Defending the Color Line

Racially and Ethnically Motivated Hate Crime

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Drawing on structured action theory, the author examines the ways in which racially and ethnically motivated hate crime emerges as a forceful means of constructing identity and difference within the institutional settings of culture, labor, sexuality, and power. The author summarizes the trends in racially and ethnically motivated violence nationwide and then explores hate crimes as a readily available means of doing difference. *The author argues that racially motivated violence is not an aberration associated with a lunatic or extremist fringe. Instead, it is a normative means of asserting racial identity relative to the victimized* other*; it is an enactment—of the racism that allocates privilege along racial lines.*

As with any human activity, hate crime takes its meaning and its impact from the broader array of social and institutional patterns. It is mediated by and enacted within culturally available forms. Each of us is held accountable to our race or ethnic category as we perform in diverse settings. Our identity performances "can be used to justify or discredit other actions; accordingly, virtually any action can be assessed in relation to its race category" (West & Fenstermaker, 1995, p. 22). So, for example, a Hispanic youth who excels in school is perceived by the majority to be crossing established racial boundaries. He is discredited to the extent that he has forgotten his place. Consequently, a White youth who victimizes this upstart will be justified and in fact rewarded for his efforts to reestablish the racialized boundaries between himself and his victim. Both actors have been judged for their actions, with predictable and reconstitutive consequences. Race and ethnicity—for both actors—have been (re)accomplished, the boundaries preserved through the mechanism of hate-motivated violence. Therefore, hate crime can be seen as a coherent racial project (Omi & Winant, 1993) in that it connects the structural meanings and organization of race with the cultural construction of racialized identity. It occurs within the institutional contexts of what is known to be the appropriate place of victim and victimizer. In this article,

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I explore those structured patterns that tell us where we belong. I will address the racialized contours of culture, sexuality, power, and labor and their implications for "doing race" (Connell, 1987; Martin & Jurik, 1996; Messerschmidt, 1993) and how racially and ethnically motivated hate crime emerges as a supplementary means of constructing identity and difference within those institutional settings. First, however, I will preface this analysis with a brief discussion of the trends in racially and ethnically motivated violence nationwide.

In this article, I deal specifically with White violence against racial and ethnic minorities. It is important to recognize, however, that minority on minority violence can also be viewed within the framework of *doing difference* because it too reeks of hierarchical conflict. Interethnic violence among and between subordinate groups "becomes a 'field of possibilities' for transcending class and race discrimination" (i.e., a critical resource for doing race, in particular) (Messerschmidt, 1993, p. 103). But it is important to interpret such violence within the master narrative of White, heterosexual, and masculine hegemony. As Ikemoto (1995) contended, "If you experience racism as one marginalized by it, then you may use racism to explain your relationship with other groups and their members" (p. 307). Even in their relationships with one another, members of subordinate groups are "dependent on the will and leftovers of a dominant group" (p. 308). Ultimately, hegemonic constructions of race or gender identity infuse the experiences and interactions of subordinate groups as well. Nonetheless, the dynamics of violent interactions differ substantially from White on non-White violence. So distinct are these patterns that I have taken them up separately in other contexts (see Perry, 2000, 2001) and will not address them here.

Similarly, in this article I do not take up the issue of minority on majority violence (i.e., violence perpetrated against White Euro-Americans) although that too must be understood within the context of the struggle for recognition and identity. Although statistics suggest that White racial victimization does occur (see below), there is reason to question these data. First, we do know that minority group members dramatically underreport their bias-motivated victimization for reasons that range from fear to a lack of confidence in the likely response of law enforcement (Herek, Gillis, & Cogan, 1999). Second, and conversely, is the possibility that White victims are more likely to report what they perceive as racially motivated violence. From their perspective, it may be seen as a serious affront to their status and authority. Of course, these suggestions are speculative at best because there is virtually no scholarly literature on anti-White violence.

COUNTING RACIAL AND ETHNIC VIOLENCE

Although both academic and media reports make the claim that ethnoviolence represents a rising tide, the truth is we do not know whether in fact this is the case. For the most part, existing methodologies are both too new and too flawed to give us an accurate picture of changes over time. For example, because the hate crime data are collected in the same way as the other data from the Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) program, they are fraught with the same well-documented deficiencies (Bureau of Justice Assistance, 1997). In fact, some argue that hate crimes are even more dramatically underreported than other UCR offences (Berrill, 1992; Weiss, 1993). Reasons for underreporting are varied. The undocumented Mexican laborer may fear the repercussions of his or her status being revealed. Moreover, victims may well fear secondary victimization at the hands of law enforcement officials. At the very least, they may perceive that police will not take their victimization seriously. Moreover, the hate crime data collected by the FBI count only officially designated criminal offences, not other forms of violence and harassment, and thus those incidents go undocumented (e.g., racial slurs, pamphleteering, and so forth).

In spite of the limitations, the UCR data are of some use. They represent the most comprehensive database in the country in terms of geographical coverage and in terms of the motivations they reflect. Although inaccurate in absolute numbers, the data may nonetheless be useful as a source of information on general trends and patterns.

Table 1 provides a summary of UCR data from 1991 to 1998. The data seem to confirm a number of trends that anecdotal evidence has long suggested:

1. The most frequent motivation consistently is race. Racial bias typically accounts for nearly one third of all incidents; when ethnicity is included, the proportion rises to more than 70%.
2. African Americans are the most likely victims of racially motivated violence. Although making up less than 15% of the population, they represent approximately one third of the victims of hate crime.
3. Jews are the second most frequently victimized cultural group, representing the vast majority of religious bias victims, and well over 10% of all victims.

Turning to Table 2, we get a sense of the other side of the equation (i.e., characteristics of the suspected offenders). As one might expect, White offenders are in the majority. However, we must take these data with a grain of salt because such a large proportion of offenders are typically unknown.

Table 3 reveals a number of trends associated specifically with racially and ethnically motivated violence. Most intriguing here are the disparities between crimes against the person and crimes against property. It is apparent that hate crime—relative to normal street crime—is much more likely to involve physical threat and harm to individuals rather than property.

Overall, the UCR program provides a starting point for any discussion of hate crime. However, we are well advised to supplement this information with that available from the growing number of nongovernmental bodies devoted to tracking and responding to hate crime. Generally, these agencies tend to gather information specific to one target group, as is the case with the Anti-Defamation League (ADL), for example.

TABLE 1: Hate Crime by Bias Motivation, 1991 to 1998

Description	*1991*	*1992*	*1993*	*1994*	*1995*	*1996*	*1997*	*1998*
Race	2,963 / 62.3	4,025 / 60.8	4,732 / 62.4	3,545 / 59.8	4,831 / 60.8	5,396 / 61.6	5,898 / 59.9	5,360 / 58.3
Anti-White	888 / 18.7	1,342 / 20.3	1,471 / 31.1	1,010 / 17.0	1,226 / 15.4	1,106 / 12.6	1,267 /12.9	989 / 10.8
Anti-Black	1,689 / 35.5	2,296 / 34.7	2,815 / 59.5	2,174 / 36.6	2,988 / 37.6	3,674 / 41.9	3,838 / 39	3,573 / 38.9
Anti-American Indian	11 / 0.2	26 / 0.4	27 / 0.5	22 / 0.4	41 / 0.5	51 / 0.6	44 / 0.4	66 / 0.7
Anti-Asian/Pacific islander	287 / 6.0	217 / 3.3	258 / 5.4	211 / 3.6	355 / 4.5	355 / 4.1	437 / 4.4	359 / 3.9
Anti-multiracial group	88 / 1.9	144 / 2.2	161 / 3.5	128 / 2.2	221 / 2.8	210 / 2.4	312 / 3.2	373 / 4.1
Ethnicity	450 / 9.5	669 / 10.1	697 / 9.2	638 / 10.8	814 / 10.2	940 / 10.7	1,083 / 11	919 / 10.0
Anti-Hispanic	242 / 5.1	369 / 5.6	472 / 6.2	337 / 5.7	516 / 6.5	564 / 6.4	636 / 6.5	595 / 6.5
Anti-other ethnicity	208 / 4.4	300 / 4.5	225 / 3.0	301 / 5.1	298 / 3.7	376 / 4.3	447 / 4.5	324 / 3.5
Religion	917 / 19.3	1,162 / 17.5	1,298 / 17.1	1,062 / 18.0	1,277 / 16.1	1,401 / 16.0	1,483 / 15.1	1,475 / 16.0
Anti-Jewish	792 / 16.7	1,017 / 15.4	1,143 / 15.1	915 / 15.4	1,058 / 13.3	1,109 / 12.7	1,159 / 11.8	1,145 / 12.5
Anti-Catholic	23 / 0.5	18 / 0.3	32 / 0.4	17 / 0.3	31 / 0.4	35 / 0.4	32 / 0.3	62 / 0.7
Anti-Protestant	26 / 0.5	28 / 0.4	30 / 0.4	29 / 0.5	36 / 0.5	75 / 0.9	59 / 0.6	61 / 0.7
Anti-Islamic	10 / 0.2	15 / 0.2	13 / 0.2	17 / 0.3	29 / 0.4	27 / 0.3	31 / 0.3	22 / 0.2
Anti-other religion	51 / 1.0	69 / 1.0	63 / 0.8	67 / 1.1	102 / 1.2	129 / 1.5	173 / 1.8	138 / 1.5
Anti-multireligious group	11 / 0.2	14 / 0.3	14 / 0.3	14 / 0.2	20 / 0.3	24 / 0.3	26 / 0.3	45 / 0.5
Anti-atheist/agnostic	4 / 0.1	1 / 0.0	3 / 0.1	3 / 0.1	1 / 0.0	2 / 0.0	3 / 0.0	2 / 0.0
Sexual orientation	425 / 8.9	767 / 11.6	860 / 11.3	685 / 11.5	1,019 / 12.8	1,016 / 11.6	1,375 / 14	1,439 / 15.7
Anti-homosexual	421 / 8.9	750 / 11.3	830 / 10.9	664 / 11.2	984 / 12.4	991 / 11.3	1,351 / 13.7	1,407 / 15.3
Male	NA	557 / 8.4	516 / 8.1	501 / 8.4	735 / 9.2	757 / 8.6	912 / 9.3	972 / 10.6
Female	NA	93 / 1.4	121 / 1.6	100 / 1.7	146 / 1.8	150 / 1.7	229 / 2.3	265 / 2.9
Anti-heterosexual	3 / 0.1	14 / 0.2	28 / 0.4	14 / 0.2	17 / 0.2	15 / 0.2	14 / 0.1	13 / 0.1
Anti-bisexual	1 / 0.0	3 / 0.1	2 / 0.1	7 / 0.1	18 / 0.2	10 / 0.1	10 / 0.1	19 / 0.2
Total	4,755	6,623	7,587	5,932	7,947	8,759	9,839	9,193

SOURCE: Federal Bureau of Investigation, 1992, 1993, 1994, 1995, 1996, 1997, 1998, 1999.
NOTE: The first number indicates total number of crimes reported in the United States. The second number indicates the percentage of the sample.

TABLE 2: Reported Number of Incidents of Racially/Ethnically Motivated Violence by Suspected Offender's Race, 1991 to 1998

Description	*1991*	*1992*	*1993*	*1994*	*1995*	*1996*	*1997*	*1998*
White	1,679	2,612	2,813	2,939	3,361	4,892	NA	2,988
Black	769	1,381	1,312	1,139	1,209	1,258	NA	759
American Indian	12	14	30	32	40	50	NA	55
Asian/Pacific islander	47	36	53	51	97	106	NA	61
Multiracial	77	98	133	135	98	177	NA	164
Other/unknown	1,974	1,773	3,246	2,966	2,377	2,211	NA	2,252

SOURCE: Federal Bureau of Investigation, 1992, 1993, 1994, 1995, 1996, 1997, 1998, 1999.

TABLE 3: General Trends in Racially/Ethnically Motivated Violence

Description	*1991*	*1992*	*1993*	*1994*	*1995*	*1996*	*1997*	*1998*
Participating agencies	2,771	6,181	6,551	7,356	9,584	11,355	11,211	10,730
Total incidents	4,558	6,623	7,587	5,932	7,947	8,734	8,049	7,755
Incidents motivated by race/ethnicity								
Incidents	3,413	4,694	4,732	3,545	5,645	5,396	5,898	5,075
Offences	NA	5,914	5,786	4,431	7,192	6,767	9,861	9,235
Victims	NA	6,078	6,011	4,540	7,482	6,994	10,255	9,722
Known offenders	NA	6,939	6,258	4,356	6,709	6,122	8,474	7,489
Crimes against person	3,321	4,695	4,415	3,382	5,539	4,953	6,873	6,305
Crimes against property	1,434	1,219	1,371	1,049	1,639	1,814	2,973	2,905
Racial/ethnic bias motivation								
Anti-White	888	1,342	1,471	1,010	1,226	1,106	1,267	989
Anti-Black	1,689	2,296	2,815	2,174	2,988	3,674	3,838	3,573
Anti-American Indian/Alaskan native	11	26	27	22	41	51	44	66
Anti-Asian/Pacific islander	287	217	258	211	355	355	437	359
Anti-Hispanic	242	369	472	337	516	564	636	595
Anti-multiracial group	88	144	161	128	221	210	312	373
Anti-other ethnicity	208	300	225	301	298	376	447	324

SOURCE: Federal Bureau of Investigation, 1992, 1993, 1994, 1995, 1996, 1997, 1998, 1999.

ANTI-SEMITIC VIOLENCE

Since 1979, the ADL has generated annual audits of anti-Semitic violence, not only in the United States but worldwide. The mandate of the ADL goes much further than does the FBI's UCR program. ADL includes among its data

TABLE 4: Anti-Semitic Violence by Selected Offense Type, 1990 to 1998

Description	*1990*	*1991*	*1992*	*1993*	*1994*	*1995*	*1996*	*1997*	*1998*
Anti-Defamation League Data									
Harassment, threats, assaults	758	950	874	1,079	1,197	1,116	941	898	715
Vandalism	927	929	856	788	869	727	781	673	896
Total	1,685	1,879	1,730	1,867	2,066	1,843	1,722	1,571	1,611
Campus anti-Semitic incidents	95	101	114	122	143	NA	NA	NA	NA
FBI (Uniform Crime Report) data	NA	792	1,017	1,143	915	1,058	1,109	1,159	1,145

SOURCE: Anti-Defamation League, 1991, 1992, 1993, 1994, 1995, 1996, 1997, 1998, 1999; Federal Bureau of Investigation, 1992, 1993, 1994, 1995, 1996, 1997, 1998, 1999.

incidents that may not fit the traditional definition of crime. The ADL tracks murder, assaults, and arsons to be sure, but this is supplemented with attention paid to harassment, petty and serious vandalism, anti-Semitic slurs, and the distribution of neo-Nazi literature.

Looking at Table 4, one especially disturbing fact leaps immediately to the fore: Since 1991, anti-Semitic violence has been increasingly more likely to involve personal rather than property crimes. Historically, this has been a group victimized by crimes against property, such as synagogue or cemetery desecrations. However, the tide has turned in recent years. In addition, the decline in the number of anti-Semitic incidents beginning in 1995 has corresponded to an increase in the intensity of the violence associated with the incidents. In 1995, for example, an arson in New York City resulted in several deaths. In November of that year, the FBI fortunately stopped an attempt by the TriState Militia to bomb several ADL offices.

RACIALLY MOTIVATED VIOLENCE

In contrast to the case of anti-Semitic violence, there is no national, coherent audit of racially motivated violence in the United States. The Southern Poverty Law Center's (SPLC) *Intelligence Report* includes "For the Record," a catalog of bias incidents drawn from media sources, public reports, and initial police reports. The primary value of the SPLC report is that it offers brief narratives describing the incidents. The reports offer a qualitative supplement to the UCR data.

There are some regional organizations committed to collecting hate crime data in their area or state—for example, North Carolinians Against Racist and Religious Violence and the Northwest Coalition Against Malicious Harassment.

Alternatively, some local and national organizations have been involved in survey research oriented toward hate crime. The National Institute Against Prejudice and Violence has been at the forefront of these initiatives, publishing reports on workplace and campus ethnoviolence, for example. Indeed, the institute has discovered that violence in both of those settings is more widespread than was anticipated. More narrowly, the Los Angeles County Office of Education recently released a research report documenting a 53% increase in racial hate crime between 1989 and 1992. Although valuable to their immediate constituents, such localized data are obviously limited in the extent to which their findings might be generalized.

The Arab American Anti-Discrimination Committee and the National Asian Pacific American Legal Consortium (NAPALC) are two national organizations that have emerged in recent years as a response to the perceived increase in anti-Asian violence specifically. The annual audits of both agencies are veritable treasure troves of information. They provide summary numbers, synopses of cases, information on legal actions, analyses of regional and national trends, and extensive policy recommendations. The data uncovered by each confirm what anecdotal evidence and intuitive observations have suggested: Riding the wave of anti-immigrant and anti-Asian sentiment, anti-Asian violence was consistently on the rise in closing years of the 20th century (see Table 5).

As the data provided here suggest, racially and ethnically motivated violence, although relatively rare, is nonetheless a daily possibility for minority group members. Moreover, I posit that this violence is the physical expression of the endemic racism that pervades race relations in the United States.

THE CULTURE OF RACISM

Although racism constitutes a structured pattern of relationships between groups, it might simultaneously be understood as a cultural field of discourse in support of that structure. The practices of racism encompass exclusion, marginalization, subordination, and not least of all, violence (Young, 1990). But these patterns are predicated on legitimating ideologies and images that mark the *other*, and the boundaries between self and other, in such a way as to normalize the corresponding inequities. Racist discourse, then, provides “a reservoir of procedural norms that not only tacitly inform routine activity, but are also able to legitimate more purposive, explicitly racist practices” (S. Smith, 1989, p. 150). It is within the cultural realm that we find the justifications for inequities and for ethnoviolence.

At the heart of this cultural field of discourse, one discovers *the American*—a deep seated (albeit often contested) presumption of what it is to be American. For the dominant majority, this invariably suggests Whiteness (Frankenberg, 1993; Wellman, 1993). Or perhaps Wellman’s (1993) characterization is more precise because he suggests that the American identity revolves around “a

TABLE 5: Anti-Asian Violence by Selected Offence Type, 1993 to 1998

Description	*1993*	*1994*	*1995*	*1996*	*1997*	*1998*
Total incidents (National Asian Pacific American Legal Consortium)	335	452	355	370	144	295
% Vandalism	17	9	16	29	32	31
% Threats/intimidation	9	5	13	16	17	15
% Police abuse	7	4	3	NA	NA	NA
% Harassment	4	12	7	22	19	17
% Assault	28	26	28	33	31	32
FBI (Uniform Crime Report) data	258	211	355	355	437	359

SOURCE: National Asian Pacific American Legal Consortium, 1995, 1999; Federal Bureau of Investigation, 1994, 1995, 1996, 1997, 1998, 1999.

conception of America that defines what it is not" (p. 245). Culturally, White Americans construct themselves in negative relational terms. Their normative Whiteness is created on the backs of the other. The American is not raced, is not Black or Asian, is not even ethnic. Language reinforces this exclusive categorizing to the extent that the norm of Whiteness is implicit in such terms as *Black author*, *Pakistani doctor*, or the distinction between White *hired hands* and Black *servants*. Simultaneously, White Americans stand on this self-perception as a means of both constructing their identity and marginalizing, even denigrating, that of non-Whites.

Ethnoviolence becomes understandable in this context as an arena in which the primacy of Whiteness can be recreated and in which the boundaries between what is and is not American can be reaffirmed. Xenophobic violence is especially acute with respect to immigrants and their descendants. Chinese, Koreans, Indians, and other people of color are perceived as *perpetual foreigners* who will never assimilate and become American. They will forever be outsiders. The NAPALC (1995, p. 4) cited a talk show host's complaints that world-class figure skaters Kristi Yamaguchi and Michelle Kwan—both second generation Americans—were not "real" Americans. A New York City police officer acted on these sentiments when he beat a Pakistani cab driver. The assault was accompanied by the exclamation that "You immigrants think we're stupid. . . . This is my country, I'll teach you a lesson" (NAPALC, 1995, p. 7).

But what is the basis for such exclusionary conceptions of American-ness and belongingness? Why and how are the racialized others distinct from White America? We might look for a response to these questions in the realm of stereotypes and popular images. It is these portrayals that justify and underlie the hostile treatment of racial minorities.

Stereotypes that distinguish the racialized other from White subjects are grounded in what are held to be the identifying features of racial minorities.

They help to distance White from not White. The latter are to be feared, ridiculed, and loathed for their differences as recognized in the popular psyche. Almost invariably, the stereotypes are loaded with disparaging associations, suggesting inferiority, irresponsibility, immorality, and nonhumanness, for example. Consequently, they provide both motive and rationale for injurious verbal and physical assaults on minority groups. Acting on these interpretations allows dominant group members to re-create Whiteness as superiority, while castigating the other for their presumed traits and behaviors. The active construction of Whiteness, then, exploits stereotypes to legitimate violence.

Individuals enter each social interaction carrying with them the baggage that holds these stereotypical images. Whether a particular member of a minority group corresponds to these is almost immaterial. It is assumed—via gross generalizations—that all Blacks are criminal, or all Asians are submissive, or all Jews are greedy. Violence motivated by these preconceptions becomes an effort to prove one's Whiteness—racial solidarity—relative to the defiled other. It is a claim to superiority, which is meant to establish once and for all that the White perpetrator is not Black, is not Asian, is not Jewish. Rather, the perpetrator removes himself from the victim group by engaging in violence directed against it—surely one would not seek to harm the self, only the other.

When the youths of Bensonhurst and Howard Beach, New York, attacked their victims, they did so within the context of a mind-set that distinguished *us* from *them*. The Black youths were to be excluded from the neighborhood because they were presumed to be looking for trouble. In contrast to the White defenders of the race, the Black victims were constructed as threats to the physical and economic security of the White residents of the neighborhoods—of course, they had robbery or murder or sexual assault on their minds because "all Black men" are criminals. Again, attacking these youths provided the offenders with proof of their masculine role of defenders to be sure; but it also provided them with proof of their racial purity and solidarity. They were not like their victims. Rather, they were the virtuous ones: Their actions were inscribed with the mark of the moral supremacy of Whiteness. As Fine (1997) commented in another context,

> Among these white adolescent men, people of color are used consistently as a foil against which acceptable moral, and particularly sexual, standards are established. The goodness of white is always contrasted with the badness of Black—blacks are involved in drugs, Blacks are unacceptable sexually, Black men attempt to "invade" white sexual space. . . . The binary translates in ways that compliment white boys. (p. 57)

And violence is an important mechanism through which these translations are made. It helps to reestablish the natural hierarchy of goodness and evil, strength and weakness, morality and immorality. It ensures that Whites and people of color will inhabit their appropriate places in physical and cultural terms.

RACIALIZED SEXUALITY

As the preceding quote implies, from the perspective—historical and contemporary—of White Americans, one of the most palpable realms of difference between *us* and *them* lies in sexuality. And it is in this context that people of color are often subject to the most vicious opprobrium and hostility precedent to racial violence. Non-White male sexualities are constructed as "dangerous, powerful, and uncivilized force[s] that [are] hazardous to White women and a serious threat to White men" (Daniels, 1997, p. 93). Consequently, people of color are most at risk when they visibly cross the racialized sexual boundaries by engaging in interracial relationships.

On the basis of these controlling images of people of color, White women, and especially White men, are fearful and suspicious of the sexualities of the other. Speaking of the White fear of Black bodies in particular, West (1993) contended that this

> fear is rooted in visceral feelings about black bodies and fueled by sexual myths of black men and women . . . either as threatening creatures who have the potential for sexual power over whites, or as harmless, desired underlings of a white culture. (p. 119)

In this context, hate crime functions to reinforce the normativeness of White sexuality while punishing people of color for their real or imagined sexual improprieties. It is a means of degrading the bodies of the other, with an eye to controlling them. Hate crime emasculates the sexual threat, thereby firmly establishing the essential boundaries between groups.

Nowhere have White fears been more palpable than in their historical relationship with Black males. No other group has been so narrowly defined by their sexuality than have Black males. This was clear under slavery, where *bucks* were valued for their breeding capacity, but also where Black male subordination was justified on the grounds of his savage and beastly nature. As Messerschmidt (1997) contended, Black masculinity was irrevocably defined in terms of Black sexuality, which in turn, was seen as "animalistic and bestial" (p. 23). Thus, the unrestrained instincts and desires of Black men could be reined in only through the use or threat of violence.

The sexualized image of Black males was reproduced in postbellum culture. In fact, to the extent that Black sexual independence was correlated with their economic and political freedom, they presented an even greater threat to White masculine superiority. The fact that alleged Black rapists were as often castrated as lynched suggests an attempt to emasculate the "savage" by symbolically (and literally) erasing his identity—much as one would control a wild dog. The vicious forms of punishment meted out to Black males served to highlight their animal nature at the same time that it reinforced the power and hegemony of White males.

The presumption of Black male as sexual predator continues to underlie racial difference and racial violence in the contemporary era. In fact, the myth of lascivious, rapacious, and insatiable Black sexuality is perhaps one of the most enduring themes in U.S. culture. It emerged in the 1988 Willie Horton ads; it was also evoked by Clarence Thomas's claim that he was the victim of a "hi-tech" lynching; and it ensured Mike Tyson's conviction for sexual assault. The image of the Black sexual predator is the cultural lens through which Whites perceive Blacks. As such, it provides the context for racially motivated violence: Violent people are worthy of violent repression.

Fine and her colleagues (1997) uncovered contemporary evidence of this dichotomization in their interviews with White male high school students, who proclaimed both their right and duty to preserve the chastity of White girls for themselves.

> Much expressed racism centers on white men's entitled access to white women, thus serving the dual purpose of fixing black men and white women on a ladder of social relations. . . . This felt need to protect white girls translates as a code of behavior for white male students. It is the fact that *Black* men are invading *White* women, the property of *White* men, that is at issue here. (pp. 57-58)

In defending their White girls from the unrestrained sexuality of Black boys, the White boys are also defending themselves—that is, the sanctity of their own carefully restrained, "civilized," normative sexuality. These youths are reacting to messages received from the broader culture.

Moreover, these codes of behavior often rest on violence as a means of policing the relative identities. Yusuf Hawkins, for example, was a proxy for 18-year-old Keith Mondello, evidently aggravated by the revelation that a former girlfriend had dated Black and Hispanic men. Mondello was further disturbed on the night he formed the group that killed Hawkins when the girl told him that she had planned to celebrate her birthday with a group of Black and Puerto Rican friends. The anger and hostility of Mondello and his predominantly Italian peers were so evident that the party was canceled. Deprived of direct targets of their wrath—the potential partygoers—Mondello and his friends turned their anger on three other, interchangeable Black youths who had happened into the neighborhood. One of Mondello's accomplices is said to have exclaimed, "Let's not club the niggers, let's shoot them and show Gina," presumably as a means of reminding Gina and any Black males with an interest in White women that their "unnatural" desires would not be tolerated.

Boundary crossing is perceived as not only unnatural but threatening to the rigid hierarchies that have been built around these presumed differences. This sentiment is evident in a letter to the editor (cited in Mathabane & Mathabane, 1992) written in response to a photo of Black and White youths dancing together:

> Interracial marriages are unbiblical and immoral. God created different races of people and placed them amongst themselves. . . . There is nothing for white

> Americans to gain by mixing their blood with blood of other peoples. There will only be irreversible damage for us. (p. 186)

The rhetoric of antimiscegenation is especially common among White supremacists. How else could the White race maintain its supremacy other than by maintaining its purity? Any "contamination" by non-White blood introduces into the White bloodline all of those reviled deficiencies characteristic of the "mud people." Supremacists look with disgust and hostility on those race traitors who seek out non-White mates, as is the case for the Klansman overheard by Ezekiel (1995) at a Klan rally: "What is the worst, to see a couple—to see some White woman and some Black man—ugh! It just turns my stomach" (p. 10).

For White racialists such as Alfred Strom, race mixing constitutes part of the genocidal agenda of non-White races. Strom (retrieved from www.com/FREESP) links the rhetoric of White supremacy with that of antimiscegenation, arguing that the White race's

> continued existence would undoubtedly [sic] be assumed by our superior intelligence and unmatched technology, if it were not for those who practice and promote the genocide of our people through racial mixing. By their actions they are killing us. . . . They kill infinite generations of our future. Their crime—the crime of racial mixture—is far, far worse than mere murder.

Race mixing is deemed to be yet another symptom of the loss of White power and identity because it violates the sacred order of the established hierarchy. It muddies the boundaries between the races in such a way that the politicized superiority of Whites is thrown into question. Consequently, miscegenation elicits calls for enforced racial purity as a means of correcting the emerging imbalance in the relationship between Whites and non-Whites. The latter must be put back in their place, by force, if necessary.

(DIS)EMPOWERING RACE

An obvious hallmark of racism as a structure of domination is the restriction of the power of non-White racial groups. To this end, racial minorities have historically been limited in terms of social, political, and economic power (the latter will be explicitly addressed in the next section). The sorts of racial constructions and categorizations discussed earlier are the stuff of which social exclusions are built, to the extent that they legitimate discrepancies in access to opportunities and privilege. The power that is wielded—physically and socially—by Whites is exercised in such a way as to "develop, evolve, nurture, spread, impose, and enforce the very myths . . . that underlie racism" (Fernandez, 1996, p. 160).

Historically in the United States, power has been cautiously guarded by imposing restrictions on citizenship and its correspondent rights. Whether through formal policy or informal practice, racialized minorities have consistently been disenfranchised as a means of limiting their voice and position in the United States. Although no ethnic or racial group is legally excluded from attaining U.S. citizenship at this time, it does not necessarily follow that all groups are able to enjoy the privileges associated with this status. Racial minorities continue to be marginalized by their inability to gain full access to political, civil, and social rights, such that inclusion is still constituted of and by Whiteness, not color. Civil rights violations of an array of racial and ethnic groups are endemic. The 1992 beating of Rodney King, and the 1997 sodomization of Abner Louima—both by police officers—are but the tip of the iceberg. The 1997 sweep of Chandler, Arizona, constituted a dramatic breach of the civil rights and liberties of the dozens of apparently Hispanic citizens—people randomly stopped and ordered to produce their papers, solely on the basis of their presumed ethnicity. Similarly, housing and mortgage discrimination continues to be a determining factor in the persistence of racial and ethnic segregation (Hacker, 1995; R. Smith, 1995). And, although the political power of minorities has increased somewhat over the past couple of decades, all such groups are still underrepresented in the formal machinery of politics (Hacker, 1995; Young, 1990).

Racially motivated violence is directly implicated in efforts to maintain these unequal relations of power. It is itself a mechanism of social power by which White males in particular assert a particular version of hegemonic Whiteness. It is not difficult to trace the history of racially motivated violence during periods when the power of Whites was perceived to be at risk—periods in which this identity was reconstructed through the exercise of violence as a resource for doing race. Nor is it difficult to identify contemporary illustrations.

Violence is empowering for its users: Physical dominion implies a corresponding cultural mastery. Gunner Lindberg boasted in a letter of his killing of a Vietnamese man, Thien Minh Ly:

> Oh I killed a jap a while ago. I stabbed him to death at Tuslin High School . . . I walked right up to him and he was scared . . . he got happy that he wasn't gona get jumped. Then I hit him . . . I stabbed him about 7 or 8 times. (Phan, "Another Senseless Hate Crime," retrieved from www.avl.umd.edu/staff/nowk/hate_crime.html)

The murderer's use of the derogatory label *jap* implies the racial distancing and animosity that underlie Lindberg's motive. He signifies his dominant Whiteness by derogating Ly's Asian identity. That Ly was in fact Vietnamese and not Japanese further confirms Lindberg's presumption of superiority and hauteur. It is enough to know that Ly was Asian—no need to discern his true ethnicity or national origin. Any Asian could be at risk. Thus, the entire community is put on notice. Moreover, Lindberg's awareness that his racial identity was reinforced by his acts is clear in his pretentious statement within the letter:

"Here's the clippings from the newspaper we were on all the channels." Lindberg assumes that his audience—on learning of his exploits in the media—will judge his Whiteness and not find him lacking. He is appropriately accountable to his race, given his eagerness to destroy the other. No race traitor there, rather Lindberg announces through his actions that he is in solidarity with the White race, thereby preserving White privilege and position.

Such racial constructions, however, are dynamic and relational. Not only does this example illustrate how perpetrators empower Whiteness through violence. It is also suggestive of the opposite: disempowering the victims' communities. Ly's death—like other hate-motivated assaults—also represents an effort to render impotent the targeted group. Individual assaults are warning signs to others like the victim—you could be next. Richard Wright, in his now classic *Black Boy*, speaks to the vicarious experience of racial violence:

> The things that influenced my conduct as a Negro did not have to happen to me directly; I needed but to hear of them to feel their full effects in the deepest layers of my consciousness.

A Black person or a Korean person or a Hispanic person need not have been a victim personally. Like Wright, they are all too aware of their consistent vulnerability because of their race. The immutability of their racial identity invokes hopelessness—they are victimized for reasons they cannot change. In the midst of the "Dot Busters" campaign of terror against Asian Indians in Jersey City, an open letter made clear the generalized vulnerability of a group: "If I'm walking down the street and I see a Hindu and the setting is right, I will just hit him or her" (cited in Harvard Law Review, 1993). Thus, hate crimes have the potential to throw an entire community into paralysis, forcing them to withdraw further into themselves. Marovitz (1993) observed that

> By making members of minority communities fearful, by making them suspicious of other groups and of the power structure that is supposed to protect them, these incidents can damage society and polarize our communities. (p. 50)

Such violence reaffirms the subordinate status of minority communities. At its extreme, it discourages social and political participation by keeping potential victims off the streets and out of the public eye.

Paradoxically, efforts to render minority communities impotent—whether through the mechanism of hate crime or other repressive means—can backfire. Rather than hobbling the victim group, they may in fact mobilize the community. This was the case in New York City, for example, in which Haitians, accompanied by other Caribbeans, demonstrated angrily, vocally, and visibly against the racist violence represented by Louima's brutal beating at the hands of police officers. Although innumerable victims had previously remained silent out of fear and intimidation, the publicity surrounding Louima's victimization galvanized the community into action.

A decade earlier, other New York neighborhoods witnessed similar rallies. The racially motivated murders of Michael Griffith in Howard Beach and Yusuf Hawkins in Bensonhurst both resulted in flurries of organizing and demonstrating. An organization created after the first murder—New York City Civil Rights Coalition—was still available to lend its support to those involved in prosecuting the Hawkins case. Both incidents inspired widespread demonstrations condemning the racism of the perpetrators' communities, as well as the racist culture of New York City generally. Clearly these cases stimulated rather than disabled the communities.

Unfortunately, this posture of empowerment is often seen as an affront to White dominance. The victim community is perceived to be violating the anticipated rules of behavior. Instead of accepting their subordination, they resist it. In such a context, incidents of hate crime may escalate in retaliation. Consider the case of Farmington, New Mexico, in the mid-1970s. In response to the vicious murders of three Indian men, local Navajo activists established the Coalition for Navajo Liberation. Although the immediate purpose of the coalition was to see justice done in the prosecutions for the offense, it soon expanded to address the broader patterns of discrimination and victimization experienced by natives in the border town. As the coalition dug in its heels and intensified its demands for justice, the antagonism of the White community became clear. Rather than discourage anti-Navajo violence, the activism of the Coalition for Navajo Liberation seemed to inspire it, as evident in the increase in the number of drive-by shootings of Navajo people (Barker, 1992). This case typifies how activism—a sign of strength—can beget animosity. It may in fact elevate the level of hostility already existing in a community.

Seen in this light, hate crime is a reactionary tool, a resource for the reassertion of Whiteness over color. It is a form of "resistance to any diminishment in the authorial claims of a particular White identity" (Hesse, Rai, Bennett, & McGilchrist, 1992, p. 172). Racially motivated violence, then, is available as an albeit violent and extreme response to the other who is out of control, who has overstepped his or her social or political boundaries, thereby challenging the entrenched hierarchies.

THE ECONOMICS OF RACE

The presumption of racial hierarchies has had, and continues to have, a profound impact on the place of minority groups within the labor process. In particular, people of color have traditionally been marginalized and exploited as cheap and malleable labor (Young, 1990). Thus, although the political and social gains made by minorities in recent years threaten White cultural identity, economic gains represent a more direct and tangible threat to White economic security. People of color who presume to advance on the economic ladder are perceived as unfair and undeserving competitors and as takers of "White" jobs. People of color are seen to have overstepped the economic boundaries that have long contributed to their marginalization. Consequently, White fear and resentment are frequently and viciously translated into racial violence in the context of labor activities.

Many White men now picture and present themselves as the *new minority*. They experience a sense of displacement and dispossession relative to people of color. This imagery of White-man-as-victim gives voice to the insecurity of White men in a weakened economy. It also provides an ideological rationale for re-creating people of color as legitimate victims. Thus, perpetrators of ethnoviolence are akin to the young White men interviewed by Fine (Fine et al., 1997), who act or "speak for a gendered and racial group whose privilege has been rattled and whose wrath is boiling over" (p. 66).

Where have all the jobs gone? From the perspective of many disaffected White workers, the answer is clear enough. They have not been relocated offshore or replaced by technology. Rather, they have been stolen from them by lesser and unfit beings: Those uppity others who have won the ears of politicians and employers alike. The most visible manifestation of this inverted preference for minorities is the bogey of affirmative action. There is a widespread consensus emerging that affirmative action policies have resulted in the displacement of qualified White workers by unqualified minority workers (Fine et al., 1997). In a curious inversion of history, many White males imagine an array of signs stating "Whites Need Not Apply." This is particularly frustrating in the context of the cultural constructions of Blacks, Hispanics, and Native Americans, for example, as lazy and undisciplined. Where White workers imagine themselves at the opposite pole—hardworking and dedicated—the backdrop is set for a volatile response.

Perceptions of reverse discrimination provide the motive and rationale for harassment and assaults of minority workers. This has become evident in the studies of workplace ethnoviolence carried out by the Prejudice Institute (Ehrlich, 1989), which found relatively high rates of harassment and defamation of people of color (i.e., those who "don't belong"). Successive reports of the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights (1990, 1992a, 1992b) also reveal the links between hostility toward affirmative action and violence against minorities. For example, a 1990 Commission on Civil Rights summary report observed that

> most of the historical episodes of anti-democratic action occurred in times, in places, and among people who suffered from economic dislocation. . . . Their grievances in those circumstances tend to focus on the Federal government and on minorities . . . because they are believed to receive unfair advantage from Government programs. (pp. 15-16)

Ethnoviolence is an attempt to reclaim the advantages of Whiteness. It is an assertion of racial superiority and, more important, proprietorship: To the White man belong the spoils, not some "third-world invader." Violence motivated by the resentment of labor competition provides the perpetrator with the opportunity to publicly announce his indignation, and correspondingly, his right to work. This is the essence of White masculinity after all: the ability to provide. If he is to distinguish himself from minorities of color, he must forcibly resist the latter's access to equitable conditions of employment.

There is an abundance of examples to illustrate the link between job competition and racially motivated violence. An especially brutal illustration of this connection occurred in Novato, California, in 1995. Robert Page attacked Eddy Wu, a Chinese American male, at a supermarket. Page stabbed Wu twice in the parking lot, then followed him back into the store where he stabbed him several times more. Wu was left with multiple injuries, including a punctured lung. Page later testified (NAPALC, 1995) that he had consciously set out to "kill me a Chinaman" because "they got all the good jobs" (p. 8).

Regardless of their diversity and uneven performance in the United States, Asians are inscribed with the mantle of prosperity in spite of their perpetual foreignness. Because they are not seen as Americans, Asians risk reprisal when they become viable, if not superior, competitors. The months of violence, harassment, and intimidation experienced by Vietnamese shrimpers in Texas illustrates the point. Supported by the KKK, local White shrimpers engaged in a campaign of violence from 1979 to 1980, which included sinking the boats belonging to the Vietnamese, cutting their fishing nets, assaults, and harassment. Gilbert Pampa (cited in U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, nd), then director of the federal Community Relations Service, observed that

> there was displeasure on the part of the other fishermen concerning the overindulgence of refugees. [The American fishermen] did not feel that the refugees were competing in the American way. The refugees worked on Sundays, stayed longer hours on the bay, and sometimes caught shrimp outside certain demarcated areas of the bay. [The Americans] felt that this was unfair to them, and the competition turned to open conflict. (p. 51)

It is not only individual immigrants and Americans of Asian descent who are held responsible for this loss of place. Asian nations (often interchangeable) represent a global economic threat. The lengthy trade deficit with Japan has had serious repercussions on industry, employment, and intercultural relationships. In his statement to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights (nd), Congressman Robert Matsui argued that

> In recent years, most of the industries that have suffered the worst have been hurt by imports from countries in South East Asia. As anger develops against nations of Asia that anger is transferred to Americans of Asian ancestry who appear to be quick and "easy" targets. (p. 63)

The 1982 murder of Vincent Chin in Detroit is but the most extreme in an ongoing series of such attacks on Asian Americans. Two White men engaged Chinese American Chin in an argument in a bar, referring to him as “nip” and “chink.” After leaving the bar, the men chased Chin with a baseball bat. When they caught up with him, they delivered a series of blows to his head, knee, and chest that resulted in Chin’s death 4 days later. That this example fits the pattern is evident in the following two facts of the case: The assailants were laid-off autoworkers, and one was reported to have said, “It is because of you that we are out of work” (U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, nd, p. 43).

Fearing a loss of domestic and global hegemony, White perpetrators of racially motivated violence seek to redeem their status through repressive and retaliatory acts of violence. The viciousness of both the verbal and physical attacks attests to their rage at the loss of relative advantage. Rather than appear meek and accepting—the very antithesis of hegemonic White masculinity—White males assert themselves through misdirected violence. Better to be seen as active agents of their own destiny than victims of the encroachment of inferior others.

CONCLUSION

In a culture in which the color line is subject to increasing challenges and blurring, racial violence is a pervasive threat. Moreover, it is not the exclusive weapon of white-hooded or brown-shirted rednecks. Rather, it is shared by those without a rigid ideological dogma or without White supremacist group affiliation. In other words, racially motivated violence is not an aberration associated with a lunatic or extremist fringe. It is a normative means of asserting racial identity relative to the victimized other; it is a natural extension—or enactment—of the racism that allocates privilege along racial lines.

The cultural and structural contexts that condition hate crime are many and varied: Stereotypes, language, legislation, and differential employment practices are but a few. Stereotyping Native Americans as savages, and excluding Asians from citizenship have served to maintain the stigmatized outsider identity of these others. These same others have been defined negatively in terms of their relationship to some dominant norm—that is, Black is defined as inherently inferior to White, Jewish inferior to Christian. Racial violence has been described here as a primary site for enacting these differences, as well as acting on them.

However, there is reason for hope: Because difference is socially constructed, it can also be socially reconstructed. In other words, as a society, we can redefine the ways in which difference matters. We can strive for a just and democratic society in which the full spectrum of diversity addressed here is reevaluated in a positive and celebratory light that would preclude violence motivated by racial or ethnic difference.

We would do well to heed Young's (1990) advice that we embrace a positive politics of difference. This would involve much more than efforts to assimilate others, or merely tolerate their presence. Rather, it challenges us to celebrate our differences. Of course, this requires that much of our current way of ordering the world would be radically altered. It means that we must cease to define *different* as inferior and see it instead as simply not the same.

To engage in such a powerful politics is to resist the temptation to ask all others to conform to an artificial set of norms and expectations. It is to reclaim and value the natural heterogeneity of this nation rather than force a false homogeneity. It is to refuse to denigrate the culture and experiences of Black people, Jews, or Native Americans. It is to learn and grow from the strength and beauty that alternate cultures have to offer.

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