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Source: *Critical Philosophy of Race*, Vol. 7, No. 2 (2019), pp. 223-246

Published by: Penn State University Press

Stable URL: https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5325/critphilrace.7.2.0223

SHOULD WE NARROW THE SCOPE OF "RACISM" TO ACCOMMODATE WHITE SENSITIVITIES?

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Abstract

This article critically examines the proposal that the word "racism"
should be restricted to the most egregious of racial ills. It argues
that the costs of restricting the scope of the term in this way are
too great and that the proposal gives too much weight to white
sensitivities.

Keywords: race, racism, white fragility, ideology

Introduction

The contemporary analytical discussion of racism has been governed by
a largely unnoticed implicit norm of colorblindness. The norm prohibits
adverting to the role race may play in the framing of that very discussion.
One is permitted to talk about the role race plays in *racism*, but not the role
it plays in the *discussion* of racism. In other words, one is to write as if that
discussion were itself colorblind. It seems to me, however, that race has in

fact figured in the proposal that the word "racism" be reserved for the most egregious of racial wrongs and that this is worth noting. What I would like to do, then, is critically assess the narrow-the-scope proposal in a way that calls attention to the role that, I shall argue, race plays in its motivation.[1]

First, a preliminary remark about the sense of the word "racism" that the proposal is meant to cover. As I understand it, "racism" is polysemous.[2] It has different senses and can be used in different ways. Since its first recorded use, the term has undergone changes of meaning, coming to acquire new meanings without, however, shedding its older ones. "Racism" can properly be used to refer to an ideology of biologically grounded superiority. It can properly be used to refer to structures of inequality or oppression between racially defined groups. And it can properly be used in to criticize serious racial ills of various kinds, on broadly moral grounds. It is the proper scope of this third, broadly moral, way of using the word "racism" that is at issue in the proposal I wish to examine. One caveat. Although I will argue for a broad-scope approach to the extension of "racism," my discussion is not meant to exhaust the subject. That is, I do not claim to discuss or list everything that can be properly called a form of racism.[3]

The argument for the proposal to narrow the scope of "racism" is generally presented in something like the following terms:

> Overly broad use of the word "racism" produces defensive reactions and shuts down urgently needed discussion of matters racial. Were the term's application restricted to the *worst* moral failings in the area of race, people of good will (who of course oppose racism) would not have to fear being called by the dread term "racist," and this would facilitate interracial communication.[4]

This argument is "colorblind" in the sense that the race of the people who experience the inhibiting fear and exhibit the unproductive defensive reactions that inhibit interracial communication is left unspecified, the tacit suggestion being that everyone feels that way. But does *everyone* feel this way? Discuss racism in the classroom—surely an experience on which defenders of the narrow-the-scope proposal draw—and one finds that the negative reactions to broader uses of "racism" tend to be confined to one specific group of students, namely students who believe they are white. By this I mean students who identify as and are generally taken to be white, that is, students who belong to the white racialized group or white

socialrace.[5] It is not blacks or other people of color who for the most part are offended by broad uses of the word "racism." It is whites.[6]

The tendency of whites to respond defensively when the topic of racism arises is well-known and has come to be referred to in the anti-racist literature as "white fragility." Robin DiAngelo, the theorist who coined the term, writes,

> White people in North America live in a social environment that protects and insulates them from race-based stress. This insulated environment of racial protection builds white expectations for racial comfort while at the same time lowering the ability to tolerate racial stress, leading to what I refer to as White Fragility. White Fragility is a state in which even a minimum amount of racial stress becomes intolerable, triggering a range of defensive moves. These moves include the outward display of emotions such as anger, fear, and guilt, and behaviors such as argumentation, silence, and leaving the stress-inducing situation.[7]

Examples of the phenomenon include (a) the rapidity with which some whites move from the experience of being criticized for *saying or doing* something racist to the certainty that they have been personally accused of *being a racist,* and (b) the speed with which some whites move from the experience of being accused of *being a racist* to the certainty that they have been accused of being an *out-and-out racist,* if not a *moral monster.*[8] (I return to the steps between saying or doing something racist and being a racist and the distinction between being a racist and being an out-and-out racist and between being an out-and-out racist and being a moral monster below.) My suggestion, then, is that the proposal to narrow the scope of "racism" can be best understood as an attempt to facilitate constructive conversations about race by accommodating the sensitivities of whites.[9]

With these preliminaries in place, I turn to the assessment of the narrow-the-scope proposal.

When Are Racial Wrongs Egregious?

What sort of racial wrongs count as serious enough to warrant the application of the word "racism"? Defenders of the narrow-the-scope proposal don't say, but the list would presumably include: slavery, genocide, lynching, and

explicit racial discrimination (e.g., de jure exclusion from housing, jobs, schools, and so forth). It would also, surely, include attitudes and behaviors *generally* that consist in or express *racial antipathy* (race-based hatred and hostility) and *racial derogation* (treating members of a racialized group—typically but not necessarily a racialized group other than one's own—as unworthy of the respect owed to human beings as such). Racial antipathy and racial derogation are kindred wrongs. Both can be expressed using racial slurs and epithets; each flows easily into the other. Nevertheless, the concepts are distinct. It is one thing to be hostile to members of a racial group, another to think they are unworthy. One could in principle think Rs are unworthy without being hostile to them *or* be hostile to Rs without thinking they are unworthy. Purely paternalistic anti-black racists (if such there are) think that blacks are unworthy but feel no hostility whatsoever toward them. Anti-Semites may hate Jews and think them superior.

Some defenders of the narrow-the-scope proposal hold that for a *behavior* to be properly counted "racist," it must be conscious and endorsed and that for an *attitude* to be properly counted racist, it must be conscious, endorsed, and practically engaged.[10] To say that *consciousness* is a condition of counting an attitude or behavior "racist" is to say that the person to whom the attitude or behavior is attributed must be *aware* of holding the particular attitude or engaging in the particular behavior in question. To say that that *endorsement* is a condition of counting an attitude or behavior "racist" is to say that the person to whom the attitude or behavior is attributed must *affirm* or *approve* the attitude or behavior in question. To say that an attitude must be *practically engaged* to be counted "racist" is to say, as we might put it, that it must *"engage the will"* of the person to whom it is attributed. One can be racist without acting on one's racism (e.g., on a deserted island) if no occasion for its expression arises.[11] But to be properly counted as racist, a person must be disposed to behave in certain ways (e.g., to disparage Rs on the grounds of their race) should the occasion arise. The motivation for these restrictions is straightforward. Attitudes and behaviors that fail to meet them are not deserving of the most severe moral condemnation.

The defenders of the narrow-the-scope proposal further recommend that, in its application to *persons*, the word "racism" should be restricted what might be called, for lack of a better term, "out-and-out racists." By that term I mean people who exhibit particularly egregious forms of racial badness; for example, neo-Nazis, members of the Ku Klux Klan, supporters of explicit practices of racial discrimination, subordination, and

segregation—old-fashioned Jim Crow–style racists—and, one must now add, self-described white supremacists.[12] Note that a racist need not accept the *label* "racist" or regard his or her attitude *as* "racist" to be properly counted "racist." Nowadays the general disapprobation attaching to "racist" is such that even extreme racists are likely to deny that the term correctly applies to them. Perfectly happy *being* racist, they don't want to be *called* racist.[13]

It used to be thought that out-and-out racism was dying out. The last couple of years, however, have witnessed a most unfortunate resurgence of such racism. Think Charlottesville. The lid has come off. It turns out that there are rather more out-and-out racists than we would have liked to think. Out-and-out racism remains a serious problem.

So what, if anything, *is* wrong with the policy of reserving the word "racism" for the most severe racial ills? Defenders of the narrow-the-scope proposal would, after all, agree that racial ills that do not warrant the label "racist" deserve moral criticism, nonetheless.[14] Why not, then, confine the word "racism" to attitudes and behaviors that are conscious, endorsed, and practically engaged?

What's Wrong with Narrowing the Scope?

To begin with, restricting "racism" to the worst moral failings means not counting *racial indifference* as "racism."[15] To be racially indifferent to Rs is to be indifferent to the harm, suffering, or disadvantage Rs experience, where the indifference is rooted in the belief that Rs are Rs. It is characterized by the absence of good will toward members of a particular race. It differs from "everyday" human indifference (which may be morally objectionable but is not racist) in being due, not to ignorance or lack of personal connection, but to the consciousness that the people toward whom one is indifferent are members of a particular racial group.

Racial indifference can, and often does, mask racial hostility or derogation. If someone exhibits racial indifference, that is a reason to suspect underlying antipathy or derogation. But the concept of racial indifference is distinct from both the concept of racial hostility and the concept of racial derogation. One can (in principle) be indifferent to Rs without feeling the slightest hostility toward them or having the least inclination to derogate them. Although arguably not as bad as racial hostility or derogation, racial

indifference is clearly very bad in its own right and consequently aptly characterized as "racist." Racial indifference also has the additional unattractive feature of being "cold" in a way in which racial hostility (which, ironically, includes a "moment" of recognition) is not.

Racial indifference itself constitutes race-based refusal of recognition.[16] People who are racially indifferent refuse to recognize individuals belonging to a particular racially designated group as fully human or equally worthy of moral concern. Racial indifference is like racial antipathy and derogation in undermining human self-esteem, but its harms are more insidious and harder to resist.[17] It violates the duty we have to recognize others whatever their race.

One important species of racial indifference is *indifference to racism.* Indifference to racism counts as a species of racial indifference because one cannot be indifferent to racism without being indifferent to the suffering it causes.[18] A person exhibits the failing of indifference to racism if, for example, the fact that something, for example, a word (e.g., the N-word), a symbol (the Confederate battle flag), a political policy (locating a freeway in an African American neighborhood), or a person (e.g., a political candidate) *is* racist simply doesn't matter to them.[19] These facts don't count *as reasons* for such persons to criticize use of the racist word, forgo support for use of the racist symbol, oppose the racist policy, or refuse to vote for the racist candidate. For such persons, racism is just not that urgent. They may be willing to give lip service to the badness of racism but feel no obligation whatsoever to do anything concrete to oppose it.[20]

Why do defenders of the narrow-the-scope proposal want to protect people who exhibit racial indifference (including indifference to racism) from the discomfort and stress that results from being called "racist"? Presumably, because such people are not deserving of the severest condemnation. But do the racially indifferent deserve protection? Such individuals *should* feel bad. They ought to feel shame. True, racial indifference doesn't make you an out-and-out racist. It doesn't put you on a par with being a member of the Klan. But restricting the application of "racism" to racists of that ilk sets the bar too high. Once upon a time it might have made (pragmatic) sense to withhold the label "racist" from the (merely) racial indifferent. But it does not make sense now. Racial indifference is, after all, a central feature of institutional racism.[21] It is, arguably, *the* race-related moral vice of our time. It is crucial that we be able to apply the term

"racism" to racial ills, which, like racial indifference, are still publically acceptable—a possibility that the narrow-the-scope proposal precludes.

Moreover, restricting the application of "racism" to the most severe of racial ills would prohibit counting more subtle form of racism as "racism." It would, for example, preclude counting *racial microaggressions* as racist.[22] Microaggressions are subtle insults and put-downs, expressions of hostility, and acts of derogation that may occur below the level of their perpetrators' awareness.[23] *Racial* microaggressions, then, are microaggressions in the domain of race. Being less severe than overt insults and expressions of racial hostility and acts of derogation, racial microaggressions clearly do not count among the most severe racial failings. But, being expressions of racial antipathy and derogation, they are straightforwardly counted as "racist." Calling microaggressions "racist" does not trivialize the word. Racial microaggressions are not trivial. The harm they wreak—especially when one considers their cumulative effect—is significant.[24]

The explicit characterization of microaggressions as a form of *racism* (which goes hand in hand with the explicit conceptualization of these behaviors *as microaggressions*) should be seen as marking a positive development in our understanding of *what racism is*. Our use of the word "racism" should be progressive. As we make advances in discerning morally objectionable ideas, behaviors, practices, and attitudes concerning race, we should feel free to tag as "racist" serious forms of racial wrongfulness that may not have been labeled as such at an earlier time.

Writing back in 2002, Lawrence Blum raised the concern that "overuse" of the word "racism" might diminish its moral force and contribute to a lowering of concern about racism and other race-related wrongs. But, writing now in 2019, I find no evidence that the broader use of the term has in fact diminished its moral force or contributed to a lowering of concern about race-related wrongs. Nor do I think that allowing "racism" to continue to encompass lesser but still serious racial wrongs will undermine the opprobrium attaching to the word. Lesser racial wrongs (like microaggressions) may not be the most grievous of racial wrongs, but they are not *slight* moral wrongs either. What needs to be appreciated is precisely the badness of racial wrongs *as such*. This is the point defenders of the narrow-the-scope proposal miss.

Another argument. To restrict the scope of "racism" to the most severe racial ills is to restrict its scope to forms of racial wrongfulness that were

widespread *in the past*. Doing that robs the term of critical force *in the present*. It makes it impossible to count as "racist" lesser but still severe racial ills (in which present-day whites who sincerely take themselves to be opposed to racism may still be implicated) that have come to the fore.[25]

Yet another disadvantage of the narrow-the-scope proposal is that it makes it impossible to count *implicit racial bias* as a form of "racism." Implicit racial bias is a species of *bias* (psychological leaning) that contrasts with explicit bias in being "automatic" and generally, if not always, "unconscious."[26] Implicit biases are not for the most part subject to introspection.[27] They may not align with our declared beliefs or reflect stances we would explicitly endorse.[28] Implicit racial bias encompasses both favorable and unfavorable assessments based solely on "race" (e.g., a quick glance at the photograph of the face of a phenotypically typical black or white person).[29] A striking example of racial implicit bias are the results of the so-called "weapon bias" test. Researchers determined that, when shown a picture of a black person, both white and black Americans were more likely to misidentify a harmless object as a gun than when shown a picture of a white person.[30] There is evidence that implicit bias occurs, that it occurs in almost everyone,[31] that it is practically engaged,[32] and that it harms people.[33] Implicit racial bias is thus a form of unwarranted racial preference and discrimination and, being such, it is a form of racism, at least sometimes. (I want to allow the possibility that some forms of implicit bias might fall below the threshold of racism). Because implicit bias can result in death (e.g., Amadou Diallo and Tamir Rice), it is more than serious enough to warrant the label.[34]

The fact that the narrow-the-scope proposal precludes counting as "racist" attitudes, behaviors, and representations that are unconscious should be regarded as a disadvantage. By racist *representations* I mean such items as beliefs about members of a particular racial group, images associated with members of the group and group stereotypes that are *stigmatizing*— that "mark" members of the group as deserving of antipathy, derogation, and indifference.[35] These items, which are fundamentally cognitive, can be distinguished from the moral and emotional attitudes they underwrite. Examples of stigmatizing representations include "representations of blacks as lacking the virtues of self-reliance, enterprise, studiousness, and dedication to hard honest work, but claiming goods to which they would be entitled only if they had these virtues."[36] Stigmatizing representations count as "racist" because they are derogating. They publically dishonor their targets,

assaulting their social reputation, placing them on a lower order of being in a public ranking.[37] Because they constitute a serious expressive harm, stigmatizing racial representations should be classified as "racist."

Can Racism Be Unconscious?

The idea of unconscious mental states has been familiar since Freud.[38] The notion has received additional empirical support from recent research on implicit bias and become a fixed part of enlightened common sense.[39] Once the possibility of unconscious attitudes, representations, and behaviors has been recognized and conjoined with the idea of racism, the idea of *unconscious* racism becomes unavoidable. Racial antipathy can be unconscious. Racial derogation can be unconscious. Racial indifference can be unconscious. Stigmatizing racial representations can be unconscious. Microaggressions are typically unconscious. Implicit bias is characteristically unconscious. Recognition of the possibility of unconscious racism makes it possible to make sense of the commonplace that a person who sincerely expresses anti-racist sentiments might nonetheless harbor objectionable racial attitudes.[40]

If the word "racism" is to be brought to bear on serious racial ills standing in the way of racial progress in the present age, it is essential to allow its application to racial wrongs that fall short of the most severe. Slavery, genocide, lynching, and explicit racial discrimination are indeed very bad. But one doesn't count as anti-racist—or earn moral credit—for being against *them.*

Now recent events have made clear that, contrary to what had been widely thought, conscious racial antipathy and derogation remain significant problems in the United States (and elsewhere), even after the end of the civil rights era. Nonetheless, it is at least arguable that we have progressed to the point that conscious racism, does not present as much of an obstacle to the attainment of racial equality as do unconscious racial antipathy and derogation, unconscious racial indifference, unrecognized microaggressions, and implicit bias.

Here is a guiding principle for regulating the use of the word "racism": our policy concerning its proper scope should be keyed to the racial ills that represent the most serious challenges to achieving racial equality in the present.

More Arguments *for* Narrowing the Scope

Defenders of the narrow-the-scope proposal place great weight on the severity of the opprobrium the word "racism" conveys, which they take to be invariably extreme.[41] This appears to be *the* datum on which their position is based.[42] Now it is certainly true that the condemnation attaching to the word "racism" is strong. The word is emotionally charged in a way that, for example, the word "sexism" arguably is not. Some men feel reasonably comfortable granting that they are sexist; I suspect that few whites (or people of any race) would feel as comfortable allowing that they are racist. Members of groups such a Racists Anonymous (who begin each meeting by acknowledging that they are racists) count as rule-proving exceptions.[43]

It is worth asking whether the opprobrium "racism" carries *must* be as severe as the defenders of the narrow-the-scope proposal would have us believe. Might not some portion of the extreme discomfort some whites attribute to the word "racism" be an artifact of the discomfort they feel when it is deployed? Might not the condemnation it conveys sometimes be less than maximally extreme?

Rather than inviting reflection, the narrow-the-scope proposal takes a term that already has a strong valence and amps that valence up. Saying that "racism" *should* be used only to express maximal condemnation encourages hearing the word as invariably expressing maximal condemnation. It thus deadens us to the different degrees of condemnation the term can convey, bolsters the tendency some whites already have to hear the word as necessarily picking out the worst of racial wrongs, and thereby transforms the guilty way in which some whites hear the word into the way that the term *ought* to be heard by everyone. It makes "normative" the "white response" to the word, legitimizing and reinforcing the disposition some whites have to respond defensively to word's use. The narrow-the-scope proposal thus has the ironic effect of exacerbating the very reaction it is meant to address. This is hardly a point in its favor.

Now, it is sometimes suggested that the word "racism" "shuts down urgently needed discussion."[44] It is certainly true that many conversations end when the term is introduced, But it is a mistake to think this result inevitable. Contrary to what the defenders of the narrow-the-scope proposal suggest, the word "racism" is not imbued with magical power.

If conversation comes to a halt when it is deployed, that is because people choose to stop talking. This is not to say that people who suffer from white fragility choose to feel as they do.[45] Presumably they do not. They may be uncomfortable. Perhaps very uncomfortable. But how people deal with their feelings is something over which they have some control. If nothing else, they can *say* that they are very uncomfortable and make *that* the basis of a continued conversation. No one would suggest that talking about racism is easy. Discussing this topic across racial lines is no doubt especially difficult. But the fact remains that racism is something that *can* be talked about, within or across racial lines—provided one is prepared to have a difficult conversation.

There are defenders of the narrow-the-scope proposal who suggest that whites who object to the label "racist" think the word properly applies only to the worst conduct and attitudes of people such as members of the KKK and neo-Nazis, think of "racist" as an insulting epithet, which, when applied to those who are not out-and-out racists, is equivalent to calling them the N-word.[46] The term thus provokes immediate dismissal. Why take seriously someone who stoops to engaging in hostile personal attacks like that?

Now, if some whites do in fact hear the word "racist" in this way, then no wonder they feel offended. But the idea that calling someone a "racist" is equivalent to calling a person the N-word is—there simply is no other word for it—absurd. Here is why. To call someone a racist is not classify them by race.[47] Unlike the N-word, the word "racist" is not a term of racial classification. *Merriam-Webster* informs us that the N-word "now ranks as almost certainly the most offensive and inflammatory racial slur in English, a term expressive of hatred and bigotry."[48] "Racist," however, is not a racial slur. Accusations of racism may express anger, but anger is not hatred. And accusations of racism my also express other emotions, including sadness, disappointment, frustration, and despair. The N-word by its nature denies the dignity and humanity of individuals and groups to whom it is applied. The word "racism" does not. Use of the N-word reminds its targets of the historical experience of slavery, the denial of civil rights, and lynching. "Racism" does not invoke the past in a comparable way. The equation of "racism" with the N-word is a quintessential example of white fragility.

The appropriate response to those who are offended by the application of "racism" to people who are not members of the KKK or neo-Nazis

would be to ask respectfully whether their sense of being offended, while understandable, might not be misplaced. We should politely invite them to consider the possibility that their reaction might turn on a failure to appreciate the range of racial ills to which the word "racism" properly applies and the degree to which the condemnation it signifies varies. Instead of thinking of "racism" as an insulting epithet personally aimed at them, they might come to regard the word as a vital tool of anti-racist criticism that names something they, too, oppose.

It might be suggested that I am discounting the semantic intuitions of white people who think that the word "racism" cannot be properly applied to individuals who are not out-and-out racists. But I think there is a principled reason for doing so. One question concerns whether whites who have such intuitions are personally acquainted with any African Americans. Another relates to the extent to which they are familiar with the actual history of the N-word. Still another concerns the degree to which they understand the social advantages they enjoy in contemporary American society in virtue of being white. If, as seems likely, their equation of "racism" and the N-word is a product of ignorance and parochialism that comes from having lived their life in segregated white communities, that is a reason for regarding their intuitions as suspect. It is quite possible that were whites who currently associate the word "racism" with the N-word to gain, say, an African American relative, come to know some African Americans personally, or simply read more widely, they would acquire a sense of what it is like to be the target of real racism. Their understanding of *what racism is* would no doubt change, and they might come to regard their own original intuitions about the word as defective.

A point that is often lost sight of in these discussions is that accusations of racism can be (and in some cases are and ought to be) decisively rebutted. Contrary to what some think, it is not a charge to which there is no answer. Furthermore, questions about how the word "racism" is to be understood can be made part of the conversation. If it is unclear why a thing said or done is supposed to be racist, one can simply ask, *why* do you think that what I said (or did) was racist? To be sure, raising this question requires openness to the possibility of having said or done something that was in fact racist. But this is a possibility to which one ought to be open. We cannot know in advance that we are altogether free of racism.[49]

There is, in any case, a *step* from saying that something someone has *said* or *done* is racist to saying that *the person herself* is a racist.[50] To say one is

not *eo ipso* to say the other. And there is a step from being a racist to being an out-and-out racist. Being a moral monster (e.g., a racial terrorist such as Dylann Roof) is something else again. Recognizing these steps as *steps* should make it easier to consider the possibility that something one said or did was in fact racist. "Racism" can be used as a character judgment, but it isn't always used as such.[51] Sometimes it is simply used to judge what has been said or done.

As for the question concerning who is a racist (which would take me to far afield to try to settle here), it is time that we recognize the practice of taking neo-Nazis and members of the KKK are *the* prototypes of "the racist" is woefully out of date. The problem isn't that such persons aren't racists; it's that they are not the only kind of racists there are. So long as we think *that* is what racists looks like, we remain blind to the possibility that there might be what could be called *ordinary* racists, that is, racists who are not moral monsters or out-and-out racists, racists who are ordinary people.[52]

It is sometimes suggested that broad use of the word "racism" threatens to destroy its descriptive purchase.[53] But as our discussion has made clear, the word "racism" remains suffused with meaning even when it is broadly used. One can deal with the many ways in the term "racism" is used is by noting *that* it is used in different ways and showing how the different ways in which it is used hang together. The history of the word "racism" is the history of its accrual of new meanings. There is every reason to expect that the word will continue to acquire new senses. Given the historically open-ended character of the word, it is unlikely that it will be ever be possible to specify the necessary and sufficient conditions of its application. But nowadays no one thinks that a word must have necessary and sufficient conditions to be genuinely meaningful. There is, in any case, no reason to think that recognizing the word's wider scope must result in counting trivial racial ills as "racist." If a racial ill is in fact trivial, that is a reason for not counting it as "racist."[54] One can consistently reject the narrow-the-scope proposal and affirm that the word "racist" should be reserved for serious racial ills.

If the line of argumentation advanced here is correct, then the direction in which the narrow-the-scope proposal pushes our understanding of racism is precisely the wrong one. What needs to be appreciated is a point that Tommie Shelby has forcefully made: the severity of condemnation "racism" conveys *varies*.[55]

The Pressing Need for a Generic Term

We urgently need to have a *general term* that applies not only to slavery, lynching, use of the N-word but also to serious racial ills that are not maximally serious. The maximally serious racial ills and the serious but less than maximally serious racial ills have something in common and it is essential to have a term that picks out that common factor. We urgently need a single word that refers to the *genus* of which slavery, genocide, lynching, explicit racial discrimination, unconscious racial antipathy, racial derogation, racial indifference, microaggressions, and implicit bias are distinct *species*. We need a term that captures the general phenomenon in its entirety. Fortunately, it is not necessary to invent such a word. We already have "racism." The crucial and decisive fact is that no other word in the English language performs this specific general function.[56] The expressive costs of losing that generality (which would be the result of the full implementation of the narrow-the-scope proposal) would be enormous.

Concessions

None of this is to suggest that the narrow-the-scope proposal is wholly without merit. We have already granted that the word "racism" should be reserved for serious racial ills, and we can readily admit that the term can be misapplied.[57] We can deplore its reflexive and indiscriminate deployment. We can warn against overhasty uses of the word. We can agree that the term should be used with circumspection and indeed reluctance. We can also recognize that *if* it is possible to adequately criticize a particular racial ill using a weaker term of criticism, the milder term should generally be deployed. We can also grant that, owing to white fragility, circumstances will no doubt arise in which the sensitivities of the (white) person addressed are such that the only possible way of genuinely communicating with them is by refraining from using the word "racism" (even though its deployment would be apt). In such cases, euphemisms are to be preferred. But it is one thing to forgo using the word "racism" in a particular context for tactical reasons when dealing with fragile people and another to narrow the scope of a word across the board as a matter of principle. It is important for *us* to recognize that, in cases in which euphemisms are called for, the terms we are employing are precisely *euphemisms* (polite words for things that

cannot be directly named in a polite or nonthreatening way). Such cases should, in any case, be treated as exceptions. The error of the narrow-the-scope proposal is to suggest that these exceptions should be made the rule. Also, it may not always be a bad thing that whites feel stress in connection with the use of the word "racism." Felt discomfort may be part and parcel of consciousness-raising.[58]

There is no reason why opponents of the narrow-the-scope proposal cannot endorse the project of finding more variegated and nuanced terms to designate fine-grained categories of morally objectionable practices and attitudes concerning race. We, too, can recognize the value of a more nuanced moral vocabulary that will enable capturing the distinctive character of different sorts of racial wrongs with precision. We, too, can grant that words such as "racial stigmatization," "racially unjust conduct," and "racial insensitivity" are invaluable additions to our lexicon.[59] But make no mistake: these terms are valuable precisely because they make it possible to pick out more fine-grained species of *racism* as well as racial ills that fall short of racism (e.g., nonculpable racial ignorance). Nor do we have to choose between having a range of terms to designate more fine-grained categories and having a general term that subsumes them all. We can have both. We need both.

One additional, buttressing, reason why the proposal should be rejected is, quite frankly, that it assigns too much importance to the sensitivities of white people. It effectively gives more weight to those whose feelings are hurt by use of the word "racism" (i.e., whites) than it does to those (i.e., people of color) whose interests are harmed by the forms of racial wrongfulness that the broader use of the word "racism" picks out. I am not the first to suggest that the suffering of the racially oppressed is the suffering that deserves the most weight in determining the scope of "racism." The narrow-the-scope proposal focuses our attention on the suffering of the wrong people. It suggests that people of color should be the ones to bear the costs of creating conditions for productive dialogue. That's just unreasonable.

Throughout this essay, I have urged that, instead of narrowing the scope of "racism," we should call attention to the wide range of different ways in which the word can be properly used, alerting people to the variability of the degree of condemnation the word expresses. Making it clear that "racism" can be used to criticize serious but not maximally bad racial ills could go some distance toward correcting the misunderstandings that

can impede interracial communication. It's one thing to be criticized for an egregious racial wrong and another to be criticized for a serious but not maximally bad racial wrong. Emphasizing the step between saying that what someone said or did is racist and saying that the person herself is a racist can help, too. The opponents of the narrow-the-scope proposal share the defenders' end of facilitating urgently needed discussions of matters racial. The disagreement is over how this end is best accomplished.

It is worth noting that the narrow-the-scope proposal is revisionary. As things now stand, the word "racism" is generally used in a broad way. Opponents of the proposal recommend leaving the existing broad use in place. They commend education—explaining that racism comes in different degrees, all forms being bad but some forms being less bad than others—as the solution to the problems of miscommunication that the narrow-the-scope proposal is meant to address.

White Fragility, Revisited

The idea of white privilege is the idea of social advantages that whites enjoy and people of color do not.[60] When the narrow-the-scope proposal is placed in a broader social and political context, it becomes clear that it exemplifies the way in which white privilege maintains and reproduces itself generally: whites find the broad use of the word "racism" distressing, so, for the sake of creating the conditions for productive dialogue, we are asked to restrict the term's scope. The narrow-the-scope proposal thus functions to protect people—whites—who are already protected by their racial positionality. It expands white privilege by exempting whites from the stress that results from the discomfort they might feel as a result of recognizing that they might not be altogether free of racism. Objectionable in its own right, this expansion of white privilege has the further unwelcome consequence of insulating less-than-maximally bad racial ills from the very specific moral criticism that the word "racism" is uniquely suited to convey. In this way, the proposal would function to stabilize and legitimize racial oppression. This makes the proposal *ideological* by definition.[61] The fact that the proposal functions to stabilize and legitimize racial oppression constitutes a fundamental *political* reason for rejecting it.

Not Ad Hominem

Let me be clear. I am not challenging the bona fides of the defenders of the narrow-the-scope proposal. About the genuineness of their good will and the sincerity of their anti-racism, I have no doubt. Nor do I for a minute think they intend (consciously or unconsciously) to support white privilege or racism in any form. They are emphatically *opposed* to racial oppression.

They recognize that less than maximally bad racial ills are racial ills and the proper objects of criticism. What they are trying to do is to enable constructive discussions about race, and that is, to repeat, a worthy goal. The tricky thing about ideology, though, is that it operates *behind people's backs*. If I am right, defenders of the narrow-the-scope proposal exemplify what critical theorists call "false consciousness." My point in calling the narrow-the-scope proposal "ideological" is not to blame its defenders but rather to emancipate us from the way in which it occludes our vision.

Conclusion

If the word "racism" is restricted to practices such as slavery, genocide, and lynching, most of us are off the hook. The notion that the word should be allowed to range over items such as unconscious racial antipathy, derogation, and indifference, microaggressions, and implicit bias goes with the idea that few of us *are* altogether off the hook. Some may find this thought stressful. But stress may be an unavoidable concomitant of authentically facing racism.

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NOTES

1. What I am calling the narrow-the-scope proposal represents a *tendency* in discussions of racism. It is a view that is "in the air." One can find intimations of it in the writing of Lawrence Blum and Elizabeth Anderson, although I do not want to suggest that either of them is committed to the proposal in all of its details. Nor do I wish to suggest that either of them thinks of themselves as "accommodating white sensitivities." Their central concern is creating the conditions for productive dialogue. See Blum's *"I'm Not a Racist, but . . . ": The Moral Quandary of Race* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2002); and Anderson's *The Imperative of Integration* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010). The position Blum takes in "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) is somewhat different, closer to the position taken in the present essay. Tommie Shelby criticizes Blum's narrow-the-scope proposal in "Lawrence Blum, *'I'm Not a Racist, but . . . ': The Moral Quandary of Race," The Philosophical Review* 112 (1): 124–26, and he argues explicitly for a broader construal of 'racism' in "Racism, Moralism, and Social Criticism," *Du Bois Review* 11 (1) (2014): 57–74.

    Intimations of the narrow-the-scope proposal can also be found in Richard Thompson Ford's *The Race Card: How Bluffing about Bias Makes Race Relations Worse* (New York: Oxford, 2008). One finds a very recent example of the proposal in the *New York Times* opinion piece "Liberals, You Are Not as Smart as You Think" (May 12, 2018) in which the author Gerard Alexander contends that "racist is pretty much the most damning label that can be slapped on anyone in America today, which means that it should be applied firmly and carefully." He goes on to add "Yet some people have cavalierly leveled the charge against, huge number of Americans — specifically, the more than 60 million people who voted for Mr. Trump." The fact that the issue of the proper scope of "racism" has arisen in connection with the forty-fifth president of the United States makes clear that that the topic of the paper remains relevant.

2. For defense of a *monistic* approach to 'racism', see Joshua Glasgow's "Racism as Disrespect," *Ethics* 120 (October 2009): 71, 72, 80, 81.

3. Below I will provide an argument for why we should regard our list of forms of racism as open-ended.

4. Blum says, "An agreed-upon meaning that avoids conceptual inflation and moral overload would facilitate interracial communication, and it should *diminish an inhibiting fear of the dread charge of 'racism'* while also encouraging a more morally nuanced vocabulary for discussing race-related phenomena" (*"I'm Not a Racist but . . . ,"* 8, my emphasis). Anderson writes: "[R]acism is a highly charged term, both morally and emotionally, which *provokes unproductive, defensive reactions and shuts down urgently needed discussion*" (48, my emphasis).

5. I take the expression "who believe that they are white" from Ta-Nehisi Coates, *Between the World and Me* (New York: Spiegel and Grau, 2015). The expression "racialized group" belongs to Blum (*"I'm Not a Racist, but . . . "*). The term "socialrace" comes from Michael O. Hardimon, *Rethinking Race: The Case for*

Deflationary Realism (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2017). Everything said about "race" in this essay can be reformulated in terms of "racialized" groups or socialraces and consequently should be acceptable to social constructionists.

6. Blum, *"I'm Not a Racist, but,"* 8, 3.1

7. Robin DiAngelo, "White Fragility," *International Journal of Critical Pedagogy* 3 (3) (2011): 54–70. I assume that in listing "argumentation" among these defensive reactions, DiAngelo is not suggesting that providing reasons for claims, that is, reasoned argument, is symptomatic of white fragility. What she presumably means instead is that belligerent or defensive argumentation, getting angry, or becoming offended is symptomatic of this disposition. But genuine philosophical argumentation can express white fragility, too. It is worth noting that *naming* white fragility often has the ironic but predictable effect of *evoking* the phenomenon it names.

8. A most glaring recent example of white fragility is the outrage readers expressed in response to George Yancy's December 24, 2015, *New York Times* essay "Dear White America," in which he asked whites to consider the possibility that they might be racist (http://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2015/12/24/dear-white-america/). The naked racism (e.g., outright racial hostility and use of the N-word) of many of those responses also bears witness to the fact that outright, explicit racism has by no means disappeared. Yancy discusses the response to his 2015 *New York Times* essay in *Backlash: What Happens When We Talk Honestly about Racism in America* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2018).

9. The analytical literature on matters related to white fragility includes Linda Martín Alcoff, The *Future of Whiteness* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2015); Charles Mills, Th*e Racial Contract* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1997); *White Rights, Black Wrongs* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017); Shannon Sullivan, *Revealing Whiteness* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006); *Good White People* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2014), and George Yancy, *Black Bodies, White Gazes* (London: Rowman and Littlefield, 2008).

10. Anderson, *The Imperative of Integration*, 47 and 48. Blum does not require that racial antipathy and inferiorization be conscious to be counted "racist." He does not emphasize the idea that racism may be unconscious but allows for the possibility.

11. Joshua Glasgow, "Racism as Disrespect," 66. Glasgow attributes this example to John Arthur: *Race, Equality, and the Burdens of History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 17.

12. Anderson writes, "To be a racist, in this view requires that one's racial representations possess at least three features: stigmatizing content (perhaps of an extreme sort), consciousness, and endorsement" (47, 48). Note that she does not represent the view she is characterizing as her own.

13. There is a debate over the breadth of agreement concerning the wrongfulness of racism (Does everyone agree that racism is wrong?) between Lawrence Blum and Tommie Shelby. This debate can be illuminated by distinguishing between the narrow and broad construal of the term 'racist'. Blum thinks there is broad agreement on the wrongness of racism. Shelby doubts that this is so (Blum, *"I'm Not a*

Racist, but," 1; Shelby, "Racism," 59, 60). What Blum means is that there is wide agreement about the wrongness of racism in the narrow sense—that is, what I will call out-and-out racism. What Shelby means is that there isn't wide agreement about the wrongness of racism in the broad sense—for example, what I will call indifference racism. There is, I think, wide, though by no means universal, agreement that "racism" *narrowly construed* is wrong. Pretty much everyone outside of members of the KKK and neo-Nazis would accept that. And most of those who do not think that racism so construed is wrong are nonetheless inclined to give lip-service to its wrongness—something that should be regarded as a (relatively) good thing, as progress. There is, however, far less agreement that racism *more widely construed* is wrong.

14. This is a point on which both Blum and Anderson rightly insist (private communication).

15. Jorge Garcia has long urged that racial indifference is a form of racism. I take this idea from him. J. L. A. Garcia, "The Heart of Racism," *Journal of Social Philosophy* 27 (1) (1996): 5–45; "Current Conceptions of Racism: A Critical Examination of Some Recent Social Philosophy," *Journal of Social Philosophy* 28, no 2 (1997): 5–24; "Racism as a model for Understanding Sexism," in *Race/Sex: Their Sameness, Difference and Interplay*, ed. Naomi Zack (New York: Routledge, 1997); "Philosophical Analysis and the Moral Concept of Racism," *Philosophy and Social Criticism* 25 (1999): 1–32. Blum refrains from counting racial indifference as a form of "racism." Anderson says that "conscious, race-based, practical indifference should also qualify [as racist]" but denies that unconscious racial indifference should be counted as "racism" (48). In a later section, I will suggest that unconscious racial indifference counts as "racist."

16. On the value of recognition, see G. W. F. Hegel, *Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A.V. Miller (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977). See also Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Discourse on the Origins of Inequality*, trans. Donald A, Cress (Indianapolis, IA: Hackett, 1992); and Frederick Neuhouse, *Rousseau's Theodicy of Self-Love: Evil, Rationality, and the Drive for Recognition* (New York: Oxford, 2008).

17. Think here of the African American commonplace that (subtle) Northern racism is more difficult to cope with than (overt) Southern racism.

18. I thank Tommie Shelby for insisting that I clarify this point.

19. I don't mean to suggest that Blum and Anderson are indifferent to the evil of racist symbols, epithets, and so on. Indeed, Blum has a long discussion of the Confederate battle flag and epithets, arguing that use of these symbols is racist, regardless of intent. My point is rather that they do not recognize indifference to the racism of such symbols as racist.

20. Gerald Alexander holds that the notion that "huge numbers of Americans" ("specifically, the more than 60 million people who voted for Mr. Trump") are racist is outrageous and bespeaks a "cavalier" use of the word. But no one has suggested that everyone who voted for Trump is an *out-and-out* racist. The idea that those who voted for him are *indifferent to racism*, on the other hand, is difficult to avoid. They

may not have voted for Trump *because* of his racism but if they didn't, they did so *in spite of* it. The notion that the application of the term "racism" to racial indifference is *cavalier* bespeaks a failure to appreciate the very real harm that racial indifference actually does.

21. Michelle Alexander, *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness* (New York: The New Press, 2012),14, 187, 203, 204, 223, 233, 241–42. Note that if indifference racism is a precondition of institutional racism, then it is not possible to have (institutional) racism without indifference racists. It is, however, conceptually possible to have ongoing institutional racism in the absence of out-and-out racists.

22. Neither Blum or Anderson would deny that racial microaggressions are morally objectionable. Their frameworks allow them to say that although microaggressions do not rise to the level of racism, they are morally objectionable in their own right, nonetheless. Blum himself is at pains to note that the fact that a racial ill does not count as "racist" does not entail that it is morally acceptable. This is one of the considerations that motivates his search for a more variegated moral vocabulary. The fact that Blum and Anderson can recognize the moral badness of microaggressions suggests that the outlooks of those advocating a narrower and those advocating a broader construal of "racism" are not so very far apart. But I think that the fact the narrow-the-scope proposal precludes classifying (what I would call) subtle forms of racism (such as microaggressions) as "racism" unduly restricts our critical resources. Much, though by no means all, of the racism that pervades our lives today is subtle. If a view precludes the clear articulation of this fact, that is a sufficient reason for rejecting it.

23. Derald Wing Sue et al., "Racial Microaggressions in Everyday Life," *American Psychologist* 62 (4): 271–86.

24. On the significance of the cumulative effects of microaggressions, see Shelby "Lawrence Blum, *"I'm Not a Racist, but . . . ,"* 125. On the harms of microaggressions, see Simba Runyowa "Microaggressions Matter," *The Atlantic*, September 2015.

25. I owe the contents of the parenthetical observation to Lucy Allais.

26. R. H. Fazio et al., "Variability in Automatic Activation as an Unobtrusive Measure of Racial Attitudes: A Bona Fide Pipeline?," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 69 (9) (1995): 1013–27; A. G. Greenwald and M. R. Banji, "Implicit Social Cognition: Attitudes, Self-Esteem, and Stereotypes," *Psychological Review* 102 (1) (1995): 4–27.

27. Greenwald and Banji, "Implicit Social Cognition," 4–27.

28. A. G. Greenwald and L. H. Krieger, "Implicit Bias: Scientific Foundations," *California Law Review* 94 (4) (2006): 945–67.

29. I. V. Blair, "The Malleability of Automatic Stereotypes and Prejudice," *Personality and Social Psychology Review* 6 (3) (2002): 242–61.

30. R. Keith Payne, "Weapon Bias: Split-Second Decisions and Unintended Stereotyping," *Current Directions in Psychological Science* 15 (6) (2006): 287–91.

31. J. J. Rachlinski et al., "Does Unconscious Racial Bias Affect Trial Judges?," *Notre Dame Law Review* 84 (3) (2009): 1195–1246.

32. N. Dasgupta, "Implicit Ingroup Favoritism, Outgroup Favoritism, and Their Behavioral Manifestations," *Social Justice Research* 17 (2) (2004): 143–68.

33. M. Bertrand. and S. Mullainathan, "Are Emily and Greg More Employable Than Lakisha and Jamal?: A Field Experiment on Labor Market and Discrimination," *The American Economic Review* 94 (4) (2004): 991–1013.

34. Speaking of implicit bias, Richard Thomson Ford writes, "If almost everyone is racist, then in a sense nobody is. If 'racist' comes to describe an almost universally held, unintentional associative bias that may have no tangible effect, it loses its appropriate connotation of moral censure" (*The Race Card*, 191). We can say that implicit bias represents a *form of racism* without saying that everyone who exhibits it is a *racist*. There is a significant step between *having a racist trait* and *being a racist*. To say that a person exhibits implicit bias is to say that they have a racist trait. It is not yet to say that *they* are racist. Furthermore, recognizing that racism comes in varying forms allows us to recognize that there may indeed be forms of racism that almost everybody exhibits, without losing sight of other more widely recognized forms of racism (e.g., outright racial hostility and derogation) exhibited by the few. As for the connotation of moral censure appropriate to "racism," what needs to be recognized is that this "connotation" varies in accordance with the degree of seriousness of the form of racism in question. It is worth noting that racism is not like excellence; there is nothing in the concept that requires that racists be few in number. How many racists there are is an empirical question.

35. I take the idea of stigmatizing racial representation from Elizabeth Anderson, who, however, refrains from characterizing them as racist.

36. Anderson, *The Imperative of Integration*, 52.

37. Ibid., 55.

38. Sigmund Freud, "On the Grounds for Detaching a Particular Syndrome from Neurasthenia Under the Description 'Anxiety Neurosis'" (1894), *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, ed. James Strachey (London: Hogarth Press and Institute for Psycho-Analysis, 1962), vol. 3, *Early Psycho-Analytic Publications* (1893–1899), 87–117; vol. 4, *The Interpretation of Dreams* (First Part), xi–338; vol. 5, *The Interpretation of Dreams (Second Part) and On Dreams*, 339–628; also, "Formulation on the Two Principles of Mental Functioning," vol. 12, 214–26. The idea of unconscious racism does not, of course, go back to Freud.

39. It has been helpfully suggested that what is really novel about the implicit bias research is not the recognition of unconsciousness as such but rather the "ability to *measure* [hidden prejudices] scientifically." Michael Brownstein and Jennifer Saul, "Introduction," *Implicit Bias and Philosophy*, vol. 1, *Metaphysics and Epistemology*, ed. Michael Brownstein and Jennifer Saul (New York: Oxford, 2016), 3. My emphasis.

40. Edouard Machery distinguishes implicit attitudes from Freudian unconsciousness and denies the existence of ambivalence. "De-Freuding Implicit Attitudes," *Implicit Bias and Philosophy*, vol 1, *Metaphysics and Epistemology*, ed. Michael Brownstein and Jennifer Saul (New York: Oxford, 2016).

41. Blum, *"I'm Not a Racist, but . . . ,"* 20, 31. Anderson, *The Imperative of Integration*, 47,48.

42. See also Robert Miles, *Racism*. (London: Routledge, 1989), 1.

43. Michael Allison Chandler, "Some Churches Are Forming Racist Anonymous Groups for Those Brave Enough to Join," *Washington Post*, August 31, 2016, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/acts-of-faith/wp/2016/08/31/some-churches-are-forming-racists-anonymous-groups-for-those-brave-enough-to-join/?noredirect=on.

44. Anderson, *The Imperative of Integration*, 48. See also Blum, *"I'm Not a Racist, but. . . . ,"* viii.

45. This clarification is a response to an objection made by an anonymous reader.

46. I owe this suggestion to Elizabeth Anderson.

47. I owe this point to Mary Devereaux.

48. Merriam-Webster dictionary definition of "nigger," https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/nigger.

49. Rather than sticking with the familiar *racist/not racist* binary, we need to recognize a *spectrum* of moral statuses ranging from *utterly free of racism* to *thoroughly and completely racist* and including such intermediate positions as *not altogether free of racism.*

50. Blum calls attention to the step between saying that something one did or said was racist and saying that the person is a racist on page 15 of *"I'm not a Racist, but. . . . "* The failure to register this step is well illustrated by episode 5 of season 1 of the television show *Dear White People* in which a white character, Addison, utters the N-word in the course of singing along with a rap song at a college party. His African American friend, Reggie, standing next to him, tells him, in a not unkind way, not to use that word. Addison says, incredulously, "Wait. So it's bad if I'm just repeating what's in the song?" To which another African American student says, "Dude, seriously?" Addison replies, "I know. I'm sorry," pauses and then says " . . . But it's not like I'm a racist!" To which the reply is "*Never* said you were a racist." And indeed no one *had* said that he was a racist. No one had even said that what he *said* was racist. But Addison moved immediately from having being told that he should not use a particular word (the N-word!) to the thought that he was being accused of being a racist. Even after being explicitly corrected on this point, he went on to say, "I just don't like being called a racist." This is classic white fragility.

51. Anderson, *The Imperative of Integration*, 47.

52. Note that we can hold that there are racists (out-and-out and ordinary) in our social world without contending that they are the primary cause of continuing racial inequality. Unconscious racial antipathy, derogation, and indifference arguably play a bigger role in the maintenance of racial inequities than the conscious activity of present day racists. A full account of continuing racial inequality would have to advert to the notion of *structural racism*, a topic that falls outside the scope of this essay. But, as Sally Haslanger reminds us, it is a mistake to think that wherever

there is racial oppression, there must be some individual racist who is to blame. Individuals who are racists *are* deserving of blame, but our fundamental moral relation to ra*cism* should not consist in blaming people. Often there will be nobody (no single, living person) who *is* to blame. "Oppressions: Racial and Other," in *Resisting Reality* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 311–38.

One advantage of repudiating the narrow-the-scope proposal is that it makes it possible to better understand the idea of *racism* as a primary cause of continuing racial inequality. So long as one thinks that racism is confined to conscious racial antipathy and derogation, the idea that racism is a primary cause of continuing racial inequality will seem outlandish. It is important to recognize, then, that the people who insist that racism is a primary cause of continuing racial inequality are thinking of "racism" in the broad sense of the term.

53. Blum *"I'm Not a Racist, but . . . ,"* viii,1, 2.

54. Racial ills that fall below the threshold of racism might be thought of as "subracist."

55. Tommie Shelby, "Racism, Moralism, and Social Criticism," Lawrence Blum, *"I'm Not a Racist, but. . ." : The Moral Quandary of Race*. Blum explicitly recognizes that racism comes in different degrees: he notes that just as there are different degrees of dishonesty, there are different degrees of racism. What is less clear is that he registers that the *condemnation* attaching to the word 'racism' also comes in different degrees (Blum, *"I'm Not a Racist, but . . . ,"* 27, 28).

56. I thus reject Shelby's view that, "from a strictly analytical and moral point of view," the wide-scope conception of racism and the narrow scope approach to the same "are functionally equivalent" (61). Having the word "racism" at one's disposal for the critique of serious racial ills that are not the most egregious makes it possible to be critical of such ills in a way that one otherwise cannot. The word "racism" has a critical force that is genuinely unique. This uniqueness does not lie in the extreme severity of the condemnation the word expresses (since the severity of the condemnation it expresses varies) but rather its being a generic term that encompasses all forms of racial ills.

57. See Frank Bruni, "These Campus Inquisitions Must Stop," *New York Times*, June 3, 2017.

58. I owe this point to Mary Devereaux.

59. Anderson introduces the terms "racial stigmatization" (48) and "racially unjust conduct" (49). Blum introduces the term "racial insensitivity" (53). Although she does not understand it as such, Anderson's discussion of racial stigmatization represents an important contribution to the understanding of *systemic racism*. If one construes "racism" broadly, her book *The Imperative of Integration* can be read as providing strong support for the notion that racism is a fundamental cause of persisting racial inequality.

60. For an (anti-racist) critique of the notion of white privilege see Naomi Zack, *White Privilege and Black Rights: The Injustice of U.S. Police Racial Profiling and Homicide*. (Lanham, MD: Roman and Littlefield, 2015).

61. Raymond Geuss, *The Idea of a Critical Theory* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981).