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Reply to My Critics

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I would like to thank my critics V. Denise James, Chike Jeffers, Falguni Sheth, Ronald Sundstrom, and Paul Taylor for their stimulating and constructive comments. Rather than discussing each of their contributions separately, I will divide my reply along thematic lines, most of which were articulated by more than one commentator.

1. The vocabulary of integration and the role of a white scholar in the philosophy of race

Taken together, my commentators articulate an important challenge to any white scholar working in the philosophy of race who has the aim of offering proposals for the promotion of racial justice. The problem is general: it applies to anyone occupying a structural position of privilege who aims to produce knowledge of practical use to the oppressed. The challenge is to articulate ideas in a way that

connects fruitfully to the self-understandings of the oppressed, since they can be liberated only if they (among others) exercise their agency to that end, and agency works through people's self-understandings. A common theme running through my critics' commentaries is that my language of integration does not connect in the right way to what Taylor calls the political phenomenology of the black community.

I'd like to step back and consider this problem from the perspective of social theory. Max Weber (1968, vol. I, ch. I.1.6) distinguished two dimensions of analysis of social behavior. First, we can analyze behavior causally, tracing its underlying mechanisms, likelihood under different conditions, and effects. Second, we can analyze its social meaning, or the significance of behavior as understood by members of society. The two dimensions are linked, since the meanings people place on conduct affect the likelihood that they will do it and shape patterns of social behavior in more complicated ways. However, one of the deep themes of social theory is that people often misrecognize their own social practices. Indeed, misrecognition may be a critical feature that reproduces patterns of behavior over time. For example, studies of gift exchange comment on the discord between the social meaning of gifts as freely given, and the underlying social fact that gift exchange is (covertly) obligatory (Mauss 1967).

Weber was interested in understanding the social world as it is, not in devising a set of social meanings that would mobilize participants to change it. Considering the latter project as lying at the core of the project of creating a more democratic society, it is evident that the scholar occupying a structural position of privilege has no authority to dictate terms of transformational self-understanding to the key agents – the oppressed – whose mobilization is needed for the project to succeed. What help, then, can the scholar of privilege provide in her capacity as a social theorist committed to democratic equality? Four things:

1. She can provide a detailed analysis of the multiple interlocking and reinforcing causal mechanisms that, together, reproduce systematic oppression—undemocratic relations of subordination, exploitation, marginalization, cultural imposition, and stigmatization—in the present day. This supplies an account of the mechanisms that must

be blocked and ultimately dismantled in order to realize a more just and democratic society. This is the task of ch. 1-3 of my book.

2. She can provide an analysis of why occupants in privileged positions ascribe the social meanings they do to the persons and conduct of both the privileged and the disadvantaged--meanings that figure constitutively in the reproduction of stigmatized social identities, stigmatizing social policies, and the failure of the privileged to recognize their own causal role in perpetuating systematic oppression. Critical to task is to explain how and why the privileged systematically misrecognize the causal mechanisms underlying both their own conduct, and the conduct of those whom they stigmatize. This is the task of ch. 3-4 of my book.

3. She can provide an analysis of strategies, policies, and institutions that are (a) needed to block and ultimately dismantle the unjust mechanisms identified above *and* (b) that are in the feasible option set for agents committed to creating a more just and democratic order. For the objective of non-ideal theory is not to describe a perfectly just but unattainable world, but to identify available strategies that evidence shows have causal power to undermine the causes of group oppression. This is the task of ch. 5-7 of my book.

4. She can identify causal deficiencies in alternative strategies proposed to deal with injustice, (strategies that fail to fully account for the mechanisms that are causing injustice), warn of their likely results, and *begin* to address some of the costs to the oppressed of the strategies recommended in (3) by offering reasons to expect that, even if the short-run costs are substantial, those costs will decline in the long run. This is the task of ch. 8-9 of my book. Ultimately, however, she lacks the authority to weigh the costs against the benefits to the oppressed of alternative strategies. That is something the oppressed must ultimately weigh for themselves.

None of these things, however important, supply terms of self-understanding that the oppressed need find congenial. Taylor, Sundstrom, and James complain that the term "integration", which I use to refer to the strategies and institutions identified in (3), has many negative connotations in blacks' lived experience. While I acknowledged that blacks have good reason to regard with suspicion the debased forms of integration whites have resentfully offered to

them (p. 1), and the stresses of the experience of integration even when white-dominated institutions are trying to do a better job of it (ch. 9), I wasn't aware that the term itself is sufficiently toxic to substantial segments of the black community as to disqualify it as a name for an ideal that they might find inspiring. My own theory predicts that my relative segregation from the black community would make me ignorant of this fact, and also claims that I am incompetent, and indeed not authorized, to correct this error on my own. Therefore I welcome Taylor's invitation to cross-racial dialogue in the creation of a shared vocabulary that would be better able to articulate and advance democracy and racial justice. What I care about is that the causal mechanisms reproducing undemocratic and unjust race relations be dismantled, and I clam that cooperative interracial interaction on terms of equality is needed to dismantle them. What terms we use to denote these activities are up for grabs. Moreover, the terms we choose in dialogue will also shape and reflect jointly achieved understandings of how to specify the activities in question. Whatever we decide to call these activities, they do not amount to a fixed ideal but are always in need of reconstruction in light of experience with their successes and failures, and in need of enrichment by what Taylor calls the "wider vision of human flourishing" found in "certain forms of the black radical imagination."

2. How Integration/Inclusion Works

Having just conceded the inadequacy of the term "integration," but with the dialogue needed to come up with a better term incomplete, I am in somewhat of a quandary as to how to proceed. Sundstrom uses terms including "community, democracy, accountability, equity, and inclusion" to refer to ideals he endorses. These evocative terms all pick up on aspects of the ideal I am after, but a single term is needed. I therefore propose, as a provisional remediation, to use the term "inclusion" for what I call "integration" in my book. However, insofar as my critics have named my ideal of integration as an object of critique, it might be unfair to represent them as criticizing inclusion, since they may have a different understanding of what inclusion amounts to. Hence I shall retain the use of "integration" in this section, when I discuss what my critics Jeffers and James have named as their object of criticism.

Integration may refer either to a condition or to activities. As an ideal condition or achieved state of affairs it consists in full inclusion of social groups on terms of equality across all of the main institutions of social life. As a set of activities in our non-ideal world, it consists in a range of modes of intergroup interaction, including (1) spatial integration: sharing social spaces and facilities, (2) formal integration: intergroup cooperation toward shared goals in formal organizations such as firms, schools, sports teams, government offices, and the armed forces, with members of all groups participating in all formal positions of the organization in substantial numbers, enjoying all of the powers and entitlements of those positions, (3) political integration: intergroup dialogue, coalition-building, negotiation, and contention over public policies in the constitutive activities of democratic politics (political campaigns, elections, grassroots organizations, demonstrations, legislation, school board meetings, etc.) in which all groups have voice and significant bargaining power (ch. 5), (4) informal integration: intergroup affiliation in intimate relations as of friendship and marriage.

My book stresses formal and political integration as the key integrative activities that promote black destigmatization and access to resources. I argue that spatial integration by itself, without the social engagement entailed by the other modes of integration, may provide access to physical resources such as safer neighborhoods and better housing, but that it does not improve blacks' access to social capital, and may not provide the background conditions for cooperative interaction that formal integration supplies (pp. 117, 119-120, 126). The numerous studies I cite on the positive effects of formal and informal integration never suggest that whites' experience in a single integrative activity or relationship purges them of all racial antipathies and stigmatizing stereotypes. Rather, they demonstrate that the effects of integration are incremental and probabilistic. Yet the positive effects on whites' attitudes are measurable, and spread to some degree beyond the specific persons with whom whites engage. Hence, mere token integration is insufficient to generate positive effects (p. 151). For integration to have cumulatively observable positive effects, I argue that it must involve substantial representation of excluded groups and be assiduously practiced across multiple domains, in multiple modes.

Hence, when James disparages mere "proximity" as insufficient to secure respectful race relations, argues that her experience of being a token black professor in a white dominated institution has not transformed the consciousness of her white colleagues, that whites who have a single black friend do not necessarily acquire empathy toward all blacks, and that partial integration in some domains does not eliminate racism everywhere, she affirms rather than undermines my argument.

I spend a much of my book detailing the diverse paths by which different types of integration work their effects. For example, spatial integration gives blacks access to the richer resources available in areas from which they have been excluded. Formal and informal integration give blacks access to forms of social and cultural capital they need to obtain jobs and advance their careers (§6.2). Political integration involves the cross-racial coalition building needed to enable blacks to direct public resources to their communities. It also involves contentious activities, whereby blacks organize to demand fair treatment and hold white political actors accountable for their policies. Integrative activities, particularly in politics, do not necessarily involve warmth and consensus, but often do their constructive work through stressful contention and disagreement (§§5.2-5.3).

Hence, when James suggests that "countervailing voices of collective black political commitments (in coalition with sympathetic white persons) should . . . be the expected and desired norm of political interactions today," and that "those of us interested in social justice should . . . fight for the redistribution of material resources to poor communities" and that "factionalism, conflict, and disagreement . . . [are] found at the root of a healthy, contemporary, large scale democracy" she affirms rather than undermines my argument. This is what political integration is about.

Beyond all of these effects, I stress the educative functions of integration. I reverse the stigmatizing narrative of integration's educative effects, according to which ignorant blacks are uplifted by contact with enlightened whites with supposedly superior cultural values. It is mainly *whites* who need to be educated by *blacks* through integration. Throughout my book, I stress the corrupting effects of segregation on dominant groups. Segregation makes dominant

groups ignorant, bigoted, parochial, irresponsible, unjust and incompetent in interacting with stigmatized groups (pp. 108-9). It disables them from recognizing their own injustice, by insulating them from exposure to critique and accountability at the hands of the groups they exclude. Political integration, carried out through contentious and forceful expression of complaints of injustice and demands for justice, is the great vehicle whereby blacks have taught America to move closer to justice and to realize a more democratic society (§§5.2-5.3). Formal and informal integration have subtler educative effects, working more on implicit than explicit racial biases. These modes of integration undermine whites' racial stereotypes by exposing them to and giving them an interest in recognizing heterogeneity among blacks. Formal integration, when raised to a critical mass across all occupational positions, undermines stereotypes that link whites to elite positions and blacks to subordinate positions. These are all cognitive improvements spurred by blacks exercising agency in integrated settings (§6.3).

The story I tell about American politics places blacks' struggle for racial justice at the very center of American democratic development. The story I tell about democracy generally represents contention by integrated coalitions of the less advantaged with their more privileged allies as the engine of progress toward a more just and democratic order. Since schools are the places where students are taught about the history of American democracy and more generally about democratic values and processes, it follows from my account that schools should highlight blacks' contributions to making America a more just and democratic society, and center attention on the ways democracies learn to educate and improve themselves by listening to the voices of the disadvantaged.

For this reason, I disagree with Jeffers's representation of integration as a "huge blow to black dignity." When all Americans, and not only African-Americans, are taught the pivotal contributions of African-Americans to realizing American ideals of equality and democracy, black dignity is enhanced. Centering black agency in American history also humbles white narcissistic narratives of self-enlightenment and superiority.

My book instantiates a conception of political philosophy and democratic theory that focuses attention on racial and other group

injustices, and on the indispensable agency of subordinate groups in overcoming these injustices. This is plainly a challenge to mainstream analytic political philosophy, which mostly ignores race and marginalizes consideration of group injustices more generally. Hence I find it astonishing that James thinks I am "telling . . . stigmatized, oppressed people who make it to the hallowed halls for their educations or to make their livings . . . [to] dare not to question the nature of the disciplines and institutions who've welcomed you."

James's reading is so bizarrely contrary what I took myself to be doing that some diagnosis of this miscommunication is called for. Can my own theory account for my failure to communicate successfully? Along the lines I indicate in section 1, I speculate that my use of the term "integration," which appears to have highly negative connotations in a substantial segment of the black community with which I have not had enough contact (although I have shared my work with other black scholars who have not objected to the term), led her to draw inferences about what I am saying from her own understanding of this term, rather than from my explicit disavowals of older understandings of integration and my extended discussion of how my usage, designed for analytic purposes, differs from cognate concepts. I thank Taylor for his reading of "integration" in the analytic mode I intended, for his insightful discussion of racial differences in how that term is understood, and for his useful proposals for how to construct a better vocabulary.

3. Methodology: Non-Ideal Theory, Mechanisms, and Motives

Non-ideal theory begins with the identification of moral and political problems in our world, moves on to analyzing and evaluating the causes of these problems, considers the evidence on what could block or dismantle those causes, and recommends strategies of improvement that lie within the capacities and resources of people today. Even better worlds than those that would be produced by these strategies might be imagined. Non-ideal theory sets those aside if it cannot identify feasible paths from our world to those more ideal worlds. The focus of non-ideal theory is on what we can and should do, given the constraints under which we currently live.

A distinctive feature of my way of doing non-ideal theory is to be meticulous and precise in differentiating the variety and interaction of discrete causal mechanisms underlying the problem at hand, by pursuing normative concerns in close conjunction with research in the social sciences and history. Only so can we identify specific causal levers that can block or undo those causes. So I am equally meticulous and precise in differentiating the variety of strategies that we can undertake, and in focusing close on what effects they may be expected to yield, in light of empirical research. Non-ideal theory demands splitting, not lumping.

For this reason I resist James's complaint that I fail to engage in a "deep critique of capitalism" and James's and Sheth's complaint that I decenter "white hegemony," white racism, and the history of violence in my account of current racial injustice. I do criticize Tilly for discounting violence in the historical construction of group inequality (p. 12). But non-ideal theory focuses on the problem here and now. While I note blacks' current disproportionate subjection to police violence, white-on-black violence plays a much less central role in the reproduction of racial inequality today than in the slave era, or in the Jim Crow era of KKK terrorism, lynching, violent disenfranchisement, and white rioting against black neighborhoods.

One could, if one likes, call "white hegemony" the entire interlocking and mutually reinforcing set of mechanisms that reproduce systematic black oppression today. What I am showing, then, is how that hegemony works, in detail. As an analytic category, however, "white hegemony" is too lumpy to do the practical work non-ideal theory needs. It has been realized in too many different ways across historical eras and countries. What matters for action is the particular mechanisms realizing it today, so that we can identify specific counter-mechanisms. I also find "capitalism" too lumpy, and an inaccurate fit to the problem. To be sure, some of the mechanisms I identify, such as predatory lending practices that drain housing wealth out of black neighborhoods, are distinctively capitalist. But others are not. The tendency to stereotype is universal. Even some particular racial stereotypes cross continents and economic systems. For example, some of the stigmatizing stereotypes of blacks today originated in pre-capitalist Muslim stereotypes of their African slaves, which were communicated to Europeans (Davis 2003, pp. 12-13).

"White racism," too, is either too lumpy, if it encompasses all of the mechanisms underlying black disadvantage, or too narrow, if it only includes explicit avowal of white supremacist ideology and conscious hatred for blacks. While varieties of pernicious conscious racism persist, we must come to grips with the considerable research documenting that many whites today are unaware of their racial biases and want to avoid discriminating against blacks. The mechanisms reproducing black disadvantage have shifted substantially since the end of Jim Crow.

My purpose in stressing these implicit mechanisms, and in stressing ethnocentrism over racial hatred, is not, as James supposes, to tell blacks to "forgive" whites. It is to identify fruitful strategies that can block or undo these mechanisms. Whites who are ethnocentric but not racist in the narrow sense can be induced to extend their ingroup-favoring biases to blacks by including blacks on their cooperative work teams. Whites who want to avoid discriminating but are unaware of their own biases behave more fairly when they need to reach decisions that they have to justify to blacks. Including blacks in their decisionmaking groups makes these whites more epistemically responsible in decisions affecting blacks, and more careful to avoid discrimination (§§6.3-6.4).

Another purpose in focusing on implicit mechanisms is to recruit well-meaning but self-ignorant whites as allies in the cause of racial justice. Calling them racist only alienates them. A vocabulary is needed to enable them to understand not just what they are doing but why their own self-understandings misrecognize what they are doing. The psychological language of ethnocentrism and implicit biases helpfully explains this in ways that can move them forward.

Sheth asks how whites can be motivated to support inclusion. She is right to stress that racial antagonism remains a significant force today. Nevertheless, racial attitudes have softened among a large segment of the white population, with ethnocentric biases overtaking racial hatred in ways that provide two openings for more inclusive strategies. First, many whites' explicit endorsement of civil rights principles means that they really do want to avoid discriminating. They embrace an image of themselves as not racially biased. When they know they are being judged on how well they are living up to that image, many do take care to be more inclusive (pp. 50, 129-131).

Second, cooperating with diverse groups, while experienced as stressful for most people in the heat of the action, induces longer-term tendencies by members of all races to choose more racially inclusive social domains in the future (p. 127). Inclusion therefore builds on itself. While this is incremental, it is real, and can be nudged along by concerted action.

I have another reason for investigating causal mechanisms: to criticize the ideology that rationalizes black stigmatization and white neglect of systematic black disadvantage. The dominant stigmatizing narrative blames blacks for dysfunctional behaviors present in poor segregated black neighborhoods, such as gang violence and dropping out of school, claims that these behaviors are the main cause of black disadvantage, and claims that blacks alone are responsible for addressing these problems. In §4.3, I offer an explanation of these behaviors, appealing in part to an economic theory of norms, to demonstrate how their causes extend beyond the black community to the structures of segregation that oppress them. I stress the ways they reflect individual adaptation to severe external constraints and deprivations. James's preferred explanation of school disengagement fits that pattern, so it is congenial and not opposed to my account. I also offer moral arguments questioning the assumption that if blacks have any responsibility at all for destructive behavior, the rest of society has no duty to help. This argument is addressed to elites leading public institutions, and to whites more generally, to explain why observed destructive behaviors taking place in segregated black neighborhoods do not justify neglect and inaction.

Sheth complains that the behaviors I consider are symptoms rather than causes of systematic black disadvantage, and that it is stigmatizing to focus on these behaviors as causes. I agree with her that these behaviors are symptoms: the whole point of my causal analysis shows how they are symptoms of larger structures of racial injustice imposed on black communities. At the same time these behaviors, especially violence and dropping out of school, are also proximate causes of worse outcomes for blacks. Furthermore, as William Julius Wilson (2009) has argued, arguments addressed to enlist agents outside the black community in the cause of racial justice will not get a serious hearing unless these "cultural" issues within the black community are addressed.

Sheth is also correct to observe that the same behaviors stigmatized by conservatives as causes of black disadvantage are cast in a different light when whites engage in them. Alcohol abuse and promiscuous sex are practiced more widely by wealthy white than by black college students, with no stigmatizing effects on the former. Nowhere is this double standard more evident than with respect to "stand your ground laws," which seek to extend to the whole society the norms of violence in response to challenges to masculine honor that have wrought devastation in high-poverty segregated neighborhoods. While support for these laws is partially grounded in longstanding white racist fears of black men challenging white male honor, their main effect appears to be to increase killings of whites (McCellan and Tekin 2013).

James complains that I pathologize black culture by focusing on deviant behavior, and trivialize it by offering an economic theory of norms that fails to account for how people experience culture. These complaints misapprehend the point of my causal analysis in §4.3. I was not offering a general survey of all black culture, but criticizing the ideology that rationalizes black stigmatization and inequality. It is impossible to criticize this ideology without focusing on the behaviors that ground the stigma, and offering a destigmatizing account of those behaviors. James is correct to observe that my economic theory does not account for how people experience culture. As sociologists have long stressed, the meanings people attach to behaviors do not necessarily track or correspond to their causes. Causes of behavior are often opaque or misrecognized by the actors themselves, and by others. Because black stigmatization rests on causal attributions, to undermine the stigmatizing ideology requires that one offer an alternative causal account.

4. Respect, Black Pride, Black Community Development, and the Ordeal of Integration

My book argues that segregation plays a central causal role in reproducing three large types of racial injustice against blacks: deprivation of resources, educational, and economic opportunity; political disempowerment; and stigmatization. A concern with stigmatization—the pervasive disrespect inflicted on blacks in U.S. society—is a central theme of my book. I investigate the social bases of this disrespect, and stress the importance of inclusion for

expanding the social bases of respect beyond the black community to the whole society.

Among the social bases of disrespect are practices that discriminate not against blacks as such, but against blackness—for example, cultural expressions that are seen as black. I illustrate this phenomenon with respect to discrimination against certain black hairstyles in corporate settings and criticize this as a case of what I call secondary discrimination (p. 115). It is secondary not because it isn't disrespectful or unjust, but because it is logically and causally derivative of primary discrimination against blacks as such. The context for my discussion of appearance norms in corporate settings is my larger critique of assimilation as a strategy for achieving racial equality. I criticize assimilation as “largely misguided” because racial inequality is caused by unjust race relations and not by cultural differences between blacks and whites (p. 114). In calling corporate appearance norms “marginal to the central problems of racial inequality,” I was therefore not calling for blacks to give up the struggle for respect and against secondary discrimination in this realm. I was rather criticizing assimilationism for supposing that racial equality would be advanced if blacks would adopt white cultural norms of appearance.¹ The *only* specifically black cultural difference that I argued played a causal role in racial inequality was certain linguistic differences that tend to generate miscommunication between blacks and whites, at blacks' expense. This is the *only* case in which I suggested that a kind of assimilation (convergence of interracial communication practices closer to white than black linguistic conventions) would promote inclusion and hence racial equality.

Enjoyment of the social bases of self-respect is critical to a flourishing life and a constructive sense of agency. When an oppressed community is deprived of those bases in the wider society, it is imperative that it cultivate those bases within its own ranks. I accept Jeffers's thoughtful discussion of the legitimate connections between

¹ I may have muddied the waters by also discussing appearance norms that self-consciously express an anti-corporate ethos, some of which are associated with blacks, others with whites. My point was to *distinguish* corporate policies that penalize such modes of appearance from policies that are racially discriminatory in penalizing employees for black cultural expression.

culture and racial ancestry, how these are cultivated in black community life, and how critical they are to black dignity. None of my criticisms of multiculturalist and black nationalist strategies is intended to deny or disparage those efforts—indeed, I acknowledged their importance (pp. 2, 183, 185). *I have one and only one criticism of these strategies*: that they fail to contend with the fundamental causal role of segregation in reproducing systematic black disadvantage in access to resources, political power, and the social bases of self-respect in the wider society. *They are not wrong; they are incomplete.*

James's response exemplifies this failure of some in the multiculturalist and black nationalist left to squarely contend with the causal analysis I present in my book. Simply arguing for more resources to be directed to black communities ignores the larger political economy of segregated, disadvantaged communities. Segregation turns these communities into sieves: resources flow out at least as quickly as they enter (Fusfeld and Bates, 1984). Moreover, economic opportunity is not a matter of access to material resources only, but of expanding the scope of opportunities for cooperation beyond the bounds of one's parochial community.

Jeffers and Sundstrom offer the most constructive and promising paths forward. I wholeheartedly agree with Jeffers that “we must balance the two vital and justifiable goals of black communal self-development and wide interracial contact, as these goals are not – in principle – incompatible.” I gladly take on board Sundstrom's thoughtful and extended account of how festivals of social identity foster solidarity and community, and how community building provides a basis for inclusion.

Sundstrom offers a path forward that may allay Jeffers's worry that my recommendations entail the tragic dissolution of black community life. In my book, I envisioned that, in the medium-to-long term, the assiduous practice of inclusion might end in a balance of local community/wider inclusion somewhat like what American Jews enjoy today. Jews are fully included across the institutions of American life, while continuing to enjoy flourishing distinctively Jewish institutions, celebrations, and spaces (pp. 113-114). While some Jews disagree about whether current trends and patterns of Jewish inclusion, particularly intermarriage, are striking the right

balance, or threaten to dangerously attenuate Jewish culture, most are not very distressed about it.

The paths of change for any group may differ and cannot be wholly predicted or controlled. Nor is anyone authorized to speak for their descendants. So the possibility of tragedy cannot be ruled out. Yet blacks have always had a substantially stronger preference for inclusion than whites have been willing to accommodate. I therefore consider it unlikely that the pace of inclusion would run ahead of blacks' preferred balance of local community/wider participation. DuBois may have been right to give up on that aim in the 1930s, at the nadir of black power in America, as Jeffers argues. Yet the browning of America, the willingness of tens of millions of whites to vote twice to elect a black president, and the gradual softening of white racial animus suggest that the time has returned for a renewed push toward inclusion.

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