

The Five I's of Five-O: Racial Ideologies, Institutions, Interests, Identities, and Interactions of Police Violence

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Abstract

The relationship between police violence and race is one fraught with both specific historical and contemporary tensions (i.e., white police profiling, beating, and murder of people of color) and with ambiguity (e.g., what is meant by “race” and how do we operationalize and measure “violence” at the hands of law enforcement?). Defining the concept of “race” as a multidimensional process of oppression and justification for social inequality can shed light on why and how police violence often descends upon black and Latino populations as well as why such brutality and state surveillance is supported by many whites yesterday and today. In this article I analyze the relationships between police violence and race as an ongoing feedback loop: “race” produces violence and inequality while violence and inequality (re)forms “race.” Their intertwined formation reproduces the dominant meanings and structural location of racial groups in five key domains: ideologies, institutions, interests, identities, and interactions – what I call “The Five I’s.”

Keywords

police, race, racism, sociology, theory, violence

When you are a Bear of Very Little Brain, and you Think of Things, you find sometimes that a Thing which seemed very Thingish inside you is quite different when it gets out into the open and has other people looking at it. (A. A. Milne, *Winnie-the-Pooh*, 1926: ch. 6)

Introduction

Any “Thing” can be a weapon. And when academics “Think of Things,” their definitions can impose particular meanings on social relations. For instance, George Fitzhugh published the first

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printed usage of the English word “sociology” in 1854. The book, entitled a *Sociology for the South*, attempted to rationalize and promote the paternalistic morality and usefulness of white-dominated, black-chattel slavery. Early on, that Thing called “sociology” took on a particular meaning in the service of a young *Herrenvolk* democracy.

In the 161 years since Fitzhugh’s treatise, Bears of Very Little (and Lots of) Brain have thought many things about both “sociology” and “race”: From white supremacist tracts that justified Jim Crow and advanced both biological determinism and racial essentialism (cf. Bryce 1902; Galton, 1904; Park and Washington, 1912), to biting criticisms of racial inequality, discrimination, and segregation (cf. Frazier, 1927; Du Bois, 1935; Ladner, 1973). In recent years, a host of voices – which arrived in the midst of outcry, scrutiny, and even defense of, police profiling and racialized violence – stand as a discordant choir; some wed the meaning of race to an ideology (Saito, 2015), to a political and economic project (Glenn, 2015), or to practices of oppression (Bonilla-Silva, 2015).

This discourse, taken into account with the crux of the A. A. Milne epigraph, begs us to question what Frantz Fanon (1964) and Aimé Césaire (2005 [1972]) called the “Thingification” of race¹ – especially in relation to modern sociological attempts to define “race” and explanations of the relationships between race, profiling, abuse, and murder at the hands of police and the state. That is, when we examine the relationships between race, police, and violence, about what kind of Things are we Thinking?

Race and the Problem of Action and Order

Modern sociology attempts to answer the “problem of action and order” (Hobbes, 2010 [1651]). The field proposes answers to why people do things (action) and why they do them in a specific, observed form (order). When the Thing called “race” enters the mix, a bevy of “sociological” explanations have been offered to explain (or explain away) the relationship between different racial groups and a host of varied outcomes (cf. Reskin, 2012).

In our contemporary moment, social scientists largely agree that “race” is a “social construction.” Yet, we are in the midst of a small yet virulent, biologically determinist-driven reaction.² Moreover, there are discordant and sometimes antagonistic views on what racial phenomena should be emphasized, and even disagreement over whether “race” is the cause or the effect of racial profiling! To remove this confusion and clarify the relationship between race and human behavior – in the case of police violence against people of color – it is necessary to outline a new approach.

First, there is a noted “effect of race” on police violence. We can easily observe such disparities between arrest rates or the likelihood of death at the hands of police across racial groups. But race is not a static Thing that possesses essential qualities that cause these disparities (what we call “racial essentialism”). When we view varying rates across racial groups, we are not observing an “effect of race” but a process of social domination that we call “race,” which leads to the next point.

Second, many earnest sociological thinkers view police violence as driven by a robust racist ideology. Others view the relationship as the product of macro-institutional dynamics. Still others see it as the result of micro-level interactional patterns. It is important to remember that all these dynamics occur simultaneously to create unequal outcomes across varying racial groups. Accordingly, when we view any particular racial outcome (in this case, the unequal “effect of race” on predicting police violence), we are observing a multidimensional process of domination in which the police habitually besiege certain racial groups while defending others.

Third, we must understand that the multidimensional activity of domination produces both the dominant meanings and structural location of “race” (cf. Bonilla-Silva, 2014, 2011; Omi and Winant, 2014). The always, already, ongoing accomplishment of “race” – what some call

“racialization” (Banton, 1978) – is a continuing process that may appear as a static ideology, or institutional pattern, or stable identity, depending on our vantage point and how “Thingish” or entrenched our disciplinary perspective is.

The Five I’s in Action: The Case of Police Violence

Rather than analyze racial profiling and police violence as only the cause, or just the effect, of one particular social phenomenon (in which the relationship would seem “very Thingish”), below I analyze the relationships between police violence and race as an ongoing feedback loop: “race” produces violence and inequality while violence and inequality (re)forms “race.” The intertwined formation of race and inequality reproduces the dominant meanings and structural location of racial groups in five key domains: ideologies, institutions, interests, identities, and interactions – what I call “The Five I’s.” These five areas are neither separate nor do they exist in a vacuum. However, they are presented below separately as a useful heuristic.

Ideologies: The Thin Blue Line³

One component of what we mean by “race” is ideological; certain beliefs about the division in the human population are collectively shared, understood as commonsense descriptions of the world, and serve as justification for who belongs in what racial group, what supposedly natural traits or characteristics that racial group holds, and how differing racial groups are arranged in the social order and hierarchy. Activities related to crime, guilt, and innocence are central to the legitimization of both the dominant meanings and material realities of the lived experiences of race.

For instance, the creation and reproduction of the American state and social order consistently linked nonwhites – particularly blacks – to criminal threats to American civility. The growth of the criminal justice system was often justified by an ideology that blacks held a natural predisposition to commit crime (Francis, 2014). Today, most Americans adhere to a set of racially essentialist ideologies that associate blacks and Latinos with criminality (Chiricos et al., 2004; Pickett et al., 2012; Welch et al., 2011). There is evidence that such ideologies are taken up early on; both children and teachers understand black boys as dangerous and inherently immoral (Ferguson, 2001).

Mass media often promotes that ideological linkage. Local news media portrays blacks as criminally threatening more than any other racial group (Chiricos and Eschholz, 2002; Entman and Rojecki, 2000). Latinos are the least likely racial group to be represented in the media, but their sparse representation is dominated by depictions of violent crime, licentiousness, and undocumented migration (often called “illegal immigration”) (Méndez-Méndez and Alverio, 2003). Overall, “Television news programs and newspapers over-represent racial minorities as crime suspects and whites as crime victims. Black and Latino suspects are also more likely than whites to be presented in a non-individualized and threatening way – unnamed and in police custody” (Ghandnoosh and Lewis, 2014).

Police employ both color-conscious and color-blind ideologies that disproportionately advantage whites, burden people of color with more profiling, arrests, and violence, and are counter-productive in the search for contraband. Black and Latino drivers are about twice as likely as white drivers to be arrested or receive a traffic ticket, whereas whites are much more likely to receive a written or verbal warning. And, once stopped, black and Latino drivers are two to three times more likely to be searched for weapons or drugs than whites – even though whites have a higher probability of transporting drugs, guns, or other contraband (US Department of Justice, 2007).

There is evidence that these ideological biases are deadly. A 2002 study entitled “The Police Officer’s Dilemma” presented photos of black and white men holding either a gun or a

non-threatening object (like a wallet) in a video game style setting. Participants were asked to make a rapid decision to “shoot” or “don’t shoot” based on whether the target was armed. Participants hesitated longer to shoot an armed white target (and they were more likely not to shoot) than a black target. Participants were also quicker and more accurate with black, armed targets than whites or unarmed targets and there were more “false alarms” (shooting black targets when they were unarmed) (Correll et al., 2002).

Racial profiling by police is an endemic problem (Parks and Hughey, 2010). For instance, in the late 2000s, the New York Police Department (NYPD) made approximately 1.6 million stops of people on the street – what was called the “stop and frisk” program. Eighty percent of total stops made were of blacks and Latinos, who comprised about 58% of New York City’s total population. During this same time period, only about 10% of stops were of whites, who comprise 44% of the city’s population. Whites comprised 8% and blacks comprised 85% of all individuals frisked by the NYPD. In addition, 34% of whites stopped during this time period were frisked, while 50% of blacks and Latinos stopped were frisked. A significant number of stops resulted in the use of physical force by the NYPD. Of those stops, a disproportionate number of blacks and Latinos had physical force used against them. Between 2005 and mid-2008, 17% of whites, compared to 24% of blacks and Latinos, had physical force used against them during NYPD-initiated encounters. And even though nonwhite people were stopped and frisked more than whites, whites were more likely than people of color to have contraband (Center for Constitutional Rights, 2009).

Similar tactics and programs have been recently instituted by the LAPD. Analysis of more than 700,000 cases in which LAPD officers stopped pedestrians and/or drivers of motor vehicles between July 2003 and June 2004 indicated similar results as with the NYPD. For every 10,000 residents, about 3400 more black people are stopped than whites, and 360 more Latinos are stopped than whites. Stopped blacks are 127% more likely to be frisked – and stopped Latinos are 43% more likely to be frisked – than stopped whites. Not only were blacks and Latinos subjected to more stops, frisks, searches, and arrests than whites, but these additional police actions were not correlated with higher-crime area, likelihood to possess contraband, or any legitimate variable (Ayers and Borowsky, 2008).⁴

Space is also ideologically racialized. Many officers target people of color in areas understood as “white space” (cf. Anderson, 2015; Moore, 2007) under the notion that people of color are “out of place” (cf. Glover, 2009) and which invite racialized social control policies in the guise of racially neutral and moral appeals to safety and space (Haar, 2014). For instance, on 5 August 2006 *The Washington Post* ran a story on a Washington, DC police commander’s statement that “black people were an unusual sight in Georgetown” and that to be “suspicious at the sight of a couple of young black men hanging out ... is not racial profiling, it is common sense” (Cauvin, 2006: B1). Hence, when black and brown people enter into white spaces, police can evoke a supposedly color-blind rationale that they are merely demographically unique cases that beg for surveillance due to their guilt by association with their own skin.

Institutions: Violent Militarization

Institutions are persistent structures of social order that govern the behavior of individuals in a specific community. Institutions have a distinct social purpose, specific resources, and expected rules of behavior – which are both formal and informal. And the meanings and structural locations of racial groups are (re)produced in various institutional settings, such as the institution of policing.

Police forces across the nation are becoming increasingly militarized. This increase has been disproportionately directed at people of color. The shift from an institutional culture of police

service to one of might and force was solidified in the 1960s – at the height of the Civil Rights Movement – with the rise of “SWAT” (Special Weapons And Tactics). In fact, the first prominent SWAT team was the Los Angeles Police Department’s that was formed in response to the Watts Riots of 1965 (in which many black and Latino communities rioted in the wake of a white police officer’s violent reaction during a traffic stop). Additionally, federal legislation (beginning with section 1208 of the 1990 National Defense Authorization Act and then section 1033 of the 1997 National Defense Authorization Act) authorized the transfer of military equipment (e.g., grenade launchers, fully automatic weapons, armored vehicles, and aircraft) to law enforcement agencies. By 2014, over 8000 local law enforcement agencies participated in the reutilization programs that have transferred \$5.1 billion in military hardware from the US Department of Defense to local American police agencies. In recent years, more police departments function like a military force designed for war.⁵ And this war is increasingly brought to the doorsteps of people of color; over the past 50 years, SWAT teams, military weapon-equipped police officers, and ex-military personal are more likely used against people of color and the poor than against whites or the middle-class (Jacobs and O’Brien, 1998).

In the wake of recent, high profile killings of young black men and women by white police officers, many have uncritically parroted the belief that there is a rise in shootings of black men due to police hyper-militarization. While the measurement of this trend is complicated, several tenable conclusions can be drawn.

First, since the late 1990s, at least 400 people have been killed each year by police in the USA.⁶ Second, if we analyze data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s National Vital Statistics System (NVSS),⁷ we find that from 1968 to 2011 black people were between two to eight times more likely to die at the hands of law enforcement than whites (annual average of 4.2 times more likely) (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2015). Third, the variables of gender, age, and income add importance nuance to the discrepancy between white and black mortality rates at the hands of police (see Figure 1).

Between 1960 and 2010, 15,699 US deaths were due to “legal intervention” (death by law enforcement). Of those, 63.3% (n=9934) occurred among men age 15–34; 5489 were classified as white (55.3%) and 4204 as black (42.3%). The ratio for deaths due to legal intervention of black vs white men always exceeded 2.5 (with a median of 4.5) and ranged from 10.1 in 1969 to 2.6 in 2001. Importantly, the lack of a difference in the unequal black-white race ratio by county-level income in the 1980s stands as a vital corrective to those that would say there is a declining significance of race in the face of rising class inequality. That is, while death rates decline over time, *both* class and race shape the likelihood of murder by police.

We should be careful not to confuse the downward trend of murder with a rise in racially equitable treatment by police across the color line. It behooves us to take a critical interpretation of the data whereby a decline in police deaths signals an increase of police and state hegemony. For example, take into account the case of Prince George’s County, Maryland. Prince George is Maryland’s second most populous county and has been one of the country’s richest black suburbs for the past 20 years. Yet it has witnessed a rising string of brutal beatings and shootings at the hands of the police while it has become a site of black social-economic upward mobility (Coates, 2001). If we consider that forms of social control violence by vigilante groups and lynch mobs like the Red Shirts and Ku Klux Klan came *after* the demise of slavery (Beck and Tolnay, 1990), then the relationship between rising police violence and upward black socio-economic mobility appears hegemonic. Refer again to Figure 1, which demonstrates that the height of modern police murder coincided with the 1960s and the push for racial equality under the Civil Rights Movement. Such a correlation between state sanctioned murder and social control then necessitates the importance of understanding police violence as an institutional dynamic.

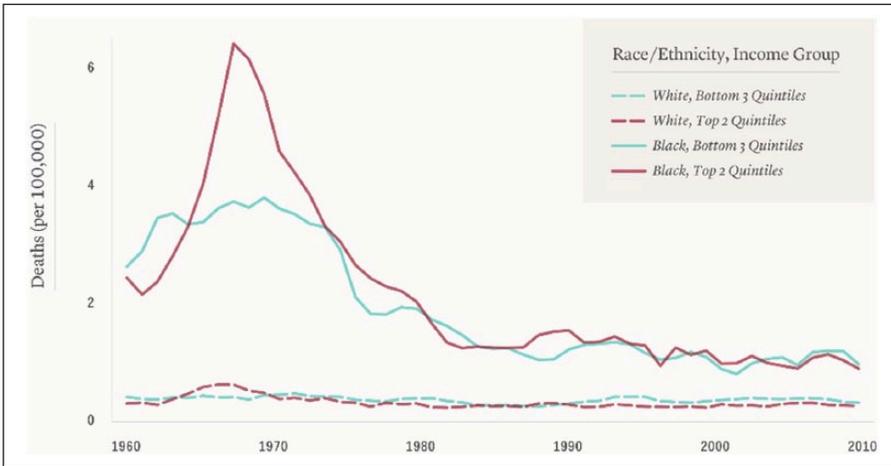


Figure 1. Deaths due to legal intervention among males, 15–34 year old. (Source: Krieger et al., 2015).

Interests: Defending Inequality

An “interest” can be any perceived resource or goal. When groups organize, they come to see certain resources or goals as necessary. They may recognize other groups as threats to those goals or resources and feel them unworthy in relation to their own entitlement. For example, whites often interpret particular resources or goals as unfairly threatened by “undeserving” blacks and Latinos (Bobo, 1999; Hughey, 2014).

The very origins of the “race” concept were intimately crocheted with police protection of varied settler colonialist and slave-based economic interests. Williams and Murphy (1989) found that many of the first “police” forces in the Deep South were formed to protect race-based chattel property. By the late 1700s, slave patrols were “authorized to stop, search, whip, maim, and even kill any African slave caught off the plantation without a pass, engaged in illegal activities or running away” (Dulaney, 1996: 2).

Over the past two centuries, many whites have come to believe that they are enmeshed in a zero-sum game of interest-competition with people of color, particularly blacks (Norton and Sommers, 2011: 217). Moreover, many whites now believe that they are the new victims of a racial order turned anti-white in which people of color are given *carte blanche* to behave in any manner in which they please, and that people of color receive an array of unearned advantages – from affirmative action seats in higher education, to welfare-related “handouts,” to political opportunities. Hence many whites support active policing of nonwhite communities and persons as a means of social control (cf. Bonilla-Silva, 2014; Haney-López, 2014; Hughey and Parks, 2014; Mendelberg, 2001; Parks and Hughey, 2011).

For instance, in the wake of the recent media attention to black men killed at the hands of white police officers – especially after the civil unrest documented in Ferguson, Missouri, in late 2014 – many whites have shown an *increased* belief that police treat blacks fairly. Before the unrest in Ferguson, 41% of whites said they had a “great deal” of confidence that police officers treat blacks and whites equally. After the unrest and subsequent media coverage in December 2014, there was an 11-percentage-point jump whereby 52% of whites had a “great deal” of confidence that police officers treat blacks fairly (Clement, 2014).

Research on “group threat” helps to explain this phenomenon. When the dominant racial group perceives a subordinated racial group as a threat to economic, political, or other interests, the dominant group is more likely to engage in discriminatory social control practices against the subordinated group (cf. Taylor and Mateyka, 2011). For instance, when whites perceive blacks as threats to “their” economic resources, it is likely that white support of punitive measures toward blacks will increase (Bobo, 1999; Dollar, 2014; King and Wheelock, 2007).

Moreover, the largely white-supported “Stand Your Ground” laws allow people to use “proportionate force” in the face of an attack without first trying to retreat or escape. More than 20 US states have such a law, such as the one employed in the Florida courtroom defense of George Zimmerman’s “not guilty” killing of the black teenager Trayvon Martin in 2012. But such laws are not color-blind. Roman and Downey (2012) analyzed 4650 FBI records of homicides in which a person killed a stranger with a handgun. They compared the likelihood by race of a favorable finding for the defendant in “Stand Your Ground” and “non-Stand Your Ground” cases. Their finding was clear: “Stand Your Ground” laws increased the likelihood of a “not guilty” finding, but only when a white person was accused of killing a black person.⁸

Identities: The Violence of Belonging

Identity is the distinctive characteristic belonging to any given individual, or shared by all members of a particular social category or group. Racial identity, then, has to do with social membership in a particular racial group – both the sense of belonging one has, and how others feel about their proper fit within a racial group.

The dominant and ideal meanings of white racial identity – what I have elsewhere called “hegemonic whiteness” (Hughey, 2010, 2012) – are formed and regulated through intra- and inter-racial distinctions. In any given setting or context an ideal of whiteness emerges alongside many other ways of “being white” that are complicit, subordinate, or marginalized in relation to that ideal (intra-racial distinctions), as well as nonwhite racial groups (inter-racial distinctions).⁹ Participation in, and support of, police violence and social control of poor whites and people of color helps align one with an ideal or “hegemonic whiteness.” As Nevels (2007) points out in *Lynching to Belong*, and as Lipsitz (1998) makes clear in *The Possessive Investment in Whiteness*, vigilante and police violence toward people of color and poor whites were not so much undertaken by white people with a static and fully formed racial identity but were important social expectations, rules, and rituals which helped to form their white racial identity in distinction to those under attack and control.

Moreover, both participating in and supporting police violence is an effect of the very construction of “hegemonic whiteness” itself. White support of police violence occurs because most white people cannot fundamentally achieve the superiority they are taught should be a natural consequence of their racial identity. When whites fall short of that ideal (as was explained in the above section on interests), many blame subordinate whites and/or people of color, for the lack of total domination. Accordingly, violence toward poor or somehow deficient whites and toward people of color is often understood as a necessary action to return the social order, and white people’s place atop it, to its supposedly natural arrangement.¹⁰ The very construction of white identity sows the seeds of its own violence toward others. In so much as the dominant meanings of whiteness are reconstructed as innately superior and innocent in relation to people of color, whites will continue to support police violence against what they believe is the inherent criminality of people of color, which hampers the achievement of a fully superior white life. In this sense, the formation of white angst and reactionary support of the police may not be not so much an individual “private trouble” but instead the manifestation of a much larger “public issue” (Mills, 1959).

Interactions: Predators and Protection

Social interactions regularly occur between two or more individuals. These interactions are often habitual, patterned, scripted, governed by formal or informal rules, and become shared expectations or maps that help us navigate everyday encounters. In these interactions, people develop, and then come to rely on, shared meanings that people impose on objects, events, and behaviors. These interpretations are what W. I. Thomas (1896) called the “definition of the situation.”

The interactions between police and communities of color have increasingly been viewed not as a helpful relationship whereby police are the servants of the public good, but as predators in an occupied territory. There is a great deal of “bad blood” between police and communities of color (cf. Bolton and Feagin, 2004; Brunson, 2007; Parker et al., 1995; Tyler, 2005). For instance, nationally representative surveys indicate that blacks and Latinos are more likely than whites to report negative interactions with police, to be exposed to media reports of police misconduct, and to live in high-crime neighborhoods where policing may be contentious (Weitzer and Tuch, 2004).

The material realities of nonwhite experiences with police violence indicate how high levels of mistrust came to be. In fact, the “father of black psychology,” Joseph White (1980), once observed that black people should have a healthy paranoia toward both the police and whites that defend the police. In this vein, recent scholarship has found whites to have less empathy for black people than for other whites (cf. Forman, 2004; Forman and Lewis, 2006). For instance, an experiment revealed that when viewing images of both a dark- and a light-skinned person being harmed, most people reacted with more empathy for the light-skinned person (Trawalter et al., 2012).

People have less empathy for blacks than for whites in an array of settings. Black patients are over three times more likely than white patients to have limbs amputated as a result of diabetes (Lefebvre and Lavery, 2011). Moreover, black patients are systematically undertreated for pain and are less likely than whites to receive pain medication and, when they do, they receive less (Drwecki et al., 2011; Todd et al., 2000). Black men in particular are stereotyped as dangerous and physically tough – qualities that many may think makes them less susceptible to pain (Cottrell and Neuberg, 2005; Payne, 2001). Scholarship on dehumanization indicates that black men are infra-humanized, which is associated with whites’ support of police brutality against blacks (Goff et al., 2008).

Moreover, even when whites learn of the unfair and rather large racial gaps in arrest, conviction, and sentencing rates, they tend to agree more with the laws and policies that create those rates. For instance, in one experiment, one group of whites watched a video in which 25% of the images were of black inmates. A second group of whites watched a video in which 45% of photos were of black inmates. After viewing the mug shots, all participants were informed about California’s “three-strikes” law (which mandates harsh sentences on habitual offenders with three or more convictions) and asked to rate it on a scale of 1 (“not punitive enough”) to 7 (“too punitive”). Then participants were shown a petition to amend the law to make it less harsh, which they could sign if they wanted. More than 50% of the participants in group one agreed to sign the petition. But of the whites in the second group, only 28% agreed to sign. And punitiveness did not affect the result. The outcome was the same for participants who said the law was too harsh as well as for those who said it was not harsh enough (Hetey and Eberhardt, 2014).

Police function not just as a legal authority but as a fraternal brotherhood in which members hold deep-seated expectations to adhere to a code of silence and to protect one another from harm, whether in the line of duty or to cover up wrong-doing (cf. Mastrofski et al., 2002). This code of silence extends to other branches of the criminal justice system as well. Expectations of internal cooperation by any means necessary have resulted in a trend whereby police are hardly ever charged, indicted, or prosecuted in relation to on-duty killings (Stinson et al., 2015). Between 2005 and 2014, only 54 officers nationwide were criminally charged after they shot and killed someone

in the line of duty.¹¹ Of those 54 officers, only 11 were convicted. And in 80% of those cases, at least one of the following occurred: (1) the victim was shot in the back, (2) there was a video recording of the incident, (3) other officers testified against the shooter or (4) a cover-up was alleged (*The Washington Post*, 2015). Even though the former New York state Chief Judge Sol Wachtler famously remarked that a prosecutor could persuade a grand jury to “indict a ham sandwich” (in *New York Daily News*, 1985: 46), officers are rarely indicted or charged for on-duty killings (Stinson et al., 2015). Prosecutors may acknowledge the racial politics in play, recognizing both public pressure and statistical probabilities that bringing charges against a white officer who kills a person of color, even if it is a strong case, will be both publicly opposed and unlikely to result in conviction.¹²

Conclusion

‘I have been Foolish and Deluded,’ said he, ‘and I am a Bear of No Brain at All.’ (A. A. Milne, *Winnie-the-Pooh*, 1926: ch. 3)

If we come to understand the Thing called “race” as an dynamic and ongoing multidimensional practice toward the reproduction of inequality, then we should move beyond both scholarly and layperson comprehensions of race as either static identities or fixed ideologies. An understanding of the processes and contexts that produce race, how race is imbued with particular meanings, and how race constrains and enables pathways of human action and order is necessary if we are to provide social science in the interest of those on the underside of police violence.

The “Five I” approach stands against such views of social life that are individualistic and which analyze society only in terms of psychological make-up, skills, and atomistic behaviors. On the one hand, some argue that the key to eliminating police violence is the removal of “bad apple” officers from the overall orchard, even as it systematically and habitually blossoms “strange fruit” from its boughs. On the other hand, some posit that a reprieve from police violence is found in compliant behavior – what some term the “politics of respectability” – even as profiling, beatings, and deaths occur across black and brown communities intersected by class lines, across geographic areas, and regardless of wrongdoing. These assumptions gesture toward a belief that social structures will magically change via one’s hard work, good intentions, or education. History affords too many examples of participation by the “righteous,” “educated,” and “hard-working” in structures of oppression to allow any objective observer of social life to accept the notion that equitable or just social arrangements are based entirely on the redemption of the individual without direct attention to external social forces.

Rather, we must focus on the aforementioned dimensions of how “race” operates as a systematic process of domination – from laws and policies on the habits and techniques of policing to the juggernaut of the for-profit prison system, and from the unequal outcomes in criminal justice sentencing to the high unemployment rates across an increasingly black and brown class of ex-felons. Focus on the ideologies, institutions, interests, identities, and interactions of police violence demonstrates the operation of tyranny and white rage against the ‘browning’ of America and the upward socio-economic mobility of people of darker hues. Only then can we see the Thing called “race” as a system of white supremacy, that

... concedes nothing without a demand. It never did and it never will. Find out just what any people will quietly submit to and you have found out the exact measure of injustice and wrong which will be imposed upon them, and these will continue till they are resisted with either words or blows, or with both. The limits of tyrants are prescribed by the endurance of those whom they oppress. (Douglass, 1950 [1857])

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Notes

1. Césaire contends that “colonization = thingification” (2005 [1972]: 62), while Fanon (1964: 14) wrote that when we “thingify” someone we dissolve him “on the basis on an idea, an idea you know to be repulsive ... emptying him of his substance.” Thingification is the process by which definitions of unequal social relations are reified as neutral or positive “things” but which reproduce domination. Compare with Bourdieu’s concept of “symbolic violence” and the power of naming: “*official naming*, a symbolic act of imposition which has on its side all the strength of the collective, of the consensus, of common sense, because it is performed by a delegated agent of the state, that is, the holder of the *monopoly of legitimate symbolic violence*” (Bourdieu, 1991 [1982]: 239; emphasis in original).
2. Confer recent issues of *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* (forthcoming 2015); *The British Journal of Sociology* 66(1); *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 37(10); ISIS, *Journal of the History of Science Society* 105(4); *PLOS Medicine* 4(9); *Social Studies of Science* 38(5); *Sociological Theory* 32(3).
3. In the US, police use a symbol to refer to themselves – a thin blue line on a black background. That line represents a particular relationship between three things. First, the black space above the blue line represents the community or public who is assumed deserving of both help and protection. Second, the black space below the blue line represents the bad and evil criminals who seek to harm the public. And third, the blue line represents the police who first indicate who is criminal, who is innocent, and keeping those two apart without interference.
4. Despite this ideological regime of racialized terror, the supposed goal of discovering illegal activities and contraband (namely illicit drugs and weapons) is not reached. In fact, in 2006 for example, 21.5 blacks were stopped for each arrest of a black person as opposed to only 18.2 whites stopped for each white arrest. Yet police found guns, drugs, or stolen property on whites about twice as often as they did on black suspects. That is, whites were stopped on suspicion of possessing a weapon at a rate lower than their weapon-possession arrest rate, while blacks were stopped on suspicion of possessing a weapon at a rate greater than their weapon-possession arrest rate (Ridgeway, 2007). These findings indicate that such police profiling was not only unjustly motivated but pragmatically ineffective! Research consistently shows that blacks are not more likely (in fact, they may be less likely) than whites to use drugs (Wu et al., 2011), yet they are four times as likely to be arrested on drug possession charges (American Civil Liberties Union, 2013).
5. A 2010 Bureau of Labor statistics study found that 10% of all employed male military veterans ages 18 to 54 work in some sort of law enforcement career – such as police, sheriff officers, correctional officers, and/or bailiffs.
6. This number is conservative and is likely much higher due to underreporting. It derives from the FBI’s uniform crime reporting program that collects data from the more than 18,000 law enforcement agencies to provide statistics about crime and law enforcement in the US. From this program, we know that there were 14,827 homicides and non-negligent manslaughters in 2012, the latest year for available data as of March of 2015. However, there are four major problems with the validity of this data. First, as of now, there is no law requiring agencies to submit justifiable homicide data – the “Supplementary Homicide Report” (SHR) – to participate in the FBI program. This makes the largest database of justifiable homicides in the US incredibly inaccurate. Only about 750 of the 18,000 law enforcement agencies provide statistics (cf. Bump, 2014). For example, the entire state of New York (the third most populous state, which also had 684 killings in 2012) does not report justifiable homicide data to the FBI (cf. Molla, 2014). In another example, the Los Angeles Police Department was compelled to admit in a lawsuit that there were 79 fatal police shootings from 2000–2005 but they had reported on only 38 (Carter, 2012). Second, the numbers are not audited after they are submitted to the FBI and the statistics on “justifiable” homicides have conflicted with independent measures of fatalities at the hands of the police (cf. Johnson

et al., 2014). For instance, “Felon killed by police” refers narrowly to justifiable police homicides, and “unjustifiable homicide by police” is not a classification. This means that it is difficult to combine unjustifiable police homicides – which could be listed as crimes elsewhere in the database – with “justifiable” police homicides (cf. Fischer-Baum, 2014). Third, if the legality of a police homicide is in question, it may not be reported to the FBI SHR until the investigation is resolved. If the investigation concludes in a new reporting year, the old SHR data may not be updated, regardless of whether the killing was found to be justifiable or not (cf. Fischer-Baum, 2014). Fourth, police killings in federal jurisdictions, such as federal prisons or military bases, are not included in the database (cf. Fischer-Baum, 2014).

7. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s cause-of-death data is based on death certificates collected at the state level. The NVSS includes the cause of death classifications “homicide” and homicide by “legal intervention,” which is the general equivalent of the FBI “Supplementary Homicide Report” and is a much more reliable statistic (cf. Fischer-Baum, 2014).
8. It is important to note that white people who kill black people are far more likely to be found not-guilty (even in states *without* Stand Your Ground laws) than black people who kill white people (again, regardless of any Stand Your Ground laws).
9. Amanda Lewis (2004: 634) wrote that: “Whiteness works in distinct ways for and is embodied quite differently by homeless white men, golf-club-membership-owning executives, suburban soccer moms, urban hillbillies, antiracist skinheads, and/or union-card-carrying factory workers ... In any particular historical moment, however, certain forms of whiteness become dominant.”
10. I theorize that white racial identity formation turns on the pursuit of hegemonic whiteness, which itself is a function what Bonnett (2000) calls “white fragility” or the inability to achieve and maintain a nearly impossible level of social superiority: “Whiteness has often been experienced as something very vulnerable, as an identity under threat. ... the fragility of whiteness is a direct product of the extraordinary claims of superiority made on its behalf” (Bonnett, 2000: 39).
11. Of those 54 cases, 44 of the officers were white, 33 of the victims were black, and in none of the 54 cases did a black officer fatally shoot a white person.
12. In 2010, US attorneys prosecuted approximately 162,000 federal cases. Grand juries declined to return an indictment in only 11 of them. However, cases involving police shootings of black men and women are an exception.

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