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A New Theoretical Framework for Race Scholarship

There never has been a comprehensive and systematic theory of race. In more than a century of modern race scholarship, many impressive efforts in that direction have been undertaken, but all have contributed something other than a comprehensive and systematic theory. For instance, in a remarkable body of work spanning poetry, fiction, autobiography, topical commentaries, historical monographs, ethnography, and several collections of essays, W. E. B. Du Bois examined a vast range of issues having to do with race in America and, along the way, opened up multiple lines of theorization and empirical research still being developed today. Not even he, however, was analytically consistent and systematic—one strains to impose systematicity on so many disparate insights and arguments—and his perspective kept evolving over an immensely long and fruitful career, one extending over seven decades.[1] Other influential scholars—one thinks, for example, of mid-twentieth-century sociologist Oliver Cromwell Cox—theorized race in a more systematic fashion yet hardly were comprehensive; moreover, as a neo-Marxist, Cox paid little heed to the many dimensions of racial life itself, choosing to reduce it analytically to the level of class dynamics.[2] His contemporary, Gunnar Myrdal, compiled a massive study of virtually every important aspect of race in the United States, yet his work, more a compendium of findings by a team of social researchers than an endeavor in original race theorizing, fell well short of providing a rigorous analytic approach.[3] Frantz Fanon offered brilliant insights into the social psychology of race, but these insights largely were psychoanalytic in inspiration; like Cox, he sought to reduce racial phenomena to some other underlying principle. Several generations of Chicago School sociologists, extending well into midcentury and beyond, also had a great deal to say about racial topics. But while their work,

including Robert Park and Ernest Burgess's notion of a race relations cycle, was imbued with a pragmatist sensibility and with numerous insights from sociological theory, its strengths lay more at the level of middle-range theorizing.[4] More recently, Michael Omi and Howard Winant have attempted to engage in rigorous theory building in respect to race.[5] Yet, while producing useful concepts for understanding race, such as "racial projects" and "racial formation," their influential efforts have represented only a first step toward an encompassing theory of racial domination and racial progress.[6]

Race scholarship, meanwhile, has produced an impressive array of empirical investigations. In recent years, especially, some of the most empirically sound and policy-relevant findings in all of social science have belonged to the field of race studies. Much of this work has been highly rigorous. If there is methodological advancement in the social sciences, a new statistical method or in-depth interviewing technique, one can rest assured it soon will be employed in the service of racial inquiry. Nor has there been a problem of volume or mass—that is, of scholarly productivity. Empirical studies of race—ethnographic and historical, but especially statistical—have appeared in prodigious quantities. In both the core disciplines and the interstitial spaces of ethnic and cultural studies, inquiries have been undertaken from almost every conceivable point of view, bringing to light broad social and economic trends, cultural meanings, and political dynamics. Substantive issues including neighborhood effects, segmented assimilation, labor market discrimination, residential segregation, immigration, mass incarceration, racial movements, stereotyping, whiteness, hybridity, oppositional culture, and the intersections of race with gender and class all have been addressed.[7] In the grand style of landmark works such as *The Philadelphia Negro* (Du Bois) and *The Polish Peasant in Europe and America* (W. I. Thomas and Florian Znaniecki), which dominated the sociological scene at the dawn of the last century, or *Black Metropolis* (St. Clair Drake and Horace Cayton) and *An American Dilemma* (Gunnar Myrdal) at midcentury, some of the most influential major works of the last few decades also have dealt squarely with racial tensions and inequalities—such works as *American Apartheid* (Douglas Massey and Nancy Denton), *Still the Promised City?* (Roger Waldinger), and the famous trilogy by William Julius Wilson: *The Declining Significance of Race, The Truly Disadvantaged,* and *When Work Disappears.*[8] Add to these a small library of other monographs and articles—more are generated with each passing year—and the conclusion is unmistakable: the sociology of race is flourishing.

Putting together race scholarship's theoretical thinness and its empirical richness, we arrive at the problem that drives the present work: from the very start, and in recent decades more than ever, there has been a grossly uneven development of theory and research in race studies and an ensuing (and predictable) decoupling of one from the other. The ceaseless production of empirical work has not proceeded apace with the building of comprehensive and systematic theories. Despite the outpouring of empirical research, there have been no comparable advances at the level of theoretical insight. Indeed, the currently most influential wide-ranging theoretical statement on race—Omi and Winant's *Racial Formation in the United States*—appeared more than a quarter century ago. Among the many explanations for this disparity between empirical efflorescence and theoretical atrophy, especially in recent years, one is especially telling. The shift from openly violent to more hidden forms of racism has given rise to congratulatory shouts (most, but not all, emanating from the public sphere) that race no longer is a defining feature of American society. This, in turn, has resulted in a surge of voices from the social sciences arguing otherwise. Accordingly, race studies have moved from analyses of how race works (as in *Black Metropolis*) to demonstrations that racial inequality or discrimination continue to exist (as in studies that "test" for discrimination and conclude more or less as follows: "This study has shown that race matters in *fill in the blank: politics, voting patterns, housing discrimination, etc.*").[9] Much of our best work no longer tells us how to understand or reconstruct racial dynamics but simply gives us concrete proof of their continuing significance. A few sociologists do take as their interlocutors not those in the public sphere who speak of an era "beyond race" but other critical-minded scholars of race.[10] Yet those sociologists seeking to point out the lacunae in current research trends fail to develop superior ways of conceptualizing race and the racial order. Their contribution is less the generation of new theories than it is the criticism of existing scholarship. Social thinkers—and the public—are left with no clear alternative language in which theoretically to articulate and systematically to address racial concerns.

The yawning gap between theoretical inquiry and empirical research is so pervasive that it has come to be viewed by analysts of all persuasions as natural and unproblematic. The "theorist" and the "empiricist" (artificial labels to which social thinkers have resigned themselves without much protest) can labor in relative isolation from one another, as if belonging to different disciplines entirely, and when forced to confront each other's work, as during a tenure review or some keynote address, often can experience confusion or frustration (and sometimes awe) but rarely familiarity or fraternity. Such an arrangement, one that would scandalize most natural scientists, literary critics, or mathematicians, now is widely accepted in race studies simply as the order of things. But this theory/research gap—a "social division of scientific

labor," as Pierre Bourdieu would have it, "which splits, reifies, and compartmentalizes moments of the process of construction of the sociological object into separate specialties"[11]—is not innocent of consequences. It leads, for one, to fractionalization, which impedes the circulation of ideas and promotes the shrinking of research questions. It leads, for another, to misleading assumptions about the nature of social reality, perhaps the most insidious of these being substantialism, a way of thinking that snaps apart the totality of interconnected race relations and treats racial groups, in Eric Wolf's words, as "internally homogeneous and externally distinctive and bounded objects," like so many different plant varieties.[12] Assumptions of this sort seep quietly into the academic unconscious of empirical race scholarship until they function like a kind of implicit theory. As Talcott Parsons recognized, every mode of thought, even that presenting itself as raw positivism, necessarily relies on some kind of theory. "All empirically verifiable knowledge," he wrote, "even the commonsense knowledge of everyday life—involves implicitly, if not explicitly, systematic theory. . . . The fact [that] a person denies that he is theorizing is no reason for taking him at his word and [for] failing to investigate what implicit theory is involved in his statements." Parsons drove the point home by quoting Alfred Marshall: "The most reckless and treacherous of all theorists is he who professes to let facts and figures speak for themselves."[13]

Perhaps the most unfortunate consequence of the decoupling of theory from empirical research, however, has been a gradual loss of scholarly energy and dynamism in race scholarship. To use the words of Clifford Geertz, race studies today finds itself in a state of "general stagnation," pursuing "minor variations on classical theoretical themes" (e.g., inequality, discrimination, institutional racism) and small modifications to well-known hypotheses (e.g., segmented assimilation, spatial mismatch), each study another brick added to a long road trailing off into the darkness, leading, we hope, to some unknown destination.[14] We find ourselves pursuing relatively similar questions, even if in different spheres of life (e.g., the political, economic, aesthetic, intimate), and generating important facts but rarely big new ideas. To a large degree, race scholarship has become the stuff of normal science. "Empirical inference," John Dewey wrote in *How We Think*, "follows the grooves and ruts that custom wears, and has no track to follow when the groove disappears. . . . Passivity, docility, acquiescence, come to be primal intellectual virtues. Facts and events presenting novelty and variety are slighted, or are sheared down till they fit into the Procrustean bed of habitual belief."[15] When social inquiry is at its best, we arrive face-to-face with the novel by sliding down the curve of a question mark. Yet the seemingly simple act of asking new questions, which is not the same thing as applying old questions to new

settings or problems, often does not appear to our mind's eye as a possibility, so busy are we with the everyday work of routine, conventional research. "Theory," to quote Parsons once more, "not only formulates what we know but also tells us what we want to know, that is, the questions to which an answer is needed."[16] But without a comprehensive and systematic theory of race, new questions remain in the shadows just beyond the peripheries of our collective vision. "There are problems," Bourdieu and his colleagues once wrote, "that sociologists fail to pose because the tradition of the discipline does not recognize them as worthy of being posed or does not offer the conceptual tools or the techniques that would make it possible to treat them in canonical fashion; and conversely, there are questions they feel bound to pose because they rank high in the consecrated hierarchy of research subjects."[17]

A race scholarship divorced from theory does not enable us to cope with the novel. And if it throws no light on the novel, then empirical race scholarship—however sound its methods, correct its findings, or relevant its implications—is in danger of becoming irrelevant, of speeding off in one direction while the whole world goes in another. For, undeniably, something new has emerged. Today we find ourselves in a remarkable historical moment, attempting to make sense of a nation tossed about violently by the push-pull of racial domination and racial progress, one beset by racial contradictions and paradoxes. Barack Obama was elected president in a country that imprisons more of its citizens than any other, the incarceration rate of poor black men soaring high above the national average. Astounding racial progress has been documented at the individual level (consider that, merely forty years ago, a near majority of Americans favored a ban on interracial marriage), while, at the social level, racial inequality remains entrenched (consider the degree to which our cities remain starkly segregated). One Native American nation flourishes while another sinks deeper into poverty. Latinos have moved closer to the center while anti-immigrant sentiment and a spirit of "opportunity hoarding," to use Charles Tilly's powerful term, stretches the length of the southern border.[18] And as more African Americans ascend the socioeconomic ladder, making significant inroads in business, politics, science, and art, millions more slip further into despair. Perhaps most perplexingly, politicians and citizens alike promote multiculturalism today and xenophobia tomorrow, cosmopolitanism in some respects and jingoism in others, tolerance for some people or practices and prejudice for others. Much overt racism still exists, while a new racism of today is more intangible, invisible, and insidious. This quieter, more subtle racism often is described as the emblematic form of racial domination in our age, yet there is nothing particularly quiet, subtle, or invisible about the staggering racial disparities

along the poverty line or within the criminal justice system. Racial dynamics continue to permeate all domains of contemporary life, from the intimate realm to that of large-scale institutional structures. And they bring with them new uncertainties in interpersonal life, workplace relations, and public policy.

The problems and uncertainties we face, however, are not merely those of the past few decades. While much has changed, much also remains the same, and the continuities in our racial life—in its structures and dynamics, not to mention its social psychology—are every bit as noteworthy as the disjunctures. Indeed, the very opposition between permanance and change in our racial life is misleading. Historical invariants we need also to understand, relative constancies, beneath the visible transformations that have occurred (not all for the better). Orlando Patterson has termed this "the puzzle of persistence."[19] How has racial division endured for so long? And how has this cultural arbitrary come to appear so natural and eternal? To paraphrase Bourdieu, "One should not try to deny the permanences and the invariants, which are indisputably part of historical reality; but, rather, one must *reconstruct the history of the historical labor of dehistoricization*, or, to put it another way, the history of the continuous (re)creation of the objective and subjective structures of [racial] domination, which has gone on permanently so long as there have been [races], and through which the [racial] order has been continuously reproduced from age to age. . . . Posing the question in those terms [can] mark an advance in the order of knowledge which can be the basis of a decisive advance in the order of action."[20] Thus far at least, race scholars have yet to elaborate a system of concepts or a research agenda fully adequate to such an ambitious endeavor. More than a generation after the Civil Rights Movement, we continue to lack a clear and unitary conceptual language for discussing race. Whether as citizens in the public sphere, politicians inside the Beltway, or scholars in the ivory tower, we find ourselves unable to gain analytic leverage on the deeper meanings and significance of the commingling of racial domination and racial progress. Now more than ever, we need a conceptual framework in which to think and talk about such issues and developments.[21] As Winant has written, "We are in a quandary, we sociologists of race. . . . No new sociological paradigm of race has appeared in quite some time, as the field struggles—and the nation . . . struggles—with the ongoing racial crisis of the post–civil rights . . . era. The old has died, but the new cannot be born."[22]

To the extent that race scholars do take up theoretical questions, recent contributions have been concerned less with the overall workings of the racial order than with adding to what might be termed "empirical theory," the accumulation of "explanatory statements at a high level of generality."[23] Such

relatively circumscribed—or, in academic jargon, middle-range—theories reflect the triumph of specialization and fragmentation in today's academy, a trend that, while certainly fruitful in some respects (we would not have been able to write the present work without it, and we seek to push forward from it and not to repudiate it), is not conducive to the elaboration of broad theoretical perspectives. These studies might be understandable as a reaction to the grand theorizing of a Talcott Parsons. But as philosophers Pierre Duhem and W. V. O. Quine noted long ago, in what now is known as the Quine-Duhem thesis, it is systems of concepts that face the empirical test in science, not particular, isolated propositions or sets of hypotheses.[24] Scientific progress is much like "a symbolic painting in which continual retouching gives greater comprehensiveness and unity[,] . . . whereas each detail of this picture, cut off and isolated from the whole, loses all meaning and no longer represents anything."[25] A more fundamental approach to understanding the racial order is needed. We shall have more to say about analytically focused, middle-range analyses—and their relation to our own efforts—later in this chapter.

We do not mean to leave the wrong impression. At the risk of reifying an artificial division to shore up the point, we stress that the problem primarily does not belong to the empiricists but to the theorists. For decades now, the empiricists have done their job expertly and proficiently, and we rely heavily on their work in this volume. It is the theorists who are responsible for the lopsided development of race scholarship and the consequences of this imbalance. It is we who have lagged behind in race studies, even as exciting and fruitful theoretical advances have taken place in other areas of the social sciences, including the blossoming of relational sociology, the pragmatist revival, the cultural turn, and the international dissemination of Bourdieu's work, to name but a few recent developments of major importance. We do not seek here to dismiss or to criticize empirical sociology. Nor do we wish to preside over a remarriage of theory and research so much as to "cause them to interpenetrate each other entirely," as Dewey would have it. What is needed is not less empirical work but more theoretical labor, more theoretically driven empiricism and empirically grounded theory, "a conjoint process of analysis and synthesis," the former bringing "the added factor of certainty or proof," the latter "accounting for the ability to cope with the novel and variable."[26] Like an architect working with the most up-to-date tools but no blueprint, the typical race scholar today employs technically cutting-edge methodological devices but far less advanced theoretical ones. The new systematic and comprehensive theory of race of which we speak must be informed by and in turn designed to inform empirical scholarship; it must be a blueprint, a map, that weaves together theoretical advances with empirical work and

that unifies the increasingly splintered field of race studies, exposing and correcting the often-unspoken mistaken assumptions of current modes of thought, posing new questions and opening up new lines of research, and preparing us to comprehend novelty and permanence alike in racial life. It also must break at turns with intellectual customs that have come to define contemporary race scholarship. For, as Geertz also noted, it is only by abandoning "that sweet sense of accomplishment which comes from parading habitual skills and address[ing] ourselves to problems sufficiently unclarified as to make discovery possible" that we can hope to gain a deeper understanding of complex and intangible, frustrating yet familiar, fluid yet fixed objects of study—objects such as the American racial order.[27]

Theoretical Touchstones

One of the touchstones of *The Racial Order* is the truth of American pragmatism. By this, we mean the ideas of Dewey in particular, but also the works of other pragmatist thinkers such as Charles Sanders Peirce, William James, George Herbert Mead, Jane Addams, Alain Locke, and Du Bois himself.[28] The writings of these classical pragmatists deeply influenced early American sociology and, more recently, have been at the heart of what is being termed a pragmatist revival.[29] In the pragmatist way of thinking, social life entails engagement with obstacles to effective action. It requires the exercise of *intelligence*, or practice informed by knowledge and good judgment and carried out in an open-ended, experimentalist spirit. Addressing perplexing or unsettled situations, intelligent action effects their creative reconstruction and seeks out a richer and more inclusive experience. One deeply problematic situation today, of course, is that of the color line. The classical American pragmatists themselves did at best an uneven job of addressing its many challenges. Peirce, James, and Mead had little to contribute to the analysis of race as such. By virtue of her work in the settlement movement, Addams was confronted in a more practical way by racial challenges, but she hardly engaged with them intellectually in a sustained or systematic fashion. And Dewey devoted little attention to the issue in his voluminous writings and, whenever he did, conceptualized it in reductionist fashion as a "sign" or "symbol" of external political or economic forces, "bear[ing] much the same relation to the actual forces which cause [racial] friction that a national flag bears to the emotions and activities which it symbolizes, condensing them into visible and tangible form."[30] Only Locke and Du Bois faced the complexities of race directly and tried to grapple with them, although they also were the

social thinkers perhaps most distant from the mainstream of the pragmatist tradition.[31]

The pragmatist tradition did, however—and still does—provide important guidance for students of the racial order. It contributes insights, articulated most powerfully by Dewey, into the habitual and dispositional nature of action, the logic of problem solving, the link between experimentalism and creative democracy, and the ideal of growth. It seeks also to overcome the age-old divide between theory and practice and to return to the world of concrete experience. It champions, throughout, an eminently relational way of thinking, one that regards engagements between subject and object, mind and world, as transactions rather than static oppositions. And it leads us to reconsider prevailing modes of racial analysis and to gain a newfound appreciation for the logic of racialized practices. Pragmatism's insights have made themselves felt throughout the twentieth-century history of social thought. Influential in the rich tradition of Chicago-style urban ethnography initiated by Thomas and Znaniecki and in the current of symbolic interactionism originating in the early work, some of it on race, of Herbert Blumer, they further were developed in midcentury by Du Bois, the pragmatist Marxist Sidney Hook, and the hard-hitting critical sociologist C. Wright Mills.[32] And they have been picked up yet again in the recent pragmatist revival in sociology and social thought more generally, in works by Hans Joas in Germany; Luc Boltanski and Laurent Thevenot in France; and Nancy Fraser and Cornel West in the United States.[33] We ourselves draw on that tradition in *The Racial Order*, in ways we outline in greater detail below.

However, a second great tradition of sociological inquiry also has inspired us, one whose founder, Émile Durkheim, himself was a contemporary of the classical American pragmatists. Later contributors to that tradition, including Marcel Mauss, Claude Lévi-Strauss, Mary Douglas, Victor Turner, and Jeffrey Alexander, not to mention Pierre Bourdieu, rank among the most creative and seminal figures in twentieth-century social thought.[34] The Durkheimian tradition provides illuminating ways to think about issues central to the racial order. Indeed, as Karen Fields has pointed out, some of its key ideas probably emerged in the very crucible of racial conflict, Durkheim likely having witnessed anti-Semitic rallies at a young age in his native Alsace, unsettling events that may have inspired his notion of totemic identification (and blood as a carrier of totemic essence) and, of course, his idea of collective effervescence.[35] These two crucial contributions, in fact—theories of symbolic (racial) classification and of the sacralization of (racialized) practices; or, more briefly, of cultural structures and ritual process—form the basis of

much of our analyses of the symbolic dimensions of race. They open the door to a comparative and historical sociology of symbolic, including racial, boundary making and the attendant processes of racial inclusion and exclusion, as well as to an investigation of how racial differences are naturalized.[36] (Durkheim makes a powerful argument for the relative autonomy of the symbolic order vis-à-vis social relations. On this score as well, we closely follow his thinking.[37]) More relevant still to our purposes, Durkheim allows us to think of race itself as a collective representation: race is real because it is *socially* real, not because it is biological. Indeed, race is *historically* real, in the sense of being a cultural structure historically sedimented in both our social institutions and our personal dispositions.

Such insights set Durkheimian sociology well apart from spontaneous, commonsense ways of thinking about history, society, and the individual. Indeed, Durkheim explicitly called on sociologists to effect a critical break with the "prenotions" that distort our thinking as scholars and as citizens.[38] Nowhere is this more important than in the study of race, where prenotions decisively shape our relations to the object of study—and in ways we often hardly realize. In works such as *Suicide* and *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, Durkheim distanced himself from unexamined, commonplace definitions and used the process of carving out his alternative definition as a model for how methodically and scientifically to construct an object.[39] In approaching our own object, that of race, we follow a similar path. In the *Elementary Forms*, Durkheim also showed how to develop a comprehensive theorization of a complex phenomenon, breaking it down into its "elementary," constitutive features. Our own approach, to be sure, differs in some respects from his. For one thing, it does not see race as an "eternal" structure, as Durkheim deemed religion; nor does it seek to locate its origins in an archaic or premodern civilization. Rather, it stresses the temporal and spatial specificities of race, even as it regards race as a social formation that has been *rendered* unhistorical. For another thing, it does not direct equal attention to racial formations in all points in time and space; as our opening remarks indicate, our keenest interest is in the American racial order. However, our approach does at least aim to generate the lineaments of a broad and encompassing framework for racial inquiry. It seeks to provide in a single work concepts and modes of thinking needed for an illuminating sociology of race. Durkheim's *Elementary Forms* constitutes for us a crucial reference point as we pursue that ambitious goal.

Neither of the above two traditions, however—those of Dewey and Durkheim—provides a fully satisfactory model for thinking about the racial order or about the dynamics and mechanisms of its reproduction. For a third

and final major touchstone to *The Racial Order*, we turn to yet another source, one that subsumes many of the key insights of both Deweyan and Durkheimian ways of thinking. We speak here of Bourdieu, inheritor to Durkheim of the grand tradition of French sociology and, at least in the deep structure of his thought, a figure also highly resonant with pragmatist ideas.[40] Bourdieu's sociology revolves around a small number of profound insights into the logic of practical action (recalling pragmatism) and the importance of symbolic classification struggles (recalling Durkheim). It adds to these insights a keen interest in "fields of practice," Bourdieu's term for the spaces or microcosms within which practical action and conflicts over symbolic systems unfold; it adds as well a concern with systems of dispositions, modes of perception, and patterns of thought and feeling—he calls them "habitus"—that generate the strategies through which actors engage in their field-specific struggles. From this sociological perspective comes a deep concern with questions of power and conflict. One might say it adds to our work a critical dimension similar to that which Max Weber's political sociology of domination added to Mills's pragmatism.[41] Like Dewey and Durkheim, Bourdieu had little to say in systematic terms about racial fields or habitus, an important absence in his work. Although in his early writings he theorized colonialism as (in part) a system of racial domination, he devoted most of his analytic attention to class rather than to race.[42] But in what follows, we seek, in Bourdieuian fashion (and while building on a growing body of analogous work in race studies), generatively to extend his method of analysis from the many fields of practice he did discuss to the study of the racial order.[43]

Perhaps the deepest of Bourdieu's contributions was his lifelong exploration of reflexivity. Repeatedly, he stressed, as had Durkheim before him, the importance of turning the instruments of social-scientific objectification back upon the subjects of objectification themselves—the scholars engaged in systematic inquiry—so as to free their work of presuppositions that otherwise might limit their scope and value. Here we generatively apply Bourdieu's insights, warnings, and injunctions regarding reflexivity to the field of race studies and, ultimately, to our own work. For help in that endeavor, we benefit from social science research that deploys some of the most advanced methods and instruments of its day, in a long and distinguished line stretching from Du Bois's pioneering inquiries at the turn of the last century to the aforementioned classics of more recent times.[44] We also learn from a wide range of contemporary currents in race, gender, and postcolonial theory.[45] Finally, we draw on essayists, social commentators, and literary figures who, in a different way, have sought to liberate the study of race from self-limiting and narrowing assumptions.[46] All these sources help us to pursue the regulative

ideal of a social science that advances through hard-won victories in reflexive and critical analysis. Only by such a path, we believe (with Bourdieu), can it approach the goal of generating telling and challenging insights into our social (and racial) world.

Contributions and Limitations

Having set forth the important touchstones of our overall theoretical argument, let us offer now a few added remarks to clarify the nature and limits of our contribution. In contrast to the previous section, where we described the positive aspirations of our project, here we concern ourselves with demarcating in negative terms what it *does not* aim to do. To begin with, drawing inspiration from the various sources mentioned above does not commit us to the view that all converge on the same theoretical position. We do not deny that the three tendencies we highlight—Deweyan pragmatism, the Durkheimian tradition, and Bourdieuian sociology—were constructed in very different ways in relation to Western philosophy, the Deweyan and Bourdieuian strains at variance with the dualistic current running from Descartes to Kant (and beyond) and Durkheimian sociology itself an extension of that current. Nor do we deny that, in many instances, these tendencies of thought stand in considerable tension with one another, if not outright opposition. By no means do these tendencies flow together seamlessly and without conflict or contradiction. Durkheim was a severe critic of pragmatist philosophy, Bourdieu drew as much on Marx and Weber as he did on Durkheim, and Dewey surely would have been at odds with Bourdieu's stress on determination and constraint, not to mention also his underdeveloped theory of democracy. Not surprisingly, moreover, symbolic interactionism, deeply influenced by pragmatism's action-theoretic orientation, sits uncomfortably with Bourdieu's strong emphasis on structural compulsion. Since Bourdieu's passing, French social theory has moved noticeably in the direction of pragmatism—and away from what the French call "critique," leading in turn to new attempts to reconcile the two. Boltanski, a former student of, and collaborator with, Bourdieu, first broke with the latter's "critical sociology" and, together with Thevenot, embraced pragmatist ideas in their masterwork, *On Justification.* More recently, he has sought (in terms still less than clearly formulated) to bring pragmatism and critique together.[47]

We do not fail to recognize, moreover, that within each tendency there are significant internal variations. Traditions of thought never are entirely unified. Within the pragmatist tradition, for instance, James's subjectivism and individualism do not sit well with Dewey's more objectivistic and collectivistic approach. Charles Horton Cooley's close linkage of collective and individual disorganization is at odds with Thomas and Znaniecki's explicit decoupling of the two. Du Bois's efforts at race theorization and research proceeded along quite separate lines from those of the early Chicago School, due in considerable part to the close biographical and intellectual connections between Park and Booker T. Washington, Du Bois's chief nemesis and target within the world of black politics.[48] Within the Durkheimian tradition, some have further developed the *Elementary Forms*'s ritual theory; others selectively have focused on its theory of symbolic classification. Alexander has modified the conceptualization of "profane" in that latter theory to include "evil" and "pollution" under its aegis. With time, there doubtless will emerge (more) fissures within the Bourdieuian tendency as well. As we discuss in greater detail below, our own undertaking is best conceived of, accordingly, as a creative drawing together of disparate and sometimes divergent, even internally divergent, currents. It also is important to note that our endeavor draws as well, sometimes extensively, on social-scientific traditions as different from one another as psychoanalysis, social network theory, ethnomethodology, and even structural functionalism. These also do not see eye to eye in every instance on substantive or theoretical issues.

We do not always, in every phase of our discussion, give equal weight to our three guiding thinkers and theoretical orientations. Our focus on Dewey, Durkheim, and Bourdieu is meant only as a simplication—for purposes of exposition—of a considerably more complex and multifaceted theoretical picture. At various points in our argument, we accord one or another of the approaches or traditions mentioned above greater emphasis than the rest. We refer most often in this work to Bourdieu (including in the next chapter on reflexivity—always Bourdieu's forte), not only because his contributions to social thought are the most recent and, accordingly, the most in touch with substantive and theoretical problems to which we ourselves wish to respond, but also because in his life's work there came together several of the themes we also draw on from Dewey and Durkheim. However, the latter two figures—and the traditions coming out of them—also appear throughout the work, to such an extent that this volume could be deemed just as much a pragmatist or a Durkheimian work as a Bourdieuian one. We are not concerned to follow a specific master or to work out the implications of one or another research program, as some in the philosophy of science would call on us to do.[49] Notwithstanding the view that scientific progress entails first "defin[ing] certain *hard core* postulates" to be accepted "by convention," then defending the "research program" built around them "by introducing auxiliary theories that expand the explanatory power of the core postulates," we

hold that an inclusive, pragmatically open, cross-fertilizing approach is what most is needed at the present time.[50] It is this approach that Dewey himself pursued—and Durkheim—and Bourdieu.

Concerned as we are with reconstructing race theory, we do not discuss the methodology of race scholarship in any systematic way. Issues such as the opposition between quantitative and qualitative approaches do not receive consideration here. Of course, it is inevitable that, in the study of race, issues of a methodological nature continually should arise. We discuss them briefly in chapter 8. Our stance in respect to them is to stress the same spirit of creative problem solving we also deem crucial to theoretical innovation. Race scholarship ought always to deploy the most advanced instruments of social science in addressing its substantive concerns, allowing the question to determine the method, not the other way around. Total sociology is our motto: by all means necessary.[51] That also would be in the spirit of Dewey himself, who was nothing if not experimentalist in his approach; or of Durkheim, who produced work using both statistical (*Suicide*) and historical (*The Evolution of Educational Thought*) modes of inquiry; or of Bourdieu, who never ceased to bemoan the academic division of labor that gives rise to pointless methodological disputes or to criticize the disastrous tendency to fetishize specific techniques, alluding at one point to the "monomaniacs of log-linear modeling."[52] (The principle of methodological pluralism, he suggested—and can this really be denied?—may widely be accepted in today's scholarly community, but it remains only occasionally followed in practice, with most researchers preferring instead to stick to their signature research techniques.) This does not mean that the relational way of thinking we develop here does not bear an elective affinity to certain methodological approaches, such as social network studies and relational ethnography, or that it does not lead us to question certain others, such as variable-based methods.[53] But even with respect to multivariate approaches, it is perfectly appropriate, in our view—not to mention often quite useful—to pursue a *strategic regressionism* not dissimilar to the strategic essentialism now widely embraced at the level of political practice.[54] The point throughout is to address problems in an "all hands on deck" spirit, attending to them in whichever way might be necessary for getting the job done.

The present volume is focused squarely on theoretical concerns; it does not provide an empirical interpretation of how race works in the different life spheres of contemporary society.[55] It is not a substantive work in that regard. We take on the question of how race, in all its analytic dimensions, is to be investigated. As indicated at the start of this chapter, we build a theoretical

framework within which to think and talk about the workings of our racial order. Despite the intuitive appeal of providing some kind of empirical problem as our point of reference or touchstone—that is, some specific, concrete illustrative example to which continually to return—it makes little sense for us to do so given the far-reaching theoretical aims of this work. As will become clear, no particular substantive example, no matter now complex or multifaceted, would suffice. Instead of a running confrontation with some singular problem, we are careful to provide many empirical examples all along the way to illustrate our analytic reasoning. This is not to say we do not engage throughout with problem solving; the opening section of this chapter was concerned specifically with delineating the theoretical object of this work. It is only to suggest that our problem-solving endeavors do not revolve around some singular empirical object. Nor would it be helpful, for similar reasons, to frame this work as some kind of grand hypothesis-testing venture, with our theoretical framework pitted against an array of alternative approaches in some sort of test of its analytic power or effectiveness. Such an organizational format again would presume there is a singular, specifiable empirical problem to be addressed. We offer at many junctures not only theoretical but also empirical arguments on behalf of the different elements in our comprehensive framework.

The present volume is not concerned exclusively with American racial life. To be sure, our theoretical framework is replete with illustrative examples from the present-day American context. We hew close to the empirical materials we know best. We speak often of "our" racial order or of "our" contemporary racial life. However, our theoretical approach is meant to apply not only to the United States but also to a wide range of other national (as well as subnational) terrains, whether in Latin America or in Western Europe, in sub-Saharan Africa or in the Caribbean. Although we do not assume that "race" existed always and everywhere—"race" actually is a phenomenon secondary to ethnicity, logically as well as chronologically, as we discuss in greater detail in chapter 2—we do proceed from the notion that, after the so-called "Age of Discovery" and of European expansion, and after Europeans extended colonial rule over much of the rest of the world (a process coterminous with the rise of Western modernity and of modern social thought, which partly reflected and partly was constitutive of that development), a *global racial order* came into being that organized social relations, symbolic classifications, and even collective emotions in terms of a white/nonwhite polarity. We recognize that this global racialization of ethnicity received a different inflection in each specific spatial locale (different in the United States, for instance, than

in Brazil), but we also affirm that in every instance it evinced certain shared, essential features. And we direct our analytic attention to the phenomena of this global racial order, providing a new way of conceptualizing fundamental regularities in racial life, providing, that is, an approach that can be adapted in creative and generative spirit to the particularities of many different racial settings.[56] (Our approach also can shed indirect light on other questions of ethnic conflict, given the close relation between ethnicity and race.) It will be useful to recall that Bourdieu's *Distinction*, despite its own "very French" subject matter, concerned itself above all with a theoretically defined object: the field of social classes in modern societies. Readers outside France who engaged with that work were meant to extend its insights to their own respective settings, seeking in each instance to balance sensitivity to contextual specificities with an ambition to identify illuminating generalities. The present work is designed quite self-consciously on that model, with nationally specific racial formations analogous to nationally specific class formations and set against the backdrop also of a comprehensive global order—but one of race.

Nor is this work concerned exclusively with black-white relations within the American racial order. Many purportedly comprehensive studies of racial life do in fact confine themselves to this axis, whether explicitly or implicitly.[57] But in the pages that follow, we devote attention to a wide range of racial and ethnic groups, not just to blacks and whites. As race scholars increasingly have noted, racial life, never itself a matter of black-white relations alone, has become all the more variegated and many sided in recent decades with the large influx of immigrants from Asia and Latin America, a shift that has been transforming the very face of American society.[58] The field-theoretic approach we develop in subsequent chapters—one of the ways in which we build on Bourdieu's theoretical model—is meant to make sense of this growing complexity. This does not mean, however, that when attending to American racial life we do not prioritize the black-white dimension. Conceiving of race in field-theoretic terms underscores the necessity of asking in empirical terms which positions happen to be the most dominant (or dominated) in the field. Historians such as Winthrop Jordan and Thomas Gossett long have argued, at least in the US context, that the antipodal pairing of whiteness and blackness indeed is the foundation on which the idea of race has been erected; this pairing, moreover, continues to be foundational right up to the present day.[59] Whiteness and blackness *do* in fact mark the two poles of the American racial field. The race scholar's goal ought not to be, then, in some unthinking fashion always to "reach beyond" the black-white binary but rather to study the structure and dynamics of the racial field at hand,

recognizing that this space empirically is structured in those very terms, even if not entirely reducible to them.

Yet another related issue has to do with the theoretical connection between racial domination—our primary concern in this work—and "race" per se. We contend that race always has borne within itself the marks of structural oppression. From its origins, it did not have an innocuous or innocent meaning, and this still holds true to the present day. Many race scholars have become all too comfortable studying "race" when really it is racial inequality and subjugation that matter. That having been said, however, we also must ask: What about the playfulness and joy of race? What about the linguistic innovations, jokes, styles, food, music, and so forth, that are racialized? What about feelings of solidarity when with "our people" or equally rewarding feelings of hope and promise when participating in genuinely multicultural events? What about racial dynamics that have to do with beauty, affect, home, or parenting? One might recall here that Bourdieu himself forcefully underscored the intrinsic gratifications and rewards associated with different locations or positions in a structure of inequality. For instance, intellectuals as he depicted them not only strive for domination in their own field (while being dominated in a larger societal field of power); they also genuinely love their work, take joy in the life of the mind, and strive for truth. Fields provide multiple alternative sources of gratification and fulfillment.[60] The racial field, too, provides affirmative pleasures. Consider, for example, the possessors of black capital, to whom we return in a later chapter. Although they are located in the more dominated sectors of the racial space, does not their blackness provide them with deeply felt gratifications? And with a shared culture? And is it not the same also with whites (including white ethnics) toward the more dominant regions of the racial space? It would be a failure of analysis to call these gratifications simply illusory or to depict them as a kind of fool's gold. In this book, we place a heavy accent on the theme of racial inequality and subjugation. But we also acknowledge and inquire into the underpinnings of this other, more affirmative mode of investment in racial belonging.

Let us turn now to some considerations regarding the overall nature of the theoretical contribution this present work aims—and *does not* aim—to offer. On the one hand, this work does not aim to provide explanations of the sort once envisioned by George Homans, for whom any theory worth its salt simply was an explanation of a phenomenon.[61] The causal-analytic approach has been widely influential over the decades, and most recently it has been given new life by "analytical sociology," which announces itself as a theoretical program "concerned first and foremost with explaining important social

facts."[62] So far as it goes, there is nothing objectionable about such a program, and, indeed, its call for finding and specifying causal mechanisms is unproblematic and one that we wholeheartedly endorse. Yet our work cannot straightforwardly sink or swim on the basis of a small number of empirical findings alone. The very expectation that theoretical frameworks could be tested in this way—in direct, unmediated fashion—itself is seriously wrongheaded. One often needs to think through specifically theoretical problems and issues, such as the relation between culture and social relations, or the nature of social action, or the limits and usefulness of interactionist vis-à-vis structural analyses, before proceeding to offer specific explanations. Theoretical reflection must be recognized as possessing its own autonomy, its own integrity as a mode of inquiry, and not be subordinated straightaway to the task of explaining particular outcomes.

On the other hand, we are not seeking here, either, to construct a Parsonian-style grand sociological theory. Although there are, as we discuss below, a few similarities between our approach and that of Parsons, there also are significant differences. It is not enough simply to point out that we do not engage in functionalist reasoning; nothing here comes out of a functionalist program. Nor does it suffice to affirm that, in our own theory-building efforts, we continually are informed by empirical social inquiry; indeed, our work, unlike that of Parsons, is deeply grounded in empirical studies. Far closer to the heart of the matter is that, again unlike Parsons, in true pragmatist fashion we conceive of our efforts as an extended venture in creative problem solving—with the aim ultimately of moral and social reconstruction. As remarked above, a defining insight of pragmatism is that we are faced at times with a problematic (or, as Dewey would call it, "indeterminate") situation in which there is a blockage to effective action and the way of proceeding is unclear. On those occasions, practical action is suspended and a moment of reflective thought ensues. "Thinking begins in what may fairly enough be called a *forked-road* situation, [one] which is ambiguous, which presents a dilemma, [and] which proposes alternatives."[63] (Glossing Dewey, Durkheim spoke, too, of a "cross-roads situation" in which "nonadaptation occurs" and "consciousness and reflection" become salient.[64]) In any thought process, new conceptions more adequate to the circumstances at hand are formed—and a new plan of action formulated. Mills, deeply imbued as he was with pragmatist ideas, spoke often in *The Sociological Imagination* of the need at critical "junctures in the process of work" to "pause," step back, and reflect.[65] His complaint against grand theorizing was not that theoretical reflection is engaged in but rather that it "exists and flourishes within what ought to be

pauses in the working process."[66] Our own work engages in theory building not for its own sake but as a way creatively to solve the problems extant in race studies today—and in the broader racial order.

This is not to say that our work does not share with that of Parsons a number of important features, which now deserve comment. To begin with, the theoretical venture presented here aims, as does Parsons's, to draw selectively and creatively on alternative perspectives in fashioning a more comprehensive viewpoint. It does so by identifying common themes that serve to connect disparate approaches, *common underlying bases such as the relational mode of thinking* shared by Dewey and Bourdieu. Perhaps the paradigm of such synthetic reasoning, at least in the tradition of classical social thought, was Marxian theory itself, whose dialectical method successfully fused German idealism, French socialism, and British political economy. Bourdieu's work has much the same encompassing quality, as do all attempts, regardless of scale or ambition, to construct a broad, overarching theoretical perspective.[67] For all such efforts, the assertion by Seneca regarding his claim on "borrowed thoughts" is a useful motto: "Anything true is mine."[68] Long before social science existed, many ancient philosophers concerned themselves with how best to combine elements from preceding schools in pursuit of a higher truth. One example is Cicero, who aimed in *De Finibus* to resolve the impasse between Stoic and Epicurean philosophies. "I am dragged in different directions," he confessed, "now the latter view seems the more plausible, now the former; and yet I firmly believe that unless one or the other is true, virtue is overthrown."[69] The specter all such synthesizers faced, of course, was that of eclecticism. Even now, Bourdieu describes Cicero's attempted theoretical resolutions themselves as "soft and spongy," "syncretic, not synthetic," likening them to Parsons's more recent (in his view, equally unsatisfactory) effort.[70] The challenge surely is to avoid the "confused mixture," in Epicurus's phrase, of disparate and heterogeneous notions.[71] Eclecticism flourished during and after the 1970s "crisis of sociology," when it became increasingly popular to speak of borrowing as needed from one or another theoretical approach. The result was some of the difficulties indicated at the start of this chapter, difficulties that persist to the present day. Easy and facile unities—a false unification—are among the most significant obstacles to the advancement of scientific understanding.[72] But so too is the scholastic tendency to set up canonical divisions among schools of thought and then to adhere, in the name of theoretical consistency, to rigid prohibitions on creative reworkings and meldings.

A second similarity between our mode of theoretical reasoning and that of Parsons is a shared emphasis on the drawing of analytic distinctions.

Parsonian theory revolved around an "AGIL" model in which different "systems" were subdivided into different "subsystems," and so forth, while our own approach, too, stresses the analytic autonomy of different orders of phenomena and different fields of inquiry. It complexifies rather than simplifies. The shortcoming inherent in all such theories featuring analytic distinctions and analytically autonomous realms of inquiry, of course, is that they quickly become intricate and unwieldy. It is difficult to know precisely what one is to study. One easily could caricature the present work, in fact, by alluding to all the rooms we have built in our sprawling mansion. Far more intuitively appealing, more easily translatable into an empirical research agenda, are approaches (such as classical Marxism) that make bold and ringing claims ("Material interests are paramount!") and that provide clear, unmistakable guidelines for inquiry ("Lay bare the dynamics of the class struggle!"). As Mills expressed it, "The liberal 'multiple-factor' view does not lead to a conception of causation which would permit points of entry for broader types of action, especially political action."[73] And yet, what does lend superior power to frameworks such as ours that feature a relatively high degree of internal analytic differentiation—or "ontological depth," as the critical realists would have it[74]—is their greater capacity not only to incorporate a wide range of theoretical dimensions or elements (not to mention also empirical problems) into a complex whole but also to give each moment its due. While the true may be the whole, as G. W. F. Hegel asserted, each moment in the whole also retains its distinctiveness and integrity.[75] Is one compelled to take into account everything all at once and in all its inner complexity? What are the implications for those who might wish to focus on but one specific theoretical or substantive issue or problem? John Stuart Mill once observed in respect to Bentham and Coleridge that those with a one-eyed view of the world often make the most important and long-lasting contributions. "We have a large tolerance for one-eyed men," he wrote, "provided their one eye is a penetrating one: if they saw more, they probably would not see so keenly, nor so eagerly pursue one line of inquiry."[76] (F. Scott Fitzgerald had much the same insight: "Life is much more successfully looked at from a single window, after all."[77]) Partial scholarly investigations remain useful; our own work builds in large measure on them. The point is not to replace analysis with synthesis tout court but rather to redress in dialectical spirit the present-day tilt in race scholarship toward exclusively analytic reasoning.

Finally, both approaches—ours and Parsons's—evince a certain universalizing ambition. Here we need to remind ourselves that all theoretical reasoning, even when complex and intricate, exists to make our lives easier and to enhance our powers of thought, "enlarg[ing]," in Mills's words, "the

scope of [our] sensibilities, the precision of [our] references, the depth of [our] reasoning."[78] Often it cannot do so when it breaks up the world into discrete, unrelated, bite-size pieces. Here again the Quine-Duhem thesis is relevant. Universalizing theories, not only Parsonian structural functionalism but also Marxism, Bourdieuian sociology, and a host of other approaches such as rational choice theory, all aim to show how the world—or, at least, within certain scope conditions, some significant portion of it—makes sense as a unified whole. All attempt, as in Bourdieu's call for a "general theory of fields," to understand the meaningful connections between each instance or iteration and every other.[79] As Mills pointed out, sometimes one needs to "fly high" in order to take in a larger vista.[80] This is important, for even when one focuses empirically on one aspect of a phenomenon, one has a sense of its theoretical relations with all the rest. One knows where one is. Findings in one empirical area, too, fruitfully can be brought to bear on those in others. The danger specific to universalizing reasoning is that the particularity of one's substantive problems easily might be lost. Many of the theoretical arguments presented in this work can with little modification apply to topics quite distinct from race itself, topics such as gender or class. Yet this, too, might be a good thing. For has not race scholarship been confined for much too long to its own particular, segmented domain?

Perhaps it is to be regretted that Mills's attack on grand theorizing—and Robert Merton's parallel and contemporaneous critique of "total systems of sociological theory"[81]—were so devastatingly effective that many sociologists, at least on the American scene, refrained for decades from venturing onto theoretical terrain, rarely grasping that grand theories and universalizing theories are not the same thing.[82] It came to be, in fact, part of the common sense of the social sciences—and of the world of race studies itself—that legitimate scholarship can be pursued only at the so-called middle range. Ironically, after inveighing so much against what he dubbed "the methodological inhibition," Mills himself helped to institute a still more "theoretical" inhibition by means of his own critiques.[83] If we return to pragmatism, where Mills's roots lay, we can begin to overcome this long-lasting and unfortunate tendency. Not even Dewey, we should recall, refrained from producing volume upon volume of abstract theoretical reflection, aimed in each instance at shedding light on the crucial problems and challenges of his day. For all pragmatists, including us, the relevant standard ought to be the *intelligence* with which our theoretical endeavors, whether they be middle-range or universalizing, engage with and seek to resolve the difficulties facing them. If the theoretical efforts in which we engage are an "orientation" and not a "theory" (or perhaps a "preliminary to a theory"), then so be it: those are no more than verbal

quibbles.[84] Cooley once put it this way: "The test of intelligence is the power to act successfully in new situations."[85] He could just as well have been speaking of scholarly work, with its concern to address specifically theoretical and empirical research challenges, as he was of the more practical forms of action which attend to challenges in mundane daily existence.

In sum, the present work ought to be judged on whether it brings together theoretical ideas of diverse origins into a coherent framework and, in turn, opens up new questions and lines of inquiry which help to refocus old ones. It ought to be judged on whether it takes race scholarship to higher levels of theoretical clarity and illumination. The various analytic moments of this work, each concerned with a different constituent feature of racial life, all must fit together. And the whole must be greater than the sum of its parts, many of which will have been developed at greater levels of specificity in other bodies of work. Only if those requirements are met can we ask of it, as Dewey would: "Does it end in conclusions which, when they are referred back to ordinary life-experiences and their predicaments, render them more significant, more luminous to us, and make our dealings with them more fruitful? Or does it terminate in rendering the things of ordinary experience more opaque than they were before?"[86] As the pragmatists believed, inquiries perforce must begin and end in concrete experience. They must engage in real problem solving in a resolutely pragmatist spirit, taking their lead from real theoretical challenges in race studies, not from a concern, as with Parsons, to develop a theory prior to any actual problems we might confront. But not all inquiries must be empirical through and through. Indeed, as noted just above, many of Dewey's own writings were deeply philosophical, much as some of Durkheim's—and even Bourdieu's—were social theoretical and abstract.

Reflexivity, Relationality, and Reconstruction

The present work is organized around three fundamental ideas: reflexivity, relationality, and reconstruction. In part 1—"Reflexivity"—we begin with Durkheim's imperative that sociological inquiry construct its own scientific objects rather than receive them preconstructed from common sense. This includes the injunction to denaturalize the objects of racial inquiry, both at the societal level (race as a historical product) and at the personal level (race as a system of categories that are learned—and that can be *un*learned). Our thinking, especially our taken-for-granted, habitual orientation to the world, is a product of long centuries of (racialized) discourses and practices.

It is conditioned by what colonizers thought when they were arriving in the "New World," what slaves and slave masters thought during the early years of America, and what all were thinking during the Indian Wars and the era of Jim Crow. Since so much of our thought is internalized and forgotten history, we must strive, through repeated acts of reflexivity, to rehistoricize it. Such a stance ought never to be confused with relativism, which sees reality as existing only in the mind. We reject this idea, as do the millions of people suffering from the inflictions of racial injustice and poverty, people who know that social realities are all too real. Far from reducing reality to one's own perspective, reflexivity teaches that one's own point of view must be studied, questioned, and picked apart if one truly is to know reality. Nor is the point of reflexivity to discover if one is a "racist" or "nonracist." The point, rather, is to uncover unconscious assumptions that produce blind spots in our thinking about race, assumptions that lurk in the shadows and that impede critical thought. We explore the different epistemological obstacles most often encountered in race studies and consider some ways of overcoming them (chapter 2).

In part 2 of the work—"Relationality"—we highlight an idea that traces all the way back to the relational, transactional way of thinking so characteristic of pragmatist philosophy and given a sociological twist by Bourdieu's concept of fields.[87] In these core chapters of the book, we develop the notion of a specifically racial field, exploring the ways in which this field, a matrix of social, symbolic, and psychical structures, is held together by what Bourdieu termed *illusio* (or belief), an investment in the game of racialized practices that occurs at the level of the taken-for-granted (chapter 3). We examine how struggles over racial domination have as their stakes (and weapons) systems of racial classification and sacralization and how these struggles are aided or obstructed by forces emanating from other societal fields (chapter 4). We also show how racial structures and racial agency come together, as it were, in the interactions, institutions, and interstitial phenomena (such as publics and social movements) of racial life (chapter 5). Turning from the collective to the individual level, we further explore how this racial order produces—and in turn is reproduced by—racialized modes of thinking, perceiving, feeling, and acting, or the habitus, and how "symbolic violence," the perpetuation of domination through the active complicity of the dominated, is enacted through the workings of racialized habitus (chapter 6).

Finally, in part 3 of the work—"Reconstruction"—we turn back to the pragmatists' original idea of creative and intelligent problem solving. If the above insights can help us better understand the structures and processes of

racial inequality, then how do we replace such a state of affairs with ways of living free of symbolic (and other forms of) violence and arrive at modes of social existence marked by racial justice, creative democracy, and growth? Part of the challenge here is to pursue a politics of the habitus that involves the unlearning of dispositions conducive to the perpetuation of racial inequalities. Indeed, this reconstructive strategy involves bringing to light the *illusio* of the racial field itself, eliminating the hold that belief in race as a naturalized, dehistoricized entity has on our thinking and action. But another part of the challenge—an equally important one—is to pursue a reshaping of interactions, institutions, and interstitial spaces wherein those very dispositions are produced and reproduced. This latter dimension of our politics of reconstruction redirects us from individualistic solutions toward a broader focus on historical forces and structures, while not avoiding the question as to what damage racism effects in people's souls. It helps us better grasp what a racial democracy would look like and how one might get there (chapter 7). Let us underscore that the very dualism of solutions of a structural nature versus those highlighting social psychology needs to be avoided. Perhaps the most pernicious of all epistemological couplets in race studies, it long has prevented us from coming to terms with the racial dilemmas that beset us.

The analytic strategy we develop here is relevant to all configurations of racial life, past and present, in the United States or elsewhere, even as it focuses primarily on the contemporary American context. It also can be generatively extended to other stratification orders (e.g., those of class and gender) or to other substantive orders (e.g., the political or the aesthetic sphere). In the conclusion (chapter 8), we explore those issues in greater depth and consider as well the challenge of theorizing race while also thinking intersectionally about how the racial order is interwoven with other aspects or domains of social life. In addition, we examine a series of implications of our arguments for different dimensions of racial inquiry. Theoretically, we consider the task of moving from a complex and differentiated theoretical framework to straightforward directions for empirical research. Substantively, we discuss the bearing of our approach on the formidable and perplexing challenges of the post–Civil Rights Era. Methodologically, we examine the implications of our way of thinking for such issues as the quantitative-qualitative divide, which persists in race scholarship; the dualism of description and explanation; and the opposition between particularizing and generalizing investigation. And normatively, we speak of the need to recover some of early American sociology's primordial unity of scholarship and moral-practical concerns. These various considerations help to situate the present work in a wide range of

important conversations currently (or in some cases, long since) underway in race studies.

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It is our hope that *The Racial Order* can provide an effective language with which to think and talk about—and intelligently to address—the problems of race in today's society. We believe that language is important. As Ralph Ellison asserted half a century ago, "Perhaps the most insidious and least understood form of segregation is that of the word. . . . For if the word has the potency to revive and make us free, it has also the power to blind, imprison, and destroy."[88] What Ellison noted in respect to segregation applies to all forms of racialized practices. Partly because of the growing narrowness in scope and ambition of recent theoretical frameworks, race persists as among the most difficult and intimidating of our contemporary problems. Americans continue to be tongue-tied when it comes to discussing race. Drawing on the vocabulary of classical pragmatism, one might even say that we find ourselves in an "unsettled or indeterminate situation," uncertain as to which course of conduct to follow or which road to pursue.[89] While Dewey stressed the cognitive dimensions of such indeterminacy, his friend and fellow pragmatist, Jane Addams—who termed it "perplexity"—treated it also as an existential condition, one marked not by cognitive uncertainty alone but also by moral and emotional confusion.[90] It is to this state of perplexity in our racial lives that we must address ourselves. Of course, racial solutions are not to be found exclusively in the realm of language, despite the strong presumption in that direction in postmodernist thought; indeed, to believe in such a thing would be a travesty and an affront to struggles on behalf of racial justice. Nevertheless, as Kurt Lewin has put it, "There is nothing more practical than a good theory."[91]

It has been a good while since race scholarship witnessed an attempt to provide an encompassing and systematic new theoretical framework. We need new words, a new theory, with which to address the complexities of our present racial order. A comprehensive and rigorous approach to theorizing race long is overdue, one that avoids the pitfalls of grand theorizing and middle-range theorizing alike and that pursues creative problem solving in a pragmatist spirit, reconceptualizing racial life and unpacking its inner logic and dynamics. The present work presents an analytically complex—while nonabstract—response to the task of theorizing racial structures and dynamics today. It aims to do so, moreover, in ways that have both public and academic significance. The problem of race is not merely a challenge for the

ivory tower and for the social scientists lodged inside it; it also is a challenge for all citizens in our troubled and uncertain civil sphere. Without a more adequate theoretical perspective, our understanding of the racial challenges facing us will be incomplete—and our attempts to overcome them hopelessly and demoralizingly incoherent.

PART I

Reflexivity