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RESOLVING THE TROUBLE WITH ‘RACE’

With race theories, you can prove
and disprove anything you want.
Max Weber*

RACE IS ARGUABLY the single most troublesome and volatile category of the social sciences in the early twenty-first century—as Zora Neale Hurston put it, it is ‘like fire on the tongues of men’. Do you put it in scare quotes or not? Do you pair it with ethnicity to specify its scope or extend its reach? Do you use it as a substantive (as if it were a ‘thing’ out there in the world) or as an adjective (racial, racialized, racialist or the accusatory racist) attached to a perception, belief, action or institution? Is race premised on descent, phenotype, or skin tone? But what of such varied social properties as legal status, region, language, migration and religion that have also long served as vectors of racialization?¹

What is the relationship between the social understanding of race and its putative genetic and neurological designation? Is race a self-propelled social force or does it derive from other causal powers (for instance, class or nationality)? A historical construct of utility in certain societies, such as imperial powers and their colonies, or an abstract construct of universal reach? Most urgently still, is it a ‘sin of the West’ (linked to chattel slavery), as loudly proclaimed by many race scholars and activists, or does it operate across civilizations? The principles guiding the conceptual autopsy of the ‘underclass’ as racialized category—elaborated in my latest book, *The Invention of the ‘Underclass’*—may help us gain some clarity and traction on these issues, allowing us to see how notions

which have gained wide currency such as ‘structural racism’ and ‘systemic racism’ create more trouble than they resolve.²

I. REFRAMINGS

First principle: *historicize*. The trouble with ‘race’ in the West did not start in the 20th or 21st century. It is co-extensive with the life of the notion, which, from its coalescence in the mid-18th century, has constantly trafficked in the *complicity between common sense and science*. The naturalists of that era, who concocted the idea that humanity could be divided into biophysical categories (Linnaeus’s four races, white, black, yellow, red, corresponding to the four humours of the body and to the four continents of the earth, which survive under various guises to this day), which would later be decreed inherently unequal by Gobineau and his followers, were both codifying an extensive array of ordinary pre-modern perceptions and participating in a scientific revolution that was posing, for the first time, the question of how to fit together human diversity and hierarchy.³

* Max Weber, Meeting of the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Soziologie (1912).

¹ The luminous but little-known essay by Charles Wagley, ‘On the Concept of Social Race in the Americas’, suffices to demonstrate the variability of ethnoracial foundations. See Dwight Heath and Richard Adams, eds, *Contemporary Cultures and Societies in Latin America*, New York [1958] 1965, pp. 531–45. For recent empirical support from diverse countries, Gi-Wook Shin, *Ethnic Nationalism in Korea: Genealogy, Politics and Legacy*, Stanford 2006; John Lie, *Multiethnic Japan*, Cambridge, MA 2009; Lahra Smith, *Making Citizens in Africa: Ethnicity, Gender, and National Identity in Ethiopia*, Cambridge 2013; Edward Telles, *Pigmentocracies: Ethnicity, Race and Colour in Latin America*, Chapel Hill 2014; Giovanni Picker, *Racial Cities: Governance and the Segregation of Romani People in Urban Europe*, London 2017; Patrick Wolfe, *Traces of History: Elementary Structures of Race*, London and New York 2016; and Mahmood Mamdani, *Neither Settler nor Native: The Making and Unmaking of Permanent Minorities*, Cambridge MA 2020. The counterintuitive and often absurd commodification of ethnicity in the neoliberal era is parsed by John Comaroff and Jean Comaroff, *Ethnicity, Inc.*, Chicago 2009.

² Loïc Wacquant, *The Invention of the ‘Underclass’: A Study in the Politics of Knowledge*, Cambridge 2022, especially pp. 122–31, 150–67. The present article expands upon the conclusion of the book.

³ Ivan Hannaford, *Race: The History of an Idea in the West*, Baltimore 1996; Anthony Pagden, *The Burdens of Empire: 1539 to the Present*, Cambridge 2015, especially Chapter 3. A precursor to the modern notion of race as dividing practice, East and West, is found in religion, Shinto and Christian, respectively: Frank Dikötter, *The Discourse of Race in Modern China*, New York 1992; George

That originary confusion between common sense and scholarship has continued into the present and is embedded in the conventional coupling of 'race and ethnicity'. Whenever social scientists take up this doxic duo, they endorse and amplify the *defining symbolic effect of race*, which is, precisely, the ideological belief that it is fundamentally different from ethnicity. The same applies to the pairing of 'race and racism': what is race if not a figment of the collective belief in its autonomous existence, that is, racism? So why the duplication? And the pluralization of the category, as in the seemingly self-evident and endlessly multiplying 'racisms', only compounds the trouble. This dubious commerce between common sense and science has gone on uninterrupted for three centuries, so that countless pre-sociological tenets about 'race' survive, indeed thrive, in contemporary social science. Inside too many racial constructivists, there is a racial essentialist struggling to get out.⁴

Second principle: *expand the geographic scope* to decentre the discussion. This entails three moves. The first is to *bring East and West together* to escape continental parochialism. It is a curiously Eurocentric vision of history to believe that race as an essentialist principle of classification and stratification is a monopoly of Western nations and empires. The Japanese, to take but one example, did not wait for Commodore

Fredrickson, *Racism: A Short History*, Princeton 2002. Religion, not race (i.e. the belief in the innate inferiority of black people), was the criterion that initially codified the enslavement of Africans for the transatlantic trade. There is no room to address here the claims that race was an operative category in the European medieval era and even antiquity: see Benjamin Isaac, *The Invention of Racism in Classical Antiquity*, Princeton 2013; and Geraldine Heng, *The Invention of Race in the European Middle Ages*, New York 2018. Suffice it to note that the 18th century, as the 'century of classification', marked a historical rupture in putatively racial constructions, with the rise of science and the political principle of equality.

⁴ A vivid illustration is Howard Winant, *The World Is a Ghetto: Race and Democracy since World War II*, New York 2001, for whom race is 'a flexible dimension of human variety that is valuable and permanent'; 'race is present everywhere . . . Race has shaped the modern economy and nation-state. It has permeated all available social identities, cultural forms and systems of signification'; it is 'infinitely incarnated in institution and personality'; 'it is the foundation of every dream of liberation . . . It is a fundamental social fact! To say that race endures is to say that the modern world endures', pp. xiv, 1, 6. But being everywhere means that race is nowhere in particular, which makes it difficult to attack politically. Also, the notion that *The World Is a Ghetto* not only denies the specificity of the ghetto as a sociospatial mechanism of ethnoracial domination (distinct from discrimination and segregation); it implies, curiously, that the ghetto has no exterior and therefore that the dominant reside inside the ghetto too.

Perry's arrival in 1853 to racialize the medieval caste of the Eta (meaning 'filth abundant') and the criminal class of the Hinin ('non-human') into the 'invisible race' of the Burakumin ('hamlet people'), believed to be innately different, inferior and defiling, and to treat them as such across the centuries, including after their emancipation in 1871, even as no phenotypical property marked them out. And the Japanese penetration of Korea in the early 20th century was a colonial project steeped in racial thinking and action, even as the Japanese cloaked this capture in the language of amalgamation and assimilation grounded in the paradox of common ancestry.⁵

The next move consists in *linking the colonial and the metropolitan domains* to track down the similarities and differences in the treatment of the subaltern of the interior (peasants, working class, ethnic minorities on grounds of region and religion) and the subaltern of the exterior (colonial subjects), as well as the two-way transfer of racialized representations, subjectivities and techniques of government between the imperial centre and its periphery. This is the task of a new generation of scholars promising to produce a colonial and postcolonial sociology whose work bears directly on theories of race (and group-making) in the global North of the contemporary era.⁶

⁵ See, respectively, Hiroshi Wagatsuma and George DeVos, *Japan's Invisible Race: Caste in Culture and Personality*, Berkeley [1968] 2021; Peter Duus, *The Abacus and the Sword: The Japanese Penetration of Korea, 1895–1910*, Berkeley 1998. For accounts of the Eastern, Middle Eastern and African histories and realities of ethnoracial division in these regions, see Frank Dikötter, ed., *The Construction of Racial Identities in China and Japan: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives*, Honolulu 1997; Gyanendra Pandey, *A History of Prejudice: Race, Caste and Difference in India and the United States*, New York 2013; Bernard Lewis, *Race and Slavery in the Middle East: An Historical Enquiry*, Oxford 1990; and Bruce Hall, *A History of Race in Muslim West Africa, 1600–1960*, Cambridge 2011.

⁶ The broad parameters of this research programme are set out by George Steinmetz, 'The Sociology of Empires, Colonies and Postcolonialism', *Annual Review of Sociology*, vol. 40, 2014, pp. 77–103. On ethnoracial division specifically, see the literature scanned by Julian Go, 'Postcolonial Possibilities for the Sociology of Race', *Sociology of Race and Ethnicity*, no. 4, 2018, pp. 439–51, most of which is still programmatic or declamatory. Two provocative studies linking metropole and colony are Zine Magubane, *Bringing the Empire Home: Race, Class and Gender in Britain and Colonial South Africa*, Chicago 2004, and Frederick Cooper, *Citizenship between Empire and Nation: Remaking France and French Africa, 1945–1960*, Princeton 2014. The pioneer statement on this front is Frederick Cooper and Ann Laura Stoler, eds, *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World*, Berkeley 1997.

The final spatial move is to *dislodge the United States from its Archimedean position*. Just as the tripartite tale of the 'underclass' was a uniquely American story, nourished by virulent anti-urbanism and suffusive racial fear activated by the black revolt of the 1960s, academic and civic debates on race globally are dominated by American categories, assumptions and claims—as illustrated recently by the international diffusion of intersectionality in the academy and Black Lives Matter on the streets. But the American definition of race as civic felony and of blackness as public dishonour transmitted through strict hypodescent are historical outliers.⁷ No other ethnic group in the United States is bounded on that basis and no other society on the planet defines blackness thus. The limitations of the best theorizing on race in American social science can be traced directly to the reliance of its progenitors upon the *oddties* of the national historical experience.⁸

For instance, the idea that race equals 'colour', meaning skin tone, leaves out cases of ethnoracial domination where other phenotypical markers (such as hair, height or eye colour as in China, Central Africa, and the Andes) are used; situations where no phenotypical difference exists (Jews, Slavs and Sinti in Nazi-era Europe, the Burakumin of Japan, the Dalits of India); instances where the racializer is a 'coloured' population (the empires of precolonial Africa and Asia) or the racialized 'white' (the Irish in the eyes of the Britons as late as the interwar years). It cannot explicate how a gradational continuum is turned into discrete categories nor into how many (as documented by the profusion of flexible colour categories used in everyday life by Brazilians). And, final irony, it does not comprise the 'canonical race', African Americans, who are defined by strict hypodescent regardless of physical appearance (what we might

⁷ Loïc Wacquant, 'Race as Civic Felony', *International Social Science Journal*, vol. 57, no. 183, 2005, pp. 127–42 and F. James Davis, *Who Is Black? One Nation's Definition*, University Park, PA 1990. A masterful geographic decentring of the race question is Mara Loveman, *National Colours: Racial Classification and the State in Latin America*, New York 2014.

⁸ Mustafa Emirbayer and Matthew Desmond, *The Racial Order*, Chicago 2015; Karen Fields and Barbara Fields, *Racecraft: The Soul of Inequality in American Life*, London and New York 2014. A powerful counter to this national parochialism is Orlando Patterson, 'Four Modes of Ethno-Somatic Stratification: The Experience of Blacks in Europe and the Americas', in Glenn Loury, Tariq Modood and Steven Teles, eds, *Ethnicity, Social Mobility and Public Policy: Comparing the USA and UK*. Cambridge 2005, pp. 67–122.

call the Walter White paradox), nor does it recognize the pervasiveness of colour discrimination among people of colour.⁹

The third principle is to *avoid the logic of the trial*, which truncates inquiry by seeking to prove culpability and assign blame, in favour of a relentless commitment to the cold-blooded logic of theoretical construction and empirical validation, no matter where these take you.¹⁰ It was Du Bois who admonished that, when carrying out a social study, ‘the utmost that the world can demand is, not lack of human interest and moral conviction, but rather the heart-quality of fairness, and an earnest desire for the truth despite its possible unpleasantness.’¹¹ This implies a strict, if provisional, ban on moral judgement and a permanent rejection of appeals to emotions which too often drive inquiry into ethnoracial inequality—as when the white author of a book on the topic feels obligated to flaunt their racial *bona fides* in a preface confessing their privilege and asserting their ethnic solidarity (in a way that an upper-class colleague writing on class inequality would not think of doing).

A sociologist of class, the family, the state, modernity does not mechanically and unthinkingly write *against* class, the family, the state, modernity, to denounce the phenomenon in question. And when they do the result is rather questionable: *vide* Marx’s unfortunate prediction that the mechanical polarization of the class structure of capitalism would inevitably lead to the communist revolution and the abolition of class that he so fervently wished for. Why do sociologists of race feel obligated to write *against* race instead of *about* race—or, better, why do they so easily let the first impulse overwhelm the second, and vituperation crimp elucidation?

⁹ Walter White was the leader of the NAACP from 1931 to 1955, and the architect of its strategy of legal challenge to racial segregation. He was phenotypically white, with thin blond hair and blue eyes, and he could easily ‘pass’ (he did so to investigate racial lynchings and pogroms first-hand, leading to his stunning 1929 book, *Rope and Faggot*). He was ‘a Negro by choice’, as he himself put it, and no one seriously questioned his identity and his legitimacy to lead black people. On the pervasiveness of colour inequality among African-, Hispanic- and Asian-Americans, read the bold article of Ellis Monk, ‘The Unceasing Significance of Colorism: Skin Tone Stratification in the USA’, *Daedalus*, vol. 150, no. 2, Winter 2021, pp. 76–90; for a global panorama, scan Evelyn Nakano Glenn, ed., *Shades of Difference: Why Skin Color Matters*, Stanford 2009.

¹⁰ On the seductions of the logic of the trial, see Loïc Wacquant, ‘For an Analytic of Racial Domination’, *Political Power & Social Theory*, vol. 11, no. 1, 1997, pp. 221–34.

¹¹ W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Philadelphia Negro: A Social Study*, Philadelphia [1899] 2010, p. 3.

This is not to say that social scientists should remain indifferent to ethnoracial struggles for equality and justice, far from it. It is to assert, with Weber, that they should participate in these struggles as citizens, while making sure to dispatch their scientific duties according to specifically scientific criteria.¹² Indeed, it is when they stringently sublimate their social passions into rigorous theory-building, robust methodological designs, and scrupulous empirical observation that sociologists best serve the historical interests of the dominated by producing cogent explanations of the complex and shifting structures that keep them down.

2. A DOUBLE BREAK

A fourth imperative is to *demarcate and repatriate*. To demarcate means *breaking with common sense*, ordinary and scholarly, and elaborating an analytic construct capacious enough to encompass the varied forms of ethnoracial domination deployed across time and space. The notion that science advances by breaking with opinion and prior knowledge already there, treated as 'epistemological obstacles', to engage in an endless process of 'rectification' producing 'approximations' of reality as well as historical discontinuities in knowledge formation is the core teaching of historical epistemology, the philosophy of science elaborated by Bachelard, Koyré and Canguilhem, and put to work in social science by Foucault and Bourdieu.¹³ It is also the first commandment of the sociological method on which Marx, Durkheim and Weber agree: folk and analytic concepts pertain to different knowledge registers; the former respond to social needs, express or veil conflictive interests, and constitute practical cognitive recipes for action; the latter are forged specifically for purposes of scientific description, interpretation and explanation.

Enter Bourdieu, who builds on this epistemological foundation to highlight the fact that Marx's 'ideologies', Durkheim's 'prenotions' and Weber's 'complexes of meaning', far from being mere illusions, are part and parcel of the objective reality of the social world—they form what

¹² Max Weber, 'Science as a Vocation', *Daedalus*, vol. 87, no. 1, [1919] Winter 1958, pp. III–34. Scientific criteria include egological, textual and epistemic reflexivity (as discussed in Wacquant, *The Invention of the 'Underclass'*, pp. 4–6), and thus encompass effects of 'positionality'.

¹³ For an overview, see Dominique Lecourt, *Marxism and Epistemology: Bachelard, Canguilhem, Foucault*, London and New York 2018, and Hans-Jörg Rheinberger, *On Historicizing Epistemology*, Stanford 2010.

he calls the ‘objectivity of the second order.’¹⁴ This means that we must effect a *double break*: in a first move, sweep aside ordinary racial beliefs to reconstruct the material and symbolic political economy subtending ethnoracial stratification (that is, demarcate); then, in a second move, reincorporate in the objectivist model of racial domination those very perceptions and beliefs (that is, repatriate). This, Bourdieu stresses, is because ‘the “social reality” of which the objectivists speak is also an object of perception. And social science must take as its object both this reality and the perception of this reality, the perspectives, the points of view that the agents form of this reality, depending on their position in objective social space’. Racial subjectivity, emotions, discourses and interpellation are part and parcel of the objective reality of racial rule and so they must figure fully in its science.¹⁵

To effect repatriation, the second move of the double break, is essential because ethnicity is ultimately predicated upon *perception and discernment*, unlike other canonical principles of social vision and division, which all have a self-standing material foundation independent of cognition: class (the mode of production), gender (the mode of reproduction), age (the unfolding of biological life), citizenship and nationhood (affiliation with a state). Racial phenomenology is integral to racial reality in a way that is not true of other bases of stratification—that is: classes exist, if potentially, in the absence of class consciousness; not so ethnoracial groups in the absence of ethnically inflected cognition (if only by the dominant). Put differently, *race is a pure modality of symbolic violence*, the bending of social reality to fit a mental map of reality; or, to put it more tersely still, a limiting case of the *realization of categories*, the conundrum at the heart of Bourdieu’s sociology.¹⁶ But how do we capture its specificity as realized basis of classification and stratification? Here are

¹⁴ Bourdieu, *Le Sens pratique*, Paris 1980, see chapter 9, ‘The Objectivity of the Subjective’.

¹⁵ Bourdieu, *Choses dites*, Paris 1986, p. 154. No historical case demonstrates this proposition better than Nazism: Edouard Conte and Cornelia Essner, *La Quête de la race: Une anthropologie du Nazisme*, Paris 1995, and Johann Chapoutot, *La Loi du sang: Penser et agir en nazi*, Paris 2014.

¹⁶ The template for this analytic move is Bourdieu, ‘À propos de la famille comme catégorie réalisée’, *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales*, vol. 100, no. 5, December 1993, pp. 32–6. An explication is Loïc Wacquant, ‘Symbolic Power and Group-Making: Bourdieu’s Reframing of Class’, *Journal of Classical Sociology*, vol. 13, no. 2, May 2013, pp. 274–91, see pp. 276–7 and 281. A perfect illustration of the mapping of symbolic space onto social and physical space from above is, again, the violent

the lineaments of a framework that treats race as a *paradoxical subtype of ethnicity*, paradoxical in that it denies being ethnic, that is, founded on the accidents of history, and yet reveals that it is by this very denial (in the Freudian sense of *Verneinung*).

Figure 1 (overleaf) offers a synoptic view of the analytics of ethnoracial vision and division undergirding my argument. It combines Bachelard's mandate to effect a clean 'epistemological rupture' with common sense (lay and scholarly), considering the 'illusory character of the primary experience' of race in any given society; Weber's theory of 'status group' (*Ständische Lage*) as a collective based on an 'effective claim to social esteem in terms of positive or negative privileges'; and Bourdieu's theory of 'symbolic power' as 'the power to constitute the given by enunciating it', that is, 'to impose the legitimate definition of the divisions of the social world, and thence to make and unmake groups.'¹⁷ It offers an *ideal-typical blueprint* with which to investigate the causes, mechanisms and consequences of ethnoracial domination.

This framework posits that ethnicity as basis for social identity, strategy and structure forms a continuum rooted in what Weber called 'the social estimation of honour', whatever its basis. Honour may indeed be granted or denied on a wide range of grounds, for 'any cultural trait, no matter how superficial, can serve as a starting point for the familiar tendency to monopolistic closure.'¹⁸ Grasped along the axis of heterogeneity,

restructuring of a class-based into a race-based society by the Nazis, as shown by Michael Burleigh and Wolfgang Iyer, *The Racial State: Germany 1933–1945*, Cambridge 1991. Another is the reorganization along racial lines of the mental, social and physical geography of South Africa under apartheid, as mapped by A. J. Christopher, *The Atlas of Changing South Africa*, New York 2002. A third is provided by episodes of ethnic cleansing throughout history, especially those that seek both to remove the undesirable population and to erase all traces of the process of ethnic erasure itself, as discussed by Ilan Pappé, *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine*, Oxford 2006. A mobilization seeking to realign state categories with social space from below is studied by Nancy Grey Postero, *Now We Are Citizens: Indigenous Politics in Postmulticultural Bolivia*, Stanford 2007.

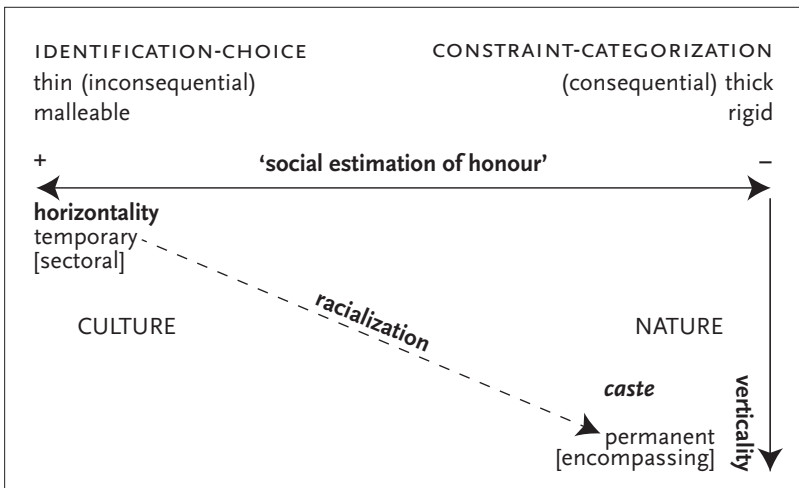
¹⁷ Gaston Bachelard, *La Formation de l'esprit scientifique: Contribution à une psychanalyse de la connaissance objective*, Paris 1938, p. 26; Max Weber, *Economy and Society*, Berkeley [1918–22] 1978, vol. 1, p. 305; Pierre Bourdieu, *Langage et pouvoir symbolique*, Paris [1982] 2000, p. 283.

¹⁸ Weber, *Economy and Society*, vol. 1, p. 388. Note that I draw on Weber's (broader) theory of closure and status groups and not on his (narrower) theory of ethnic groups, which is logically subsumed under it.

ethnicity runs the gamut from pure identification (a self-attributed identity), based on choice, stamped by aura and tending toward *horizontality* (meaning that ethnicized populations are on a plane of symbolic equality, each endowed with dignity), to pure categorization (an other-attributed identity, where dignity is graded and can be denied), imposed by constraint, stamped by stigma or collective dishonour, and tending toward *verticality*, that is, increasingly steep and durable inequality.

At one end, 'thin' ethnicity fully admits its arbitrariness:¹⁹ it is overtly 'ethnic' in the sense that it is self-evidently grounded in the vagaries of *culture and history*, as with variants of ethnoreligious, ethnonational and ethnoregional categories (Jews in contemporary France, Zainichi in postcolonial Japan, Toltecs in present-day Mexico, for instance); at the other end, 'thick' ethnicity denies its own historicity (which thus

FIGURE I: *The Continuum of Ethnic Vision and Division and the Diagonal of Racialization*



¹⁹ The end of this spectrum is often labelled 'symbolic ethnicity' (by Herbert Gans and students of 'white ethnicity' in the US after him: see Gans, 'Symbolic Ethnicity: The Future of Ethnic Groups and Cultures in America', *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, vol. 2, no. 1, January 1979, pp. 1–20). This is confusing because all ethnic forms, thin or thick, malleable or rigid, racialized or not, are fundamentally symbolic: absent an act of cognitive classification based on (dis)honour, there is no ethnicity, however flimsy (e.g. claiming one's Irish identity only on Saint Patrick's Day). Also, we must avoid the trap of treating symbolic power as 'merely symbolic', in the sense of decorative, efflorescent, secondary to material reality and devoid of consequentiality.

becomes covert) and claims to be rooted in the necessities of *nature and biology* (or its logical analogue, culture understood as hard-wired and virtually unchanging), materialized in its most extreme form by caste and caste-like arrangements. The former is malleable, often temporary or episodic, and it applies differently in different sectors of social life (indeed, it can be present and consequential in some and absent in others); the latter is rigid, seemingly permanent, it impregnates all zones of social structure and subjectivity, and it impacts every social outcome.²⁰ Racialized forms of ethnicity take us deep into the vertical dimension of inequality.

It bears stressing here that a Weberian ideal-type, such as Figure 1 captures, is not a description of social phenomena but a 'mental construct' (*Gedankenbild*) obtained through 'one-sided accentuation', which provides an analytic benchmark against which to dissect social formations and formulate hypotheses.²¹ Thus, in historical reality, the various oppositions drawn by Figure 1 are not so neatly aligned but often combined, enmeshed, or nested one inside the other. For instance, identification and categorization are always both present in ethnic formation; choice and constraint are also intermingled in different proportions and in different institutions; identification is seemingly permanent until it dissolves under the press of social change, as when ethnonational identities get swamped, nay erased, by ethnonational ones, or vice versa with the collapse of national states devolving into ethnoreligious splinters. As for attributions of stigma, they can be challenged and even inverted, as when a category develops internal forms of collective pride under the hard crust of symbolic denigration by the dominant.²² Nonetheless, this ideal-type has the virtue of providing 'unambiguous means'—to quote Weber again—for travelling across the span of historical cases and fostering rigorous comparison liable to nourish further theorizing.

²⁰ An illustration of the former is what Rogers Brubaker, Margit Feischmidt, Jon Fox and Liana Grancea call 'everyday ethnicity' in *Nationalist Politics and Everyday Ethnicity in a Transylvanian Town*, Princeton 2006; a case of the latter is ethnoracial categorization under apartheid as dissected by John Western in *Outcast Cape Town*, Berkeley [1981] 1997.

²¹ Weber, "Objectivity" in Social Science and Social Policy', in *The Methodology of the Social Sciences*, New York [1904] 1947, p. 90.

²² For examples of these two configurations, see, respectively, Peter Sahlins, *Boundaries: The Making of France and Spain in the Pyrénées*, Berkeley 1991; St. Clair Drake and Horace Cayton, *Black Metropolis: A Study of Negro Life in a Northern City*, Chicago [1945] 1993.

In particular, this framework helps us to problematize and to focalize what I call the *diagonal of racialization*, the historical process whereby a population or category is pushed or pulled from the top-left side of the horizontal axis of the diagram down towards the bottom-right side of the vertical axis, where ethnicity turns ethnoracial—that is, thick, rigid, all-encompassing and consequential across all sectors of social reality, as in a caste regime.²³ This model can also be used to study cases of deracialization, as when Irish-Americans and Jews in the US lose their status as a separate ‘race’ to merge into the ‘white’ ethnic designation, as well as cases of failed ethnoracial submersion, such as the Zainichi in Japan after World War II, or fluid ethnic absorption, as experienced by Portuguese immigrants in France.²⁴ It can also be deployed to illumine the vexed question of resistance and the two major forms it can assume: under what material and symbolic conditions do the subordinate come to challenge ethnoracial classification (e.g. asking for the recognition or erasure of intermediate categories or an end to state ethnic categorization altogether) and to contest ethnoracial stratification (i.e. asking for an equal or equitable distribution of resources across categories).

In this perspective, to racialize means to *naturalize*, to turn history into biology, cultural differences into dissimilarities of essence; to *eternalize*, to stipulate that those differences are enduring if not unchanging across time, past, present and future; and to *homogenize*, to perceive and picture all members of the racialized category as fundamentally alike, as sharing

²³ Gerald Berreman, ‘Race, Caste and Other Invidious Distinctions in Social Stratification’, in *Race*, vol. 23, no 4, April 1972, pp. 385–414; John Dollard, *Caste and Class in a Southern Town*, Madison [1937] 1989; Susan Bayly, *Caste, Society and Politics in India from the Eighteenth Century to the Modern Age*, Cambridge 2001; and Loïc Wacquant, ‘Bringing Caste Back In’, unpublished manuscript 2020. Briefly put, a caste regime is a hierarchical system of fixed categories that are ascribed at birth, culturally distinct, homogamous and sustained by a doctrine of purity or inherent superiority (validated by religion, science, or folk belief). For a different take on the applicability of caste to rigid regimes of ethnoracial domination, see Kheya Bag and Susan Watkins, ‘Structures of Oppression: Querying Analogies of Race and Caste’, *NLR* 132, Nov–Dec 2021, pp. 55–82.

²⁴ Noel Ignatiev, *How the Irish Became White*, Cambridge 1994; Karen Brodtkin, *How Jews Became White Folks and What that Says about Race in America*, New Brunswick 1998; John Lie, *Zainichi (Koreans in Japan): Diasporic Nationalism and Postcolonial Identity*, Berkeley 2008; Marie-Christine Volovitch-Tavares, *Cent ans d’histoire des Portugais en France, 1916–2016*, Paris 2016; but see Margot Delon, ‘Des “Blancs honoraire” ? Les trajectoires sociales des Portugais et de leurs descendants en France’, *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales*, vol. 228, no. 3, 2019, pp. 4–28.

a permanent essential quality that warrants differential treatment of its members in symbolic, social and physical space. Like racialization itself, naturalization, eternalization and homogenization are not things but symbolic activities—involving a real and imagined relation between the racializer and the racialized—and a matter of degree; but they tend to proceed apace and closely implicate one another. One paradoxical form of racialization is the belief by the subordinate, or their self-appointed spokespersons, that they possess some shared essence, unchanging and uniform, as in variants of Afropessimism for which all blacks everywhere face the same forces of anti-blackness forever, no matter their social position and the institutional constellations they confront, as if they had the ontological burden of existing outside of history.²⁵

The neo-Bourdiesian model proposed here makes 'race', as acknowledged and practised in a given society at a given time, a disguised variant of ethnic classification and stratification that must be explained (*explanandum*), rather than taken for granted and treated as a self-propelled cause (*explanans*) of the gamut of social outcomes; and, for that purpose, duly located on the analytic map of possible forms of ethnicities, racialized or not. Position and movement along the diagonal of racialization is moreover explained by material and symbolic struggles over the partitioning of social space and the naming of populations in which paramount symbolic powers—chief among them the state, law, science, religion and party politics—compete for the 'monopoly over the legitimate means of symbolic violence.'²⁶

So much to say that race is at once *the product, the instrument and the stake of classification struggles* aiming to bolster or subvert its use as preeminent 'principle of social vision and division', over and against other possible bases of clustering and claims-making, class, gender, age, sexuality, religion, region, nation, etc. Writes Bourdieu: 'Struggles over ethnic or regional identity, that is, over properties (stigmas or emblems) linked to *origin* through the *place* of origin and to the durable marks

²⁵ Frank Wilderson III, *Afropessimism*, New York 2020.

²⁶ Here I diverge from Bourdieu (whose striking formulation it is) in proposing that religion, politics, science and the law can effectively contest the status of the state as 'central bank of symbolic power' (Bourdieu, *Sur l'État*, Paris 2012) by challenging and even overturning its verdicts. In other words, the status of the bureaucratic state as monopolist of symbolic legitimacy cannot be assumed and is always disputed, with various degrees of success.

associated with it, such as an accent, are a particular case of classification struggles, that is, struggles over the monopoly of the power to make people see and believe, to make people cognize and recognize, to impose the legitimate definition of the divisions of the social world and thereby to *make and unmake groups*.²⁷

3. PENTAD OF ETHNORACIAL DOMINATION

Historicize, spatialize, forsake incrimination, demarcate and repatriate. A fifth principle is to *disaggregate*.²⁸ The scholarly-cum-policy myth of the ‘underclass’ emerged from, and traded on, the conflation of disparate social relations rooted in ethnicity, geography, the labour market, the family and the state. It was a lumpy category which, for this reason, created empirical confusion and theoretical trouble—not to mention policy misdirection and political regression. The lesson to draw here is to break ethnoracial phenomena into their constituent elements, what I call the *elementary forms of racial domination*: categorization (assignment to a hierarchical and naturalizing classification system, encompassing prejudice, bias and stigma), discrimination (differential treatment and disparate impact based on real or putative categorical membership), segregation (differential allocation in social and physical space), ghettoization (institutional enclosure and parallelism) and violence, deployed to signal and enforce racial boundaries, ranging from intimidation and assault to pogroms and ethnic cleansing to war and genocide (the ultimate form of ethnic domination).²⁹

These five elementary forms get enmeshed together and articulated differently in different societies, for different populations and in different epochs. And they can vary in unison (tight coupling) or, on the contrary, evolve independently of each other (loose coupling). Accordingly, groups can face different *profiles of ethnoracial domination* across time and space, as shown vividly by the experience of African Americans as

²⁷ Bourdieu, *Langage et pouvoir symbolique*, pp. 282–3, italics in the original.

²⁸ To disaggregate ethnoracial domination is not the same as differentiating the possible meanings of race in an effort to salvage one of them, as does Michael Hardimon, *Rethinking Race: A Case for Deflationary Realism*, Cambridge MA 2017. It aims to rid us of the category entirely as an analytic construct.

²⁹ An elaboration is Wacquant, ‘For an Analytic of Racial Domination’, pp. 27–31.

they navigated from slavery to the caste terrorism of Jim Crow, to the urban ghetto, to the triadic contraption of hyperghetto, penal system and segregated black middle-class district, after the racial uprising of the 1960s.³⁰ In the past half-century the iron hold of ethnoracial domination over blacks has relaxed and shifted: public prejudice has disappeared (to be unanimously excoriated when its vestiges reappear); discrimination was diffracted across institutions; hypersegregation persisted; ghettoization collapsed; and homicidal violence turned internecine. But the fulcrum of ethnoracial oppression in America, namely, the one-drop rule that uniquely corrals blacks inside a 'blood fence' (rather than behind a 'colour line') has withstood the onslaught of the multisided social changes—immigration, the spread of genomics and multiculturalism, and cohort replacement—which influential analysts of the black question in America confidently predicted would usher in a new democratic racial order.³¹

Crucially, the profile of ethnoracial domination imposed upon blacks has bifurcated by class, in ways that current thinking and mobilization about racial inequality fail to take fully into account. One brutal illustration: African Americans with no college education are 22 times more likely to serve prison time than blacks with some college, whereas the black-white differential is 6 to 1.³² This means that the penal state is both a race-making institution and a class-splitting institution, which belies emotive denunciations of criminal justice as a 'New Jim Crow' that have served as a rallying cry of militants for penal reform.³³ Such reforms are unlikely to succeed in disconnecting race from penalty inasmuch as they proceed from a wrong specification of their relationship.

Now travel across the Atlantic to contrast with the urban Roma spread out across Eastern Europe. The pentad of racial rule gives us a template

³⁰ See Loïc Wacquant, 'Deadly Symbiosis: When Ghetto and Prison Meet and Mesh', *Punishment & Society* 3, no. 1, January 2001, pp. 95–133.

³¹ Jennifer Hochschild, Vesla Weaver and Traci Burch, *Creating a New Racial Order: How Immigration, Multiracialism, Genomics and the Young Can Remake Race in America*, Princeton 2012.

³² Christopher Muller and Alexander Roehrkasse, 'Racial and Class Inequality in US Incarceration in the Early Twenty-First Century', *Social Forces*, December 2021.

³³ Loïc Wacquant, 'Class, Race, and Hyperincarceration in Revanchist America', *Daedalus*, vol. 139, no. 3, Summer 2010, pp. 74–90.

to ascertain their predicament. Overall, their contemporary profile combines pervasive prejudice and stinging stigma, moderate and fluctuating discrimination, high segregation in both physical space (residence) and social space (schooling, marriage and occupation), incipient ghettoization (which helps reproduce the other forms of domination but also offers a platform for collective resistance), and dispersed incidents of violence, an articulation that is complicated by widespread ‘passing’ inflected by class, and that varies sharply across countries as well as along the urban-rural divide.³⁴ The task of the sociology of ethnoracial domination is precisely to dismantle such articulations of ethnoracial domination on paper, thereby helping to forge better tools for possibly dismantling them in reality.

Two crucial pivots here are the *intersections between ethnoracial rule, political economy and the state*. The economic foundations and implications of racial rule are an immense topic of daunting breadth and complexity, which cannot be even adumbrated within the confines of this essay. Suffice it to note here that economic interests both motivate and moderate different articulations of ethnoracial domination; that ethnoracial and class divisions can be coeval or orthogonal; and that racial division is not always functional for the economy.³⁵ Thus the ethnic partitioning of the workforce, flowing from categorization and discrimination, has everywhere facilitated exploitation, but it has also crimped economic development (the US South) and triggered ethnonational fusion and rebellion (South Africa). Ghettoization has served to extract economic

³⁴ This is my reading of János Ladányi and Iván Szelényi, *Patterns of Exclusion: Constructing Gypsy Ethnicity and the Making of an Underclass in Transitional Societies of Europe*, New York 2006; Roni Stauber and Raphael Vago, eds, *The Roma—A Minority in Europe: Historical, Political and Social Perspectives*, Budapest 2007; Ryan Powell and John Lever, ‘Europe’s Perennial “Outsiders”: A Processual Approach to Roma Stigmatization and Ghettoization’, *Current Sociology*, vol. 65, no. 5, September 2017, pp. 680–99; and a host of studies of urban marginality among the Roma of Bulgaria, Romania, Hungary, Czechia and Slovakia.

³⁵ In the rest of this paragraph, I limit myself to one reference for each form of ethnoracial domination: Philippe Bourgois, *Ethnicity at Work: Divided Labour on a Central American Banana Plantation*, Baltimore 1989; Gavin Wright, *Slavery and American Economic Development*, Baton Rouge 2006; St. Drake and Cayton, *Black Metropolis*; George Fredrickson, *White Supremacy: A Comparative Study of American and South African History*, New York 1981; Stanley Tambiah, *Levelling Crowds: Ethnonationalist Conflicts and Collective Violence in South Asia*, Berkeley 1996.

value out of a stigmatized population—Jews in Renaissance Europe, blacks in the Fordist US—while limiting social intercourse with its members; but in so doing it has given that population a separate *Lebensraum* in which to experience dignity and accumulate the social and symbolic capital needed to challenge ethnoracial subordination. Economic imperatives have both driven and contained ethnoracial violence, as when the need for labour thwarts ethnic cleansing and checks genocidal projects, and they also fail to explain expressive violence serving to mark caste superiority or national exclusivity.

Here we must resist the reflex to limit the sociology of race and the economy, first, to slavery and wage labour, second to capitalism, and third to the US experience. For racialization has also worked to oil the wheels of forms of bonded labour such as late serfdom, indentured servitude and convict labour, which have all played a central role in capital accumulation and colonialism; it has operated in imperial, communist and despotic regimes; and the continental American experiment with race is a poor guide to the diversity of configurations assumed by racialized economies, rolled under the catchy and catch-all category of racial capitalism.³⁶

A second analytic pivot for the pentad of ethnoracial forms is the degree to which categorization and the correlative distribution of capital (economic, cultural, social and symbolic) are recognized, codified and sponsored by the state, or supported by other paramount symbolic agencies such as the law, religion and science, as distinct from the common sense of everyday life. The dynamics of racialization take on a different tenor when the state, as the *fount of public honour and dishonour*, validates ethnic classification and solidifies, nay aggravates, the corresponding disparities of stratification. Accordingly, the study of ethnoracial domination

³⁶ See, for instance, Peter Kolchin, *Unfree Labor: American Slavery and Russian Serfdom*, Cambridge MA 1990; Anand Yang, *Empire of Convicts: Indian Penal Labour in Colonial Southeast Asia*, Berkeley 2021; Martin Thomas, *Violence and Colonial Order: Police, Workers and Protest in the European Colonial Empires, 1918–1940*, Cambridge 2012; Eiichiro Azuma, *In Search of Our Frontier: Japanese America and Settler Colonialism in the Construction of Japan's Borderless Empire*, Berkeley 2019; Evelyn Nakano Glenn, *Unequal Freedom: How Race and Gender Shaped American Citizenship and Labour*, Cambridge MA 2004; Stanley Greenberg, *Race and Class in Capitalist Development: Comparative Perspectives*, New Haven 1980; Justin Leroy and Destin Jenkins, eds, *Histories of Racial Capitalism*, New York 2021.

must imperatively include a systematic comparative sociology of racial states, their genesis, structure and functioning in history.³⁷

This study has to resolve three vexing complications. First, the state is not a monolith but a space of forces and struggles over its very boundaries, architecture and missions, such that some administrative units may act as racializing forces while others are racially neutral or even deracializing—as with the US military after World War II or the public provision of water, which drastically reduced black-white inequality in deaths from waterborne infectious diseases, even in the South.³⁸ The unity of racial thinking and action by state managers must be established, not assumed. Next, there is always a gap between the blueprints of state policy intended to institute and enforce ethnoracial boundaries from above and the reality of their implementation by extant bureaucracies at ground level, which have to make do with varying degrees of recalcitrance and resistance. This is why the historian of Nazism Devin Pendas prefers to characterize even the Third Reich as ‘a racializing regime, not a racial state.’³⁹

Lastly, even in the most coherent of cases, ethnoracial taxonomies promulgated by the state are jumbled, multilayered, riven by contradictions and weakened by exceptions. This is because, being historical products of past classification struggles, they incorporate multiple criteria born from, and geared toward, political action not scholarly knowledge or bureaucratic conformity. Generally, they are no more than ethnic nomenclatures, listings of names of groups devoid of formal rationality.

³⁷ Studies of colonial formations are the prime ground for advancing the sociology of the racial state: George Steinmetz, ‘Social Fields, Subfields and Social Spaces at the Scale of Empires: Explaining the Colonial State and Colonial Sociology’, *The Sociological Review*, vol. 64, no. 2, July 2016, pp. 98–123; George Steinmetz, *The Devil’s Handwriting: Precoloniality and the German Colonial State in Qingdao, Samoa and Southwest Africa*, Chicago 2008; Crawford Young, *The African Colonial State in Comparative Perspective*, New Haven 1994; Peter Zinoman, *The Colonial Bastille: A Social History of Imprisonment in Colonial Vietnam, 1862–1940*, Berkeley 1996; Marie Muschalek, *Violence as Usual: Policing and the Colonial State in German Southwest Africa*, Ithaca 2019; and many of the books published in the Cambridge Imperial and Post-Colonial Studies series.

³⁸ Werner Troesken, *Water, Race and Disease*, Cambridge MA 2004. I owe this example to Chris Muller.

³⁹ Devin Pendas, ‘Racial States in Comparative Perspective’, in Devin Pendas, Mark Roseman and Richard Wetzell, eds, *Beyond the Racial State: Rethinking Nazi Germany*, Cambridge 2017, p. 135. For a contrary case and argument, see Ivan Evans, *Bureaucracy and Race: Native Administration in South Africa*, Berkeley 1997.

And they commonly diverge from the richer folk designations invoked by people in everyday life. Ordinary ethnic categories are also always to some degree fuzzy because they admit of multiple readings and can be manipulated and contested, even in the seemingly most rigid of regimes of domination, not to mention more flexible ones. For instance, two-thirds of persons classified as Roma by the interviewers of a cross-national survey of poverty and ethnicity in Hungary and Romania did not regard themselves as Roma, whereas two-thirds of those identified as Roma by interviewers self-identified as such in Bulgaria. Such are the inescapable *illogics of ethnoracial classification* that sociology must be careful not to erase from its accounts. The combination of these three factors make the comparative sociology of the ethnoracial state as classifying and stratifying machine both difficult and indispensable.⁴⁰

4. CLASSIFICATION, STRATIFICATION, GROUP-MAKING

To assert that race is a subtype of ethnicity, logically as well as historically, is not to deny the brute and brutal reality of racial domination, as feared by activists and scholars who cling to the distinction between race and ethnicity as if their life depended on it. On the contrary: it is to give ourselves the analytic means to discover under what conditions and due to what forces and mechanisms *ordinary ethnicity gets turned into racialized*

⁴⁰ The Roma study referred to is the gem by János Ladányi and Iván Szelényi, 'The Social Construction of Roma Ethnicity in Bulgaria, Romania and Hungary during Market Transition', *Review of Sociology*, vol. 7, no. 2, November 2001, 79–89. The illogics of racial classification are fully documented and dissected in Loveman's *National Colours: Racial Classification and the State in Latin America*, covering 19 countries over two centuries, which reclaims the hidden history of ethnoracial categorization as instrument of state-making and nation-building. See also Ilona Katzew and Susan Deans-Smith, eds, *Race and Classification: The Case of Mexican America*, Stanford 2009, and Thomas Mullaney, *Coming to Terms with the Nation: Ethnic Classification in Modern China*, Berkeley 2011. Two model studies of the socially flexible and semantically fluid deployment of ethnic categories in everyday life are Virginia Domínguez, *White by Definition: Social Classification in Creole Louisiana*, New Brunswick 1993, especially part III, and Brubaker et al., *Nationalist Politics and Everyday Ethnicity*, especially 'Categories', pp. 207–38. For further illustrations of the consistent incoherence of socioracial taxonomies, read Siep Stuurman, 'François Bernier and the Invention of Racial Classification', *History Workshop Journal*, vol. 50, no. 1, Autumn 2000, pp. 1–21; Deborah Posel, 'Race as Common Sense: Racial Classification in Twentieth-Century South Africa', *African Studies Review*, vol. 44, no. 2, September 2001, pp. 87–114; and Kenneth Prewitt, 'Racial Classification in America: Where do We Go from Here?', *Daedalus*, vol. 134, no. 1, Winter 2005, pp. 5–17.

(*denegated*) ethnicity, and the difference that naturalization makes in different arenas of social action—say, friendship, marriage, schooling, the labour market, or civic membership. Clumpy terms such as ‘structural racism’ or ‘systemic racism’, which, in the wake of social movements for racial justice have spread at blinding speed in the past few years—in part through the influence of think tanks and philanthropic foundations eager to rephrase old programmes in the new Racespeak of the moment⁴¹—may work well as political mottos to mobilize people and to give them a personal sense of moral zeal and civic benevolence; they are nonetheless poor guides for dissecting, and thence overturning, the racial order.

Indeed, aside from its progressive valence, the resurrection of ‘institutional racism’ under the guise of ‘structural racism’ could turn out to be to the 2020s what the invention of the ‘underclass’ was for the 1980s: a lumpy notion that stops analytic work just where it should begin, confuses and conflates mechanisms of ethnoracial domination (themselves racial and nonracial), and thus forms a practical obstacle to the surgical removal of operative sources of racial inequality. This is the case, for instance, with broad-brush rhetorical attacks on ‘structural racism in criminal justice’ that confuse the different scales of the American penal state (federal, state, county and city), overlook the hyperlocalism and administrative fragmentation of a criminal justice system that is not a system, and amalgamate the different practices of legislating, policing, pretrial detention, prosecution, public defence, plea negotiation and litigation, sentencing, supervising, court-mandated programming, incarceration, and sentence administration, each of which has layers of internal complexity, and may or may not produce looping ethnoracial disparities.⁴² ‘Structural racism’ posits that which needs to be discovered and demonstrated. It obfuscates the primacy of class disparity in crimi-

⁴¹ See, for instance, the ‘Glossary for Understanding the Dismantling [of] Structural Racism/Promoting Racial Equity Analysis’, formulated and diffused by the Aspen Institute via its fifteen locations around the world, and the rubric ‘Structural Racism in America’ on the website of the Urban Institute, which, interestingly, was a leading proponent of the racially regressive myth of the ‘underclass’ at century’s turn. A methodical disassembling of ‘structural racism’ is Daniel Sabbagh, ‘Le “racisme systémique”: un conglomérat problématique’, *Mouvements*, forthcoming 2022.

⁴² A brilliant exploration of the crevasse between the slogan and the counterintuitive realities of ‘court reform’ is Malcolm Feeley, *Court Reform on Trial: Why Simple Solutions Fail*, New York 1983. It is striking and worrisome that the current generation of criminal-justice activists blissfully ignores the sobering lessons of the failure, fifty years ago, of exactly those changes they are now seeking, bail reform, pre-trial diversion, sentencing reform and speedy trial rules.

nal processing. It replaces meticulous study with facile sloganeering, and pinpoint remedial action with vague calls for systemic changes that are unlikely to come about or to produce their expected results. In so doing, this vogue word betrays its ostensive purpose: to excavate the social conditions of possibility of ethnoracial justice.

The stipulation of the concept of 'race' sketched here meets the criteria that make for a solid analytic construct.⁴³ It is semantically discrete, clear and neutral. It is logically coherent, specific and parsimonious. It is heuristic in that it allows us to dissect empirically, and bring within a single theoretical framework, the varied forms assumed by ethnic ordering in history and across continents—ethnoreligious, ethnolinguistic, ethnoregional, ethnonational and ethnoracial proper. A similarly vigorous conceptual effort to unify these categories 'as a single integrated family of forms' on a comparative and historical basis is Rogers Brubaker's *Grounds for Difference*.⁴⁴ It does not go far enough: instead of subsuming race and nationalism *under ethnicity*, as biologized ethnicity and state-affiliated ethnicity, respectively, Brubaker retains them as three coequal cognitive and conative perspectives on the social world. Andreas Wimmer goes further in that direction by developing a comparative analytic of ethnic formation in global perspective in *Ethnic Boundary Making*.⁴⁵ But neither Brubaker nor Wimmer takes the next step of rolling the categories of ethnicity, race and nationalism under a general neo-Bourdieuian theory of symbolic power and group-making—encompassing class, gender, age, sexuality, religion, citizenship, locality, etc—whose very possibility and necessity they demonstrate.

The analytic framework sketched in this essay sets for the sociology of racial domination the central task of uncovering how a system of ethnoracial *classification*—a taxonomy trading on the overt or covert correspondence between social and natural orderings—is created and inculcated, sedimented in the socialized body in the form of the ethnic habitus, and mapped onto a system of ethnoracial *stratification* through the differential distribution of material and symbolic goods, privileges and penalties, profits and perils, across social and physical

⁴³ For an explication and illustration of these criteria, see Wacquant, *The Invention of the 'Underclass'*, pp. 150–7.

⁴⁴ Rogers Brubaker, *Grounds for Difference*, and 'Ethnicity, Race and Nationalism', *Annual Review of Sociology*, vol. 35, August 2009, pp. 21–42.

⁴⁵ Andreas Wimmer, *Ethnic Boundary Making: Institutions, Power, Networks*, New York 2013, especially pp. 7–10.

space. Classification comprises the politically informed and bureaucratically inscribed taxonomies of the state and the everyday modes of sorting people deployed by ordinary people in the course of their daily round and during moments of collective action and emotion, both of which are multilayered, variably incongruent, and eminently malleable and manipulable.⁴⁶ Similarly, stratification refers to the macro-allocations of resources and rewards underlying the structure of social space, as well as to the micro-allocations shaping face-to-face interactions, including recognition, respect and deference, or the denial thereof.

The genesis, crystallization and recursive *transmutation of classification into stratification, and vice versa*, constitute the core problematic for formulating the sociology of race as a particular modality of group-making, without falling into the twin traps of ‘groupism’ and ‘race-centrism’.⁴⁷ This problematic prompts us to determine what is generic and what is specific about race as category-to-be-realized, and to discover how it achieves (or not) the status of dominant principle of vision and division as a result of struggles for what Bourdieu evocatively called ‘symbolic royalty.’

⁴⁶ On the historical manipulation, rationalizations and consequences of legal and ordinary ethnoracial labels, and the social dissensus they generate and thrive on, read Domínguez, *White by Definition*, particularly pp. 262–277.

⁴⁷ Rogers Brubaker, *Ethnicity without Groups*, Cambridge, MA 2004; Andreas Wimmer, ‘Race-Centrism: A Critique and Research Agenda’, *Ethnic & Racial Studies* vol. 38, no. 13, August 2015, pp. 2186–2205.

This article is dedicated to the Berkeley graduate students who served as readers for Soc131B over the years. It benefited considerably from the generous suggestions and sharp critiques of Aksu Akçaoğlu, Magali Bessone, Sarah Brothers, Rogers Brubaker, Jenae Carpenter, Mara Loveman, Ellis Monk, Chris Muller, Nazli Ökten, Daniel Sabbagh, Victor Lund Shammas, David Showalter and Andreas Wimmer.