

RACE AND IDEOLOGY: AN INTRODUCTION

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Preamble

As Du Bois's (1961 [1903]) words lead us to expect, race has been a major problem worldwide in the 20th century. Had he lived, he might have come to another conclusion concerning the U.S. specifically: America cannot be America without racism (cf. Bell 1992). Racism, and its byproduct colorstruction (Spears 1992), also termed colorism (color hierarchies in communities of color), is so integral a part of American institutions that an America without racism would be a distinctly new thing, created necessarily by a radical social transformation. This, of course, contradicts many people's view of the U.S. as a nation fundamentally about freedom and justice for all, one that is meanwhile working out superficial flaws that come to us as part of a historical legacy. In reality, it is the mechanism of racism that has made possible the continuation of the American economic and political system, whose founding documents reaffirm subordination based on race, class, and gender. Racism in the U.S., as in all white-supremacist societies, is institutionalized, woven into the fabric of all American institutions (Fanon 1968 [1961], Blauner 1972) and it is diligently maintained by the economic and power elites who so greatly profit from it (see below).¹ Racism against people of color appeases white working people (working- and middle-class whites), as well as the white underclass, who are simply higher in the hierarchy of exploited groups. The leader of the world economic community is also the leader in maintaining and spreading white supremacy in the world. This should not be seen as a cause for despair, but as a call for sober pragmatism and solid work for change.

This book is concerned with the ways in which racism, along with and other forms of oppression, is partially maintained by the dissemination of ideology, through words, images, and behavior. Racial hierarchies maintain differential access to wealth and power, which is the central reason for the existence of racial categorization. Every U.S. textbook that I have examined obscures the true nature function of, not only racial, but also ethnic categorization (cf. van Dijk 1993). Many do not even list the word *racism* in their indexes (though all provide, sometimes grossly inadequate, definitions and discussions of racism in the text). Most of them discuss prejudice and stereotypes as givens, as though they have a life of their own, largely independent of political and economic factors. Virtually none of them attend to how major mainstream institutions, publishing included, structure racist ("ethnicist," sexist, classist, and heterosexist) discourses and images into their products.

There are many volumes fully or partially devoted to discussions of race and ideology from diverse perspectives. However, here is a tendency for works on race not to relate their discussions explicitly to a macro-framework for understanding the dynamics and causes of oppression in general, especially as it affects both nonelite whites and people of color. Almost all of the works on race and ideology lack a macro-framework, probably under the often unjustified

assumption that the reader brings an adequate framework to the reading.² As a result of my conversations with academics in a number of disciplines and with nonacademics, I do not believe this assumption is usually warranted. Many people are very clear and knowledgeable about certain aspects of the big picture, but seem to falter in making linkages and drawing fundamental conclusions. Many serious people seem simply to prefer not to think deeply about race and racism, fearing perhaps that they will be labeled as whining victims or co-conspirators. A brief framework is presented in this introduction in response to such concerns.

Until the post-World War II period, racism was based principally on false ideas of biologically based inferiority. The inferiority it claimed was innate. The more recent neoracism is subtler, in most cases claiming a cultural basis for what is seen as low achievement by people of color. This view is erroneously based on various unproved factors such as cultures of poverty, lack of entrepreneurial traditions, unstable family structures, teenage pregnancy, single motherhood, deficient languages, and anti-intellectualism. However, claims of inferior genetic endowment, for African Americans in particular, still circulate. Neoracism rationalizes the subordination of people of color on the basis of culture, which of course is acquired through acculturation within an ethnic group,³ while traditional racism rationalizes it fundamentally in terms of biology. Neoracism is still racism in that it functions to maintain racial hierarchies of oppression. Its new ideological focus on culture has the same function, and provides a vast new field to mine for supposed causes of the lower achievement of groups of color based on dysfunctional attitudes, values, and orientations. As soon as one false theory is overturned by painstaking social science research, another is fabricated. Previous research is frequently ignored. Claims of cultural deficit constitute only one of neoracism's strategies. Another major strategy involves the mass media, which, through selection, emphasis, and omission, portray blacks and other groups of color (not to mention women, the working classes, and other oppressed groups) in negative and stereotyped ways. Finally, the educational system has always played a key role in disseminating racist ideologies; its role under neoracism continues with a shift in content and method. Even university level academic production has with one hand supported and purveyed racist thought, while with the other strongly supported antiracism (Baker and Patterson 1994).

New in education in terms of method, or policy if you will, is the systematic miseducation in most public schools of working-class children, white and nonwhite, but more damaging to children of color. The learning abilities of these children are dulled and their sense of self-discipline and self-esteem eroded. It is the perfect educational system for assisting in taming an assertive population that tends to feel strongly about being wronged. Although some students do well in spite of the system, my college teaching experiences offer stunning examples of miseducation. A student asks why Spanish is spoken in South America. Another does not know where South America is on the map. Many students cannot write simple, understandable sentences, among them student teachers who will be teaching in a public school the following semester. Some of them are illiterate, not just *functionally* illiterate: they cannot put letters together to make words, except for simplest and commonest ones such as *dog*, *a*, and *cat*. Several have told me that they were illiterate when they graduated from high school, and some students I know have graduated from college functionally illiterate.

As part of the neoracist educational strategy, public (and private) schools continue to teach a distorted version of American history. For example, history classes generally ignore the

many interconnections among people of color throughout American history, such as those between blacks and Native Americans (Harrison 1995, Forbes 1988) and between Chinese Americans and blacks, to take two examples. Interesting in the latter case is the amalgamation and cooperation that occurred in the Mississippi Delta area, particularly before many of the Chinese were able to rise to the status of small-business entrepreneurs.⁴ The fact that groups of color have often suffered from the same kinds of oppression is typically not pointed out. For example, Native Americans were enslaved as were blacks (and whites [Bennett 1987]); both African Americans and Mexican Americans have been victimized by segregated schools, lynching, and debt peonage. Another generally avoided topic is the history of resistance by people of color.⁵

The mass media's role in shaping thought and opinions and racist ideology has greatly increased in the post-war period owing to the great growth in their size and reach, attaining monopoly proportions. Monopoly has led to the placement of unprecedented power for shaping thought in the hands of a few conglomerates (Bagdikian 1987, Herman and Chomsky 1988). As Chomsky (1977) has noted, the U.S. has the narrowest range of mass media political discourse of any of the major economic powers. This can be verified by perusing newsstands in the cities of other countries. This augmented role of the mass media, particularly television and film, which typically present propaganda masquerading as entertainment, make the study of the media and their impact on popular culture all the more important.

The world problem of racial categorization and the racism that is an integral part of that categorization, is driven in many ways by the global presence of the U.S., through the export of mass media products, fashion, images and standards of beauty, and corporate products and administration techniques. The influx of American (and European) capital into regions of less economically developed countries with no color hierarchies or milder ones has produced comparatively extreme racialization in hitherto relatively uncolor-coded social terrains. The establishment in Cuba by American business and crime organizations of racial segregation, which was not abolished until Castro's takeover, is one of the better known instances. (See Whitten 1974 on Ecuador and Colombia.) The U.S. is not simply just another country. Aspects of American society and culture often have worldwide impact. Thus, in learning more about American racial dynamics, we learn more also about something that continues to infect on a global scale.

The purpose of this collection is to explore race and racism as they affect African Americans and other nonwhites in the U.S. and abroad. The primary emphasis is on African Americans; however, the chapters dealing with other groups serve to underline commonalities in the experience of racism and in the transmission of racist values as they occur in diverse national and ethnic contexts. While there would be no argument that all of the groups discussed in these pages are groups of color, there may be some question as to whether all are nonwhite, particularly if one thinks of *white* as equivalent to the racial term *Caucasian*. There might be some confusion because, for example, at least some of the people of the Indian subcontinent are in racial classifications considered Caucasian, but they are not normally considered white. This is relevant in the case of the Rom (Gypsies), who trace their origins to India and whose language, Romani, is Indo-European. (It would, however, be a mistake to assume that all of the Rom can trace their biological descent back to India.) In the final analysis, these considerations all amount to a nonissue. The Rom tend to be darker-skinned than the whites surrounding them in

Europe and North American. Their history of oppression reads like that of the peoples of the African diaspora. The last Gypsy slaves in Europe were freed only in the latter half of the 19th century (in Romania); a half a million died in the Holocaust, along with Jews and homosexuals. And their oppression continues (Hancock 1986). Furthermore, the terms *white* and *Caucasian* are not scientific, reliable, or explanatory; whiteness changes through time and space (Gregory and Sanjek 1994; Reynolds and Lieberman 1996), and who is Caucasian depends on the particular pseudo-scientific model of race that informs one's use of the term. Of course, most people use the two terms interchangeably and subjectively. In this volume, Gypsies are considered nonwhite due not solely to color (after all, some African Americans are fair-skinned, blue-eyed, and blond) but due also to their history of oppression resulting from the structural position they occupy in the white-controlled societies they inhabit.

Too often, African Americans and other nonwhites fail to consider their struggles within a broader framework of oppression that would pinpoint common concerns, not solely for other groups of color but also for women, lesbians and gays, and other oppressed groups, especially nonelite whites, including the much criticized white male heterosexual (who is often presumed not to belong to any oppressed group). Indeed, one of the key considerations that has been almost consistently ignored in the literature on race and racism is that nonelite (i.e., middle- and working-class) whites do not constitute the primary source of racist values. Rather they are led and coordinated in their racism by the policies, discourses, and symbolism manufactured by white elites and their representatives. This point has been made by Gran (1994) and ably elaborated by Du Bois (1969 [1935]) and van Dijk (1993).

Often works that are written either fully or partially by scholars of color, as is the case with this book, are dismissed as being subjective or biased. This is but one tactic in the marginalization of scholars of color. But why should scholars of color, who have much to gain from a usable analysis of race and racism based on qualitative and quantitative research, be more subjective or biased than white scholars, who clearly, as members of the white group, have something to gain from misrepresenting the true nature of a white supremacist system that licenses them to benefit from skin-color privilege? Moreover, recent critical studies have done much to debunk the myth of the possibility of total objectivity. Many whites find it difficult to confront the fact that their social position, within a white supremacist nation and world capitalist system, may owe more to white privilege than to skills and knowledge. The truly humanitarian impulse in the late 20th century is to resign from whiteness and all that it entails in order to join the rest of humanity. To resign from whiteness is to reject the inequalities and forms of exploitation for which it serves as the foundation. Resignation from whiteness is indeed possible since whiteness is a state of mind and a regime of behavior. It is a social construction and changes over time in response to political and economic needs.

All of the phenomena indicated by the titles of this book's chapters have commonalities due to their inclusion under the global canopy of race and racism. This is their context whether implicit or explicit, and they affect and are affected by race and racism. If not at the table, race and racism are the ghost interlocutors. While some chapters are more direct than others, all of them are ultimately about the struggle for cultural freedom in the face of the constraining force of race/racism nationally and globally. They approach this struggle, variously, through cultural and ideological analysis and critique. Amilcar Cabral and Frantz Fanon among others have

instructed us on the centrality of culture in emancipation; this volume continues in the direction they have signaled.

Although most of the contributors are in anthropology and/or linguistics (which itself is a major subfield of anthropology), this volume is problem-oriented rather than discipline-oriented. It is more diagnostic than programmatic and is intended to provide information useful in the development of emancipatory theories and practices.

Among the most important goals of this volume is to emphasize, by the juxtaposition of the chapters within it, the necessity for unifying the study of oppression by considering as many fronts as possible, and by considering them within some unifying framework and through the perspective provided by a unifying theme. The theme in this volume is ideology, one side of the coin of oppression. The other side, of course, is coercion, through the many methods of physical force. Consequently, the core interest within these pages is in *an emancipation-oriented treatment of race/racism as illuminated by the concept of ideology*.

Below, I present a macro-framework for the study of oppression that is intended to aid us in pinpointing connections and contradictions. The chapters deal not only with discourse, but also with policies, images, institutions, and facets of popular culture.

Another goal is to provide a detailed discussion of cultural self-critique: identifying an aspect of the culture of a people of color, colorstruction, which is a byproduct of patriarchal white supremacy. With colorstruction, there is at once a connection to racism and a contradiction, a people struggling against racism but harboring a form of it within themselves. Skin-bleaching among people of color is but one example of a behavior reflecting white-supremacist racism directed against the self.⁶ People of color cannot simply blame white power elites. Agency is everywhere, and oppressed peoples everywhere are wont to participate to varying degrees in their own oppression. Even the most brutalized slave has options of resistance and accommodation; s/he can always resort to sabotage and revolt, for example, or, to put it bluntly, commit suicide in revolt. Analyses of white-power-elite culpability cannot truly fulfill their emancipatory function unless they are complemented by analyses of internalized oppression within individuals and cultural domination within groups.

Race and Racism

The concept of race is not scientific. A mountain of scientific research firmly establishes it as pseudo-science (see Reynolds and Lieberman 1996 and the references cited there). It is a sociocultural concept, created and sustained in the minds of humans living in or aware of racialized societies.

Several points can be considered briefly to understand why race is not a scientific concept. Race, again, is based on biological features of humans, but not all of them. The notion of race has been tied principally to visible human features, which allowed pseudo-scientific race studies to take off in the 18th century, primary among them color, facial features, and cranium and skeleton shape and size. These features figure most prominently in the popular mind in thinking about race and consequently are useful in a basic discussion.

The first problem with racial classification is that it does not allow for the scientific definition, which minimally must be precise, of discrete groups of individuals. A superficial familiarity with the world's peoples may make it seem that they can be neatly categorized on the

basis of features such as hair texture; skin color; and eye, nose, and lip shape. However, a broader knowledge makes it clear that these traits do not vary together. For example, Caucasian is the category including those with pale or olive skin, straight or wavy hair, straight noses or ones nearly so, thinner lips, and eyes without the epicanthic fold. (Eyes with the epicanthic fold are typical of Japanese, for example, and some other Asians, but also some Africans). Admittedly, this talk of size is somewhat mushy, but so are racial types.

This Caucasian category presents problems because there are pale people with kinky hair (all over the Americas, for example); very dark-skinned people with straight hair (Dravidians in India, for example); and dark-skinned people with wavy blond hair, flattish round noses, and full lips (Native Australians). The features, in other words, do not form a stable set. They do not covary. "Problem" populations such as Native Australians simply caused race pseudo-scientists to create new categories and reorganize their racial systems, leading to the creation of more and more races and subraces.

Nor are these "racial" traits inherited together. They are inherited separately; thus, we have the extremely wide range of looks due to "race mixing," witnessed in the Americas for example. The separate inheritance of genes for physical traits also creates the odd situation of several races existing among the offspring of one nuclear family.

Hence the fourth problem: physical types vary gradually, in clines, as we cross the globe north to south and east to west. The physical traits in question do not allow for the setting up of discrete groups. This makes it impossible to identify racial boundaries. We have only a gradual fading of one type into another. For example, the skin color changes gradually moving from southern Africa (light-brown to brown), Equatorial Africa (very dark brown), to North Africa (dark brown, brown to olive and fair), on up to northern Europe (generally fair).

Fifth, racial traits can change from one generation to the next with a change in environment and nutrition. This is notably true of skin color and cranium measurements (Lieberman and Reynolds 1996). Consequently, the rather ridiculous situation can occur in which parents of one and the same race have children of another race, that is, if definitions of race are followed strictly.

Sixth, the physical traits that racial categories are based on do not tell us anything interesting about people. Negroidness (kinky hair, dark skin color, full lips, etc.), for example, does not allow us to predict either intelligence or the gene for the sickling trait, which can cause sickle cell anemia or simply provide resistance against malaria. Blood type, to take another physical feature, does not vary according to race. Racial groupings that do not reveal anything interesting about people themselves and that relate only to how they are treated by others due to preconceived ideas, are otherwise useless.

What some biologists and physical anthropologists refer to as *populations* can be precisely defined (for example, on the basis of blood type) leading to meaningful, scientifically useful results.⁷ However, the traits used in defining populations are unevenly spread across racial groups, so one cannot use these features to resurrect racial classification and at the same time continue to identify what are popularly conceived of as races.

Race is a sociocultural category, and more specifically it is ideological in the critical sense that concerns us. Not just any collection of ideas, ideology is a set of ideas put to work in the justification and maintenance of vested interests. Ideology in the critical sense is typically used in reference to power elites, who use ideology to rationalize their power and the

exploitation of other groups. Racial categories are integrated into a racial hierarchy arranged on an inferiority-superiority scale, tied principally to presumed intelligence and absence or level of civilization.⁸ Race has been the key ingredient in justifying European imperialism, slavery, and more recently the global color order, in which the wealthy nations of Europeans and their descendants plunder the world's resources and exploit to varying degrees all of those, white and of color, outside of national power elites.

Race is and has been used to justify the exploitation of people of color as well as whites. For indeed, racial classification schemes in a number of cases have divided whites themselves into distinct races: Anglo-Saxons defined the Irish as an inferior race. The vilification and degradation of the Irish at the hands of Anglo-Saxons in Great Britain and the U.S. rivals that of the indigenous peoples of Africa, Asia, Oceania, Australia, and the Americas (Metress 1996, Shanklin 1994:3-7, Patterson 1994). Consider this description of the Irish, from an 1860 translation of a 12th-century text by Giraldus Cambrensis:

But I am haunted by the human chimpanzees I saw along that hundred miles of horrible country. I don't believe they are our fault. I believe there are not only many more of them than of old, but that they are happier, better, more comfortably fed and lodged under our rule than they ever were. But to see white chimpanzees is dreadful; if they were black, one would not feel it so much ... (quoted in Curtis 1968:84, quoted in Shanklin 1994:3).

As Shanklin points out, the translation was heavily influenced by attitudes of the time and was considerably more derogatory than earlier translations of the same 12th-century work.

Race has been used to facilitate the exploitation of whites too, not solely to justify it. This is true historically in the U.S. (see especially Du Bois 1969 [1935]) and increasingly in Europe. The stigmatization of African Americans and others of color in the U.S. is used to promote a sense of well-being in U.S. whites, detracting their attention from their own exploitation and creating obstacles for interracial movements for improving the conditions of all. Thus, many working whites (working- and middle-class) find it difficult to identify their own self interests and end up voting for officials (notably ex-presidents Reagan and Bush) who, once elected, put in place policies and laws that diminished these whites' standard of living while causing income and wealth to flow up the social scale (Chomsky 1994).

As the power of unions is whittled away, retirement funds are stolen or otherwise dissolved, health and other benefits eliminated, job security diminished, and full-time employment ever more difficult to come by, whites are whipped into fear over crimes and drugs, which through the mass media are diligently associated primarily with African Americans and Hispanics (Gilliam 1992, Buck in this volume). African American men are falsely presented in the mass media as the prototypical destroyers of family happiness and purveyors of irresponsible public discourse: "it is no coincidence that the issues of sexual harassment, date rape, spousal abuse, ... child molestation and hate speech reach the height of nationalized ritual via *black* protagonists [in the mass media]" (Giddings 1994). The vilification of these and other populations of color props up the ever growing prison industry, which has awarded to the U.S. the highest rate of incarceration in the world (Sharff 1995, Morris and Rothman 1995, Buck in this volume).

Not only are people of color negatively presented to whites to assure the latter's worth (in the face of diminishing rewards for whiteness) and to becloud the income and wealth gap between power-elite whites and ordinary whites (Roediger 1991), others are also served up as whipping boys--and girls: women, and gays and lesbians foremost among them. It can be observed, without engaging in an invidious ranking of oppressions, that *in some ways* women and homosexuals fare worse than straight males of color. Sedgwick notes the use of the defense strategy of "homosexual panic," used by gay-bashers claiming that they have received unwanted sexual advances. The success of this defense is based on a tangle of stereotypes and societal pathologies, but corresponding defense strategies using "black panic," "Latino panic," and "heterosexual panic" (for instance, by women protesting unwanted male sexual advances) would never succeed in justifying the acquittal of bashers and murderers using such a defense (Sedgwick 1990:19ff).

Just as race is sociocultural and more specifically ideological, so also are the dominant constructions of gender, sexuality, and class. These dominant constructions are, too, involved in a tangle of stereotypes, social pathologies, and unwarranted assumptions. Sociological and biological functionalist explanations are often promoted inside and outside the academy in support of theories of universal female subordination and oppression. The anthropologist Eleanor Leacock played a critical role in revealing that female subordination evolved concurrently with the evolution of human societies into states⁹ and more recently European colonialism and its introduction of capitalist private property (Rapp 1993:89).¹⁰ In other words, female subordination has not existed since the beginning of time.

There is, then, a chain of oppression deflected downward to whoever falls below in the racist, patriarchal, heterosexist society. One of the interesting features of this chain, not discussed enough, is that it is not unilinear in terms of any one particular category, whether it be race, class, sex, sexuality, or whatever. For example, the offspring of upper-middle-class, urban, college-educated African Americans would normally have better life chances than those of poor, rural whites lacking high school educations. However, of all the categories, gender and race are the most predictive in terms of degree of oppression (defined in terms of income, wealth, and quality of life¹¹); even whites belonging to nonracial oppressed groups (e.g., white male *homosexuals*) typically do better than blacks not belonging to those nonracial oppressed groups (e.g., black male *heterosexuals*).

Racism can be defined as behaviors which indirectly or directly support the inequality of racial hierarchy. Racists, in this view, are those who engage in such behaviors, which include (1) supporting racial classification and claiming the biological and/or cultural inferiority of races, (2) supporting any other behaviors that support racial oppression, and (3) not doing anything to stop racism. The third results from the reasoning that if one does nothing to eliminate racism, then the racist status quo will continue that much stronger. It also takes into consideration what is referred to as *privilege*. Privilege is the set of benefits that one gains from the racist status quo: better housing, employment, pay, and education, and so on. Privilege is most revealingly discussed in reference to whites, but it is worth noting that accommodationist individuals of color may also derive privilege from racialized societies as a result of cooptation by the racist power structure (see below). In sum, an individual need never have willfully done anything that directly and clearly oppresses minorities; s/he need only have gone about business as usual without attempting to change procedures and structures in order to be an accomplice in racism,

since business as usual has been systematized to maintain people of color in an oppressed state (Spears 1978:129-130, after Blauner 1972). Racism, being institutional, is only secondarily about an individual's thoughts and actions; it is primarily about the power relations among hierarchized groups and the way in which those relations permeate social institutions and become an integral part of the social structure.

The notion of "reverse racism" is often used to turn reality on its head, frequently in attempts to discredit affirmative action programs, which recognize that due to the history of oppression of peoples of color and women and the contemporary effects of that oppression, something must be done in an effort to assist in creating a level playing field for members of oppressed groups. It is very important to keep in mind that racism, if the notion is not to be semantically gutted, is related to the maintenance of a racist regime in the context of a racial hierarchy. In other words, racism is prejudice (judging people before one obtains information about them) with power behind it.

The primary problem with most discussions of race and racism is that they do not provide a framework or theory that can offer answers to fundamental questions about race and racism. Fundamental questions such as the following can be provided with reasonable answers if they are posed within the framework of an adequate model of race and racism:

- (1) Why has the U.S. not been able to eliminate racism, especially in the post-World War II period when public pronouncements have stated this as a goal? Observe that racial classification and racism must serve important functions for powerful sectors of American society if they are so tenacious. (The same reasoning applies to other societies.)
- (2) Why has blatant racism in the form of segregation, lynchings, debt peonage, etc. been on the wane during most of the last sixty years?
- (3) Why was the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s - 1970s much more successful than similar previous movements?
- (4) Why has the issue of instituting a multiracial category recently become so talked about? Had not the one-drop rule already been firmly established? This is the rule whereby "one drop of black or African blood" makes one black. Why did the multiracial category not become an issue in the same way in the 1950s, the 1920s, or the 1840s for example?
- (5) Will racism ever be eliminated?

In regard to question (1), white privilege is among the principal reasons that racism is so difficult to eliminate. Privilege is not the sort of thing given up easily. It is also true that racism, as dealt with above, facilitates a divide-and-conquer strategy on the part of elite Whites used to keep people of color and working whites from realizing they could improve their condition by uniting. The history of racism, in the U.S., renders it too handy a lightning rod for the discontents of whites for it to be discarded. Thus, the demonization of African Americans and other people of color goes hand-in-hand with the exploitation of working whites and more recently their pauperization since the Reagan administration.

Consider also the other functions of racism. Racism provides working whites with a sense of well-being that comes from believing that there will always be a group that is lower on the social scale than they are. Secondly, racism creates a reserve labor pool of blacks and other

workers of color who can be fired, or left unemployed, during recessions and depressions, but during periods of economic boom can be re-employed (Marable 1983).

In regard to (2) and (3), racism has been on the wane during most of this period, largely because of the same reasons that created the conditions for the relative success of the Civil Rights Movement: the increasingly glaring hypocrisy of the U.S. in claiming to represent democracy while significant segments of its population suffered under the world's worst system of racial oppression after South Africa, whose apartheid was itself inspired by Jim Crow in the U.S. The competition of the (largely capitalist¹²) U.S. with the socialist Soviet Union and the socialist bloc for the hearts, minds, and resources especially of nonaligned countries (mostly of color) required that the U.S. improve its image (Dudziak 1995). Not only did the Civil Rights Movement benefit from this rivalry, so also did all working people, including whites, who benefited from improved working conditions and better wages in an effort to buy their allegiance to capitalism. Witness the sharp rise in living standards, especially of whites, after World War II. During that period, wealthy elites were willing to forego some of their profits in favor of the long-term goal of eliminating socialism (Chomsky 1994). Now that socialism appears to be no longer a viable competitor against capitalism, it is felt that working whites can now be safely pauperized again.

Many forget that no aspect of the civil rights movement of the 1950s through 1970s was unique in comparison to earlier ones except for mass media coverage. Of course, common wisdom is that the mass media played a crucial role: the shock of visual images, for example, of the abuse of blacks mobilized whites who might otherwise have remained quiet. This may indeed have played some role, but the ideological conflict between the superpowers suffices to provide a compelling explanation within the more reliable realm of realpolitik. Moreover, whites enjoyed greater privilege during the Civil Rights Movement than they do now. It is quite difficult to understand how screen images might have affected their self-interests as they perceived them. During earlier periods, for example the Reign of Terror against African Americans in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, many whites had witnessed first hand atrocities committed against blacks without changing their attitudes.

Lynchings and other forms of physical violence against African Americans were for the most part a component of the Reign of Terror against blacks, aimed at intimidating freedmen into remaining in near-slave conditions so that wealthy whites could continue to reap the large profits typical of slavery. The violence, then, was an integral part of the slavery-like system of sharecropping/ debt peonage/ prison labor. Businesses using prison labor today reap similar huge profits (Sharff 1995, Buck in this volume). In brief, some of the more blatant forms of racism have greatly diminished or disappeared because they have been replaced by other institutions that accomplish the same goals.

An additional reason for the difficulty in eliminating racism is that it maintains a tripartite syndrome of oppression, guilt, and fear of reprisal. Concerning fear of reprisal, one of the great contradictions of American society (but in some ways expected) is that whites are generally safer in black neighborhoods than blacks in white neighborhoods. Most bias crimes reported in the mass media are against blacks: in New York City, for example, the Howard Beach and Bensonhurst murders, which were actually lynchings, defined as violent murders (outside of the justice system) with the aim of intimidation and behavior-control in support of a racist regime. It is not likely that attacks on whites in black neighborhoods would go unreported. One must read

the black press to gain an accurate picture of bias crimes against people of color and lynchings specifically, as they sometimes go unreported or hardly reported in the hegemonic press. An example of this is the Central Park lynching by hanging, perpetrated around the time of the Howard Beach and Bensonhurst lynchings and reported in the *Amsterdam News*, but given only slight, back page mention in the white press, if any mention at all. In spite of all this, black neighborhoods such as Harlem are demonized by many whites in New York City as places of great danger. An important point in all of this, however, one that is hardly ever discussed, is that in all situations of oppression there lurks in the mind of the oppressor the idea that, if the oppressed ever get the upper hand, they will retaliate in kind. This is one of the great unutterables in discussions of racism. This fear surfaces in contexts where people of color come close to control or have control (at least over the short-term), e.g., in black neighborhoods. Consequently, whites' seemingly irrational fear of Harlem is not such a mystery after all. The central point is that the tripartite syndrome of oppression, guilt, and fear of reprisal makes it all the more difficult to eliminate racism since it is racism that maintains the regime that keeps the oppressed from gaining, not only parity, but also the upper hand that becomes more readily conceivable once parity is reached.

In regard to question (4), the white media's broad support of multiracialism and nearly absolute silence about the movement to abolish the white race (Ignatiev and Garvey 1996) leads one to suspect a hidden agenda. Multiracialism is a movement apparently led by the offspring of parents of different races. Although the parents can be of any two different races (or perhaps "mixed" themselves), I will simplify the discussion by confining my remarks to black-white multiracialism, and follow the main lines of Harris's (1964) theory on American and Brazilian racial configurations.¹³

First, some background. The U.S. has historically had an officialized two-way racial system, black and white, with in-between mulatto (i.e., multiracial) groups existing only in certain areas during specific periods (notably South Carolina and Louisiana), although of course multiracial people existed all over. It is likely that most, if not virtually all, African Americans are now multiracial. Starting in the colonial period, Britain had a surplus population that migrated in significant numbers to North America, while Portugal and Spain did not. Consequently, North America eventually had a white majority, while Latin America had a white minority. As a rule, three-way racial systems, with blacks, whites, and an in-between mulatto group (used here as a cover term for all people in between black and white), have been found in areas with a white minority. (This situation constitutes what Ali Mazrui in a number of public lectures has called the "Latin racial system," as opposed to the "Anglo-Saxon" one, characterizing North America.) The mulattoes, then, serve as a buffer group. Their existence divides those of color into a series, actually, of graded groups who identify up the social scale toward whiteness and serve mediating political-economic functions (e.g., overseeing slaves and military functions). This arrangement allows a relatively small number of whites to maintain control of a much larger population of color.

In areas such as the U.S. where there has always been a white majority, a buffer group has not been needed. South Carolina and Louisiana owe their exceptional status to demographics and, in the latter case, French racial traditions in Haiti and Louisiana (which received many refugees from Haiti after the Haitian Revolution). These traditions themselves were influenced by demographics, having been formed in white minority conditions.

As the percentage of whites in the U.S. population decreases, the officialization of an intermediate, buffer group becomes increasingly attractive, and thus the very small multiracial movement has been given an inordinate amount of attention by the media. (There are indications that Hispanics are also being groomed for a buffer role, which most played in their countries of origin.) It seems reasonable to assume that the multiracial movement panders to the insecurity and desire to escape the stigma of being black on the part of some offspring of mixed marriages. This assessment is supported by the fact that blackness has the lowest rank in the racial hierarchy. However, the overall political effect of the movement is to aid in keeping whites as the largest single group, by reducing the black population (see Spears in this volume).

It is very important to observe also that a three-way racial system makes it significantly more difficult to organize blacks, i.e., nonwhites. This is true because in essence three-way racial systems drastically reduce the number of blacks. Blacks are typically defined in these systems as those who have no "white blood" or no visible effects of it. With the degradation of blackness comes the desire of those who have some white ancestry to claim that ancestry and their status as nonblacks, that is mulattoes. If their looks do not allow them to claim whiteness. In other words, societies with three-way racial systems in effect have an informal *reverse one-drop rule*: anyone having one drop of "white blood" is not black.¹⁴ (Again, for simplicity's sake, I consider only the black-white dimension of racial systems.) Consequently, when black groups organize in countries such as Brazil with three-way racial systems, those groups have difficulties recruiting persons who in the U.S. would clearly be black but in their society are not considered black but mulatto. In the U.S., the one-drop rule has the effect of forcing dark- and light-skinned blacks into the same camp. Thus, black civil rights movements in the U.S. have been overall more successful than their counterparts in Latin America (Winant 1994).

The possible effect of the U.S. multiracial movement's reducing the number of African Americans in future census tallies has important, concrete political consequences since the allocation of resources by the federal government is affected by the number of African Americans in the census count.

Thus, the multiracial movement's actual effects will aid in maintaining the racial status quo. It will assist in the maintenance of whites as the largest racial block; it will hinder African American political and economic organizing; and it will reduce benefits from federal government programs.

The movement's professed goal of making it easier for multiracials to claim and express more than one heritage is ill-conceived at best. First and foremost, the problem with multiracialism is that it conflates race and culture. There is not a one-to-one relationship between race, however construed, and culture. The anthropological tradition since Boas has demonstrated this point repeatedly. One can belong to a single racial category, e.g., African American, and at the same time identify or claim several cultural heritages. American culture itself, as virtually all cultures, is a blend of heritages. Thus, to believe that the existence of a census category of "multiracial" would facilitate the claim and expression of more than one heritage is patently ridiculous. Second, the great majority of, if not all, blacks are multiracial anyway, as are many whites, by virtue of the one drop rule and white-looking blacks' passing for white throughout American history and intermarrying with whites. Third, leaders in the multiracial movement are themselves not all offspring of mixed marriages, unless mixed blacks marrying mixed blacks constitutes an interracial coupling and produces multiracial children (i.e., or, multiracialism is

construed as inheritable), as some multiracial people have claimed (Marriott 1996). However, in this situation multiracialism becomes entirely meaningless: it becomes a category that includes nearly all African Americans. These observations indicate that multiracialism is merely a front for the desire to escape the stigma of blackness. One wonders whether multiracial activists believe a new census-category will exempt them from police brutality, cross-burnings, and lynchings.

The propagandizing of multiracialism dovetails with the historical process of promoting nonwhites to whiteness, which can now be defined as the status of the highest ranking racial group, however that group is defined at a particular historical moment. Irish Americans and Italian Americans and, later in the post-World War II period, Jews (Sacks 1994) have benefitted from promotion to whiteness. These promotions have the effect of expanding the notion of whiteness and increasing the white population. Furthermore, it should be remembered that *blackness is the extreme otherness in white-supremacist racial iconography*. Thus, the one-drop rule and hypodescent (one inherits the status of the lower status parent) have been applied more rigorously to blacks than other groups of color, creating a situation in which recently and increasingly Native Americanness and some Asiannesses can be bleached out with repeated intermarriages to whites. Observe that whites can claim to be white and at the same time also claim Native American but not black ancestors.¹⁵ The recentness and increase of these shifts in genealogical principles points not only to blackness as the negative end of a racialized color scale but also to another means of making whiteness more inclusive and thereby strategically increasing the white population.

The status of blackness was also witnessed in April 1997 when Tiger Woods, the African American golf champion of African American and Asian parentage was insulted by a white golfer shortly after a major tournament victory of Woods'. It is instructive that the white golfer insulted Woods with references to his African American background, not his other backgrounds. The white golfer's wish was that Woods not select "fried chicken and collard greens," (dishes stereotypically associated with African-Americans) for the following year's tournament dinner (which he as that year's champion was called upon to select). The white golfer did not mine the many Asian cuisine stereotypes available because the best strategy for a joke (or insult) was blackness, not Asianness, owing to the bottom rank of blackness in the color hierarchy. The white golfer was also probably operating out of the one-drop rule, whereby "one drop" of "African blood" makes one black. Apparently, when situations heat up, multiracialism socially evaporates.

Additionally, there is a tendency to reify the boundaries among groups of African descent (e.g., Latino African Americans, Caribbean-descent African Americans, and U.S.-descent African Americans) in order to divide groups of color as much as possible. (See Spears in this volume.)

Thus, to answer question (5), in view of all the highly important functions racial categorization and racism play in the maintenance of an inequality, increasing ever more dramatically since the collapse of the Soviet Union, one can assume that they will not be eliminated in the normal course of events.

In summary, racial categorization and racism are not superficial aspects of the American social system. They are institutionalized, thus permeating all social institutions. They play a fundamental role in the domination by a small white ruling elite of the mass of working people

of color and whites. Racism sets up people of color as scapegoats. Racism leads many working whites to blame working people of color for whites' economic woes, while whites' attention is directed away from the real causes of their own economic problems. Racism, then, involves a divide-and-conquer strategy: whites and people of color in the subordinated classes generally fail to see their common interests and fail to unite to struggle against their common oppressor. Racism is so hard to eliminate because of its crucial role in maintaining domination and the exploitation that it makes possible. The American Civil Rights Movement, unlike earlier pre-1950s movements, was able to rid the U.S. of some of the more blatant forms of official racism primarily because of the United States' embarrassment, due to official racism (notably racial segregation), in its struggle with the Soviet Union for influence in the Third World, consisting mostly of people of color. This struggle was not merely for hearts and minds, but more importantly for the resources, many of them critical for industry in the technologically advanced, wealthiest nations and often not available outside of Africa at least not at the bargain basement prices that have been imposed from outside on African resources. Generally, the more brutal and blatant forms of racism such as segregation, lynchings, and debt peonage have decreased due, not only to the effects of the Civil Rights Movement, but also due to their replacement by other forms of oppression and exploitation. For example, the Drug War and increasing incarceration and the exploitation of prison labor (Buck in this volume) substitute for some of the earlier forms of control and exploitation. The promotion of multiracialism in the media is a new kind of divide-and-conquer tactic in the white ruling elite's strategy to create smaller blocks of people of color, e.g. a smaller block of African Americans, while attempting to keep the white block as large as possible. White working people are intended to continue in their identification, as members of the same race, with ruling elite whites. It is expected, then, that the media give no support to whites' thinking of themselves as multiracial (e.g., those who have "Native American blood," but are still allowed to consider themselves white) or to the abolish-the-white-race movement. Given the overwhelmingly important function of race and racism in the U.S., it is highly unlikely that racism will ever be significantly reduced without a change so fundamental that the nation would not be recognizable as we know it. Racism is the foundation that keeps the entire societal structure from tumbling down. Furthermore, without competition from a rival power such as the former Soviet bloc, the U.S. becomes ever more powerful globally and spreads its style of racism globally along with its popular, technological, and business cultures. *America* cannot be America without racism. This should not be taken as cause for despair, but as a call for rethinking the fundamentals of liberation strategies.

Ideology

Without ideology, for the shaping of minds, the American power elite, as all power elites, would have to rely on brute force (the police, the military, and other institution and forms of coercion) to uphold a nonegalitarian social structure. (Although professed ideals may be egalitarian, wealth and income distribution, the least egalitarian among the wealthy nations, reveal another reality.) The use of force is costly and creates resentments that severely compromise social system stability.

In this collection, *ideology* is used in its critical sense. So, while ideology can be thought of as nothing more than a set of ideas, the true power of the notion lies in the sense which makes possible explanations of the mechanism of power and oppression. *Ideology* used in this critical sense refers to a set of ideas which functions to justify and support vested interests. It can indeed be appropriate to talk about ideologies of various social classes, but my focus is on ruling class ideology, and unless otherwise indicated the following discussion pertains to this variety of ideology alone.

Ideology in this sense is a mechanism for the creation of false consciousness, a thought-limiting system which distorts reality, even though much of it is based on "objective" facts. The real story, so to speak, is distorted by strategic emphases and omissions. Ideology's effectiveness varies according to its social context. It roots itself in the consciousness of its victims through "continuous repetition, in diverse instrumental domains, of the same basic propositions regarding the nature of constructed reality" (Wolf 1983:388). In other words, ideology infiltrates most of the discourses and images we come into contact with through the mass media, education, religion, and corporate-produced popular culture: television, film, music videos, etc. Ideology seeks to naturalize, that is, to make the status quo seem to be the natural order of things, "common sense," rather than the result of diligent maintenance. It is boundary-defining in the sense that it inhibits the contextualization necessary for the full apprehension and emancipation-oriented interpretation of reality. A useful example of such failed contextualization is exemplified in the primary currents of working class history in the U.S. White workers (with the notable exception of the Wobblies, the Industrial Workers of the World) have often failed to place their own exploitation within the larger context of the exploitation of labor in general, including African-American labor. Consequently, the labor agenda remained largely within the context of White labor and lacked the added support that Black and other laborers of color might have provided (Dubofsky 1969, Nonini 1992). This continues to be true today (Buck 1992).

One is tempted to follow Parsons (1959) in stating that the key to ideology can be found by contrasting it with science, that is, what can be established as factually correct. However, it must be kept in mind that not everything called science is actually that.

Thus, for example, gender biases in medical research which produce results often considered valid for males and females are actually based on research which has focused primarily on males. In this instance, the interpretation of scientific research is invalid. It can be seen that more gender-specific research is called for by considering just a few gender differences. For example, women are more likely than men to suffer from phobias, depression, and panic attacks, while men are two to four times as likely as women to abuse alcohol and other drugs and have an anti-social personality (Raymond 1991). In American society, where men,

white men, are for ideological reasons taken as the norm, it is not difficult to attribute the bias in medical research to ideological influences.

Consequently, as Wetherell and Potter (1992:66) note, science is about interpretation as well as data. In fact, what counts as acceptable data is a matter of interpretation. With interpretation comes the influence of social positions and vested interests. What qualifies as science in the ideal sense is inescapably problematic, and it is question of degree. Observe also that what may qualify as true can be contingent. For example, qualification based on merit as measured by the same standards for all "can be used to justify the exclusion of black groups from some resources and can also be used to oppose racist practices" (Wetherell and Potter 1992:70-71). Accepting a science-ideology contrast requires seeing science, as a whole, as a work always in progress, to be evaluated according to its ideological effects. All of this is not to deny, however, that there are areas of science such as mathematics that are relatively free of ideological influences.

Often the (neo-)Marxist view of ideology just presented is critiqued on the grounds that it does not account for the stability of capitalism, or at least capitalism's staying power. For example, in their critique of this view, which they include in what they call "the dominant ideology thesis," Abercrombie and colleagues (Abercrombie et al. 1990) claim that dominant ideologies do "have significant effects but these are primarily on the dominant rather than the subordinate class" (Abercrombie et al. 1990:2). The foundation of social stability in the advanced capitalist state is not ideological but economic in character. The commitment of subordinate classes to the system is more a matter of "pragmatic acquiescence" than ideological control. Subordinates have an important material stake in the system, and they receive a "stream of rewards" that raise the cost of replacing it with something else. Also, the complexity of the modern division of labor has created a high level of interdependence among individuals, increasing the costs of insurrection-related disruptions in social and economic life. In sum, the "solidity and coercive quality of everyday life" makes it appear that society cannot be changed (Abercrombie et al. 1990:3-4).

Certainly, pragmatic acquiescence plays an important role in the stability of modern capitalist societies, and there has possibly been a tendency among some (neo-)Marxists to overstate the importance of ideology relative to other factors in the domination of subordinate classes. That pragmatic acquiescence is fundamental, however, is doubtful. First, pragmatic acquiescence itself can be seen as a result of ideology. It results from a certain way of thinking, and that thinking itself can easily be assumed to result at least partially from ideological influences. Second, the stream-of-rewards factor in pragmatic acquiescence is certainly affected by class. Those in the lower layers of society have few rewards, so we must account for why they are not constantly in revolt. The class issue forces us to question and investigate the interrelationships among acquiescence, catalysts for revolt, and revolt itself in all sectors of society, not just classes. Third, upon closer scrutiny, we see that pragmatic acquiescence is actually a less specific form of cooptation and clearly must be studied in relation to more specific means of buying people off. These observations build up to a final one, which is that pragmatic acquiescence must be investigated along with ideology, the use of force, cooptation, and other factors that figure in the maintenance of states. The relative importance of each of these factors varies from society to society. In the final analysis, the torture, killing, jailing, and forced exile of many African-American leaders during the U.S. Civil Rights Movement, to consider only one

period in one country, support the claim by much of the social science literature that the forceful suppression of dissent is necessary, but not sufficient, for maintaining all state societies.

Social inequality, which results from differential access to resources and is tied to social class stratification, is present in all state societies to varying extents. In all state societies, there are at least two distinguishable major classes, each, of course, with internal subdivisions: a ruling one, and one which is ruled. The ruling class owns or controls the "means of production...the means of state administration and coercion[,]...and the main means of communication and consent" (Miliband 1987:329); the ruled class does not. Admittedly, some social scientists prefer to think of American society as something other than a class system: there is too much social mobility, "too many crosscutting factors like race and region and ... a lot of self-induced false consciousness about where we would like to think we stand" (Hacker 1991:46). However, this view merely recognizes class mobility, of which there is only a small amount, in the U.S. and other class societies. This view also fails to take into account the major class distinction, just outlined, between the ruling and the ruled, which is based on objective criteria and cannot be denied by reference to people's self-assessment. Finally, it must be remembered that the concept of class itself is fundamentally about power conflict among economic groups having different interests. To bring lifestyle, subjective self-assessment, and highly limited social mobility into discussion of class can easily and often does lead to muddying our focus on coercion, domination, privilege, inequality, and exploitation.

Exploitation is the root purpose of class hierarchies and thus always accompanies them. Exploitation is also the purpose of racial and ethnic hierarchies, which have, to varying extents, depending on the time and place, a class character. By *exploitation* is meant a situation, characteristic of all class stratified societies, in which the labor of members of subordinate classes is expropriated. This is the function of class stratification. *Super-exploitation* exists when at least some subordinates are deprived of basic necessities while the ruling class diverts critical resources, e.g., in order to supply itself with luxuries. On the level of the nation-state, exploitation consistently involves both senses of the term.

The fundamental issue in such societies, then, becomes one of how an exploitative social structure can be maintained, assuming quite straightforwardly that the exploited will act to the extent they can or feel they can to end their exploitation, while the ruling sector of a society will act to retain its privileged position. There exists, consequently, in stratified, exploitative societies, an inherent tension, based on an ineradicable difference in interests. This inherent tension produces a dynamic which calls forth the application of two major mechanisms in attempts to enforce social system stability: force and cultural domination. These are the twin mechanisms of repression, usefully defined by Wolfe as "a process by which those in power try to keep themselves in power by consciously attempting to destroy or render harmless organizations and ideologies that threaten their power" (Wolfe 1978:6). It is also important to mention a third mechanism, co-optation, which involves buying off leaders, or potential leaders, of resistance movements with offers of well-paid jobs or other forms of financial reward or prestige. However, cooptation can be seen also as a result of cultural domination, the acceptance by exploited groups of the ideology oppressing them. Cooptation produces the mentality that leads to an individual's throwing in the towel of resistance and accepting what she or he is given.

By *cultural domination* I mean a situation in which members of a subordinated class have to an important extent accepted the ideology of the ruling class. This term, then, focuses on

groups rather than individuals. Reserving the term *internalized oppression* for speaking of individuals assists in making the group-individual distinction. Under these definitions, what has been labeled the *bleaching syndrome* (when a black person denies any connection to other blacks) (White 1991) would be an example of internalized oppression: it is not systematically present in African American communities; it occurs randomly and rarely throughout them.

Cultural domination focuses not directly on ideology, but the successful dissemination of ideology in one or more classes whose interests it works against. Clearly, as cultural domination increases, the expensive and relatively inefficient routine use of force becomes less necessary. It becomes possible to distract, confuse, divide, and amuse subordinated groups before their actions make the use of force necessary. Harris provides one type of example, drawing on Wadel 1973:

The poor or near-poor themselves are often the staunchest supporters of the view that people who really want to work can always find work. This attitude forms part of a larger world view in which there is little comprehension of the structural conditions that make poverty for some inevitable... . In a study of a Newfoundland community called Squid Cove, Canto Wadel...has shown how a structural problem of unemployment caused by factors entirely beyond the control of the local community can be interpreted in such a way as to set neighbor against neighbor (Harris 1987:241).

Ideology is a key factor in the maintenance of oppression, but even more important is its successful dissemination.

As noted above, ideology is a set of ideas of a certain type. Various types of behavior may reflect ideology, but in this view are not part of ideology. One of the crucial issues is this: where does ideology exist, in the mental world or the world of action? It could be said to exist in both places. It, like language, can be fruitfully thought of as a conceptual structure, one which exist completely in the mind of no one and is continuously in the process of evolution through actual speech behavior. Ideology underlies thought and ideas actually communicated and action as well. Similarly, language, the conceptual whole, underlies speech, which is, among other things, action. Even if we can say that in certain societies, state societies, there are ideologies, we cannot say that in those societies there exists a statement of some ideology or set of procedures or recipes for action, which when followed would produce some enactment of ideological premises. We would do better to say that thoughts are communicated, actions are taken, rituals performed, routines engaged in which generally reflect, which are generally in accord with, a set of ideas and principles which nowhere is stated completely and explicitly. Ideology is derivable from all of these since it depends on them for the definition of its nature; ideology is organic and changes as they change--along with their material context. As language, ideology is some kind of entity, but it is not one that we necessarily must be able to apprehend directly or in its entirety. As language also, it contains competing elements, contradictions, and exceptions; a core of relatively more stable content and a periphery of content more noticeably in flux.

First and foremost there are interests, realized consciously to varying extents by various individuals both inside and outside ruling elites. Then there is social discourse and the sociocultural institutions to which various aspects of social discourse are linked. *Social*

discourse can be defined as all that which is typically said in a society, group, or an institutional setting or otherwise communicated, i.e., via nonlinguistic communication. Both social discourse and actions will reflect ideology to some extent, but we are still left with the question, where does ideology exist?

However, the appropriate question is actually, how is ideology most usefully conceptualized? If ideology is a set of realized linguistic utterances and nonlinguistic communications, then how are we to determine what is ideological and what is not? I would propose that we do so in a way parallel to the way we decide what utterances are part of the English language, French, Chinese, or any other languages. A language, like an ideology, can nowhere be perceived whole. We assign utterances, i.e. speech, to a language, I propose, in the same way we assign linguistic and nonlinguistic behavior to articulated ideologies.

Ideology, then, is a structured set of ideas, certain of which are not directly observable, in much the same way that the system of rules which governs the construction of sentences in a particular language is not directly observable in people's speech. Those governing rules of any language must be inferred from actual speech behavior, both from what is said and from what is not said. In the same way, the governing ideas and principles of ideology must be inferred from what is or is not actually said and done. Such actions and statements and their frequency reflect and provide clues to the underlying ideology. Thus, social discourse (defined as all that is typically said or otherwise communicated) is influenced through its relationship to ideology by the interests of individuals both inside and outside of the ruling elite.

However, ideology does not have exactly the same relationship to social discourse as grammar has to language. While all of language, basically, is accounted for by grammar, only some of social discourse is accounted for by ideology. When ideology controls all of social discourse, there exists what Gramsci called *hegemony*, the state of affairs in a society in which one view of reality permeates all institutions and informs all communication (Cammett 1967; Gramsci 1971). Under hegemony, thus conceived, "consent [is] given by the great masses of the population to the general direction imposed on social life by the dominant fundamental group," the ruling elite (Gramsci 1971:12). Put another way, and more realistically, this is a situation in which the ideology of the ruling elite has no *viable* competitors. Although opposing views are definitely expressed and circulated, they are unable to compete successfully with hegemonic views. Obviously, even under hegemony, there are many social discourses, underlain by diverse ideologies, each linked to its own sector of society. Hegemony, as most situations in the real world, is a matter of degree. Indeed, the picture Gramsci painted showed overly passive subordinate (middle and working) classes and has received considerable criticism (Scott 1985).

Ideology may be expressed in a variety of ways. I will distinguish between *positing* and *constraining* ideologies. Positing ideologies emphasize stating much of ideology directly. Consequently, ideology is manifested in a relatively direct way; however, this does not imply that the entire content of the ideology is made explicit. Some of that content must be gleaned. By contrast, constraining ideologies emphasize constraining social discourse within certain bounds which are not explicitly referred to.

Chomsky, in contrasting the U.S. (a "democracy") to the former Soviet Union (a "totalitarian state") aptly illustrates the distinction:

A totalitarian state simply enunciates official doctrine—clearly, explicitly. Internally, one can think what one likes, but one can only express opposition at one's peril. In a democratic system of propaganda no one is punished (in theory) for objecting to official dogma. In fact, dissidence is encouraged. What this system attempts to do is to fix the limits of possible thought: supporters of official doctrine at one end, and the critics—vigorous, courageous, and much admired for their independence of judgment—at the other... . But we discover that all share certain tacit assumptions, and that it is these assumptions that are really crucial. No doubt a propaganda system is more effective when its doctrines are insinuated rather than asserted, when it sets the bounds for possible thought rather than simply imposing a clear and easily identifiable doctrine that one must parrot... (Chomsky 1977:39).

So, during the Vietnam War, to take one example, the mainstream press restricted itself largely to a discussion of the strategic pros and cons of the war without questioning the assumption that the U.S. had the right to intervene in the affairs of an independent country.

Bagdikian (1987) makes revealing comments about the media's role in producing a constraining ideology:

Authorities have always recognized that to control the public they must control information. The initial possessor of news and ideas has political power—the power to disclose or conceal, to announce some parts and not others, to hold back until opportunistic moments, to predetermine the interpretation of what is revealed (Bagdikian 1987:xviii).

Also,

It is a truism among political scientists that while it is not possible for the media to tell the population what to think, they do tell the public what to think about. What is reported enters the public agenda. What is not reported may not be lost forever, but it may be lost at a time when it is most needed (Bagdikian 1987:xx).

The U.S. is an example of a nation with a constraining ideology; the former Soviet Union, a positing one. Of course, this passage of Chomsky's appeared in 1977 and could not have taken into account the later initiation of the politics of glasnost, the dissolution of the Soviet Union, and the politics of the various post-Union entities. The Soviet glasnost policy, encouraging more openness in public discussion, seems primarily to have been about shifting to a more constraining type of ideology, one more like those of the U.S. and the countries of Western Europe and Japan, to support the rush to capitalism of the former Soviet republics. If such is indeed what Gorbachev, his allies, and successors planned using the U.S. as their prime model, they did not take into account that the success of American constraining ideology in supporting capitalism is based on a large segment of the population, fully employed whites, (and increasing more affluent people of color) having a traditionally high level of material comfort (but now deteriorating alarmingly [Chomsky 1994]), a large array of distracting consumer goods

(especially electronic pacifiers of various types), a largely narcotizing public education system, as well as a centuries-old, inculcated fear and loathing of their principal potential allies: their darker-skinned fellow Americans.

I should emphasize that Chomsky is talking about how ideology is communicated--directly or indirectly, not about ideology itself. Ideology itself, I propose, is most profitably thought of as having two components. One component contains conceptual matter that encapsulates the vested interests of a ruling elite. The basic units of this component are propositions. The other component contains ideas or principles concerning how the conceptual matter is to be most effectively communicated and disseminated. Thus, ideology, thought of in this way, incorporates not only a set of propositions and their evaluation but also a set of directives concerning their dissemination.

The conceptual component of all ideologies has just a few fundamental propositions, which generate all the rest. These fundamental propositions could be stated roughly as follows: (1) things are as they should be (for example, this is the best of all possible countries, or this is the best country that it can possibly be); (2) the ruling class (and their agents) deserves to rule because it is better--stronger, more intelligent, more knowledgeable, more industrious, more attractive, etc.; (4) resistance to the status quo is futile. *Ideology is fundamentally about the maintenance of ruling class power, even in racist societies; it is not fundamentally about maintaining white power.*¹⁶ The second proposition could be seen as generating a more specific one in the context of U.S.:politicians (agents of the ruling class who are sometimes members also) deserve to rule because they have been duly elected by the people through democratic process. The key word in this "generated" proposition is *democratic*. This word loses its force under critical examination. Important politicians require campaign financing and generally a non-hostile mainstream press. Both of these requirements typically spell out a dependence on support from the wealthy ruling elite since they largely control the media (Bagdikian 1987) and most of the wealth available for political campaigns. Second, many Americans have been historically and continue to be disfranchised by means of the voter registration process, economic debilitation, strategic voting machine malfunctions, and vote tally fraud, to mention only some factors. The "breakdown" of voting machines in black neighborhoods in New York City during Jesse Jackson's presidential campaign is one of the better known instances of these informal means of disfranchisement. The proposition that the ruling class deserves to rule is certainly communicated through many mass media channels, notably television and film. When these screen images are analyzed collectively, they show decidedly more positive images of people most like the ruling elite: white, male, wealthy, protestant.¹⁷

Referring back to the discussion of race and racism, we see that the most basic premises underlying American racist ideology historically have not changed, but more superficial ones have, e.g., those relating to questions of biological inferiority, the content and hierarchy of racial categories, and overt precepts for the treatment of the various races. The more superficial, but still important, ideological propositions of racial and other ideologies can be linked directly to *regime-maintenance imperatives*, what is necessary for maintaining a political and economic regime.

I have focused primarily on race, but there are at least two regime-maintenance imperatives in the U.S.: (1) Maintain racial hierarchy (as a means of dividing and conquering) and (2) Maintain the illusion of democracy. How this is to be done ideologically during different

periods is determined by the complex of international and domestic system features. Above, a basic change of this type was discussed in terms of a change from racism to neoracism.

Important is that regime-maintenance imperatives result from weighing the strands of ideology (racism, sexism, etc.) in order to identify which are crucial. Racism, as well as sexism, classism, and heterosexism, is a major ideological strand in the U.S.

Challenges to existing regimes cannot be undertaken solely in terms of force, just as regimes cannot be maintained by force alone. There must also be (1) a raising of political consciousness and (2) an understanding of regime-maintenance imperatives, as well as the *basic regime imperative* in the case of any regime: maintain control, where *control* is understood as power and wealth. Any attack on existing regimes must attack primordial regime-maintenance imperatives, in our case, not just racism and the other "-isms" but also the claim of democracy.

To return to the subject of the ruling elite (variously referred to as the elite, the power elite, the ruling elite, and so forth), one of Alan Wolfe's humorous remarks about them is perhaps the best introduction to the subject: "For amusement, they read books (often written with support from their foundations) which 'prove' that no ruling class exists in the United States" (Wolfe 1976:57). This remark is helpful in that it gets directly at the idea often repeated in American political science discourse. This discourse claims that there are many countervailing power groups in the U.S., producing a situation in which no one group has a decisive hand in running the country. Wolfe denies this claim. In looking for the ruling class, it would be a mistake to focus on those in political decision-making positions; rather, the focus should be "on those whose activities define the parameters of the system and reproduce those parameters on a day-to-day basis" (Wolfe 1976:55). More specifically, the ruling class comprises the politicized members of the upper class. Furthermore, it is

composed of no more than a few thousand individuals, nearly all of them living in the Boston-New York-Philadelphia-Washington axis. They are all rich. Nearly all are white Anglo-Saxon Protestants or German Jews. They are all either businessmen or descendants of businessmen. They are born to power and grow up in an atmosphere that cultivates power. They recognize each other, and each of them is fully conscious that he belongs to the ruling class. They are chairmen, directors, trustees, vice-presidents, consultants, partners, secretaries, advisers, presidents, members and relatives. They, in other words, are the "they" that people ... blame for their troubles (Wolfe 1976:57).

But what about the American president, whom most people assume to run the country? Again, Wolfe's comments are particularly apt:

the power of the presidency is not much greater than the power of the president, while the power of the ruling class is much greater than the power of any single member. The collected membership of the ruling class is instrumental in nominating the president, financing his campaign, aiding in his accession to power, and advising him on policies. Its members not only shape the environment in which he makes his decisions, but they also give him all their help when those decisions have to be made. It is he who is more likely to recognize

their power, rather than they who will recognize his. There has been no American president in this century who has crossed the ruling class for any length of time (Wolfe 1976:61).

Miliband (1987) provides a somewhat different and in some ways more nuanced view of the ruling class, the "power elite" in his terms, and its relationships with other classes and subclasses. The power elite is the top stratum of the dominant class. It is composed of those who control the few hundred largest industrial, financial, commercial, and media enterprises along with those "who control the commanding positions in the state system: presidents, prime ministers", and the top civil service, military and police officials (Miliband 1987:330). The dominant class, at the top of the social pyramid, and the subordinate class, at near bottom (above the underclass), are the two fundamental classes. The subordinate class comprises the great majority of the population and is composed of working people, who get all of their income from their jobs and/or government transfer programs such as welfare. Between the two fundamental classes is a class, the petty bourgeoisie, small entrepreneurs, semi-professionals, supervisors, ordinary government officials, etc., who "too are properly speaking part of the subordinate population of advanced capitalist societies (Miliband 1987:333). The bottom layer of the dominant class is the "bourgeoisie," comprising upper-level professionals and mid-tier entrepreneurs. In spite of differences and conflicts among the dominant class,

they usually remain sufficiently cohesive to ensure that their common purposes are effectively defended and advanced. This is particularly true of the power elite....But all...differences and conflicts generally pall into relative insignificance when compared with the vast and crucial areas of agreement....For whereas such people may disagree on what precisely they do want, they very firmly agree on what they do not want and this encompasses anything that might appear to them to threaten the structure of power, privilege and property of which they are the main beneficiaries (Miliband 1987:331).

Miliband includes high officials such as the president in the top stratum, the power elite, of the top class, his "dominant class." It appears, then, that for Miliband the ruling class would be his dominant class, the top layer of which clearly does more "ruling." Wolfe's ruling class is not really a class, in the sense that there are persons outside the ruling class who have the same relationship as the ruling class to the means and relations of production in society. Wolfe really pinpoints the ruling elite, the ultimate power group, not a class as such. The real problem in reconciling the two authors views is deciding whether high officials such as the American president are by virtue of their position alone members of the ruling elite, the very top power group. I mostly agree with Wolfe, but I would caution that membership in the ruling elite is by degree rather than being an all or none affair. However, most important is that advanced industrial societies, as all state societies, do have a ruling elite that is usually able to impose its will on society.

We may characterize the dissemination components of ideologies as primarily positing or constraining, and we may also characterize them according to the preferred institutional channels for the dissemination of ideology. While religion is the most important public institution for the

dissemination of ideology in the pre-industrial state, the mass media and mass public education are the primary institutions in the mature industrial state. The notions of divine right (to rule) and divine descent, buttressed by religious doctrine, are among the more conspicuous examples of religious concepts supporting the interests of a ruler and the ruling group of which he or she is the outstanding member.

With the rise of industrialization, religion and science come into conflict because the system of criteria for belief underlying each is opposed to that of the other. Science, based on empiricism, inevitably collides with religious doctrine, based on faith. Science is indispensable for the modern, industrial state, whose power and ability to survive in a world of competing nation-states depends on the pursuit of science. Science and the technology it makes possible are required for the production of material goods the state needs, notably armaments. Religion, therefore, must lose when it comes into conflict with science. The two mutually contradictory belief systems cannot both be candidates for full support by the state. The advantage of science over religion is what science, in contrast, makes possible: industrialization, commerce, and technologically adequate military institutions. Religion has therefore been replaced as the primary disseminator of ideology by the mass media and mass public education.

Religion, freed from its service to the state, becomes in reality common property, in a sense, free for all to use and exploit as they may. This, of course, does not happen overnight; rather, it is a gradual process. Thus, religion is subject to "private sector" commercialization, as seen especially in the U.S. with the hugely profitable religion businesses dealing in Christian televangelical fundamentalism. In institutions of education, a strong effort is made to present science as it is or should be, while the social sciences, humanities, and arts typically have a central concern with indoctrination. While free inquiry and creativity are more encouraged in the sciences, narrowness of focus, disciplinary isolation, and credential fetishism are promoted in the humanities and social sciences, particularly in educational institutions other than elite preparatory schools, colleges, and universities. There is, of course a reason for this distinction between institutions: students at elite institutions, being often of the wealthier classes themselves, have the most to gain from the continuation of the current social order and need to be creative and critically sophisticated in order to assume the leadership positions in society held for them. If the students in elite institutions are not of the wealthiest classes, they are at least in a prime situation to be co-opted into the service of the current social order. Students at nonelite institutions, on the other hand, are typically denied the kind of education that could encourage them to document and question oppression. Their creativity, in other words, is held in check. Chomsky provides a revealing comment on the difference of approach that distinguishes the sciences from other fields of study:

Compare mathematics and the political sciences.... In mathematics, in physics, people are concerned with what you say, not with the certification. But in order to speak about social reality, you must have the proper credentials, particularly if you depart from the accepted framework of thinking. Generally speaking, it seems fair to say that the richer the intellectual substance of a field, the less there is a concern for credentials, and the greater is the concern for content. One might even argue that to deal with substantial issues in the ideological disciplines may be a dangerous thing, because these disciplines are not simply concerned with

discovering and explaining the facts as they are; rather, they tend to present these facts and interpret them in a manner that conforms to certain ideological requirements, and to become dangerous to established interests if they do not do so (Chomsky 1977:7).

Language, Symbolism, and Popular Culture

The chapters of this book all deal with race and ideology and to varying extents language and symbolism also. The chapter in Part I take up linguistic, symbolic, and institutional manifestations of race, racism, and ideology. In Part II, the chapters highlight language, symbolism, and ideology as they are intertwined in popular cultural forms that are highly revealing in racial matters. Race is construed in the larger sense that deals with the negative categorizations and hierarchies of the world's peoples based on color and other physical traits. Not all of the groups discussed would think of themselves as a separate "race." Nevertheless, their physical traits, their nonwhiteness, combined with their social history, places them in a disadvantaged position in an increasingly globalized hierarchy of color. Their lifeways unfold in a racialized context; their grouphood is symbolically encoded in racial iconography.

Symbolism in this volume is used in the sense of *nonlanguage* objects, images, and actions that convey meaning that is not inherent in them; they stand for something other than themselves, although what they stand for may well have something to do with their nature. For example, images of blacks in films may communication subordination, but that subordination is not inherent in the images. We are able to attach a meaning of subordination to the images because of the way in which they pattern with respect to one another and because of our knowledge of the sociocultural context of the films, and film itself as an institution. *Popular culture* in these pages refers to cultural products produced for people with whom one has face-to-face relationships and also to what is sometimes referred to as mass culture (Lazere 1987), cultural products for the consumption of mass audiences, distributed through mass media. Consequently, popular culture may have the cultural specificity that is expected in grassroots cultural production, that is, specificity with regard to a particular cultural group such as African American teenagers in a certain city or African Americans in the northeast. Rap spans both senses of popular culture, but television and film products, of course, are normally produced for mass audiences.

Of the chapters in Part I, those by Spears, Baker, Gilliam, and Dejean investigate language primarily. Hancock exposes externally imposed symbolism on group identity, examining how a group of people, Gypsies (or, the Rom, as many prefer to be called), can become symbolic of constructs hardly related to them at all, but fulfilling needs of others. We often find discussions of such symbolic distortion in relation to blacks, Hispanics, Native Americans, and Asians, but seldom do we encounter discussions of subordinate groups such as Gypsies, who have been symbolically banished from the everyday world of work, leisure, and striving to a costumed, carefree shadow world of nomadism and trickery.

In the first of the chapters on language, Spears deals with how the teaching of language and culture can be used as a forum for combatting views of language that support subordination. He uses that discussion to put the Ebonics controversy of 1996-97 in context. Baker examines the subtle ways in which (racial) group power relations are reflected in everyday office speech patterns involving forms of address. Gilliam looks at language as resource or hindrance in a

developing country. In her chapter, race is the backdrop: she treats a people of color attempting to recover from the trials of colonialism and a contemporary world order structured by a very real color hierarchy. With Gilliam's and Dejean's chapters, it becomes clearer that language is usually an issue in developing countries in a way that it is not in wealthy nations such as the U.S.: the struggle for linguistic equity has extremely important consequences for political and economic development.

Spears undertakes the deconstructing of terms like *minority* that have much more ideological content than is commonly realized. He shows how the study of language, which must be contextualized, can lead students to a critical understanding of their condition and that of their people in society. There are three basic points which students must grasp. First, the prestige of a language or dialect depends on political and/or economic factors, not to any kind of grammatical superiority. For indeed, there is no sense in which one language can be grammatically superior to another. Second, language attitudes are essentially attitudes about people. Thus, the Ebonics controversy was really a masked discourse about blackness, in which derogatory statements that could not be made directly about blacks were made about the language of black people. Third, languages are not simply tools, they are resources. Practically all languages are acquired in a natural context (i.e., growing up in a particular community). Each comes attached to a specific world view, embedded, so to speak, in what the speakers of that language typically use it to say. One task for students of language and society is to study languages of oppressed groups to discover the discourses to which they are linked, in order to locate and amplify those parts of the discourses which can be used in liberation.

Baker asks fundamental questions concerning the relationship between diversity and equality, on the one hand, and cultural patterns and power, on the other. With integration, is there a combining of the cultures of the groups integrated or does the subordinate group assimilate to the culture of the dominant one? In situations where African and whites are integrated, there is generally an unstated assumption that blacks will assimilate to the cultural patterns of whites, the power group. However, sometimes that does not happen. Baker first outlines differences in white and African American address patterns and then looks at the maintenance of African American patterns in order to understand how their maintenance is related to the challenging or contestation of power in an entire institution.

Gilliam deals with language and ideology in Papua New Guinea, whose citizens are a people of color. As English becomes the language of economic development, which, she correctly notes, is not in line with national interests but instead the interests of multinational corporations, there is a corresponding lack of development in the vocabulary of indigenous languages. This "lexical arrest" in indigenous languages corresponds to technological arrest in development for national needs. She makes clear, by implication, that the language of development, i.e., true economic development which is in the interest of the country's population, can ill afford to ignore or treat lightly the question of what is to be the language of development. Implicit in her article also is the statement, after Calvet (1974), that language is both superstructure and base, it is a part of the ideological apparatus of the state and the means of production. (See also Devonish 1986, Gal 1989.) The situation in Papua New Guinea involves ideologies of language (Woolard and Schieffelin 1994) of a type commonly seen in developing nations of people of color.

Dejean takes a fresh approach to the question of what language should be used as a medium of instruction in Haiti. Both Creole and French are spoken, Creole by all, French by a tiny minority elite. Yet, instruction has been practically all in French or mostly in French throughout Haitian history, though during the past two decades significant teaching in Creole has begun in public schools. Should the medium of instruction be the child's native language or one s/he arrives at school unable to speak? Common sense tells us that it should be the native language, but a strong trend in language research informs us that in underdeveloped countries such as Haiti, another language is better. In the Haitian case, French, an international language, a "window on the world," is prescribed, when what Haitians actually need is a window on strategies for internally-oriented development aimed at putting an end to the misery of its people. Dejean points out that, although experiments have shown that school children can be introduced to literacy through a non-native language (in conjunction with use of their native language or not), learn it, and go on to perform well academically, it is imperative that the native language be used in order to achieve *mass* literacy. He notes that there have been examples throughout history of elitist educational systems which have provided literacy through instruction in a foreign language, but no mass educational institution has produced *mass* literacy through the use of a foreign language. So, while it is repeatedly recommended that Third World countries use a foreign language in attempts to achieve mass literacy, no one has ever suggested that the developed countries of North America and Europe, for example, use a non-native language. It is also worth noting that the small countries of Europe, e.g., Finland and Denmark, maintain their native languages, even though there is widespread use of a second "world" language or at least one of wider communication.

Wherever mass literacy has been achieved, e.g., Cuba, Nicaragua, the Soviet Union, and the U.S., the native language of the vast majority of school children has been the medium of instruction. I hasten to point out that Dejean does not present arguments against bilingual education per se. Rather, he argues against requiring the many Third World children who do not have access to special resources, to learn to read and write in a language other than their native one. Once they have achieved literacy, of course, they can go on to acquire another language. Many people of color in developing nations encounter the same kind of problem in achieving literacy and continuing their education. Thus, the problems of Haiti and Papua New Guinea are widespread.

Hancock's article deals with symbolism and social group identity. It concentrates on the symbolic function of an oppressed group in American society: the Rom, better known as Gypsies. Hancock's remarks on Gypsies recall statements which have been made in relation to several oppressed, nonwhite groups, notably blacks in the U.S. He duly notes the symbolic function of the Gypsy myth, which has little if anything to do with the real people. That myth, rather, serves to define them as scapegoats and to define the oppositional OtherCall of that which non-Gypsies are not or should not be. James Baldwin, the African American writer, stated in practically all of his nonfiction, that a primary symbolic function of U.S. blacks is to define the bottom of the social barrel. Blacks serve to define the bottom level, to which every white can feel fortunate for not having sunk, and in so doing help to perpetuate the fiction that being oppressed is a purely black affair (or one of blacks and other oppressed groups). The article reminds us that oppressed groups have symbolic (and ideological) functions in addition to the economic functions they may have.

Buck's chapter, analyzing the institution of prison labor, treats language and symbolism but most importantly dissects racism in a growing institution that reflects ominous trends in both the domestic and international business and governmental sectors. Buck makes the telling point that hegemonic discourse on prison labor in the U.S. is intended to produce the comfortable illusion for those on the outside that prisoners generally deserve to be in prison and benefit from the experience. One of the great ironies of the prison system is its creation of a domestic Fourth World (captive) labor source whose pitifully low wages, minuscule rate of absenteeism, and low drug use make it more attractive than Third World labor. Prison labor, ironically, also takes jobs from whites (and workers of color) on the outside, significant numbers of whom ironically favor higher incarceration rates over the establishment of social and educational programs (if indeed they have the relationship between the two strategies clearly in mind). Obtaining near-slave labor through the penal system is an old American tradition. During Reconstruction and afterwards, vagrancy and other types of laws were designed especially for the purpose of indiscriminately jailing blacks. Once in jail or prison, they were leased, whether in chain gangs or otherwise, to plantation owners and other business people at minimal prices. The prison system played a major institutional role in supplying captive black labor that worked under slave conditions. There is strong evidence that today profitability is one of the main reasons for the increase in prison labor.

Buck observes that prison labor cannot be fully understood unless it is related to the racist policies of the U.S. Drug War, which, among other things, criminalizes crack cocaine much more so than the powdered form of the drug. It is also important to observe that high drug use in U.S. inner cities creates in those communities a high level of political passivity and disorganization, making difficult the kind of activism necessary to improve overall conditions there. The domestic Drug War and the increase in prison labor are also related to the international drug war, notably as it unfolds in Latin America, where U.S. agents, U.S. supported regimes, and revolutionary groups intervene in the drug trade in the pursuit of their own agendas. The drug trade is also used in some cases as a cover for American military involvement in the internal politics of foreign countries. An understanding of prison labor and all of its ramifications is crucial for understanding not only race relations in the U.S., but also the evolution of the U.S. economy and the interconnections among the drug trade, prisons, labor relations, U.S. foreign policy, and the shaping of racist discourses and practices for the purpose of control. These interconnections may well foreshadow what we can expect to see more of in the future.

The chapters in Part II look at television, film, and rap. The chapters on television and film examine the content and function of ideology as it is structured into screen products with characters of color and women. The history of stereotyping African Americans and other people of color in television and film is rather well known. Bogle (1973) speaks of five basic black stereotypes in film: toms, coons, mulattoes, mammies, and bucks. The classic tom is servile, docile, avuncular, and asexual. The classic coon is Uncle Tom from Harriet Beecher Stowe's anti-slavery novel, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. The model coon is impossibly simple-minded, clownish, and cowardly; Stepin Fetchit comes to mind. Mulattoes are typically female and tragic, the only stock female black character allowed sexual allure of a kind that positions her to be a white man's throwaway mistress or a counterfeit white lady of leisure. The female protagonist who passes for white in *Imitation of Life* exemplifies a person of this type. Mammies are fat, dark-skinned, older, and enamored of hectoring black people and mothering whites. Hattie McDaniel, the black actress

who preferred to play a maid rather than be one, played the mammy role in *Gone with the Wind*, although she managed to bring a modicum of dignity to the part. Bucks epitomize the stereotype of the irrational, penis-driven, hypersexual black male. The most notorious early version of this type was the Negro character who raped a white woman in D. W. Griffith's filmic paean to white supremacy, *Birth of a Nation*.

Bogle (1991) later added to his list the asexual (or nearly so) sidekick-buddy, a type that has been popular since the onset of racial integration in the 1950s (see also Tasker 1993, Chap. 2). Bill Cosby in the television drama series "I Spy" fits this role. The main black character discussed in Abalos' chapter presents an updated version of this type. He does have a sex life, but is unequivocally the junior buddy in terms of actions and imagery. A subtype of this sidekick-buddy type (or the mammy type. Take your pick) is the mammy-buddy, an older, fat, sex-appealless (within conventional standards) black man who helps and nurtures a younger, "sex object," white male hero. The original *Die Hard* has this subtype on display. The *Lethal Weapon* series of films does also, but the black actor Danny Glover's role in these films is a "cleaned up" version of this type: only the helping and nurturing remain for the most part. But there is always an aura of irresistible sexual and combative potency about the white star, while the black one is subtly disrespected and feminized (patriarchy's deepest insult). In one of the *Lethal Weapon*'s, Glover is required to sit gingerly, pants down, on a bomb-rigged toilet, while the white buddy bemusedly goes about rescuing his mammy-buddy in distress. The most extreme example I have seen of the feminization of black men occurred in an episode of the television miniseries "Rich Man, Poor Man," in which a very large, heavily muscled black character is sexually molested by a slightly smaller white villain, after which, Nick Nolte's character, a noticeably shorter and slimmer white man (and ex-boxer, for what it's worth), avenges his black buddy.

Other people of color do not fare better. From patriarchal white supremacy's bottomless reservoir of disrespect come humiliating roles such as Tonto, the subservient Indian; Gunga Din, the native itching to serve and die for whites; the China doll, who has the same structural position to white men as the (female) mulatto and thus appears unable to focus on men of her own group, what with all the white adventurers passing through, foraging for receptacles to catch their excess body fluids; and the accented, drug-dealing Hispanics frequently appearing in police and action-adventure dramas.¹⁸

Abalos, writing on the classic television cop-buddy drama series "Miami Vice," includes a treatment of the representation of a gay man in relation to issues of masculinity. "Miami Vice" has been much applauded for its trend-setting role in television. However, Abalos concludes that the 1980s series was formally novel but in terms of content simply a more sophisticated re-presentation of the premises underlying hegemonic discourse in the U.S. She looks at issues relating to sexuality, male and female roles, ethnic casting, and others, demonstrating how contextualization not only makes the meaningful and useful interpretation of screen images as symbols possible, it also allows us better to isolate those units of communication which are indeed symbolic and therefore subject to interpretation. Abalos provides striking informal illustrations of how various qualitative and quantitative approaches to the analysis of symbolic content can reveal what otherwise might remain beneath the level of awareness.

In his reading of the film *New Jack City*, Whyllie reveals, with perhaps distressing clarity, how white supremacy infects the minds of those who suffer from it and becomes the mutant

virus of colorstruction. This term was formed on analogy with *colorstruck*, the African-American English adjective for blacks (not just African Americans) who at least sometimes show preferences for more "white-looking" people over more "African-looking" people (Spears 1992). I prefer *colorstruction* to *colorism* because of this and its evocation of *obstruction*, which is what colorstruction is on the road to equality. The best easily accessible example of colorstruction is the before-camera staff at Black Entertainment Television (BET), which is ironically much more allergic to dark-skinned and "African-looking" television personalities than any of the other networks, except, of course, the Hispanic ones, which are draconian in their degradation and marginalization of the dark-skinned Hispanic world.

New Jack City, produced by African Americans with creative control, shows cultural specificity. Other things being equal, "members of a cultural group will produce more compelling cultural products for members of that same group than will an outsider" (Spears 1992:26). The notion of cultural specificity ties in with that of *redissemination*, which refers to members of an oppressed group incorporating elements of the ideology used against them into the products they create. Redissemination in the typical case is more potent than mere dissemination (by members of the oppressing group) because it will have more cultural specificity: it will be more compelling because of its resonance with the audience's experiences. It is chilling that even African American film makers considered progressive are perpetrators of redissemination, no doubt unawares. Whylye's contribution comes to us in good time. Colorstruction in all communities of color needs to be thoroughly examined in an intense project of continuing culture critique.

Yasin's article in Part II looks into rap. He exposes the hegemonic media's distortion of the nature and range of artistic production included within rap. The media seem to focus on those types of rap having "gangsta" motifs and uncensored language, usually referred to as profanity or obscenity and seldom understood (Spears 1998). He notes that rap's beginnings are connected to the Black Power Movement of the Civil Rights Era and that it is probably the most vibrant and potent form of grassroots black culture today (also, of course, disseminated through the mass media). These two traits have figured prominently in the internationalization of rap, playing a role in a variety of countries as a model for structures that can serve local, popular cultural production oriented toward liberation. By placing rap, a kind of information mass medium, within the history of the African-American music tradition, he illustrates the continuity, adaptability, and functionality of black culture as well as its historical role in critiquing American society.

Television and film cannot be mentioned without bringing up the important issue of neoracist symbolism in these media. In this connection, it is first necessary to separate language from symbolism and then to separate categorical symbolic patterns from variable ones. A categorical pattern of symbolism is a group of symbols (in television and film, usually images) which all receive basically the same interpretation. For example, if *all* Latinos in a film are presented as unpleasant looking villains, we then have categorical symbolism; all individual instances in the pattern are negative. If some of the individual instances of a particular pattern, or group of symbols, are positive, while the rest are negative, then we have an example of variable symbolism. Variable symbolic patterns, then, are quantitative. Only a certain percentage of the images have a particular evaluation. Crude, categorical negative symbolism is in effect a slur, an ethnic or racial slur if it involves an ethnic or racial group. Typically, variable

symbolism is not received as a slur by audiences because it is much more subtle. Categorical negative symbolism is akin to a spoken slur. In narrative television programs (dramas, comedies—those with a story line) and movies, there are virtually no spoken slurs against African Americans, to take one group as an example. Nor are slurs communicated through categorical symbolism.

However, slurs are communicated through variable symbolism in most television and film products. Some black characters are presented as negative, but some positive ones are presented also and stand ready to serve as counterexamples to any accusations of racism or ethnic misrepresentation.

As a result, one often leaves a movie or comes away from a television program feeling a vague sense of dissatisfaction or discomfiture; or, one may come away feeling that nothing worth commenting on or reacting to has occurred. The second reaction is perhaps the more common and simply underlines the effectiveness of variable symbolism in the maintenance and reinforcement of ideas and the cultural hegemony of which they are a part.

A relevant example of variable symbolism comes from films of the action/adventure genre, typified by movies over the past fifteen years or so starring Sylvester Stallone, Chuck Norris, and Arnold Schwarzenegger, who seems to be the worst offender in this regard. In each of these films, besides the star, there is an array of good characters and villains. One notes that some of the good characters are black,¹⁹ some white; some of the villains are black, some white. However, as many moviegoers are increasingly realizing, even though there are both black and white villains, the worst villain is often black, and accordingly dies the most horrible or violent death. From the standpoint of gore, this villain's death may even be one of the film's showpieces, as is the case in one of Arnold Schwarzenegger's films, *Commando*, in which the black, primary villain, who is also the black in the film with the darkest skin and the most stereotypically black facial features, meets his horrible fate by falling a story or two onto the sharp projectile of a huge machine. The projectile pierces the middle portion of his upper torso, causing an eruption of blood. This was all to the delight of the audience that witnessed this scene when I saw it. (Roughly half of the audience seemed to be African American. In any case, about three-fourths of the audience was non-white, probably mostly American and Caribbean blacks and Hispanics.) Sometimes, it is a good black character who dies a notably horrible death (at least "good" at the time of his death). An example is what happens to Apollo Creed, the black boxer character in Stallone's Rocky films. In one of them, Creed is bludgeoned with unusual viciousness in the ring, blood and sweat flying from his body, and dies as a result.

These films as a group seem to have achieved a way of killing two birds with one punch: they pander to the racism of mostly young adult white audiences by furnishing them scenes of vicious killings of blacks and they pander to similar black audiences by presenting them with some kind of black role model (though definitely less heroic than the white star) as well as heaping quantities of violence. It would appear that makers of this genre of film have discovered—and knowingly use—a viciously racist hook for white audiences that will get past black audiences.

This kind of neoracist symbolism does not flaunt itself. It slips into the consciousness of many of those who view it, simply because it is not blunt enough to be regularly detected. Most important is that such subtle, variable symbolism makes possible the perpetuation of negative stereotyping without significant resistance from the ethnic group negatively affected by it, a

group that may otherwise be active in campaigning against defamation. But, such campaigns are launched only against defamation by language and through categorical or near categorical symbolic defamation.

Neoracist negative symbolism, of a variable nature, nourishes among blacks the seeds of self-hate planted continually by an institutionally anti-black society and, among whites, nourishes the white supremacy which promotes the power of a very small ruling elite. The symbolism of the media, not just their language, need to be subjected to constant, conscious interpretation. In a neoracist environment, critique must be based on qualitative and quantitative decoding to reveal the media's ideological function. So long as this function remains hidden, it can continue to help maintain the differential access to wealth and power that is the central reason for the existence of racial categorization.

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1. Du Bois (1969 [1935]) is apparently the first social scientist who realized this and documented it. His work, like that of other independent-thinker scholars of color (and like-thinking whites), has been marginalized in mainstream U.S. academic and intellectual circles.

2. The following works, which are only a few among many, give some idea of the diversity of frameworks and perspectives in circulation: Allen 1994; Bell 1992, Delgado 1995; Montagu 1942; Shanklin 1994; Wallace 1992; Grossberg et al. 1992; hooks 1992 and 1994; van Dijk 1993; Diawara 1993; Grimshaw 1992; Marable 1983, 1995; Minority Rights Group 1995; Omi and Winant 1986; Reynolds and Lieberman 1996; Roediger 1991; Smedley 1993; Harris 1964; Wetherell and Potter 1992; Gregory and Sanjek 1994; Smitherman-Donaldson and van Dijk 1988; Tobach and Rosoff 1994, West 1993; Harrison 1991, and *Transforming Anthropology* 5.

Du Bois 1969 [1935]; Drake 1987, 1990; *Transforming Anthropology* 2.1 and 3.1; and Blauner 1972 are only a few examples of works mentioned above and others that do attempt to place their discussions within the larger context.

3. Ethnicity is not seen as necessarily involving genetically determined physical characteristics; rather, it is in theory based on the common heritage of a group: shared history, language (which may not be unique to a particular ethnic group), regional origin, and culture. It must be emphasized also that ethnic notions are tied to the position of groups in a social hierarchy and the ideology that assists in propping up the hierarchy. Different ethnic groups can be represented in the same (socially constructed) race and vice-versa. See Williams 1989 and Mullings 1978.

4. Most accounts of race in this area focus on the buffer status of the Chinese Americans (e.g., Loewen 1988). In at least some areas during certain periods, the Chinese Americans and African Americans had the same status. Offspring of mixed, Chinese-African American marriages were considered black, but if possible sometimes passed for Chinese American when and where it was advantageous (personal communication, Rutherford Edwards, my stepfather, born in 1894, who grew up in the area).

5. This resistance take both physical and cultural forms. In regard to the latter, see for example, Guthrie 1996, which discusses African Americans in the Sea Islands.

6. During the 1970s, in Kinshasha and other Congolese cities, there was a wave of skin bleaching by women that had several disastrous consequences, one being that it destroyed the skin's elasticity, resulting in the death in childbirth of some skin-bleaching women.

7. Some biologists, geneticists, and others in the life sciences use the term *race* in the sense of *population*.

8. *Civilization* is not currently used evaluatively in the social sciences. It simply refers to a society with specific traits, namely cities and all they imply.

9. *State* is the term used by most anthropologists to refer to societies with the prominent features of cities, social stratification involving elites and subordinated groups, occupational specialization, and permanent governmental and bureaucratic institutions.

10. Leacock's oeuvre comprises numerous publications. See Sutton 1993 for a bibliography.

11. In terms of economics, there is strong evidence that sexism is more oppressive than racism. Black males do better than white females in terms of income and earnings. For example, the 1992 median income and earnings of employed black men were \$22,369, while for employed white women they were \$21,659 (Hacker 1995:100). When quality of life issues, including health care, are considered, it is harder to tell since quality of life is often difficult to measure and is subjectively determined.

12. The U.S. has some socialist institutions such as Social Security and welfare, though they would never be called what they are because of the bogeyman status of socialism in the U.S.

12. See Winant 1994 for a discussion of events in Brazil's racial struggles during the past decades.

14. I am indebted to Charles Hamilton Townsend for stressing this point to me.

15. Ironically, blackness represents extreme otherness and the lowest status in U.S. white-supremacist racial iconography (as indicated by considerations under discussion); but in reality blacks (i.e., "African Americans") do not occupy the bottom of the political-economic scale (in terms of per capita income and wealth and other such measures). Native Americans do, and so also do other groups, e.g., Puerto Ricans and Dominicans. It appears that few U.S. residents are aware of this, due no doubt to the symbolic status of various racial groups. Of course, ranking these (shifting) groups economically or otherwise is fraught with difficulties because some Native Americans, Puerto Ricans, and Dominicans situationally identify as black.

16. Another, down to earth, way of saying this is that if a group of black humans arrived from outer space with unprecedented wealth and technological power and took over Earth, white elites in Europe, the U.S., and elsewhere, once they decided that the new power group was here to stay and that resistance was futile, would start intermarrying (the new power group permitting) with the new power group in order to conserve as much of their power as possible and to insure the elite status of their offspring. Notice also that the new black ruling elite would probably do as such new elites have done throughout history: intermarry with the old elite in order to quickly solidify their power and thereby save expense in putting down rebellions.

17. Students in my television and film courses have done papers actually demonstrating this by analyzing quantitatively the social characteristics of characters and then rating that character on a positive/negative scale based on how an audience would rate that character in terms of other attributes such as looks, personality, sexual allure, possessions, character, morals, leadership, etc. Most people would expect nonwhites to fare much worse than whites, and they do. What is

somewhat surprising is how much worse southern European/Mediterranean (i.e., swarthy or dark-featured) non-Protestant whites do in comparison to northern European (fairer), Protestant types.

18. See Parenti 1992 for detailed discussions of the stereotyping of groups of color, white "ethnics," and the white working class. See Russo 1987 on the stereotyping of (mainly white) gays and lesbians in film.

19. Sometimes, none of the good characters are black, e.g., in *Total Recall*, the Arnold Schwarzenegger science fiction vehicle, where the most positive black character is an air-brained receptionist. The others are an assortment of prostitutes, mutants, and other underworld types.