Stigma Allure and White Antiracist Identity Management

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Abstract

This article examines how "white antiracists" manage a perceived, and sometimes self-imposed, stigma. Given that whiteness and antiracism are often framed as antonyms, white engagement with matters commonly deemed "nonwhite issues" often involves a presentation of self that unsettles established habit and expected modes of interaction. Adding to the research on race and stigma, I demonstrate how privileged actors repeatedly construct a broken and stigmatized white and antiracist identity in which management of one recreates the stigmatization of the other. They not only accept a "spoiled" identity (whiteness-as-racist and antiracism-as-too-radical), but embrace stigma as markings of moral commitment and political authenticity. This dynamic—what I call stigma allure—*illuminates how stigma, rather than a status to be shunned or entirely overcome, can become a desired component of identity formation that drives and orders human behavior toward utilitarian, symbolic, and self-creative goals.*

Keywords

stigma, identity, whiteness, racism, antiracism

Michael sat near a window in the headquarters for the white antiracist organization I call "Whites for Racial Justice" (WRJ). A 36-year-old banker by profession, he accrued nearly five years in the organization by October 2006. Leaned back in his chair on a chilly autumn day, he took a deep breath and stated, "White people, we're . . . we're conditioned to see the world in racist ways, as though we're the natural owners and administrators of the planet. That weighs on me constantly, you know?" As he settled his gaze through the window he continued with an uncomfortable laugh. "Ha! I sometimes wonder if what we're doing is pointless, because, you know, we're just conditioned to feel superior. But, then again, what's

the alternative? Give up? It's a struggle to figure it all out. But if that's the worst of my worries, then so be it" (Michael interview, October 2006).

Emerging from their prior mainstream and synonymous relationship with the neutral, natural, and unmarked (e.g., Bonilla-Silva (2003 [2010]); Delgado and Stefancic 1997; Feagin 2009), white racial identities are increasingly variable and

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debated (e.g., Hartmann, Gerteis, and Croll 2009; McDermott and Samson 2005; Twine and Steinbugler 2006). Despite such discourse and new forms of overt white racial activism, "whiteness and antiracism sometimes are spoken of, or written about, as if they were antithetical" (Eichstedt 2001:446). Given the hyper-racialized makeup of the United States, it is important to study when and how beneficiaries of the racial order both accept and resist that arrangement. Hence, the intersection of whiteness and antiracist activism emerges as a key site for the examination of actors' perceptions of their racial and activist identities as simultaneously privileged and "stigmatized" (Goffman 1961, 1963). And it is an unanticipated result when white antiracists engage in the enthusiastic adoption of a self-conception of both whiteness and activism as broken, deficient, disgraced, and otherwise stigmatized categories.

Social psychologists have long recognized that identity and stigma remain central pillars of social action and order due to actors' orientation to categories of human difference and status as meaningful platforms for activity (Granberg 2011; Kroska and Harkness 2006; O'Brien 2011; Saguy and Ward 2011). This line of inquiry focuses almost exclusively on how socially disadvantaged and subordinate groups manage their identities and associated forms of stigma. In turn, this stream of research remains largely disconnected from research on race, whiteness, and racial activism (cf. Lamont and Mizrachi 2012). Moreover, how white antiracists manage and reproduce a contentious and "spoiled" racial identity remains largely unexamined by sociologists of race and ethnicity (cf. Eichstedt 2001 for a notable exception). I address this scholarly lacuna by analyzing data from an ethnographic study of a white antiracist organization (inclusive of 14 months of field observations, content analysis, and in-depth interviews). These actors manage self-perceptions of stigma by not only accepting a "spoiled" identity (i.e., whiteness-as-racist and antiracism-as-too-radical), but by embracing stigma in forms of dishonor, pathology, and dysfunction as markings of moral commitment and political authenticity—a process I call *stigma allure*. These actors partake in a "moral career" (Goffman 1961:125) by repeatedly constructing a broken and stigmatized *white* identity and *antiracist* identity in which management of one paradoxically stigmatizes and drives the formation of the other. This circular arrangement begs the question: what identity management strategies help to navigate this perceived stigma and how are these strategies employed?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Whiteness and White Identities

Early sociological examinations of whiteness found whites to possess a lower degree of self-awareness about their racial identity than members of other racial groups, as well as a relative inability to recognize their own racial privilege and racist attitudes (Du Bois [1920] 1976). W. E. B. Du Bois wrote in 1899 that whites were largely "unconscious of any such powerful and vindictive feeling" (322). In more modern studies of white respondents, Terry (1981), Feagin and Vera (1995), and Tatum (1997) all found that when asked about the meaning of whiteness, most replied along the lines of, "I've never really thought that much about it" (Doane 2003:7).

While the self-invisibility of whiteness is an important insight, it is crucial not to neglect white racial consciousness. Gallagher (1995) found that some whites exhibit a high degree of racial consciousness when they are the racial minority or feel threatened. Other scholars (Daniels 1997; Dobratz and Shanks-Meile 1997)

demonstrate how challenges to the status quo can result in a defensive white racial consciousness that takes the forms of white nationalist groups like the Ku Klux Klan. Alongside white defensiveness stand whites critical of racial inequality: from radical activist groups like S.H.A.R.P. (Skin Heads Against Racial Prejudice) to education-oriented groups like A.W.A.R.E. (Alliance of White Anti Racists Everywhere) (Bonnett 2000a, 2000b; Eichstedt 2001; Hughey 2006, 2007; O'Brien 2001).

Given these diverse forms of whiteness, Howard Winant (2004) argues that contemporary white racial identity is bifurcating. Borrowing from W. E. B. Du Bois's notion of "double consciousness," Winant argues:

> . . . whites, now experience a division in their racial identities. On the one hand, whites inherit the legacy of white supremacy, from which they continue to benefit. But on the other hand, they are subject to the moral and political challenges posed to that inheritance. . . . As a result, white identities have been displaced and refigured: they are now contradictory, as well as confused and anxiety ridden, to an unprecedented extent. It is this situation which can be described as white racial dualism. (5–6)

In examining the manifestation of white antiracism, such white racial dualism is apparent. Twine and Steinbugler (2006:345) remark that white antiracists are "outsiders within," due to their simultaneous position as beneficiaries and resisters of racial inequality. Despite this recent turn in the theorizing on whiteness, social psychological analysis remains largely silent on how antiracist whites navigate an identity stigmatized as inherently racist and unfairly privileged yet somehow racially redeemable.

Research on Stigma and Identity Management

Managing a spoiled or stigmatized identity (Goffman 1961, 1963) is an "ongoing accomplishment" (Garfinkel 1967) in that people "create, present, and sustain personal identities that are congruent with and supportive of the self-concept" (Snow and Anderson 1987:1348). The majority of research on stigma centers on the marginalized: mental patients (Goffman 1961; Kroska and Harkness 2006), street-corner hangouts and the homeless (Liebow 1967; Phelan et al. 1997), LGBT activists (Gamson 1995), hate crime victims (Lyons 2006), nonfluent English speakers (Molinsky 2005), the overweight (Carr and Friedman 2006), and nonwhite racial groups (Storrs 1999). While stigma is often assumed the exclusive province of the low-statused (Leary and Schreindorfer 1998; Link and Phelan 2001; Major and Eccleston 2004), I argue that dominant and privileged groups may also navigate differing types of stigma (cf. Boven, Campbell, and Gilovich 2010 on the stigma of upper-class materialism and Inzlicht, Kaiser, and Major 2008 on the stigma of male chauvinism).

A second area for theoretical refinement of stigma exists in a focal shift from outlying, individual actors that deviate from normative group contexts to collectively stigmatized identities (Link and Phelan 2001). While Goffman (1963:3) suggested a need for "a language of relationships, not attributes," the dominant approaches to stigma center on individual characteristics (cf. Fine and Asch 1988; Oliver 1992). Hence, research examining how stigma extends between, within, and across groups—as ties that bind actors together while they are either excluded from, or recipients of, social and economic benefits—is infrequent.

Next, depending on situational context, stigma may serve as an integral mechanism for either utilitarian task performance or advantageous identity formations and interactions. In the former, the social scientific production of knowledge about stigma generally hails from theories uninformed by the lived experience of the stigmatized (cf. Link and Phelan 2001; Schneider 1988). Research geared toward participatory examination and group *verstehen* (understanding) could well illuminate how stigma enables (rather than solely constrains) goal attainment. In the latter, once task impairment is no longer assumed a priori, researchers could address how stigma may help win sympathy or legitimacy from peers and thus propel the stigmatized group trajectory within a particular "moral career" (Goffman 1963).

Fourth, prior work emphasizes the strategies by which individuals attempt to reduce stigma: going into social isolation (Goffman 1961), "passing as normal" (Goffman 1961), shunning stigmatized others (Henson and Rogers 2001), "open confrontation" (Feagin 2000:245), "flaming" (Rosenblum and Travis 1996:152–54), selective disclosure and "expressive balance" (Simi and Futrell 2009:92–4), and offering an alternative identity or "cover story" (Rogers 2000:113). I add to this body of work by showing how privileged actors embrace stigma qua dishonor, pathology, and dysfunction as markings of moral commitment and political authenticity. Some actors do not simply desire to "pass into normal" but require a simultaneous process of stigmatization and salvation in order to achieve what Gecas and Schwalbe (1983:79) call "self-efficacy"—whereby actors are "motivated to experience themselves as causal agents in their environment."

WHITE ANTIRACISM AND WHITES FOR RACIAL JUSTICE

What Is White Antiracism?

In broad strokes, white antiracism opposes laws, policies, prejudices, and practices that promote racial discrimination or racial inequality (Bonnett 2000a; O'Brien 2001). A small and descriptive body of work is largely celebratory of white antiracist activism. Scholars in this tradition work to uncover why whites join antiracist organizations (O'Brien 2001; Warren 2010), the affective and social strain of white antiracist work (O'Brien 2003), and the tensions of concomitant support for both color-blind liberal individualism and color-conscious attention to equality (O'Brien 2000; Warren 2010). Another strand of scholarship critiques white antiracist work for relying on essentialist notions of race (Bonnett 2000b), forbidding structural analysis (Hughey 2006), constantly excusing, and thus reproducing, white racist activity (Zajicek 2002), and for creating a movement that is "not a sociologically grounded, empirically based account of the significance of race . . . it is a morally based educational reform movement that embodies the confessional and redemptive modes common in evangelical Protestantism" (Niemonen 2007:159). Moreover, white antiracists seem heavily constrained by their own guilt, anger, and denial that greatly limit their own antiracist agenda (Bonnett 2000a; Srivastava 2005, 2006). Many white antiracist meetings and workshops serve as dramaturgical settings for profuse apology, relinquishment of authority, and the confession of "bad deeds" to other whites (Warren and Hytten 2004).

Who Are White Antiracists?

There exists no definitive count of white antiracist organizations. Research indicates substantial variation in ideology: from radical Marxist associations to organizations concerned with increasing racial diversity amid corporate America (Hartigan 2000). Writing in *Rethinking Anti-Racisms,* Floya Anthias and Cathie Lloyd (2002:62) contend: "As a political movement antiracism may be best

Table 1. Demographics

Mean years active in organization (median, SD)	4.38 (5, 2.08)
Mean age in years (median, SD)	36.76 (35, 10.88)
Age range in years	22–62
Gender (male, female)	(19, 2)
Religion	
Catholic	2
Protestant	12
Atheist	1
Agnostic	2
"Spiritual"/other	4
Where primarily raised (geographic location)	
Midwest	2
North	3
South	16
West	0
Political orientation	
Democrat	5
Independent	12
Republican	1
No affiliation	3
Relationship status	
Single	13
Married (mean length in years)	7 (9)
Divorced	1
Mean number of children (median)	1.14 (0)
Highest level of education attained	
Some college	4
College degree or equivalent	7
Some graduate classes	3
Advanced degree (MA, PhD, JD, etc.)	7
Occupational status	
Working	1
Lower-middle class	3
Middle class	8
Upper-middle class	6
Upper class	3
Yearly income	
<$25,000	1
$25,000–$49,000	9
$50,000–$74,000	9
$75,000–$99,000	0
$100,000>	2

understood as occupying different points on a continuum between well-organized, bureaucratic organizations, pressure groups, and protest or social movements which challenge dominant social practices and preconceptions." Some of the more well-known white antiracist organizations include the White Anti-Racist Community Action Network affiliated with the Center for the Study of White American Culture, Inc.; the White Allies Organization of Toms River, New Jersey; the United Universalism–affiliated Anti-Racism Trainer-Organizer Collective; Skin Heads against Racial Prejudice; the John Brown Party; Challenging White Supremacy workshops out of San Francisco, California; and the People's Institute for Survival and Beyond (Bonnett 2000a, 2000b; Eichstedt 2001; Hughey 2006, 2007; O'Brien 2001).

Whites for Racial Justice

The headquarters for WRJ is located in a mid-Atlantic city I call "Fairview." Founded in the 1970s, WRJ slowly grew into a national organization of over 20 chapters with a reported membership, at its height, of nearly 800. WRJ generates publications, sponsors workshops and conferences, and promotes media events about what white people can do to fight racism. Members believe that by coming together just as whites, they take responsibility to oppose racism within the "white community" and to create a "safe space" for whites to contest racism and prejudice in their own lives. Most were unmarried, college educated, middle to upper-middle class, Protestant, with Democratic or independent political affiliations, overwhelmingly male (see Table 1), and 21 members of the headquarter-chapter were regular attendees (see Table 2).

The gender imbalance in WRJ provides distinct advantages. First, as a white male who was able to enact—via clothing, language, aesthetic tastes, and various dispositions—a similar racial and gendered

Table 2. Membership

Pseudonym	Age	Occupation	Membership (years)
Blake	22	Retail sales	2
Malcolm	44	Consultant/counselor	5
Cassandra	31	Marketing	3
Sean	62	Gardener (part-time)	6
Bret	51	Writer	7
Mark	33	Corporate sales	7
Michael	36	Banker	4.5
Patrick	28	Writer	2
Horace	41	Car salesman	4
James	36	Construction manager	4
Simon	27	Engineer	6
Philip	53	Owns grocery store	5
Samuel	26	Works at music store	2
Duncan	30	Corporate sales	2.5
Tristan	30	Waiter	5
Andre	24	Graduate student	1
Colin	26	Student	1
Wayne	44	Manager of retail store	5
Jerry	38	Music teacher	7
Sherrill	35	Consultant	8
Frederick	55	Federal government	6

persona to the majority of members, I was often interpreted as akin to WRJ, but not "radical" enough. As time wore on, members began to lay bare their beliefs about how white masculinity (as recipients of racial gendered privilege) informed their activism and how I might fit within their organization. Second, as a group dominated by white men, I was afforded access to the "seat of power" within whiteness. I do not suggest an essentialist connection between masculinity and white racial identity, but rather I highlight the historical connection in which men and whites share claims to power. Third, the two female members—highly cognizant of their gendered minority status—became important sources for how different techniques and situations structured the white anti-racist embrace of stigma.

Adherence to the dominant scripts and expectations associated with a proper white identity and valorized forms of whiteness (in the vein of "hegemonic whiteness" Hughey 2010, 2011, 2012a, 2012b; Lewis 2004) promises material and symbolic returns for whites. Members of WRJ see whiteness as racist and attempt to resist this arrangement. Overtly challenging one's friendship networks, employment relationships, and familial ties—in favor of a racial self-conception intimately tied to racism—necessitates specialized identity management strategies. Considering such social psychological incentives, beyond a focus on instrumental factors, remains an essential enterprise if we are to assess the intersubjective embrace of stigma.

DATA AND METHODOLOGY

In order to receive Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval, all potentially identifying information regarding WRJ was changed and replaced with pseudonyms. I gained access after conducting several separate meetings in which WRJ members "interrogated" me. I eventually

was permitted to interview members, attend meetings, and analyze much of their private literature, communications, and projects. My status was that of a disclosed researcher who participated in many of the classes, workshops, and events sponsored by WRJ. All members consented to my presence. Moreover, I habitually allowed members of WRJ access to my field notes and preliminary analysis so to gauge their reaction to my observations—a technique of ethnographic fieldwork (cf. Luker 2008). Such a reflexive approach demands that the researcher move through time and space, embedded with the respondents in this study, to uncover a diverse array of experiences encoded into a single data point that we might call "race." I accomplished this endeavor through triangulation of data (Downward and Mearman 2007; Olson 2004) via: (1) ethnographic fieldwork (I attended their meetings, $n = 27$) along with day-to-day informal observations between May 2006 and June 2007; (2) semi-structured, in-depth interviews with members ($n = 21$); and (3) content analysis inclusive of newsletter issues ($n = 4$), flyers ($n = 10$), and textual information such as electronic correspondence and office memos ($n = 165$).

Empirically Identifying Strategies of Identity Management

Identity management strategies are not always directly observable, but they have empirical manifestations in the discursive and affective framing of social situations (Rashotte 2002). Frames are "relatively bounded sets of arguments organized around a specific diagnosis or solution to some social problem" (Ellingson 1995:107). Three defining characteristics identify collectively held frames. Frames involve a cast of characters involved in the action (Polletta 2006). Second, they require clear

demarcation between the actors that possess "self-efficacy" and those acted upon (Gecas and Schwalbe 1983:79). Third, frames involve plot structures that connect events through causal imputation (Goffman 1983). For Whites for Racial Justice (WRJ), the relevant characters are the members' identities in relation to the perceived stigma of whiteness and activism. This framing emerged when the (1) cast of characters were (2) clearly identified as active and/or passive in (3) implicit or explicit causal relationships in empirically repeated patterns.

STIGMA ALLURE: THE APPROPRIATION OF STIGMA AND REPRODUCTION OF IDENTITY

Akin to dominant understandings of race and politics, the white antiracists in this study constructed understandings of "whiteness" and "antiracism" as essentially adversarial. Yet, they were attracted to understandings and performances that, ironically, continually salvaged and restigmatized each aspect of their identity. I found that the adequate management of one (i.e., white racial identity) created the need to manage the stigma of the other (i.e., antiracist identity) (see Figure 1). This dynamic illuminates how stigma (when both internally perceived and socially shared) may be appropriated and embraced (rather than a status one shuns or attempts to definitively overcome) in ways that reproduce racial and activist identity. As one member stated: "Being an antiracist means that you will be ridiculed. That you're a radical ideologue. That you're somehow not a *real* [said with emphasis] white person. . . . But I think that judgment means I'm doing something right. . . . Being white means knowing you're racist because you're white. So, I mean if I don't embrace that fault, then I'm really not antiracist, not yet" (Interview, September 2006).
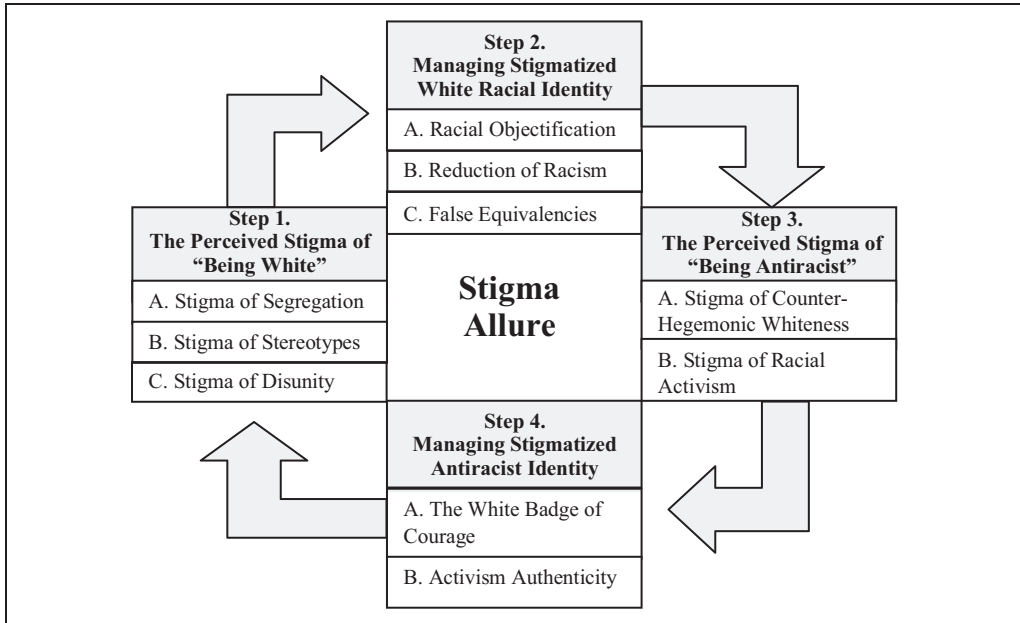
Figure 1. The Process of Stigma Allure

THE PERCEIVED STIGMA OF ''BEING WHITE''

The respondents in this study perceived their whiteness as inherently stigmatized due to their participation in racial segregation, their possession of racial stereotypes, and their lack of serious political and social unification with people of color. While there is certainly a material difference between the white racial stigma and the racial stigma that often burdens people of color, I emphasize the Thomas dictum: "If men define situations as real, they are real in their consequences" (Thomas and Thomas 1928:572). In what follows, I provide poignant examples of how these white antiracists engage in a circular identity management of a perceived stigmatized whiteness.

The Stigma of Segregation

Most of the white antiracist members in this study lived in segregated and overwhelmingly white neighborhoods with access to an array of health, education, and employment resources. Such a reality was a bitter pill to swallow for many members of WRJ. As Wayne expressed one day while we walked through his neighborhood:

> Most white people don't realize that "diversity" is a far different cry from that thing we might call "true integration." Yeah, I live here, there's an Asian couple there and a few African American families down there [gesturing toward specific houses as he spoke], but we're not really that close . . . we don't talk about "hot button" issues. Religion, politics, *race* [emphasizing the latter] are not really brought up. . . . I might talk about the weather or what crab grass is killing my yard . . . nothing tangible . . . it sucks; I know I'm a part of the problem. It's not enough to simply live here. Living beside people who look different is not "real antiracism," that's an excuse for those that want

to feel better about their lives without doing anything. . . . Most other racially conscious whites might think just living here is enough. And most whites, overall, live only among themselves. (Wayne interview, June 2006)

The knowledge of Wayne's own lack of intimate racial contact, alongside that of many other whites' racial segregation, came to represent a significant personal and racialized failing in terms of practicing both "true integration" and "real antiracism."

Throughout the 14 months of ethnographic study with WRJ members, the topic of whites' voluntary and unconscious racial segregation was discussed in patterned fashion. Their participation in a racist social order meant they had to challenge segregation in their everyday lives. Yet, their unwilling participation in a racially segregated world stood as both a mark of racialized stigma while driving their antiracist activism. Michael stated:

> I don't really know what to do about racial segregation. I'm locked into the apartment I have for the next year and even after that, I'm not sure where I'll be able to live. That said, I hate how that makes me feel. I absolutely hate it . . . I feel like a part of the problem, I mean, *I am* [said with emphasis] a part of the problem. I just feel bad about it, like I'm a bad person. . . . I don't know what I can actually do, you know, to change it . . . but I know I must at least do something to be an antiracist. (Michael interview, February 2007)

Michael expressed a style of frustration that many WRJ members also demonstrated. Their complicit relationships with segregated structures of education, housing, and employment led many WRJ members to complain of their own "guilt," "sadness," and even "immorality" as white

people. Consequently, they constantly felt marked by a white racial identity they perceived as watched, evaluated, and stigmatized by others. These perceptions were generally grounded in very real segregationist practices. For example, Mark said, "We're [whites are] simply kept apart from one another [nonwhites]. I hate how it feels, like when I see interracial groups of people and I'm with my all-white friends or whatever, I wonder if people think I'm a racist because I don't have any black or Latino friends with me. . . . I hate the way that feels. I hate it. . . . I know some people judge me" (Mark interview, March 2007). In this same vein Simon told me, "I've never dated a black girl. It's just never come up. I wonder if folks think I'm racist because of it. I've just never got to know a black girl that well to ask her out" (Simon interview, February 2007).

These WRJ members feel a stigmatized strain on their lives by virtue of their segregated white selves. This ongoing racial identity formation is held together through (1) the material realities of a hypersegregated social world and (2) their understandings of that world as both viciously racist yet also growing in politically correct surveillance and progressive intent. In the former, their continued assent to segregation (in terms of where they live, with whom they work, and their choice of romantic partners) structures their self-perceptions as stigmatized pariahs and hypocrites reaping racial privilege from an unequal social order. In the latter, WRJ members habitually peer into a "looking glass self" (Cooley 1902) whereby they imagine a larger social world (especially people of color) looking upon them with anger, shame, or pity as the unerring beneficiaries of white supremacy.

The Stigma of Stereotypes

Most of the white antiracists felt a great deal of frustration with the larger and

historical patterns of racial segregation, often lamenting that if others would simply "wake up and get it," then segregation might dissipate. As Cassandra told me, "I hold out hope . . . folks will wake up and get it one day, you know? They have to. We can't keep this up, you know, a hyper-segregated, crazy course anyway. Sooner or later, folks will wise up" (Cassandra interview, October 2006). The implication of this logic is that "racism" and "racial inequality" both belong to, and have their origins in, the realm of ideas and prejudices.

The collective identification of members' stereotypes and prejudices in group meetings and informal interactions reemphasized the stigma of their whiteness. My ethnographic fieldnotes and recording from one WRJ meeting exemplify this identity work:

Field notes: Afternoon. 12 present. Topic = "Identifying Our Prejudices". [Malcolm] led 10 min intro on import of recognizing white prejudice/stereotypes. Made clear ongoing process—never-ending. White prejudice = no cure. Tone—moral duty to fight against own prejudice even if losing battle.

Audio:

Malcolm: "So, to begin, it might be good if we go around the room and just admit, first, you know, to yourself and, well, of course to the others here, what prejudices we each hold. . . . It's good to purge these from our psyche."

Frederick: "Yes yes, but of course, it's not really purging, right? I mean, you all know what I'm saying, yeah,? It's more like admitting they're there because, it's, it's not like we get rid of them ever [said with an uncomfortable laugh in which others joined]. I mean, it's a lifelong fight."

Andre: "That's the thing right, it's part of the task we have to carry out, once we recognize it, that we have to fight it. If not, it's going to be worse, and you know, well, it would be worse for people of color and our friends and folks that have to deal with us on a daily basis."

Sherrill: "Yeah, it all starts there. Recognition, yeah? We have to admit the problem and live with that. . . . That's the uncomfortable place we have to live, so to speak." (Field notes and audio, March 2007)

A three-part process structured the accomplishment of a stigmatized white racial identity via belief in their inherent possession of racist stereotypes. First, members identified the prejudices and stereotypes they held. Second, they attempted "rational" discussions that centered on deconstructing the assumptions and myths upon which those stereotypes were built. Third, they admitted that one never purges oneself of stereotypes and prejudices. Hence, their work was constantly reconstructed as vital but paradoxically impossible to accomplish. Members thus embraced a stigmatized white racial identity as a lifelong burden.

The Stigma of Disunity

The third observed theme was the shared racial stigma brought about by a collectively perceived lack of solidarity with people of color. As Simon told me, "[WRJ] is doing what it has to do. I support it and its goals . . . still, we are failing miserably as a group, and really as white people, as truly antiracist white folks, in connecting to people of color . . . we do not have enough solidarity with them and their struggles" (Simon interview, August 2006).

During one WRJ meeting, both Mark and Michael engaged the question of racial unity across the color line. Mark: "Honestly I'm at wit's end. I've been a member for some time now, and my friends know, my family knows. Hell, my neighbor that I only see once every few

weeks knows. So, my sister calls me the other day, and says, 'If you're such a good white person, where are your non-white friends?' I didn't know how to answer." Michael: "Yeah, so I get the same time. I'm preaching this stuff, but I don't really have any close allies or friends. I mean, I have a few, but they aren't close . . . honestly, I struggle with how to talk to black people . . . we're from two different worlds." Mark: "I can't talk to them, but I really don't know what's going on their world . . . there's a difference between being politically allied and actually being unified [long pause]. My sister called that." Chiming in, Blake said:

> A lot of us are in that same boat, I mean, that's the twenty-thousand dollar question: How do you stop being white enough to actually relate and live with, and among, you know, people of color's experiences? You can't, at least I don't think. Others know it. It's a realization that I think a lotta progressive whites make, and well, they decide to just give up or give in. They can't live with others seeing them, or even, hell, even seeing yourself in the mirror everyday. I, I just [pause], I know 'cause, it's like I see shame in my skin. (Field notes, November 2006)

These activists regularly experienced racially stigmatizing social encounters (e.g., the condemnation from Mark's sister) and constructed a perceived stigmatized racial self (e.g., Blake seeing "shame in my skin"). These members perceived their white racial identity as a stigmatized marker that curtailed trust afforded to them by people of color and as a significant identity that prevented them from learning how to honestly and equally interact and unify with people of color. Yet, these members often embraced this stigma as somewhat

inevitable, which in turn necessitated several management strategies.

MANAGING A PERCEIVED STIGMATIZED WHITE RACIAL IDENTITY

The respondents in this study invoked three specific identity management strategies to contend with specific aspects of "being white" they perceived to be stigmatic: segregation, stereotypes, and disunity. These were not individually distinct endeavors, but collectively held strategies that assisted individual members to manage their racial identities (see Table 3 in the appendix at the *SPQ* Web site, www.asanet.org/spq).

Racial Objectification

Most WRJ members do not work to develop historical or sociological understandings of segregation. Rather, management of their stigmatized racial selves is often accomplished by an emphasis on one's moral conviction to resist the effects of segregation. As Jerry stated, "if we can't change the system, at least we can be better people and help others along the way" (Jerry interview, June 2006). Such a statement reveals a glimpse into the "moral career" (Goffman 1961, 1963) of WRJ's activism. They fervently believe that they hold some answers and that those with whom they come in contact will directly benefit from their labors.

Such beliefs are not without complication. Many of the moral imperatives through which their identity management strategies are enacted are tied to rather essentialist and reactionary understandings of racial identity. Given members' aggravation with their own "spoiled identities," they labor to redeem their segregated white selves by objectifying people of color as objects capable of conferring redemption. Such objectification is used as evidence of slight, but symbolically important,

antiracist actions that counterbalance their essentialized white racist self. For example, one Whites for Racial Justice (WRJ) member named Andre stated: "I have two black neighbors on either side of my house. . . . We're an Oreo cookie! [he said with a hearty laugh]. I guess I can't say I live in a segregated neighborhood anymore" (Andre interview, March 2007). In following up the discussion with Andre I asked how two black neighbors directly influenced his identity. He responded:

> I really believe in what we are doing and I think segregation is flat out wrong and so, I mean, that's good, you know . . . and I guess outside of [WRJ] I feel like I earn a bit of respect from others who think that we're just a bunch of crazy radicals. I use the fact that I have two black neighbors to show others that we live what we say; it earns me respect. . . . I mean, I brought [one of his black neighbors] by [WRJ] the other day and it was great. He was asking me questions about what we did and he seemed to look at me in a different light, and to the other guys [in WRJ] I became one of the good white people.

After turning off the audio recorder, Andre further explained the sense of antiracist "cool" he felt when he brought his black neighbor to meet his fellow WRJ members. "I feel like I, for at least a moment, I, I beat my own prejudice," he said (Andre interview, March 2007).

Nonwhite acquaintances are frequently interpreted as objectified and tokenized antidotes for the white racial practices of segregation. Such management strategies enable these actors to manage their whiteness as temporary racial transcendence. For brief, yet highly meaningful moments of situational interactions, their whiteness becomes good, moral, and proactive. Mark illuminates this dynamic:

> Having [black friend] and [Asian friend] in my life makes me feel like I'm doing something right. . . . No one can say I'm really *that* [said with emphasis] racist. . . . It's good to meet the right expectations that I have for myself, and well, what others, particularly in [WRJ] have for me. . . . My friendship is evidence of some progress, right? We're getting past some obstacles that remain from racism. (Mark interview, February 2007)

The white antiracists herein respond in two distinct yet complementary ways to the perceived stigma of segregation. Most invoke identity management strategies that highlight instances of "intimate" non-white contact to contend with their feelings of frustration and devaluation. This strategy generally accomplishes a temporary allay of their "spoiled identity" problem, but also reproduces the objectification of nonwhite people that the members of WRJ seek to resist. A second, and significantly smaller, strategy is the actual tokenization of people of color that resembles the trite phrase "I can't be racist, one of my best friends is black." Some of the members are conscious of this conundrum, yet rationalize such actions as "better than nothing." James told me: "I don't want to use my Asian friends, but I mean. I feel a lot [said with a sigh of relief] better when I'm out with them. . . . I know others will see me as progressive and not like the others." [Interviewer]: "Who are 'the others'?" James: "Other racist white people" (James interview, March 2007).

Such identity management strategies— as deeply meaningful social psychological incentives—reproduce the racial objectified and tokenized worldviews and social relations that these actors actively seek to displace through their activism. As antiracists, they do not dismiss their segregated status, but manage the stigma of

their white identities in terms of segregation by objectifying, essentializing, and tokenizing racial "otherness" so they do not appear as racist. These members' identity work garners consent to the very race relations that create the need for their white antiracist identities in the first place. The impulse to gather tokenized friendships and avoid practices of racial segregation and white homogeneity results from the dominant nets of expectation whereby participation in "diversity" can become an end to itself (Bonilla-Silva 2003 [2010]). Such cultural logic provides WRJ members a schematic map whereby one negotiates both the micro-demands of local organizing in WRJ, as well as the larger compulsion to redeem the stigma of a white racist identity.

Reduction of Racism

In managing the stigma of supposedly inherent mental stereotypes and psychologically conditioned racism, these antiracists often reframe their mental maladies as either harmless thoughts or as lesser evils in comparison to "overt" racial actions. During my fieldwork, a WRJ member hosted a monthly card game. Inviting me along with fellow WRJ members, I witnessed members construct a managed identity in relation to the stigma of their stereotypes. One member stated that his stereotypes made "no real difference in the world" because he had them "under control." "I know when I'm thinking racist things," another member remarked. He continued, "It's really not a big deal. It's not like I'm acting on them and hurting anyone" (Interview, December 2006). Another attendee stated, "At the end of the day, thoughts are thoughts. They're harmless unless you put them into action" (Interview, November 2006). Such reduction of prejudice was not limited to after-hours socializing, but was present in WRJ meetings as

well. Horace told me directly. "Yes, we're all racist. But, come on, you know us. We're different. . . . We're simply dealing with our racism and admitting it. That's more than most white people do. . . . It's not like we're going to hurt anyone. That's discrimination, not prejudice. . . . We don't act on our irrationality" (Horace interview, January 2007).

Alastair Bonnett (2000a:10) writes that antiracist activists often engage in dichotomous moral framing replete "with melodrama, the characters presented as heroes and villains: pure anti-racists versus pure racists, good against evil." Accordingly, members are quick to draw intraracial distinctions between themselves and an amorphous group of "racist whites." Malcolm told a group of prospective members at a WRJ meeting:

> Yes, any white person today is inherently racist. By virtue of our privilege and our power, we are taught to see ourselves as the natural and the normal human being against which [*sic*] all others are compared. The difference is, the difference between us and any other white group out there, is that we, we whole-heartedly admit it. We know we are taught to be racist, and such admissions, especially between ourselves, both allow us to bond with one another, and is a crucial guard in making sure we don't become like the unconscious whites. (Field notes, July 2006)

Members frequently echo this sentiment with one another. Sherrill stated in a WRJ meeting, "I immediately liked Wayne because he didn't try to sit there and tell me that he's not racist. He owned it, and he opened up about . . . if we can't counsel one another on this and really start to own and release this anger, this hate, this self-pity, all of the above . . . then we're just like the rest" (Sherrill interview, June 2007). In utter simplicity,

an email communication between members read: "We're not racist like the others. . . . We're all racist, but there are degrees. . . . We're the good kind of white racist, if there is such a thing, because were [*sic*] trying to be antiracist" (WRJ email, May 2007).

WRJ meetings, seminars, and educational sessions seem well intentioned (akin to a twelve-step program where the first step is "admitting" and the twelfth step enables the functionalist reentry of the "healthy" actor into the status quo). Yet, WRJ's activism is more a form of identity management in which the members dance between dwelling on their stigmatized selves and management through a kind of religiously inspired "white confessionalism." While such a "feedback loop" (in the Meadian sense) seems foolhardy from a utilitarian perspective, these strategies manifest because they are meaningful scripts by which to constantly manage a white racial identity perceived problematic and spoiled.

False Equivalencies

The identity management strategies enacted to cope with the stigma of disunity are multifaceted, but coalesce around attempts to demonstrate inherent and philosophical similarities between white antiracist activism and people of color's everyday lives. Pointing out this correspondence temporarily repairs the feelings of stigma. In addition, it simultaneously reproduces a worldview that equates white antiracist activism as a form of victimhood similar to that of nonwhite recipients of racism. Such strategies call attention to WRJ members' stigma and, moreover, invite pity for their supposedly victimized status.

In an interview with Duncan, it was apparent that he felt Whites for Racial Justice (WRJ) members were stigmatized because of their choice to organize:

> Being in WRJ is a commitment that I love. I get a lot out of it, but you know . . . at the same time it gets old real quick. Whenever I bring up how I feel [about racial issues] it seems that I'm attacked. I mean [long sigh] it just doesn't just seem that way, *I am attacked* [said with emphasis]. Being white with these beliefs puts me on center stage, right in the line of fire. People of color think I'm crazy and wonder what my ulterior motives are and other white people, well they think I'm crazy too and that I'm a communist or something or other. . . . It's like being white with these beliefs, like I said, makes you a target *just like black people* [my emphasis]. (Duncan interview, December 2006)

Duncan's supposition that whites are a "target just like black people" labors to not only alleviate feelings of stigma, but functionally delimits the seriousness of antiblack racism and the reasons why WRJ organizes in the first place. Such a strategy is not limited to Duncan, but is evinced by other members. For example, Sean stated:

> Being white in today's climate means not being able to speak one's mind openly . . . today's politically correct climate is engineered in such a way that I can't say what I feel about racism, even though I am critiquing it! If black people want to critique racism then that seems all fine and well, but watch out if I do! [said with a sarcastic tone]. . . . In the end I guess you can attribute all this to the effects of racism, *we all end up being oppressed equally* [my emphasis]. It does seem unfair [long pause], that people of color can stand for antiracism and people think that's normal, but when I do, or we do, it's seen as deviant

behavior. (Sean interview, November 2006)

Sean's statements echo Duncan's; both understand whiteness as *equally* victimized as blackness, which contradicts much of WRJ's overt statements concerning how society is a racialized hierarchy in which whites benefit unjustly in every arena of life. Furthermore, Colin told me:

> I would be lying if I didn't tell you I feel like my choices, my decisions, . . . my identity is under attack by our politically correct society . . . it's like being white and being in [WRJ] is too much for some people to understand . . . it's just not normal for whites to stand up and take this stand . . . I'm proud of it . . . at the same time . . . I feel so constrained by how we talk about race, like my identity is always under investigation . . . I'm not allowed to express how I feel, . . . there's no space in our society for a white antiracist. (Colin interview, December 2006)

Much of WRJ's official literature proclaims that members abide by a fundamental principle: as the beneficiaries of unequal power, members are morally obliged to share power by equalizing society. Still, Sean refutes this principle when he indicates that whites are *more* repressed than blacks. The idea that whites have to "pay" for their comments with the stigma of "deviance" while blacks get to "stand up for antiracism" with little to no repercussion because it is "normal" is an odd reversal of WRJ's overt antiracist politics. Citing their whiteness as an essential blockade between themselves and people of color's worldviews and everyday struggles with discrimination, these actors construct a sense of interracial unity by insinuating similarity in terms of racial discrimination. If shortcomings of their whiteness (disunity with

nonwhites) are stigmatized severely enough, then that very same stigma serves as evidence of their unity, and ipso facto, as a situational identity management strategy to alleviate that very stigma.

THE PERCEIVED STIGMA OF "BEING ANTIRACIST"

So far I have concentrated on how Whites for Racial Justice (WRJ) members perceive a stigma based on their *racial* identities and how they manage that perceived stigma. Yet, these actors also perceived a stigma based on their *activism*, an understanding they also struggled to manage. In particular, members voice stigmatism (1) via their deviation from color-blind or racially neutral behaviors and ideas associated with whites and (2) through their identification as "white antiracists."

The Stigma of Counter-Hegemonic Whiteness

Members often express they are "tired," "run-down," "exhausted," and "drained" by their activism. These activists do not often express these terms in relation to their bodies, but in terms of the daily penalties they pay for deviating from the dominant expectations of white neutrality or aloofness from "racial" topics. Bret stated, "We do pay a price. Not gonna lie. Dedication to these goals means, well, frankly, that we're different, that we're shunned. . . . I think to other people, especially most whites, we're a strange bunch of white people. We're white people that don't act like white people should" (Bret interview, January 2007).

These activists are keenly aware of the stigma generated by their commitment to antiracist ideals. For some, this stigma feels like a high cost. Philip told me in an in-depth interview:

My wife left me a couple years back, and [long pause], I know my decision to be here [WRJ] was a part of it . . . she told me all this [antiracism] was stupid and a waste of time . . . she once said that [fellow WRJ members] were stupid, brainwashed radicals with nothing better to do. . . . I don't feel good saying that I blame [WRJ] [for the divorce], but yeah [pause], a part of me does. . . . I feel like I pay a price for being associated with [WRJ] that's more than a little frustration or annoyance. It's a large price. (Philip interview, March 2007)

At lunch one day, Jerry told his fellow WRJ members about a recent phone conversation between him and his grandmother: "She told me that only trouble-causers and 'race-baiters'—that's the word she used—would get involved with race. She said it was enough to just be a good person. . . . I told her that was exactly the problem, that there were too many nice people that didn't do enough or take a stand. So she hung up on me" (Jerry interview, April 2007).

Members consistently report stories in which their commitment to antiracist ideals translates into a potent form of social stigma that in turn alienated them from friends, family, and new acquaintances. Dedication to antiracist ethics places them at odds with the dominant and shared expectations of what a proper and authentic white person *is* or *should* be—conceptualized as "hegemonic whiteness" (Hughey 2010, 2012a, 2012b; Lewis 2004). Because identities do not reside in acultural or ahistorical vacuums, they retain a "loose coupling" (Goffman 1983:11) with social "nets of accountability" (Schwalbe et al. 2000). For example, Cassandra told me:

I think we, as overt antiracists, throw a lot of people off-guard. We're not what white people are *supposed to do*

[said with emphasis]. We're not taking a neutral or *laissez faire* stance in relation to race. We're jumping into the fray. . . . I think that upsets some other whites, who then see us as either strange and crazy radicals or even as, as like, some association of race traitors. . . . We're unexpected. (Cassandra interview, May 2007)

Cassandra's rendering that white antiracists are "unexpected" is apt. Given that whiteness and antiracism are often framed as antonyms, white engagement with issues generally deemed "nonwhite business" engages in unconventional presentations of self and unexpected modes of interaction. Resultantly, WRJ members report that others interpret these deviations as immoral and discourteous transgressions.

The Stigma of Racial Activism

Behavioral commitment to antiracist principles is not the only cause of stigma. WRJ members explain that rather normal behaviors committed under the label of *antiracism* are perceived as dishonorable or shameful. For example, on one early Saturday morning, several older WRJ members traveled to a farmer's market where they set up a booth that highlighted information on their national organization, local activities in which they were involved, and steps for how to join. Sitting there with them, one middle-aged, white, male market-goer approached me and said, "You're not with those crazy hippies are you?" Catching me off-guard, I replied, "Uh, well, I sort of am." The man quickly replied, "You look too normal to be some ideologue. I guess tame appearances are deceiving. How'd you get involved with that crap?" Before I could respond, the man interjected: "You know what? Just never mind, if you're one of those antiracists, I'm not going to believe anything

you say anyhow" (Field notes, June 2007). This interaction is telling. Besides echoing members' accounts, my markedly different appearance (although "normal" and "tame") was instantly reinterpreted as housing a deceitful and biased character. By early afternoon, the market cleared and we packed up to leave. Bret, having witnessed the prior interaction (at the time unbeknownst to me), approached me and stated:

> I'm sorry about what that man said to you. . . . I've been through things like that a hundred times, I swear. . . . Sometimes, when I tell people that I volunteer my time in a white antiracist organization, they look at me and ask one of two things. First, they ask, "Why, are you Latino or something?" If they don't say that, they ask, "Why, is something wrong?" or "Is something bothering you?" as if the problem is some kind of deficiency in here or here [pointing at his heart and then his head] rather than in society . . . it seems like you're only allowed to be an antiracist if you're not white or if you're somehow twisted or irrational.

I replied, "Yeah, he didn't even want to listen to anything I said because he thought . . . " Bret interrupted, "I think you get it now. We have it hard" (Field notes, June 07).

MANAGING A STIGMATIZED ANTIRACIST IDENTITY

Whites for Racial Justice (WRJ) members use two specific identity management techniques to navigate the stigma of antiracist activism: claiming a courageous and morally committed identity (what I call "The White Badge of Courage") and asserting their authenticity as political activists (what I label "Activism Authenticity") (see Table 4 in the appendix at the *SPQ* Web site).

The White Badge of Courage

While members tell heartbreaking stories of stigmatizing encounters that left families ruptured and friendships ruined, I was repeatedly surprised by their commitment to withstand ridicule for their dedication to antiracist principles. In addition to their stories, I was privy to numerous instances in which WRJ members withstood rude behavior from strangers and acquaintances both. While such hostility certainly took a toll, members regularly transform their stigma into meaningful markers of courageous valor.

During one WRJ meeting at which plans for a commemoration of slain human rights leader Malcolm X were under discussion, the following conversation took place:

> Patrick: It's quite obvious that because of both Malcolm's misunderstood legacy and our own, kinda, rap for being radicals that, we should be prepared for, you know, disruptors. Or at least for folks that will ask ridiculous questions about Malcolm's supposed violence.
>
> Sherrill: Yeah, there's always someone asking why we're so *radical* [said with sarcastic emphasis].
>
> Cassandra: Well, in a way, we are. At least compared to others . . .
>
> Simon: Remember last year, at the [Dr. Martin Luther] King breakfast? [slight laughter from around the table]. That woman was like, "He was a communist!" and then someone said, "Yeah, so am I, lady!" [more laughter]. She looked like she might fall over! [more laughter]
>
> Patrick: She said some more hurtful things, if you remember. . . . And that reporter that wrote that story that painted us as a bit, uh, ideological, too. . . . It's a pain, but, I actually get a great feeling from those encounters . . . maybe she actually learned something.

Cassandra: It's just proof to me that we've got the courage to do the right thing when we don't back down from these ridiculous things people say. (Field notes, January 2007)

This back and forth demonstrates the mutual transformation of stigma (whether interpersonal conflicts or media representations) into consequential markers of moral certitude. Such alchemy, while certainly a collective WRJ endeavor, often took place in small (two to three person) interactions. As Tristan told me in a series of in-depth interviews:

I guess you can say that the hate I get, you know, when folks I know, and actually care what they think about me, are like, gossiping about me and saying that I'm *too caught up in race* [said in mocking tone], then I don't appreciate it . . . yeah, I get sad about it, and really I get angry that my reputation is being ruined, because, I know that they're saying more than just stuff about my activism, so, you know, it's just really hateful. But [sighs], it's really what keeps me going. . . . I feel really proud that I'm able to cause such a reaction just because of my beliefs. . . . I certainly feel like when they see me, that's all they see. . . . If it scars me, then I'll gladly wear that supposed fault that my [WRJ] membership brings with pride. (Tristan interview, March 2007)

Tristan's description certainly evokes Goffman's (1963:4) trifold rendering of stigma as abominations of the body (the "scar"), blemishes of character ("supposed fault"), and tribal stigmata ("my membership"). While certainly metaphorical, here stigma is not the "discredit" that Goffman (1963:4) emphasizes, but the badge by which credit and tribute is attained. Stigma as status, then, manifests in three distinct types: the "personal" (aspects of

identity that make us unique), the "social" (the identity by which others understand us), and the "ego" (how one comes to think of oneself) (Goffman 1963:57). For WRJ members, such an embrace and management of stigma in ways that retain, rather than dull, stigma's sharp edge, carves out reproductions of courageous white antiracists. For as Malcolm stated, "I don't feel like I really did my job unless someone gets upset . . . unless someone thinks antiracism is a little strange" (Malcolm interview, December 2006).

Activism Authenticity

Members of WRJ manage the stigma of their antiracist labeling by appropriating stigma as primary evidence of their honest, dedicated, and otherwise authentic activism. Members seem to require stigma to validate their activism and to make distinctions between authentic and faux antiracists. Claims to authenticity are often tenuous and established in contrast to "normals" (cf. Handler 1986:2; Benjamin [1936] 1992). Accordingly, WRJ members manage their stigmatic label of *antiracist* through deploying it as a mark of bona fide activism contra normal whites that refrain from racial activism or other antiracist activists thought amateurish. For example, one internal WRJ email communication stated:

Let me put it this way: I've known a couple other white antiracists and there [*sic*] good people, don't get me wrong. However, they don't live their activism. They really weren't that into it because, I believe for them, it was little more than a hobby. Hobby maybe [*sic*] too strong a word, but it certainly was something they did on the side of the lives, if you will. . . . I doubted it was something they really believed. . . . Put it this way: I would be shocked if they moved into a black

neighborhood or dated outside of white people. . . . If they were really challenged, they would stop. I wouldn't bet a lot that they would put up with a string of harsh judgments or difficulties. (WRJ email, April 2007)

In this rendering, other white antiracists do not "live their activism," but treat it near to a "hobby" or a "side" rather than the preferred central and defining label of their lives. In asking Colin follow-up questions about the other white antiracists outside of Whites for Racial Justice (WRJ), he said matter of factly, "They're just not real. That's why I stick close to my friends [in WRJ]" (Colin interview, August 2006).

Such ingroup/outgroup parceling of supposedly "real" and "fake" antiracists is common amid WRJ discourse. In line with Tatum's (1997) work on white identity development, WRJ members often engage in a twofold maneuvering tactic. First, they distance themselves from other whites perceived as racist. Second, so as to reconceptualize themselves in terms of something other than a stigmatized antiracist deviant or pariah, they search for antiracist role models and allies. While Tatum posits such white antiracist stigma as temporary, and implies that one abandons the "stigmatized" self-perception in order to fully self-actualize an "autonomous" white antiracist identity, WRJ members hold on to their stigma in order to indicate authenticity.

DISCUSSION

This article outlines how privileged actors—white antiracists—both manage and embrace their perceived "spoiled identities" through "stigma allure"— a process that appropriates claims to stigma that paradoxically reproduces rather privileged identities. The illumination of this process contributes to stigma and race literature in four key ways.

First, prior research on stigma concentrates on the relationship between stigma and actors in the lower strata. The findings herein beg scholars to temper such correlations. Second, stigma does not essentially require deviation from group norms. Rather, the marking of stigma can become normative for group dynamics—whether through enabling social solidarity through struggle against it, or co-opting it and internalizing it as an integral marker of group identity. Third, stigma does not automatically lead to either "stereotype threat" (Steele and Aronson 1995) or "impaired task performance" (Hogg 2006:490). Fourth, stigma *management* should not be conflated with stigma *reduction*. These four aforementioned observations certainly gesture toward avenues for future research on stigma, identity, and race that cannot be fully addressed in the space here.

First, "authenticity" is a highly valued cultural ideal in modern Western society. Sloan (2007:307) found that we feel inauthentic when "reflected appraisals signal a discrepancy between our behavior and what we think is our real self." Hence, future research could compare how the markings of stigma, while painful (Link and Phelan 2001), may pale in comparison to the negative effects of the inauthentic (cf. Gecas 2001). So also, the research herein demonstrates that stigmatized selves may denote spoiled yet real and tested characters that have "lived to tell" something genuine and true. Stigma denotes an authoritative primary experience rooted in particular institutional settings or situational moments with which few can argue or dispute. Stigmatized selves of this ilk, while spoiled and negatively marked as deviant, can become valuable personas based not only on their infrequency (scarcity is often valued), but from the particular distinctive "aura" of their individual experiences as deviations from normal and expected routine lives.

A research agenda that links the sociology of emotions, stigma and authenticity, and reproductions of social orders remains pregnant with possibilities.

A second area for future research on stigma is the exploration of how historically entrenched and dominant racial (or gendered or classed) schemas demonstrate a structuring influence upon identity work and management across seemingly disconnected situational interactions. Meanings and categories are not just given to identities in various contexts as a kind of "rampant situationalism" (Goffman 1983:4). Identities have a "loose coupling" to "four critical diffuse statuses: age-grade, gender, class, and race . . . they constitute a cross-cutting grid on which each individual can be relevantly located with respect to each of the four statuses" (Goffman 1983:11, 14). This "grid" is not only a set of rules and positions, but perceived expectations that constrain and enable actors in unequal fields of power. Schwalbe et al. (2000:442) remark:

> The power to hold others accountable in one setting depends upon relationships—that is, a larger *net of accountability* [emphasis in original]—with actors outside the setting. The general point, again, is that . . . we need to see how social actors in that setting are enabled and constrained by what actors elsewhere have done, are doing, or might do.

Stigmatized identities are less essentialized subjects than agreed upon signifiers in which meaning resides in the larger social context. While stigmatization is widely shared and many groups and persons may hold "discrediting dispositions" (Jones et al. 1984), there is variation in stigmatization effects and management. We must analyze the continued significance of white supremacist thought in a supposed "post-racial" era (Parks and Hughey 2011) whereby racist schema "transposes" (Sewell 1992) across various and disconnected contexts and situations. Future researchers would be well served to investigate how and which racist schema ironically reduces or eliminates self- and other-perceptions of the stigma of "being racist."

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BIO

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