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A Theory of Racialized Organizations

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Abstract

Organizational theory scholars typically see organizations as race-neutral bureaucratic structures, while race and ethnicity scholars have largely neglected the role of organizations in the social construction of race. The theory developed in this article bridges these subfields, arguing that organizations are racial structures—cognitive schemas connecting organizational rules to social and material resources. I begin with the proposition that race is constitutive of organizational foundations, hierarchies, and processes. Next, I develop four tenets: (1) racialized organizations enhance or diminish the agency of racial groups; (2) racialized organizations legitimate the unequal distribution of resources; (3) Whiteness is a credential; and (4) the decoupling of formal rules from organizational practice is often racialized. I argue that racialization theory must account for how both state policy and individual attitudes are filtered through—and changed by—organizations. Seeing race as constitutive of organizations helps us better understand the formation and everyday functioning of organizations. Incorporating organizations into a structural theory of racial inequality can help us better understand stability, change, and the institutionalization of racial inequality. I conclude with an overview of internal and external sources of organizational change and a discussion of how the theory of racialized organizations may set the agenda for future research.

Keywords

race and ethnicity, organizational theory, critical race theory, agency, racism

> "After a social formation is racialized, its 'normal' dynamics always include a racial component."—Eduardo Bonilla-Silva (1997)

> "Organizational theory could benefit from a hostile perspective; it has been altogether too accommodating to organizations and their power."—Charles Perrow (1979)

Scholars of organizations typically see organizations as race-neutral bureaucratic structures. Scholars of race and ethnicity have largely neglected the role of organizations in the social construction of race. Claiming that organizational theory relies on a relatively superficial understanding of race as an individual demographic characteristic, Wooten (2006) argues for a rethinking of organizational theory grounded in structural explanations (Bonilla-Silva 1997), a standard among race scholars. Yet mainstream organizational theory typically sees organizational formation, hierarchies, and processes as race-neutral and operationalizes race as a personal identity. Similarly, scholars of race and ethnicity often focus on the state, individuals, or ideologies unconnected to material structures

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(Burke 2016). Leading scholars lament the lack of a structural theory of race and organizations (Bonilla-Silva 2015; Gans 2017), as organizations are key to understanding racialization processes spanning macro-, meso-, and microsocial levels. This article answers these calls by developing a theoretical framework of racialized organizations.

The goal of this theory is to bridge subfields via critique and synthesis. Rather than developing an oppositional theoretical apparatus, I briefly engage the literature on race and organizations to argue that each body of literature misses key insights that would ultimately strengthen theoretical development in the given subfield. I then move toward synthesis by extending Jung's (2015) blend of Bonilla-Silva's (1997) racialized social systems framework and Sewell's (1992) dual theory of social structure to argue that organizations are racial structures that reproduce (and challenge) racialization processes. Schemas of sub- and superordination are encoded in the concept of race (Bonilla-Silva 1997; Ray and Seamster 2016), providing a template for organizational action. Race connects cultural rules to social and material resources through organizational formation, hierarchy, and processes (Bonilla-Silva 1997; Sewell 1992). This template constructs racial hierarchy between organizations at the macro-institutional level, such that non-White organizations are typically disadvantaged relative to White organizations. Within meso-level organizations, these schematic relations are recreated as hierarchies are racialized.[1]

Following these propositions, I develop four lower-order tenets: (1) racialized organizations enhance or diminish the agency of racial groups; (2) racialized organizations legitimate the unequal distribution of resources; (3) Whiteness is a credential; and (4) decoupling is racialized. Each of these tenets highlights the connection of racial schemas to a particular set of material and social resources. Seeing organizations as racial structures provides a descriptively more realistic picture of organizational formation, hierarchies, and processes.

I then discuss changes in organizational racialization. Institutionally, exogenous sources of change result from the racial conflicts of constituents and social movements (Bell 2014). Meso-level organizational changes in racialization may stem from competitive pressures—for example, attempts at gaining market share (Skrentny 2013) or the ability to recruit or discipline labor (Ngai 2003). Meso-level racial change may also arise endogenously from changes in organizational routines (Feldman and Pentland 2003). Finally, individual acts of discrimination, aggregated across the organizational landscape, magnify the power of local racial projects. Because the outcome of racial conflict is unknowable beforehand, organizational racialization is not simply a reflection of an underlying racialized social system (Bonilla-Silva 1997).

My approach replaces the notion of organizations as race-neutral with a view of organizations as constituting and constituted by racial processes that may shape both the policies of the racial state and individual prejudice. For example, as Table 1 shows, individual racial biases are empowered by their connection to meso-level organizational resources. Thus, the racial order is reproduced via multiple organizational mechanisms (Ray and Seamster 2016). Indeed, the resilience of racial inequality depends on mechanisms being thought of not as a single "thing" but rather, as Gross (2009) claims, habituated responses accounting for both the stability of a racialized social system and, under situations of unpredictability, changes in that system, as people respond creatively to emergent problems. In isolation, individual prejudice and racial animus may matter little; but when these are put into practice in connection to organizational processes such as racialized tracking, job-typing, or exclusion, they help shape the larger racial order.

Recently, sociological theory has taken a turn toward meso-level analysis (Fine 2012; Sewell 2016). In practice, as systems theorists show (McLeod and Lively 2006), it is often difficult to empirically separate the effects of macro, micro, and meso levels. Nevertheless, systems theorists maintain that this analytic distinction allows scholars to focus attention on specific features of the social order while recognizing that social

Table 1. Levels of Analysis in the Study of Race and Ethnicity

Level of Analysis	Typical Analytic Frames	Representative Features	Conflict Over
Institutional (Macro)	The racial state Institutionalized racism	State racial categorization Racialized laws (explicit or implicit) Expropriation	Group membership State resources National inclusion
Organizational (Meso)	Individual workplaces Schools Churches	Wage differentials Racialized tracking Racial segregation	Jobs, equal pay Equitable education Enforcement of anti-discrimination law
Individual Level (Micro)	Prejudice Racial attitudes Implicit bias	Stereotypes In-group favoritism	Interactions Exclusion Unequal treatment

Note: This table highlights typical sites for empirical analysis in the study of race and ethnicity. As I show in the text, race scholars often conflate macro-level institutions and meso-level organizations. This table shows the analytic distinction between levels and illustrates the possibility of multiply-determined racial conflict, as clashes at one level—for instance, over jobs and equal pay—can have implications for conflicts over national inclusion or personal interactions. Organizations can shape the distribution of resources along racial lines and can influence state-level processes and individual expressions of racial animus.

processes are often multiply-determined. This makes the project of empirically distinguishing among institutional, organizational, and individual effects more important. Definitionally, this shift to the meso level revolves around two primary explanations.

One explanation sees the meso level as composed of interactive groups (Fine 2012); the second focuses on intermediate social arrangements, like the neighborhood (Sewell 2016) or organizations (Hallett and Ventresca 2006; Rojas 2017), as meso-level structures. The meso level is conceptualized as an "inhabited institution" (Hallett and Ventresca 2006), which helps explain both reproduction and change as people interact in response to institutional imperatives. Focusing on the meso level allows for greater attention to the multiple mechanisms reproducing inequality (Gross 2009; Reskin 2003). My approach centers the role of human agency in generating new mechanisms while also explaining the stability of organizational inequality. Thus, race joins class and gender as a foundational category in organizational theory.

Of course, I do not claim to be the first to notice that organizations are racialized. Many scholars have highlighted aspects of organizational racialization (Bhatt 2013; Tomaskovic-Devey 1993; Wooten 2006), and the theory developed here is indebted to their work. Intersectionality scholars, in particular, have shown that stigmatized racial and gender statuses disadvantage women of color in organizations (Acker 2006; Bhatt 2013). Yet the way race influences organizational formation, hierarchies, and processes remains largely under-theorized (Wooten and Couloute 2017). Organizations are central to the "process by which racial categories are created, inhabited, transformed, and destroyed" (Omi and Winant 2015:109), hence the need for theory explaining the central role of organizations in the reproduction of racial inequality.

OMITTING RACE FROM ORGANIZATIONAL FORMATION

Organizational theorists see racial matters as epiphenomena secondary to more fundamental organizational concerns like market efficiency (Omi and Winant 2015). Weber saw "racial and ethnic characteristics . . . as convenient" axes of exclusionary boundary maintenance (Stone 2003:31). Yet when outlining the features of rational bureaucracies, Weber replaces the particularities of racial

and ethnic monopolization with race-neutral abstractions such as bureaucratic rationality, interchangeable hierarchical positions, and meritocracy (Weber 1978).

Scholars drawing on Weber's formulation define organizations as groups coming together to accomplish extra-individual goals (Aldrich 1999). Stinchcombe's (1965) classic "Social Structure and Organizations" highlights property and contract laws, urbanization, and general educational systems as institutional prerequisites of organizational formation. Once these conditions hold, organizations form among those possessing literacy, capital, the ability to monopolize benefits, and some guarantee of organizational continuity. Perrow's (2002) general account of corporations' rise begins with nineteenth-century New England mills, glossing over their dependence on slave-produced cotton (Beckert 2015) and the plantation's central role in the development of scientific management and bureaucratic procedures (Roediger and Esch 2012; Rosenthal 2012). Perrow defines wage labor as an organizational criterion, excluding slavery's role in organizational formation by definitional fiat. These canonical accounts neglect that organizational formation was partially premised on the expropriation and exclusion of racial others.[2]

Institutionalists move beyond the early epiphenomenal view, highlighting the historical continuity of racial discrimination (Stainback and Tomaskovic-Devey 2012) and organizational reliance on cultural rules. Institutionalists argue that organizations are nested within "institutional logics" (Thornton and Ocasio 1999) or "broad, 'supraorganizational' logics or 'symbolic systems' that order reality" (Hallett and Ventresca 2006:214). Institutionalization, in both organizational theory and race scholarship, is tied to the state through laws and regulations and enforced, in the last instance, by violence (Martin 2004). Institutional logics are not simply coercive: organizational action can reshape the institutional environment (Perrow 2002), and organizations' power to shape social life now rivals the state (Meyer and Bromley 2014; Perrow 1991).

Institutionalists convincingly show that external factors such as legislation and professional organizations partially dictate organizational forms (Abbott 1988; DiMaggio and Powell 1983). Yet institutionalists rarely see the racial homogeneity of mainstream organizations as a foundational abstract principle. From a racialized organizations perspective, organizational formation is nested within the institutionalized field of race. Recent mainstream race theory has joined the long-standing tradition in more radical scholarship (Bonilla-Silva 1997; Ture and Hamilton 1967) of arguing that race is an institutionalized "field" (Emirbayer and Desmond 2015; Jung 2015). Organizational analysts should begin with a similar understanding of racialized social systems (Bonilla-Silva 1997) as the background in which organizations operate.

ORGANIZATIONAL INVISIBILITY IN RACE THEORY

Despite their shared concerns with the origins of social differentiation among groups (Barth 1969; Stone 2003), the legitimation of hierarchies (Elliott and Smith 2004; Weber 1978), and justifications of resource inequality (Bonilla-Silva 2010; Feagin 2000), the literatures on race and organizational theory have largely developed independently. As I will show, race theorists have also neglected key insights from organizational theory, lessening the explanatory power of their central theories.

Race is a multidimensional, hierarchical, sociopolitical construction (Baker 1998; Omi and Winant 2015). Paraphrasing Marx (1977), I define race not as a thing but as a relationship between persons mediated through things. This definition of race eschews biological essentialism and highlights that race is constructed relationally via the distribution of social, psychological, and material resources. Racialization is the extension of racial meaning to resources, cultural objects, emotions, bodies—and for our purposes, organizations—previously seen as non-racial (Omi and Winant 2015). Racism, or "the racial ideology of a

racialized social system" (Bonilla-Silva 2010: 218), is a justification of racial inequality.

The theory I develop here extends structural theories of race (Bonilla-Silva 1997; Jung 2015) while engaging certain theoretical concerns of critical race theorists (Crenshaw et al. 1995; Mills 1997). Race theory typically focuses on the state (Feagin and Elias 2013), individual animus, or ideology (Bonilla-Silva 1997) as primary loci of racial processes, downplaying the role of organizations in the production of racial ideologies and the social construction of race itself. Golash-Boza's (2016) diagrams of the current state of race theory show the overarching focus on macro-micro linkages. These diagrams combine "institutions that reproduce racial inequality" and "laws, policies, and practices" (Golash-Boza 2016:131) into an encompassing macro unit. Despite a consensus among race scholars that racial inequality is "institutionalized," "structural," or "systemic" (Bonilla-Silva 1997; Feagin 2000; Ture and Hamilton 1967), the role of organizations in institutionalizing race remains under-theorized.

Collapsing macro-level institutions (e.g., the racial state, legislation) and meso-level organizations (e.g., corporations, schools) has the benefit of showing the pervasive and totalizing aspects of racial phenomena. Yet compressing these social levels elides how meso-level organizations can influence both the policies of the racial state and individual animus. Racialization processes, occurring in "large-scale and small-scale ways, macro- and micro-socially" (Omi and Winant 2015:111) are enacted through meso-level organizations reinforcing, challenging, or altering racial meanings.

At the macro level, segregation between organizations allows for the consolidation of resources in the hands of dominant racial groups. Meso-level internal hierarchies and occupational segregation contribute to the mundane reproduction of racial stratification. Individual racial attitudes and discrimination are enabled or constrained by organizational routines. More than a mere "link" between macro- and micro-level processes, organizations are key to stability and change for the entire racial order. Organizations magnify the power and depth of racial projects and are a primary terrain of racial contestation.

An adequate theory of organizational racialization must also contend with the unmarked Whiteness of mainstream organizations. Critical race theorists consider Whiteness a form of property: a resource encompassing "all of a person's legal rights" (Harris 1995:279). Harris (1995:278) traces "the merger of white identity and property" to notions of freedom and personal sovereignty constructed in opposition to racial slavery and the conquest and appropriation of Native American land. Seeing Whiteness as property is not simply metaphorical: access to capital, the distribution of labor, and ultimately freedom itself were all bound by Whiteness. An implicit property interest in Whiteness was a prerequisite for the formation of complex organizations.

Race theory and organizational theory pay insufficient attention to their shared concerns. This is unfortunate, because there is a large potential payoff from a theoretical bridge between these subfields. Seeing racialized relations as constitutive of organizations helps us better understand the formation and everyday function of organizations. Incorporating organizations into a structural theory of racial inequality can help us better understand stability, change, and the "institutionalization" of racism (Ture and Hamilton 1967).

I will argue that seeing organizations as racial structures—that is, cultural schemas connected to social resources—can help link the subfields. Scholars with otherwise highly divergent theoretical perspectives agree that schemas should have a central place in explanations of the ubiquity of racial and ethnic phenomena. Ethnicity theorists claim cultural schemas are hierarchically organized, widely shared, and contextually activated (Brubaker, Loveman, and Stamatov 2004). Critical race theorists such as Jung (2015) see schemas as a theoretical linchpin that can explain the ubiquity of racial structures. Cognitive (DiMaggio 1997) and cultural (Lamont, Beljean, and Clair 2014) sociologists have long seen schemas as "taken-for-granted" mental representations generating and legitimating

inequality. An extension of Bonilla-Silva's (1997) racialized social systems theory and Sewell's theory of dual structures (Jung 2015) can help better explain the centrality of organizations in accumulating, managing, monopolizing, and apportioning the resources that make up racial structures.

ORGANIZATIONS ARE RACIAL STRUCTURES

My theory of racialized organizations moves beyond models using race as merely a demographic variable, focusing instead on the mechanisms reproducing racial inequality and the relation between racial structures and agency. I begin with Jung's (2015) reformulation of Bonilla-Silva's (1997) racialized social system theory, which describes a social system as racialized when "a set of social relations and practices based on racial distinctions develops at all societal levels" (Bonilla-Silva 1997:474).

Opposing a definition of racism as personal psychological animus (Allport 1954), Bonilla-Silva (1997) argues that racism arises as a set of historically- and contextually-specific ideological justifications for a society's racialized social system. Yet Bonilla-Silva's (1997) break with definitions of racism based on personal psychology is less stark than it first appears, as racialized social systems theory maintains a residual distinction between "structure" and "culture" (Jung 2015) long abandoned by theorists who see culture and structure as mutually constitutive (Bourdieu 1998; Hays 1994; Sewell 1992). Jung (2015) extends Bonilla-Silva's work by drawing on Sewell's (1992) notion of "dual structures," erasing the untenable distinction between structure and culture.

Although Jung (2015) reconciles the distinction between structure and culture, he says little about non-state organizations, or meso-level racial structures operating below the level of the state. Instead, Jung (2015) uses his refined definition of racial structure to focus on the "empire state," reinforcing the traditional race-theoretical focus on the state or nationalism (Brubaker 2009). I revisit Sewell's work to show how thinking about structures as simultaneously composed of "rules and resources" allows us to see organizations as meso-level racial structures.

Sewell on the Duality of Structure

Sewell (1992) is concerned with the emergence and continuity of social structures and how social structures shape agency. For Sewell (1992), social structures are "dual" in that they are simultaneous expressions of cultural schemas and the mobilization of resources. Schemas are generalizable, often unconscious, cognitive "default assumptions" (DiMaggio 1997:269) acting as situationally-applicable templates for social action. Put simply, schemas can be thought of as a kind of unwritten rulebook explaining how to write rules. For our purposes, racial schemas provide a set of "fundamental tools of thought" (Sewell 1992:7) for the accumulation and distribution of organizational resources.

Sewell's (1992:9) definition of resources is expansive, including not only material resources, but any "media of power" used to gain, enhance, contest, or maintain social position. Resources include objects philosophical materialists consider resources (physical capital, raw materials, commodities) and more intangible human resources such as "physical strength, dexterity, knowledge" or explicit rules of social interaction (Sewell 1992:9). Both material and social resources are often expressed or used in accordance with underlying schematic maps. The baroque racial etiquette under Jim Crow, which reinforced hierarchical relations among individuals and racial groups, is an example of a schema of racial subordination expressed via rules of social interaction.

When schemas are connected to resources, they become durable structures. Sewell (1992:9) illustrates the connection between schemas and resources by focusing on the schema of commodification, or "the conversion of use value to exchange value." Commodification involves the capture and sale of

resources, or the transformation of personal into market value. Land closures and the marketing of goods such as bottled water are two examples of resources formerly considered commonly held but put to use for personal profit in accordance with capitalism's central schema. What matters for the reproduction of capitalist relations is not necessarily the particular characteristics of a given commodity, but rather the logic that patterns the process of commodification across various types of resources—that is, a schema.

Organizations and the Emergence of Racial Structures

Similarly, racial structures are produced when central schemas connect to resources. Race, as a multidimensional concept, encodes schemas of sub- and super-ordination that can be activated when connected to resources. For instance, segregation is a schema limiting (or granting) access to material and social resources. Under Jim Crow, the schema of segregation was manifest in the expectation that Blacks work in menial jobs, attend segregated schools, and sit apart on public transportation. It is no accident that many of the Civil Rights Movement's most iconic actions—the Memphis sanitation strike, the Freedom Rides and Montgomery bus boycott, and the lunch-counter sit-ins—involved activists' clever manipulation of these racialized organizational resources. In each case, the schema of racial segregation was expressed via an organizational resource (buses, lunch counters, wages) that was subsequently legitimated by the laws of the "racial state." Thus, segregation is not an unchanging thing: segregation is a relationship with a variable impact relative to the resources it marshals.

Once racial structures are in place, a racial ideology—or racism—arises to justify the unequal distribution of resources along racial lines. Racial ideologies then reinforce the underlying cognitive schema. Racist ideologies are explicit defenses of an underlying racial structure endowing actors with differential forms of agency. Racial schemas, like the commodity form, are easily applied to new organizational resources. Racial ideologies can thus be re-articulated in novel historical conditions as racist ideas adapt to changing power relations (Kendi 2016).

Figure 1 illustrates the relationship between racial schemas, resources, and ideology. Racial structures arise any time resources are (intentionally or passively) distributed according to racial schemas. For instance, occupational segregation connects racialized schemas regarding competence to workplace hierarchies, time-management rules, and even informal rituals of interaction between racial groups. Ideological claims about racial inequality (i.e., biological or cultural racism) are always expressed in relation to the distribution of resources along racial lines.

Furthermore, as the line from "racial ideology" to "schemas" in Figure 1 shows, these justifications can reinforce underlying racial schemas. This view of racial ideology as mediated via resources breaks with literature that conceptualizes racism as existing independently of underlying material and social conditions (e.g., Allport 1954). Simply put, individual prejudice unconnected to active discrimination hoarding resources does little harm. As Sewell (1992:13) claims, "schemas not empowered or regenerated by resources would eventually be abandoned and forgotten."

Organizations and the Depth and Power of Structures

The continuity of structures is based on structural depth and power. Depth refers to the application of a schema to a wide array of more general, superficial expressions. For instance, in her classic article on gendered organizations, Acker (1990) argues that the schema of the "abstract [male] worker" is manifest in a host of general organizational patterns, including gendered hierarchies, the division between paid work and unpaid housework, and the distinction between production and reproduction. These relatively superficial patterns are all surface manifestations of gender's schematic depth.

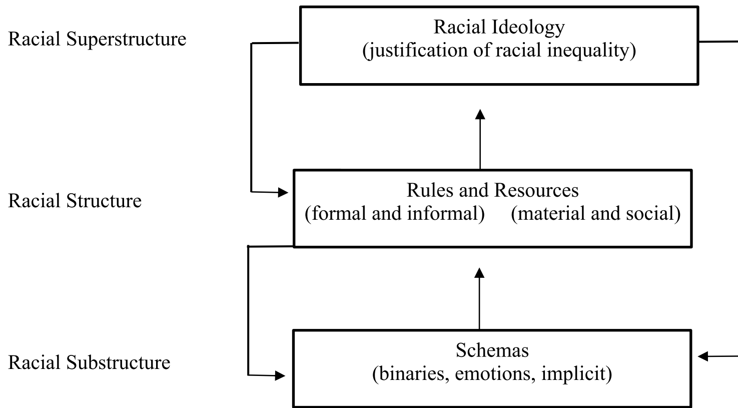

Figure 1. The Relation between Schemas, Racial Structures, and Racial Ideology

The power dimension of structures refers to the ability of schemas to muster material or social resources. Even socialist critics argue, for instance, that capitalism, via commodification, is capable of mobilizing a world-historic amount of resources. This ability to accumulate resources reinforces the underlying commodity schema, making the structure of capitalism exceptionally powerful. Because schemas applied to resources generate patterns of interaction—whether markets under capitalism or deference rituals under Jim Crow—these become taken-for-granted aspects of social life.

Organizations consolidate the "resource" (or power) side of dual racial structures at the meso level. Organizational development has been premised on cultural schemas tying non-Whites to menial labor, for example, "subject races," "coolies," or the concatenation of "slave" and "Black" (Davis 1991). Du Bois claimed racial caste linked "certain sorts of work and certain colors of men" (quoted in Morris 2015:157). Notions of innate biological difference—Blacks' alleged suitability for physical labor, or the "mulishness" of Chinese workers (Roediger and Esch 2012:118)—served to justify racial exploitation.

Inversely, management and leadership are formulated as White prerogatives, replicating the hierarchy of the antebellum plantation (Collins 1993). Organizational routines habitually connect racial schemas to social and material resources; for instance, bureaucratic hierarchies helping codify associations between racial identity and status. From the deep segregation of emerging organizations (Ferguson and Koning 2018) to the enduring Whiteness of university presidents (Gagliardi et al. 2017) and corporate leaders (Embrick 2011), race shapes occupational attainment in the United States. Recognizing schemas activated in organizational contexts (Brubaker et al. 2004; DiMaggio 1997) allows analysts to examine racism not as an ahistorical constant lodged in individual minds or as a singular ideology, but rather as a variable, adaptive to organizational niches.

Understanding racial structures as schema-resource couplings allows scholars of race and ethnicity to examine the meso level. Race scholarship from a structural perspective typically focuses on macro-level structures with great depth and power (Golash-Boza 2016). In contrast to this macro-level focus, the model I outline in Figure 1 sees racial structures as existing at multiple levels. Just as the structure of capitalism is expressed in both the commerce of a child's lemonade stand and the massive accretion of resources in a multinational corporation, racial structures are produced via individual-, organizational-, and state-level actions. Racial structures, in my formulation, are not necessarily institutionalized at the macro level. Racial structures exist when schemas are connected to

resources in ways that differentially advantage racial groups at any level. Racial structures are institutionalized when they are replicated across many organizational forms.[3]

Racialized organizational structures that successfully muster resources (gain power, in Sewell's language) can be formalized by gatekeepers and exert top-down pressure on subordinates, potentially shifting the relation between schemas and resources. This can occur via the adoption of explicitly race-based (or even colorblind) rules (Ray and Purifoy n.d.), or by adopting the practices of peer organizations within a field. Furthermore, the well-known body of research on judicial deference to anti-discrimination policy (Edelman et al. 2011) shows that once organizational gatekeepers develop a new racial structure, it may diffuse beyond a single organization, potentially altering other fields.

For instance, in the wake of uncertainty about compliance with civil rights law, organizational gatekeepers adopted anti-discrimination policies. Despite little evidence that these policies prevented or even lessened discrimination, courts saw them as good-faith efforts at legal compliance (Dobbin 2009). Law initially designed to alleviate organizational inequality was, instead, ultimately used to legitimate said inequality. Thus, once institutionalized, racialized organizational processes can spread beyond the field in which they arose and potentially influence understandings of race in the entire racial order. Race scholarship, then, would benefit by adopting organizational theory's understanding of organizations as nested within broader fields and institutional logics. Adopting this position helps clarify how organizations can influence changes in the larger racial order, as innovative mechanisms for the racialized allocation of resources spread across an organizational field.

Adopting this model of racial structure helps explain mechanisms that reproduce racial inequality in the absence of conscious discriminatory intent. Recent work focuses on the role of human agency in generating novel social mechanisms (Aviles and Reed 2017; Gross 2009). Arguing that schemas are basically a type of "habit," Gross (2009:375) claims that social mechanisms are "aggregations of actors, problem situations, and habitual responses" allowing for the machinelike or nearly automatic reproduction of social relations. When people act creatively in the face of new problems, they may generate novel mechanisms. But this creativity is not entirely random: it is often constrained by habitually enacted schemas that are transposable or easily applied to new circumstances.

The Emergence of Novel Mechanisms of Racial Inequality

To illustrate how schemas connected to resources in novel ways can generate new mechanisms of racial inequality, it is helpful to recall how the schema of segregation was reapplied following the landmark Supreme Court decision outlawing state-sponsored segregation in *Brown v. Board of Education.* Legalized school segregation coupled the racial schema of segregation with school resources to create meso-level structures that entrenched racial inequality. Following *Brown,* segregation did not disappear; rather, the schema of segregation was expressed via organizational resources in new ways, such as tracking programs that internally segregated students (Lewis and Diamond 2015; Tyson 2011) and the development of "segregation academies," as White parents enrolled their children in private schools (Bonastia 2011). In the post-*Brown* era, organizational forms shifted as underlying schemas of racial inclusion were paired with emergent organizational resources. Segregation via exclusion was replaced by segregation through unequal incorporation. School organizations, depending on how they deployed resources in relation to racial schemas, supported, undermined, or caused innovations in the wider racialized social system.

Similar processes occur in many industries, as racial integration is channeled into niche, segregated jobs. For instance, jobs such as "diversity consultants" combined racial meanings with newly granted access to

work opportunities; but, because these jobs are segregated from central organizational functions, workers are less likely to move up the organizational hierarchy (Collins 1997).

Children attending a segregated school, or employees laboring in segregated workplaces, are habitually enacting schematic rules and benefitting (or suffering) from the unequal distribution of resources. Collectively-enacted organizational routines (Gross 2009), such as hiring, assessment tests, or even job-typing are mechanisms of allocation. These schema-resource couplings operate regardless of workers' or students' awareness, and they reinforce the racial segregation schema without requiring conscious action (Bourdieu 1998)—that is, a novel mechanism emerges "organically" from working in a racialized organization. When schemas and resources combine in novel ways, the racial structure is altered. Thus, racialized schematic maps allow for the development of novel mechanisms of racial control combining schemas and resources in new ways.

Seeing organizations as racial structures consolidating resources and social power also allows us to deal with two typical critiques of structural theories of racism: the problem of coordination and the problem of reification. According to Wimmer (2015), absent collective White coordination, race scholarship lacks a convincing theoretical mechanism explaining racial domination across empirical cases. Placing broadly shared racial schemas at the center of a structural theory of race renders conscious coordination unnecessary. As generative mechanisms, schemas provide an organizational template for solving problems. In novel situations, people transpose existing racialized schemas to a new set of organizational resources. This transposition need not be conscious or intentional: indeed, the organizational reproduction of racial inequality may work best if organizational procedures appear impartial. Organizations help launder racial domination by obscuring or legitimating unequal processes.[4]

Other critiques hold that structural theorists reify race by implying race is a natural category and mistakenly seeing racial structures as "things" independent from human agency. Structural determinists may see human actions as wholly dependent on structures, but this is a minority view (Emirbayer and Goodwin 1994). Both the stability of structures and social change are dependent on human action (Bourdieu 1998; Sewell 1992). The definition of racialized organizations I adopt places agency, motive, and action in relation to resources and cultural schemas. Because organizations consolidate resources along racial lines in ways that constrain (or enable) human action, seeing organizations as racial structures describes one domain through which racial actors express agency.

Take, for instance, police violence directed disproportionately against non-Whites in the United States (Ross 2015). When scholars claim that such violence is "structural," they do not mean that joining a police department invariably implies one will engage in violence against non-Whites. Rather, they mean the probability of violence is elevated because of the resources empowering police (legal protections, a monopoly on violence, guns). When these resources are combined with diffuse cultural *schemas*—anti-Blackness, hierarchy, fear of non-Whites—the risk of violence directed against non-Whites in general, and Black people in particular, is elevated. "Part of what it means to conceive of human beings as agents is to conceive of them as empowered by access to resources of one kind or another" (Sewell 1992:10). Rather than exonerating actors, my view of structure explains divergent outcomes as the result of agency exercised in relation to organizational resources. In contrast, a reified view would see disproportionate police violence against people of color as flowing directly from becoming an officer.

Taking agency seriously as a universal human trait requires acknowledging that people of color's participation in racialized organizations—whether hegemonic (Omi and Winant 2015) or coercive (Crenshaw 1988)—may either reproduce or challenge racial hierarchies. "All actors in the system participate in racial affairs" (Bonilla-Silva 1997:475),

but their ability to shape their lives and react to larger social forces is partially determined by their location in organizations. Crenshaw's (1988) critique of the racially-neutral application of the concept of hegemony is instructive here. Claiming that people of color in the United States have never fully consented to the racial hierarchy, Crenshaw argues that a coercive dimension must be included in any discussion of people of color's collective role in reproducing the racial order. Rather than being opposed, structure and agency "presuppose each other" (Sewell 1992:4).

Given the foregoing, I define racialized organizations as meso-level social structures that limit the personal agency and collective efficacy of subordinate racial groups while magnifying the agency of the dominant racial group. The ability to act upon the world, to create, to learn, to express emotion—indeed, one's full humanity—is constrained (or enabled) by racialized organizations. All organizations are racialized and "inhabited" by racialized bodies; yet the specific distribution of resources, the degree to which organizational dynamics rely on explicit racial criteria, the deployment of racialized schemas, and patterns of racial incorporation are variable. Having defined racialized organizations, I now show how they enhance or inhibit agency. Each subsequent component of racialized organizations (the unequal distribution of resources, the credentialing of Whiteness, and racialized decoupling) differentially endows agency along racial lines.

Racialized Organizations Shape Agency

Agency is rife with organizationally-produced power differentials (Sewell 1992). The concentration of people of color at the bottom of organizational hierarchies influences a host of extra-organizational outcomes, including health (Sewell 2016), job access (Wilson 1996), political power, and life expectancy (Roberts 2013). Lawyers, doctors, and janitors are produced through organizations, as are the forms of agency they wield. The symbolic meanings conferred by segregated organizational hierarchies influence interactions outside of formal organizations.

The relationship between structure and agency is one of sociology's most fundamental concerns. Although agency, or independent action, is a "universal human potentiality" (Hitlin and Elder 2007:177), one's position in racialized organizations shapes agency. "The extent of agency exercised by individual persons depends profoundly upon their position in collective organizations," because those at the top of organizational hierarchies can "bind the collectivity with their actions" (Sewell 1992:21). Sewell uses the example of a king whose agency is magnified by the trappings of divine right to illustrate that participation in collective organizations requires submitting one's will to the collective (Wooten and Couloute 2017), and patterns of submission are not uniformly distributed.

One way racialized organizations shape agency is by controlling time use. Agency is a temporal relationship, as actors plan according to past experiences and future hopes. "The key to grasping the dynamic possibilities of human agency is to view it as composed of variable and changing orientation within the flow of time" (Emirbayer and Mische 1998:964). Individuals' locations within racialized organizations influence the amount of control they exercise over their time, their ability to plan non-work time, and their ability to plot the future. As racial structures, organizations partially delineate where, and how, one is to spend one's time. Within organizations, segregation or incorporation into the lower tiers of organizational hierarchies diminishes one's ability to influence organizational procedures and the larger institutional environment. Segregated schools make it harder for non-White children to actualize their futures. How racialized subordinates spend their time at work, in school, or at church, is typically delineated by organizational procedures.

For instance, people in the welfare system often experience time as daily management of permanent "crisis" given insufficient resources (Roy, Tubbs, and Burton 2004), and

forced waiting is a "psychological cost" welfare bureaucrats impose on recipients to show their time has no value (Lipsky 2010). Similarly, non-Whites are over-represented in precarious jobs with highly variable schedules that make it difficult to manage family obligations and plan the use of their time (Edin and Shaefer 2015).

Organizations also shape agency via what amounts to the theft of time from non-Whites (Kwate 2017). By this, I mean that organizations differentially apportion time along racial lines or redistribute time from non-Whites to Whites (Mills 2014). Kwate (2017), focusing on the health care system, argues that racial differences in life expectancy are partially produced by health care organizations that literally steal time from Black people. But Kwate's (2017) central point on the racialized apportioning of time can be generalized to organizations more broadly.

Differential wages for equally-qualified Black and White workers, and the concentration of non-Whites at the bottom of organizational hierarchies, means it takes more labor time to purchase necessary goods. Hiring discrimination (Quillian et al. 2017) means it takes more time to find work. Spatial mismatch (Wilson 1996), or firms placing workplaces in predominantly White areas, means people of color likely spend more time in transit, if hired at all. Differential access to loans (Sewell 2016) and housing discrimination means it takes longer for non-Whites to find housing (Turner et al. 2013). Indeed, "working times, eating and sleeping times, free times, commuting times, waiting times, and ultimately, of course, living and dying times" (Mills 2014:28) are all partially determined by the disproportionate representation of non-Whites at the bottom of racialized organizational hierarchies. All of these cases racialize time by shaping future orientations (Mahadeo 2018).

Racial deference rituals are built into work hierarchies, shaping "identity agency," or the ability to act within socially-proscribed roles (Hitlin and Elder 2007). Racialized organizations shape habitual actions, as employees are expected to defer to customers, employers, or the public. Racialized organizations also constrain agency by limiting people of color's range of emotional expressions (Wingfield 2009, 2010; Wingfield and Alston 2013). Wingfield and Alston's (2013) extremely promising theory of racial tasks is resonant with the theoretical orientation forwarded here, as it connects internal organizational hierarchies to the ideological, interactional, and physical labor people of color do in White organizations. The theory of racial tasks shows how people of color, by conforming to racialized organizational scripts, can often reproduce structures of inequality.

However, there are several points of difference between the theory of racial tasks and the racialized organizations perspective. First, because the theory of racial tasks draws heavily from the sociology of emotions, particularly the idea of "emotional labor" (Hochschild 1979), it is largely concerned with the emotional responses of people of color. Racial tasks are defined as "the work minorities do that is associated with their position in the organizational hierarchy and reinforces Whites' position of power within the workplace" (Wingfield and Alston 2013:276). By obscuring the racial tasks Whites perform—that is, expectations of deference, or the assumption of menial status for people of color—focusing on the racial tasks of people of color (unintentionally) reinforces the sense that racial identity and conflict are things non-Whites bring into otherwise race-neutral organizations.

The racialized organizations perspective, in contrast, sees Whites' emotional expectations—as the primary beneficiaries of the racial system—as equally if not more important in reinforcing that system (Ioanide 2015). Second, the theory of racial tasks provides sharp theoretical tools for analyzing racial interactions and their connection to organizational hierarchies, but it neglects the racial foundation of organizational prerequisites, the mediating role of organizations in the distribution of resources along racial lines, and organizational influences on state policy.

Moore's (2008:27) theory of "White institutional space" provides a broader frame for

thinking about how the unmarked Whiteness of organizations shapes agency. Moore's descriptive elements of White institutional space (racialized exclusion, racial symbolism, explicit and tacit discrimination, and the normative elements of White institutions) are largely congruent with my position. I build on this work by adding a clear distinction between institutional and organizational processes, as meso-level organizations can alter macro-level patterns of institutionalization.

Crenshaw's (2011) discussion of the early Critical Race Theory movement highlights the importance of this last distinction. As a founder of Critical Race Theory, Crenshaw undoubtedly faced the "impossible burdens" (Evans and Moore 2015) of navigating law school as a woman of color. Yet through collective action with a group of like-minded peers, Crenshaw shows, local organizational contexts shaped the subjective experience of White institutional spaces. Individual White professors, with access to resources, provided mentorship and physical space that allowed Critical Race Theory to gain an organizational foothold. Collective, creative agency led to a redistribution of organizational resources and the (partial) institutionalization of Critical Race Theory.

One could object that individuals can (almost) always exert agency by opting out of organizations, for example, by quitting work or school. Yet the potential results of these actions—exacerbated poverty, lack of money, reduced social support—reinforce the point that inclusion (or exclusion) in racialized organizations shapes agency. Unemployment and under-education disrupt the ability to use time as one chooses over the long run, making it more time consuming to meet daily needs.

Racialized Organizations Legitimate the Unequal Distribution of Resources

Segregation, by design, limits access to organizational resources. Racial segregation is a defining foundational characteristic of most organizations, historically enforced through custom, policy, and law (Kendi 2016; Massey and Denton 1993). Segregated organizations maintain racial boundaries, channel resources, and help direct collective action. This segregation is implicit in Stinchcombe's (1965:147) claim that "most people are little motivated to start organizations if they anticipate the benefits will all be appropriated by others whom they do not love," as the historical organizational forms Stinchcombe examined were founded on the expropriation and exclusion of racial others.

While White organizations are seen as normative and neutral, non-White organizations are seen as deviations from the norm and often stigmatized. The founding scholarship on organizational theory defines organizations universally, but in the United States, the institutional environment has never guaranteed the rights necessary for organizational formation on an equal basis with Whites. And while Stinchcombe (1965) and other scholars assert that external institutional factors heavily influence the founding and subsequent trajectory of organizations, the White dominance of the institutional environment and the property interest in Whiteness remain largely implicit, legitimate, and unnamed. Institutionalized racial schemas, often laundered through facially-neutral bureaucratic processes, segregate organizations on a White/non-White hierarchy.

At the institutional level, segregation typically means organizations with large proportions of people of color are under-resourced relative to White organizations (Marable 2000; Wooten 2015). Frazier (1957) and Marable (2000) point to the results of this division of organizational resources. Discussing "Black capitalism," Frazier (1957:2) claimed that "the total assets of all negro banks in the United States were less than those of a single small white bank" in New York. Indeed, at their peak in 1926, Black banks held only "0.2 percent of all U.S. bank assets" (Baradaran 2017:70). Similarly, Marable (2000) argues that the combined assets of all Black-owned businesses could be purchased by a single large oil company. This highly unequal

distribution of resources continues through highly segregated businesses that channel money to White business owners. Blacks regularly shop in White-owned stores—often there is no other option. But segregation ensures Whites rarely shop in Black businesses and are unlikely to work for Black bosses (Baradaran 2017). Institutionalized racial exclusion from organizations has deeply shaped the competitive environment, disadvantaging non-White organizations.

Post-Reconstruction industrialists, believing in Black intellectual inferiority, supported an institutional environment that reinforced the schematic distribution of resources. Black colleges and universities—under-capitalized and considered derivative—ensured segregation and a bifurcated labor-force (Wooten 2006). The famous post-Reconstruction debate between Du Bois and Washington was precisely over the issue of racialized organizational incorporation, with Washington advocating for industrial education for menial work and Du Bois fighting for full inclusion (Morris 2015). Non-White organizations often depended on the largess of White institutional (state-level) benefactors. This dependency constrained collective action for political and social equality. We can think of historical Black Wall Streets and historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs) as racialized organizations arising in response to either tacit or explicit exclusion from unmarked White organizations.

The long history of political pressure directed against HBCUs illustrates the coercive power of racialized organizations. Unequal access to the prerequisites of organizational formation made private and public HBCUs subordinate to pro-segregation Whites who recognized HBCUs as potential bastions of Black political power. Southern legislators stacked public HBCUs' boards of trustees with Jim Crow supporters (Williamson 2004), and organizational survival often depended on accommodation: schools challenging the prevailing racial order were threatened and sanctioned, including removal of college presidents and loss of accreditation (Williamson 2004). Some HBCUs expelled students who participated in the Civil Rights Movement—with implications for the agency of Black Americans. HBCUs continue to face coercive political and economic pressures. For instance, the endowment gap between HBCUs and predominantly White institutions doubled over the past 20 years (Hamilton and Darity 2017). HBCUs remain underfunded by the state relative to their unmarked White counterparts.

Integrated organizations internally recreate institutional-level segregation, as racial hierarchies are mapped onto ostensibly nonracial positions. For instance, through job sorting, positions in the labor hierarchy become associated with racial groups and accordingly devalued (Tomaskovic-Devey 1993) or overvalued, and racialized hierarchy is seen as a basic feature of the world as opposed to a historically constructed reality. Academic tracking stigmatizes Black students by associating Blackness with lower academic achievement. Despite nominal integration, such tracking creates a secondary educational system (Lewis and Diamond 2015; Tyson 2011).

Even diversity programs can reinforce and legitimate racial hierarchies they are purportedly designed to undermine. Companies may see no reason to diversify workers who "drove trucks, packed boxes on the factory floor, or cleaned bathrooms" (Berrey 2015:226), as these are congruent with schemas of racial inferiority. Latino immigrants in Los Angeles have been relegated to "brown-collar jobs" characterized by a lack of legal protections (Catanzarite 2002). Despite formal diversity policies in corporations (Embrick 2011) and the military (Burk and Espinoza 2012), people of color remain clustered near the occupational floor, pointing to the resilience of this structural form.

Occupational segregation also structures relations at the top of organizational hierarchies. Despite anti-discrimination and corporate diversity programs, racial change at the top of corporate hierarchies can still be measured in tenths-of-a percentage-point changes, with people of color firmly positioned at the base of the racial pyramid. In Fortune 500

companies, Blacks make up just 1 percent of CEOs and Latinos less than 2 percent (Embrick 2011). Most Asian American groups remain underpaid when compared to equally-qualified Whites (Kim and Sakamoto 2010), and class divisions among Asian Americans—mediated by selective organizational incorporation—are rising (Sakamoto, Goyette, and Kim 2009).

The naturalization of racial categories, and their subsequent legitimation, is partially achieved via what Abigail Sewell (2016:404) terms the meso-level "reification of racism," where institutional actors—in this case mortgage brokers—turn the "abstract idea of race into a concrete social fact" through the "racist relational structures" of disparate lending. This unequal access to economic resources adversely influences the health of racial minorities through their connection to residential segregation. Race becomes "real in its consequences" (Thomas and Thomas 1928) through the organizationally mediated distribution of economic and social resources.

Building on Sewell's (2016) account, and in line with a body of theory on the institutionalization of racism (Lopez 2000), I would add that much racial inequality is produced through relatively passive participation in racialized organizations. As scholars have shown since at least the Whitehall studies (Marmot et al. 1991), being at the bottom of organizational hierarchies has health effects independent of direct discrimination. The concentration of people of color at the bottom of organizational hierarchies has implications for life expectancy (and thus agency) that are not reducible to intentional discrimination.

Once racialized hierarchies become a taken-for-granted aspect of organizations, they are enforced by Whites' "sense of group position" (Blumer 1958). Threats to the organizational hierarchy—for example, the hiring or promotion of non-Whites, affirmative action policies, or diversity programs—are often seen as illegitimate intrusions into the normal, meritocratic, neutral functioning of organizations (Moore and Bell 2011). Because people of color relatively high up in the occupational hierarchy deviate from expected schematic relations, they experience racial discrimination, are forced to conform to White norms of behavior, and must navigate White emotional expectations (Ioanide 2015; Thornhill 2015).

Whites' sense of group position is not reducible to individual attitudes, because biases arise and are reinforced through membership in collective organizations. "Environmental triggers" (DiMaggio 1997) and organizational context can influence variations in discrimination type. The connection between material resources and organizational routines shows why explicit prejudice and discrimination are insufficient to explain continued racial inequality. Moreover, organizational structure and policy—net of individual measures of prejudice or the propensity to discriminate—may increase personal biases (for exceptions, see Castilla 2008; Castilla and Benard 2010) expressed in relation to organizational resources. Mundane, everyday organizational processes, such as working in a race-typed job, reinforce the connection between racial schemas and resources in the absence of personal racial animus.

It is important to note that some of the practices delineated above have little relation to what is typically considered illegitimate, or intentional, racial discrimination. In line with race-neutral theorizing about organizations, discrimination is often seen as a discrete act somehow separate from otherwise-neutral organizational processes. Working a race-typed job, attending a segregated school, and the basic racial deference rituals of organizational life all reinforce the underlying schema-resource connection. Thus, once racialized practices are instantiated, the elimination of all intentionally discriminatory action will not eliminate unequal outcomes.

In many organizations, the lack of productivity caused by a widely-shared schema of racial inferiority is used as a neutral justification for continued inequality. For instance, stereotype threat (Spencer, Steele, and Quinn 1999; Steele 1997) is an individual response to organizationally-specific environmental

triggers, where negative performance expectations induce a confirming reaction among stereotyped groups. This context-specific reaction is then individualized and taken as objective, neutral, measurable evidence of systematic underperformance—rather than as an example of organizational procedures disadvantaging people of color. The symbolism of White workplaces, Whites' emotional expectations, and the racial hierarchy of organizations are considered legitimate and neutral (Carbado and Harris 2008; Sue et al. 2007). Prototypical racialized organizations thus remain White-dominated in the face of even good-faith efforts at integration.

Racialization and Credentialing

Whiteness is a credential providing access to organizational resources, legitimizing work hierarchies, and expanding White agency. This credential helps organizations appear racially neutral in principle, while in practice institutionalizing the property interest in Whiteness. Credentials are allegedly objective, organizationally-generated statuses showing suitability for employment and legitimating modern stratification systems (Collins 1979). According to this narrative, credentials replaced ascribed status as a legitimate bureaucratic means of allocating resources by merit (Pager 2007).

Recent field experiments have generated important empirical evidence on the credential of Whiteness, showing that hiring discrimination should be considered a general organizational process (Bertrand and Mullainathan 2004; Moss and Tilly 2003; Pager 2003). When discrimination is examined via audit methods—isolating racial meanings as causes of differential treatment (Sen and Wasow 2016)—racialized[5] exclusion exists across economic sectors and despite matched formal credentials (Bertrand and Mullainathan 2004; Correll, Benard, and Paik 2007). Regardless of legal restrictions on racial discrimination, many employers still oppose hiring people of color due to schemas related to allegedly poor work ethics and attitudes (Moss and Tilly 2003; Neckerman and Kirschenman 1991; Pager and Karafin 2009; Pager, Western, and Bonikowski 2009). Yet researchers continue to conceptualize credentials themselves as race-neutral.

When describing the effect of racial identity on credentials, scholars operationalize discrimination as differential returns to the same credential. But the problem with interpreting this as a differential return to the same credential is that, typically, perceived racial identity trumps the credential. For instance, Pager (2007) discusses the "negative credential" of a criminal record. Her research shows that incarceration profoundly influences subsequent employment opportunities and that much discrimination based on this negative credential is not apparent to victims (Pager et al. 2009). Conceptualizing a criminal record as a "negative credential" illustrates the long-term consequences of incomplete organizational incorporation. However, her findings show that Blackness is another negative credential. Black men without criminal records were less likely than formerly incarcerated White men to be called back for a job interview. Similar, although less dramatic, results hold for Latino job-seekers (Pager et al. 2009).

Organizational racialization is thus a credentialing process. Typically, formal credentials are considered neutral because they are bureaucratically conferred, whereas ascribed categories are not highly formalized and are socially illegitimate means of status differentiation (Pager 2007). However, constructionist accounts of race claim that race is produced via precisely such bureaucratic processes. For instance, the "one-drop" rule assigning race at birth was institutionally formalized through state laws applied unevenly through local-level organizations (Davis 1991). Historically, census categories have been highly malleable (Nobles 2000; Rodriguez 2000) and contested or consolidated through organizational processes (Mora 2014).

Seeing racialization as a relational credentialing process resonates with Harris's (1995) original conceptualization of Whiteness as a form of property. Harris illustrates the credential of Whiteness by recounting the experience of her grandmother, who passed for White to

gain access to clerical work but maintained a strong Black identity in her personal life. In this way, the credential of Whiteness expands agency. The access provided by phenotypical Whiteness was at odds with her personal (and state-imposed) racial identity, but organizational access nonetheless expanded her personal agency. Thus, access to mainstream organizations facilitates cumulative advantage processes stretching across the life course, as much of what counts as "merit" in hiring or access to education is produced through prior access to credentialing organizations.

Affirmative action policies recognize the credential of Whiteness and attempt to alter the nearly taken-for-granted link between Whiteness and organizational incorporation. Strong affirmative action policies implicitly acknowledge that Whiteness is connected to organizational resources through hiring and admissions procedures. Thus, representational goals proportional to a minority group's presence in the general population are evidence of attempts to change the connection between racial schemas and organizational resources.

Racialized Decoupling

Racialized organizations often decouple formal commitments to equity, access, and inclusion from policies and practices that reinforce, or at least do not challenge, existing racial hierarchies. "Objective" rules and practices may be enforced in ways that disadvantage non-Whites, or rules aimed at diversifying or ending discrimination may be ignored. This decoupling allows organizations to maintain legitimacy and appear neutral or even progressive while doing little to intervene in pervasive patterns of racial inequality.

Organizational rules designed to protect minority classes from discrimination are routinely broken, and racialized organizations are likely to apply rules differentially based on the race of the rule-breaker. Neoinstitutionalists have long argued that formal organizational rules are often decoupled from practice (Meyer and Rowan 1977). Decoupling occurs when there is a contradiction between existing organizational routines and policies adopted to placate external constituencies. Yet many descriptions of bureaucratic rule-breaking leave out the importance of rules and hierarchy in shaping who is allowed to break the rules (Martin et al. 2012).

In many cases, organizations adopt affirmative action, diversity, and anti-discrimination policies out of fear of government sanctions (Collins 2011; Kelly and Dobbin 1998) but retroactively claim benevolent intent. Diversity policies often serve a ceremonial public-relations function but do little to change the racial distribution of organizational power, as most diversity policies lack the formal enforcement measures that, for a short historical moment, made affirmative action effective (Embrick 2008, 2011). Whether this is through lack of commitment or design is an empirical question; however, there is an "assumed white center in most discourse on diversity" (Bell and Hartmann 2007:908), with organizations expecting minorities to conform to established (White) norms and standards.

Similarly, organizational policies for reporting and resolving discrimination cases are often decoupled from enforcement mechanisms. In an implicit nod to the racialization of organizations, many workplaces and schools have discrimination procedures in place to protect minorities. Officially, and as a formal procedure, victims of discrimination file a complaint, which is examined internally by a specific department. In practice, workers who come forward with even heavily-substantiated complaints tend to be ostracized, hazed, or, at worst, fired (Roscigno 2007). Many claim that organizational responses to discrimination are worse than the initial discrimination (Roscigno 2007), as diversity policies and discrimination reporting procedures are often decoupled. Legal protections have been insufficient to eliminate systematic discrimination across many organizations.

Seeing decoupling as racialized reinforces the notion that Whiteness is a credential. Many studies of credentialing and discrimination focus on access at the point of hire. But credentials also facilitate mobility and

potentially shield one from the consequences of rule-breaking. The loose coupling between anti-discrimination policies and enforcement is another example of organizations expanding or limiting agency. Because discrimination policies are loosely enforced, targets of discrimination may face a hostile environment because they understand that those above them in the hierarchy are unlikely to support their claim. Furthermore, the typical resource differences between individuals and organizations ensure that litigious appeals to institutions are rarely successful.

SOURCES OF CHANGE IN RACIALIZED ORGANIZATIONS

Thus far, I have established that organizations are racial structures and a primary domain of contestation over racial meanings and resources. This definition of organizations as racial structures accounts for both organizational stability, which occurs during periods of habituation as schemas accumulate organizational resources, and racialized organizational change through the creative application of schemas to resources in novel ways to solve emergent problems. I now highlight the need to focus on the implicit Whiteness of organizational theory, which may allow for the appearance of neutrality while promoting group-based interests. I also show how changes in organizational racialization may happen through overt conflicts over resources, or through more prosaic processes that utilize racial meanings to gain market share.

External Sources of Organizational Racialization

Three interrelated external factors can alter the racialization of organizations: social movements (Bell 2014), changes in macro-level policies such as immigration (FitzGerald and Cook-Martin 2014), and the degree and relative level of organizational reliance on the state. Each of these changes in patterns of organizational racialization result from altering schema-resource couplings. For example, among the primary goals of the Civil Rights Movement were advancing the agency of non-White groups, deinstitutionalizing the credential of Whiteness, and undermining the legitimacy of organizational segregation and the attendant distribution of resources.

Social movements are perhaps the clearest attempts to alter racialized organizations. The success of the "Black Power" (Bell 2014; Rojas 2007) and "Red Power" (Nagel 1995) movements have partially been determined by their incorporation into organizations and professional associations (Bell 2014) that can channel material and social resources in ways that are at odds with dominant schemas, potentially altering racial structures.

For instance, during the Civil Rights Movement, attempts to alter associations of Blackness (schemas) with degraded organizational positions (resources) were often overt (Bell 2014). Using middle-class protesters as the public face of the movement, the professional uniforms worn by protesters, and even the nonviolent tactic of civil disobedience were all conscious tactics by organizers to change the institutionalized meaning of race in public life. Altered racial meanings reshaped the institutional environment governing organizational life for both Whites and people of color. Movement goals went beyond mere attitudinal change, attempting to decenter the credential of Whiteness as a prerequisite for equitable incorporation. "Don't shop where you can't work" campaigns, calls for school integration, and even the demand for "Black Power" (Ture and Hamilton 1967) were attempts to shift the distribution of resources and alter organizational patterns of racial sub- and super-ordination.

International conflicts may weaken the link between the credential of Whiteness and organizational inclusion. Social movements highlight the contradiction between racial exclusion in the United States and "fighting for freedom" abroad to push for greater inclusion (Parker 2009), and aversion to Nazism following WWII delegitimated the most

brazen forms of racial exclusion (Winant 2000). The Soviet Union used rampant racial discrimination in the United States for propaganda purposes, highlighting the country's hypocrisy and influencing policy change (Bell 1980). Large-scale conflict may also influence organizational racialization through potential labor shortages. For instance, when WWII created a shortage of White male workers, northern industrial organizations responded by recruiting heavily from the southern Black Belt, which influenced the Great Migration and changed the racial makeup of northern industry (Sugrue 1996).

Shifts in state policy, especially for organizations relying heavily on the state, can also alter the racialization of organizations. Truman's desegregation orders applied only to federal contractors and the military (Dobbin 2009). This institutionalized non-discrimination as an ideal with sanctions for noncompliance. Similarly, following desegregation orders and the Civil Rights Acts in the 1960s, public-sector organizations showed greater degrees of compliance and were largely responsible for the rising Black middle class (Wilson 1978). Recently, a policy retreat from ideals of institutional equality (Steinberg 2001) has led to reduced levels of integration within public-sector organizations (Wilson, Roscigno, and Huffman 2015).

Immigration policy can also alter organizational relations. Policies that select on high-status (Jimenez and Horowitz 2013) or low-status workers (Catanzarite and Trimble 2008) pit natives against migrants for scarce resources. More importantly, immigration policy selecting on certain characteristics can alter the schematic meanings associated with racial groups. In contrast to the well-known association of Latino migrants with devalued labor (Catanzarite and Trimble 2008), Jimenez and Horowitz (2013) argue that high-status immigrants recast racial meanings largely through their incorporation into mainstream organizations. High-status Asians have challenged White norms, recasting achievement as a distinctly Asian trait. Importantly, Jimenez and Horowitz's respondents were able to recast schemas associated with Asians through the real organizational resources accrued from incorporation into good schools and overrepresentation in high-skilled occupations.

Just as top-down policies have altered organizational practices, organizations have also pushed for changes in the policies of the racial state. Hoffman's (2003) social Darwinist "extinction hypothesis" (written for Prudential Life Insurance), which held that African Americans would "naturally" die out, helped derail progressive health care policy in the early twentieth century. Agricultural corporations regularly intervene in immigration policy to maintain access to racialized migrant workers (Bacon 2008). Most recently, organizations such as Airbnb have undermined federal anti-discrimination law: the Fair Housing Act carves out exemptions for single-family and owner-occupied housing, and until recently Airbnb's website touted this exemption. Thus, Airbnb, as an organizational "platform," is formally compliant with federal law but decoupled in practice: it empowers individuals to skirt a law designed to regulate a prior organizational form. In each of these cases, organizations are engaged in racial contestation as they redistribute or consolidate the connection between resources and cultural schemas, supporting or undermining the policies of the racial state.

Organizational practices can co-create racial categories through interactions with the state. A complex series of "boundary spanning" interactions between the state, the media, and social movement organizations led to the adoption of the census category Hispanic—an amalgam of national groups with elements of shared language and culture (Mora 2014). Once institutionalized, these categories can filter down to influence the behavior of organizations or individuals (e.g., prior to the state's adoption of the organizationally-pushed Hispanic category, these individuals did not necessarily see themselves as a "racial" group). Similarly, historical examples of incorporation into mainstream organizations have been central to the whitening of groups such as the Irish and Jews (Brodkin 1998; Roediger 1999).

Thus, organizationally-based racial projects—not only the state or individuals—are central to racialization and boundary formation processes. Organizationally-mediated racial contestation influences the institutional environment by changing racial categories (Mora 2014), racial state policies, and potentially even individual racial identity.

Social movements, macro-level policy changes, and state-level incorporation can influence the racialization of organizations, but these changes are by no means unidirectional. Steps toward incorporation may be met by counter-moves (Anderson 2016; Ray and Seamster 2016) seeking continued exclusion. In the United States, many of these changing policies have had a relatively small effect on the overall racialized field influencing organizational formation and operation. Although external factors have, in many cases, successfully altered racial meanings within organizations, the underlying schemas determining sub- and super-ordination have remained largely stable.

Internal Sources of Organizational Racialization

Internal changes can also alter patterns of organizational racialization. Attempts to garner greater market share (Leong 2013), diversity programs (Berrey 2015), and movement actors' conscious attempts to alter the distribution of resources (Bell 2014) can all contribute to internal organizational change. Each of these organizational practices potentially shapes agency as resources are redistributed along racial lines.

Altering hiring processes may partially change the meaning of race for organizations. Recognizing the profitability available from leveraging racial difference, said difference may be used to appeal to potential customers, gain market access, or signal compliance to widely shared ideals about non-discrimination (Skrentny 2013). For instance, niche marketers may incorporate non-Whites to increase profits (Cohen 2003). Thus, the selective incorporation of people of color can be organizationally useful. As with external pressures for organizational change, internal sources of change are not necessarily linear: the hiring of minorities can provide actors with a "moral credential" (Bendick and Nunes 2012) that makes additional hires less likely.

Organizational change can also come from movement actors diversifying their strategies and moving into formal organizations in an attempt to institutionalize movement ideals. Black Power activists intentionally fought to change racialized organizational relations by entering the professions and developing connections to mainstream organizations (Bell 2014; Rojas 2007). The profession of social work was profoundly changed by the movement, as Black activists altered the assumptions of the profession (Bell 2014). Black Power activists changed the organizational environment of higher education through the creation of Black Studies programs, the development of academic journals and professional associations, and calls for diversity (Rojas 2007). Importantly, Black Studies programs that conformed to the norms of preexisting White organizational practices were more likely to last than those seeking autonomy, as the latter were unable to accrue the resources necessary for survival (Rojas 2017).

Work examining shifts in racialized organizations typically focuses on the explicit racial content of organizational claims-making. Yet because Whiteness is an implicit norm in much organizational research, White interests may be enforced without explicitly naming Whiteness. White organizational actors have institutionalized group-based demands, often in the name of universal interests. Yet scholars typically do not name White organizations, preferring the euphemism "mainstream" (Alba and Nee 2003). Therefore, the organizational inculcation of values and social norms, and the incorporation of racial groups formerly considered non-White (Brodkin 1998), are considered neutral or net positives.

The tacit refusal to name the Whiteness of mainstream organizations is a hierarchy-reinforcing racial project. Any mainstream organization engaging in affirmative action or

diversity programming (DiTomaso, Post, and Parks-Yancy 2007; Embrick 2008; Moore and Bell 2011), downplaying a history of racial exclusion, or recruiting people of color to gain market share (Leong 2013) is engaged in organizationally-mediated racial contestation. These racial projects can have effects well beyond the immediate organizational context, influencing the racial state's categorization, legislative processes, and individual attitudes.

For example, White evangelicalism is typically considered a religious, not racial, movement; but this group of organizations has been highly influential in restructuring the racial state's institutional environment in ways that curtail the agency of people of color (Bracey 2016). Similarly, the National Rifle Association (NRA) is not considered primarily White, even though their deeply racialized activism has reshaped the institutional environment to the disadvantage of Black people, who are the primary victims of gun violence (Zakrison, Puyana, and Britt 2017). Furthermore, the abstract universalism of the NRA's protection of gun rights is often decoupled when non-Whites' second amendment rights are abridged.

A final source of internal change is the redefinition of job categories if they become increasingly associated with a racial group through job sorting (Tomaskovic-Devey 1993). Occupations that become categorized as non-White work—typically at the bottom of organizational hierarchies—may confirm and legitimate the connection between racial schemas and the unequal distribution of organizational resources, as when employers explain the concentration of Latinos in agriculture as a natural racial trait (Maldonado 2009).

The "property interest" in Whiteness also shapes organizational development through dominant racial groups' sense of ownership over jobs (Harris 1995; Moore 2008). Although Whites may not be cognizant of shared material interests, threats to group prerogative can quickly transform Whites from a passive collectivity to an active constituency (Lewis 2004). Rising numbers of minorities in the workplace (Huffman and Cohen 2004), the promotion of people of color (Elliott and Smith 2004), or the threat of affirmative action (Samson 2013) trigger Whites' latent sense of group position. The phrase "a Black (or immigrant) man took my job" (Bonilla-Silva, Lewis, and Embrick 2004) neatly encapsulates the sense that hiring people of color violates organizational order, constructing wage labor as a White prerogative.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS: TOWARD A RESEARCH AGENDA ON RACIALIZED ORGANIZATIONS

I have argued that racialized organizations are meso-level racial structures central to contestation over racial meaning, the social construction of race, and stability and change in the racial order. Through daily, routine organizational processes, racial schemas delineating racial sub- and super-ordination are connected to material and social resources. Racialized organizations expand or inhibit agency, legitimate the unequal distribution of resources, treat Whiteness as a credential, and decouple organizational procedures in ways that typically advantage dominant racial groups. Social movements and conflict between states, along with more mundane processes such as attempts to gain market share, can alter the connections between racial schemas and organizational resources as actors deal with organizational problems in creative ways.

Several implications flow from the racialized organizations framework. At a minimum, I suggest that organizational theorists should abandon the notion that organizational formations, hierarchies, and processes are race-neutral. In place of the question "Does discrimination exist?" (Nkomo 1992:498), a question to which most sociologists know the answer, we should begin with the assumption that discrimination, racial sorting, and an unequal distribution of resources are not anomalous but rather foundational organizational norms. Although many sociologists of race and ethnicity study race "in"

organizations, these studies typically examine organizations as hermetically sealed from the wider racialized social system. Studies of racial ideology and racial attitudes—often abstracted from the context in which these attitudes develop and are expressed—should be contextualized in relation to organizational processes and the resources they muster.

Researchers should place a greater focus on how organizations react to changes in the policies of the racial state in ways that enhance or diminish racial group agency. Here, Tavory and Eliasoph's (2013) work on different modes of "future making" may provide a model, as both historical understanding and potential opportunities are shaped by one's position in racial hierarchies. How do racialized organizational processes of unequal surveillance and punishment, coercion and consent, shape the subjective sense of future possibility? One is reminded of a passage in *The Autobiography of Malcolm X,* where Malcolm's teacher told him to lower his ambition, as Black children rarely became lawyers (X and Haley 1965). Although perhaps less explicit than in Malcolm X's day, segregated schools still prepare students for deeply divergent futures.

Other possible avenues for research focus on the credential of Whiteness. Does this credential facilitate a similar passage through non-White organizations? Research on gendered organizations shows that men in so-called women's roles are afforded more authority and move up the hierarchy more quickly (Williams 1992). Do organizations dominated by people of color provide Jim-Crow escalators for Whites, akin to the well-documented glass escalators privileging men (Williams 1992) in female professions?

A racialized organizations perspective also calls for greater attention to Whites' emotional reactions in organizations. Hochschild (2016) and Anderson (2016) argue that Whites' sense of lost cultural cachet has resulted in White emotional reactions that have shaped the national political landscape. But we know little about how the emotions of Whites shape the daily operation and distribution of resources within organizations, or what types of group-based solidarity White organizational inclusion may foster. How do organizational processes contribute to the "deep stories" (Hochschild 2016) Whites tell regarding deservingness and merit? How do organizations channel and direct the "White rage" (Anderson 2016) of backlash politics?

Classic work in critical race theory argues that racial progress occurs when the interests of Whites and people of color converge (Bell 1980). How do racialized organizations adapt in ways that support, undermine, or spur innovations in the wider racialized social system? Research could examine the role of organizations in constructing group-based interest, or how organizations undermine the extension of rights. There is excellent research in organizational theory on how civil rights and Black Power activists (Bell 2014; Rojas 2007) institutionalized racial concerns, but no companion volume on the White Citizens' Council members who become managers, teachers, and business owners. Beyond credentialing Whiteness, what racialized policies and practices did Whites who were opposed to the Civil Rights Movement carry with them into the workplace? Finally, a recent advance in the study of color-blind racism examines how ignorance of racial inequality is produced by White actors (Mueller 2017). Does the naturalized and unmarked Whiteness of mainstream organizations assist in the production of racial ignorance?

Seeing organizations as fundamentally racialized also opens questions about continuity and change in the racial order. Organizations' role in the distribution of social resources has implications beyond employment; organizational location, for example, influences community health or may spawn gentrification. Classic accounts of organizational flight cite non-racial, economic factors as the primary reason "work disappeared" (Wilson 1996) from Black communities. From a racialized organizations perspective, material relations reshuffled through human agency—not racial attitudes abstracted from social context—are part of the structure in which organizational decision-making happens. As all

"inhabited institutions" (Hallett and Ventresca 2006) are peopled with racialized bodies, decisions about where to locate and whom to hire likely include a racial component.

Ultimately, racial inequality is not merely "in" organizations but "of" them, as racial processes are foundational to organizational formation and continuity. A greater integration of race and organizational theory—focused on sometimes-hidden mechanisms producing racial stratification—can provide a better guide for potential interventions into the stunning consistency of racialized organizational inequality.

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Notes

1. Empirical examples illustrating this theory are drawn from the United States. Thus, the applicability of the theory to organizations in other parts of the world is an open question. Brazil (Telles 2014) and South Africa (Fredrickson 1982) have many similar features, as their organizations are also likely built on racial foundations. Similarly, historical scholarship shows the importance of racialized, unpaid, slave labor to British organizations (Beckert 2015; Williams [1944] 1994) and the Industrial Revolution more generally.
2. For an exception, see Ruef (2014) which is an organizational study that takes slavery seriously.
3. This definition of institutionalization draws on DiMaggio and Powell's (1983) discussion of coercive, mimetic, and normative isomorphism leading to organizational practices becoming increasingly similar. Coercive isomorphism typically results from top-down mandates from state legal structures or concerns about legitimacy in the face of external constituencies. Mimetic isomorphism is due to organizations mimicking one another as they attempt to navigate uncertainty. Normative isomorphism results from professionalization and credentialing processes that make workers increasingly similar. As I show in the section on racialized organizational change, it is an empirical question which type of isomorphism leads to the overwhelming racial similarity in a given organizational case. However, as DiMaggio and Powell argue, in practice, these various forms of isomorphism likely overlap.
4. I would like to thank one of the anonymous reviewers for this language.
5. There is considerable debate in the literature on the causal status of race in field experiments and audit studies. Scholars with widely divergent normative commitments agree that race—when conceptualized as a personal identity typically conferred at birth and unchanging over the life course—cannot be randomly assigned, making the construct's causal status at best indeterminate (Heckman 1998; Zuberi 2001). To address this issue, scholars have suggested disaggregating the various components of the social construction of "race" into composite parts to test their causal status (Roth 2016; Sen and Wasow 2016). My position on this debate follows Sen and Wasow (2016) in thinking that aspects of race can be manipulated by organizational actors.

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