible with RACISM being analyzed in such a way that it ends up always being (at least defeasibly) morally askew.

37. Arthur, *Race, Equality, and the Burdens of History*, 17–22.

stake out some controversial positions about moral assessment, but I don't believe that it commits us to any position that is downright implausible. We might say, first, that the reluctant racist is still responsible for his hostility, despite his reluctance. Obviously, it is no easy task to sort out exactly when we are responsible for our attitudes, but on at least some theories of responsibility for attitudes, the reluctant racist might be responsible for his attitudes and, as such, morally condemnable for holding them.<sup>38</sup> Now some might insist that we can construct a case of a deeply unwilling racist who is, on influential theories of responsibility, not responsible for the hostility he feels, perhaps because in being so unwilling, the racist has become so alienated or disassociated from his hostility that it is "external" to him.<sup>39</sup> So, as a second tack, we might follow those, such as Justin Oakley, who hold that there are some moral assessments, "aretaic" assessments on Oakley's parsing, that target objects for which the agent need not be responsible.<sup>40</sup> Think of what the unwilling or alienated kleptomaniac might say: "I know my continual thievery is wrong, but I can't resist the temptation, a temptation that I hate and thoroughly reject." Using 'wrong' in this way might presuppose a controversial position, but the mere fact that it can be used in this way also suggests that, at least as a conceptual matter, it is not implausible to believe that moral assessment can cover repudiated and disassociated attitudes, even if the agent is not responsible for those attitudes. This is not to deny, of course, that the proud or willing racist is condemnable in a way that the unwilling racist is not.

Again, both of these positions are sure to be controversial. But since this is not the occasion to defend a theory of responsibility or assessment, and since ordinary usage of 'racist' seems to presuppose that racism is wrong (regardless of whatever the true theory of responsibility and assessment might be), I am going to proceed on the assumption that something in their neighborhood is defensible. Indeed, it is because of the prevalence of this presupposition in ordinary discourse that I take a third desideratum for any theory of racism to be that it should capture racism's moral condemnability. The account I present below is meant to satisfy this constraint. If the end-of-the-day, true theories of moral responsibility and assessment turn out to

38. For a recent discussion of responsibility for attitudes, see Angela M. Smith, "Responsibility for Attitudes: Activity and Passivity in Mental Life," *Ethics* 115 (2005): 236–71.

39. See, for prominent example, the work of Harry Frankfurt, e.g., "Identification and Externality," in his *The Importance of What We Care About* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 58–68. In this way, Arthur is on to something notable here that I do not wish to deny: the desperately unwilling racist is irrational insofar as the hostility he harbors fails to comport with his deeper judgments. On this kind of irrationality, see Smith, "Responsibility for Attitudes," 253.

40. Justin Oakley, *Morality and the Emotions* (London: Routledge, 1992), chap. 5.



be incompatible with this constraint, then what follows below would have to be modified accordingly. To be clear, though, it is not the third constraint, or views like mine that comply with it, that are the problem here, if there is indeed a problem. The problem would be that ordinary usage would (by hypothesis) endorse a triad of inconsistent propositions: that racism is always morally condemnable, that agents are always responsible for what is morally condemnable, and that agents are not always responsible for their racist attitudes. Since our primary concern here is to articulate an account of racism in a way that preserves ordinary usage of the term 'racism', we should sacrifice, if only provisionally, the second or third proposition in order to preserve the first. So I will proceed on the premise that we should try to find an account of racism that can make sense of its apparent moral inadequacy.

What we have seen so far, then, is the following. First, none of the rival accounts considered above can accommodate all cases that seem intuitively to be classified as racist. Thus we still need an analysis that can make sense of the wide range of cases of racism; that is, we still need to solve the location problem. Second, our analysis should find a set of properties (perhaps a disjunction of properties) that specifies necessary and sufficient conditions for racism. Finally, that analysis should somehow make sense of the judgment that racism is morally problematic. With these objectives in mind, I next want to propose a new account of racism.

## II. THE DISRESPECT ANALYSIS

The accounts considered above all deal with the location problem by specifying a proper subset of commonly recognized locations of racism (attitudes, behaviors, etc.) fundamental to racism, and in so doing they exclude from the domain of racism cases that occupy other locations but that are, it seems, intuitively classified as cases of racism. As was noted at the outset, some might argue that such exclusions are simply unavoidable, but I maintain that sacrificing the intuitive in any case counts as an analytical cost. And I now want to argue that it is a cost that can be plausibly avoided.

If an adequate monistic analysis of RACISM does not require one fundamental location for racism, then adopting a noncommittal stance about what categories can and can't be racist—a stance of *location neutrality*—would solve the location problem in one easy step. What makes an analysis of F monistic is that it gives a feature or conjunction of features, *G*, that is distinctive and common to all *F*s, whether or not *F*-ness can be found in a variety of locations. If everything that is funny is funny because it is *G*, we can give a monistic account of FUNNY by saying that  $\varphi$  is funny just in case  $\varphi$  is *G*, even if lots of things—jokes,

facial expressions, situations—can be *G*. Whether any monistic analysis of RACISM succeeds will thus depend not on whether we can find one location as the sole fundamental site of racism but on whether the *G* privileged in the analysis really is found in all and only instances of racism. Not specifying *any* location, then, seems like the right way to handle the location problem without abandoning the search for a unified account of racism. The widespread attempt to satisfy the first desideratum by finding a single location for racism has, I think, masked the real task, that of satisfying the second desideratum, coming up with an acceptable *G*. If we can do this in a location-neutral way, then we can satisfy the first desideratum for free.

A promising step in this direction is to analyze racism in terms of disrespectfulness. Of course, many instances of disrespect have nothing to do with racism. The kind of disrespect with which we are concerned must be racially relevant in some way. So we might say that  $\varphi$  is racist if and only if  $\varphi$  is racially disrespectful. Since ‘racially disrespectful’ is not the most transparent locution, when being precise I’ll instead adopt the following clumsier formula, which I will call the Disrespect Analysis of racism:

(DA)  $\varphi$  is racist if and only if  $\varphi$  is disrespectful toward members of racialized group *R* as *Rs*.

A few remarks on DA are in order. First, why say that racism targets one’s racialized group rather than one’s race? Racialized groups are, roughly, groups of people who have been identified and treated as if they were members of the same race. One virtue of identifying racialized groups (and their members) as the targets of racism is that it allows us to avoid taking a stand on whether race is real; DA is neutral between realist and antirealist views of race. While many deny that race is real, few deny that racialized groups are real. So we can, at little cost, avoid taking on a very cumbersome piece of theoretical baggage by identifying racialized groups rather than races as the targets of racism.<sup>41</sup> Another virtue is that, even if race does turn out to be real, people might very

41. Many accounts of racism that otherwise depart from DA could adopt the same kind of agnosticism about the ontology of race, and some, such as Blum’s, Garcia’s, and Haslanger’s, in fact do. To sort out what it is to see a group of people as a race (i.e., what it is for a group of people to be racialized), we need to know what the concept of race consists in. My own view is that races are supposed to be groups of humans demarcated by certain visible traits in biologically nonarbitrary ways, but defending this or any other analysis of the concept of race is a complicated and contentious matter. One view about the reality of race is just that race is made real, as a social kind, by a history of racist practices and discourses. I think that this view is false, but if I am wrong and it turns out to be true, then races and racialized groups may be coextensive. (For extended treatment of these issues, see Joshua Glasgow, *A Theory of Race* [New York: Routledge, 2009].)

well have mistaken beliefs about race, and their racism might be responsive to their mistaken beliefs. Suppose for the sake of argument that the end-of-the-day ontological truth about race is that race is real but that Jews do not constitute a race. Of course, at the same time, some people have believed that Jewish people constitute a race and have harbored attitudes toward Jews that we would ordinarily call 'racist'. Although these attitudes are premised on a belief about the nature of race that we are supposing is mistaken, they appear no less racist for their mistake. Plausibly, this is because racism can be responsive to a subjective dimension of mental life and target groups that, perhaps mistakenly, we take to be races. Allowing for this subjective dimension handily enables us to say that, even if Jews are not a race, it is conceptually possible for the anti-Semite to be racist. In these ways, it makes sense to identify the targets of racism as racialized groups rather than races.

Turn now to the second, and for our purposes most important, strength of DA: it can accommodate the variety of agential and institutional racism, thus avoiding the location problem and providing a plausible analysis for RACISM. Before expanding on this claim, it is worth noting that even the categorial plurality covered in Section I is not exhaustive. For example, Blum's list of racism's many locations includes "beliefs, practices, institutions, utterances, propositions, actions, feelings, attitudes, societies, and more."<sup>42</sup> Faced with such a daunting array of racisms, Blum has expressed concern that no single account can accommodate the plurality of racist phenomena. I think this is too pessimistic, as DA can account for (almost?) all widely recognized forms of racism, in which case DA will at least prove more fitting than the alternative proposals considered in the previous section, as none of them could accommodate all of those forms of racism.<sup>43</sup>

Recall, in particular, Garcia's view. For Garcia, disrespect is just one kind of disregard, and racism includes not only disregard more generally but also ill will. As we have seen, the problem with attitudinal accounts like Garcia's is that they cannot accommodate nonattitudinal racist beliefs or behaviors. So since disrespect is ineluctably attitudinal, if we follow Garcia in understanding disrespect as one species of disregard, DA will be no broader than Garcia's volitional conception. Importantly, however, we should not feel compelled to understand disrespect in that attitudinal way, for disrespect can be predicated of many different cat-

42. Blum, "What Do Accounts of 'Racism' Do?" 72.

43. The claim that all racist phenomena can be accommodated by one analysis of racism does not deny that there are some racial ills that are not forms of racism, as Blum has also taken care to establish. This point will be further discussed in Sec. III below.

egories—indeed, if DA is right, it can be at least as location neutral as racism is.<sup>44</sup>

Perhaps most obviously, disrespect can be predicated of the three main agential categories we are considering: attitudes, beliefs (and the statements that express them), and behaviors. We say things like: “Your dismissive attitude is disrespectful,” “Your claim that Kerry is a coward is disrespectful, particularly in light of his exemplary military service,” and “Giving him ‘the finger’ was disrespectful.” Indeed, we say such things even when the attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors seem to come apart from each other. We might tell a child who “gives someone the finger” just because that’s what he saw his older brother do to stop doing that on the grounds that it is disrespectful, even though the child had no disrespect in his heart. Thus it appears that not all behavioral or cognitive disrespect derives from attitudinal disrespect.

We say similar things when the subject is race: “Your fear of all *R*s does not respect their individual differences,” “Your belief that *R*s are uniquely unintelligent shows an incredible amount of disrespect,” and “Discriminating against *R*s in hiring does not give them the respect they are due.” Thus, while Garcia confines the language of disregard and ill will to attitudes, the language of disrespect can be extended beyond that to beliefs and behaviors as well. Here again, this extension includes beliefs and behaviors that do not necessarily express any attitude of disregard or ill will, such as the benevolent but ignorant person who believes that *R*s are unintelligent or who due to unconscious bias discriminates in hiring.

Furthermore, the language of respect—unlike all ineluctably agent-based language—can be extended to institutions. For example, whatever one’s stance on the morality of abortion, prochoice advocates hardly seem to betray conceptual confusion when they assert that antiabortion laws fail to respect a woman’s right to choose her conditions of pregnancy. And, again, the language of respect seems appropriate when thinking about institutional racism. Antimiscegenation laws failed to respect rights of intimacy and love and the people whose rights were at stake. The political, legal, and military institutions in the United States that collectively enabled the near extermination of multiple indigenous

44. See Taylor, *Race*, 32–38, for a “deattitudinalized” account of disregard. The “overattitudinalization” of disrespect seems to have created some unnecessary image problems for respect-based accounts. For example, Kasper Lippert-Rasmussen, in “The Badness of Discrimination,” *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice* 9 (2006): 167–85, 180–84, rejects respect-based accounts of discrimination (rather than racism) because he thinks they entail that discrimination can be bad only when someone is “actually being disrespectful” and that the only way out of this problematic entailment is to have the discriminator falsely represent the discriminatee as having a lower moral status. As I will argue, we need not take DA down either of these paths.

American peoples disrespected them on several fronts, not least as members of sovereign nations and as persons with a moral standing that entails rights of life and security (among other things). And the institutions that conspire to systematically discriminate socioeconomically against  $R_2$ s in Real Estate fail to respect their equal moral and political standing. Thus it seems that DA's language of disrespect is fitting with regard to both institutional racism and the varieties of agential racism.

Next, recall that Blum's list of categories includes societies and people as capable of being racist, which surely makes sense: some people—not merely their attitudes or beliefs, but the people themselves—are racist, and some societies, such as the United States at times—plausibly including all times to date—are racist. Accordingly, the language of disrespect had better work in these cases too. And so it does. We can say to the racist, “You—not merely your beliefs or attitudes, but *you*—fail to respect the targets of your hatred.” Similarly, we can say that the United States has shown a monumental lack of respect for just about every single racialized group other than white people. Perhaps this way of talking about societal racism is reducible: perhaps what we really mean is that the people in charge, or particular institutions at work, or both, have shown a monumental lack of respect. But it does not matter, for the purposes of evaluating DA, whether such a reduction is appropriate, for DA accommodates the kinds of racism under consideration now so long as disrespect can be predicated of both people and societies.

In addition, Blum holds that the propositional content of the statement “Arabs are all terrorists who are attempting to destroy our way of life” is racist—not merely that the utterance or endorsement of this statement is racist but that the proposition is racist as well. He also holds that the swastika is a racist symbol.<sup>45</sup> I find it hard to settle on a firm intuition about whether these are truly cases of racism. To be sure, endorsing the statement “All Arabs are terrorists” appears racist, but what's racist here is arguably not the proposition but the mental state of the endorser. So it's less than perfectly clear that the objects of our propositional attitudes can be independently racist and, as Shelby points out, how they can be immoral.<sup>46</sup> The same seems true of symbols. Thus it appears that racism might be contained not in the swastika or the proposition per se but in the wearing or displaying of the swastika and the asserting of the proposition. Note, though, that DA is helpfully uncommitted on this question. Given that symbols and propositions might have moralized meaning, which can be expressed in our attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors, DA can

45. Blum, “*I’m Not a Racist, But . . .*,” 16, 18–22, and “What Do Accounts of ‘Racism’ Do?” 72.

46. Tommie Shelby, “Racism, Morality, and Social Criticism” (unpublished manuscript, Harvard University).

locate the racial disrespect either in the symbols or propositions themselves or in the expression of their meaning.

To this point I hope to have shown that DA can accommodate a range of cases that is broader than the ranges covered by the rival analyses considered in Section I; to that extent it is more successful at accommodating ordinary discourse. This flexibility notwithstanding, however, in the next section I will indicate some points at which DA requires taking some stands that some might find controversial. Before getting to that, though, two more fundamental issues must be addressed. First, what notion of respect am I working with, and is it itself unified? Second, what does it mean for something to be *racially* disrespectful? Let's take these one at a time.

Putting race aside, I have left open what does and does not count as disrespectful. While I will say something about that question momentarily, respect is, of course, a much discussed, normatively loaded notion, and this is not the place to give a full theory of it. Instead, I hope that most readers, whatever their theoretical persuasions, have some sort of pretheoretical grip on respect and can agree on a series of commonly recognized cases of disrespectfulness: systematic suppression of *R*s' political rights, workplace discrimination against *R*s, the utterance of racial epithets, hating *R*s as *R*s, and so on. Presumably disagreement will arise regarding whether or not some other cases (such as affirmative action) are properly categorized as respectful. Rather than sort out exactly what is and what is not respectful—a task that, obviously, exceeds this article—all DA suggests is that  $\varphi$  is racist when and only when it is racially disrespectful. Whatever the true story is about what does and what does not constitute disrespect will also constrain what is and what is not racist. But while this agnosticism about the general nature of respect is tolerable for our purposes, it is tolerable only up to a point. For, if it turns out that RESPECT is not itself unified, then two potential landmines might lie in DA's path.<sup>47</sup>

The first potential problem is that the disunity of RESPECT might itself threaten the unity of any analysis for which RESPECT is an analysans. It is safe to suppose that there is a rich array of kinds of disrespect that can manifest themselves racially, but two points can mitigate the concern that this diversity destabilizes the relevant unity of RACISM. First, despite this diversity, all instances of disrespect may still have something in common. Although I don't want DA's fate to rest on this understanding of disrespect, I am partial to understanding the relevant kind of disrespect as something like a failure to adequately recognize autonomous, independent, sensitive, morally significant creatures. I won't present a

47. I am grateful to Sally Haslanger, Edouard Machery, and Jay Wallace for pressing me to address this issue.

sustained examination of RESPECT here, so the jury is out on this understanding. But I suspect that something in its neighborhood could be common to both agential and institutional forms of racism.

Christopher Heath Wellman recently suggested an instructive example in another context.<sup>48</sup> Just as a parent of one white child and one black child would disrespect the black child to announce that he doesn't want to have a third child for fear that she might be black, so a state can disrespect its nonwhite citizens by exclusively banning nonwhite immigrants from entry. Just as an utterance can express disrespect, so can a policy, and the disrespect expressed by the agent or the institution might have a common core. The expressive work done by our institutions is in fact one of their more powerful functions. Our institutions partly determine not only who will be physically harmed or imprisoned or financially benefitted but also which creatures will be accorded what kinds and levels of political status. And in so doing, those institutions are subject to evaluation in terms of respectfulness. A small business manager fails to adequately respect *R*s when he discriminates against them in hiring no more than institutions disrespect *R*s when they unequally constrain their rights. And, as we saw above, institutionalized disrespect can outlive the agential disrespect from which it was spawned. We see this phenomenon not only in cases like Real Estate but also in antimiscegenation laws that remained on the books in some U.S. states after they had been ruled unconstitutional in 1967: even though these laws were now unenforceable, citizens of the states that had them eventually sought to remove them anyway, because of their embarrassing expressive content. (The last U.S. state to repeal such a law was Alabama, in 2000. Even then, some 40 percent voted to keep the law, itself a disrespectful, if legally inconsequential, expressive act.) To return to the bigger issue, then, though this exploration of disrespect hardly constitutes a decisive argument or analysis, it does suggest that we might be able to understand disrespect in a single way that is broad enough to capture talk of both institutions and agents and that is relevant to racism, for it may in all of these cases involve a failure of recognition.<sup>49</sup>

48. Christopher Heath Wellman, "Immigration and Freedom of Association," *Ethics* 119 (2008): 109–41, 139–40.

49. This understanding of respect is thus a modified form of what many, following Stephen Darwall, call "recognition respect" (Darwall, "Two Kinds of Respect," *Ethics* 88 [1977]: 36–49). One modification is to add that, at least sometimes, the appropriate recognition will involve valuing the object of respect, when the object is a person. Thus the respect in question is what Robin S. Dillon calls *valuing* recognition respect (in "Respect," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, 2007, <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/respect/>). Another modification pertains to the deliberative focus of Darwall's analysis. As he understands it, the core component of recognition respect is "giving appropriate consideration or recognition to some feature of its object

Additionally, there is a second, more direct, and arguably more conclusive response to the first concern about the unity of respect: we can deny the supposition that disunity in a concept contained in the analysis compromises the unity of the analysis. If it turns out, for comparison, that MAN is a cluster concept, this would not mean that we fail to give BACHELOR a unified analysis when we analyze it as UNMARRIED MAN. Suppose that some men are men because of their reproductive organs, while others are men because of their genetic codes, and the two populations are not coextensive. In that case of conceptual disunity in MAN, I think we should still want to say that, nevertheless, to analyze BACHELOR in terms of UNMARRIED MAN is to give a unified analysis of BACHELOR. (We should say the same thing if a person can be unmarried in the sense relevant for bachelorhood either by not having undergone the right kind of legal ritual or by not having undergone the right kind of religious ritual.) The same is true, I want to say, of RACISM. Even if RESPECT turns out to be a nonunified concept, analyzing RACISM as RACIAL DISRESPECT will itself still be a unified analysis.

But even if this counts as a unified analysis, a second related worry on the disunity front is that, if RESPECT is not unified, then we might lose an important normative resource in our analysis. For example, consider that those who are reluctant to grant the existence of institutional racism might be persuaded by being shown that institutional racism has something wrong in common with agential racism.<sup>50</sup> If institutional racism features a kind of disrespect that is fundamentally different from agential respect, then do we lose that kind of persuasive

---

in deliberating about what to do" (Darwall, "Two Kinds of Respect," 38). Recognition respect can be given by both institutions and individuals if we remove the practical deliberation requirement. Even putting institutional respect to the side, it is arguable that these words should be removed anyway, since our attitudes seem capable of manifesting valuing recognition respect or disrespect whether or not they figure in our deliberations. And bringing institutions back in, it seems fair to say that both institutions and agents can engage in valuing recognition respect. Even if they have no attitudes, institutions and their policies can (and should) reflect our equal moral status. Those who are uncertain whether institutions can really be respectful or disrespectful might recall that if we accept the genetic thesis, institutions will be disrespectful only if they originated in the disrespectfulness of agents.

Note that claiming that both people and institutions can express disrespect does not by itself commit one to an expressive theory of rational action, such as that proposed by Elizabeth Anderson in *Value in Ethics and Economics* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993). That is, even a consequentialist theory of rational action can claim that expressing disrespect can bring about disvalue and thereby fail to be rational. Thus my account appears to be in principle compatible with any theory of rational action (which should be an appealing feature even for those who, like me, are sympathetic to Anderson's theory). That said, Anderson does argue that expressive considerations cannot be coherently captured by consequentialism (see esp. 80–81).

50. I am grateful to Jay Wallace for supplying this consideration.



argument by normative analogy? To stave off this worry, we can again note that our agnosticism leaves it open that all instances of disrespect might plausibly have something substantive in common. Beyond that, though, the second worry can also be alleviated if all instances of disrespect have something less substantive but more formal, and also morally weighty, in common. That is, if 'disrespect' itself connotes a moral negative (as I believe it does), then even if all instances of disrespect have nothing else in common besides that moral valence, they will all be at least defeasibly morally condemnable, and in that case DA can enable the normative work we want done by an analysis of RACISM.<sup>51</sup>

Thus, I think that I am here working with an understanding of respect that is vague but tolerably so. Our last analytical task, then, is to unpack what it means for  $\varphi$  to be *racially* disrespectful, that is, to be disrespectful toward members of *R* as *Rs*. As Haslanger points out, racial injustice is not coextensive with disproportionately affecting one racial group rather than another. "For example, a Japanese company with all Japanese workers might exploit those workers, but this would not make the exploitation a racial injustice."<sup>52</sup> So in order for  $\varphi$  to be racially disrespectful, it must disrespect people as members of their racialized group: the Japanese workers are disrespected as workers, not as members of any *R*. (This should not be read as denying that racism can intersect in a variety of ways with classism and other forms of oppression.) Thus, for  $\varphi$  to be racist, it must disrespect members of some racialized group as members of that group. Put otherwise, the identity of the victim's racialized group must play a suitably explanatory role in characterizing disrespect that is uniquely racist.<sup>53</sup> That is to say, if we can adequately explain the disrespect without mentioning the racialized identity of the target(s) of  $\varphi$ , then  $\varphi$  won't be racist. We don't need to refer to the Japanese workers' racialized identity to explain their bosses' exploitative behavior; we do need to refer to black people's racialized identity in order to explain the uniquely racist disrespectfulness of the lynchings with which whites terrorized blacks in the period between reconstruction and the civil rights era in the United States.

51. As this suggests, I am partial to interpreting not only racism but also disrespect such that it is always (at least defeasibly) wrong. Thus I do not think that, other things equal, it would ever be right to engage in racial disrespect, even directed by the racially oppressed at the racially oppressive. This doesn't mean that act-types that are typically disrespectful—condemnation, imprisonment, punitive reparation—would not be called for in reaction to racial oppression. It just means that in such cases tokens of those act-types would not count as disrespectful.

52. Haslanger, "Oppressions," 108–9. Cf. Garcia, "Current Conceptions," 23; and Shelby, "Is Racism in the 'Heart'?" 414.

53. Arthur, *Race, Equality, and the Burdens of History*, 15; Lippert-Rasmussen, "Badness," 170. Cf. Haslanger, "Oppressions."

That said, the explanatory role of the racialized identity need not pertain to any qualities of the racialized group that the racist perceives as essential to that group. A racist might, of course, be disrespectful toward a racialized group because he perceives it as somehow inherently deserving of disrespect or as possessing essential traits that somehow warrant disrespect. But the racist also might be disrespectful toward *R*s just because he thinks that *R*s are (as a contingent matter, prone to being) cheap and he thinks cheapness warrants his being disrespectful.<sup>54</sup> On DA, this still counts as racist, since *R*s are being disrespected as *R*s by this racist. That is, it is not a case where *R*s coincidentally happen to disproportionately figure in his disrespect toward cheap people. Rather it is one in which they, as *R*s, are singled out for disrespect because they are perceived to be (essentially or not) cheap. This counts as a case, therefore, of racism.

### III. POINTS OF CONTENTION

This account is flexible enough to accommodate multiple aspects of racism. Most importantly, DA is consistent with the many apparent locations of racism. Also recall that there is some dispute over whether one must be in a position of power to be racist. I side with those (including Blum, Garcia, and Taylor) who reject this idea—I believe that white racism is not the only kind of racism in societies with a history of predominantly white racism. But DA itself has no commitments on this question. If only the most powerful can generate racial disrespect (which I doubt), then only the powerful can be racist according to DA; but if even the powerless can generate racial disrespect, then DA says that they could be racist too.

At other points, however, DA requires us to take some controversial stands. For example, by characterizing racism in terms of racial disrespect, the analysis presented here implies that some race relations, namely, the respectful ones, are not racist. Dummett deems such an implication incoherent. He writes that “there is no aspect of race relations—as the term is normally and properly used—that does not have racism at its root: ‘race relations’ is not normally applied to relations between groups between which there is no friction or competition.”<sup>55</sup> Now here Dummett is presuming the same basic principle for analysis selection that I have been using: other things equal, one analysis is better than another to the extent that it can in more respects preserve ordinary ways of using race-related terms without running afoul of other analytic virtues, such as consistency. But, in many places at least, it is not uncommon or improper to hear it used in ways other than those described by Dummett. For instance, people sometimes talk of *improved* race relations. It even makes sense to talk about, and hope for, *idyllic* or *peaceful*

54. I owe this example to Meir Cohen.

55. Dummett, “The Nature of Racism,” 30.

race relations, in which friction between racialized groups is a thing of the past. Thus I think it is a strength of my account that it allows that race relations are sometimes racist and other times not.<sup>56</sup>

My analysis also makes no claims as to the causal source of racism. Some or all forms of racism might ultimately spring from our genetic hardwiring, from a legacy of intergroup conflict, from being teased in the schoolyard, or from whatever else: DA takes no stand on that question. I consider this kind of neutrality virtuous, but it occasionally finds critics. Michael P. Levine, for example, insists that a “causal account of racism, in particular one that involves a psychological or psychoanalytic underpinning, is necessary to understanding what racism is.”<sup>57</sup> To be sure, Levine is making a claim about racism’s necessary boundaries: “Behavior that appears racist but has no racist etiology is not—could not be—a form of racism.”<sup>58</sup> So, according to Levine, racism is necessarily etiological, and on his particular diagnosis it originates in a certain form of “desire and wish fulfillment,” without which a belief, behavior, or any other  $\varphi$  could not be racist. He thus provocatively claims that “trying to understand racism . . . independently of a psychoanalytic approach is like trying to understand motion without physics or how a car runs with no mention of its engine. . . . There is no vacuum quite like a philosophical vacuum.”<sup>59</sup>

Perhaps we need psychoanalytic theory to understand why people are racist. (*Perhaps.*) I don’t think we need it to explain what racism is. So what arguments might be given for a Levine-style etiological approach? At one point, he distinguishes his view from nonetiological accounts by allying it with externalist semantics.<sup>60</sup> But semantic externalism is neither here nor there: whether or not the reference or meaning of ‘racism’ is wholly settled by what we think about racism, racism still might be definable without recourse to any of its psychological causes. Levine also tries to marshal Putnam-style twin earth considerations, but the way he deploys them is, to me, inscrutable. It does not seem too hard to imagine someone (even on earth, let alone twin earth) who comes to have racist attitudes that aren’t based in desire or wish fulfillment. Levine disagrees: he holds that if a Martian came to an apparently racist attitude by a route other than “perceived inadequacy” (the alleged source of human racism), “we

56. Dummett, of course, might have been trying to analyze ‘racism’ as it is used in a different—if closely related—linguistic community than the one that governs the usage that concerns this article. If so, then on this question our analyses might not be rivals as much as complementary analyses that focus on different communities.

57. Michael P. Levine, “Philosophy and Racism,” in Levine and Pataki, *Racism in Mind*, 78–96, 78. Cf. Headley, “Philosophical Analysis,” 15.

58. *Ibid.*, 90.

59. *Ibid.*, 84.

60. *Ibid.*, 89 n. 12.

might *call* it racism, but we would understand it as importantly different from the real thing.” But Levine does not tell us why, granting for argument’s sake that we would understand such alien attitudes as importantly different from run-of-the-mill human racism, we should think that their attitudes are not racist. We get no reason to deny that seeking the destruction of all *Rs* (and only because they are *Rs*) is racist, even when it is based in alien ignorance, or even simple idiocy. But without an argument, it’s hard to see why we should relinquish such an intuitive proposition.<sup>61</sup>

Finally, return to the central claim that racism can be analyzed as disrespect. Some might think that this is too weak: there’s more involved in racism than disrespect—there’s also hatred, and malice, and murderous intent. Alternatively, some might think that DA expansively implies that too many things are racist: not every “racial ill,” as Blum puts it, should be considered racist, especially given the deep moral significance that attaches to attributions of racism. Since anything that is disrespectful toward members of *R* as *Rs* is racist according to DA, this unpacking of ‘racist’ might seem to fall victim to what Blum, following Robert Miles, calls the “conceptual inflation” of RACISM.<sup>62</sup>

Regarding the weakness objection, it is true that any account that denied the awful viciousness of so many forms of racism would be inadequate. But DA does not issue such a denial. First, to say that all instances of racism are instances of disrespect is not to deny that all or many instances of racism might also be instances of something else. The goal here has been to analyze the concept RACISM, not to enumerate every single truth, not even every universal truth, about racism. (If all horses have teeth, that doesn’t mean that having teeth is part of the concept HORSE; we can, after all, at least conceptualize a toothless horse.) So even if every known instance of racism were accompanied by intense malice, this wouldn’t mean that intense malice is part of the concept of racism. Second, given the possibility of benevolent racism, it seems hard to deny that, while all instances of racism are and must be disrespectful, not all are malicious. Third, we have already seen that disrespect is a morally loaded notion. Further investigation would presumably reveal the myriad ways in which the disrespect-makers can line up with other morally troubling aspects of racism: that it can be malicious, that it can cause severe harm, that it can corrode social relations, and so on.

61. Garcia (“Philosophical Analysis,” 10, 17, 26–27 n. 48, and “Heart of Racism,” 420) suggests similar arguments against the kind of psychoanalytically sensitive account of which Levine approves (particularly Elizabeth Young-Bruehl, *The Anatomy of Prejudices* [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996]). Although Levine targets Garcia in particular, he does not examine these arguments.

62. Blum, *I’m Not a Racist, But . . .*; Robert Miles, *Racism* (London: Routledge, 1989).

One of the reasons that disrespect is a useful analysis for racism is that disrespect is abstract enough to take as many forms as racism takes.<sup>63</sup> These different forms can manifest different kinds (and degrees)<sup>64</sup> of morally troubling properties.

As for the possibility that DA leaves RACISM too inflated, whether this is true will depend in large part on what we pretheoretically but critically and reflectively consider instances of racism. Blum gives some examples of racial ills that he identifies as currently labeled 'racist' but that should not be labeled as such. While DA is consistent with Blum's verdict in many of these cases, and while his verdict is often compelling, some of his cases do not seem persuasive to me. Consider his example of a high school teacher asking a Haitian American student "to give 'the black point of view'" in a race-related classroom discussion. Blum holds that, although such a question is insensitive and ignorant, it should not be considered racist because it does not spring from inferiorization or antipathy.<sup>65</sup> But perhaps what we should do here is keep what Blum acknowledges is the widespread recognition that such questions are racist and jettison the inferiorization-or-antipathy approach to racism. DA, in fact, can step into the breach and account for the apparent racism in the teacher's request: among other problems, it is racially disrespectful—presumably not just to the individual in question but to all members of the racialized group in question, as members of that group—to homogenize one racialized group's various distinctive points of view and to take one person's perspective as representative of the entire group.<sup>66</sup>

So the short answer to the overinclusiveness objection is this. Some things we call 'racist', other things we don't. The goal here has been to identify an account of racism that best captures ordinary everyday discourse and thought. It seems to me that DA is no more expansive than ordinary discourse allows it to be, and, given the goal, its limits and expansiveness appear to be virtuous.

However, I should stress that I don't mean to deny any of three things here. First, recall that focusing on the ordinary concept allows that we can deploy the term 'racism' in an incorrect manner. In fact, while I have presupposed that we want an analysis that accommodates ordinary usage as broadly as possible, the conclusion of my argument

63. Indeed, although I cannot argue for this here, I suspect that the flexibility of 'respect' might allow us to give parallel analyses of other 'isms'. Vindicating that suspicion would obviously require sustained considerations of the many forms of oppression.

64. For more on degrees of racism, see Blum, *"I'm Not a Racist, But . . ."*, 28–29.

65. *Ibid.*, 53–57.

66. If homogenization can be disrespectful (e.g., because it fails to recognize us as independent and distinctive), we should be confident that DA can also account for the apparent racism in at least some positive stereotypes, the bitter jealousy and hatred sometimes built upon those stereotypes, and any other related phenomena.

entails that ‘racism’ is deployed correctly only when it conforms to DA. Second, I don’t mean to deny that semantic externalism and the possibility of erroneous description might have a role to play: we can have false beliefs about the nature of racism, and various experts, including social theorists, might be able to shine a unique light on its nature and meaning. But the best we can do, the best that even the experts can do, is to look at how language works, consider not only the actual world but also possible cases, widen our reflective equilibrium, and ultimately render our best analysis. On these fronts, DA at least appears more consistent with the variety of cases of racism than the alternatives considered here. Third, I don’t mean to deny that we also might want to use and unpack the term ‘racism’ in a way that deviates from ordinary usage but that serves various pragmatic or liberating ends.<sup>67</sup> But investigating what our terms refer to and exploring what they could and should refer to are attempts to paint two different pictures. DA is an analysis of the former variety. Perhaps we’d be better off if we reserved the term ‘racism’ for a different set of social ills than what it currently covers; perhaps not. In either case, though, a focus on what it currently covers is the constraint by which any descriptive analysis must abide. The Disrespect Analysis is one way of trying to meet that constraint, and its breadth is the product of that endeavor.

67. Blum, “What Do Accounts of ‘Racism’ Do?”; Haslanger, “Oppressions.”

Copyright of Ethics is the property of University of Chicago Press and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.