

STRUCTURALIST AND INDIVIDUALIST ACCOUNTS OF  
RACISM

STRUCTURALIST AND INDIVIDUALIST ACCOUNTS OF  
RACISM:  
FINDING THE MIDDLE GROUND IN A POLARIZING DEBATE

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## **Lay Abstract**

This Thesis discusses individualist and structuralist accounts of racism in an attempt to bridge the two. Many people have discussed this topic in the past 20 years, but nearly all do it from one of these two camps. I propose that we allow for both account to be used in tandem, rather than using one account to explain situations and aspects of situations better explained by the other account.

## **Abstract**

This thesis attempts to demarcate the use of the term “racism” by looking at two of main accounts of what the word means. The first, individualism, defines racism as normally meaning an individual act or attitude of antipathy or apathy towards a person on the basis of their perceived race. The second, structuralism, defines racism as normally meaning the various beliefs, ideologies, laws, and actions that a cultural group participates in as caused by the structures of society which negatively affect a racialized group. I believe that neither of these accounts can adequately define nor address racism. As is shown in chapter III, many of the critiques made against individualism do not adequately answer the major structuralist concerns, but, as is shown in chapter IV, the same can be said for individualist critiques of structuralism. As I show in chapter V, each of them address an important aspect of racism, but fail when they attempt to entirely address it. Both act as a useful evaluative lens, but I will argue that we should be able to use both, rather than have to explain one by using the other

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## I. INTRODUCTION

Modern-day discussions of the nature of racism are characterized by a deep disagreement about how to approach the phenomenon. Some view racism as a solely individual phenomenon centred around a particular person acting hatefully towards someone based on their race, while others view racism as something that primarily exists in the structures and institutions of society and, because of those, the subconscious attitudes that each member of society holds. There are, of course, more extreme and more moderate positions on each side of these debates. Some believe that racism should only be located in the actions and attitudes of an individual and some believe that while primary focus should be given to individual attitudes and actions, there is also room to examine structures and institutions. This is true of the other side as well. Some view structures and the ideologies caused by them as the only things the word ‘racism’ should be used for, while others believe these should be the primary but not the only focus. My goal is to show that these two approaches both have their weaknesses and that by co-opting each other, they can address those weaknesses. By giving a dual focus to the individual and the structures of society, we can gain a deeper understanding of racism and also of how to explain these issues to audiences.

I will start by giving a general overview of the authors and terminology involved in this debate. In chapter one, I will give a general overview of the two positions and the various disagreements that they have with each other. In chapter two, I will defend individualism from some of the critiques made against it by structuralists. In addition, I will show that there are areas of racial injustice that are better understood from an individualist evaluative perspective than from a structuralist one. In chapter three, I will show that the criteria that even broad individualism uses to define racism are too stringent, leaving many of the most harmful forms of racial injustice outside of the definition of racism. Finally, chapter four will show that there is no reason why we

cannot define racism in both individualist and structuralist terms and adds also that it is useful to do this in conversations about racism since both individualist and structuralist elements are often present and since attitudes focused on by individualists are fed by the institutions focused on by structuralists.

### **Authors, and Terminology**

There are multiple people involved in this debate. On the individualist side, the author who started much of the discussion was Jorge Garcia (1996, 1997, and 2004). Many of the articles I will be considering are written in response to, or make use of use of, his series of articles on individualistic racism. Lawrence Blum often agrees with Garcia, taking the approach that although much can go wrong in the realm of race, the term “racism” should be reserved only for serious wrongs (2002 and 2007). When I will refer too “individualists” without any specific modifiers and without noting who specifically is speaking throughout this work, I mean a broad camp of thinkers who wish to see the individual and individual morality as the starting point for discussions of racism, whether that is in day-to-day happenings or its effect on the broader sociological framework. Two big players on the structuralist side are Charles Mills (1999 and 2003) and Tommie Shelby (2002 and 2014). Both of these authors have written extensively against Garcia’s individualistic model and have argued for a structuralist view of racism that puts the sociopolitical over the moral. Two authors have attempted to make a bridge between these two systems of thought. Jeremy Fischer discusses a synthesized individualistic and structuralist framework for defining racism that takes an equal view of individual morality and the moral psychology of society, although one always remains the main interpretive lens (Fischer 2021). Similarly, Grant Silva wrote a piece on ways to analyze individualistic behaviour from a structuralist framework with an aim towards individualistic concerns (Silva 2019).



Garcia's virtue and vice account most closely lines up with methodological individualism, in that it focuses specifically on the individual's intentions. But all individualistic accounts in some way attempt to explain the sociological via the moral rather than the other way around. That being said, some people in this group will be more individualist (e.g. Garcia) and some people will be less individualist (e.g. Blum), but each of them shares a particular focus or sympathy for a view of racism that gives at least some preference to the individual over the structure.

Individualistic accounts of racism focus primarily on the duties and attitudes of the individual. This is not to be confused with methodological individualism as found in the social sciences, or with the moral individualism espoused by people like Peter Singer. Although separate, the first of these types of individualism is not completely disconnected from an individualistic view of racism. Methodological individualism is "the claim that social phenomena must be explained by showing how they result from individual actions, which in turn must be explained through reference to the intentional states that motivate the individual actors." (Joseph, 2020). This is, in essence, what individualist accounts of racism attempt to do, although using the instance of racism is taking the broader theory of methodological individualism and applying it to a more specific set of cases and issues. The methodological individualist discussing racism would likely wish to show how individual actions and attitudes are the primary areas of focus. Some of those within the individualist camp will attempt to prove that most people view racism in methodologically individual terms. This will be shown further in the second chapter as we discuss the modern usage of the word "racism." This specific aspect of individual intention towards the explanation of social phenomenon will be brought to bear when we discuss Garcia's "infection" model and Fischer's "social virtue" model of institutionalized racism.

Less like individualism regarding racism is what I will call moral individualism. Moral individualism is a view about moral duty espoused, for example, by prominent philosopher Peter Singer. On such views, our moral obligations toward other creatures are based on the moral capacity and moral character of those creatures (May 2014, 1). Characteristics such as the capacity to suffer or the ability to have a life in a broad sense are things that moral individualists look to for as providing moral value (Ibid., 1). While the discussion of character traits may ring bells for those familiar with the work of Jorge Garcia, his individualistic theory of racism is distinct and separate from moral individualism. Garcia discusses character within the context of virtue ethics, whereas moral individualism as I understand it is primarily concerned with indicating which agents and creatures are deserving of moral concern as dictated by the nature (or in the terms of moral individualism, character) of a being.

### **Structuralism**

A second general approach to understanding and defining racism is what I will call “structuralism.” A structuralist account of racism sees racism as primarily existing within the structures of society, rather than in the attitudes or actions of individuals. These attitudes are related to the structures, of course, but are often a result of the structures rather than a cause of them. It is characteristic of structuralists to see political philosophy rather than moral philosophy as the central tool of analysis for issues of race and more specifically of the immorality (or technical lack thereof) of racism. A structuralist sees racism as primarily being a property of the structure of modern, Western society.<sup>1</sup> While there can be overt racism within the individual (i.e. hatred of one race or another), a person need not hold specifically racist attitudes in order to be considered racist,

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<sup>1</sup> It is important to note that racism can exist in any society, Western or not, with the power resting with any race. In the context of the literature, however, we will only be paying attention to the writings on structures in the Western world, wherein whites have historically held the power.

on this view. Rather, under structuralism, a person must only be part of an inherently racist society, thus partaking in the underlying cultural ideology, to be considered in some way racist. In a scientific sense, structuralism is the belief that most human behaviours are a result of underlying societal structures (Ladyman 2014). The behaviours and attitudes of people in a society are best understood in relation to the societies that helped to form and support those behaviours and attitudes (Ibid.). When discussing racism, structuralism is exactly what was previously described, but applied directly to attitudes people have about racism. Much as people can be more or less individualist, people can be more or less structuralist in their attitude toward racism. Those who are less structuralist would, while still emphasizing people's underlying attitudes caused by culture, allow for a significant amount of personal choice and a significant role for individual character in their assessment of a person's racism.

There are a few other terms that are important in understanding the debate between these two views. First, there is the idea of "conceptual inflation" or "overload." This is the idea that terms can be used in a broader array of scenarios and instances than those they were originally meant to be used in, or currently should be used in. A large part of the debate surrounding what counts as racism deals with this issue (Blum 2002, 31). Similar to conceptual inflation is the idea of "moral overload." Moral overload occurs when an idea is given both an unnecessary amount of moral weight and, as in conceptual inflation, an overly broad realm of applicability (Ibid., 31). Both of these ideas are especially important to individualist critiques of structuralism, but they also come to bear in most discussions of the definition of racism more generally.

My mission in this work is not to simply to discuss these various viewpoints and highlight the ways in which they differ. Instead, it is to find a way to synthesize them in a way leaves all of the tools available to those who wish to analyze race. Some attempts at synthesis have already

been done as mentioned in my overview of Fischer and Silva, but both of these came from a specific framework, namely structuralism. I hope to show a way that both individualist and structuralist focuses can be used to better explain, understand, and combat racism.

## II. LAYING THE GROUND

In this chapter, I want to introduce the major sides of the debate that this work will focus on, namely individualism and structuralism. Alongside introducing and showing the contours of each side of the debate, I will introduce the major authors attached to each side, showing the major distinctions each author brings up as well as how they agree and can be considered a part of the same camp in broad terms.

The discussion surrounding racism has inherently changed in the modern era. The question of “what does it mean to be racist” has shifted from questions with seemingly obvious answers, regarding, for example, the immorality of slavery and denial of equal legal rights, to less obvious questions about what exactly racism is in a modern society that has technical legal equality. Regarding common usage within culture and the academy, within politics, and within specific cultural groups, what is racism in the modern-day and how does it show itself? As will be shown later, a large part of this debate concerns whether many parts of what is called “racism” in modern discussions of the phenomenon can be properly called *immoral* in a meaningful way, or whether they are failures of a different, less blameworthy kind. Some take the view that if an action, attitude, or bias is harmful to a race, even if it is not immoral in and of itself, it can be called “racist,” while others argue that immorality must be present in any action that can be properly called “racist.”

In 1996, Jorge L. A. Garcia published an influential article entitled “The Heart of Racism” wherein he argued that racism should be primarily viewed as holding attitudes within the human heart, specifically an ill-will or lack of proper care (apathy) for a person because of their race (Garcia 1996, 6). Using the terminology of virtue ethics, Garcia calls these characteristics of ill-will *vices* (Ibid., 6). While ill-will is the worst and most morally reprehensible form of racism,

Garcia assumes that people are also owed a certain degree of care by other people. To not care enough about a specific people group is to be out of line with certain virtues and thus to have a vice (Ibid., 6).

Garcia argues that such vices transgress the virtues of benevolence and justice (Ibid., 9). While it is obvious how race-based ill-will is at odds with these virtues, it may not be as clear how a lack of goodwill is. Garcia admits that disregard is a lesser and derivative form of ill-will, but he argues that it is a form of ill-will nonetheless (Ibid., 9). Benevolence is treating others kindly or with mercy, and justice is giving things what they are owed (Ibid., 10). In the case of unjustified ill-will on the basis of race, one is neither treating a person with kindness nor giving a human what they are owed. There are perhaps justified reasons to feel ill-will, but the arbitrary criterion of race is not one of them (Ibid., 9). One might properly feel ill-will towards a murderer or a thief, for instance, but to feel that way towards someone on the basis of race is wrong (Ibid., 9). If people are owed a certain minimum of respect, those that hate a person or wish them ill or disregard them because of their race are being unjust. In the case of a lack of goodwill, we have similar reasons to call such acts immoral if we look at them through the lens of justice and benevolence. If it was agreed that people owe one another a certain degree of kindness and that treating another person justly includes meeting certain basic needs, then a lack of goodwill can be seen as somewhat equivalent to ill-will. Garcia writes that “At the individual level, it is in desires, wishes, intentions, and the like that racism fundamentally lies, not in actions or beliefs.” (Ibid., 11). Garcia is thus more concerned with how people feel towards others than with the external manifestations of those feelings. However, those feelings need not be directly hateful, but only apathetic.

Garcia summarizes his view as follows: “Actions and beliefs are racist in virtue of their coming from racism in the desires, wishes, and intentions of individuals, not in virtue of their

leading to these or other undesirable effects” (Garcia 1996, 11). In other words, racist actions are immoral because of the moral attitudes from which they stem, rather than because of their bad consequences. In this fairly basic summary of his claims, Garcia is claiming to offer both a more useful account of racism and a more accurate definition of it as far as modern cultural usage goes. The immediate response may be to doubt Garcia’s claim about modern cultural use of the word “racist,” given that the focus of modern discourse is often about how racism affects and exists in societal power structures. However, such doubt may be premature. Garcia believes that his account easily accounts for institutional aspects of racism alongside, and in fact because of, the individualistic nature of his account. Garcia claims that racism within societal structures occurs because of the attitudes of individuals who are in charge and a part of a given institution or used to be in charge (Garcia 1996, 13). These individuals affect the policies and decisions of the institution, subsequently affecting the culture and institutional attitudes of the institution even after those individuals have long since passed away (Ibid., 3). Garcia calls this an “infection” model of racism (Ibid., 11). While the infection label applies to racism on the individual level, since an action can be considered racist based on it being infected by attitudes within the individual heart rather than the outcome of the specific action, it more fully applies to his view of systemic racism. The leadership, founders, and policymakers were racist many years ago, and thus the current practices of the business, still following those policies and the actions of the founders, remain racist despite no racial ill-will being harboured by the current leadership or staff of the institution. In this way, an institution or organization can be “infected” with racism.

While the attitudes of the heart are what make something racist, the actual outcomes of the resulting decisions may or may not have a racist effect. Regardless of the result, and also regardless of whether that result was caused by malicious or racist intentions, the person or institution can

still be properly called racist. Regarding institutions, Garcia writes, “What matters is that racist attitudes contaminate the operation of the institution; it is irrelevant what its original point may have been, what its designers meant it to do. If it does not operate from those motives (at time T1), then it does not embody institutional racism (at T1)” (Garcia 1996, 12). This is to say that as long as a policy stemmed from racism when it was brought about and was genuinely racist back then, it can properly be considered racist even if the current members of the institution are not racist themselves in the present. In the language of infection, Garcia considers such old racist decisions as a contaminating agent that negatively affects the modern running of an institution (Ibid., 12). These infectable institutions need not be small or specific but can have a far reach and be quite broad. The main example that Garcia cites is Jim Crow laws that enshrined segregation and unequal rights within laws despite the passing of anti-slavery laws (Ibid., 12). These laws were presumably enacted with a spirit of malice and ill-will towards black people, resulting in institutions that could be considered racist despite not requiring racist people to utilize and enforce them.

### **Belief vs attitude**

Garcia believes that his view of racism offers a few distinct advantages. First, it allows for people to have pre-conceived beliefs without those beliefs being necessarily racist (Garcia 1996, 12). He calls this “prejudice in its strict sense...” (Ibid., 12). It is not immediately clear that Garcia considers this a specific advantage to his view as much as a simple feature, but there are pragmatic reasons to consider it an advantage in both discussions of race and the modern usage of the term in popular discourse. Such a conception of racism would allow for less confrontational discussion about racial ills and features of structural racism. People would at least not feel judged for having seemingly unavoidable assumptions. This is not to say that such assumptions should not be fought,



but that people cannot avoid, as is inherent in the definition of the word, having an ideology. Rather than being based on assumptions and ideologies, racism is a specific vice of character. If someone holds a specific view of a racial group but does so without a vicious hatred or disregard for those people, then the person is not racist (Ibid., 17). For example, one could perhaps believe that a particular racial group is generally lazy, but as long as their feelings do not lean towards a disrespect that lacks care for members of that group, we could not say that they are being racist towards those people. Garcia explains this idea by making the analogy of accidentally making a good investment for stupid reasons (Ibid., 16). In another work, Garcia states “Someone's belief in the inferiority of R1s to R2s, for example, will be racist when it serves to rationalize or motivate her antipathy or disregard for R1s” (Garcia 1997, 29). Even if someone holds a specifically negative belief about someone based on their race, it will not be racist if it cannot be found to be based in antipathy. In the same way, someone could come to hold a *characteristically racist* viewpoint without holding it for *genuinely racist* reasons (Garcia 1996, 16). This is a part of Garcia's “vice” conception of racism. While being influenced by acts and states of being, being racist is primarily a character trait – a vicious character trait (Ibid., 6-7).

Second, as hinted before, Garcia believes his account allows for a view of racism that does not excuse so-called “innocent” racism (Garcia 1996, 13). He writes, “...the person with racist feelings, desires, hopes, fears, and dispositions is racist even if she never acts on these attitudes in such a way as to harm people designated as members of the hated race” (Garcia 1996, 13). This benefit is almost the opposite of the previous one. Whereas the last one allows for epistemic assumptions about other people that may have negative effects, this benefit shows that Garcia's system does not make room for genuinely negative feelings that disregard the welfare of a racial group. A person that never acts contemptuously towards a racial group but holds them in contempt

in their mind is racist in Garcia's view. The moral aspect is always moral, and the epistemic aspect is allowed to stay epistemic. An immoral feeling or attitude will always be considered such, regardless of its consequences.

A third benefit that Garcia sees is that under this view of racism, a race-based preference does not necessarily have to be racist (Garcia 1996, 13). By this, he means things such as affirmative action, programs wherein special spots or benefits are given to members of a specific underrepresented group in an attempt to undo the various wrongs of the past (Ibid., 13). Specifically, it involves allowing people *more* than they are due rather than less (Ibid., 14). While there is always something wrong with not giving someone what they are owed, there is nothing immediately problematic with giving someone *more* than what they are owed. In cases of affirmative action, there is no "reverse racism" going on because no one is being denied anything, rather a specific group is being specifically benefitted in light of past injustices (Ibid., 14). This is not a benefit specific to Garcia's account as most structuralists believe that some form of recompense is due to underrepresented and oppressed groups. However, Garcia's account gives a moral reason for doing this, rather than a sociopolitical one, as is typical of the individualistic camp. For Garcia, it is totally fine to act with love and respect to a person or group of people. In fact, it is a good thing to do that. When something, such as an affirmative action program, is enacted out of love or respect for welfare, it is a *good* thing – a virtuous thing.

As should be clear by now, Garcia's account of racism is based on an appeal to virtue ethics, wherein "racism" denotes a particular state of character rather than a broad set of actions. Most accounts of virtue ethics are more concerned with who we are than what we do. What we do and our character are, of course, connected, but character takes the centre stage in virtue ethics. With character in mind, the view of moral duty is somewhat different than it is in many other moral

philosophies. Rather than giving specific moral guidelines and rules for our actions, virtue ethics gives us traits of character that are either desirable or undesirable (Van Zyl, 1-3).

Virtue ethics has not often been used as a lens through which to view racism, as one might expect. Lawrence Blum discusses virtue ethics' lack of use in such discussions and the benefits that it could provide in his book *I'm Not Racist, But...* He writes,

Perhaps one reason for the general lack of engagement between virtue theory and race is that race is seen as a primarily negative evaluative domain—one in which the moral task is primarily to avoid doing wrong, for example, to avoid being 'racist'. By contrast, virtue theory, while of course encompassing vice as well, has a primary focus on positive qualities of character (Blum 2002, 225)

This is what Blum believes to be the positive aspect of Garcia's account – that virtue ethics has an important role to play in discussions of racism by giving people something positive to do rather than a focus on avoiding the negative. But Blum also has something negative to say about Garcia's account. He writes that

In particular [Garcia] tends to conflate motivational and emotional dimensions of racism. In addition, his account of racism provides insufficient guidance to the plurality of race-related value. Focusing almost solely on racism, Garcia does not place the racial ills encompassed by 'racism' in the context of the wider set of racial values and disvalues. (Ibid., 226)

Blum does not believe that Garcia recognizes the full complexity of racism. He goes on to say that Garcia does not seem to have a full realization of the ways in which racism transgresses many of the virtues that Garcia does not specifically focus on (Ibid., 226). So, while Blum appreciates Garcia's general approach, he also believes that Garcia underutilizes virtue theory, leading to a stunted and under-useful framework for viewing and dealing with racism.

### **Lawrence Blum**

While still being somewhat in the same "individualist" camp as Garcia and recognizing the attractiveness of Garcia's virtue ethics viewpoint, Blum's view has some major differences from

Garcia's. To avoid possible confusion, one thing to note at the outset is that Blum claims that the word "racism" has become so overused and bogged down in a plethora of meanings that it is losing its moral significance (Blum 2002, 2). Blum wishes to specify and restrict the use of the word "racism" to specifically egregious offences within the realm of race (Blum 2002, 8). He writes that "Not every instance of racial conflict, insensitivity, discomfort, miscommunication, exclusion, injustice, or ignorance should be called "racist". Not all racial incidents are racist incidents." (Blum 2002, 2) Further, he argues that within the realm of politics and personal morality, there can be racial implications to actions that are not inherently or primarily racial actions (i.e. side effects) (Ibid., 3). For example, an action can negatively affect a specific socioeconomic class or subculture that is primarily made up of people from a particular racial group without being racist (Ibid., 3).

Blum calls this bogging down phenomenon "conceptual inflation." As examples of non-racist moral issues regarding race, he gives racial discomfort, racial ignorance, racial insensitivity, and racial injustice (Blum 2002, 31). Under Blum's definition of racism, all of these things could properly be considered immoral, but are not properly considered racist. Rather, such phenomena are less morally blameworthy than is racism. Rather than any moral issue involving race, Blum instead defines racism as an action based upon "ethnically prejudicial beliefs" (Ibid., 23), while simultaneously noting that a line of habitual actions is likely worse than an individual, isolated incident (Ibid., 22).

If it were not yet obvious, Blum's claim relies on the assumption that racism is "a grievous moral wrong," (Blum 2002, viii). This is why Blum wishes to separate these seemingly "innocent" mistakes from the sharper-fanged, personal racial injustices that he wishes to call racism proper (Ibid., vii-viii). While those more "innocent" racial issues can still be immoral, they will most often be less immoral than is racism proper. This account, like Garcia's, is, therefore, a "moralized"

account of racism. Both Garcia and Blum see the term “racism” as always denoting a moral failure and wish to separate actions or beliefs that are not moral failures from the specifically moral term that they both believe racism to be. More specifically, they both wish to view racism as primarily a personal moral failure rather than an institutional one, although institutional aspects exist in both of their views.

Another reason that Blum believes the term “racism” is losing moral significance is that it has been co-opted to cover “all forms of group discrimination, denials of dignity, and stigmatization (based on sex, disability, sexual orientation, and religion)” (Blum 2002, 31-32). This is to say that whenever someone is denied a service or called a slur because of their religion or sexuality, the cry of “racism!” comes up, even though it seems to be something distinct, even if related.<sup>2</sup> Finally, Blum claims that people “have become sloppy about the category of item that they name as “racist” (Blum 2002, 31). Categorical drift is most important when demarcating racism, but the loss of moral significance and the sloppy use of language should be kept in mind as well. Sexism no doubt has ties to racism, but to call two problems one is a danger to everyone (Blum 2002, 31 and Garcia 1997, 41).

Blum directly discusses Garcia’s work in a few places. From these writings, we can gather that he has two main critiques. First, Blum believes that Garcia “does not give a psychologically adequate account of the character of the vice in question” (Blum 2007, 228). Second, Blum believes that Garcia fails to “articulate the plurality of virtues and vices related to race” (Ibid., 228). In support of the first of these criticisms, Blum claims that in focusing on people’s intentions

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<sup>2</sup> The topic of intersectionality is not brought up by Blum, perhaps to his fault. His goal is to demarcate what the term “racism” does and should mean. In doing this, he wants us to think of the ways that racism is confused with other forms of discrimination rather than the way that the many forms of discrimination interact. Whether this is a good idea or not I have no opinion on but I do not believe he is denying that such discrimination intersects..

and motivations,<sup>3</sup> for the most part leaving aside the feelings that a person may have, Garcia misses an important and often actionable aspect of racism (Ibid., 228). By focusing upon two specific virtues, and more so their corresponding vices, Garcia is not only failing to see the breadth of the vices and virtues that apply to racism, but also the breadth of virtue ethics itself. Despite this, Blum does think there is merit in viewing racism as an individual vice, even if Garcia's account does not quite do enough (Ibid., 228).

Blum's second critique is that Garcia primarily sees racism as consisting of transgressions of the virtues of benevolence and/or justice – a vice of character rather than a specific action (Garcia 1996, 9 and Blum 2007 228-9). Blum sees this specific focus on these two virtues, or more specifically their vicious counterparts, as a weakness of Garcia's account (Blum 2007, 229). According to Blum, any account of racism must encompass and account for a few simple forms of it. In describing racism as primarily an affront to justice and benevolence through the concept of antipathy, Blum claims that Garcia is ignoring the equally important aspect of inferiorization (Ibid., 229).<sup>4</sup> Garcia argues that inferiorization is simply a form of antipathy, but this is based on the assumption that all forms of inferiorization are based on some form of ill-will or hatred, which Blum contends is not always true (Ibid., 229). Blum claims that Garcia's account fails to account for the plurality of motivations that can cause people to act racist and also because Garcia's account

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<sup>3</sup> Garcia's account should not be confused with other versions of "motivational racism." Philosophers such as Thomas Schmid in his *The Definition of Racism* and to a lesser degree Clevis Headley in his *Philosophical Approaches to Racism: A Critique of the Individualistic Perspective* both attempt to give a definition of racism that relies upon motivations, but they do so in a meaningfully different way than does Garcia. A motivational approach as described by Headley is mostly concerned with a specific desire to dominate another person or group of people based upon their race alone. Some accounts (Schmid) call this the only way to describe racism but others (Headley) refer to as the main lens through which other types of racism (behavioral and cognitive) can be explained. Garcia's account is based upon *feelings* towards another reason. While a desire to dominate would definitely fit under Garcia's account, his account is far broader, including general hatred and antipathy. The form of argumentation is also quite different, with motivational racism not bringing virtue or vice into the picture.

<sup>4</sup> See my section concerning Blum's *I'm Not Racist, But...*

does not account of the plurality of non-moral things that can go wrong in the realm of race without an action needing to be considered racist (Ibid., 229).

### **Benefits of Individualism over Structuralism**

With two major versions of individualism summarized, we are now in a position to turn to the reasons that Garcia and Blum see individualist accounts of racism as advantageous when compared to a structuralist account. Individualism has two major claims over structuralism. First, it claims to provide a view of racism that is more in line with how racism is normally thought of (Garcia). Second, it provides a framework for how racism *should* be thought of (Blum) so that we can be clearer with our language and thus better able to address wrongdoing in the realm of race. The second point is very much in line with the first and is that by viewing racism as always wrong, we can always condemn it regardless of the consequences. This allows for potentially harmful but not yet harmful attitudes to be called out as immoral, and for seemingly innocent ideals to be called into question.

### **Structuralist Accounts of Racism**

Many authors have criticized the individualist views of racism offered by Garcia and Blum, especially those of Garcia.<sup>5</sup> While some authors give a more positive response, most of them are only limitedly positive and most still have significant disagreements with Garcia. Among the many figures on the structuralist side, two stand out as especially significant in this debate about Garcia specifically and individualism more generally: Charles W. Mills and Tommie Shelby. Some of the criticisms levelled against Garcia also apply to Blum's argument, but many do not. Garcia and

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<sup>5</sup> See, among others, Mill's "'Heart' Attack: A Critique of Jorge Garcia's Volitional Conception of Racism", Shelby's "Is Racism in the 'Heart'?", Luc Faucher and Edouard Machery's "Against Jorge Garcia's Moral and Psychological Monism," Alberto G. Urquidez's "Jorge Garcia and the Ordinary Use of Racist Belief" and "A Revisionist Theory of Racism: Rejecting the Presumption of Conservatism," Rima Basu's "The Wrongs of Racist Beliefs," and Polycarp Ikuenobe's "Conceptualizing Racism and Its Subtle Forms,"

Blum's accounts are both moralistic accounts. That is a key shared feature, and will also turn out to be a key focus of criticism that applies to both systems of thought.

As noted previously, structuralism can be briefly defined as a view of racism that sees racism as existing within the structures and institutions of modern western society, stemming from their historic roots in colonialism and white supremacy. The ideals of these systems of thought and culture have been both wittingly and unwittingly baked into the structures of modern culture. Since these ideals and systems are baked into the culture of the West, the people of that culture often have unconscious attitudes and beliefs based upon the culture in which they were raised and the societal structures that affected their development. Such beliefs and attitudes are most often called an *ideology* by philosophers of race. I will discuss ideology in greater depth in chapter 2, but a simple definition of ideology is that it is a set of false or distorted beliefs that are held due to a particular position or class within a society (Payne and Barbera 2010, 340).

Structuralists claim that individualists commit a category error when they want to make racism a primarily moral issue. Rather, most structuralists claim that racism should be considered primarily as an issue of political philosophy (Mills 1997, 3, Shelby 2014 71). They of course believe that there are moral aspects and concerns about racism, but they claim that racism, as a phenomenon, is not primarily a moral one, but a cultural one. Or, one that is not primarily about whether an individual is living justly, but whether or not a society is functioning justly. Even moreso, whether or not the harm is being caused by the attitudes and actions of individuals or whether the harm is caused by how societies affect and mold its citizens. If this claim is true, a structuralist view that looks at the broader culture and institutions as the origin of, and probable starting point to fix, racism in Western culture is more useful than one that looks to the individual as the source of those things. This may seem somewhat opposed to normal thinking about racism.



However, structuralists make some important distinctions between moral and non-moral (amoral) aspects of racism. Shelby writes, “Ultimately... racism should, first and foremost, be understood as a problem of social injustice, where matters of basic liberty, the allocation of vital resources, access to educational and employment opportunities, and the rule of law are at stake” (Shelby 2014, 71). Shelby is not speaking here of issues that do not have moral aspects or claiming that moral philosophy does not have valuable insight into these issues. Quite the contrary (Ibid., 61). Shelby is arguing that issues of racism are best seen as issues and consequences of politics, systems of government, and culture. The allocation of resources in a culture most definitely has moral implications. It seems foolish to suggest otherwise. At the same time, it is hard to see it as an issue that is *primarily* about individual morality. The same applies to access to education. Do we want to say that every individual in the racial majority is morally at fault for a culture where the racial minority is less educated? Surely not. Do we want to say that such a thing is right or of no moral concern? Again, surely not. Thus, structuralists argue that racism should be seen as a primarily political issue, not a moral one.

As hinted at in the previous paragraph, another reason to doubt that racism is primarily a concern of individual morality is that not all racism is necessarily morally blameworthy. Shelby claims that although all forms of racism are “...*prima facie* cause for moral concern,” not all acts of racism are a “moral failing” (Shelby 2014, 65). This is to say that all expressions and instantiations of racism are morally concerning, but that an individual may not be blameworthy for all acts that can be considered racist under a structuralist model.

As further proof that most forms of structuralism do not focus on the moral but allow for something called “moral concern,” I would like to turn to the work of Grant J. Silva. Looking at structuralism from the aspect of the possibility of self-love, Silva writes,

...my account examines the workings of racism in social structures where racial injustice and inequality are already present. What difference does this make? When discussing racism many whites are often apprehensive and feel as if they are being personally attacked and blamed for historical injustices such as the colonization of the Americas, the African slave trade and chattel slavery, Jim Crow segregation, and more. This essay does not do this. White people alive today should not be blamed for the sins of yesteryear (unless, of course, if they actually participated in these wrongs). Instead, I challenge readers, particularly white ones, to consider their complacency and investment in the racial status quo. While one might not be accountable for the past, how might they take part in upholding and preserving a racist present shaped by historical injustice? (2019, 88)

This account is in a sense the other side of Shelby's coin. While Silva is not specifically discussing the individualist/structuralist debate, he is giving space to certain individualist concerns by way of a degree of personal responsibility to change things of moral note that do not necessarily entail moral blame. The mention of historical instances of blatant racism is also telling of Silva's structuralist leanings. The reason for mentioning these historical ills is not to imply only that those explicit evils are of moral note, but to focus on the perhaps less obvious, modern offspring of these evils. The less obvious nature of the modern-day ills is one of the reasons that Silva takes issue with Garcia's individualist account of racism. He says of Garcia's account: "Such a way of thinking about racism creates a firewall that protects many whites from the charge of racism" (Ibid., 91). So while one concern is that not all racism is morally blameworthy, the other side of that coin is that having an account that only focused on individual moral racism will miss very important parts of racism.

Even further on the structuralist side of this debate is Charles W. Mills. While Shelby allows for and even requires moral philosophy, Mills hints that both moral philosophy and the concept of blame have little to do with discussions of racism. The discussion of the problem of racism should be primarily conducted through the lens of political philosophy (Mills 2003, 67). To make morality a prerequisite for conversations about, and definitions of, racism is a category mistake. He writes, "In particular, we should not start a priori with the position that racism in its

different varieties is always wrong before we seek to analyze racism, since this aprioristic assumption may distort the investigative project” (Ibid., 58). This critique applies in a similar way to those that require some form individual blame in an act of racism, alongside a necessity for immorality. Mills further argues that when we require racism to be viewed as individual immorality or individual vice, we necessarily take focus and explanatory power away from the social structure (Ibid., 59). A major issue that Mills sees here is that to look at racism primarily as a moral issue, it must be greatly condensed in scope, or one must allow epistemic concerns to flow into moral ones (Ibid., 59). Blum and Garcia’s accounts see this very thing as positive, but Mills claims that it will detract from the racism debate, not add to it. Mills characterizes Garcia’s belief system and individualism more generally as one that would necessarily have to allow for genuinely believed prejudices that are harmful but not necessarily based on an ill-will or hatred to not be called racism. Such systems of ignorant or “positive” prejudices would necessarily produce bad effects, but Mills takes issue with not being able to call such effects racist.

Mills takes a position very similar to Shelby’s, although perhaps one that is more extreme. Mills writes, “As Tommie Shelby comments in his critique of Garcia, there is something sociologically very odd about [Garcia’s moral condemnation requirement] – though I think Shelby understates the degree of oddness by assuming that Garcia “means to apply this methodological requirement to only moral-philosophical analyses of racism” (Mills, 58).<sup>6</sup> This is to say that Mills

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<sup>6</sup> It is worth noting Mill’s critique of how Garcia dodges around using the word “sexism.” Mills claims that Garcia omits the word because it would “undercut the viability of [Garcia’s] account...” Mills claims that sexism is specifically left off of the list of actions that Garcia argues we view similarly to his account of racism because sexism is not normally seen as moral in even a remotely similar way to how Garcia wants people to view racism’s necessary immorality (Mills 2003, 58). Instead, Mills claims that sexism is not normally seen as a moral issue but rather as a mistaken epistemic position with bad, though not necessarily individually morally blameworthy, societal implications. However, Mills seems to miss Garcia’s endnote on this specific claim. While Garcia does not mention sexism in his list of similar phenomena, he does mention misogyny and adds on an endnote to explain why he does this. Garcia writes, “In my treatment, I purposely omit ‘sexism’, because it is a term consciously modeled on a certain politically informed understanding of racism...”) For my purposes here, it is better to work with notions more

thinks that Shelby *understates* the error of Garcia's account by allowing for moralization to be a requirement of moral-philosophical analyses. The issue for Mills is not the requirement of moralization or immorality, but the moral-philosophical analysis itself. Mills believes that racism is, in the modern-day, an almost entirely societal and political happening, and thus falls under the purview of sociopolitical philosophy. As something that should be analyzed as a sociopolitical phenomenon, to use the tools, language, and requirements of moral philosophy is a mistake – a mistake of category. Mills writes,

Yet the question of the nature and significance of a social phenomenon (its social sources, functional role, historical evolution, distinctive features, etc.) is a different question from its moral status, and to use morality as a preliminary filter is likely to have unfortunate theoretical consequences. In particular, we should not start a priori with the position that racism in its different varieties is always wrong before we seek to do an analysis of racism, since this aprioristic assumption may distort the investigative project (Mills 2003, 58).

In other words, if, like Garcia, we make the immorality of racism a prerequisite for defining what is and is not racist, we are missing the point – that racism is a social rather than moral phenomenon. According to Mills, racism is not the individual actions that we take on a day-by-day basis, but our unspoken participation in a social contract that excludes and stigmatizes racialized individuals (Mills 1997, 16). This exclusion and stigmatization is not an oddity or bug in this contract, but a part of the fabric of it (Ibid., 16). This, he refers to as a “racial contract” (Ibid., 16-17).

Now, Mills does not do away with the moral entirely. Rather, he believes that the socio-political explains the moral in a psychological sense. In his well-known book *The Racial Contract*, he writes,

Now the Racial Contract – and the "Racial Contract" as a theory, that is, the distanced, critical examination of the Racial Contract follows the classical model in being both

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nearly pre-theoretical. For similar reasons, I also omit here such concepts as 'heterosexism,' 'speciesism,' 'ageism,' 'ableism' and 'handicapism,' and many similar terms of recent coinage" (Garcia 1997, 34). So when Mills accuses Garcia of purposefully avoiding a term like "sexism," he is correct, but it does not seem to hurt Garcia's argument as much as Mills thinks it does. Instead, Garcia claims that his critique of racism could also be a critique of the modern usage of the term sexism.

sociopolitical and moral. It explains how society was created or crucially transformed, how the individuals in that society were reconstituted, how the state was established, and how a particular moral code and a certain moral psychology were brought into existence. Mills 1997, 10)

Or, in other words, the racial contract was agreed upon on a societal level and created a way of psychologically viewing morality that associated certain racial features with the good and other racial features with the bad (Mills 1997, 93). Racist action will, of course, not be recognized as such and the perpetrators will see themselves as righteous actors (Ibid., 93). It seems likely that there exists a connection between this part of *The Racial Contract* and his critique of Garcia's moral requirement in "Heart Attack." At the end of the day, the morality of a racist is not going to be governed by the same moral psychology as a non-racist and thus we cannot expect purely moral reasoning to have the needed effect. The principles upon which the racist and non-racist's beliefs are predicated are too different to agree and thus the underlying sociological ideologies, under the purview of sociopolitical philosophy, must be examined.

The discussion that Mills raises, about beliefs that are not based on ill-will or other issues of seeming obvious moral blame, is not particular to structuralism and critiques of individualism. Lying adjacent to the structuralism and individualism debate is a distinct debate about whether racism should be made a single concept amongst a broader category of "race-based-ills" (Matthew, 914). D.C. Matthew writes about demarcating racism for similar reasons to Shelby and Blum. I introduce him to show the importance of demarcation of the term, but also to show that demarcation is not the only part of this debate. Matthew here is arguing, somewhat in line with Lawrence Blum, that not all forms of racial injustice are equal and that the term "racist" should be reserved for particularly egregious matters of racial injustice (Ibid., 886). Explaining Blum, Matthew uses racial insensitivity and racial ignorance as examples of racial injustices that Blum claims can or should not be called "racist." Now, while Matthew's project of demarcating racism

proper amongst other racial ills has similarities to Shelby's project, there are a few important distinctions. First, while Matthew agrees with Shelby that not all forms of racism should be categorized as immoral, he also argues that, under his definition, some forms of racial injustice that cannot be called racism will be more morally problematic and worthy of more moral blame than some forms of racism (Matthew 2017, 887 fn 7). This is also to say that he disagrees with Blum's assertion that "racism" should be reserved for the most heinous and morally blameworthy instantiations of racial injustice. Second, whereas Shelby is mostly fine with a somewhat inflated concept of racism (Ibid., 885), Matthew is not. Specifically, Matthew argues for a conception of non-racist racial discrimination (Ibid., 885).

The point of bringing this up is not to show an alternative answer to the definition of racism, but rather to show what the debate is *not* about as much as what it *is* about. The debate is not about whether the term "racism" should be redefined or whether or not the term has been appropriately inflated. It is instead about the criteria by which we should redefine and view racism. Some views argue for a more inclusive definition, others for a more exclusive one. The question is not about this inclusion and exclusion. It is instead about the foundation that the inclusion and exclusion are based on. Matthew is an excellent example of this debate, coming from the structuralist side.

It is important to note the intersection between individualists and structuralists in Matthew as well. There is a genuine recognition of the problem of conceptual inflation. Although Matthew disagrees with the way that Blum addresses the problem, he does recognize it (Matthew 2017, 886-888). The way that Matthew disagrees with Blum is typical of the structuralist viewpoint. Matthew writes, "But Blum comes to this diversity of racial ills by way of distinctly *moral* considerations: given the strong sense of moral condemnation evoked by 'racism' and 'racist' he argues that we should reserve these terms "for certain especially serious moral failings and violations in the area

of race” (Matthew 2017, 886). After further explaining Blum’s viewpoint and saying that there is not a true need for terms that designate degrees of immorality, Matthew writes “Nevertheless, there may be other good reasons to adopt such an approach [Blum’s pluralistic approach to racial ills]. I will argue that a critical analysis of some such ills— or rather, analysis of the concepts that we use to name them—shows that there are indeed such reasons” (Ibid., 886.) To come to a pluralistic view of racism, Matthew suggests that we take a closer look at the language used to describe what goes wrong within the realm of race, rather than trying to look at the individual acts as Blum does. This linguistic approach to demarcating racism is somewhat similar to the approach that Alberto Urquidez uses to critique Garcia, though less formal and less Wittgensteinian (Urquidez 2019, 223). Urquidez brings up instances within the ordinary use, and talks of language that does not seem to fit either with Garcia’s claim that racism is primarily within the heart – not that most people in the general populace would agree with his definition of racism. Urquidez’s view will be considered in the second chapter when I discuss paternalistic racism and the issues that concept brings up for individualists.

While there is a lot of dispute amongst structuralists, allow me to summarize the major points they seem to mostly agree on. First, racism should be seen as a primarily sociopolitical issue. Although it can have moral aspects, it is best analyzed in the modern-day with a primary focus given to the societal effects and their previous causes. This is instead of a focus on the human heart and what makes an individual “racist” as an individual. The individual racist, after all, does not matter much – but a society of people with a racial ideology most definitely do. As will be seen in the next chapter, structuralists argue that by giving primary focus to morality and the individual, the individualists will downplay important aspects of racial injustice and seemingly allow for systems of thought that can greatly damage racialized groups. As with the individualists,

a second claim flows from the first. According to the structuralists, Garcia, and to a lesser extent Blum, are wrong in saying that their definitions of racism are more in line with modern usage of the term “racism.”

In this second chapter, I have introduced the major ideas, writers, and camps in the debate that I am examining. In the following chapters, I will demonstrate that there are issues with both structuralism and individualism. There are significant aspects of racism, racial injustice, and the definitions thereof that each view cannot address on its own. With such problems existing on both sides, the only answer, as will be shown in chapter five, is to allow for both views to have a place in the discussion.



### III. GRAVE MORAL ILLS

The question of what degree of personal, moral condemnation various acts within the realm of racial injustice deserve will be examined in this chapter. It will argue that by ignoring individual blame and morality, the structuralist accounts examined in this work all have certain weaknesses both as definitions of racism that the masses could accept and also as accounts that are academically/analytically applicable when we look back at history and when we look at contemporary issues of race and racism. First, I will examine what it means to have an amoral system of thought regarding racism. Following this, I will present two major critiques of amorality. First, I will argue that very few people outside of academia have any sort of notion of “amoral” racism. Instead, most view racism as primarily a moral failing. Second, I will argue that many of the “amoral” counterexamples that structuralists bring against individualist accounts have strong elements of personal immorality, specifically paternalism and certain other forms of ideological racism. While neither of these criticisms of structuralist approaches is enough to completely do away with amoralist concerns, it will be shown that they are enough to warrant exploring racism by employing moral philosophy and individual, moral responsibility. While discussing these points, there are two questions that we need to keep in mind: which definition will make it easiest to rectify the mistakes of the past and which definition will make us more comfortable being apathetic to the problems surrounding us?

An amoral account of racism is one where racism is not looked upon as *necessarily* morally blameworthy. Racism can simply be a mistake, an ignorant belief, the innocent participation in an unjust system, or any other manner of actions, beliefs, or states of being that in some way or another contributes to racial injustice within a society. Many writers call such actions “worthy of

moral note,” but allow that they are not necessarily morally blameworthy (Shelby, 61). Concerning the amoral label, Mills writes,

It is simply to recognize the existence of different spheres of inquiry. Moral judgments about racism and racialized social structures should certainly be made (and in my own work I have made them myself), but these should be left as open questions, not definitional prerequisites. The alternative to a moralized account is not an amoral account, but an account which separates the descriptive from the normative, which is alert, in Shelby’s phrase, to the “moral significance” of the social phenomena under theoretical scrutiny, without using the moral as a filter to determine what phenomena are examined in the first place. (Mills, 61)

This is to say that the major purpose of defining the word racism is to explain it as a phenomenon, rather than to give an implied normative guide for how we should feel towards it.

The first major critique of the structuralist approach is that few people outside of academia and so-called “woke” circles have a concept of racism that deviates greatly from an individualist framework. Garcia is the most prominent proponent in the philosophical community to make such a claim, but I believe him when he says,

It is unclear what we should make of the claim that Black people tend to hold the racism-in-the-world conception and White people the racism-in-the-head conception. How do we know that we should infer from the data that Black people hold a systemic conception of racism and White people a doxastic one? Perhaps it is just that Black people are more likely to think that racism-in-the-head (or, as I will suggest, in the heart) pervades the behavior of White people acting in their institutional capacities as well as in their private conduct (Garcia 1997, 25).

In other words, Garcia is claiming that we do not have enough information to make sweeping statements about what Black or White people in the general populace believe regarding racism. We do not have a good reason to believe that *all* Black people hold a certain view or that *all* White people hold another. Before showing why it matters that few outside of academia have an amoralist view of racism, I want to accomplish two things. First, I want to show the need and value of having a popular conception of racism. Second, I want to show that, while a popular conception of racism is important, a true conception is more important.

First, why does the popular conception of racism matter? Regardless of whether the framework for viewing and condemning racism is structuralist or individualist, the end goal is to address and fix racism's ill effects on a broader level and to give philosophers and social scientists a more accurate lens through which to analyze racial disparity.<sup>7</sup> If the goal then, for the extremes of both sides, is to change society for the better and to work towards the elimination of racism, then it has to matter what ordinary people think. If racism is primarily an individual moral vice, then people need to be convinced of the existence of such attitudes. If racism is primarily working out of the structures that exist in society, people need to be convinced of the existence of said structures and of their participation in them.

However, it may be hasty to say that easy acceptance is indicative of a *good* conception of racism. People, especially racist people, may want to call things that are racist not racist, and thus the common view towards the subject should likely not be the be-all and end-all of our definition. The mob, after all, should not dictate truth—the truth should. However, we must also keep in mind that race, as a concept, is almost entirely socially constructed. While race is likely a non-real thing entrenched in societal roles and historical mistreatment, many authors would still allow us to view racism as a real thing. Garcia, referencing Appiah, calls racism real, while disregarding the question of whether or not race is real (Garcia, 7). He believes he can do this because, regardless of whether a racist action is done on a false belief or feeling, the racist feeling or belief still exists—and thus racism still exists regardless of whether race does (Ibid., 7).

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<sup>7</sup> Indeed, Garcia himself says in his conclusion to “The Heart of Racism,” “These reflections suggest that an improved understanding of racism and its immorality calls for a comprehensive rethinking of racial discrimination, of the preferential treatment programs sometimes disparaged as ‘reverse discrimination,’ and of institutional conduct as well. They also indicate the direction such a rethinking should take, and its dependence on the virtues and other concepts from moral psychology. That may require a significant change in the way social philosophers have recently treated these and related topics” (Garcia 1996, 34). The purpose, or at least the implication of Garcia’s viewpoint, is that it is meant to provide a framework from whence racism can be better recognized and combatted on both an individual and a structural (he says institutional) level.

If then we are dealing with a real thing (racism)<sup>8</sup> based upon what very well could be a social construction(race), why should not the consensus of the society from which the original idea of race was constructed be the ultimate judge on what is and what is not racist? As I alluded to earlier, a major reason not to do this is that it would favour the racial majority and the racist. If the society at large can arbitrate what is and what is not immorally racist, then the population who has the most cultural power (in the historic Western case, the whites), and thus likely the one doing the oppressing, will be the one who holds that moral gavel. This will necessarily put those being wronged at a disadvantage, as what counts as a slight towards them would be decided by those doing the slighting. It would almost be like the Nazis getting to decide what counts as a slight against the Jewish people.

Now, can we come to a conception of racism that is agreed upon and used by the racial minority or those who have been historically oppressed? Perhaps. Speaking from the American, Western context, both Garcia and Mills claim that their view of racism is one that is accepted by *most* blacks in the general population (i.e. those outside of academic circles) (Garcia 1996, 6 and Mills 2003, 34-35), and for Mills, especially those within academic circles. Expressing a similar sentiment to the one Mills expresses, Shelby writes,

...it would be just as reasonable [as reasonable as the popular, amoralist view], from a pragmatic point of view, to define the scope of “racism” by focusing on those race-related ills that have the greatest consequences for the liberty, material life prospects, and self-respect of individuals. It is no doubt because of these urgent practical concerns that many African Americans insist that racism be understood (primarily) as a system of oppression rather than (strictly) in terms of individual prejudice (Shelby 2014, 61).

By contrast, Garcia argues that his view would be accepted by most blacks *and* whites simply as the way that the word is used (Garcia 1996, 6). Both sides are claiming that their conception is one

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<sup>8</sup> Again, racism is considered real because it is a real feeling, in the same way that love or disgust are real even if based off of false beliefs.

that not only *should* be accepted by the public, but also one that *is* accepted by a significant number or subset of the population. There seems to be an impasse here. Both sides are claiming to have in mind the general populace, or at least the populace whose opinion has weight in matters of race. They give less evidence for their claims and still less evidence for their critiques of each other's claims.

What then are we supposed to do with a debate where both sides claim popular support for their opposing views? I think we must come to two conclusions. First, while we cannot use popular support as a final litmus test of an account, popular support is pragmatically important. Most accounts agree that there are important societal ills that racism adds to. The individualist accounts believe racism to be a symptom of these ills, the structuralist accounts believe it to be a cause. For both, the structures are prominent and important. If those structures are important, the constituents of those structures' – the citizens, members, or employees – belief's and attitudes; must also be important. How easy an account of racism is to understand, and how logically consistent it is, must then be a major concern for any system of belief.<sup>9</sup> While being a major concern, the acceptability of an account should not be the be-all or end-all. This acceptability is, after all, a unit of measurement that is not incredibly accurate. Few people in the general public will be able to easily articulate an in-depth definition of racism like the ones put forward by the many authors discussed in this work. Conversely, most academics will have a far more in-depth view that is more separated from day-to-day life than that of the average person. So, while popular/academic support should not be the ultimate litmus test for a good account of racism, it must be a necessary feature. After all, what good is an account of racism offered with the goal of making societal change that cannot

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<sup>9</sup> Indeed, Garcia believes that by accepting his account, more people will be better able to understand the problems plaguing society and everyone will be better equipped to fight it (Garcia 1996, PN).

effectively encourage others to act towards this societal change or convince them that their actions have been wrong?

A distinction that has to be made is between an effective account and an attractive account. An account needs to be effective in encouraging people to act in a certain way, but that does not mean it cannot make uncomfortable and difficult demands of people. Quite the opposite in fact. Often times it is such demands that will make an account effective. As I discussed above, the cultural majority, which will often be the oppressing group, cannot be the ones to decide what counts as “racist.” Doing so would allow them to write off all of their actions as kosher without regard to those who are negatively affected by their actions (and inactions). When speaking of acceptability to the public, all that can be entailed is that an account must be simple enough and coherent enough to be understood by people on mass.

The second conclusion is that the best account of racism must stand up to academic scrutiny. As I mentioned above, few people in the general public will have the time to study racism. Instead, it is the job of the people with the expertise and opportunity to study the phenomena in-depth and to give an account of its function and, in the case that it is a negative phenomenon, of the ways in which it can be combatted. From the history and use of the word as traced by Blum (2002, 3-8) to the specific criteria given by Garcia (1997, 6), to the general principles given by Mills (1997 120-130), all of these things must be considered in unison with the account’s general coherence and ease of expression. Academic opinions on the subject can then be used to find the account that best fits the evidence and usage and to simplify it into one that will be accepted and used by the general public towards the goal of ending racism. An account of the nature of racism must then be acceptable to the general public (the society) and also hold up to scrutiny from scholars of race, ethics, and politics (the academy).

In the second part of this chapter, I want to address “amoral” counterexamples to individualist accounts of racism. I believe that many of these counterexamples work against structuralists more than they do against individualists. This structuralist critique of individualism is that various historical and obviously damaging forms of racism cannot be called racism under definitions of racism that only pay attention to individual morality and specifically, as in Garcia’s case, to the individual’s intentions. Many structuralists take note of this failure, but this critique is most directly put forward by Alberto Urquidez in his article “Jorge Garcia and the Ordinary Use of ‘Racist Belief,’” and by Mills in his various works against Garcia. The major form of racism that Urquidez and Mills believe to be worthy of some form of condemnation, even if not a moral one, is *paternalism*, a type of ideological racism. Paternalism is the practice of taking away someone’s autonomy against their will for their own good (Dworkin 2020). Racial paternalism is the belief then that blacks could have their autonomy overridden by whites for the good of the blacks. Structuralists claim that under a strongly moral account like Garcia’s, racial paternalism could not be condemned.

Urquidez notes that “Scholars have long maintained as an empirical matter that many whites were paternalists—that is, seemingly good-intentioned individuals whose paternalistic treatment of blacks was based on racial inferiorization” (Urquidez 2017, 228). The first step in this argument then is to give us an apparently uncontroversial real-life example of a form of racism that in no way involves ill-intent and is therefore not technically immoral on a personal level. The person has a good intention, but, because of a mistaken epistemic belief, their action causes great harm. Explaining how such an action is bad, but not necessarily immoral, Mills writes,

I want to argue, on lines somewhat analogous to those in the previous section, that this response [Garcia’s point on Paternalism found in “The Heart of Racism”] does not work. To begin with, we need to make some preliminary clarificatory points about “intent.” If I give you a glass of water because you have complained of thirst, and I do not know that

somebody has put cyanide in it, I do not intend to kill you, even though you die as a result (in part) of my actions. I believed the water would do you good, and so meant well, not ill. My intention had a bad outcome because of properties unknown to me of what I was giving you. Similarly, if I give you a dose of medicine, such as penicillin, standardly prescribed for people in your condition, without realizing that because of your constitution you fall into the category of people who are allergic to it (you are not wearing your warning medical bracelet), I do not intend your harm even though you die as a result of my actions. I believed the penicillin would do you good, and so meant well, not ill. My intention had a bad outcome because of properties unknown to me of your constitution. And this judgment would also be applicable for the converse case in which I withhold penicillin from you when you are ill, because of a mistaken but sincere belief that you are allergic to it, and you die as a result. (Mills 2003, 52-53)

This is how Mills views paternalistic racism: it is something that is wrong because of its outcome but leaves its actor free of blame because their intent was pure—they wanted to help the person that they ended up hurting. Mills ends his argument by concluding, “So in general, if I have a certain (mistaken) picture of your needs, capabilities, and limitations, which I sincerely believe, and I act based on this picture to further your well-being, then it cannot justifiably be claimed, when you suffer by my actions, that I desired to harm you” (Mills 2003, 53).

I have few doubts that many whites *claimed* to be paternalists, that is, to be motivated by genuine concern for the good of racially marginalized groups. However, I believe that their actions showed that they did not truly believe what they were saying and instead used paternalism as an excuse to put a rubber stamp on vicious racism. Sure, a few whites may have been genuine paternalists, but I believe those few would be an exception. A good example of someone who was supposedly a paternalist is Confederate general Robert E. Lee. Lee described slavery as a necessary evil and one that negatively affected whites more than it did blacks (Coates 2010). He describes the “painful discipline” that the blacks had to undergo as necessary for their moral, spiritual, and intellectual upbringing (Ibid.). We have first-hand accounts from ex-slaves of Lee ordering escaped slaves flogged and the wounds washed with saltwater. We also have Lee’s writing on the inherent master/slave relationship between whites and blacks, which will necessarily last until God



emancipates the blacks from their ignorance, malice, and laziness, as he did the white race (Melgar 2017). Luckily, God's time came far sooner than Lee expected, in the form of the civil war. After the emancipation of slaves in the post-Civil War United States, Lee supposedly turned a blind eye to the KKK chapters that formed at his university as well as to their rape and assaults on young black women (Melgar 2017).

Lee is often put forward as the quintessential southerner during the Civil War era. He hated slavery but considered it necessary for the good of the blacks. However, as described above, it seems likely that Lee was not the kindly old grandfather that certain people would have us believe, at least based on those two *Atlantic* articles. But even if he was a genuine paternalist – so what? Even if he never had a slave flogged, even if he never turned a blind eye to the rape of black women, and even if he did genuinely go to war for the rights of states instead of for the subjugation and exploitation of black people – so what? He still regarded black people in a way that put them far beneath the white. He regarded them in a way that no person should ever view another person. He did not give them the respect due them nor what they were owed by any principle of justice. Thus, we have good reasons to believe that Lee was not a genuine paternalist, since he did not genuinely have the good of black people in mind. And even if he was a paternalist, his paternalism would still be morally condemnable on a personal, individual level. I will discuss this idea of personal immorality and racial paternalism further in reference to Mill's example of having good intentions and bring about bad outcomes.

Second, I do not believe that Mills' medical example can be meaningfully connected to paternalistic racism. The purpose of Mills's analogy is to show that you can cause harm, even great harm, without the intention to cause harm. While the main point of the analogy stands, the analogy misses the point that the individualists are making. Someone giving you medicine that they do not

know and cannot know that you are allergic to is a far cry from not recognizing another person's equal moral status and assuming a lesser status because of an inherent part of someone's identity. Not only is there a difference in scope – a medical fact about physiology versus an anthropological and psychological fact about someone's identity – but it is also different in morality as well. Let me give a counterexample to Mills'. Imagine that someone has a mental disability that stopped their mental progression at 6 years old. Their parents, genuinely believing that the person with the disability could not have a fulfilling life, decide to euthanize them. The person with the disability had repeatedly told them that they loved life and had a desire to continue living it, but the parents disregard that and, believing that they know best, go ahead with euthanasia.<sup>10</sup>

In the analogy that I gave, the parents, despite a direct wish of the other, reject their child's perspective and force their point of view on the person with the disability because of a difference in the mind. Similarly, paternalists directly go against the wishes of the racial minority being "fathered" because of a difference in culture and history. They are not simply making a mistake based upon fully believed data, as in the medical case. Instead, they are often making a decision in the face of dissension and protest of those being subjugated "for their own good." Claiming, as Mills does, that a person engaging in paternalistic racism is subjectively justified (as a moral individual), but objectively unjustified (as the societal effects show) seems to go against basic human rights and tenets of moral philosophy—namely the right to bodily autonomy. Even if the people felt justified in the belief that those of a different race needed the guiding hand of the whites, the availability of information and the means needed to guide those of a different race showed a clear picture of immorality. Their actions were wrong, not just in their societal effects, but as a personal moral failure for those involved.

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<sup>10</sup> This example is somewhat extreme, but that extremity is purposeful. I hope to instill a sort of gut moral reaction in the reader, one that should be present in discussions of paternalistic racism for example.

I have argued that there are some good reasons to think paternalistic racism typically involves an individual moral failing, not merely a societal one. However even if that is right, there are still issues with Garcia's view. In Garcia's view, what matters is not just individual moral blame, but individual intention. Even if it can be proved that there exists a relationship between people directly partaking in the systems of societal racism and individual moral blame, partaking in the unjust system does not always entail bad intentions. While it is likely that some form of racial animosity exists between those who subjugated and those who are subjugated under a system where slavery or other race-based apartheid existed, it does not seem to obviously be the *main* moral error in the subjugator's judgements. Rather, the main issue seems to be a form of disrespect. As I will discuss later on in this chapter, that disrespect can often be seen as a form of hatred or apathy, but it is not immediately apparent that it *has* to be so. It seems logically consistent to have an immoral view of personhood while having moral intentions towards others, informed by that immoral view of personhood. The inferiorizing view that people took and sometimes still take to blacks is in no way in line with principles of justice, whether societal or individual, but it is not immediately apparent that the injustice is rooted in individual intention, as Garcia must maintain. Rather, it is rooted in having a different kind of improper feeling towards a people group.

As an example of a lack of respect for personhood instead of antipathy, we can look at chattel slavery. I have argued that antipathy in the form of hatred would come up if an unjust system was challenged. However, I believe that disrespect was a major reason for the perpetuation of these systems in the first place. At least in most cases, black people were not made slaves because people hated them, they were made slaves because their labour was far more valuable than their humanity was. Slavers and slave-owners valued the economic boost that a slave could provide over the slave's value as a person. In this case, the intention may not have been to hurt blacks out

of hatred. Instead, because of incorrect views about the value of a human being, slavery was justified.

Another issue for Garcia's account is the existence of genuine paternalists. While it seems unlikely, at least in my moral imagination, that most or even many whites were genuine paternalists, as I argued above, surely a few were. Were these people morally justified in their beliefs? I have argued that despite intention and due to the availability of information, people are not justified and are morally blameworthy for a paternalistic belief, even if that belief is in some way genuine. This is not true on Garcia's account. For him, if someone has genuinely good intentions, the orbiting moral paraphernalia only matters so much. I believe that this specific focus on an individual's intentions, rather than on an individual's moral responsibility more generally, creates more serious issues for Garcia's virtue-based account than it does for a more general individualist account of racism. While we can often see moral issues with the intention behind many acts that degrade marginalized people, there seem to be other issues regarding the view of personhood and other issues of justice that underly the committing of acts that go beyond intention, conscious or otherwise. It is these other issues that Garcia does not particularly focus on. This was shown in the Robert E. Lee example used above. This will also be shown later in this chapter in regard to structuralism, and the fourth chapter in regard to Garcia's version of individualism.

It is important to recognize that not every individualist shares Garcia's exact convictions. In fact, almost no one does. While there are aspects of Garcia's account that have been influential on other individualist accounts, they are taken piecemeal rather than as a whole thing. While this influence is most obvious in Blum's discussion and critique of virtue theory, we also see this influence with a difference in Blum's discussion of paternalism. Blum explains that inferiorization and antipathy are distinct (Blum 2002, 10). In Garcia's account, any form of inferiorization is a

subset of antipathy—the inferiorizing is specifically caused by a lack of care for, or even worse, active hate for, the people group in question. I mentioned Blum’s mission in chapter one—to show that racism is always morally unacceptable, but also to demarcate areas of racial justice that are not necessarily immoral and thus not racist—but it is worth noting it again here using the words of Blum’s preface. He writes,

I suggest in these pages that moral philosophy can help us [demarcate the meaning of racism]. We need to clarify what racism is, to find a basis in history and current use for fixing a definition, one that will reveal why racism is rightly regarded as a grievous moral wrong. At the same time we need to recognize the manifold ways things can go racially wrong, without being racist. (Blum 2002, viii)

For Blum, racism must *always* be a “grievous moral wrong,” which seems roughly in line with Garcia’s claim that in a good account of racism immorality is a necessity.<sup>11</sup>

For Garcia, the immorality of paternalistic racism was based on the paternalist either not caring enough or actively hating a people or group that was being paternalistically oppressed. For Blum, the immorality of this form of racism is specifically placed in the demeaning attitude that is taken toward the subject (Blum, 10). Blum places it amidst a broader framework of “inferiorizing racism.” However, despite there being room for genuine inferiorization and even paternalism (while remaining immoral), both inferiorization and paternalism will often lead to hatred (Blum 2002, 11). Blum mentions an example of a black man in the 1950s “transgressing” a societal norm and acting outside of his supposed class, provoking hatred and eventually a lynching (Ibid., 11). While there were undoubtedly aspects of antipathy involved from the get-go, such feelings would not develop or show themselves until the racialized person challenged the inferiorization with which they were originally regarded.

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<sup>11</sup> Garcia claims that any adequate conception of racism must “Clarify why racism is always immoral (without trivializing the moral judgment by making it a matter of definition),” alongside seven other criteria for what make a conception of racism good (Garcia 1997, 6).

It seems then that there are two major sources of personal, individual immorality in inferiorizing racism and especially paternalism. In the first and most intrinsic sense, inferiorization is a disrespect of someone's autonomy and personhood. There is a personal, unjust choice being made to view a human being as less than, and as worth less than, someone in the racial group with power. In the second sense, inferiorization is personally immoral because of the underlying attitudes that often come up when the inferiorization is challenged. When a racialized person challenges the disrespect to their autonomy and personhood (the first sense of immorality), other underlying attitudes of hatred and aggression will often come out. The first is a disrespect of autonomy and personhood, the second an underlying hatred or at least apathy seemingly required for such disrespect.

It is also important to note that Blum does not believe paternalism to be as large an issue today as it was in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. He writes, “[In the 19<sup>th</sup> century] blacks were regarded as uncivilized and virtually subhuman-“humanoid but not fully human” in Charles Mills’ apt phrase. They were seen as like both beasts and children-in neither case capable of directing their own lives and requiring whites to do this for them” (Blum 2002, 132) However, Blum’s purpose in discussing this is to say that people rarely view black people with the same level of paternalism in the modern-day as they did then. Regardless of how prevalent they are, such attitudes do still exist. Blum writes that “Blacks are still viewed as inferior in certain respects-as violent, lacking in motivation, intellectually deficient-but, except in the far extremes of racism, seldom in such degrading and vicious ways as in classic racial ideology” (Ibid., 132).

As I mentioned early in this chapter, racial paternalism is a type of ideological racism. While paternalism is supposedly not common in the modern-day, structuralists would argue that similarly functioning forms of ideological racism still exist and are one of the most common and

most important forms of racism (Shelby 415-416). Urquidez writes that “A belief is ideologically racist in virtue of its social function. This implies that ideological racism cannot be determined a priori or solely in virtue of the content of belief” (Urquidez 2017, 235). We then have a view of racism that is mostly separate from the content of the belief itself. The content will, of course, matter to a degree, but it is the consequences of those beliefs that truly matter: not only the consequences but the social consequences. Urquidez, Mills, and Shelby are primarily using the word “ideology” in its Marxist sense, where it has two primary and often complementary meanings. From *A Dictionary of Cultural and Critical Theory*,

- (50) the epistemologically negative – ideology as a type of distorted, false thought (for example, the “consciousness” of human subjects in capitalist society); (ii) the socially relative – ideology as any set of opinions, beliefs, attitudes (for example, the “world view” of a social group or class). (Payne and Barbera 2010, 340)

The first of these implies a distortion in the thoughts and beliefs of a group and the second implies a social basis for these false thoughts—a set of opinions associated with a specific economic or cultural group. While ideology can be used to mean either of these specifically, the way that authors are using the term “racist ideology” or “ideologically racist” seems to best fit under the umbrella of both definitions. Mills similarly uses the terms by referring to them in psychological, explanatory terms rather than in primarily moral ones (Mills 2003, 39-40 and

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An example of racist ideology that Urquidez gives is that of the penalties for crack vs powder cocaine in the United States. Despite having near-identical psychoactive effects and side effects, the drug-associated with lower-class blacks, crack cocaine, has far harsher legal penalties associated with it than does the drug associated with middle- and upper-class whites, powder cocaine (Urquidez 2017, 234-5). Proponents of structuralism will often hold that despite these laws technically having nothing to do with colour, they were designed to disproportionately target

members of a specific racial and economic class while leaving members of a different racial and economic class free from harm.

Perhaps such an idea of ideology is too nefarious. Another social phenomenon that could be seen as ideologically racist is the idea that milk is universally good for children and should be a staple of meals in the elementary school system. While this belief has merit in certain contexts, there are significant portions of racialized populations that have a genetic propensity to lactose intolerance and cannot drink large quantities of milk. By making the seemingly innocent assumption that all children should have milk with lunch, there can be a social phenomenon that leads black children in the public school system to not have the same access to protein as white children do.<sup>12</sup> This is probably not based on an attitude or assumption that black children do not *deserve* the same treatment or access to protein as do white children, but is instead probably based on mistaken beliefs about the needs of those black children. Structuralists claim that it is based on an ideology that unconsciously puts white experience and needs above those of other groups.

Do the individualist views of paternalism, on which it involves individual immorality, apply to this broader view of ideological racism? While the ways that ideological racism shows itself seem somewhat less nefarious than racial paternalism, I believe that the two ways individualists can see paternalism as individually immoral can apply to most forms of modern racist ideology as well. The first form of individual immorality was a disrespect of personhood

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<sup>12</sup> It is worth noting that my example may not be universally accepted as factual. KG Byers and DA Savaiano wrote an article entitled “The Myth of Increased Lactose Intolerance in African-Americans,” that claims that the idea of black people of African descent being unable to consume lactose is not entirely based in fact. Their research shows that most people with a lactose intolerance should be able to consume at least one serving of dairy, specifically a cup of milk, without symptoms. Despite this ability to have *some* dairy, they admit that most dietary guidelines advise people to consume between 3 and 4 servings of dairy to ensure proper calcium intake. Thus, if we have school systems relying on milk as the primary source of calcium for children and not providing effective alternatives, the claim that there is an ideological blind spot that benefits white children at the expense of black ones holds true regardless of whether or not black children are able to drink a single glass of milk or not.



and autonomy, and the second form was underlying aggression, hatred, or apathy when the first form is challenged.

In the first example, the one given by Urquidez, we can see a fairly direct link between paternalism and giving harsher punishments for a crime associated with a “black” drug versus a “white” drug. There are many reasons that we can assume the legislators made the law in the way that they did. We could assume that they hated blacks and wished to harm their communities, that they mistrusted them, that they thought blacks need harsher punishments because they would give in to their base instincts more than the whites would, or perhaps because the legislators knew people who had used powder cocaine and not people who had used crack cocaine. All three of these motivations easily fit into the forms of immorality that I have already discussed. Wishing harm is a fairly obvious example of antipathy, while mistrust and paternalism, as I showed above, displays a lack of regard for someone’s personhood and autonomy. As even the most individualist of individualist accounts agree, laws written by racists can remain racist despite there not being someone in power who is specifically racist. Such a scenario is therefore not a huge issue for individualist accounts to explain.

The second case is much less nefarious and likely seems harder to explain. However, I believe there is reason to doubt this. As all authors seem to agree, regardless of which side of these debates they stand on,<sup>13</sup> the belief and practice of giving children milk with lunch are not individually immoral, despite some potentially harmful societal effects. Now, the belief is one thing, but surely the context matters. Many hold the unchallenged belief that black children can process milk as easily as white children. But what if such a belief was challenged? What if a parent of a black child came to a predominantly white school board and told them that their children and

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<sup>13</sup> The individualists wish such things to not be considered racist at all, while structuralists wish to define their terms in amoralist language because of instances such as the one discussed.

most other black children in that school were not able to drink the milk provided and that they were thus worried about their children not getting the proper nutrients every day. While there may have been no individual responsibility up until this point, once the issue is brought up and ignorance is no longer a solid defence, it seems as if the moral realm suddenly comes to bear on the situation.

Assuming that the school board acts, realizing that their previous research prominently or only used white children as a model to the exclusion and harm of black children, there is little problem. However, there seem to be few, if any, good reasons to refuse to act. Money was spent on the original research because it was considered important enough. More money and effort were put into putting such programs and information into effect. While the public school system and the lunches it provides no doubt have numerous issues, the lunch programs are structured around research that gives specific nutritional needs for most children.<sup>14</sup> It is not necessarily that there is an issue with the research itself but the problem lies in the application of that research within specific school boards that take an overly cookie-cutter approach to apply that research—calcium = dairy. If the issue is considered important enough to put forward money and effort, then refusing to adjust the program for the needs of a population group seems to imply a certain lack of respect. The two forms of immorality are disrespect and hatred/apathy. In the first case, for the school board to dismiss black peoples' claims out of hand despite presumably good information would be to disrespect their autonomy. To assume that the assumptions made about what is good for and processable by children of another race despite protests by people of that race is immoral in similar ways to how I argued paternalism is personally immoral. In the second sense, to deny someone

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<sup>14</sup> See <https://www.fns.usda.gov/pd/child-nutrition-tables> for the USDA's research on child nutrition as it applies to the US Public School lunch programs and <https://foodsecurecanada.org/resources-news/news-media/we-want-national-healthy-school-food-program> for a similar Canadian program.

something that research and a school board consider important enough to make available to all children is an obvious case of apathy. The school board would show themselves not caring enough about the people group. While perhaps this is not hatred, it shows a specific level of care for white children that is not extended toward black children, and would thus be an instance of apathy.

Ideological racism then includes, and perhaps needs, aspects of personal immorality and individual racism. While paternalism is perhaps the most obviously immoral case, aspects of racially paternalistic thinking can be assumed in most forms of ideological racism. If such thinking does take place, we can see a disrespect of personhood and autonomy which can lead to levels of hatred and apathy towards a racial group. Even in forms of ideological racism that do not contain paternalism, we can see disrespect towards personhood and autonomy through simply not listening to the members of racialized groups or not considering the racialized individual of equal importance. This does not, however, mean that individualism is the way forward. Rather, I only argue that individualism is a necessary part of the conversation. In the next chapter, I will highlight certain faults within individualism and explain how structuralism can help to fill those holes.

In this chapter, I have argued two main things. First, I have argued that many of the examples that structuralists use to problematize individualism are not nearly as problematic for the individualist as they seem at first glance. Second, I have argued that many instances of “amoral” structural racism will boil down to actions that can be addressed by an individualistic conception of racism, since they involve elements of individual immorality. Both of these claims together show that individualism should not be discarded off hand. It is a theory that requires serious consideration and perhaps application in the analysis of racism. However, as will be shown in the next chapter, some different examples truly do problematize individualistic definitions of racism.

The existence of these cases implies a need, not only for individualistic analysis of racism, but also for structuralist analysis.

#### **IV. MORALLY IMPORTANT BUT NOT WRONG**

In the last chapter, I highlighted certain issues with a structuralist, amoralist account of racism – primarily that there seem to be aspects of personal immorality present within most forms of structural racism, at least when an individual is directly involved in supporting that structure. It seems generally likely that at least one of two major forms of personal immorality (according to Blum and Garcia), unjustified disrespect and antipathy on the basis of race, exist in the ways that someone participates within a specific social structure. This is even true of specific examples that are brought up against a pure-antipathy account like Garcia’s by scholars such as Urquidez, Shelby, and Mills – specifically, in the counterexamples of paternalistic racism and in the ways that certain laws can be seen as racist in ideological terms. Yet although these counterexamples do not provide compelling reasons to reject an individualist definition, racism is perhaps more nefarious and complex than it can seem under a pure individualist account of the phenomenon. There are important examples that seem to show that personal immorality, whether unjust antipathy or disrespect, is not always present in the most harmful forms of racial injustice. Throughout all of the points, one question will remain constant: Is it easier to rectify the mistakes of the past under an individualist or a structuralist definition of racism? Or, perhaps even more controversially, will some definitions of racism make us more content with injustice than others?

In this chapter, I will be arguing that there are areas of racial injustice and racism that individualist definitions are not well suited to explain. Most of these situations are ones where there seems to be no clear way to lay moral blame on specific individuals, and yet there is great harm being done. Such situations are called “morally significant” by Shelby and Mills (Mills 2003, 61, Shelby 2002, 413 and Shelby 2014, 61 and 65). While neither of these authors gives an in-depth treatment of moral significance, I believe that Grant J. Silva gives an interesting and useful

account of it. His concept of racism as self-love presents a reasonable alternative to motivations of antipathy and disrespect when viewing structural racism, and can perhaps provide some cause for reasonable doubt about direct, personal moral responsibility. I will argue that Silva's account of moral note exposes issues with the various individualist definitions of racism in that these definitions focus on personal morality at the expense of general harm. After explaining Silva's framework for viewing racism as self-love, I will provide two examples that conflict with individualist definitions of racism. The first of these is the example of implicit bias negatively affecting racialized communities without specific ill-will or disrespect. The second example is the lasting effects of housing discrimination that has created lasting wealth inequalities between racial groups. After introducing these two real-world examples and examining the ways that they conflict with individualist definitions of racism, I will argue that a structural viewpoint can be more useful for both understanding and combatting racism.

Mills and Shelby bring up the concept of "moral note" in response to Garcia's definitional requirement of moral condemnation for racism. They claim that, rather than requiring condemnation to be built-in, an account of racism should be able to show what aspects of an action are morally important or have moral effects, even if those actions are not morally condemnable on an individual level (Shelby 2002, 413). According to Mills and Shelby, something is "morally significant" when it is somewhat separated from individual and personal morality but still has effects and consequences within that realm. Shelby writes, "It is enough if we require that any such inquiry have moral significance: it must seek to reveal what is and what isn't morally troublesome about the phenomenon under investigation" (Shelby 2002, 413).

Shelby's claim concerns two parts of our broader discussion. First, it is made in reference to the discussion of allowing for a mob rule of definition. Second, it is made in reference to

Garcia's claim that a definition of racism must have immorality as a prerequisite (Ibid., 413). I have dealt with the issue of definition in the previous chapter, but I will briefly expand on Shelby's point of view here. Shelby believes that the way that the broader culture uses the term "racism" is similar to how words such as "slut" or "fag" are used (Ibid., 413). All of these terms, Shelby claims, are morally loaded (Ibid., 413). Just because the terms are morally loaded, that does not mean that the states of being that they describe should be considered truly immoral. Calling someone a "slut" is not only a description of actions that a person may have taken, or a statement about their attitudes towards sex, but a moral judgement. We are not just saying that they have had sex with multiple partners, but that they have done so in a degrading and immoral fashion. The same goes for a word like "fag." Rather than simply describing someone's sexual orientation, "fag" has a specifically negative moral connotation to it. When a word like "slut" or a "fag" is used, the speaker is claiming there is something wrong with the person being described.<sup>15</sup> Shelby uses the examples of these words to show that the condemnatory nature of a word does mean that it necessarily *should* be used to condemn. Just because the general populace uses a word to condemn something as wrong, that does not mean that the thing truly is wrong.

The second reason that Shelby brings up the idea of moral significance concerns Garcia's immorality criterion. To reiterate my previous treatment of structuralism, on structuralist accounts racism is viewed primarily as a political system instead of as a personal, moral wrong. For example, in his book *The Racial Contract*, Mills argues that racism should be considered a political

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<sup>15</sup> Other terms that Shelby uses as examples are "fornication," "shack up," and "nigger." These are condemnatory terms with difference in description perhaps similar to "kill" and "murder." "Kill" can be seen as mostly descriptive in nature. There is certainly some moral relevance to the word, it is never *good* when someone dies, but there is no direct condemnation. "Murder," on the other hand, is directly condemnatory. If say that someone murdered another, we are not simply saying that they killed a person, but that they *wrongly* killed someone. When it comes to a word like "racist" then, should we use it as descriptive or condemnatory? Should it be the equivalent of "kill" or of "murder?" We have a further issue in that the authors still want "racist" to be negative, just not inherently immoral. How this is to be done is not in question here, but could be discussed in further research and inquiry.

system, or, more in-depth, “a particular power structure of formal or informal rule, socioeconomic privilege, and norms for the differential distribution of material wealth and opportunities, benefits and burdens, rights and duties” (Mills 1997, 3). As is apparent from the quote, and as I discussed in chapters one and two, there is no mention of personal morality in this definition. Shelby defines racism in similar terms. Shelby questions whether we can assume that, as Blum claims, the popular usage of the term “racism” always implies strong moral condemnation (Shelby 2014, 59). Explaining how he thinks racism should be viewed, he writes,

...it is not so clear that the moral significance of charges of racism is as firmly or widely established in public discourse as [Blum] supposes. Therefore it is open to advocates of the wide-scope conception to say that some racist beliefs (for example, those rooted in unjustified malice) warrant strong condemnation; other racist beliefs (for instance, those formed because of the careless but non-malicious acceptance of racial stereotypes), though morally troubling, do not warrant such severe moral reproach; while still other racist beliefs (say, those based on ignorance or ordinary cognitive errors) are not, as such, morally culpable. (Shelby 2014, 65).

Shelby is presenting a system in which moral philosophy has a place but is not necessary a central focus. He calls this a “wide-scoped” conception of racism, in contrast to Blum’s “narrow scoped” one, where morally condemnable things are the only things to which “racism” should refer. Even though Shelby leaves room for moral considerations and condemnation, the moral considerations are in no way the explanatory or definitional focus. In fact, he calls his viewpoint a Rawlsian “social criticism” model (Shelby 2014, 57 and 71).<sup>16</sup> His view is that racism should primarily be viewed as a form of social injustice wherein individual actions contribute to wider societal issues (Ibid., 71). While the actions can still be looked at as individual moral failings, they are not necessarily so, and the major explanatory power comes from institutions that have a “...profound, pervasive, and practically inescapable impact on those who live under them” (Ibid., 71). In other

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<sup>16</sup> The purpose of Shelby’s 2014 article is to address issues within individualist and moralist accounts of racism, not to directly build his argument for a Rawlsian conception. He does this in articles from 2004, 2007, and 2013.



words (in the language of Mills) there are inescapable psychological phenomena that a person cannot always be held accountable for (Mills 1997, 10). Mills and Shelby's accounts are not only normative, but they are also descriptive. Rather than saying how people should behave or believe, they wish to account for *why* people believe and behave in a particular way currently. When they refer to moral psychology or an inescapable psychological bias, they do not mean that person is immoral in terms of normative morality. Instead, they mean that the person has malformed moral psychology, formed by little fault of their own.

The most interesting part of Shelby's structuralist conception of racism to me is that he believes that all racist action, whether it warrants blame for those involved in it or not, is "...prima facie cause for moral concern" (Shelby 2014, 61). Regardless of whether a person bears personal responsibility for their actions, all racist actions have moral consequences. An example of an action that would be not worthy of personal moral blame but could still be of moral note is the inescapable attitudes caused by the societal structures that people live under (Ibid., 61). These moral consequences are present in every racist action, regardless of whether an individual can be considered responsible or considered immoral for that action. It may not be immoral to have an unconscious like or dislike of a certain race, but there can be moral consequences for such an unconscious leaning. This brings us to the focal point of this chapter: the concept of moral note, rather than moral responsibility. I believe that the former concept is both important for understanding racism as a moral action under a system that analyzes the phenomenon in socio-political terms, and also shows why a system that only considers racism to be a form of individual moral failing or explains structural racism only in terms of its relationship to individual moral failing is problematic.

While some authors have noted and argued that structuralism fails to give an account of racism that is morally salient enough to bring about change, individualism can give people an account of racism wherein their own specific actions are paid attention to, rather than the ideologies and less nefarious aspects of racism that they participate in. A major failing of individualism is that it cannot address historical injustices and their current effects as well as structuralist accounts can. While the cases that an individualist would refer to may seem to matter the most, it will only serve to disadvantage the group that was historically derided to not call the current effects of past, broad injustices “racist.” Even more, it would be a mistake to downplay the role that individuals can play in the perpetuation of past injustices. In many cases of structural injustice, there is no easy way to lay blame, moral or otherwise, on a specific individual or even specific groups in the modern-day. Many structures were set up in the past by people who are long dead. Even more complicated, many of the laws that caused society-wide injustice have been done away with. All that remains are the societal effects. None of the people, laws, or institutions exist, only the effects of things now gone.

While I believe that many forms of ideological racism have disrespect built-in (as I argued in chapter two), there are many reasons that an action with racist consequences that are not necessarily disrespectful can have consequences for racial justice nonetheless. To develop this point, I turn now to Grant J. Silva’s view. Silva’s thesis is that much racism should be seen as a form of self-love, wherein, out of the desire for self-preservation and self-promotion, racist action is taken (Silva 2019, 85). Silva believes that this way of viewing racism can act as an “intersection of the interpersonal and structural by offering an account of moral complacency in racist social structures” (Ibid., 85). An example that Silva uses to express this idea is the anti-immigrant sentiment that goes on in various countries. He speaks of the fear and distrust aimed at Latin,

Muslim, and other non-white populations over them taking jobs and positions that could be going to white people (Ibid., 95). Such a fear, and the actions that stem from it, are not always based on hatred or disrespect for the non-white populations in question but can rest solely on the idea of jobs being taken away from white people. According to Silva, the reason for much racist action, and especially complacency, is this kind of self-love. It is not always a hatred of other races, but a desire to ensure that a person, their family, and those like them have the best opportunities possible.

Now, while in some ways Silva is dealing with forms of individual racism, Silva's primary focus is on showing the moral note of being complacent within the "perpetuation of racially unjust socio-economic and political structures" (Ibid., 85). Silva questions this participation, writing, "While one might not be accountable for the past, how might they take part in upholding and preserving a racist present shaped by historical injustice?" (Ibid., 88). Examples of participation in historical injustices could be the benefit that many white people have from historic wealth, the ease with which they get into academic institutions compared to black or POC counterparts, or the ease with which they get jobs. As Silva readily admits, these practices are not necessarily immoral and white people are not at fault for the actions of past generations that have caused the current state of things. What then is of moral note, if not accountability, in participation in these systems?

Before going into the concept of moral note, it is worth noting that Silva is still attempting to highlight moral aspects within structural injustice, rather than to explain structural injustice via personal immorality. This, in my view, places Silva within the more general structuralist camp. His explanation of the moral is developed in reference to the structural, with the structural being of first importance. I see the thrust of Silva's paper to be an important addition to the other structuralist accounts that we have gone over. While others such as Shelby and Mills speak of moral note and significance, Silva gives us a compelling account of such phenomena. As I have

stated before, I believe that one of the major issues with individualist accounts of racism is that by focusing on the most obvious and blameworthy aspects of racial injustice, we can be led to ignore the most potentially harmful aspects of racial injustice. If we are not able to call the more insidious forms of racial injustice “racist,” there could be a theoretical separation of racial issues that are morally blameworthy from those that have the most disastrous cultural effects – a separation that would lead to people giving a focus only on those obvious and individually blameworthy aspects of racial injustice. Silva gives a few examples of socioeconomic racial injustice and explains how each of them has aspects of what he calls “racism as self-love” (Silva 2019, 85). By discussing some of the examples that Silva brings up to prove his point, I will show how individualism does not give an adequate account of racism on its own, and how aspects of structuralism can be used to fill the holes.

In some ways, Silva agrees with Garcia about the disconnect between academic and popular conceptions of racism. He writes,

For some time now, the idea of racism has been caught in a bind. On the one hand, sociologists and historians are clearly capable of demonstrating the reality of structural injustices connected to race and systemic forms of racism. Unfortunately, on the other hand, these theories fall short when it comes to thinking about racism at the everyday level. (Silva 2019, 88)

In other words, many of the theories that give us the most compelling understandings of racism within a society fail to give us an understanding of how racism affects people on a day-to-day basis, and of how people can unknowingly perpetuate racism on a day-to-day basis. It is important to note that Silva’s claims about day-to-day racism in no way separate individualist and structuralist concerns. Rather, Silva’s point is that there seems to be a disconnect between viewing people as a cultural unit and the view that an individual will have of themselves and of their actions.

Many people claim as Silva puts it, "...that they are not racist since their actions are uninspired by hatred or malice but have some form of self-preservation at their core" (2019, 86). Silva, of course, does not agree with this attitude, but it is perhaps in line with a viewpoint like Garcia's. To a lesser extent, it could also fit in with Blum's antipathy/inferiorization model. While Garcia is in favour of certain anti-racist policies and affirmative action and believes that his account of racism can better support such policies and actions than rival accounts (Garcia 1996, 13), others view affirmative action quite differently (as Garcia himself notes (34)). Rather than viewing it as showing the positive virtue of love, as Garcia does, some view affirmative action as a negative action taken against white people. It is not hard to find accounts on social media or news opinion pieces stating that to give special treatment or special positions specifically to racial minorities is to use racism as a tool against white people. The "colour blindness" associated with such a viewpoint is not the focus of this essay but has been taken up in some of the articles cited in this work (Mills 1998, 77 and Blum 2002, 78-98). It is enough to say that none of the viewpoints discussed in this work, individualist or otherwise, promote a system of thought wherein racial injustice cannot be recognized or in which further actions to rectify it cannot be taken because of the accusation of "reverse racism." Despite this, that question that I mentioned at the beginning of this chapter remains: Is it easier to rectify the mistakes of the past under an individualist or a structuralist definition of racism? Or, perhaps even more controversially, will some definitions of racism make us more content with injustice than others?

An example Silva uses is an irrational extra fear that someone may harbour towards someone based on nothing more than socially perpetuated negative images of that race (Silva 2019, 102). The specific example he uses is people being more afraid of black males than of people of another race. Here, he refers to social imagery of "criminality and hypersexuality" which feeds

fears of physical and sexual assault (Silva 2019, 102). The fear in these cases is not caused by antipathy, or even entirely by disrespect (though I would argue disrespect will necessarily be present), but Silva argues that such an attitude would be entirely based on a socially constructed attitude that appeals to self-love and self-preservation (Silva 2019, 102-3). Someone could, presumably, have such a socially based fear, not out of immoral motivations, but out of completely understandable and normal motivations based on the epistemic assumptions that people have made and been indoctrinated with. This conception of an implicit bias rooted in fear and self-love seems to have the potential to be far more dangerous than a direct and acknowledged sense of caution surrounding a racialized group.

Take, for example, a recruitment manager who oversees a company's hires and is generally more cautious of black people than he is of white people. The manager has multiple black friends, black employees, and perhaps even a black boss. The black people that he gives interviews to are hired at roughly the same rate as white people. However, the same manager gives interviews to people with culturally black names at a rate far below that of people with culturally white names. I believe this to be an example of the type of racism to which Silva refers. Rather than people who would specifically treat someone of a different race poorly, he is speaking of the ways that individual beliefs, held due to self-preservation and caution, can cause societal harm. The manager in my example may treat most of the black people that he knows and meets perfectly respectfully. Yet his hiring practices, due to a distrust of black people as a race and culture, result in a racially unequal workplace. Once he can view the interviewees as individuals, many of the issues seem to fall by the wayside. But, because of their race, that chance of an interview is not always given to them.

While the example of the manager seems like it could be explained in terms of a disrespect of personhood and thus in terms of personal immorality, I believe that it is somewhat more complex than that. In my previous treatment of ideological racism, I argued that much of the personal immorality in the kinds of cases highlighted by structuralists comes from occasions when someone is presented with their actions and blind spots (i.e., not believing someone when they say that something is wrong) and decides not to act to rectify them. However, an insidious aspect of the biases like the one in my example caused by societal structures is that there would be very few ways for the manager in question to become aware of his bias. In the case of the manager, societal structures have caused a bias against black-sounding names. By no fault of his own, societal structures have instilled a harmful bias within an individual that will cause further racial divides and strengthen the social structures that originally shaped the bias. The social structures could be the ghetto system, caused by 1930s-60s housing laws, a lack of black people in the manager's schooling pipeline caused by household wealth inequality, or any number of other issues that affect racial groups differently in the United States. Even if one were to become aware of such a bias, there is not a specific, moral fault that seems to be in play. In terms of disrespect for a person, the manager in my example has ample proof of his respect for black individuals (interview acceptance) and can use that to ignore his lack of respect for the broader group of people. He has nothing against those people personally, nor, on an individual level, does he exhibit a lack of care for their race. Rather, he has an implicit bias that makes him unwittingly disfavour that specific group.

This example is not a fantasy. It is based on many statistical studies that have been done from the 1980s on. One meta-analysis, published in 2017, noted that there has been almost no change in job application discrimination since 1989 (Quillian et al. 2017, 1). The study showed that whites received a call-back on their resume 36% more often than blacks and 24% more often

than Latinos despite all races having similar results once the applicant reached the interview stage (Ibid., 1). While there are certainly other contributing factors (wealth, housing, and education inequality to name a few), many of the contributing factors have somewhat equalized since 1989, while the number of call-backs has remained unchanged. More blacks have joined the middle class, live in multi-ethnic neighbourhoods, and have received High School and University education since the 1980s and yet the disparity between blacks and whites who receive resume call-backs has stagnated. As in my example, many of the primary studies looked at in the meta-analysis specifically inserted resumes with racialized names amongst otherwise similar resumes (Ibid., 1). The results were as stated above.

Rather than calling such an attitude personally immoral, we could call the attitude one of “moral note.” It is the result of immorality in the past but does not stem from immoral attitudes or actions of the individual in the present. This case raises problems for Garcia because the manager does not feel antipathy or have a lack of care for black people because of an implicit and unaware bias that the manager has. The case raises problems for Blum since the manager does not disrespect black people on a personal or human level because of that same implicit bias (inferiorization). Despite this, such an attitude can cause a lot of harm, probably more than that of someone who is being directly immoral to someone on the basis of their race. Recognizing the moral note of an action or attitude without directly condemning it provides us with a useful analytical tool when it comes to discussing issues of race. Perhaps a reform of our usage of the term “racism” would be better than a full-on restriction of its usage to personal immorality.

Now, this is not a conception of racism that Garcia would accept, and the actions discussed are ones that Blum would likely put into the category of “racial injustice” rather than the category of racism. However, it seems as though attitudes that keep a particular class or race of people out



of a workforce have great potential to cause harm, perhaps more than do certain acts of antipathy or disrespect. We also have to think about what parts of overtly racist actions cause the most harm. When someone utters a racial slur, what is the harm? Is it that a single person feels hurt, dehumanized, and less-than? Surely that is great harm, but it does not seem to be the *only* harm and likely is not the *worst* harm. Instead, arguably the worst harm caused by such overtly racist actions is the normalization and broad dehumanization of the group of people targeted by the slur, rather than the harm to the specific person that the slur is used against in a given situation: the *structural* effects rather than the *individual* effects. Of course, neither effect can be separated from the other. The question is which one is the primary effect and which one is the secondary effect? Which one has more explanatory power?

Socioeconomic examples like the one that I gave can have overarching effects on people groups and cultures, but it seems likely that individual racial wrongs can too. Such wrongs often started as tools to control populations, whether they be an enslaved race, a political enemy, or a military enemy that had to be dehumanized. In Garcia's account of systemic racism, racist people created policies in the past, or currently racist leaders create policies that are racist, and these policies show the individual policy maker's antipathy towards the people that are affected. Even if the manager in my example has an implicit bias against black people, the manager's actions and attitudes are not based in antipathy. For Garcia, someone can have incorrect and perhaps even harmful beliefs but not be considered racist. The measuring stick for racism on his view is the way that a person *feels* towards the other person. This conversation forgoes an in-depth conversation about the nature of implicit bias, but it is worth noting that implicit bias goes far beyond specifically held beliefs in a person. Implicit biases are attitudes of prejudice and aversion that are held at a subconscious level (Brownstein 2019). According to research, people can have conscious

beliefs that say one thing while having implicit, subconscious attitudes that are at odds with the conscious belief (Ibid.). So, for example, a person might believe that dogs and cats are equally good pets. Despite this outwardly stated and perhaps truly believed idea, the person shows through their actions that they have an affection for dogs and an aversion to cats. They do not go out of their way to kick cats or even avoid them, but they do show a special attitude of love towards dogs – treats, petting, and other such things. This unconscious aversion and affection are not obvious and perhaps not always nefarious. However, when we get into something like people's implicit bias towards whites over blacks in the job market, we can start to see the disastrous effects that such biases can have on a culture and people group.

It is worth noting Garcia's view of bias here. He believes that a *benefit* of his view is that it would allow for "prejudice, in its strict sense of 'pre-judgment'" to not be inherently racist (Garcia 1996, 12). Prejudice would, of course, be characteristically racist and is often rooted in previously held antipathetic beliefs. But it would not be immoral without qualification, on Garcia's account (Ibid., 13). This is because, to Garcia and most individualists, racism is a primarily moral matter. Garcia specifically says that such beliefs are not inherently racist because racism is not a cognitive matter but a moral one (Ibid., 13). In the manager case that I presented, there seems to be no ill-will, but rather a general, perhaps subconscious distrust of blacks. Garcia writes, "Whether having [a prejudice] is immoral in a given case will depend in large part on whether it is a rationalization for racial disaffection. It may depend on why the individual is so quick to think the worst of people assigned to the other racial group" (Ibid., 13). While this is perhaps an attractive supposition, we are looking at a definition of racism that elevates morality over harm. Now, it is doubtful that Garcia would see most "characteristically racist" beliefs as fitting into this category. However, as the psychological literature seems to show, such unconscious beliefs as the one in my

example are far more common than many might think. As the meta-study suggested, there has been surprisingly little change in hiring disparity since the 1980s (Quillian et al. 2017, 1). If many people can have a kind of racial prejudice without being racist, then the term “racist” seems to lose some important meaning.

In chapter two, I discussed the acceptability of a definition of racism by the public and how that is an important factor in evaluating proposed definitions of racism, at least pragmatically. An objection people sometimes raise to proponents of racial justice and critical race theory is the idea that they villainize white people and promote hatred of them. The villainization idea is mostly based on misconceptions of critical race theory and modern discourse on the nature of racism. In chapter one, I discussed the way in which prominent thinkers like Mills, Shelby, and Silva have views of racism that see people as participating in an unjust system. However, I also discussed how those thinkers do not necessarily claim that involvement in such a system entails moral blame. Regardless, some people view the idea that they are involved in such a system, purposefully or not, as an attack on their character and cultural history. This seems to me to be one of the problems with a view like Garcia’s and Blum’s. The focus of the conversation will be on the most obviously wrong issues within the realm of race, and this focus can act as (to repurpose a term from Blum) a conversation stopper. Rather than opening the discussion about racial injustice, it seems to close it. It seems to me that the full acceptance of an individualistic system would give people the license to be more than happy to focus on their individual actions and to ignore their participation within systems that have negative societal effects.

Blum sees the opposite as being true. He believes that the accusation that someone is “racist” will necessarily stop a conversation, lest the label stick (Blum 2002, vii). Unless you wish to make an accusation against someone’s character, the label “racist” should not be used. As

discussed in chapter one, he believes that the term is so morally loaded that no one could possibly think of it in terms of an ideological action that says nothing about someone's character, but only about their sociological status (Ibid., viii). Along with being a morally loaded term, Blum believes the term "racist" to be morally overloaded and claims that it has been conceptually inflated – that the word is used to mean more things than is useful for general discourse (Ibid., 31). If someone says "Hey, that is racist," they are not simply describing a mistake that someone has made but, perhaps like in Shelby's treatment of words like "slut" or "fornication," describing someone as wrong in their beliefs and likely in their character. Just as calling someone a "slut" implies that they are not to be trusted in a relationship, the intentions of a "racist" towards people of colour would be doubted as well.

How correct is Blum in arguing that, as he puts it, "racism" and "racist" should be reserved for certain especially serious moral failings and violations in the area of race" (Blum 2002, 2)? It seems simpler, at times, to focus on the second criterion than it does on the first. Or, to be specific, it seems simpler to focus on the criterion of greatest harm than it does to focus on the criterion of personal moral responsibility. An example of ideological racism that could not necessarily be considered a "serious moral failing," but could be considered a "serious violation in the area of race," is the way that housing laws can negatively affect specific racial groups. As of 2013, the median wealth for black people in the USA was \$11,030 compared to the median wealth of white people in the USA at \$134,230 (de Costa 2019).<sup>17</sup> This is despite the fact that blacks only make 1/3 less than their white counterparts (Gross, 2017).<sup>18</sup> Much of this disparity in wealth has been

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<sup>17</sup> The median is the middle number in a data set, whereas the average is the calculated total divided by the number of subjects. It is worth noting that in discussions of general populations the median is often more useful than the average due to extreme outliers. This is especially true in discussions of income inequality where a few incredibly wealthy people can greatly offset the numbers.

<sup>18</sup> I say "only" in terms of comparison. 1/3 more yearly income is still a large amount.

linked to the historical housing policies of the USA in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, but also the modern ones that, perhaps more innocently, continue their legacy on economic terms (Ibid.). Much of the racial divide in housing is attributed to the racist action of the Federal Housing Administration (FHA) and Veterans Administration during the 1930s through 1960s (Gross 2017), a period when black people had no voting rights and Jim Crow laws were still widely in effect. Despite the fact that the practices of the FHA have since been made more equitable to people of varying races, its previous generosity to whites and stonewalling of blacks have resulted in a massive divide. Despite a decrease in income disparity, there has been a stagnation in wealth disparity. White people still own far more things, specifically houses, than do black people. This fact can be easily linked backed to the housing policies of the past.

Can we call the existence of such disparity in wealth “racist?” All of the main authors I am considering in this thesis would call the original laws that led to this disparity racist. But can the individualists address the current situation as well as structuralists can? I do not believe that they can. Garcia would explain the current state of things via his “infection model.” In the infection model, “What matters is that racist attitudes contaminate the operation of the institution; it is irrelevant what its original point may have been, what its designers meant it to do. If it does not operate from those motives (at time T1), then it does not embody institutional racism (at T1)” (Garcia 1996, 12). So, for Garcia, a law can be racist if it was made by people with racist attitudes and for racist reasons, but if a law was not made with racist intent, it should not be considered racist. A group of laws that had specifically racist intent were the Jim Crow segregation laws. While some rights had been gained for black Americans, Jim Crow laws were put in place that purposefully and knowingly held blacks back and made them second-class citizens. These laws

were specifically racist in their intention – they were designed to segregate and denigrate black people.

In a less obviously racist way, a law could be introduced that specifically and purposefully negatively affects a specific part of the city that is inhabited by black people. If the harm is intentional, then it is a racist law according to Garcia. Since intent matters, the exact same law, affecting the exact same people in the same exact ways could be put into practice by someone else for different reasons and not be considered racist by Garcia. One person is putting the law into effect because of antipathy towards blacks, another putting the law into effect to, for example, lower the cost of housing overall in the county or state. Despite having the same effect on the black people in this theoretical community, the first law is racist and the second is not, at least according to Garcia. This is what is called an “input-centred” view, where the consequences are not what matters, but only the intention (Ibid., 11). Garcia would then not consider the current state of housing “racist,” since it is not the result of modern laws that can be considered racist, nor does it come from people who have antipathy for people of a specific race.

Despite not considering the current state of wealth inequality “racist,” Garcia believes that his account allows for a better rationale for undertaking anti-racist actions. More specifically, Garcia believes that his account provides a better justification for affirmative action than do other definitions of racism (Garcia 1996, 13). His account, therefore, provides a better way to address the effects of past racism, even though such effects cannot be called racist themselves. Since there is no prohibition against *love* for a race but only against *antipathy*, there is no reason to be suspicious of things that are designed to help or to give an opportunity to a certain race over another, as long as each is in view without antipathy (e.g., helping black Americans out of a desire to see white ones do poorly) (Ibid., 14). There are limits to this, specifically when giving to one

race requires taking away from another. However, Garcia believes other viewpoints provide a worse justification for affirmative action and other such anti-racist measures (Ibid., 13-14).

Despite this claim, I believe that an account like Garcia's has the potential to reduce people's motivation for taking anti-racist actions. If we only pay attention to morality proper, leaving aside a focus on the moral psychology and ideology of a people, there will be little reason for ordinary people to change.<sup>19</sup> As I noted in chapter two, the usage and acceptability of an account of racism to the general populace does not matter in terms of claims of truth or accurate description. However, one goal that is common to most of the writers I have considered is coming to a definition that will best serve anti-racist concerns. Part of those anti-racist concerns will undoubtedly be changing and shaping the views and behaviour of ordinary people. There is something to be said for Blum's discussion of positive requirements from a virtue theory. But there seems not to be enough said by individualist accounts about the negative moral requirements (not doing something) that would elicit the duties and policies that many see as necessary to rectify the errors of the past.

Discussing institutional racism, Garcia writes, "In an extended sense, people may also call an institution and its operation racist when the institution works from beliefs that serve to rationalize one or another form of racial disaffection in the hearts of those who formulate and execute its policies" (Garcia 1997, 30). What then are we to do when it is no longer specific policies but only the effects of those policies that exist and that people benefit from? It is not clear. However, based on the specificity of Garcia's requirements for morality and what he has said about the way that institutional racism works as an outworking of individual racism, I believe that we can draw a conclusion. In terms of those who benefit from and, in an important way, perpetuate

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<sup>19</sup> This is a big thing in Silva

the system, we can look at Garcia's main form of immoral vice: antipathy. It is not clear and seems quite unlikely that those who have benefitted from wealth inequality and the opportunity inequality associated with it are doing so out of a hatred for blacks or a desire for their harm. On the contrary, it seems as if they are doing so out of a love for themselves, as Silva would put it.

What of the lesser form of antipathy – a lack of proper care? It seems unlikely that this would be found here either. Are white people who worry about affirmative action, whether in hiring processes, university admissions, or special housing dispensations, worried that a black person will get the benefit in question, or are they worried that they or their friends or family will not? While no doubt there is a large amount of the former, I do not doubt that there is a similarly large amount of the latter. We can ask the same questions about Blum's account. Alongside antipathy, he includes disrespect. Is there going to be in some people an attitude of disrespect when white people see a job or admission go to a black that has traditionally gone to whites? No doubt. However, it seems more likely, as Silva points out, that white people are afraid for themselves and their loss of opportunities, than that they feel disrespect towards black people (Silva 2019, 86-87).

Perhaps acting as a middle ground of sorts, the ideas of moral significance and self-love seem to provide a good way to view actions and inactions that have serious consequences in the realm of race. In Garcia's account, there is no "racism" occurring, and personal morality would not come to bear, in discussions of modern issues of wealth inequality and land ownership. Despite Garcia claiming to have a better handle on the way that the word "racism" is commonly used, and that his account would allow for the better handling of matters of racism, there seems to be a disconnect between the effects and the definition, if we are to simply judge actions based upon their intention rather than their outcome. As shown in my example of the manager, someone can have no bad intention, but still cause great racial harm, simply by implicit bias. Regarding my



example of housing and wealth inequality, Garcia sees a thing as institutionally racist only if that thing at one time had a specific, racist intent when it was originally legislated (Garcia 1996, 33). If the laws have since been changed, there can be no accusation of “racism” under Garcia’s system (Ibid., 33). The disconnect becomes apparent when we recognize that there has been no evening of the playing field. Generational wealth and privilege were accumulated by white people *at the expense of* black people for decades. Regardless of whether those laws or personal attitudes still exist, the results of those laws and attitudes most definitely do exist.

It would require too much to assume that those who currently benefit from an old set of systems or attitudes are worthy of moral blame. However, it is simplistic to assume that there is *no* moral status to their participation and benefit. There have been and are negative effects to their inaction. While the recruitment manager’s implicit bias and ideologies make it quite clear how he may be involved in a moral ill, legislation that negatively affects people of a certain economic class mostly taken up by people of a specific race due to historical injustices can also be seen to be of moral note. Moreover, the inaction of the people who benefit from such legislature can be seen to have moral significance to the people involved in racial wealth inequality – both those who have benefited in the past and those who are disadvantaged in the present. Silva’s idea of self-love is only one way to see this, but it is an attractive viewpoint. It allows for an understandable, less morally bad reason why people may allow for racial injustice to be perpetuated, but also gives people the recourse to recognize that in themselves and to adjust their attitudes without assuming a responsibility that they should not bear. Rather than advocating for an understanding of racism that shows a negative thing being projected out, Silva sees it as too much of a positive thing being projected into oneself.

In this chapter, I have argued that there are significant issues with an individualist definition of racism. The concept of moral note is useful as an analytical tool for understanding racism and has the potential to help people to analyze and understand their own motivations more than a system that focuses on whether or not an individual is worthy of moral blame. Systems that wish to view racism purely in terms of individual moral blame miss an important aspect of racial justice – the parts which often do the most harm. While likely not worthy of individual moral blame, due to there not being any sort of intent, hatred, or personal disrespect, the effects of these actions are often more harmful than are the purposeful and hateful incidents of racial prejudice and injustice. Further, the concept of moral note can help motivate and conceptualize reasons for anti-racist action and policy. My goal has not been to show that an individualist definition of racism is wrong, but rather to show that an individualist definition of racism is incomplete. Individualist definitions seem to focus excessively on individual morality at the expense of the harm that an action or state of being can have on people and societies. However, as shown in chapter three, structuralists can underplay the role that individual morality plays in ideology and institutional racism. In the final chapter, I will address possible solutions to this dual discrepancy, showing that the accounts are not exclusive and could use each other.

## **V. THE MIDDLE GROUND: A DUAL EVALUATIVE APPROACH**

Content Warning: The chapter contains a discussion of rape culture and sexual assault

In the last three chapters, I have argued two main points. First, I have argued that there are aspects of clear personal morality (or, more properly immorality) to be found in almost every structuralist counterexample against individualism. This implies that there should be room for individualist concerns alongside structuralist concerns. Second, I have argued that there are important examples of racial injustice that do not easily fit into a conception of racism that puts individuals at the center. Most importantly, some of the most harmful aspects of racial injustice fall into this category. In this chapter, I will argue for a broad conception of racism and that there is no reason that we cannot use both individualistic and structuralist conceptions of racism to analyze issues of racial injustice and in fact call many of the causes and participants “racist.” Specifically, I will argue that there is no reason that we cannot pay equal attention, according to circumstance, to the way that the individual affects the society and the way that the society affects the individual. There is no need to only evaluate one in light of the other but instead, we can use both as a primary evaluative lens. In one scenario, it will be appropriate to use a structuralist lens, calling the participation in a social structure “racist” while noting that it is not entirely immoral. In another scenario, it will be valuable to evaluate from an individualist lens, showing a person how their actions show antipathy and disregard for people of a certain race.

Prior to arguing my main point, allow me to reiterate what I have highlighted in chapters two and three – the weaknesses in individualist and structuralist accounts. First, I claimed that many of the critiques that structuralists have made against individualist conceptions of racism can be turned around onto structuralism. For example, structuralists often accuse individualists of being unable to account for cases of race-based paternalism. However, in the case of paternalism,

structuralism runs the risk of not recognizing the immorality that goes taking a paternalizing attitude towards a different race – namely a disrespect of others’ autonomy and personhood. In the case of some forms of ideological, institutional racism, many of the reasons for supporting societal injustice and inequality and enacting laws that support them can also be easily explained via personal immorality. My first example of how ideological racism could be tied back to personal immorality, borrowed from Urquidez but used for a different purpose, was the difference in punishment in the US for crack use, a traditional “black” drug, and cocaine use, a traditionally white drug, despite the two drugs having the same pharmacological effect and in essence being the same drug. It is hard to argue that such a difference in punishment would be introduced in the first place without either antipathy or disrespect being involved. My second example was that of curating public-school meals based on research done on white children while not considering any differences in black students. While there could be harm done out of ignorance, as soon as the issue is made known we are again faced with the question of individual morality, via the notions of disrespect or antipathy. All of these examples go to show that, while having its strong points, structuralism is in no way immune to criticism and may not be a satisfactory account of racism on its own.

Second, I claimed that while structuralism has certain weaknesses, so does individualism. Specifically, despite there being some forms of structural and ideological racism that seem better explained in individualist terms, some of the most harmful forms of racial injustice cannot be explained by individualism. First, it does not give adequate focus to those issues of racial justice that can cause the greatest harm. In providing an interesting account of the types of racial injustice that are personally immoral and thus racist, individualist accounts often make *personally immoral* and *causing great harm* a requirement for something being considered racist (Blum 2002, 28 and

34-36 and Garcia 1997 6).<sup>20</sup> In order for something to be considered racist, it must fulfill both of these requirements. However, I argued that often racial injustices will greatly fulfill one requirement and not the other. I showed this by discussing two examples. First, I discussed a situation where a hiring manager has an unconscious bias that makes him give interviews to black people at a rate far below the rate he gives interviews to white people. I argued that, despite the great potential for harm in such a situation, most individualist accounts would not be able to call it racist. The second example is that of the wealth gap between white and black households caused by housing policies in the US in the 1930s through 1960s. While the laws are no longer in place, there is still great harm being caused by the situation that they created. Individualist accounts cannot call such a situation racist. Individualists can call a law racist, but they will have a hard time calling any situation that does not result from an attitude of racial antipathy or disrespect “racist.” Further, they will not be able to call situations that were created from now-defunct racist laws, such as the housing market example in chapter IV, “racist.”

We are then left at a fork in the road. On one hand, amoral, structuralist definitions of racism take a view that does not seem to account for the way that personal immorality can go into acts of “amoral” racism. With this, it is not able to offer the kinds of motivation that an individualist account can. On the other hand, moral, individualist definitions of racism seem to have the potential to make people overly inward-facing, ignoring the way that their inaction and biases can affect other people in unjust and harmful ways. For this reason, it cannot offer the kinds of motivation that a structuralist account can. There have been attempts to bridge the two focus points of two major accounts of racism. We discussed Silva in the last chapter. Another attempt to bridge

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<sup>20</sup> These specific criteria (causing great harm and being personally immoral) do not by name appear in Blum but I believe them to be a good summary of how he addresses examples in Chapter 2: *Can Blacks be Racist?* Blum only specifically has the first (being personally immoral), but I again believe that the addition of “causing great harm” to be a simple and logical addition to what he was written. In fact, it may be one of the only ways of saving his case.

the divide was made by Jeremy Fischer in his article “Racism as Civic Vice” (2021). In this article, Fischer looks at the relationship of the moral virtues with those traits of characters valued by a specific society. He then goes on to argue that to be racist can often be to be a virtuous citizen but an immoral person, and that to be an antiracist can be to be a bad citizen but moral person (Fischer 2021, 539). As in Garcia’s account, Fischer puts a focus on the character of the individual. However, Garcia, for Fischer the sociopolitical remains the “primary evaluative standard” (Ibid., 539). Despite there being an explanation of and focus on the character of individuals, the account as a whole is framed in reference to the civic – in reference to what the society wants or coerces people into desiring.

Why can we not simply accept a system of thought like Fischer’s or Silva’s? Do they not have the same goal as this work? They give a system that accounts for both structural racism and the role that individual action has in such a system. Both seem to give us a solid base from which to view the morality of individual actions within an unjust social system. While it is true that both give us some useful analytical tools and language to discuss racism, both of them focus on the structure rather than the individual. By contrast, I do not believe the structural should be privileged over the individual to such a degree. We do not need to use only the structural to see how it affects the psychology and morality of the individual and we do not use only the individual to see how immoral actions affect the perpetuation of current and future social structures. Instead, we can recognize that both of these focuses can be used in concert with one another. They do not have to compete. Having a structural evaluative focus should not bar us from looking at a situation from an individual evaluative focus and vice versa.

How can this be so? All of the accounts of racism I have discussed thus far either explain racism in terms of broad social ills that exist in societal structures that trickle down into the

individual members of that society or use the individuals in a society to explain how racism in the society functions. Most definitions and their practical applications are explicitly using one side to explain the other. How could it work to use both to explain each other? Do we not need one account to in some way be primary? First, it is worth noting that Fischer and especially Silva *do* pay attention to individual morality, even if for them the structural is the focal point of their analysis. This possibly takes place because neither Silva nor Fischer is arguing for a specific position (structuralist or individualist). Rather, they are assuming one side of the debate (structuralism) to be correct and discussing an aspect of moral philosophy from that structuralist viewpoint. While both do an admirable job of discussing the various reasons that some might take racist positions for amoral reasons, whether out of self-love or out of duty to your state, they do not address what is wrong with racism on a personal level, as do Garcia or Blum. Because of this, it is doubtful that their accounts would satisfy those who believe that racism is primarily an act of unjustified antipathy or disrespect on the basis of race. Is the structuralist able to give us all of the things that we might want from an account of racism? It seems unlikely.

At one point, Mills takes note of Garcia's use of the word "sin," saying that it is indicative of Garcia's biases and position that he would wish to view racism as a "sin" – a personal moral failing for which one should be held accountable (Mills 2003, 61). From a structuralist point of view, whether something is right or wrong – whether it is a sin or not – is beside the point. Rather, Mills is concerned with how society causes and perpetuates racism and abuse within its citizen constituents. The idea of a "sin" would then simply be a consequence of a social structure, rather than a meaningful question of whether or not a society or subculture thinks something is right or wrong. After all, interracial marriage was considered sinful by a sizable portion of Americans at one time. While there are issues with trying to definitively call something right or wrong on the

basis of personal morality, do we have a good reason to completely reject individualism as an evaluative focus in favour of a structural one? I do not believe so.

This discussion of motivation may cause one to wonder whether a structuralist is lacking by not speaking to personal reason to change actions, attitudes, and characteristics. This is not the case. Structuralists often speak of responsibility and obligation arising due to an individual's connection to a "social process." The most influential statement of this type of obligation is from Iris Marion Young in her article "Responsibility and Global Justice: A Social Connection Model." Rather than an obligation to fix a problem coming from liability or blame, Young argues that people should view obligation as arising from their participation, however slight or innocuous, in a social structure (Young 2006, 107-108). It is this author that Mills says he received "special encouragement from" in conceiving his model of structural racism (Mills 1997, xi).<sup>21</sup> In claiming to be in a similar camp as her and given the influential nature of Young's work, it is no large leap to assign such a model of responsibility to all structuralist accounts. Young herself believed that her model of responsibility applies to "every case of structural injustice, whether local or global..." (Young 2006, 107).

As I have said previously, in my discussion of the popular conception of racism in chapter two, while it should not have the final say, the public view of racism matters in discussions of it. Despite Mills' protests about Garcia's use of the word "sin," surely "sinful" and "not sinful" is a common way that people view right and wrong actions. Even if someone is not religious, it does not seem controversial to say that most people want to view their actions as just and not as unjust

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<sup>21</sup> Despite Young's statement of responsibility being published at a later date (she began publishing her ideas in 2003 with her seminal work being published in 2006) than Mills' *The Racial Contract*, her view is both one that is widely accepted by structuralists and fits nicely into most of the structuralist accounts that we have gone over in this work. Given Mills' previous connection to her and her stamp of approval on his work, we can safely assume that Mills would have no issue with Young's view of responsibility being applied to his account of racism.



(or, as not sinful instead of sinful). While talk of “sin” has specific religious connotations, it is also simply a way that many people think of and conceptualize justice and injustice. If this is true, studies of racism that focus on how we can act justly on a personal, moral level will be of prime importance for effecting change in people who view morality in such a way. Further, we do not yet have a good reason to completely disregard morality. Regardless of how useful structuralism is for affecting change in people, structural accounts do not give us solid reasons to take a structuralist evaluative lens at the expense of using a moral one. We have no reason to reject questions about what actions and attitudes are required for a person to be moral and just.

If it can be accepted that discussions of personal morality are at least pragmatically useful, a new question arises. Should we discuss racism with a moral evaluative focus for purely pragmatic reasons with the end goal being structuralist concerns? Or, as I believe, can we analyze racism for the sake of pure morality as well? Can we have a discussion wherein we take racism to be a personal moral fault or bad state of character rather than the participation or perpetuation of an unjust social system? I believe that we not only can but that we should. The moral should not be discussed only as a pragmatic tool to fix a systemic issue, but as an end in and of itself. Perhaps this would have to be done in a more specific way and with more specific language than is sometimes used, but there seem to be few reasons why we cannot analyze racism from *both* a moral *and* a structural standpoint.

There is still an issue to deal with – the popular conception of racism. How can these two definitional focuses be consistently used in discussions of race, keeping in mind the acceptability of a definition and the possibility of an accusation of racism acting as a conversation stopper? The answer to this problem is quite simple – when “racism” is being spoken of structurally, it must be clear. When a thing is being called “racist” in an amoral, structuralist sense, it must be made clear

what is being said. As noted in my discussion above of the use by structuralists of the term “morally significant,” even if the word “racism” does not entail moral blame, it will always entail something about the morality of the thing being described. Despite this moral note, I do not believe that we should simply look at the moral as a subset of, or as an effect of, the structural. The personally moral parts of racism should be discussed as things in and of themselves alongside the amoral, structural aspects of racism.

I believe that the idea of rape culture provides an example of how moral and structural evaluative lenses can be used in concert with one another. The idea of “rape culture” describes a set of actions and attitudes that make sexual assault more accessible and more acceptable (Whisnant). It describes ideas and moral presuppositions that place shame upon the victims while ignoring or downplaying the role the abusers play (Ibid.). Sexual assault itself is not the focal point of discussions of rape culture. Rather the focus is on the secondary behaviours and ideologies that play into making sexual assault acceptable and the reporting of sexual assault unacceptable or stigmatized (Ibid.). This way of understanding rape culture is similar to how many people wish to define racism – as a set of conscious *and* unconscious beliefs and ideologies that negatively affect people, both in making the structures of society unequal and in making it perhaps more acceptable to be personally unjust to those people.

When someone refers to rape culture or to someone perpetuating rape culture, it will not often be thought that they are referring specifically to a sexual assault, although of course that would be included. Rather, they will be referring to a set of ideologies that allow for sexual assault and often allow the shame associated with sexual assault to flourish. While sexual assault is an important part of the broader political discourse and cultural views regarding women’s lack of autonomy (Whisnant), sexual assault can still be discussed as a specifically and individually moral

event, while still giving note to the broader societal effects. It would seem ludicrous to tell someone who committed an act of sexual assault that the real harm of their act was their perpetuation of rape culture. Was that perpetuation a harm? Most likely, yes. Was it the main harm? Most likely, no. In the claim of “racism” or “racist,” there is no such distinction. A “racist” law is not exclusively one that perpetuates a system that “innocently” allows for the degradation of a certain race. It can also be one that explicitly and purposefully harms people of that race. A “racist” person is not exclusively one who holds a harmful view such as that all blacks have a lower IQ than do whites. They can also be a person who actively hates and wishes harm upon black people. This lack of clarity is the basis for the structuralist/individualist debate that has been the focus of this work.

Racism, unlike “rape culture,” does not have an analogous distinction between actions that contribute to a societal structure and actions that are filled with racial antipathy and disrespect. There is no equivocation in terminology between the perpetuation of rape culture and the act of committing sexual assault – it is not the same thing to accuse someone of perpetuating rape culture as it is to accuse someone of being a “rapist.” By contrast, “racism” and “racist” can mean anything from participating in a lynching to a hiring manager who is unaware of his own biases. There are ways of perpetuating rape culture that would of course be immoral. However, it would not necessarily be immoral to participate in it, just as it is not always personally immoral to participate in the kinds of structure talked about in amoral accounts of racism. In the case of rape culture, there are avenues to discuss the immorality of the specific acts and the views that someone takes about women, sexual assault, and the shame attached to it, while not calling everything that goes into it moral or immoral. The discussions of racism that we have covered in this work tend not to allow for such differentiation. They wish to either discuss the specific moral ills that they believe

should be called “racist,” or the ways that all individual actions are a part of and go towards perpetuating, an unequal society that they refer to as “racist.” In discussions of racism, writers on both sides of the individualism/structuralism debate wish to see racism as having one primary meaning and to adopt just one evaluative lens. But why does that have to be true?

As I have suggested through the analogy of rape culture and sexual assault, at least some forms of structural injustice have an evaluative distinction between the individual moral acts that a system focuses on and acts that perpetuate the system itself. Differentiating between the moral and structural forms of racism is in some ways more complex than drawing analogous distinctions in the case of rape culture and sexual assault. As the existence of this debate over the meaning of racism shows, there is no clear line to be drawn between passive participation in and perpetuation of an unjust culture and an active act that constitutes racism in a way that is akin to sexual assault. While there is little question that actions of sexual assault also have the effect of perpetuating rape culture, it seems controversial to primarily use a moral evaluative lens to discuss the immorality of assault. We can, of course, discuss the broader effects, but we also need to realize that there is a specific immorality taking that stems from an individual moral failure. I see little reason that we could not do something similar in discussions of racism, depending on the circumstance. Rather than calling only acts of racial antipathy or disrespect “racist” and calling other actions and ways of being that negatively affect racial groups via social structures “racial injustice,” as Blum might suggest, we can be clear when we are talking about the socially racist effects of something and when we are calling someone’s actions or character morally racist.

At this point, it is worth circling back around to the topic of common opinion. How are regular people meant to decipher which lens they are meant to use in a given scenario? Surely a system that attempts to analyze situations both from a structural and individualistic lens would

confuse a general populace who do not have the time to carefully analyze each action and situation to see which camp it fits into. This is a valid concern, but it applies no more to my proposed dual lens account than to a single lens account. A common criticism of structuralist accounts is that it is difficult to decipher what duties are imposed upon and actions required of the individuals. More specifically, how will they know what their duty is? As we have seen from the two middle road structuralist accounts (Fischer and Silva), attempting to figure out the duties of the individual is a big thing in structuralist literature as well. In the same way that these structuralist accounts.

In the same way that structuralist accounts can lay duties upon people, a dual lens account can do so when using a structural lens. The real issue is, of course, expecting an ordinary person to know when to use the structuralist lens and when to use an individualist one. In the vast majority of cases, both can be used. The two questions will be, “how is this action going to affect a specific individual” and “how is this action or inaction going to affect my society more broadly?” Just like my example of rape culture, we can look at the specific moral and broad societal effects that a sexual assault can have. There is an obvious moral aspect to the act of sexual assault, but there is also a perpetuation of the broad culture that degrades people. In the same, when there are overt acts of disrespect and apathy, we can primarily use an individualistic lens while also recognizing the structural effects. We can also recognize the fact that they are not separate, but that both aspects feed into each other. Earlier in this work, I mentioned the idea of the individual and structural effects of calling someone an ethnic slur. Some people argue that there is little effect in a simple word. How can that harm someone? This is an example of focusing too much on the supposedly small individual effects whilst ignoring the ample structural effects – dehumanization, marginalization, etc. In this way, regular people can fairly easily use both lens – by recognizing that most actions can and should be analyzed by both lenses.

In chapter two, I showed that there were often motivations and attitudes in instances of structural racism that can and should be called personally immoral on the basis provided by individualists. At the same time, in chapter three I showed that some of the most harmful forms of racism in the modern-day do not always contain the types of racial disrespect and antipathy that are discussed by Blum and Garcia. Neither the structuralist account nor the individualist account is comprehensive enough that we can rule out the other. As all parties to this debate agree, individuals influence society and societies influence the individuals who find themselves members.

It is hard to have a view of racial injustice on which structural injustice and individual morality act and affect people in a vacuum. In fact, no account claims that they do. A structuralist account wishes to explain how the morality of a society is affected by the institutions of a society and an individualist wishes to explain how the institutions of a society are affected by the immorality of individuals. However, as we have explored in past chapters, there is rarely a utilization of both perspectives to the full extent. While some structuralist accounts are sensitive to the concerns of moral philosophy and some individualist accounts are sensitive to the concerns of socio-political philosophy, there is rarely the recognition that each feeds into each other to the point that they are inseparable. To have a conversation about racism within a society without recognizing the immoral roots of the problem is itself problematic. However, equally problematic is to try and have a conversation about racist attitudes and actions without recognizing the cultural and structural roots of such attitudes and actions.

Is there not some tension if we allow conversations about how institutions affect moral psychology to overlap with conversations about morality proper? While there would likely have to be extra care taken in labelling moral and amoral racism, it should not be a barrier to us. Without

a genuine moral argument, people will have little reason to affect change in their attitudes on a personal level, even if they have been motivated to change things at a structural level. If someone can be convinced that their moral psychology has been affected by whatever institutions they are a part of and have participated in, that is of little good if we cannot also give a strong argument for why such moral psychology is incorrect or at least problematic. There is no conflict of interest unless we believe that moral psychology is where conversations about morality end. If the goal is, as it seems to be for most of the authors, creating a more equitable and thus moral society, then we cannot stop at cultural moral psychology but must continue under the aims of moral psychology.

## VI. CONCLUSION

This work then rests on two main negative claims. First, that structuralist definitions of racism do not adequately answer the concerns brought up by individualists. Second, that racism cannot entirely be accounted for in terms of individual attitudes of antipathy and disrespect. Instead, on a more positive note, I have contended that racism should be defined and analyzed from both viewpoints simultaneously. Rather than having to pick one, we should be able to recognize the mode of speech being used in the specific conversation, allowing for both moral and sociopolitical philosophy to have a say in the appropriate situations. Each account has a distinct way of motivating action that is in important ways exclusive to each type of evaluative lens. The individualist accounts can look at the ways that personal immorality, specifically racial antipathy and disrespect, come into the various forms of racism that exist in both the modern-day and in days now past. The structuralist accounts can motivate people to fix situations that they may not have caused but that they perpetuate by their passive participation. If such premises can be accepted, we can and should view racism not just from a structuralist viewpoint, and not just from an individualist viewpoint, but from both.

In this thesis, I have considered the works of many prominent philosophers of race and racism, such as Garcia, Blum, Mills, Shelby, and Silva. In light of this consideration, I have recommended a form of synthesis. Each major definition of racism, individualist and structuralist, explains different aspects and parts of racism, but each seems to go too far when arguing that racism should *only* be evaluated under their definition. By adopting a dual focus, we can come to a fuller understanding, not just of racism as a phenomenon, but also of the ways in which people think about it and of how we can discuss it. This dual focus does not simply allow for structuralist concerns to come forward in a specifically individualist account. Nor does it simply allow for



individualist concerns to come forward in specifically structuralist accounts. Rather, we can, and perhaps should, view racism through both an individualist and structuralist lens – at times primarily as a matter of moral philosophy; at times primarily as a matter of societal institutions and moral psychology; and at times as a matter of both.

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