Whiteness and Racial (Non)Knowing
In a Historically Sundown Town

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DEDICATION

To Juliet, who’s brought joy to the world since the day she entered it.

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ABSTRACT

Sundown towns have been under-explored by sociologists as mechanisms of racial residential segregation, as have the ways that Whiteness is understood in communities marked by a high degree of White racial homogeneity. Looking at the formerly Sundown town of Appleton, Wisconsin, I use historical census and archival data to identify the effects of Sundown racial displacement and exclusion on Black residents during the Sundown era of 1880–1940, and then use qualitative interviews with current and former White Appleton residents to examine how this Sundown past is understood today. First, drawing on theories of racial ignorance, I examine how participants toggle between awareness of systemic racism and non-awareness of how they personally benefit from it, a practice that I deem *(non)knowing*, as participants summon rationalizations and explanatory stories that naturalize the absence of racial and ethnic minorities from the city. Second, I consider how Appleton's history of White exclusivity has resulted in a city that is valued for its perceived safety, but I argue that this safety is little more than an absence of Black people that White residents are socialized to see as threatening or dangerous, a basis for "feeling" safe which is made very clear in participants' comparisons between Appleton and the city of Milwaukee. Finally, I consider how Appleton's Sundown history has influenced the reception of racial and ethnic minority groups into the city, starting with the resettlement of Hmong refugees in the 1970s. I discuss the ways that hegemonic standards of Whiteness shape both expectations of assimilation and the criteria under which refugees (and other newcomers) are evaluated as "deserving" or "belonging" in the city, and argue that these standards are ultimately racialized to uphold invisible White, middle-class norms. Overall, this dissertation calls for increased attention to Sundown-style racial segregation and its contemporary effects, and offers a novel theorization of White racial cognition that moves beyond colorblind race-neutrality to consider how White people see themselves simultaneously within and outside of hierarchical systems of racial oppression.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Sociology has long examined the effects and harms of racial residential segregation, in particular its effects on people of color. What has received less attention is both the benefits that White[1] residents accrue from such segregation, and the role of racialization in establishing the boundaries of segregated space, namely the limits and meanings of Whiteness in determining who "belongs" and who does not. In this dissertation, following LaFleur (2021), I look at the historically Sundown town of Appleton, Wisconsin to consider how place is both understood through, and constitutive of, White racial identity. Focusing on the city's history as a homogenously White Sundown town and the recent racial and ethnic diversification of its population, I explore the interests that current White residents Appleton residents have in maintaining Appleton as a "White" space while simultaneously claiming the benefits of diversity and multiculturalism.

HISTORICAL RESIDENTIAL SEGREGATION

Historical racial residential segregation, and its role in laying the foundation for persistent racial inequality in the contemporary era, is well-documented, in particular the role of government agencies and policies, as well as private banking and real estate interests, that resulted in

[1] Here and in the research that follows, I capitalize "White" and "Whiteness" throughout. I do so drawing on Ewing's (2020:n.p.) rationale of de-naturalizing Whiteness and rendering it visible: "When we ignore the specificity and significance of Whiteness—the things that it is, the things that it does—we contribute to its seeming neutrality and thereby grant it power to maintain its invisibility….So, what am I trying to do when I capitalize White? One of my favorite sci-fi tropes is the archetypal scene in which a character tests whether an invisible force field is present by throwing something at it and then standing back cautiously to observe the almost-imperceptible buzz at the moment of impact. Where there appears to be nothing at all, there is, in fact, danger. That's what I hope to do, in a small way, when I capitalize White. I'm throwing a stick at the force field…I'm trying to say, in a small way, 'I think there's something there.'"

wealthier, predominately White suburbs, and urban ghettos marked by Black isolation and concentrated poverty (see Aaronson et al. 2021; Faber 2020; Glotzer 2020; Hirsch 1998; Jackson 1985; Massey and Denton 1993; Rothstein 2017; Taylor 2019; Ware 2021; Woods 2012). The story of urban-suburban racial segregation in the 20th century is often told starting with White communities and neighborhoods maintaining racial segregation through violence, intimidation, and the adoption of racially restrictive housing covenants from the end of Reconstruction in the late 1870s into the 1930s, while the establishment of the Home Owners Loan Corporation (HOLC) in 1933 and the Federal Housing Administration (FHA) in 1934 by President Roosevelt institutionalized segregating practices that remained in place for decades and entrenched racially divided and unequal housing patterns that remain to this day (Krysan and Crowder 2017).

The HOLC was responsible for the refinancing of tens of thousands of mortgages that were in danger of defaulting, while the FHA provided affordable suburban mortgage loans for would-be (White) homebuyers (Jackson 1985). Central to the story of how housing came to be segregated in the United States is that the HOLC developed a rating system to grade the riskiness of neighborhoods for homeowners seeking mortgage relief. The HOLC's rating system ranked neighborhoods that were dense, racially mixed, and full of older housing stock as at the highest risk of default, subsequently denying mortgage assistance to those living in older, urban, and predominately Black neighborhoods. At the same time, the FHA, using the HOLC's rating systems and maps, incentivized White movement into newly constructed outlying suburbs by offering inexpensive down payments and long-term fixed-rate mortgages to homebuyers (Jackson 1985). The process of drawing the boundaries to rank the riskiness of neighborhoods—where the highest-risk neighborhoods were outlined in red on maps—came to be known as *redlining*, and the maps created by the FHA were soon widely adopted by the private mortgage

industry as well (Jackson 1985; Krysan and Crowder 2017).

The affordable mortgages offered by the FHA incentivized White movement out of central cities and facilitated the establishment of all-White suburbs through the application of racially exclusive housing covenants based on the FHA's own redlining maps (Krysan and Crowder 2017). While the FHA made *White flight* into the suburbs enticing through the prospect of wealth creation via home equity, at the same time those federal programs and policies kept Black residents concentrated in central cities in worsening slum conditions, with little opportunity for residential mobility or wealth creation through property appreciation (Jackson 1985; Hirsch 1998). In the first thirty years of the FHA, only two percent of its federally backed mortgages were given to non-White homebuyers (Krysan and Crowder 2017), and suburban homeowners received the majority of the $119 billion in mortgage insurance offered by the FHA in the first forty years of its operation (Jackson 1985). Overall, more than 35 million families were able to build equity through homeownership between 1933 and 1978 as a result of FHA-backed mortgages (ibid.). This extreme racial disparity in mortgage approval that made homeownership feasible for many White Americans continues to shape patterns of racial residential inequality and segregation and wealth accumulation to this day.

CURRENT RESIDENTIAL SEGREGATION AND ITS EFFECTS

More recently, metropolitan areas in the United States have continued to racially diversify, and of the 228 U.S. metropolitan areas that had at least one thousand members of each racial group in each census year between 1990 to 2020, multigroup segregation in these areas declined a total of 37 percent over that thirty-year period (Elbers 2021). However, this decline in segregation has not been distributed equally across all racial and ethnic groups, as Black segregation from other racial and ethnic groups remains high, the level of segregation between White and Asian

households increased, and declines in segregation remained slow overall (ibid.). Additionally, within large metropolitan regions—i.e., those with more than 200,000 residents (see Raetz 2021)—81 percent, or 169 out of 209, were more segregated in 2019 than in 1990 (Elbers 2021.).

Lipsitz (2007) argues that in the United States, race is *spatialized*, and space is *racialized*. On the next few pages, I briefly consider the racial disparities seen in a number of place- and housing-based measures that, taken cumulatively, are deeply influential to one's wellbeing and life chances. I review these disparities to underscore that access to opportunity and the mechanisms of social mobility are dependent upon proximity to the physical location of things—such as schools, housing or employment opportunities, places for recreation, or even exposure to environmental pollution or threats—and that proximity has historically been ordered around the maintenance of a racially exclusionary White spatial imaginary that reflects hegemonic ideologies of White dominance.

The Racial Wealth Gap

The racial wealth gap continues to be one of the most visible, long-lasting effects of residential segregation, as homeownership as a wealth-building asset is one of the largest sources of racial wealth inequality, particularly between White and Black households. Black households have historically and presently faced discrimination in efforts to secure and purchase housing, but Oliver and Shapiro (2006) also point to the fact that Black residents are less likely than White residents to own their homes—45 percent of Black residents compared to 75 percent of White residents in 2022, a gap which has not changed since 1970 (see Bowdler and Harris 2022a).

Furthermore, while White-owned homes on average have a value 2.5 times that of Black-owned homes regardless of their location (Derenoncourt et al. 2022), homes that are located in neighborhoods that are more than ten percent Black lose at least 16 percent of their values

compared to identical homes in neighborhoods with a smaller proportion of Black residents (Oliver and Shapiro 2006; see also Flippen 2004). As a result, home values are depressed in neighborhoods with a higher proportion of Black residents, while White homeowners benefit from racial segregation through greater home equity in White-isolated neighborhoods (Oliver and Shapiro 2006; Taylor 2019). This housing value inequality has grown to such an extreme that in 2019, the median home value in a highly segregated White neighborhood was $474,798, compared to $266,927 in a highly segregated neighborhood populated by people of color (Menendian et al. 2021). At the same time, Bayer and colleagues (2017) found that Black and Latinx homebuyers often pay more than White buyers for similar homes. The disparity between the value of homes owned by people of color and the price that Black and Latinx homebuyers pay for housing can be attributed to a racially discriminatory practice that has been termed *appraisal bias* (see Kamin 2022; Rothwell and Perry 2022).

In 2019 the median net wealth of White households was eight times that of median Black households, with $184,000 in family wealth versus $23,000, respectively (Bowdler and Harris 2022b). Rather than being attributable solely to income disparities, this racial wealth gap is intimately connected to housing appreciation, as a White householder under age 35 has on average $30,000 more in housing equity compared to a Black householder of the same age, and by the time those heads are over age 55, the gap in housing equity will have grown to $175,000 (Bowdler and Harris 2022a).

The devaluing of Black-owned homes, coupled with the increased likelihood that Black residents will live in racially isolated neighborhoods through real estate financing and steering practices, results in the kind of poverty concentration, spatial mismatch, and loss of socioeconomic mobility that creates an institutionalized cycle of decline that is nearly

insurmountable for any one individual homeowner or household. Not only are higher-earning Black workers more likely to live closer to poverty than their White counterparts, but the devaluing of Black homes and lack of access to non-predatory financial practices and services mean that when Black families transmit wealth intergenerationally, they face significantly more barriers than those of White families (Oliver and Shapiro 2006).

Health and Environmental Harms

As a consequence of poverty concentration and residential isolation, the persistence of racialized residential segregation also creates social worlds where households of color are disproportionately exposed to a variety of effects that are detrimental to one's health across numerous measures. Inequalities in health for Black and Latinx households' outcomes correlated with a high degree of racial segregation include overall worse health (Gibbons and Yang 2014; White, Haas, and Williams 2012), worse outcomes in the treatment of disease (Dai 2010), reduced access to nearby hospitals (Ko et al. 2014), higher rates of infant mortality and poor birth outcomes (Bishop-Royse et al. 2021; Debbink and Bader 2011; Grady 2006), and worse outcomes and higher mortality rates attributable to the COVID-19 pandemic that began in 2020 (Holden et al. 2022; Pierce et al. 2021; Yang 2022). High rates of racial residential segregation are also associated with reduced access to primary (Anderson 2018), surgical (Hayanga et al. 2009), and emergency care (Ko et al. 2014); pharmacies (Qato et al. 2014); opioid and substance use treatment facilities (DiNardi, Swann, and Kim 2022); and mental health care resources and facilities (Dinwiddie et al. 2013).

Residential segregation is also highly associated with a lack of food and grocery options in neighborhoods occupied primarily by racial and ethnic minorities, resulting in areas that have come to be called "food deserts" (see Bower et al. 2014; Ekenga and Tian 2022; Havewala 2021;

Powell et al. 2007). Li and Yuan (2022) have found that even in neighborhoods that are today racially and economically privileged, those areas are more likely to have uneven access to healthy food options if they had a history of redlining—or discriminatory mortgage lending resulting in racial and ethnic minority concentration—pointing to the ways that the effects of historical residential segregation linger and continue to negatively affect residents long after the end of formalized, "legal" housing discrimination. In the absence of grocery stores offering a variety of foods, the options in these neighborhoods are dominated by "fast food" and convenience stores, and Huang (2021) found that in segregated neighborhoods in Chicago, each individual convenience store in a majority-Black neighborhood was associated with a .42% increase in the obesity rate, while nearby access to traditional grocery stores predicted a lower obesity rate.

Environmentally, residentially segregated neighborhoods with a high concentration of racial and ethnic minority residents are more likely to have less green space in general (see Kephart 2022; Saporito and Casey 2015), and fewer trees and less tree canopy coverage than majority-White neighborhoods, depriving them of the numerous health, aesthetic, and social benefits associated with green space and tree coverage while also putting them at higher risk of exposure during extreme heat events (Jesdale, Morello-Frosch, and Cushing 2013). At the same time, residential areas with high concentrations of racial and ethnic minority residents are more likely to be exposed to higher levels of air (Ard 2016; Liévanos 2019; Woo et al. 2019), water (Liévanos 2017), soil (Jones et al. 2022), light (Nadybal, Collins, and Grineski 2020), and noise (Casey et al. 2017) pollution. Additionally, racially segregated neighborhoods are more likely to be in closer proximity to hazardous industrial sites (Ash and Boyce 2018; Sicotte and Swanson 2007; see also Davide, Alessandra, and Roberto 2022). Finally, exposures to all of these hazards

are simultaneous and intertwined; the relationship between diet, environmental safety, and the need for healthcare, for instance, is complex, and its harms cannot easily be undone or resolved.

Education

Racialized school segregation—and its relationship with neighborhood and place—is a well-established field of research and a full review of its considerable body of literature is outside the scope of this project. Briefly, however, it should be noted that residential segregation contributes to the racial segregation found within schools (Frankenberg 2013), especially as public school populations largely reflect the racial and ethnic demographics of the neighborhoods where they are located (Menendian et al. 2021). School choice policies and the decisions of White parents with more social capital to move their children to majority-White schools, despite their voiced support for racial integration, also contribute to maintaining racially segregated schools even in more racially diverse areas (Lewis and Diamond 2015; Roda and Wells 2013). When White families *do* move to a racially mixed area in which White residents are a minority, they are unlikely to send their children to the racially diverse public schools that reflect the demographics of the surrounding community (Candipan 2019; Sikkink and Emerson 2008), thus even as the challenge of residential segregation is addressed, the institution of education does not necessarily follow.

The persistence and severity of residential segregation, combined with the reliance of school funding on local property tax revenue (one-third of all public school funding), means that as long as the financial aspect of housing remains racially unequal—particularly the under-valuing of Black-owned homes—the schools attended primarily by children of color will remain under-funded (see Baker, Di Carlo, and Green 2022; Loubert 2005). Subsequently, racially segregated schools attended primarily by Black students are found to have high teacher turnover

and fewer credentialed teachers, fewer extracurricular options, and lower test scores and graduation rates (Darling-Hammond 2014).

Employment

Housing segregation is also linked to un- and under-employment for racial and ethnic minorities who live in racially and ethnically concentrated neighborhoods. VonLockette (2010; see also Dickerson 2008) finds that while White workers' employment outcomes are more strongly predicted by their level of education and parental income, even segregation experienced as a youth has a negative effect on both the employment chances and quality of employment for Black workers later as adults. Similarly, VonLockette and Johnson (2010) observe that the employment rates of Latino men are lower in cities with higher levels of residential segregation, and as segregation increases over time, so, too, does their level of unemployment (see also VonLockette and Spriggs 2016).

Much like the entangling effects of accumulated wealth, health and the environment, or education on a person's life chances and social mobility over the life course, employment and income is also deeply connected with the cycles and inequalities that maintain residential segregation. Indeed, "exposure to concentrated neighborhood disadvantage has unsurprisingly emerged as the critical nexus for reproduction of socioeconomic disadvantage over the life course and across the generations" (Massey 2016:6; see also Massey 2020). Neighborhood effects on health are neither unchanging nor isolated to a specific point in time, and are instead both cumulative and variable (Johnson 2011), yet each of the aspects of harm discussed above is marked by their dependence on *place* in determining who will bear the fullest burden of their negative effects. Although racially discriminatory beliefs and attitudes, or even White colorblind commitments to hoarding and controlling opportunities and resources, may have their roots in

abstract or theoretical notions, these ideologies play out in real, measurable ways in the most basic of arenas: where we live.

The actions of the FHA and HUD resulted in racially segregated, predominately White suburbs and isolated urban ghettos where Black residents were left without access to employment or other opportunities for socioeconomic mobility. These practices of residential segregation continue to sustain severe disparities between Black and White racial groups across a number of outcomes. However, the segregating practices of the FHA and HUD that resulted in White suburbs and Black urban ghettos are not the end of the story of how White residential isolation and concentrated advantage were accomplished. In this research, I argue for enhanced attention on both the forces and mechanisms that create and sustain residential segregation at the macro level, and on communities and places that do not reflect the urban-suburban divide of large cities. Outside of major metropolitan areas, smaller cities and towns across the United States engaged in a number of exclusionary practices that taken together have led to them being identified as historically *Sundown towns,* and these practices have traditionally been overlooked in sociological examinations of residential segregation.

SUNDOWN TOWNS

Coming to prominence between 1890 and 1930, Sundown towns were locations—ranging in size from individual suburbs, to small rural towns, to larger metro areas—where White residents used tactics of violence, intimidation, harassment, and local ordinances to both expel racial and ethnic minority populations out of the community and then keep incoming minority group members from becoming residents by not allowing them to stay within local boundaries past sundown,

hence the term (Loewen 2018; McConnell and Miraftab 2009).[2] Following the end of the Civil War, Black migration out of the South starting in the early 1860s brought small but significant Black populations to small rural towns and larger cities in states across the country. Starting in the 1890s, however, the positive gains that had been made in racial equality and positive race relations during Reconstruction began to decline, as rulings such as *Plessy v. Ferguson* and the growing creation and enforcement of Jim Crow laws reimplemented the acceptability of overt racial discrimination and racist practices. The 1890s, then, is when Loewen (2018) identifies the start of the "Great Retreat" of racial integration in towns and cities across the United States, as White residents began to use Sundown tactics to expel minority populations. Loewen (ibid.) identifies likely Sundown counties outside of the South as those that had fewer (or zero) Black residents in 1930 than in 1890. In Colorado, for example, in 1890 there were five counties with zero Black residents and 19 with fewer than ten, but by 1930 that number had grown to eight counties with no Black residents and 28 with fewer than ten (ibid.). In 31 out of 39 states Black residents lived in a smaller number of counties in 1930 than they did in 1890, and such patterns of declines in the Black population at the county level can be seen across the United States (ibid.).

[2] Although Sundown practices were most frequently enacted by White residents against Black households, in part because of the prevalence of Sundown towns across Midwest and Northern states (and in line with patterns of Black migration out of the South that I discuss in the next chapter), the racial and ethnic groups subjected to Sundown practices did vary by region. People of Asian and Latinx ancestry, for instance, were much more likely to face Sundown-style exclusion in California and the Pacific Northwest, while they were less likely to face such opposition in the Midwest (Loewen 2018). In this research, I focus on the consequences of the Sundown era for Black residents of Appleton, Wisconsin.

Although their mechanisms of exclusion differed from the types of residential segregation described in the previous section, the practices of Sundown towns across the United States resulted in—with few exceptions—all-White towns and neighborhoods that maintained their racial exclusivity through informal violence that was supported by local ordinances and law enforcement (Loewen 2018). While a small body of research—considered in the next section—has looked into the long-term consequences and contemporary ramifications of Sundown towns and their historical practices, on the whole, Sundown towns have been largely left out of examinations of racial residential segregation, and social scientific inquiry has focused more on the effects of micro-level segregation, for instance in a city that is understood to have segregated neighborhoods but is still seen on the whole as being racially diverse (such as Chicago or Los Angeles; see Alba and Logan 1993; Chronopolous 2020; Clark and Blue 2004; Clark et al. 2015; Crowell and Fossett 2020; Logan, Zhang, and Chunyu 2015; Lukinbeal, Price, and Buel 2012; Rosenbaum and Argeros 2005; Zhou and DiRago 2023; Zubrinsky and Bobo 1996). This research, however, considers the consequences of communities that are governed by implicit ideologies of White dominance that on the whole do *not* need to be made explicit or maintained by force, because the Sundown practices of the past were enacted such that they met the goal of producing homogenously White spaces. As I argue in Chapter 3, the predominately (and sometimes entirely) White populations of historically Sundown communities often talk about White communities as normal and natural in a way that erases the racialized violence that produced them, further minimizing the active role that White actors have played in maintaining racial inequality and harm.

Recent Sundown Research

The body of critical sociological research directly looking at Sundown towns as a form of residential segregation remains fairly small. McConnell and Miraftab (2009) consider a small, historically Sundown town that was 99 percent White until around 2000 when the construction of a meat processing plant led to a significant growth in the town's Latinx population, increasing from .6 percent in 1990 to almost 18 percent in 2000. Despite the rapid increase in the Latinx population of the otherwise all-White town, the new Latinx residents were *not* residentially segregated or clustered into low-income, low-quality housing, as had been observed in other towns that had seen a similar population shift (ibid.). The authors suggest that this lack of immediate ethnic segregation was, essentially, the result of the all-White town not being prepared for the arrival of non-White residents; that is, because the town had been exclusively White for so long, there had previously been no need for ordinances or zoning mechanisms that would create and maintain residential segregation, leading to an inability to quickly racially segregate the incoming Latinx population (ibid.).

O'Connell (2018) compares the economic outcomes of towns that had a Sundown history to those that did not, and she finds that the contemporary effects of historical Sundown practices are seen more in *White advantage* in former Sundown towns rather than in the specific *disadvantage* of their current Black residents. Specifically, while there is no association between a town's Sundown status and racial inequality in its poverty rates, there *is* an association between a town's Sundown status and increased Black-White inequality in neighboring counties, suggesting that a town's Sundown history may do more to economically benefit its White residents more than it harms its Black residents (ibid.). The racial inequality that O'Connell (2018) observes, though, is seen at the city and county levels, rather than micro-level practices of

segregation, for instance at the block or neighborhood level; in that sense, it is important to note the ways that the racial outcomes of residents are influenced by the historical practices of surrounding areas at a broader scale, not just individual-level practices.

Crowe (2012), finally, finds that towns that were not historically Sundown pursued economic development more aggressively than towns that did have a Sundown history, and suggests that this difference in development strategies is the result of the Sundown towns sacrificing economic growth for the sake of maintaining White racial exclusivity. While Crowe (2012) admits that the exact causes of these differences are unclear, it is also unclear to what extent Sundown towns have been disadvantaged by this loss of development opportunities, versus economic and development benefits they might accrue as a result of being exclusively White—benefits that are similar to, for instance, the advantages that were given to exclusively White suburbs but not to more racially and ethnically mixed areas.

WHY STUDY SUNDOWN TOWNS?

The forms that racial discrimination have taken in large urban contexts are well-observed, but it is critical to understand the ways that smaller cities and urban contexts practiced (and continue to implement) strategies of racial exclusion as Sundown towns, as well as the ongoing effects of that exclusion. Not only did Sundown towns use different strategies from those observed in larger metros, but the contemporary effects and awareness of those exclusionary practices are neither remembered—despite clear evidence that they were implemented in the past—nor well-understood compared to their larger urban counterparts and their more-familiar patterns of urban-suburban tract-level segregation.

Racial segregation is not only a matter of tract- or neighborhood-level isolation, as segregation has continued to grow at city and regional levels. This macro-level segregation has increased to the extent that tract-level segregation accounts for only fifty percent of Black-White segregation in the United States (Parisi, Lichter, and Taquino 2011). In contrast to more common tract-level explanations for the persistence and effects of segregation *within* cities, Lichter, Parisi, and Taquino (2015) connect the increase in macro-level segregation (i.e., whole cities becoming increasingly all one race) to the political economy of place, due to the ways that regions and larger metropolitan areas as a whole—rather than individual neighborhoods—are the political and legal actors that create and enforce racially inclusive and exclusive measures. Despite neighborhoods playing a central role in how residents make housing decisions, the incentives that lead residents to a particular region or city take place on a higher order than individual neighborhoods. The research that follows in the coming chapters proceeds from a gap where histories of Sundown-style racial exclusion are not considered in discussions of these regional- and city-level incentives and/or deterrents, which I examine first from a historical, census data-based perspective, and then from a current qualitative examination of the historically Sundown town of Appleton, Wisconsin, shown in Figure 1.1.

The Othering and Belonging Institute at the University of California- Berkeley created an interactive map showing the degree of tract-level racial residential segregation in the city of Appleton (found here https://belonging.gis-cdn.net/us_segregation_map/?year=2020). They identify Appleton as having "Low-Medium Segregation" at the tract level, perhaps giving the impression that segregation in Appleton is a "low to medium," rather than urgent or critical, problem. However, as I argue in Chapter 2, the low level of segregation in Appleton is in part the result of historical practices that excluded ethnic and racial minority residents from settling in the

city for much of the 20th century, resulting in a majority-White population and a racial and ethnic minority population that is, essentially, too small to segregate. Thus, the *scale* at which segregation was enacted in Appleton becomes key in understanding the pernicious and ongoing effects of the Sundown exclusion practiced by White residents of the city in the early part of the 20th century.

The Ubiquitous Small City

Finally, while much urban sociological research centers on large cities and metropolitan areas, such cities do not make up the majority of places where people in the United States live. Eighty percent of the U.S. population lives within an urban area, but 52 percent of U.S. city residents live in a city with a population of fewer than 250,000 people, and there are only 311 places with a population over 100,000 (Ocejo, Kosta, and Mann 2020). Furthermore, about 16.8 percent of the U.S. population lives in cities of fewer than 50,000 residents, with small cities (<50,000) making up about 96 percent of the nearly 20,000 incorporated places in the United States (ibid). Thus, the conclusions drawn in the sociological literature about urban life, growth, and politics (to name a few) are often based on experiences of city life that most urban spaces do not reflect (Bell and Jayne 2009). Bell and Jayne (2009:690) suggest that "there is a clear need to look in detail at the actual political, economic, social, cultural, spatial, and physical nature of small cities rather than judging them simply with reference to theories and measurements developed with reference to big cities and metropolises."

Similarly, although estimates are difficult due to the varied scale at which Sundown practices were implemented, it is believed that at its peak there were nearly ten thousand Sundown towns actively practicing racial exclusion in the Sundown era of 1880 to 1940 (Coen 2020).

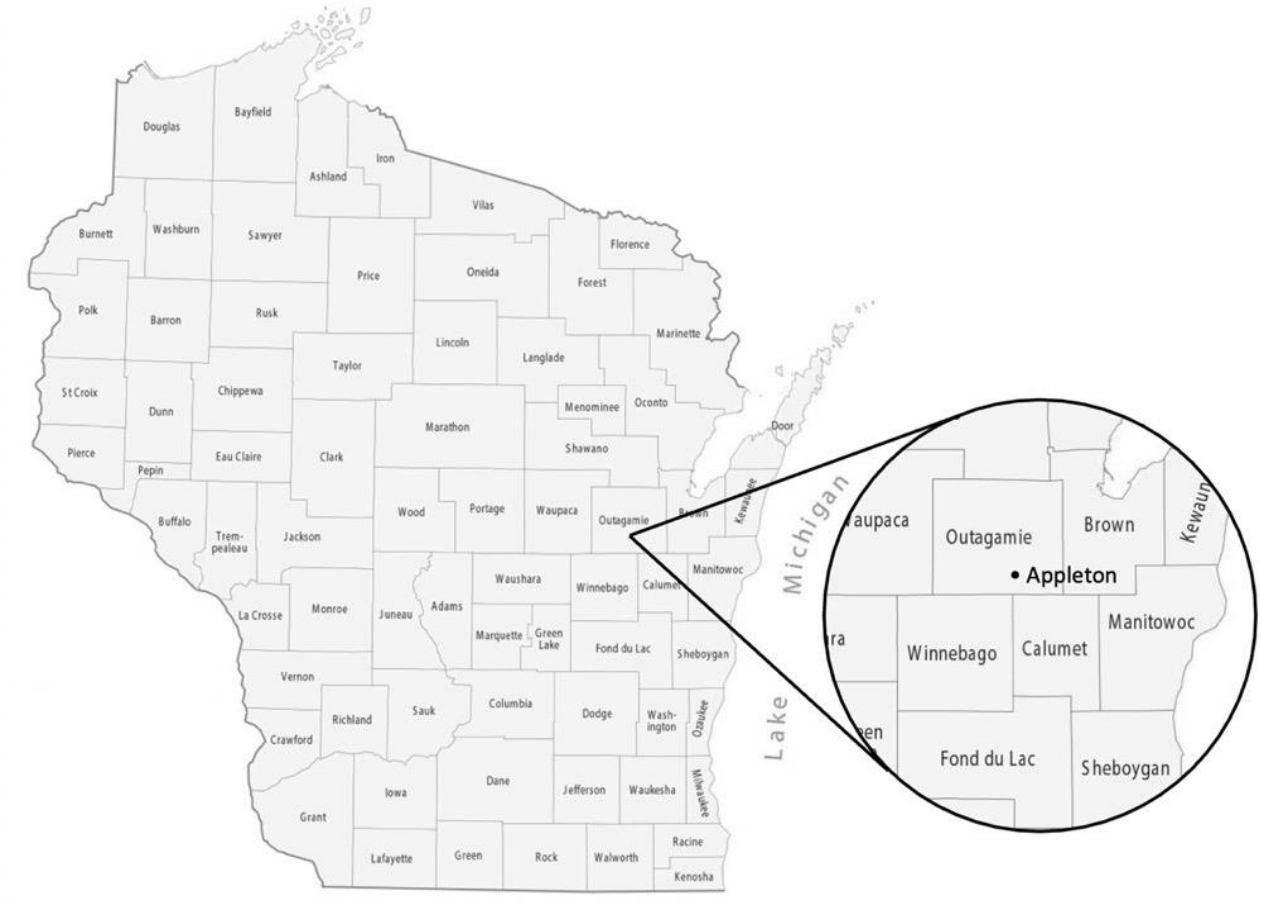


Figure 1.1. Wisconsin State County Map (Source: GISGeography.com. Used with permission.)

The ubiquity of historically Sundown towns (frequently smaller cities and towns) across the United States, taken together with the prevalence of small cities compared to larger metropolitan areas, suggests that many small cities in the United States were likely Sundown in the past, yet these places are often excluded from sociological inquiry both because of their size and because of their lack of more clearly observed patterns of residential segregation. This project, then, intends to foreground Sundown practices as a form of residential segregation that is unique to smaller cities and towns, while examining how White residents of these formerly Sundown spaces understand their city's past, as the absence of these spaces from critical examinations of residential segregation leaves scholars with an incomplete understanding of how systemic racial exclusion and discrimination has continued to disparately shape peoples' wellbeing and access to resources and opportunities.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

This project, then, looks at the historically Sundown, small city of Appleton, Wisconsin to examine how its Sundown-style patterns of racial exclusion have shaped the attitudes and conditions of the present. Appleton, shown above in Figure 1, is a small city of about 75,000 people (see Raetz 2021) in northeast Wisconsin, on the northern shore of Lake Winnebago and about 100 miles north of the city of Milwaukee, and it sits primarily in Outagamie County. Like many similarly sized communities in the Midwest, it has a known and documented history of anti-Black racial exclusion during the Sundown era. Thus, in the research that follows, I present Appleton as a representative case of a historically Sundown small northern city, as I consider the effects that history has had on the racial attitudes and beliefs of its White residents.

Appleton's Sundown Past

This project is primarily interview-based, and although even the oldest of my participants were too young to remember Appleton prior to its implementation of anti-Black exclusion, the city's Sundown past is nevertheless well-documented and is known to have persisted well into the 20th century. An exhibit on Appleton's Sundown history states that anti-vagrancy laws were some of the earliest ways that Black newcomers to Appleton were prevented from settling in the city, with White law enforcement officers going so far as to immediately place Black people arriving in Appleton by train onto wagons for transport to the local jail (History Museum at the Castle n.d.). By 1915, downtown Appleton hotels were known to deny services to Black people, with a refusal to host the Tuskegee Singers after a performance at Lawrence University—a local liberal arts college well-known for its music conservatory—one of the first widely known incidents of anti-Black refusal of service (ibid.).

Following Loewen's (2018) measure for determining Sundown status discussed above, where states outside of the South that had more counties with fewer or no Black residents in 1930 compared to 1890 are considered "Sundown," Wisconsin was one such state, with eight counties that had fewer than ten Black residents in 1890, but 42 such counties in 1930. In addition to the more informal or covert implementations of racial exclusion in the city that point to its history as a Sundown town, decennial census data also points to Appleton as a city with a known Sundown history. As Table 1.1 shows, the overall population in Wisconsin continued to grow between 1860 and 1940, as did the populations of minoritized racial and ethnic groups at the state level. While the White population in Appleton and the surrounding Outagamie County also grew, by 1930 no Black residents were recorded as living in Appleton. Thus, the declines in the Black population at the county and city levels were not the result of a slowing or decline in

state-wide population growth. Instead, they depict the extent to which Appleton enacted its own Sundown town practices like many other towns and cities across the United States at the time.

Research Questions

Today, Appleton has a population of about 76,500—79 percent of which is non-Latino White (U.S. Census Bureau 2020). Table 1.2, however, makes it clear that as recently as the 1990 Decennial Census Appleton was overwhelmingly White, and, as of 2020, Black residents still made up the smallest percentage of the city's population, pointing to the long-lingering effects of the "official" Sundown era that ended in 1940. In the chapters that follow, I consider the following research questions:

> (1). What were the residential outcomes for Black Appleton residents during the Sundown era from 1880 to 1940, and how did they compare to their White residential contemporaries?
>
> (2). How do current White Appleton residents remember and make sense of Appleton's racial past, particularly its history of anti-Black exclusion and status as a Sundown town?
>
> (3). How is Appleton's history as a former Sundown town experienced by residents today, and where can the influences of the city's Sundown history still be seen?
>
> (4). How has Appleton's history as a Sundown town affected White residents' receptions of racial and ethnic minority groups who began to settle in Appleton in the 1970s following a nearly all-White population for most of the 20th century?

In Chapter 2, I address Question 1 as I consider the effects of Sundown-era violence and exclusion against Black Appleton residents using census and other historical data to examine their residential outcomes at the end of their lives, particularly in light of related research into migration pathways during the Great Migration. Although the Sundown era and the Great Migration cannot be conflated either conceptually or in terms of their periods or durations, Sundown-style discrimination is an under-observed event in the long history of Black migration

in the United States, and its effects are often subsumed by the larger and better-known Great Migration. Yet, as I argue in the remaining chapters, historically Sundown towns and cities today have populations and social contexts that are shaped by racial histories unlike those of communities that—although perhaps (and likely) racially discriminatory and segregated to some degree—have consistently had a more racially heterogenous population. Thus, in Chapters 5, 6, and 7, I examine research Questions 2, 3, and 4, respectively as I consider how the creation of a racially homogenous White population influences a community's residents, both in the formation of racial beliefs and attitudes and in conceptions of the city's history and character.

Table 1.1 Wisconsin State and City Populations 1860–1940, by Race[3]

	Wisconsin State Population					Appleton, WI City Population				
Year	**Total**	**White**	**Black**	**Native**	**Chinese**	**Total**	**White**	**Black**	**Native**	**Chinese**
1860	775,881	773,693	1,171	1,017	--	2,345	2,337	8	6	--
1870	1,054,670	1,051,351	2,113	1,206	--	4,518	4,496	16	1	--
1880	1,315,437	1,309,618	2,702	3,101	16	8,005	7,985	19	--	--
1890	1,693,330	1,680,828	2,444	9,930	119	11,869	11,853	13	3	--
1900	2,069,042	2,057,911	2,542	8,372	212	15,085	15,059	18	3	5
1910	2,333,860	2,320,555	2,900	10,142	226	16,773	16,759	9	5	
1920	2,632,067	2,616,938	5,201	9,928		19,561	19,549	4	8	
1930	2,939,006	2,913,859	10,739	11,548	363	25,267	25,235	0	32	
1940	3,137,587	3,112,752	12,158	12,265	290	28,436	28,426	1	9	

Table 1.2. Appleton, WI City Population, 1990–2020

	1990	**2000**	**2010**	**2020**
Total Population	69,695	70,124	72,620	75,644
Non-Latino/a White	63,122 (**96%**)	63,419 (**90%**)	62,956 (**87%**)	59,472 (**79%**)
Latinx	577 (**1%**)	1,738 (**2.5%**)	3,353 (**5%**)	5,499 (**7%**)
Asian	1582 (**2.5%**)	3,183 (**4.5%**)	3,851 (**5%**)	4,805 (**6%**)
Black	163 (**<.5%**)	617 (**<1%**)	925 (**1%**)	2,092 (**3%**)
Native American, Other, 2+	279 (**.5%**)	1,166 (**2%**)	1,535 (**2%**)	3,667 (**5%**)

Source: U.S. Census Bureau. 2020 Census Redistricting Data

[3] Due to size constraints, data are shown only at the state and city levels; however, Outagamie County (where Appleton is located) followed the city's population trends of declining Black and Chinese populations while those groups grew in size in the state over the period shown.

CHAPTER TWO

CREATING WHITE APPLETON[4]

The overarching focus of this research is on how Appleton's Sundown past interacts with the conditions and attitudes of White residents in the present. However, in this chapter I consider the effects of Appleton's exclusionary history on racial minorities—primarily Black residents—who were forced out of, and excluded from settling within, city limits. As I argue below, the smaller-scale (forced) migrations of Black families out of Sundown towns and communities, and their subsequent places of settlement, are often absorbed into larger narratives of the *Great Migration* of Black farmers moving from the South to the North into urban areas, yet, as I argue here, that singular narrative both erases the experiences of Black families displaced by Sundown violence and ignores and minimizes the role of anti-Black racism in creating all-White towns and cities.

RESIDENTIAL OUTCOMES IN THE GREAT MIGRATION

Partially overlapping with the Sundown era and occurring approximately between 1915 and 1970, the Great Migration saw the movement of 6 million Black migrants out of southern states and into the West, Midwest, and Northeast in pursuit of better opportunities and an escape from the growing violence of the Jim Crow South following the end of Reconstruction (Fligstein 1981; Lemann 1992; Tolnay 2003; Wilkerson 2011). Migration destinations were not equally popular, however, as Philadelphia, Chicago, and New York became home to nearly half of all Black migrants from the South (White et al. 2005). Scholars of the Great Migration have previously compared the migration patterns of White and Black migrants from southern states

[4] A version of this chapter of my dissertation was previously published as: Abigail Tobias-Lauerman. 2023. "Racial Differences in Black and White Residential Outcomes in the Sundown Era." *Sociology Lens* 36(1):132–46. doi: 10.1111/johs.12394.

during this period, often focusing on the differences between these two groups in terms of regional and state-level outcomes, as well as neighborhood and residential attainment (Tolnay, Adelman, and Crowder 2002; Tolnay et al. 2005; White et al., 2005).

Research on internal migration pathways and destination outcomes during the Great Migration period has largely focused on the racial differences in the migration patterns of Black and White southern farmers moving North. Namely, Black Southerners were more likely to move northward and to metropolitan areas and central cities, and by 1920 they were four times more likely to be living in a metropolitan area compared to White migrants with similar characteristics (White et al. 2005). In contrast, White southern farmers were more likely to move west and to non-metropolitan and farm areas (White et al. 2005; Tolnay et al. 2005). Furthermore, Black migrants from the South generally had worse neighborhood attainment outcomes after moving North, while in contrast White migrants generally achieved both better residential outcomes such as homeownership, and moved to cities with a lower proportion of Black residents (Tolnay et al. 2002).

Scholars have proposed several potential reasons for the differences observed in destination outcomes during the Great Migration, such as racial differences in wealth and education, and the influence of preexisting migration streams and personal networks on migrants' destination choices (Tolnay et al. 2005). These are viable explanations, and I do not intend to contest them here. Instead, I propose that such explanations for the distinct pathways of Black migration and settlement during the Great Migration—and the subsequent racially segregated residential patterns that emerged across the United States—have not yet fully considered either the constraints on the movement and residential decisions of Black households who were already internally migrating *outside* the South, or the effects of the under-examined

"sundown" form of White racial violence on Black residential options during this time.

Tolnay and his colleagues (2002:472) neatly summarize this gap when they note that "Black migrants from the South were located in more segregated and lower quality neighborhoods than their northern-born counterparts, not because they lacked the human capital to gain entrance into better neighborhoods…but because they moved into cities in which their residential opportunities were more constrained." Although they are addressing Black and White migrants from the South, it also raises questions about Black households already living in the North prior to the Great Migration era: Why were northern Black households leaving their communities of residence? Furthermore, for northern Black households that did not have to contend with the challenges inherent in long-distance migration like their southern-origin counterparts did, why were their destination options limited to a few northern central cities?

While previous research has focused primarily on Black migration out of the South and into northern states (Adelman and Tolnay 2003; Alexander et al. 2017; Leibbrand et al. 2019; Logan, Zhang, and Chunyu 2015; Tolnay 2003; Tolnay, Adelman, and Crowder 2000, 2002; White et al. 2005)—namely to a few large cities—Black residents already living in smaller northern and midwestern communities were being forcibly expelled from their homes through Sundown practices both prior to and at the same time as the Great Migration. Although Black migration out of southern states may be reflected in the overall growth of Black populations in northern states, state-level population counts fail to capture the intra-state migration of Black households that were both removed from, and not permitted to settle in, towns and counties that were on their way to becoming exclusively White. Furthermore, for Black households who left their smaller communities, even if they did migrate inter-state (a departure which *would* be captured in overall state population totals), their entrance into a large city would be, as previous

research has demonstrated, viewed largely as an instance of the Great Migration from the South. As Loewen (2018:59) notes, "The increased [B]lack population in, say, Chicago got ascribed to migration from Mississippi, which was largely true; hence the internal migration of African Americans from small towns in Illinois to Chicago went unnoticed," and I discuss the implications of this erasure, or failure-to-capture, further in the conclusion.

METHODS

Previous studies (Tolnay et al 2002; Tolnay et al 2005; White et al. 2005) have looked comparatively at White and Black migration patterns during the Great Migration, yet inquiry into internal migration during the era of the Great Migration has yet to account for Sundown patterns of discrimination on residential choices. The prior research discussed above have analyses looking only at the state level, but have not necessarily considered the *types* or sizes of communities and places that households were able to settle. Without a finer-grained scale of analysis, intra-state internal migration may not be captured, which is significant for the current research because Sundown-style policies and practices were implemented at town- and county-levels within states. Thus, while a Black family may have been forced to leave their home in a smaller town or city and move to a large metropolitan area within the same state in order to escape looming or real racial violence, such a move would not be captured by state-level data. For example, if Black residents left Appleton for nearby Milwaukee, an analysis of Wisconsin would obscure this. As suggested earlier, popular narratives of the Great Migration minimize or obscure moves to a larger city in the same state, as any Black family's settlement in the central city of a large metropolitan area would likely be captured as a story of Black migration from the South, and the existence of White racial exclusion and violence in towns and cities outside the South are erased.

Analysis Description

To answer my first research question ("What were the residential outcomes for Black Appleton residents during the Sundown era from 1880 to 1940, and how did they compare to their White residential contemporaries"—see Chapter 1), I use a retrospective cohort analysis to compare the residential destinations of Black and White people who were living in Appleton in the early 1900s (N = 18). To identify the effect of Sundown town practices on racial and ethnic minority populations, I first identified racial and ethnic population group sizes in the city between the first census after its city incorporation (in 1857) and 1940 using historical decennial census summary data made available through the U.S. Census Bureau (United States Census Bureau 2022). Next, I searched publicly available decennial population schedules by race and location to identify the names of families and people of color who were living in Appleton at any time between 1880 and 1940. Although the 1890 decennial census would be closer to the generally accepted start of the Sundown era, a major fire in 1921 destroyed most population schedules from the 1890 census for the entire United States, thus I begin with the 1880 census to fully capture the pathways of Black residents who may have left Appleton in response to the exclusionary Sundown practices of its White residents. Finally, using publicly available population schedules, city directories, death records, and obituaries, I traced the residential pathways of the identified residents to find the location of their deaths, using location at time of death as a proxy for residential outcome. Although such an approach does not capture where someone may have lived between their final census appearance in Appleton and the time of their death, the embargo on individual population schedules after 1950 prevents identifying subjects' locations at decennial censuses in the latter half of the 1900s (see Kratz 2022), and the purposes of this study do not warrant identifying every town where they may have lived throughout their lifetime.

Inclusion and Sampling of White Residents

To observe residential mobility among Appleton residents not subject to Sundown-era threats and violence, I also took a non-random sample of 21 White people who lived in Appleton at the time of the 1880 census, and 21 additional White residents who were living in Appleton in 1920, or the midpoint of the observed period (1880–1940; n = 42). I then tracked their residential outcomes using the same process used for Black residents described above. The sampling was performed by looking at 1880 and 1920 Appleton city population rolls and identifying households that approximately matched the household organizations patterns of the Black residents observed, including female-led households, multi-generational households, households with and without children, and households where the parents and/or children were born outside Wisconsin, or in some cases born outside the United States. Household organization was included in order to keep the comparison between racial groups' outcomes as parsimonious as possible. For instance, it is expected that a Black, multi-generational household headed by a widowed woman will have different residential options than a single White male who is residing in a boarding house at the time of the census. Because the Black population of Appleton was small enough to observe in its entirety, it is their family and household structures that were used as the baseline against which the White sample was drawn using a matched sample method. The inclusion of White residents is intended to compare the level and type of mobility between White and Black Appleton residents at the time, as a lack of difference in outcomes between the two racial groups would raise doubts that the Sundown era really did have a negative, or at least unequal, effect on Black households. Additionally, I sampled White Appleton residents from both the 1880 and 1920 censuses to account for outside factors that may have changed over the Sundown era and influenced households' residential options.

Racial Categories

The use and function of racial categories in the U.S. decennial census have been long-contested by both scholars (see Emigh, Riley, and Ahmed 2015; Sohoni 2022; Snipp 2003; Strmic-Pawl, Jackson, and Garner 2018; Thompson 2012) and the U.S. government (United States Census Bureau 2015a). Without entering that debate, it should be noted that over the period observed, census totals generally used "Black" as a racial category, while further dividing into "Black" or "Negro" and "Mulatto" in the individual-level population schedules. Because Sundown practices in the Midwest were most frequently enacted against groups racialized as Black, I trace the residential destinations only of those individuals who at any point were categorized as "Black/Negro" or "Mulatto." Until the first mail-out census in 1960, a person's racial classification was determined in person by the census worker, which surely adds a layer of complexity as to why one's racial classification may shift from one census to the next, an outcome that I observed in the census history of several people discussed in this study.

The U.S. Census Bureau also distinguishes between U.S.-born and "non-native" White individuals. Although discrimination and violence against European-born White people certainly occurred in the 19th and 20th centuries (see Ignatiev 1995; Steinberg 1989), the inequalities that existed between U.S.- and European-born White populations did eventually close through assimilation processes, while, in contrast, the gap between White and Black Americans has persisted (Lieberson 1980; Massey and Denton 1993; Restifo, Roscigno, and Qian 2013). Despite the complex historical relationship between Whiteness, European ethnicity, and assimilation in the United States (Ignatiev 1995; Jacobson 1999; see also Fouka and Tabellini 2022), it should be noted that non-native immigrants were still enumerated and classified (and by extension, racialized) in the census as "White." See for instance, Figure 2.1 below excerpted

from the 1910 decennial census report for the state of Wisconsin: although a distinction is made between native- and foreign-born White residents, and additional tables identify the country of place of residents' (or their parents') birth, people with European ethnic origins are automatically, and implicitly, understood as "White," while no such nativity-race distinction is made for the other racial and ethnic groups. At the same time, anti-European immigrant hostility in the United States was more often manifested through nativist anti-immigration legislation and policies that blocked primarily southern and eastern European migrant entry into the United States, such as the Johnson-Reed Immigration Act of 1924 (see Marinari 2022; Ngai 1999; Yuill 2014). Finally, while the level of residential isolation between U.S.- and foreign-born White residents quickly declined by 1920, it remained high between White and Black residents well into the 20th century (Lieberson 1980), pointing to the lingering and still-seen effects of anti-Black residential practices, such as micro-level racially restrictive housing covenants and macro-level Sundown-style exclusion.[5]

RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

Table 1.1 in Chapter 1 shows the full extent of the displacement of families of color at the state, county, and city levels for White, Black, Native America, and Chinese racial groups from 1860 to 1940. During this time, the overall population in the state, county, and city continued to grow, as did the populations of some racial and ethnic groups at the state level.

[5] The broader nativist and anti-immigration attitudes and projects of the past are not necessarily distinct from the aims of Sundown towns. As noted in Chapter 1, the racial and ethnic groups subjected to violence and residential exclusion during the Sundown era varied by region. Thus, although outside the focus of this project, anti-Chinese exclusion in Californian Sundown towns, for instance, were just one manifestation of wider anti-Asian sentiment that was expressed legislatively as well, such as through the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 and the above-mentioned Immigration Act of 1924.

TABLE 1.—COLOR, NATIVITY, AND PARENTAGE.

CLASS OF POPULATION.	NUMBER.			PER CENT OF TOTAL.		
	1910	1900	1890	1910	1900	1890
THE STATE.						
Total population	2,333,860	2,069,042	1,693,330	100.0	100.0	100.0
White	2,320,555	2,057,911	1,680,828	99.4	99.5	99.3
Negro	2,900	2,542	2,444	0.1	0.1	0.1
Indian	10,142	8,372	9,930	0.4	0.4	0.6
Chinese	226	212	119	(1)	(1)	(1)
Japanese	34	5	9	(1)	(1)	(1)
All other (Korean)	3	.....	.....	(1)	.....	.....
Total native	1,820,995	1,553,071	1,174,131	78.0	75.1	69.3
Total foreign born	512,865	515,971	519,199	22.0	24.9	30.7
Native white, total	1,807,986	1,542,206	1,161,839	77.5	74.5	68.6
Native parentage	763,225	585,903	435,004	32.7	28.3	25.7
Foreign parentage	724,258	678,723	555,113	31.0	32.8	32.8
Mixed parentage	320,503	277,580	171,722	13.7	13.4	10.1
Foreign-born white	512,569	515,705	518,989	22.0	24.9	30.6
URBAN POPULATION.						
Total	1,004,328	790,213	562,286	100.0	100.0	100.0
White	1,001,416	787,915	560,526	99.7	99.7	99.7
Negro	2,141	1,859	1,440	0.2	0.2	0.3
Indian	530	247	218	0.1	(1)	(1)
Chinese, Japanese, and all other.	233	192	102	(1)	(1)	(1)
Native white, total	744,991	569,568	366,913	74.2	72.1	65.3
Native parentage	285,099	193,073	122,430	28.5	24.4	21.8
Foreign parentage	327,016	376,495	244,483	32.6	47.6	43.5
Mixed parentage	131,976			13.1		
Foreign-born white	256,425	218,347	193,613	25.5	27.6	34.4
RURAL POPULATION.						
Total	1,329,540	1,278,829	1,131,044	100.0	100.0	100.0
White	1,319,139	1,269,996	1,120,302	99.2	99.3	99.1
Negro	759	683	1,004	0.1	0.1	0.1
Indian	9,612	8,125	9,712	0.7	0.6	0.9
Chinese, Japanese, and all other.	30	25	26	(1)	(1)	(1)
Native white, total	1,062,995	972,638	794,926	80.0	76.1	70.3
Native parentage	477,226	392,830	312,574	35.9	30.7	27.6
Foreign parentage	397,242	579,808	482,352	29.9	45.3	42.6
Mixed parentage	188,527			14.2		
Foreign-born white	256,144	297,358	325,376	19.3	23.3	28.8

[1] Less than one-tenth of 1 per cent.

Figure 2.1. 1910 Wisconsin State Population Summary, by Race, Nativity, and Parentage (Source: Department of Commerce—Bureau of the Census 1913:1075).

Thus, the declines in the Black population at the county and city levels were not the result of a slowing or decline in state-wide population growth. Instead, they depict the extent to which Appleton enacted its own Sundown town practices, much like many other towns and cities across the United States at the time. Because the terms used to identify racial groups were inconsistently used over the period examined, I rely on "White" and "Black" to designate the groups under consideration. Additionally, Native American and Chinese residents were occasionally combined in census totals (with Japanese and "other" appearing in later censuses), so it is impossible to report the exact population distribution. Although the city of Appleton, and the wider Outagamie County, never had Black populations that could be considered large, and their Native and Chinese populations remained even smaller, it is clear that over time, particularly between 1920 and 1940, the number of Black residents in Appleton all but disappeared. These steep declines in Appleton's already-small Black population between 1890 and 1930 reflects the peak of racial hostility and Sundown practices in the United States (Loewen 2018), as White residents first expelled their non-White residents and then maintained White exclusivity by not allowing households of color to stay or settle within the city.

In this chapter, I turn to individual-level census data to examine four outcomes observed among the people examined: staying in Appleton, moving to an adjacent town or county, moving to a small town or city, and moving to a larger city.[6] I look at individual data from the 1880 to 1930 decennial censuses, which encompasses the peak of Sundown practices. As noted above, unfortunately all but a small number of population schedules from the 1890 federal census for the entire United States were destroyed in a major fire in 1921. Consequently, while population

[6] Following—and somewhat simplifying—Raetz (2021), I define a "small city" here as having a population up to 149,999 residents, while a "larger city" is one with over 150,000 residents.

totals at the state, county, and city levels have been preserved, I am unable to identify who was living in Appleton in 1890 and trace their residential outcomes, leaving the 1880 and 1900 population schedules as the best sources of individual-level population estimates for the city.

According to census summaries, 63 people who were classified as Black appeared in the decennial census between 1880 and 1930. Through the population schedules, I located 26 unique people who were labeled "Black" or "Mulatto" on the census roll, although this total does not include people whose only appearance in Appleton was in the 1890 census. Out of the people identified in the population schedules, I was able to locate a year and location of death for 18 of them; this group of 18 is discussed in the sections that follow. Table 3 below summarizes the birth and death dates, latest observable year that they appeared in the Appleton census, and residential outcome. Data is presented as: Birth-Death, *Latest Census Appearance in Appleton.*

The sample of White Appleton residents is described in Table 4 below, divided into the 1880 and 1920 samples, with data presented as Birth-Death, *Latest Census Appearance in Appleton*. The sample from 1920 does not include those who were first identified in 1880 and still living in the city at the time of the 1920 census. Additionally, as with the Black residents above, this table and subsequent analysis only includes those for whom full residential and death records were available, thus some of the people included are part of households where the other members are excluded from analysis.

Table 2.1. Black Appleton Resident Destinations and Census Appearances

Remained in Appleton	Moved to Adjacent County	Moved to Large Metro
1873-1897, *Likely 1890*		
1885-1909, *1900*		
1843-1909, *1900*		
1887-1906, *1900*	1846-1928, *1900*	1876-1958, *1880*
1833-1917, *1910*	1873-1958, *1900*	1839-1906, *1900*
1835-1916, *1910*	1886-1906, *1900*	1862-1950, *1910*
1842-1910, *1910*	1897-1982, *1900*	1879-1950, *1910*
1851-1913, *1910*		
1855-1920, *1920*		
1895-1974, *1940*		

Table 2.2. Sampled White Appleton Resident Destinations and Census Appearances, 1880 and 1920

1880 Federal Decennial Census			
Remained in Appleton	**Moved to Adjacent County**	**Moved to Non-Adjacent Small Metro**	**Moved to Large Metro**
1816-1883, *1880*		1825-1904, *1900*	
1851-1953, *1930*		1855-1944, *1880*	
1853-1924, *1920*		1857-1905, *1880**	
1858-1915, *1910*	1828-1898, *1980**	1878-1964, *1880**	1876-1947, *1880**
1855-1942, *1940*	1860-1913, *1900*	1849-1914, *1900*	1858-1896, *1880**
1853-1939, *1930*		1848-1927, *1900*	
1821-1888, *1880*		1878-1967, *1880**	
1822-1908, *1900*		1858-1943, *1880**	
1866-1936, *1930*			
1920 Federal Decennial Census			
1848-1922, *1920*			1906-1965, *1930*
1845-1924, *1920*			1909-1993, *1930*
1872-1944, *1940*	1883-1970, *1950***		1882-1954, *1920*
1874-1943, *1940*	1901-1970, *1920*	1904-1993, *1930*	1881-1956, *1920*
1879-1945, *1940*	1894-1974, *1940*	1896-1956, *1940*	1911-1970, *1920*
1886-1930, *1930*	1894-1960, *1940*		1917-1979, *1920*
1884-1962, *1950***			1892-1947, *1920*
1899-1992, *1950***			

*Notes confirmed 1880 census appearance in Appleton. May possibly have still been living there in 1890, but unable to confirm due to lack of 1890 population schedule data.
**Individual census data is unavailable past 1950, thus individuals may have lived in Appleton beyond the 1950 decennial census.

Staying in Appleton

People who remained in Appleton until the end of their lives make up the largest group of Black residents, with ten out of the observed eighteen residing in Appleton at the time a census was conducted, and later records then showing that they passed away while still living in the city. Two made up one household, one person was from a household that moved to an adjacent county, and the remaining seven came from two households whose other members eventually moved to much larger cities.

It should not be assumed that all ten lived in Appleton through the entirety of its Sundown era, as some died fairly young. Three people, two of whom were in the same household, all died before the age of 25, while others were much older at their last appearance in the census. Only one remained in Appleton through the entirety of the Sundown era before passing away in 1974, but she may present a somewhat exceptional case, as she not only moved away from and then returned to Appleton, but in 1940 and in subsequent censuses she was classified as White (the racial malleability of this person's extended family is examined in the next section). Sundown practices did not go into immediate and total effect in 1890, thus it should not be surprising that there was still a Black population in Appleton as late as 1920. As Loewen (2018) notes, some Sundown towns "allowed" a small number of Black residents to remain in the city while blocking new families from moving into the city. Although a few elderly Black residents remained in the city in the first several decades of the 20th century, the overall Black population was not growing at this time and the 1930 census recorded *zero* Black residents living in the city, suggesting that these few residents were permitted to stay while exclusionary practices were still being enacted.

Sometimes northern Sundown towns—with no history of slavery—were entirely White except for a handful of elderly Black residents, usually all within the same household, because stereotypes of the "faithful slave" meant that these Black residents were not perceived as a threat by the White community (Loewen 2018). Such a perception appears to be the case with Horace Artis, a formerly enslaved laborer born around 1842 in Virginia, who eventually settled in Appleton with his family and remained there until his death. When Horace passed away in 1910 at the age of 68, he was given a notably long obituary on the front page of *The Appleton Post Weekly* (1910:A1) with the headline, "Ex-Slave Dead at Appleton." In the obituary, he is described as "one of the most picturesque figures in the south. He was one of the thousands of slaves who was emancipated by Abraham Lincoln, having been in bondage under a hard master from the time he was a little boy. Mr. Artis was a veteran of the civil war." In the 1910 census, a total of nine Black residents (including Mr. Artis and one remaining child) were recorded as living in the city while the White population continued to grow, clearly demonstrating that Black families and households were decidedly *not* moving into Appleton. Yet, Horace Artis, with his "picturesque" history of being enslaved in the confederate states, was allowed to remain in the city, suggesting that Black residents, as long as they were elderly enough and with an "acceptable" personal history, were not seen as threatening the pervasive Whiteness that residents used Sundown practices to create and maintain.

Remaining in Appleton was also the most common residential outcome for White residents, with nine out of twenty-one people in the 1880 sample and eight out of twenty-one from the 1920 sample remaining in Appleton to the end of their lives. From the 1880 sample, four made up one household of a widowed mother and her three adult children, two were a married couple with no children, and three constituted a household where the fourth member

died in an adjacent county. From 1920, two were elderly sisters who shared a home, two were a husband and wife whose three children and one boarder eventually moved out of Appleton, one was the adult son of a widowed Appleton woman who was unable to be located past 1934, two were a married couple with no children at the time of the census, and the eighth person was the only one of four children in a household to remain in the city to the end of their life.

Moving to an Adjacent County

Four out of the eighteen Black people observed died in a county adjacent to Appleton, all of them part of a household of five where the fifth member lived in Appleton till her death in 1974. This family—consisting of a widowed grandmother, her three adult children, and three young grandchildren—presents a complex case, as the family was listed as "Black" in the 1900 census while living in Appleton, but at the time of the 1910 census they had moved to Calumet and Winnebago County south of Appleton, and the grandmother was classified as "Indian," while the adult children and grandchildren were classified as "Mulatto" (with the exception of the above-mentioned child who remained in Appleton).

It is impossible to know why exactly this family moved out of Appleton and to the adjacent counties, as well as the effects of their shifting racial categorization. However, two points should be noted: First, the counties to which they moved (Calumet and Winnebago; seen in Figure 1.1 in Chapter 1) both had larger racial and ethnic minority populations at the time compared to Appleton. In 1910, Winnebago County had 110 Black residents, while Calumet County had 237 "Indian and all other" residents. Although Outagamie County as a whole had a sizeable Native American population at the time, Appleton City had only 9 Black and 5 "Indian and Chinese" residents in 1910 (Department of Commerce and Labor 1913). Thus, despite the family's seemingly malleable racial classification, the locations to which they moved had more

racially mixed populations, suggesting that those communities likely did not practice Sundown-style exclusion.

Second, it is noteworthy that these people settled in the towns of Brothertown in Calumet County and Oshkosh and Neenah in Winnebago County, specifically. These communities are comparable in size to, or smaller than, Appleton. Out of the 18 Black people observed in this study, with the exception of this household that settled in these two more racially diverse counties, no one else relocated to a similarly sized or smaller urban area. Instead, they either lived in Appleton for the rest of their lives, or, as I discuss in the next section, they moved to a much larger city with a well-established Black population. As I discuss in the next section, although a few of the White Appleton residents also moved to adjacent counties by the end of their lives, moving to a smaller city *not* close to Appleton was an option taken exclusively by White people.

Moving to an adjacent county also made up the smallest category for White Appleton residents. In 1880, only two people from two different households were living in counties immediately adjacent to Outagamie County at the end of their lives, one in the town of Neenah discussed above, and the other in De Pere, Wisconsin in Brown County to the east. From the 1920 census, only four of the twenty-one White people moved to a county adjacent to Outagamie, and all four died in the towns of Oshkosh or Neenah in Winnebago County. These residents included the adult daughter of one of the two sisters who died in Appleton, a woman who was boarding with an Appleton family in 1920, and a husband and wife who were living with the husband's parents in Appleton in 1920.

Moving to a Smaller, Non-adjacent City

One outcome seen exclusively among the sampled White residents from both 1880 and 1920 and *none* of the Black residents was moving to a small town *not* adjacent to Outagamie County. In the 1880 sample this was the second-most common result, with eight out of 21White people living in small, non-adjacent towns at the end of their lives. Among this sample, three were from one household where the parents both died in the Milwaukee suburb of Oak Creek, WI while one son died in Everett, WA; three were from one household where all three members died in different states: Sun Valley, CA; Westhope, ND; and Ensign, MI; and the remaining two were a father and daughter who died in the small Wisconsin towns of Rib Lake and Phlox, respectively. Far fewer people from the 1920 sample moved to a small town or city: two men from two different households died in La Feria, TX and Peoria, AZ in 1956 and 1993, respectively.

It is anything but "natural" that Black residents should internally migrate almost exclusively to large cities from small towns (Loewen 2018). In reality, the racialized violence perpetuated against Black families and the ubiquity of Sundown towns during the Sundown era both forced them out of their homes and communities and also prevented them from settling in communities other than larger metropolitan areas that already had large Black populations. This pattern of a complete absence of Black migration to smaller towns and cities outside of the nearby communities discussed in the previous section, as well as the exclusively White migration to Western states, both echoes White and colleagues (2005), and also illustrates how Sundown violence funneled Black movement away from the Western United States and towards large northern and midwestern cities. With the seemingly anomalous exception of Calumet and Winnebago Counties discussed above, it appears there were not many viable destination options for Black families outside of the larger cities that I discuss in the next section.

Moving to the City

The last four Black people observed all left Appleton at some point and died in much larger cities. One was a person who appeared with his family in Appleton in the 1880 census, but nothing else is known about him or his family except that he died in Chicago in 1958. Two were sisters who were in Appleton at the 1900 and 1910 censuses with their four other family members; while the rest of the family eventually died in Appleton, the sisters died in 1906 and 1950 in Chicago and Boston, respectively. Finally, following the death of Horace Artis in 1910, the last living Artis child moved away from Appleton and was living in Milwaukee, WI at the 1940 census, where she died in 1950.

In comparison to Appleton, in 1910 the number of Black residents in Milwaukee, Chicago, and Boston were 980; 44,103; and 13,564, respectively. By 1930, when Appleton's recorded Black population had shrunk to zero, the Black populations in those cities had grown to 7,501 (Milwaukee), 223,903 (Chicago), and 20,574 (Boston; U.S. Department of Commerce, 1913, 1932). Although these cities were much larger overall compared to Appleton, and Black residents represented a fairly small proportion of the overall population, it is not surprising that they would be seen as desirable, if not at least safer, residential options compared to the seeming racial hostility of an increasingly White Appleton.

The movement from Appleton to much larger cities within the time of the Sundown era was an anticipated result and supports the claim that not all Black migration into these metropolitan areas was necessarily the result of the Great Migration from southern states (although the Great Migration represents the majority of Black movement into northern cities). However, due to small sample size and without reproducing this study with additional Sundown towns included, it is hard to say how consistently this pattern would have been repeated among a

larger cohort. More research is needed. What does stand out is that at least in this small group of Black residents, and as noted above, the Black people who left Appleton did not move to other small- or mid-size cities (besides moving one town south); instead, they moved to much larger urban areas that already had well-established Black populations and were already understood as "destinations" for Black migration.

Among the White Appleton population sample, only two people from the 1880 census were living in a large city at the end of their lives. They were from two different households whose other members had mixed residential outcomes, and they died in San Francisco and Milwaukee. From the 1920 sample, dying in a large metropolitan area was the second most common residential outcome, with seven out of 21 residents living in a much larger city at the end of their lives. Two were siblings who died in Cincinnati, OH and Pittsburgh, PA, while the remaining five were one complete household that had left Appleton after 1920 for Milwaukee, where they all lived to the end of their lives. This one household makes it appear that moving to a large city like Milwaukee was a popular choice for Black and White former Appleton residents alike, but further sampling may suggest that migration out of Appleton—especially for entire households—was not as common for White residents compared to staying in the city.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Despite their usefulness in the preceding analysis, census records cannot answer every question, such as *why* families and individuals moved from one place to another, or under what circumstances a family's racial classification changed from one census to the next, but these constraints are to be expected when relying on historical data. Furthermore, the destroyed 1890 federal census population schedules surely contained data on people who were still alive at the peak of Sundown practices in the 1920s and 30s, thus the available records unfortunately do not

capture all Black residents who were almost certainly affected by Sundown era practices. Finally, the results of this study are further muted due to the small sample size, thus the results reported here should be considered exploratory in nature.

The results observed—namely, the three destination outcomes of staying in Appleton, moving to an adjacent and somewhat more diverse small community, or moving to a much larger metro—illustrate how the story of Black migration in the United States is not one simple story of the Great Migration out of the South following the end of slavery. Instead, the establishment of Black populations in small northern and midwestern towns and cities during Reconstruction, and their violent removal and exclusion during the Sundown era, highlights how White violence against racialized minorities has long been a part of U.S. history and has not been isolated to southern states. The consequences of such violence are also seen in the lack of *any* Black people moving to smaller communities outside of the area surrounding Appleton and Outagamie County, and the exclusively White migration to small towns and western states.

This erasure of *why* Black people left their smaller communities of residence and migrated to large urban centers—rather than to suburbs or smaller towns and cities—should be noted not only because of the ways these patterns of migration have profoundly affected subsequent residential patterns that persist to this day (see Krysan and Crowder 2017) but also because existing explanations of Black migration into metropolitan areas rely mainly on threats of Jim Crow-era *southern* violence (Loewen 2018; Tolnay and Beck 1992) and better economic opportunities in the North (Tolnay et al. 2002). Such explanations fail to consider the effect that White racial violence had on both expelling Black households already living outside the South, and then constraining their options (and those of their counterparts moving up from the South) in the search for a new place of residence. Although the perceived availability of better

opportunities may have been a driving factor for many Black families moving into central cities, real and threatened violence may have also kept them from settling in smaller communities where their opportunities for housing and employment may have in fact been better than that of metropolitan centers. In the face of racial violence and segregation at a community-wide level, those towns and cities were avoided by Black migrants, thereby rendering some towns and cities entirely White while funneling Black households into already-crowded central cities along with Black southerners moving northward. I contend, then, that the overcrowded, under-employed, and inadequate conditions that emerged among Black urban ghettoes in northern cities (Hirsch 1998; Lemann 1991; Massey and Denton 1993) were arguably exacerbated by the White members of smaller towns and cities who did not allow Black people to settle within their city limits, as there is no reason to believe that Black families would *not* have moved into those smaller communities in the absence of perceived anti-Black racial hostility. In contrast, the White residents observed were able to move to communities that were both similarly sized or smaller than Appleton, and also much more geographically dispersed.

I have shown how the movement of Black families who left their homes in smaller midwestern towns and cities during the Sundown era of 1890 to 1930 may have contributed to the concentration of Black populations in larger, yet presumably safer, urban areas. Although sociological inquiry has focused on the contemporary effects of historical racial violence and discrimination, particularly for Black families and communities that continue to fight against systemic and institutionalized White dominance, here I point to the ways that White violence and exclusion has also shaped towns and cities through who was historically *removed* or *absent from* communities that achieved near- or entirely White populations. Without the enactment of Sundown-era racial violence and discrimination, there are individuals, families, and communities

of color who would likely be living in small towns and cities that are today characterized by near-total White homogeneity, a demographic outcome that is anything but "natural" or inevitable, as the above analysis has shown. In the chapters that follow, I first turn to consider how current White residents of Appleton understand the city's past and its history of racial exclusion, particularly their use of forgetting or what I deem "(non)knowing"; next, I examine how the city's past has shaped what resources and benefits are available to current residents and how residents understand those benefits in light of the city's racial makeup; and finally, I look at how decades of an all-White population have influenced the reception of ethnic and racial minorities into the city in more recent decades.

CHAPTER THREE

THEORIZING WHITENESS AND RACIAL (NON)KNOWING

WHITENESS AND COLORBLIND RACIAL IDEOLOGY

This research is interested in how White residents of a formerly Sundown town understand both the racial exclusion of the city's past, and its current characteristics, including its continued majority-White population. Discussions of race and racism are often thought to necessitate the presence of a non-White "other" in order for racism to exist in a place, yet in a city like Appleton the racism and racial violence of the past has resulted in an all-White population. Whiteness, then, becomes primary in questions of how residents "make sense" of the city of Appleton, as White homogeneity has been the unspoken "norm" for most of the 20th century following the removal of Appleton's non-White residents during the Sundown era. In subsequent chapters I deal in more depth with the ways participants conceptualize race, including their own White racial identities, and the present functions and meanings of race in the context of Appleton's social environments. Here, though I address the limits of colorblind racial attitudes, Whiteness as an ideology that White racial group members are socialized into, and the challenge of investigating and questioning Whiteness when it in large part relies on invisibility or naturalization in order to maintain its social power and utility. Finally, I move from the invisibility of Whiteness as a category of belonging to racial knowing and ignorance, to consider how White people cognitively maneuver around their investment in hegemonic Whiteness.

Colorblindness and the Invisibility of Whiteness

Colorblind racial ideology relies on the gains made during the Civil Rights Movement and the end of legal explicitly race-based prejudice and discrimination to argue that members of all racial groups now have an equal footing in society and that because race-based discrimination is no

longer legal, the persistence of inequalities between racial groups in measures such as housing, educational attainment, or socioeconomic status and wealth are the result of individual-level failings and inadequacies (Bonilla-Silva 2018; Gallagher 2003). Furthermore, while some people may continue to hold pernicious racist beliefs, these people are far and few between, and on the whole—colorblind ideology claims—one's racial identity is no longer a significant marker or predictor of one's life chances and outcomes, and thus *race* is no longer a meaningful category through which to question the persistence of inequalities or disparities (Bonilla-Silva 2018; Gallagher 2003; Lewis 2004; Omi and Winant 2015).

On the one hand, color-blind racial ideology fails to explain how racial disparities persist systemically across almost every measure of well-being and mobility; these inequalities remain despite legal measures against racial discrimination, resulting in what Bonilla-Silva (2018) has identified as racism that carries on "without racists." At the same time and running parallel to the silencing or erasure of the possibility of a social system that remains *highly* structured around maintaining White racial dominance and advantage without relying on individual bad actors (see Bonilla-Silva 1997), the logic of color-blindness obscures the significance or even race-*ness* of White racial identity (Bell 2021; Bonilla-Silva 2012; Frankenberg 2008; Nakayama and Krizek 1995). Whiteness, as a meaningful racial identity category that confers real benefits and shapes the life chances of those who belong in it, is instead rendered invisible, where only racial minorities "have race" and White group members are normative and racially unmarked (Frankenberg 2008; Gallagher 2003; Lewis 2004). Lewis (2004:626) explains that

> in a racialized social system all actors are *racialized*, including whites. Because all social actors are racialized, at some level they must live and perform or 'do race.' However, because of their social location (as dominants) whites historically have had the luxury of racializing others without necessarily, except strategically, developing or invoking a strong racial consciousness.

This ability to ignore or not need to constantly be aware of one's race in a given social setting is in fact a reflection of the degree to which Whiteness as a racial group has gained dominant status within U.S. culture (Bonilla-Silva 2018; Frankenberg 1993).

Recalling the earlier examination of the persistence of racially segregated neighborhoods in the United States, on the whole, White homeowners are *not* explicitly seeking to live in majority- or all-White neighborhoods on the basis of racial interests. Yet, majority-White neighborhoods continue to be sustained and reproduced, largely under the same unquestioning color-blind logic described above (see Krysan and Crowder 2017). Despite the seeming race-neutrality of being interested merely in safety or good schools when choosing a neighborhood, although

> numerous all-white groups are not explicitly racial, their racial composition is not an accident but is a result of whites' status as members of a passive social collectivity whose lives are shaped at least in part by the racialized social system in which they live and operate….Though these collective are not (or not all) organized self-consciously around group racial interests, their memberships are not entirely random or accidental. Those who participate are unified at least in part through their similar relation to historic and present-day racial structures. (Lewis 2004:627)

In a Chapters 5 and 6 I consider the consequences of erasing the memories of such "historical racial structures" using Mueller's (2017, 2020) concept of *racial ignorance,* but it is important here to recall that, as earlier in this chapter has shown, the trajectory of one's wealth, health, education, employment, and overall wellbeing all continue to be heavily influenced and shaped by one's neighborhood and residential choices, and no one's residential decisions are consequence-free. As Shome (2000) reminds us, Whiteness as a force that monopolizes real, meaningful benefits and advantages for its members does not exist in a purely rhetorical space, but instead is produced and perpetuated through its unquestioned and commonplace character,

which allows White group members to participate in and claim its benefits without being forced to acknowledge the salience of their racial identity on their everyday lives.

The Limits of Colorblindness

It should be noted that although the above discussion focuses on the everyday invisibility of Whiteness, where one of the benefits of Whiteness is the ability to live without constant and active consciousness of one's race or of race in general, colorblindness as a racial ideology does not always have the explanatory power necessary to rationalize or contain every racial situation. That is, despite the privilege of being able to "not see race" that comes with being racialized as White, a rise in explicit, public displays of (sometimes deadly) White supremacist and White nationalist beliefs and ideologies, as well as numerous events of Black civilians being killed by police officers in the United States since approximately 2016, has arguably created a context where race-neutrality is no longer (always) possible or sustainable. The growing visibility of, and calls for, extreme conservative and White nationalist views—which rely on their own sort of logic to not be "about race," and instead are about the preservation of "Western civilization" (see, for instance, the public statements of Representative Steve King in 2019 (Gabriel 2019) and Prager (2017) for mainstream examples, or Illing (2019) for a critical examination of this trend)—have sparked widespread public protests and demonstrations, public and explicit calls for racial justice (across a number of domains, not only those involving law enforcement), and a general increase in the racial explicitness of public discourse (*White privilege* and *antiracism* entering the public lexicon, for instance)—none of which particularly embody the race-neutrality of a color-blind racial ideology. However, this does not spell the end of White invisibility or normativity. Instead, as Frankenberg (2008:417) notes, White "individuals can slide from awareness of whiteness to the lack thereof and, related to that slippage, from race-consciousness

to unconsciousness and from antiracism to racism, whether from year to year, situation to situation, or sentence to sentence." Rather than suggesting that color-blindness is no longer applicable, or that its analytical usefulness has dimmed in light of the current moment of (seemingly) increasing race-consciousness, racially frank conversations do not necessarily reflect a deeper engagement with or challenge to the privileged social position of Whiteness that is embedded in many U.S. social institutions or the social contexts that make up our everyday world.

On the one hand, a mere increase in explicitly racial discourse and discussion among White people does not guarantee or depict a concerted, conscious effort to redress centuries of racial disparities and the dismantling of a social system organized around White domination and privilege. On the other hand, this ability to engage in racialized discourse is itself a reflection of a privileged stance, in which White group members are able to—voluntarily and at the moment of their choosing—engage in explicit racial talk while remaining at a (physical, social, psychological) distance from the real-world effects or calls for reform (if not outright revolution) that these discussions often engender. Thus, it is a manifestation of White privilege or dominance to be able to be selective about the extent to which people can involve themselves in these discussions, especially as White participants are free to retreat or disengage at any time, often with little to no negative consequences or effects. This phenomenon, seen most clearly in White participants' calls for justice following the murder of George Floyd in May 2020, will be examined in further detail in Chapter 5, but here I note that this voluntary White participation in "race talk" does not reflect the inadequacy or end of colorblind racial ideology; instead, it merely demonstrates the extent to which it can be temporarily suspended when the need arises, and then easily taken back up again.

IGNORANCE AND RACIALIZED KNOWING

Agnotology and Selective Cognition

At a broad level, this project is interested in what people know about race; specifically, what do White residents know about the history of race in their city of Appleton, Wisconsin, and how do they think that history influences the city today? In the results that follow, I find that on the whole, people don't know much, and what they *do* know reflects a specific and narrow set of racial logics governed by what I have described above as the ideology of Whiteness, but these logics are made up just as much by what participants actively "know" as what they do *not*.

The worlds of science and knowledge production have historically and uncritically understood ignorance as that which is *not-yet-known*: a temporary state of a sort of naivete, the natural beginning point of scientific discovery that will soon be rectified via rigorous inquiry and experimentation (see Wehling 2021). Recent inroads, however, have come to question the "naturalness" of ignorance; although we are ignorant of many things in the "not-yet-known" sense, Proctor (2008), Wehling (2021), Dossey (2014), Croissant (2014), Merton (1987), and others have come to argue for the increased study of how—using various terminology, although I follow Proctor's (2008) coining of *agnotology*—ignorance is used as a deliberate strategy or choice. Proctor (1995, 2008) points to how doubts about the scientific study of the effects of smoking or climate change, for example, are weaponized to continue making profits for tobacco and oil companies. In these cases, the space left by the disclaimer that "more research is needed" is invoked to not do *anything*, while future research that *could* eliminate the lingering unknowns around the harms of smoking or fossil fuel dependence is blocked by defunding research and political machinations. At the same time, deliberate ignorance is seen in everyday, interpersonal arenas as well, although to equally strategic ends.

Del Rosso (2022), for instance, examines the role of *denial* in social life, noting that although sometimes we deny or feign ignorance of things for arguably good reasons (ignoring, for example, the presence of spilled food on someone's clothing as a way for them to "save face"), just as often specific rhetorical moves of denial such as disclaimers, excuses, and justifications are used to direct attention away from that which is meant to stay hidden (e.g., covering up the fraud committed by a corrupt institution, or rationalizing the misdeeds of a public figure). Zerubavel (2006:23) similarly examines the distance between that which is privately known but *not* publicly expressible and should therefore be "ignored"; however, he notes, "ignoring something is more than simply failing to notice it. Indeed, it is quite often the result of some pressure to actively disregard it." Presser (2022) considers how silence and "the unsaid" allows those who *do* tell the authoritative version of a story to gain and maintain power though defining what is "true" about a given event or situation. She argues that social privilege "gives people an emotional stake in the ignorance" of an event or issue, as *knowing* that a troubling situation exists and understanding or conceiving of it as problematic is "co-requisite" to *treating* it as a problem (Presser 2022:24). What is left unknown or ignored, and what is classified as ignor*able* reflects hegemonic ideologies and values, and in order to maintain the stability of those ideologies and values, those facts that could be disruptive are moved from that which *should not be said* to that which *cannot be known*.

Alongside questions of what is known versus left unknown and *why* is the concern of cognitive sociology which, broadly speaking, investigates the role social forces in personal meaning-making, often focusing on the "lumping and splitting" of concepts or "things" in order to provide social actors with meaningful (yet socially constructed) categories with which they can make sense of the world, in part because everyday life would become nearly

incomprehensible without such conceptual shorthands (see Brekhus et al. 2010; Zerubavel 1996). Part of the process, for Brekhus and colleagues (2010), is the matter of *attention*: some, but not all, features of a concept are relevant to determining when to "lump" and when to "split," leading to some elements receiving attention while others are ignored; indeed, as Proctor (2008:7) notes, "ignorance is a product of inattention." In a social system shaped by Whiteness, it is what is ignored, denied, or deemed unimportant in the process of distinction-making that is often the most troubling, as Whiteness eludes attention and instead is seen as "normal" or "natural," as I have argued earlier (ibid.; see also Mills 2008).

Racial Ignorance, Memory, and Cognition

If dominant and hegemonic ideologies shape what is understood as "knowable" versus *not* knowable, the racial ideology that allows and maintains White racial dominance is enacted through what Mueller (2017; 2020) calls *racial ignorance*. Although I examine and deploy racial ignorance in greater depth as it is made visible in my collected interview data in Chapter 5, I note it here as a key means through which the ongoing and harmful effects of institutionalized racism are simultaneously perpetuated *and* rendered invisible so that its White beneficiaries can continue to reap the rewards without "knowingly" benefitting from racist policies and practices. Mueller identifies five tenets that make up racial ignorance:

> (1). The *epistemology of ignorance*, or the "way of knowing" (2020:147) that is always already aimed towards *not* knowing and mystification.
>
> (2). *Ignorance as an ends-based technology,* or the underlying function or motivation of racial ignorance, in which White group members hold a "unique, rational investment in *not* understanding a variety of things related to race, racism, and racial domination" (2020:149).

> (3). *Corporate White agency*, in which White racial ignorance continues not only because of the material (or "ends-based") interests White group members have in maintaining it, but because "White people hold an unparalleled collective power that makes sustaining a limited, empirically challenged worldview possible" (2020:152).
>
> (4). The *centrality of praxis*, or the extent to which racial ignorance is actively deployed and defended by its White participants; additionally, praxis also demonstrates that racial ignorance is acted upon by White group members on an everyday basis (for instance, as I reviewed in Chapter 1, the residential choices that White homebuyers make).
>
> (5). Finally, *interest convergence*, where the material and psychic investments that White group members have in maintaining White racial hegemony means that "white people's individual and collective willingness to embrace critical racial consciousness…will align most readily with subordinated races' perspectives when doing so helps maintain conditions of White domination" (2020:156).

Within the totalizing framework that racial ignorance (and those who benefit from it) creates, over time its effects are seen (or rather, made invisible) in what is remembered or forgotten, what is kept or discarded in discourses of race and racism, and what is rendered cognitively possible. In the study and results described in the coming chapters, I refer to the effects of racial ignorance as they are seen in how White Appleton residents understand and talk about the city's racial past and present as *(non)knowing*. That is, participants' responses reflect a racial ideology or cognition of "how race works" that on the one hand "knows" certain things about the social construction and significance of race, racism, and the ongoing effects of individual and systemic racial prejudice and inequality. At the same time, this knowledge is always and already deployed with an *absence* or ignorance at its heart: namely, a *non*-awareness of the ways that participants' everyday, lived-in environments and social contexts in the city of Appleton are shaped by a history of explicitly anti-Black racism and violence. I use *(non)*knowing to emphasize the extent to which this ignorance of the past and its effects on the present is actively maintained through participants *not* attempting to discover or learn about the past, nor are attempts made to connect

observed racial disparities with what *is* known about the past. This work is done within the framework described by Charles Mills (2008:242) in which "the editing of white memory has more concrete and practical consequences also: it enables a personal self-representation in which differential white privilege, and the need to correct for it, does not exist. In other words, the mystification of the past underwrites a mystification of the present," as I suggest that White participants do not need—at a moral, personal level—to remedy what is not unwell.

The Personal and Collective in Memory and Meaning-Making

The continuous workings and negotiation of memory and meaning-making take place both internally and collectively, scaling up to create *communities* of shared meaning, and these communities—as I argue in subsequent chapters—become deeply rooted in place. Bellah and colleagues (1985:153) argue that "Communities…in an important sense are constituted by their past—and for this reason we can speak of a real community as a 'community of memory,' on that does not forget its past. In order to not forget that past, a community is involved in retelling its story, its constitutive narrative." Here I suggest that communities are just as constituted by what is *not* passed on—by what is forgotten, erased, or left out of retellings and transmissions of "official" histories and narratives.

In her examination of how elderly, White residents of Greensboro, North Carolina remembered the events of the Civil Rights Movement that took place in their city, Lavelle (2015) observes that participants misremembered the past both by minimizing the active and ongoing anti-Black racism that took place in the city, and by improving the historical depiction of White people or by framing the White people as the "real" victims of racism during the Civil Rights Era. In addition to this reliably inaccurate rendering of the past, Lavelle (2015) notes that her participants—although agreeing that the Jim Crow era, slavery, and the racism of the past was

"bad" or immoral—were clearly uncomfortable, if not outright resentful, of explicit links being made between the racism of the past and the racial conditions of the present, both in Greensboro and with regard to "race relations" more broadly. In the examinations that follow, I find that my own participants engage in recounting histories that are false or factually dubious, while also providing justifications and explanations that evade their own (previously stated) understandings of race and racism. The narratives, histories, and logics seen among my participants are the result of a constant negotiation between collective meaning-making (a reflection of social worlds organized by and measured against Whiteness) and the intimate and personal psychic moves of cognition and belief, even as those personal beliefs take on moral significance (see Mills 2008). As Brekhus and colleagues (2010:64) note, "the racialized social structures within which we exist map onto our cognitions, providing ideological cartographies that allow navigations through social life. Racialized social structures are not just 'out there,' they are mapped 'in here.'" Yet, collective identities and social contexts are central to the construction of the collective memories and narratives that are maintained and passed on by the individuals who constitute those collective identities. As the narratives, histories, and explanations both include and exclude certain details (to specific ends, I have argued), the determination of what stays in or out of the "official story" is fundamentally social: "Absences evolve from prior absences, guided or mandated by particular social orders, and in particular social settings" (Presser 2022:105). In the chapters to follow, I consider my participants' accumulated histories, understandings, and beliefs that together depict how Whiteness has shaped—and continues to influence—the social world of Appleton, Wisconsin.

CHAPTER 4

QUALITATIVE METHODS DESCRIPTION

RESEARCH REVIEW AND STRATEGIES

The results that I present in the next three chapters consider the interactions—and consequences of those interactions—between how White residents of Appleton, Wisconsin understand and think about race and racism, the city's history, and its relatively high degree of White racial homogeneity. Specifically, I examine how White residents understand the past, interpret the city's characteristics in light of its past, and understand and assess the city's increasing racial and ethnic diversity. To identify how Appleton residents understand and conceptualize these topics, I relied on semi-structured, qualitative interviews as my primary method of data collection. Although my participant sample was small (n = 32) and not representative of White Appleton residents more broadly—for reasons that I describe in my section on data collection below—I believe these results stand as a case study of how White, middle-class, and liberal-leaning residents of a small, historically Sundown Midwestern city think about (or rather, *don't* think about) the anti-Black history of their community and the benefits that they derive from being White people who live in that city today. As I described in Chapter 1, Appleton is by no means exceptional, either as a small city *or* as a historically Sundown community, thus it is valuable to identify and understand how White residents work in the present to justify and maintain the city's current hierarchy of social relations while erasing the mechanisms that established it.

DATA SOURCE

Recruitment

To recruit participants, I began by posting a call in February 2022 for participation in an "Appleton local history project" on my personal Facebook profile, as well as in an open

Facebook group called “All Things Appleton,” a general-interest group where residence in Appleton was not a requirement for membership. Recruitment—along with most of the data collection process—was conducted online due to the travel restrictions and challenges resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic that began in the spring of 2020. I discuss these limitations in more detail in a description of interview locations below. Participation was described as consisting of one interview of about 45 minutes in length, and I emphasized that the project was focused on hearing about peoples’ experiences of living in Appleton and about their thoughts and attitudes about living there. I noted that participants did *not* need to have any interest or expertise in Appleton’s history to participate; the only requirements for participants were that they needed to be at least 18 years old and a current or former resident of Appleton, and, by necessity of the technological constraints, be willing and able to be interviewed either over the phone or on an online video call. People interested in participating or learning more were invited to fill out a brief contact form, from which I retrieved their email addresses to answer any questions and, if they agreed to participate, schedule an interview.

In my initial round of contacting respondents who filled out the interest form, many simply did not respond to my introductory email. However, for those who did reply, I scheduled video calls, which I conducted starting in February 2022. I discuss the interview process in a later section, but early interviews also proved to be an invaluable source of interview participants via snowball sampling (see Singleton and Straits 2005). In these interviews, which were with people who I did not know, I invited them to pass my name and contact information along to anyone who they thought might be interested in participating. This request was usually made towards the end of our conversation when I was concluding my interview questions and reminding participants of how they could contact me with any future questions or concerns.

Furthermore, as I am a long-time Appleton resident with ties to the area since my family moved there in 2006, five of my participants were people who I already knew prior to starting my recruitment process. I had several friends and acquaintances who currently work as pastors and in other public-facing positions that place them in frequent contact with a variety of Appleton residents, and I believed these people would be able to provide insight into the social context of the city as their work gives them a distinct perspective on Appleton's population and its changes in recent decades. I contacted these people directly to invite them to participate, and they served as key informants to this research, acting as valuable sources of both interview data and additional participants through their referrals to my project and research (Singleton and Straits 2005). Two participants in particular who were prior acquaintances, Evan and Logan,[7] were invaluable in providing me with contact information for a group of occupationally diverse potential interviewees, both because they knew many people working in a variety of fields throughout the city, and because their recommendation of me and my project invited access to people who I would have otherwise been unable to reach.

Participant Characteristics

In the end, my participant group consisted of 32 past and present residents of Appleton. One participant racially identified as Hmong and the rest identified as White. Participants ranged in age from 26 to 88 (with a median age of 62), and included 17 women and 15 men. Seven participants were lifelong residents, having been born in Appleton and leaving only to attend college before returning to and remaining in the city. Eleven participants were long-term residents who were not originally from Appleton but had moved to the city as children or as

[7] All names are pseudonyms. Some identifying information, including occupation, has been changed to protect participant anonymity.

young adults and had spent most, if not all, of their adult years in the city. Ten participants had moved to Appleton either recently (the most recent arriving in 2021), or later in their adult lives. Finally, four participants were not currently living in Appleton at the time of their interviews; however, they were included because they had either recently moved away from the city, or they had grown up in Appleton, and I believed they would offer valuable perspectives on Appleton's past.

All but one participant had received at least a Bachelor's degree, with eight having some form of graduate education. In 2023, nearly 35 percent of the city's residents age 25 or older (and 34 percent nationally) had at least a Bachelor's degree, thus the educational attainment among my participants is decidedly *not* representative of the educational attainment at the city- and national-levels. I did not take potential participants' level of education into consideration either in recruitment materials or in screening. However, the nature of this study—namely, its focus on local history and changes seen in the community—may have been more appealing to people with more scholarly personal interests and to people who are perhaps more widely read or attuned to social issues. A more educationally diverse participant group may have yielded more divergent results.

When I asked participants how they politically identify, one participant identified as a Republican, five identified as conservative-leaning but not Republican (namely, not supporting former Republican President Donald Trump), four identified as moderate, five identified as liberal-leaning, seven identified as Democrats, and one identified as a progressive liberal; eight identified as independent or neither party. As I describe below, I interviewed the mayor of the city of Appleton, and while I did not ask him about his political affiliation, he ran for election in 2020 with the Democratic Party. The independent and liberal-leaning characteristics of my

participants—although not explicitly examined in this study—are not representative of the city or state as a whole. As recently as the 2022 midterm elections, numerous Republican candidates won their races in both Outagamie County and state-wide (CNN 2023), thus the results in the following chapters are likely understating the conservative bent of the city's population.

Interview Locations

Twenty-six of the 32 interviews were conducted virtually via video-call software or by telephone, a result of the wholly unexpected COVID-19 pandemic that began in the United States in March 2020. I began the IRB approval process for this project in September 2021, when it was unclear if plans for in-person interviews would be approved by the IRB, or if in-person contact would even be safe for my participants or me due to the ongoing pandemic at the time. Consequently, the beginning of my data collection process for this project—as approved by the IRB—relied on online video interviews from my home in Knoxville, Tennessee with my participants (mostly) in Appleton, Wisconsin.

By early 2022, it appeared that the spread of COVID-19 had slowed significantly, and in-person gatherings had largely resumed with minimal indoor social distancing or masking precautions taken; it seemed reasonable by that time to pursue in-person interviews in Appleton, since traveling to Appleton would allow me to reach respondents who I would not have contact with otherwise. Subsequently, I revised my IRB project protocol to be able to travel to Appleton in August 2022 and conduct in-person interviews over the course of a ten-day visit, supported by a research fellowship. Doing so also allowed me to get an "on the ground" perspective of how people used and congregated in public spaces, and to see how social interaction and environments "look" in Appleton on an everyday, informal basis. Additionally, I requested—and was granted—a face-to-face interview with the mayor of the city of Appleton, as he had begun

his first term in office in spring of 2020, replacing the incumbent mayor who had served in the office since 1996. I hoped to hear his perspective as someone who was much younger than both his predecessor and many of my other participants. Additionally, because he had only relatively recently entered office, he was tasked with setting the political and legislative agenda for the entire city. My interview with the mayor, then, was valuable in large part because of the "official" perspective he provided on many of the social issues that my participants raised; specifically, as Chapter 7 discusses, my participants had a variety of opinions and beliefs about the refugee resettlement that has continued to take place in the city, and the mayor offered a compelling viewpoint as the elected official who continues to play an active role in allowing and supporting those resettlement efforts. I conducted 24 virtual interviews prior to this trip, and six interviews in-person while I was in Appleton; the final two interviews were conducted via Zoom after returning to Tennessee. Although I discuss participant homogeneity and homophily in a later section, here I note that, had the majority of my data collection process been performed in-person, I believe it would have been easier to recruit more racial and ethnic minority participants, especially as my online interview process inherently excluded those lacking access to the necessary technology. At the same time, over the course of the analysis process, it did not appear that the in-person interviews were of markedly different quality than the interviews I had conducted virtually. Although the in-person interviews were on average longer than the virtual interviews, using video call software to conduct interviews long-distance did not decrease the quality of the data they yielded—I suspect this was in part the result of my conscientious efforts to build rapport with virtual participants, which I discuss in a section below.

DATA COLLECTION METHODS

Data was collected through semi-structured qualitative interviews that lasted between thirty and ninety minutes in length. Rubin and Rubin (2005) identify the qualitative research interview as a naturalistic extension of ordinary, informal conversations, in which the interviewer focuses closely on the meaning of what their interview subjects share and express. Rather than observational methods that show what participants *do*, or positivist approaches that presuppose a detached and "neutral" experience of a given event, the qualitative interviewer is interested primarily in how participants understand, explain, and describe the meanings of the topic at hand *for themselves* (ibid.). In this research, I am interested less in the objective history of Appleton's Sundown past, and more in participants' understanding of "what happened, why, and what it means" (Rubin and Rubin 2005:6) as it pertains to racial homogeneity in the city of Appleton, Wisconsin. Qualitative interviews provided conceptual space for the tangents, follow-ups, and "I'm not sure if this is relevant"-type statements from my participants that together revealed how an interplay of racial awareness and (non)knowing work to maintain the racial-social environment among White residents of the city, and in the sections that follow I discuss both the development and process of conducting these interviews, as well as the challenges and limitations to this approach that emerged.

Interview Questions

Since I was interested mainly in participants' informal, personal beliefs and opinions, interviews were semi-structured and informal in nature, guided only by a general outline of topics to address. Consequently, after collecting demographic data from participants including their age, occupation, political affiliation, level of education, and length of time living in Appleton, I moved to open-ended questions that took up the majority of the interview time. I began by

asking my participants questions about their perceptions of Appleton, including what kinds of people lived there, what they believed was attracting people to the community, and what they would like to see change in the city. Next, I moved to ask about perceptions of racial and ethnic diversity, perceptions of segregation or inequality in the city, and their level of awareness of Appleton's history. Finally, I asked participants about their opinions on the extent to which they believed racism and racial inequality are still problems today, as well as what they believe should be done about those problems.

In moving through these groups of questions, many participants went on extended tangents and explanations, and I asked follow-up and extending questions that were not part of my prepared interview schedule, thus not every participant answered every question. Furthermore, the interviews frequently became much more conversational by the end, and participants and I quickly moved beyond a formal question-answer format to more informal exchanges. As Snow, Zurcher, and Sjoberg (1982) point out, in everyday speech we frequently elicit further information not only through questions but also through comments, and such an approach may, in fact, be desirable in the pursuit of discovery and new knowledge; in the case of this project, I was seeking participants' understandings and interpretations of events, rather than asking them to verify whether an external event was "true" or not (although I address the issue of validity in a section below). I pursued a more informal and conversational tone not only to help put participants at ease while talking about potentially sensitive subjects but also to resist presenting questions as having a "desired" answer, since

> Questions…frame answers by establishing the parameters around the field of acceptable responses. They circumscribe the respondent's options….In contrast, interviewing by comment allows the interviewee to define the response field in accordance with his or her frame of reference. The interviewee is not obligated to respond in terms of a pre-established or suggested reality. (Snow et al. 1982:289).

Thus, an interview protocol was used to guide the direction of interviews, particularly among more reserved participants, yet most interviews did not strictly follow the prepared guide.

Interviewer Rapport and Interaction

A significant contributing factor to the overall "tone" of the interviews was that, as I described above, 26 of them were conducted via virtual video call or by telephone. In the interviews that were conducted virtually or by phone—to counteract what I believed would be likely awkwardness or apprehension about spending a significant amount of time talking to a stranger about their private lives and beliefs—I attempted to build rapport by taking a relaxed, friendly approach with my participants, or what Sun, Conrad, and Kreuter (2020) identify as the "personal" interview style versus the "task-oriented" style. Additionally, by 2022 conducting meetings virtually on video-call platforms like Zoom had become somewhat commonplace as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, and I attempted to show participants both my attention and that our video connection was working by engaging with their statements through nonverbal signals like nodding and smiling, likely more than I would have during an in-person conversation. My choices in presentation and interaction with participants, however, align with the conversational nature of qualitative interviewing (see Rubin and Rubin 2005), and I believe the pressure I felt to "look friendly" during the Zoom interviews ultimately improved my engagement as an interviewer and provided richer contributions from participants than I initially expected from virtual interviews.

The question might arise, then, about the possibility of social desirability bias being present in participants' responses, particularly in light of the relaxed and conversational nature of the interviews (see Bergen and Labonté 2020; Nederhof 1985). That is, to what extent were participants giving responses that they believed were more socially acceptable, or that they

thought I "wanted to hear" rather than what they actually believed? Although interviews were on the more informal end of the spectrum (see Qu and Dumay 2011), I did not explicitly agree or disagree with much of what participants shared, nor did I share my own beliefs and opinions outside of providing the general contours of my research. At the same time, Sun and colleagues (2020) found that in cases of high rapport between interviewers and respondents, rather than inhibiting respondents' disclosure of sensitive or compromising information over fears that it would tarnish the interviewer's opinion of them, respondents were *more* honest with interviewers when rapport was higher. Thus—and as I discuss further in the next section—although I treat participants' statements and responses as "true" in that they reflect how participants define a situation (rather than an attempt to deceive me as the researcher), I also do not believe that desirability bias significantly affected my results.

Despite participants' statements that I found to be alarming to some degree for a variety of reasons (see Zhang and Okazawa 2022)—discussed in the next chapters—no participants were particularly hostile or uncooperative, and many of the participants expressed interest in my project's conclusions and curiosity about my graduate school experience, as well as more informal topics such as the differences between living in Wisconsin and in Tennessee. In that sense, the goals of my research again draw from Rubin and Rubin (2005:14-15. Emphasis in original), particularly in terms of the role of participants:

> [t]he term conversational partner also emphasizes the uniqueness of each person with whom you talk…Some conversational partners are self-revelatory, others more restrained and formalistic. Some need prodding to elaborate; others won't stop talking. Some have keen memories and provide lots of evidence, whereas others speak tentatively or are given to speculative conclusions….Asking everyone the same questions makes little sense in qualitative interviewing. An interview is a window on a time and a social world that is experienced one person at a time, one incident at a time….*Qualitative research is not simply learning about a topic, but also learning what is important to those being studied.*"

My goals for this research were essentially just what Rubin and Rubin (2005) suggest above: what was important to my participants, and *why* was it important?

It seemed relatively simple to identify *what* was important to my participants: I asked them and believed that the answers they gave me were "true" to them. Identifying *why* those things were important, however, called for a more interpretive process of "reading between the lines" and considering their stated beliefs within the context of the social and material environments they participate and live in, as well as identifying the ideologies and social systems that maintain those environments. I present the results of this interpretive process in the next three chapters, but I note it here as a point of tension between what I asked of my participants, what I did with their responses, and what I gave them in return. This research was conducted from a position of what Gold (1958) calls the *participant-as-observer*, or what Singleton and Straits (2005) call the *active member*, one step detached from a complete participant. My participant-informants were aware of my role as an "in-the-field" researcher and I did not have to conceal my investigative agenda, but the interpersonal connections that I made with my participants (or had already, prior to the start of the project) were authentic and warm, and I did not feel that being particularly formal or mechanical during the interviews would be especially helpful in soliciting in-depth, spontaneous responses, especially in the already-isolating and impersonal setting of the video call. At the same time, I did engage in some degree of deception, both during the recruitment stage—describing my project as being about "local history," when that was not my real focus—and when participants asked me what I was studying during our interviews. I generally explained my area of research as being about racial inequality and residential patterns, but I did not disclose the critical nature of my work nor my focus on Whiteness. As I described above, this evasion of the particulars of my research objectives was in

large part an attempt to not influence my participants' responses and to help facilitate openness in what they felt they could disclose, but it is true that while I tried to build closeness and rapport with my participants, I did not fully reciprocate the sharing and honesty that I requested from my interviewees. Within the parameters of Whiteness, it is also worth noting that my deception was likely aided by my positioning as a White woman, as I discuss below.

Validity and Participant Claims as "Truth"

The research results that I present in coming chapters are the outcome of qualitative interviews that were conducted within an open and informal conversational environment, where I did not adhere to a rigid interview guide, nor did I ask participants to validate or provide evidence for much of what they claimed over the course of our interviews. Because this research is focused largely on what White residents themselves believe to be true, or an accurate description of the reality of living in Appleton from their perspective, I was interested primarily in the internalized, "common sense" understandings and explanations my participants held, and in the explanations that they most commonly use to make sense of and move through their everyday lives. In line with what Kvale (1996) describes as the purpose of the qualitative research interview, I wanted to know what my participants believed and valued in relation to their social worlds, and how they interpreted their social worlds.

Without evidence to the contrary, I believe that my participants were sincere in their stated beliefs and I do not believe they at any point gave responses that were intended to deceive me, but in the analyses that follow I do not unquestioningly accept the *validity* of their claims and beliefs. On the one hand, I cannot deny the lived realities of my participants that they shared with me, which oftentimes were suffused with personal and affective significance for participants. On the other hand, one's perception and memory is always a matter of selectivity, in

which certain things are erased, excluded, or unsaid (see Presser 2022; Zerubavel 1996), and as I demonstrate in the next chapter, the inclusion of some events and histories as "memorable" but not others is oftentimes a reflection of dominant ideologies that minimize and erase stories that would contradict the "official," accepted narrative. As I consider in my discussion of ignorance and erasure in the previous chapter, active ignorance and refusal-to-know are the exact mechanisms through which hegemonic Whiteness is maintained and perpetuated in the absence of anything explicitly "nasty"; thus, in the analysis that follows I present my participants' statements as *true* in that they reflect my participants' real beliefs, but I also consider those statements in light of both the observable historical record and also the ideological work that they accomplish within a wider racialized social system (Bonilla-Silva 1997).

Race, Participant Homophily, and Researcher Positionality

The nature of my overarching research questions and reasons for conducting this inquiry were inherently complicated by my own identity as a White woman talking to other White people about race, and a number of issues emerged relating to the purpose of the research, my participants, and my own identity as a researcher. First, was the issue of *homophily*, or the tendency for people to generally form social networks and ties with others who are similar to themselves (see McPherson, Smith-Lovin, and Cook 2001). In a community that was racially exclusionary and overwhelmingly White for several decades, and today is just under 80 percent White, it should not be surprising that my snowball sampling and recruitment efforts among my initial contacts in Appleton—described above—led almost exclusively to referrals to more White people. It was also to be expected that my use of a local Facebook group for recruitment efforts would reflect the homogeneity of the wider community, as Wimmer and Lewis (2010; see also Hofstra et al. 2017) note that the homophily observed in Facebook groups is on the whole largely

the same as that of homogenous "real life" social networks. Even online spaces such as Facebook groups, which arguably have fewer barriers to access and participation (e.g., free to use, no time constraints, and no geographic access issues), are subject to the same processes of network formation that create racially isolated social spaces; in a majority-White community like Appleton, a "local issues" Facebook group, then, was in retrospect unlikely to provide access to a significant number of residents who were not part of the White majority.

In addition to the challenge of recruiting outside an all-White pool of potential participants, the shared White racial identity between myself and all but one of my participants emerged as an additional consideration, both during interviews and in their subsequent analysis. The effects of racial matching (or difference) between interviewers and respondents has been subject to much discussion and observation over decades of social scientific inquiry (see Davis et al. 2013; Hill 2002; Rhodes 1994; Schaeffer 1980; Schuman and Converse 1971). Hatchett and Schuman (1975:527) specifically consider interviewer effects in White interviewee-respondent pairs and find that, similar to Black interviewee-respondent pairs, people are more candid and offer more socially unacceptable responses in same-race interview contexts, and that in mixed-race interviews "the process for both races seems to be one of avoiding responses that might offend the interviewer of the 'opposing' race," a finding echoed by Krysan and Couper (2003). Among White interviewer-respondent pairs, however, Hatchett and Schuman (1975:528; emphasis added) identify the apparent shallowness of the connection between higher levels of education leading to more liberal racial attitudes and a greater concern for racial equality: "It seems likely that it is more educated whites who have the strongest need to *appear tolerant* in black eyes, and that they are therefore the people most likely to shift upward in liberal expression when the interviewer at their door is black." When the interviewer in question is White "like

them," however, there is much less social motivation to appear "not racist." Although, as I discussed above, none of my participants were exceptionally hostile or explicitly racist, "Midwest niceness" is its own vehicle for unstated prejudices and hostility (see Kinard 2022), and I suspect that my position as a White scholar served as implicit "permission" to my participants to express beliefs and opinions that were racially prejudiced in nature. Gallagher (2000:72) suggests that "many whites are comfortable expressing their racism to white strangers because they believe their skin color makes them kindred spirits in racism, or at least sympathetic to the 'white experience,'" and there is much that I believe participants treated as "taken for granted" between us on account of our shared racial identity.

Ultimately, the purpose of this project and the nature of what I am investigating is inevitably tied up with my own identity and (sometimes) position in the social world of Appleton: as a former resident of Appleton with many ongoing and rich ties to the community, I still feel many of the tensions described by Kenny (2000:113) in her descriptions of a similar "hometown" investigation into race and racialization:

> if...middle-class whiteness, maintains its social hegemony through a kind of measured silence and anonymity…an ethnographer of whiteness necessarily seeks to break this code and hence give the lie to white privilege. I had come home to articulate that which normally cannot and should not be said, and I had come to do this not simply as an outside observer, one who could claim a kind of distance from her object of study, but as…[one] who personally and intellectually owes much to the community.

It is true that I did, and still do, owe much to my participants, particularly those who I already knew personally before the start of this project, and who, at the end of our conversations, expressed interest in my research and pride in my completing my PhD. It is not lost on me that I worried, for instance, about how my interactions with participants and my research might reflect on or "get back to" my family members who still live in the city (and who also have their own personal ties to some of my participants).

In this project I have attempted to follow Andersen's (2003:27) call for a study of Whiteness that ties White racialization and identity to the "material structures and operations of power" that White group members benefit from and have a vested interest in protecting and maintaining. Despite the challenges of attempting to prompt self-analytical race talk among my participants (and the majority's subsequent refusal to do so), they nevertheless presented a distinct ideological picture of what race and racism "do," who "has race," and how these distinctions shape who does and does not belong in the city of Appleton. Crucially, participants' racial ideologies are not exclusively abstract or theoretical concepts; instead, they both shape and guide the everyday choices that participants make, and also provide real, material benefits and advantages to White residents through the social systems and institutions that these ideologies support. On their own, examining White Appleton residents' racial attitudes—and the way they *form* and *express* those attitudes—may be an interesting, if ultimately abstract, project. But, the way those attitudes move into the creation and hoarding of meaningful benefits and opportunities at the expense of racialized minorities— as earlier discussions of the effects of segregation showed— creates an impetus for considering the relationship between abstract or purely mental beliefs and concrete, lived environments and contexts.

I do not know if it would have helped anything to spend more time dwelling on our collective White identities, and yet this tendency to focus on whiteness as "identity" disconnected from historically grounded practices, systems, and institutions is exactly what Andersen (2003) warns against. Or, returning to Kenny (2000:115): "Herein lies the differences between studying whites and studying whiteness. Whiteness is a set of social, economic, and historical practices on the quotidian and systemic levels. It is, in other words, about cultural content rather than skin color." This project was an "insider" investigation for me on two fronts:

racially, as someone racialized as White interviewing White Appleton residents, and interpersonally, relying on people and places in my "hometown" where I continue to return and notice the same changes my participants spoke of. Delmos Jones (1982, qtd. in Twine 2000:13) suggests that "the whole value of the insider researcher is not that his data or insights into the actual social situation are better— but that they are *different*," and it is my hope that in the research that follows I have represented my participants' views fairly while placing them in a context that gives a fuller truth.

ANALYTIC AND INTERPRETIVE STRATEGIES

Analytic Induction

The open-ended, exploratory aims of this study make the data well-suited for examination via analytic induction. First formulated by Znanieki (1934), analytic induction, broadly speaking, is a process through which each new case is used to further refine potential answers to the research questions. Illustrated in Figure 4.1 (from Bryman and Bell 2006) below, analytic induction first begins with a research question and a preliminary "hypothesis"[8] to answer the question, before moving to consider the cases under examination. The strength of analytic induction, and the reason for its use in this study, is its flexibility in incorporating exceptional and outlying cases, as the research hypothesis is continually refined to account for each new case, and ends only when new cases do not require refinement of the hypothesis; or, as Tacq (2007:189) puts it, "theoretical saturation" is achieved (see Katz 2001; Tacq 2007).

[8] "Hypotheses" in the analytic induction tradition are possible explanations that are refined throughout the analysis process, rather than formalized, testable expressions like those found in more quantitative or experimental research settings. My use of "hypothesis" here and elsewhere refers only to the AI understanding of the word.

In the case of this project, my research questions were intended to "survey the field" rather than test a specific theory, thus analytic induction provided a framework in which I could both create and refine an explanation for what I observed and heard from participants, while also leaving room for outlying and unusual responses. In a project reliant on people's personal beliefs and perceptions, it seemed misguided to limit the data under observation to "typical" cases, as my participants' statements, while not all *typical*, were all *real*; that is, they were the product of people's lived experiences, and excluding outlying cases would distort the extent to which this research looks at a "real life," everyday environment.

In this study, my initial hypothesis was that White Appleton residents were both unaware of the city's racial past and also understood its resulting White majority as a natural, inevitable outcome. Instead, through looking at new cases and adjusting my hypothesis to make sense of new and outlying responses, what I found was that although Appleton residents were, to varying degrees, aware of the city's racially exclusionary history, they both distinctly abstracted that history from the present benefits they derive from living there, and saw race "at work" in Appleton on a regular basis, although primarily in relation to people *not* racialized as White.

Coding and Analysis

To organize data in a useful format, I first coded transcribed interviews topically (see Richards 2015) using NVivo data analysis software, and the earliest codes consisting of topics such as "refugee resettlement," "housing availability," and "changes in Appleton." Next, I reorganized and refined the codes into subcodes to distinguish things like participants' assessments of issues (e.g., positive or negative feelings towards changes seen in the city), and the subject of their reminiscing or recollections about the past (e.g., the past in general versus personal narratives about their immediate family).

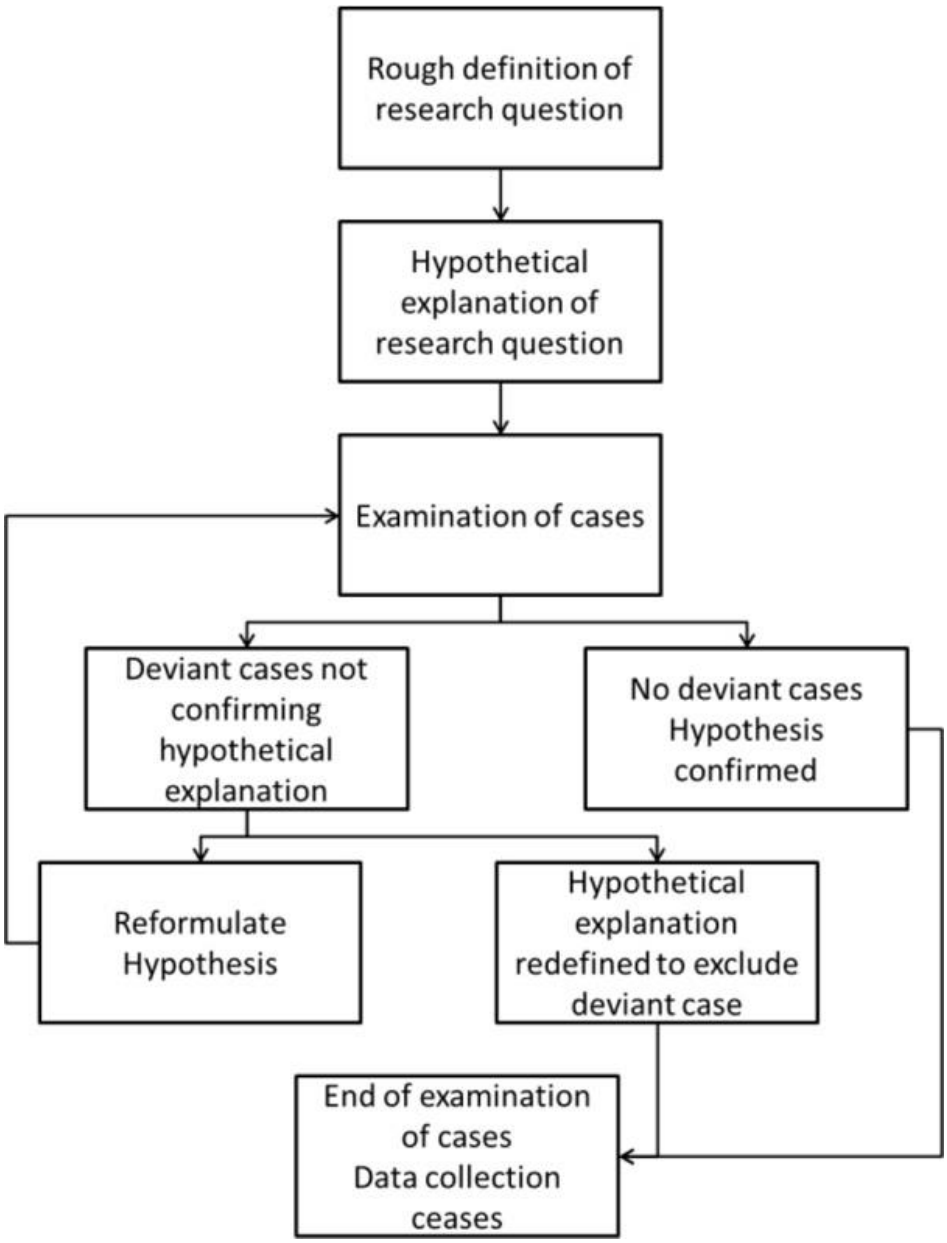


Figure 4.1. Analytic Induction Process (Source: Bryman and Bell 2006:426).

This refinement of my coding schema relied primarily on Saldaña's (2016) conception of *affective*, *evaluation*, and *values* coding categories, which together focus on participants' subjective assessments, emotions, judgments, and beliefs about various topics and reflect their perspectives or worldviews about the social world and environment of Appleton. By focusing on these expressions in the collected data, I was able to evaluate the extent to which Appleton's Sundown past did or did not play a meaningful role in how interviewed residents understood the city's present, or in how it influenced their conception of their own place (and the place of others) in the city.

In the course of creating these finer-grained topical subcodes, participants' statements appeared to coalesce around the themes of *absence/insignificance of the past*, *safety*, *assessing "others,"* and *belonging* (see Saldaña 2016). While refining my coding schema, I engaged in the analytic induction process of introducing new cases and refining my research hypothesis to account for new information. The emergence of the above themes as important (or at least perhaps unconsciously *central*) to participants suggested that the concepts of *White racialization*, *racial ignorance and erasure*, and *group threat*—examined in the previous chapter—would provide the most analytic usefulness in conceptualizing how White Appleton residents understood race as being "part" of what it means to live in Appleton, as well as their interpretation of why the city is how it is.

In the next three chapters, I investigate three overarching "moves" that White residents make in order to rationalize and understand the social environment of Appleton: maintaining ignorance of the past, understanding Appleton as distinctly "safe," and assessing people of color in the city largely on their ability to abide by White, middle-class norms of behavior and capitalist productivity. The picture of the City of Appleton, Wisconsin that emerges—and the

steps I have taken to create that picture—is ultimately intended to spark further critical inquiry into how Whiteness maintains its dominance through silence and pointed avoidance, and through the real and material interests that White people have in maintaining a racially unequal status quo; the argument I present in the chapters that follow, then, is an introduction to a racialized social arrangement that has remained unexamined for too long, and should not be taken as the final word on the matter.

CHAPTER FIVE

RACIAL IGNORANCE AND UNDERSTANDING THE PAST

The questions explored in this research begin with an inquiry into how White Appleton residents think about race. Specifically, what do they know about—or rather, how do they make sense of—Appleton's racial history? I explore this both at a broad, city-wide level, as well as at more individual levels to consider how participants recall events from the past where the race of the actors involved played a significant role, and how they make sense of Appleton's population makeup today.

To address these issues, I first return to the notion of *racial ignorance*, in which intentional non-knowing is applied towards matters of systemic racism and racial inequality. Through the lens of racial ignorance, I then examine participants' understandings of race in Appleton's Sundown past as well as within the history of the city more generally. Finally, I consider participants' responses and answers regarding current issues of racial inequality and injustice in the United States, focusing on the protests for racial justice in the spring and summer of 2020, as well as explanations of Appleton's current racial and ethnic makeup. Taken together, I consider how participants' responses in each of these areas reflect an ideology of *ignorance* or *non-knowing* rather than the more traditionally understood racial ideology of *colorblindness*, and I argue that this frame through which participants understand and contextualize the past and present leaves room for them to negotiate the extent to which racial injustice is a problem that they benefit from or are morally obligated to "do something" about.

RACIAL IGNORANCE

If ignorance, discussed earlier, broadly describes the ways in which non-knowing, silence, and refusal-to-know is activated and maintained across any domain where "knowing" is preliminary

or prior to action, then here it important to consider how non-knowing has been applied to matters of race and racism, or what Mueller (2020) calls *racial ignorance*. Racial ignorance is best understood as the cognition of race past, or *beyond*, the limits/usefulness of colorblind racial ideology. As described in Chapter 3, colorblindness as a racial logic argues that due to the victories of the Civil Rights Movement and the end of legalized explicit racism and racial discrimination, the persistence of racial inequality is now the result of individual failures (Bonilla-Silva 2018). Furthermore, proponents of this logic claim, because everyone formally has equal opportunity and protection under the law, talk or acknowledgement of race is no longer necessary, or may even be counterproductive, thus collectively the United States no longer needs to "see color" and can instead, as the name suggests, be colorblind (ibid.). Critiques of colorblindness point to the inadequacies of these explanations in understanding how racial disparities have continued to persist across almost every measure of wellbeing in the decades since the Civil Rights Movement (ibid.), as well as how it obscures the racialized nature of Whiteness and instead presents Whiteness as "normal" or unmarked while only racial minorities "have race" (Frankenberg 2008; Gallagher 2003; Lewis 2004).

Despite the usefulness of identifying colorblindness as the ideology undergirding much of the so-called race-neutrality of current social and political practices and policies, Mueller (2020) has identified the points at which colorblindness becomes insufficient in making sense of current racial discourses and the way that race is "working" in specific situations. Namely, colorblindness as an analytic lens sees racial meaning as both settled and unchanging—ignoring the always-contested nature of race and racial identities—and it too often sidesteps the *external*, material sources of racial inequality and unequal social relations, and instead the *ideology* of colorblindness is itself treated as the source of inequality (ibid.). As an alternative, Mueller

(2017; 2020) identifies *racial ignorance* as the mechanism through which White dominance and racial inequality is maintained. Instead of understanding ignorance as an absence or gap merely waiting to be filled with a "correct" or "true" perception of reality—including an understanding of the way that Whiteness and White advantage is systemically protected and maintained—here ignorance is an active, persistent non-knowing, "a process of knowing designed to produce not knowing surrounding white privilege, culpability, and structural white supremacy" (Mueller 2017:220).

Returning to the five tenets of racial ignorance introduced in Chapter 3—the epistemology of ignorance, ignorance as an ends-based technology, corporate White agency, the centrality of praxis, and interest convergence—here I focus on the first tenet, an epistemology of ignorance, which Mueller (2020:147) describes as "a way of knowing oriented toward evading, mystifying, and obscuring the reality of racism to produce (mis)understandings useful for domination." In the next chapter I consider the "ends" for which White Appleton residents deploy racial ignorance, but here it is important to identify the ways that conscientious non-knowing, or refusal-to-know, frames how my participants understand Appleton's history, as well as their own place in the city. Namely, while participants were informed about a number of race-related issues and willing to express their concern about, for instance, generalized ongoing racial inequality in the United States, participants were unable— or at least unwilling— to identify how race may be at work in their immediate, everyday social contexts. It is this absence of a connection between racial knowledge and applying it to their everyday lived experiences that suggests an epistemology of ignorance at work, which, true to Mueller's (2020:147) description, serves as "a hardy means to resist antiracist critique and evade the kinds of racial knowledge that would have moral and practical implications."

Participation and collective ignorance

Mills (1997) emphasizes the participatory nature of ignorance, further marking it as *not* a merely passive state or void that is simply waiting for knowledge to fill it. He argues for the concept of the *racial contract*, an implicit agreement of what is "true" about the meanings and significance of racial categories and differences in order for material benefits and advantages to be secured for people racialized as White (ibid.). In Mills' (1997:11) description of the socially constructed origins of racial categories—which in his telling were always about "the differential privileging of the whites as a group with respect to the nonwhites as a group"—the social meanings ascribed to racial differences are fundamentally premised on the untruth, or fantasy, of meaningful racial differences and White superiority. Tacit agreement or participation in this contract is fundamental to "what it means to be constructed as 'white'…[because] part of what it requires to achieve whiteness, successfully to become a white person…is a cognitive model that precludes self-transparency and genuine understanding of social realities" (Mills 1997:18). Here, a "genuine understanding of social realities" is a sort of knowledge or truth that one must work to *not* know; or, put differently, "one has an agreement to *mis*interpret the world. One has to learn to see the world wrongly, but with the assurance that this set of mistaken perceptions will be validated by epistemic authority" (Mills 1997:18; emphasis in original). In Mills' (1997) conception of ignorance, the untruth that is put forward as an accurate depiction or interpretation of reality is systemically propped up, with the whole ideological heft of Whiteness behind it both supporting it epistemologically and rewarding it materially.

Using the framework of racial ignorance as an analytic guide, in the remainder of this chapter I consider what my participants *do* know—or claim as true—about Whiteness and race in Appleton, moving first from race in the city's history more broadly, to Appleton's history as a

former Sundown town, to histories and personal narratives of race in participants' family and social lives, before concluding with how participants negotiate an awareness of current racial issues with the backdrop of an epistemology of ignorance.

AWARENESS OF SUNDOWN HISTORY

Appleton's past as a Sundown community is central to the questions about Whiteness and race that I ask in this project, so the extent to which participants were aware of this history is a crucial backdrop to later questions of racial attitudes and beliefs about the city and its qualities. Rather than asking participants what they knew about Appleton's Sundown history specifically, I asked questions about their awareness of Appleton's history more broadly. Between their responses to questions about Appleton's general history and discussions of racial and ethnic minorities in Appleton, nine out of 32 participants specifically used the term *Sundown* to describe the policies and practices of racial exclusion in the city, with statements such as this exchange between Cathy and Dennis, a married couple in their late seventies who had lived in Appleton since 1969:

> Cathy, 79: I think it was called, I wanna say the Sundown.
>
> Interviewer: Yeah, Sundown towns.
>
> Cathy: Yes…the Appleton was really a, had some nasty stuff in it too. And in terms of treating black people, I don't know how far back that goes. Probably maybe early 1900s maybe.
>
> Dennis, 79: I've never heard of that.

Cathy is aware of the term "Sundown," although she proceeds to say that Appleton had "some nasty stuff" in regard to the treatment of Black people, yet the exact mechanisms of what it means to be Sundown is unspecified. While Cathy suggests that this mistreatment of Black residents goes back possibly to the "early 1900s"—a consigning of racial hostility to the distant past—Dennis on the other hand has never heard of either the term Sundown or of Appleton's

past as a city that is unwelcoming or hostile to people of color, despite their living in the city for the past fifty years.

Ty, a Hmong man whose job requires consistent and close interaction with both White and racial and ethnic minority populations in the city—and the only person of color interviewed for this project—immediately identified Appleton as a Sundown town when asked what he knew about Appleton's racial history:

> Ty, 36: Appleton used to be a Sundown town. We don't like talking about that. Honestly, it's never mentioned. It is never mentioned. And I actually had to do research to find out about it. 'Cause when I first heard it, I was like, "No way." But then I found out the Timber Rattler players, any minority Timbers Rattler players had to leave the city at sundown and go stay somewhere else. And so I had a connection with, with somebody in the Timber Rattler organization that told me that and I was like, "Really? That's insane…. didn't know that."

Although I consider Ty's discussion of being Hmong in Appleton in greater detail in Chapters 6 and 7, here he points to another instance of racial and ethnic minorities being allowed to visit—and work—within the city, but not being allowed to stay overnight. In this instance, he is recalling how racial and ethnic minority players on the Wisconsin Timber Rattlers—a Minor League Baseball affiliate of the Milwaukee Brewers—could not stay in Appleton past sundown. While Appleton remained almost entirely White well into the 1980s and 90s, the Timber Rattlers were founded in 1958, suggesting that Sundown policies were being enforced in the city well beyond the "official" end of the Sundown era in 1930.

Debbie, a 63-year-old developmental editor, describes the history of conservativism in Appleton, from the city being the hometown of Joseph McCarthy to the many local connections with the upper leadership of the neoconservative John Birch Society (which is currently headquartered in a small office in Appleton), before turning to discuss the ways that Black families were prevented from buying a home in the city:

> Debbie, 63: So in the 70s, the guy who owned Air Wisconsin... God, Karl Baldwin, Karl Baldwin owned Air Wisconsin.[9] He was a very wealthy man. At the time, he was good friends with everybody on the Chamber of Commerce, and everybody on city council. And, and this was when Kimberly-Clark was trying to bring Black people in and to, and to the executive program. And like, there was a lot of heavy recruitment to settle people here because their executive offices were here. And Baldwin and a group of his wealthy friends made it very clear that if any properties were sold to Black people, they would double the price to make sure that a home was not sold. Oh, yeah...there are a lot of racial covenants though on properties here at Appleton. A lot. So I don't know if you know about the Minneapolis mapping project, it's called Mapping Prejudice,[10] and they have done, they have mapped the entire city of Minneapolis for racial covenants and boy, look at the same lines, that is what the banks did. It's just been incredible to look at the power...and that's what was happening here in Appleton is...I remember when I first got here, the first thing I learned at school was that there had been a cross burning on somebody's lawn. And it was a KC executive who had just moved here. And I have looked at the history center here, there is no record of it. Wasn't in the paper, but boy, everybody talked about it and they talked about it for years. This is still a Sundown town in that respect.

Here, Debbie is describing the sort of informal, everyday practices of both unfairly raising the prices of homes for sale and racially restrictive housing covenants that not only actively kept Black residents from settling within the city, but also surely would have contributed to a reputation of it being an unwelcoming place for racial and ethnic minorities. Even after the end of legalized residential segregation and discrimination, she points to both informal practices by the city's economic elite, as well as acts of violence like a cross burning, to describe how White residents maintained the racial exclusivity of the city. She continues:

[9] Air Wisconsin is a regional airline based out of the Outagamie Regional Airport that was established in 1965 and now operates as a subsidiary of American Airlines. Karl Baldwin was one of the original investors in the airline and served as its unpaid President (see Andelman 1971).

[10] Mapping Prejudice is an interactive mapping project started in 2016 that allows users to locate properties that were historically subject to racially restrictive housing covenants and property deed clauses. It produced by the University of Minnesota, and can be found at https://mappingprejudice.umn.edu/

> You know, it is not safe for Black people to be out at night…Probably moreso than when I was in high school. And I will tell you why—there are some MAGA-hatted,[11] you know, 20 to 30 year-old White men in this community...Who take [off] at night after the lights go down, and you can't necessarily see who's driving all that clearly. Hopefully, there's enough snow on their license plates that you can't ID them. Not only do they hit Lawrence students going through the intersections on College Avenue and not stop for the blinking lights, but they also, they'll attack anybody driving who they see at night. There's road rage. It's scary. And I'm a 63-year-old White woman, but you know, I've driven in New York City, I've driven in Chicago, it's like I don't go near College Avenue at night because in the high...I remember in high school, you know, the guys would do the drag racing up and down College Avenue, who's all the same White boys as we got today. Except for now, they're carrying guns. And they're using their vehicles as weapons. Those vehicles are three times larger than my little Toyota, so they're scary and intimidating.

In this extended statement, Debbie is making a sort of connection between the Sundown practices of the past that kept Black residents out and the violence of the past that makes Appleton a place that is still unsafe for Black people. She describes unnamed, Trump-supporting young White men who carry firearms and drive dangerously down the main street through downtown Appleton, yet by the end of her description the specific racial threat these men pose has been shifted towards the danger they pose to her specifically, namely the size of their vehicles and their guns.

Some participants, alternatively, did not use the term "Sundown" specifically, but did describe practices that could easily be categorized as such. Consider Anne, a retired junior-high Spanish teacher, for instance, who describes the acceptance of Black visitors to the city, but only as long as they did not stay overnight:

[11] "MAGA-hatted" refers to the red hats emblazoned with the acronym commonly worn by supporters of former President Donald Trump. "MAGA" stands for Trump's 2016 campaign slogan "Make America Great Again," and its use is generally understood as a shorthand for support of Trump's White nationalist and extreme anti-immigration policies, particularly among young White men and in online and social media spaces.

> Anne, 74: Umm, when I was younger back in those days and like I say, there were not... There were not people of color in Appleton…Appleton was not very friendly to outsiders either. Are you…have you heard that before?
>
> Interviewer: This is what I'm actually researching, Appleton's history of racial exclusion and that kind of thing…anything that you can tell me about it…
>
> Anne: Okay, well, there was, well, Lawrence University, they had this deal about how, if a somebody came to this area, umm, who, let's say an entertainer or someone to be at a university. And it was okay, like, if you were Black, but you couldn't stay here overnight in the community, you had to be out of Appleton by sundown.

Or consider Bruce, a 78-year-old urban planner who had grown up in Appleton, spent several decades living in Indonesia doing humanitarian work, and then only returned to Appleton in 2021. Much of our conversation focused on his childhood in Appleton, as well as the changes he observed upon returning to the city after several decades.

> Bruce, 78: I remember in the '50s, my father used to go to a [unclear] He found out this was not de jure. This is only de facto. They were not allowed to stay overnight in a hotel. So he, he used to bring him home to stay in our house. He was a musician, you know, because he had no place to stay at night. So, I mean, that's changed obviously for the better.
>
> Interviewer: It's interesting that you mentioned that because my specific [research] is Appleton's history as a Sundown town where Black residents weren't able to stay. What did you hear about that growing up?
>
> Bruce: Concerning race?
>
> Interviewer: Yeah. And, well, Appleton being exclusionary to people of other races.
>
> Bruce: Yeah. I, I actually don't remember it being discussed. Um, certainly not in school or…and, and as I said, the, the, the limitation was not de jure. It was only de facto, which I, I didn't realize. I just found that out. You know, so it's a cultural norm, I suppose you'd call it.

Our conversation was disrupted by internet issues right at the point where I believe Bruce was explaining how one of his father's Black bandmates used to stay in their family home because he was not allowed to stay in an Appleton hotel. Despite my asking for clarification, I was unable to

get Bruce to confirm this arrangement, yet this story of the Black man staying in their home because he was unable to stay in a hotel, as well as Bruce's emphasis on the "de facto" nature of racially exclusionary policies in the city are in line with Appleton's past as a Sundown town.

Finally, like Debbie above, Joan, a semi-retired office administrator— also tells me the story of how Air Wisconsin President Karl Baldwin worked to keep Black households from settling in the city, and later suggests that racially restrictive housing covenants may have been in place to formally keep Black would-be homebuyers from purchasing homes in the city.

> Joan, 61: Well, I have a story about that, maybe you've already heard it. My mom found out fairly late in her life that there was an agreement among sort of the city fathers, that if a Black family came into Appleton and made an offer on a house that, that they were to be notified and they would make a counter offer to prevent them from buying the house. And I heard that Karl Baldwin who started what was called Wisconsin Air [sic], was part of that group. That's a... that's what my mother told me, and she found that out late in her life. So I don't know how to substantiate that, but that there was a, you know, an agreement that we would keep Black families out of Appleton this way.
> …
> I don't know if there are any covenants preventing Black people from buying in Appleton…I don't know if you've researched that, but I wouldn't be surprised if there were.

The practices that Joan describes point to how Sundown-style exclusion relied not only on preventing Black people from staying within the city just overnight, but also on keeping them from settling in the city long-term and building families and communities. Additionally—like a good social scientist—Joan questions how to substantiate this narrative. I was also unable to find evidence of this arrangement among the city fathers, but the informal nature of this exclusion, echoed by Bruce above, points to the ways that Sundown towns often did *not* have formal, or *de jure*, mandates or codified laws to enforce the racial exclusivity, and instead Sundown practices were unofficial—albeit consistently and sometimes violently enforced—agreed-upon arrangements among White residents.

Constructing Linkages to the Sundown Past

As seen in these statements, although they varied in the extent and details of their knowledge, many participants were aware of Appleton's history as a place that was not welcoming to people of color, particularly Black would-be residents. Thus, in line with above discussions of racial ignorance, participants' responses reflected an awareness of the city's racial history, and those responses were generally critical of the segregation and exclusion of the past. That is, participants' responses were not constrained by a sort of colorblind logic that dictates they should not talk directly about race, and participants openly agreed that Appleton's history of exclusion were discriminatory and unacceptable; at the same time, however, their discussions of Appleton as a Sundown town constrained the significance of Sundown practices to the distant past, rather than a collection of practices that contributed to the city remaining overwhelmingly White well into the 1990s and 2000s. This is an instance of racial ignorance in action: participants noted ways that Appleton is a racially segregated city, and the ways that racial and ethnic minorities may not feel safe, may be treated unfairly, or may be limited in their political influence and representation, yet the majority did not draw a connection between the city's Sundown past and its current demographics, or discuss the ways that Appleton is perhaps still not entirely welcoming to people of color. To acknowledge this link, I argue, would create a sort of moral pressure or obligation based upon the benefits that White residents derive from living in Appleton (discussed in the next chapter), thus an implicit refusal to acknowledge or cognitively "know" this connection does not disrupt the social organization of the community while also distancing oneself from the "bad racists" of the past.

At the same time, some participants *did* make connections between the city's Sundown past and present in a variety of ways. Tanya, a coordinator for a local foster care and adoption agency, suggests that the city's Sundown past has not only led to the majority-White population of the present, but also that it has contributed to an ongoing unwelcoming attitude towards incoming residents of color:

> Tanya, 48: I think that historically, I mean, Appleton was a Sundown town. So, um, I think it still has, not that name necessarily, but that's still known like, yeah, Appleton's totally White. Um, and that's unfortunate. Um, also the... I think that when, um, diverse people move into neighborhoods, no matter if they're Middle Eastern or you know, whatever, Black, Puerto Rican, Hispanic, whatever, it's not necessarily a welcoming with open arms kind of feeling, you know? Um, which is, again it's unfortunate, but I think that's it.

More personally, Emily and Logan below reflect on the influence that historical segregation has had on their own families and social worlds. Emily, a defense attorney in the city, comes from a family that has continuously been in Appleton and the surrounding area since the 1860s, and notes that some of her ancestors are buried in the earliest part of the city's oldest cemetery.

> Emily, 41: I was...did not know that Appleton was a Sundown town, uh, until the last few years. Like that was definitely not something that was highlighted when I was a child, or that I was even aware of until recently. I can't say that it's like a shocking revelation, right? Because I [unclear] We were in Appleton. I can't imagine how many African American people there were here in the 18, and early 1900s. Could not have been a lot [laughter] I'm assuming. Umm, but it was, it definitely, uh, left a feeling of shame. You know, like that would've been my ancestors. Right? Umm, so it definitely left, left me with a feeling of shame.

Over the course of our conversation, Emily discusses the ways that racial and ethnic discrimination and biases are at work particularly in the legal system, which she has experienced first-hand in her work as an attorney. Yet, despite describing her family's deep roots in the area with some measure of pride at the start of our interview, here she wonders what her family's involvement or connection was to the presence—and eventual absence—of Black residents in

Appleton. Despite assuming the likelihood that the number of Black people in Appleton prior to the Sundown era "could not have been a lot," she notes a "feeling of shame" at the, presumably, lack of evidence that her ancestors had supported racial equality or inclusion in the city.

Logan, the pastor of a large Evangelical church, and who I had had a long acquaintance with prior to this study, did not have as deep of ancestral ties to Appleton as Emily, but was born and raised in Appleton, leaving the city only for college and graduate school and having lived there continuously since 2005:

> Logan, 45: You know, I went through...I saw some of that in history recently. Somebody did something with that here and I read it, and I didn't know it and I was like, "Whoa!" I'm ashamed of that. You know what the fruit of it is, Abby? My generation, when I grew up, there were no Black people here and it's because they did that. Right? That ticks me off. That's a systematic planned thing that...that had generational impact. So I wake up, I grow up, my dad too, even at some of these places, like there's no Black people anywhere up here because there was a...there was racism at play, and we have to confront that.

Earlier in our conversation Logan had noted how none of his teachers, and very few of his classmates, in the Appleton public school system had been people of color, and here he points to the ways that that absence was by no means inevitable or natural, but instead the result of a history of systemic exclusion that, he notes, has had an effect on multiple generations. It is unclear *who* exactly has been "impacted" though— the racial and ethnic minorities who stayed away from Appleton for most of the twentieth century because of the city's perceived unfriendliness, or the White Appleton residents who have not had to consider why their social contexts and everyday environments are so racially homogenous?

Although I consider recollections of race within participants' more intimate family and personal relationships in more detail below, in the next section I move away from Appleton as a Sundown town specifically to consider participants' recollections of more generalized "race stories" that took place in the city's past.

HISTORY AND MEMORY OF RACE IN APPLETON

Distinct from my interests in Appleton's Sundown past, when asked about what they knew about the history of Appleton as a city, participants mentioned various names and topics—Jean Nicolet, Jacques Marquette, Appleton's own Harry Houdini, and Appleton as the city of the first hydroelectric-powered private home in the United States—without offering much in the way of elaboration or opinion, presumably because much of their knowledge came from a mandatory elementary school-era class on Wisconsin state history, with no participants expressing a particular interest in state or local history. More interesting, however, were the specific stories participants chose to tell me that were more broadly about race than just the Sundown history of the city. Specifically, there were two instances that several participants brought up: Marian Anderson and Angela Davis.

Racial Testimonies in Appleton

At various points in our interviews, participants often recalled instances from their own childhoods and the city's history that they believed to be "about race," or events where they perceived race to be salient to the discussion. Following Bonilla-Silva (2018:97), I call these responses *racial testimonies*, where participants provide "accounts in which [they are] a central participant in the story, or [are] close to the characters in the story." Unlike *racial story lines* which are mythic or fable-like in their function—that is, generic and meant to convey an ideological "moral" about race—testimonies on the other hand are perceived as "firsthand" and authentic. Yet, as Bonilla-Silva (2018:97) points out, "many of the testimonies whites tell still serve rhetorical functions with regard to racial issues.... [and] they are often tightly linked to the [racial] story lines…as personal experiences are understood and interpreted through the lens of more general racial narratives and understandings about the world." In the testimonies below,

while not placing themselves as central "characters," my participants nevertheless recalled these instances of discrimination in Appleton in a fair amount of detail, albeit in both cases participants were incorrect about a few specifics of these events. Bonilla-Silva (ibid.) states that one of the major story-lines, or overarching racial narratives that characterize the dominant racial ideology in the United States, is the notion of "the past is the past," in which discrimination and its effects are minimized by consigning them to distant history that is best put behind us. The two participant narratives that follow of Marian Anderson and Angela Davis function in a similar way—these events, and their significance, present a history of racial discrimination that no longer reflects the city's values.

One testimony of racial exclusion in Appleton that was mentioned to me by two participants was about the Black opera singer Marian Anderson, who in 1941 was denied entry to the dining room of the Conway Hotel in downtown Appleton after performing at Lawrence, although she was allowed to stay in the hotel (Anderson 2014). Michelle, a retired teacher, recounted this event to me in some detail:

> Michelle, 72: In fact, even when I was in high school, I believe, when a performer came to Appleton to perform, like Marian Anderson, I don't know if you know who she is…[she's] a singer.
>
> Interviewer: Yeah, an opera singer, right?
>
> Michelle: She was Black. She was not allowed to stay in the city limits, they had to take her to a different town to stay overnight because she was Black.
> Interviewer: I had heard rumblings of that happening, but I...
>
> Michelle: Oh it happened.
>
> Interviewer: Would that have been in like the early 60s?
>
> Michelle: Well, I graduated from high school in '68, and I don't really remember if I was here when she actually was here, but it would be in the '50s or '60s.
>
> Interviewer: Okay, so really not that long at all.

Upon hearing this story, I was taken aback by how recently—according to Michelle's telling—this would have happened. Further research after our interview though revealed that, as stated above, Anderson *was* allowed to stay in the hotel, albeit not permitted to eat in the hotel's dining room, and furthermore Marian Anderson visited Appleton in 1941—before Michelle was born around 1950. Although she did not suggest as much to me, Michelle may have merely heard of this happening from a family member or some other source growing up, and since her family only moved to Appleton in 1959, she notes that she might not have been in Appleton "when [Marian Anderson] actually was" but I believe it's worth noting here that *this* is a story that she chose to tell me about racial discrimination in Appleton. Although I was unable to determine the exact source of Michelle's knowledge of this event, this "moving up" of the more-distant past to be within the lifetimes of the participants reflects, I suspect, a sort of bracketed or boxed-off "race story" that participants use to understand or talk about race. The narratives about Marian Anderson's visit that participants relayed to me, regardless of when they actually occurred and whether or not participants had a lived or close memory of the events, involve recognizable public figures experiencing blatant expressions of racial discrimination and exclusion, whereas the more subtle, everyday mechanisms of exclusion that kept ordinary Black households and families from moving to the city—like the organizing of the Air Wisconsin CEO and others to keep Black families from purchasing a home in the city, discussed by Debbie and Joan in the previous section—were not nearly as well-known.

Another event recalled to me by two participants was the controversy surrounding an invitation for Angela Davis, a Black political activist, to speak at Lawrence University in 1976, when a student organization known as the Lawrence University Bicentennial Commission planned to invite Davis to speak at the University as part of a lecture series commemorating the

bicentennial of the United States. As Debbie described it, the primary point of contention was Davis's membership in the Communist party:

> Debbie, 63: I think it's still the case, that school teachers here in Appleton had to sign the loyalty oath, which is that "I have never been and am not now a member of the communist party." That was very much an issue when I was in high school, and we were trying to get Angela Davis here. She did speak, but at Lawrence. And the reason they would not allow her to speak on public school property is, she is a Communist party member.

The student group invited Davis to speak in Appleton on April 28, 1976, and applied as members of the public to the city school district to rent a gymnasium in the (at the time, only) public high school. The school board voted 3-2 to deny the rental request, at which time Davis' lecture was rescheduled for May 16, and in March the school board, voting 4-2, again denied the request to rent the gymnasium. In April 1976, the student-led commission sued the City of Appleton for an injunction allowing them to rent the space, claiming that the city's policy against renting school facilities for partisan events was not applicable since Davis was not speaking as a political representative. A U.S. District Court agreed with the Lawrence students, and Chief Justice John W. Reynolds ordered that the city allow the student group to rent the gymnasium and allow Davis to come speak (*Lawrence U. Bicent. Com'n v. City of Appleton, Wis*. 1976). Davis did come to Appleton to speak in May 1976, although I found no media coverage of the event besides one image stored digitally in Lawrence's archives (Lawrence University Archives 1976). As Anne described the event to me:

> Anne, 74: And, umm, there was this lady named Angela Davis back in the 60s. Okay, you've heard of her?
>
> Interviewer: Yeah.
>
> Anne: She was going to come to Lawrence University and speak, and it was a really big deal. And I…I was younger then, didn't pay a whole lot of, of attention to this kind of stuff. Umm, but I don't think she ever came, and I don't know what happened there. But I just remember it was a big to-do.

In this retelling, Anne admits that she was "younger then" and "didn't pay attention to this kind of stuff," but in our interview she believes that Davis ultimately did not come to speak. In 2016, Davis was again invited to speak in Appleton, this time as the headlining event and keynote speaker of the city's 25th annual Fox Cities Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Celebration, hosted by Lawrence University in conjunction with the community organization Celebrate Diversity Fox Cities and several other groups and churches. None of my participants—Anne included—mentioned this event, and while local media coverage of the keynote event discussed Davis' history as a "radical activist" including her time in prison and work as an abolitionist, no mention was made of her prior appearance in Appleton, nor of the legal battle over the venue for her 1976 address (Nyman 2016; Peterson 2015).

Like Michelle's testimony of Marian Anderson, Davis facing opposition over her visit to Appleton in 1976 is a self-contained narrative of White residents opposing an apparently controversial, "partisan" Black woman activist, and 1976—although certainly more recent than the 1930s and 40s—carries the stylings of "a different time." Yet, her 2016 visit to the city—apparently uneventful—was neither spoken of by my participants at all, nor did the city or actors involved in her most recent visit make any mention of the historical opposition she faced. Here I argue for the existence of an active erasure of the opposition faced by Angela Davis in the past in both media coverage and my participants' responses, in part because a recounting of her 1976 visit would almost certainly require mention of the school board—elected city officials—repeatedly denying permission to both her and the student organization that was sponsoring her address. That is, it was the school board of the city of Appleton, well past the Sundown era of the early 20th century, and *not* a stereotypical "bad racist" that opposed her visit. Although this absence is perhaps more troubling in media coverage of her 2016 visit rather than its absence in

Anne's statements, the gap surrounding Davis's return to Appleton works to disconnect past events of exclusion from the contemporary image of a progressive, welcoming community that both official visions of the city and my participants work to present because, after all, *the past is the past*. While Appleton is no longer a city that gives opposition to Black public figures and entertainers performing or visiting, as was the case during the Sundown era, neither is it a place today where White residents give unreserved welcome to racial and ethnic minorities. Here I turn to participants' more immediate and personal observations and understandings of racial hostility to consider how and when the significance of race is seemingly *not* understood; that is, where the utility of racial ignorance for White people is made visible.

SELECTIVITY AND RACIAL KNOWING

Racial ignorance, like issues relating to cognition and memory more broadly, is in part a matter of selectivity: knowing or remembering some things but not others, partly out of the constraints of simply not being able to know *everything* (see Brekhus et al. 2010; Zerubavel 1996), but also, as I've argued here, out of the utility that certain knowing provides. Within the context of racial knowledge, dominant racial ideologies are maintained by certain beliefs becoming so accepted that they are deemed "natural," or "common sense," while at the same time beliefs and information to the contrary are erased or simply excluded from the domain of knowledge or "knowability." These contrary data remaining within the domain of knowledge would mark them as valid, debatable, and potentially *true*—an outcome that *cannot* happen if the dominant racial ideology and resulting social system is to be maintained.

This kind of selectivity was seen, for instance, in participants' discussions of the protests that took place in Appleton—as in many cities across the country—in the spring and summer of 2020 following the murder of George Floyd at the hands of the police on May 25, 2020. I asked

about the topic of the protests in part because media coverage of the nationwide protests, demonstrations, and marches had been seemingly ubiquitous and nonstop and it seemed likely to be a subject that participants had heard of and formed some opinion on; consequently, I inquired about them also because talking about the protests—and the event that inspired them—meant inevitably offering an interpretation formed and filtered through one's racial ideological lens. That is, I believed that because the protests took place in response to the police killing of an unarmed Black man, participants could not discuss the meaning, (in)efficacy, or need for the protests detached from prior beliefs about racialized policing, criminality, and the extent to which racial identity influences how one moves through social environments. I asked participants what they had heard about the demonstrations—both nationally and more locally in Appleton—and their responses ranged from being supportive of the *right* to protest while not getting personally involved, to criticizing or questioning the efficacy of public protest as a force for social change, to personally participating in the events that took place in Appleton. However, *every* participant had an opinion, and no one declined to respond.

At the same time, although participants were generally in agreement that systemic racial biases within the legal system and law enforcement were real and harmful problems, these were issues that were treated as generally detached or distant from life in Appleton. As David, an administrator for the University of Wisconsin System, puts it,

> David, 42: I don't think people in this community want to believe that any of that stuff could happen here, right?...For the most part in our…mostly White community, it's about, you know, 'We're gonna back the police' and…I don't think that they feel that could happen here, so it's kind of a 'somewhere else' thing…I don't know if I should generalize, but I think, umm, you wanna believe that the community you're living in isn't like other areas of the country…and particularly in Appleton…there's this sense…[that] we are sheltered from the world.

Alternatively, participants such as Debbie felt compelled to commit to personal change following the events of 2020:

> Debbie, 63: I have spent a lot of time since the George Floyd incident—probably before that as well—but it ramped up a lot in terms of owning my history. Reflecting on events in my past which may not have been as I may have thought they were. And figuring out what I can do as a White person in my community to make a difference and trying to do that. And it's made me realize how hard it is to actually change, umm, anything at a systemic level [chuckle] here in Appleton.

On the one hand, Debbie notes reevaluating her own memories, admitting that her racial identity and social position may have influenced both her initial experience with and recollections of events, which points to the interplay between memory, knowledge, and social position. On the other hand, by the end of her statement Debbie notes hitting a sort of mental roadblock in her efforts to "make a difference" as a "White person in [her] community," as the challenge of creating racial justice at the "systemic level" appears, presumably (and laughably), insurmountable, while at the same time she points to no specific efforts or issues that she believes need to change in the community. Both David's and Debbie's statements point to an abstraction or distancing of the justice issues raised by the protests and the death that inspired them; such problems are not an issue in a community like Appleton, but if they are, there is nothing that can be done to change them.

Unlike what David and Debbie suggest above, however, Appleton *is* a city where events like the murder of George Floyd take place. On May 21, 2017, Lt. Jay Steinke, who at the time had been with the Appleton police department for 29 years, responded to reports of shots fired inside Jack's Apple Pub, a bar in downtown Appleton. According to the official summary and review released by the police department, when he arrived at and entered the bar, Steinke fired four rounds at a man, Henry Nellum, holding a firearm, injuring Nellum in the arm, while an unarmed and uninvolved bystander, Jimmie Sanders, was fatally struck in the lower back by one

of Steinke's rounds (Olm and Olson 2017). The department's Use of Force Review Team deemed Steinke's actions and use of force justified as he was "up to date with his required firearms training and was acting within the scope of his authority when shooting…Steinke was justified because his perception of the threat was reasonable and there was no other way for him to stop the threat or give a verbal warning" (DeCandido 2017:n.p.).

Steinke did not face any criminal charges in Sanders' death, returned to active duty following the internal review, and he retired from the department in 2019. On September 21, 2020, Nellum was sentenced to 16.5 years in prison for being a felon in possession of a firearm, first-degree reckless endangerment, and felony murder, among others, as Wisconsin law allowed for Nellum to be charged with felony murder "because [he] initiated the sequence of events which led to Sanders' death" (Kerhin 2020:n.p.), despite Nellum not firing at Steinke or hitting any of the building's occupants (ibid.).

Although local news covered the initial shooting confrontation, Steinke's review, and Nellum's sentencing, only one participant—Emily, the criminal defense attorney—mentioned this story to me. Indeed, I had heard nothing about the event prior to her telling me about it, which she brought up to contrast the response to Sanders' death in Appleton—where Lt. Steinke was a White police officer, and both Jimmie Sanders and Henry Nellum were Black—to that of George Floyd in Minneapolis.

> Emily, 41: [Appleton is] big enough, we've had...a shooting where a Black man was killed by a cop. An innocent Black man was killed by a cop. Now, I'm not saying, I'm not making any comments on...whether that cop should have been charged or anything like that. But the fact that there weren't mass riots afterwards, is wildly different than if that would have happened in Chicago, or St. Louis, or anywhere else, right? I mean, [Sanders] was—he was actually innocent. A cop just shot the wrong guy coming out of the bar. And, umm, like there was absolutely no uproar whatsoever about that. Period.
> …

> You know, in a lot of other cities that would have resulted in a very different reaction by the community than what it resulted in here.
>
> Interviewer: Was there any response from the community?
>
> Emily: No, not really. I mean, the DA did an investigation, said the cop was justified. That was the end of it.

Here, Emily—who admits to following the local news, and particularly law enforcement and crime-related stories perhaps more closely than most due to her job—points out a lack of response to this event by Appleton residents, where no real protest or widespread reaction to the killing of Sanders took place among the (majority White) population, although she makes no mentioned of the racialized dynamics at play. Yet, protests against the killing of George Floyd would take place in the central square of Appleton just three years later, and Nellum was sentenced in September 2020, *after* the widespread protests against police violence and brutality against unarmed Black people took place just months earlier that same year.

I believe this story tells us something important about how racial ignorance and selective (non)knowing "works" in Appleton. It is perhaps another question altogether as to why some officer-involved shootings get widespread attention but not others, but it is significant that only one participant—one who is particularly attuned to police- and crime-related events in the city—either knew about Sanders's death or felt it was relevant to mention, especially in the context of a question directly addressing race and police violence. It is possible that the other participants in my study had heard of or knew about the events of Jack's Apple Pub in 2017 but failed to see the parallels between Steinke's actions and the reasons for the protests of 2020, which I would argue is a sort of choosing-to-not-understand. That is, seeing the events in Appleton in 2017 as parallel or similar to those of Minneapolis in 2020 would, I argue, bring the issue of police brutality and racial injustice *too* "close to home," and Appleton would indeed be the kind of place where "that

kind of thing happens," thereby threatening or outright breaking the construction of Appleton as a city that is safe, friendly, and fair.

It is alternatively possible that my participants were truly unaware of the confrontation in the pub in 2017, and that event was not a story "available" for them to think about or consider in relation to my questions. Yet, the details of the story are not hidden or difficult to find. The significance of Sanders's death at the hands of Lt. Steinke, I suggest, has been minimized over the subsequent years, with it not mattering enough to Appleton residents either to spur any kind of organized response at the time it took place in 2017, or to understand it as a localized manifestation of the violence that was criticized in 2020. Return to Debbie's laugh at the mention of the need for "systemic change" in Appleton discussed above: *systemic*, in her use, connotes an untouchable, depersonalized, and machine-like process, and her somewhat sardonic laugh suggests that one person cannot hope to influence such processes in any meaningful way, and therefore no real action is ever taken. Such rationalizations of the impossibility of producing systemic change are used here to deflect or defer from addressing the extent to which Appleton is potentially not much better, or not much different, than White residents in communities who *are* understood by participants as being racially biased—if not overtly violent—against their racial and ethnic minority residents. Racial ignorance, then, can be seen in the ways that the killing of Jimmie Sanders is removed from the domain of something that can be "known" and therefore considered (and also morally requiring a response of some sort from White, anti-racist individuals) in light of ongoing discussions among White Appleton residents over the problem and persistence of police violence against Black Americans. Here I have considered racial ignorance as it is enacted in the context of a specific event that my participants were widely aware of: the protests of 2020. In the next section I consider how racial ignorance is used in more

general terms to naturalize social conditions and erase the ways that systemic racial exclusion has shaped Appleton's population over the years.

NATURALIZING ABSENCE AND THE UTILITY OF (NON)KNOWING

Blame It on the Weather

One point where racial ignorance became sharply visible was in responses to my inquiry as to why Appleton "looked" the way it did. I asked participants some variation of "Appleton is a majority-White city, why do you think that is?" and what emerged was a pattern of climate-based explanations. David suggests that while jobs are a large influence in bringing certain types of people into the city, Wisconsin's infamous winter weather also likely plays a role:

> David, 42: So I think weather has something to do with that…you know, if you are growing up in Knoxville Tennessee, or Houston, Texas, or Los Angeles, California...You know, what's the incentive to come to Appleton and stuff?… So, you know, it would have to be driven by jobs… you know, really, really good jobs by whatever your definition of that is.
> …
> I have a little knowledge of Kimberly-Clark [trying to recruit employees], and I would imagine a lot of major companies are like that. They're very into the Big 10, right? So, you know, the Big 10 schools, University of Wisconsin, Ohio State, Northwestern, right? So how do you get somebody from those schools, from Columbus, Ohio to come to, uh, Appleton, Wisconsin? And, you know, if the jobs, you know, if everything's equal, if...you know, out of college, yeah, I'll use a round number, $50,000, uh, to start, uh, a year, there's an opportunity in Appleton, Wisconsin, or there's an opportunity in Dayton, Ohio...you know, where do you...you know, which one are you going to? So, umm, so I think, you know, having businesses here is a part of it, and then, yeah, and then it's a climate thing. I mean, the people that are here want to be here. And, and it's tough to convince somebody from another state [chuckle] to, to wanna come live here.

In a roundabout way, David is on the one hand saying that large employers like Kimberly-Clark—in the nearby city of Neenah, but a major employer in the Fox River region including Appleton—recruit mainly from large "Big Ten" universities, and presumably graduates from these institutions, given the option, will not choose an entry-level job in Appleton if they can find

one closer to home. On the other hand, despite the elaboration on employment as a draw to the region, David concludes by stating that "it's a climate thing," and that would-be workers from outside Wisconsin have little motivation to subject themselves to, presumably, Appleton winters by moving to the city.

In a similar vein, Evan, a conservative Protestant pastor, suggests that both migration patterns established in the past and the northern climate have shaped Appleton's racial demographics:

> Interviewer: So you've mentioned that Appleton is a pretty racially homogenous city…why do you think that is?
>
> Evan, 43: Yeah. It's... I mean we're in northern Wisconsin. I mean it's probably the way... You know, I mean it's probably just geographically how it's located you know, as you've probably done your studies and you know kind of the African American migration. That happens you know to Chicago and things like that. You know they probably didn't make its way all the way up here, probably because of jobs or things like that. I think also...yeah, maybe just the climate you know? People that are from Nordic or Germanic experiences may be okay with the climate while... Hispanic populations are maybe more drawn to more cities.

Here, Evan is drawing on the history of what has come to be known as the Great Migration, where Chicago was indeed one of the most popular destinations for Black migrants moving out of the South (the extent to which he believes this migration is still happening is unclear from his statement). As I argued in Chapter 2, however, the concentration of Black residents in large cities like Chicago during the Great Migration era should be understood as a direct consequence of smaller cities and communities like Appleton actively preventing the settlement of Black households within their city limits. In Evan's telling, though, the migration patterns out of the South during that period are treated as inevitable and natural. Continuing on, like David above, Evan suggests that Wisconsin's climate plays some part in the extent to which people are willing to live in Appleton, except that he further specifies that people from northern European

"experiences" are more tolerant of the cold. On the one hand, one might wonder how this explanation makes sense in light of Milwaukee—a large Wisconsin city 100 miles south of Appleton, and about a 90-minute drive—that is subject to its own harsh winters, where only 32 percent of the population is White. On the other hand, Evan's explanation suggests a biological reason for Appleton's racial makeup, where the White majority is simply the outcome of natural(ized) tolerances or preferences for different climates. Although it seems common sense that people with more exposure to a particular climate will likely be more tolerant of its extremes, Evan's explanation above is only one half of his conception of (a lack of) racial and ethnic diversity in Appleton. He goes on:

> Umm, you see some Hispanic population here because of the work in Door County. You know the large Hispanic migration to Door County, or that kind of work. And that's why Green Bay I think has more of Hispanic population than Appleton does, because of that. And then of course you see the Hmong population that's here is because of the work of the Lutheran Church of bringing…the Hmong people during Vietnam over to the Fox Cities. So that's why you see the diversity there.

The diversity in Appleton, in this statement, is defined by the presence of the Latinx (or "Hispanic") and Hmong populations in the city, and the reasons for them being in the city are economic in the case of Latinx residents, and charitable, as seen with the settlement of the Hmong as refugees starting in the 1970s. As stated above, the absence of a significant Black population, for Evan, is explained through the availability of jobs, or possibly even the weather, but it is *not*, as he states, the result of racial hostility: "I don't...I really don't think it's for any reason that it's like, 'Okay we are entrenched racists and we don't want people'…I don't sense that at all. Umm, I just think it's the way it's geographically located."

Despite the presence of Latinx and Hmong populations in the city—which until 2010 had together made up less than eight percent of the city's population—the absence of Black

residents, in Evan's conceptualization, should *not* be seen as the result of "entrenched racism" where people are explicitly excluded. Instead, the minimal Black population in the city is the morally neutral outcome of geography. As I examine in coming chapters, racial and ethnic minority residents *do* experience overt racism and xenophobia from White residents, and it is unclear in Evan's statement what would be needed in order for him to consider entrenched racism to in fact be the best explanation. Over the course of this extended exchange, we can see how the biological or "natural" explanation for the absence of Black residents in Appleton is buttressed by his assertion that it *cannot* be racism, despite the presence of other racial and ethnic minority populations in the city.

Finally, Alan, a semi-retired coordinator at a large financial services company also draws on ethnically bound preferences for bigger cities, as well as the climate, to explain the lack of people who would "make [Appleton] more diverse." He goes a step further, though, to consider the role that the city's reputation plays in how it attracts certain groups of people but not others.

> Interviewer: What do you think is keeping folks from moving in, or what is bringing them in [to Appleton]?
>
> Alan, 66: Yeah, that's a good question…and I don't know if this is true, but I feel like to a certain degree, umm, people that would make it more diverse, tend to be more attracted to bigger cities and I think if you, even by reputation, people might not know, like, is this a place I'd want to live? So I think that's part of it. And I, I can…I'll say this. I think the fact that it's upper Midwest. It's quite cold. It doesn't necessarily attract like people like more used to... Hispanic people are more used to warmer climates. I think the climate is a factor. Like moving from the south, Appleton's not gonna be your number one choice… Uh, there's not a big, I mean, there's strong industry, but... I don't know if it's an industry that attracts people from, uh, nationally either.

First, Alan suggests that racial and ethnic minorities are "more attracted to bigger cities," without offering any explanation in the way of what is attracting them, or why Appleton does not possess those same draws. Next, he notes that Appleton does not have the reputation of being a city that

racial and ethnic minorities would want to move to, although it is unclear if "reputation" here means a lack of awareness or knowledge about Appleton, *or* if it means that Appleton's reputation is one of being hostile or unwelcoming. Finally, he moves again to the climate explanation, specifically noting that "Hispanic people are more used to warmer climates."

On the one hand, the Latinx population in Appleton is both the largest and fastest-growing ethnic minority group in the city, and while their growing population may not yet be very visible to residents such as Alan, claiming that they are more likely to live in bigger cities rather than places like Appleton is easily dispelled by openly available census and population information. On the other hand, before once again shifting the blame of why people might not want to live in Appleton onto the climate, thereby naturalizing why some groups are present and others are absent, Alan's talk of reputation suggests that there are transmitted or passed-along reasons as to why racial and ethnic minorities do not want to move to the city. Histories of racial violence and residential discrimination in the United States means that racial and ethnic minority would-be residents have significant reason to gauge and be aware of how safe Appleton would be for them and their families, yet Alan's reference to the city's reputation is detached from any knowledge of the extent to which families and households of color have historically *not* been welcomed and accepted in the city. The rationalization or effort at sense-making that Alan offers here in response to my questions is useful to him insofar as it supports his understanding of why Appleton looks how it does, yet it is coupled with a lack of both evidence to support his claims, and of interest in further information that might expand or counteract his understanding of the city's characteristics—a dynamic that was felt throughout our conversation, and which made it challenging to conduct the interview in a way that incited any degree of self-reflection.

Alan's line of reasoning extends beyond the lack of minority group populations in the city when at the end he suggests that Appleton's industrial economy is not bringing people from across the country to the city. However, as I examine in the next chapter, Appleton's overall population has continued to grow, and is explicitly understood by my participants as being a pleasant and desirable community for incoming households and families. Again, the reasoning that Alan provides runs directly counter to what we know to be true about population growth in Appleton, and instead the interpretation that he offers is premised on a series of untruths; yet, it is an explanation that *makes sense* within the encompassing logic that he deployed to explain Appleton's residents, and I believe the challenges in conducting Alan's interview arose, in part, from an interest or investment (albeit unspoken, and perhaps unconscious) in *not* knowing how things "really are" in Appleton.[12]

Within the statements of David, Evan, and Alan, we observe non-knowing in action: without turning to empirical evidence (with the exception, perhaps, of Evan's reference to the Great Migration), one set of explanations is given (migration patterns, employment opportunities, preference, and climate) for why Appleton's population is predominately White while another line of explanation (overt or implicit racial hostility and prejudice) is discarded. Additionally, evidence that supports the racial hostility explanation, as well as information on the population distribution among racial and ethnic groups in the city, *is* available, but not sought out. I do not believe any of these participants were making these statements with the intention of lying or deception. Instead, the explanations they provided justified the social organization of the community without suggesting that anything needs to change. Like the abstract and distanced

[12] Here, and in discussions of (non)knowing elsewhere, I am equating a "lack of interest" in *knowing something* with an interest in *not knowing* that same thing, which again points back to the intentional and active nature of racial ignorance.

support for racial justice discussed above, here rationalizations of the city's population provide explanatory "power" while not disrupting what anyone's personal or collective obligations (e.g., morally) might require them to do were further or different knowledge to come to light.

The Consequences of Selective (Non)Knowing

In this chapter I examined multiple dimensions of selective (non)knowing as it relates to White residents' perceptions and explanations of Appleton's racial past and present. More than a gap in participants' awareness or knowledge, selective (non)knowing is maintained—that is, alternative or additional knowledge is not sought out—in order to maintain the integrity or solidity of the racial logic that organizes both individuals and, collectively, communities. When asked why some racial groups make up a larger proportion of the city compared to others, participants turned to various sources of explanation, none of which took into consideration either Appleton's Sundown past or the social environment its residents create and maintain in the present.

At the same time, none of the participant statements examined above—and indeed very little of what was said by any participants during the interviewing stage—are particularly hostile, or explicitly racist or "nasty." In the chapters that follow, I argue that this absence of hostility is not because my participants are exceptionally virtuous. Instead, the racialized violence enacted in the city's past has resulted in a community that is predominately White, and rather than confronting that history head-on as something that continues to shape who is and is not present in the city, it is instead consigned to the past, and certainly not something that has to do with how Appleton is today. This keeping of the past out of the present demonstrates Mills' (1997) and Mueller's (2017, 2020) racial ignorance in action, where instead of being the absence of knowledge or awareness, particularly of the causes and effects of racial harm, racism, and systemic racial discrimination, not-knowing is something that is actively maintained and

produced—the twin rather than the opposite of knowledge, and a productive force or way-of-knowing in its own right.

Consequently, Appleton is the site of numerous resources and benefits for its residents, and in the next chapter I discuss how these benefits are derived from (non)knowing and preserved for White residents while their origins are forgotten. The racial (non)knowing examined here is not merely a mental framework used by residents to respond to my inquiries in the abstract; instead, as I argue next, this forgetting or "blurring the details" of the past, coupled with the naturalization of racial isolation and homogeneity in the present, normalizes or renders invisible the ways that these real, material benefits and opportunities have been accrued to the city's residents *because* of its history of racial exclusion.

CHAPTER SIX

FEELING SAFE IN APPLETON: THE UTILITY OF RACIAL (NON)KNOWING

The preceding chapter relies largely on the hypothesis that racial ignorance undergirds White Appleton residents' understandings of the city's history, as well as their interpretations of why the city has remained predominately White well into the 20th century. In this chapter I examine the material conditions of life in Appleton, particularly those that participants pointed out as being especially good in the city, to argue that such material benefits have historically been the outcome of racial exclusivity and what Charles Tilly (1999) calls *opportunity hoarding*, and that the more distasteful roots of those advantages are erased and rendered "normal" through the aforementioned racial ignorance or (non)knowing. Without real, tangible benefits, resources, and advantages that are found in Appleton (but not in other places), the argument for the role of racial ignorance in shaping White residents' beliefs and attitudes becomes somewhat suspect: how can a lack of awareness about Appleton's racial history be assigned to strategic non-knowing instead of, for instance, being the result of my participants, perhaps like many people, simply not being particularly knowledgeable local history? The material distinctives of Appleton, however, point to the ways that White racial self-interest has historically resulted in advantages being secured for White group members while excluding racial and ethnic minorities; in the case of Appleton, racial ignorance is only applied "after the fact" to obscure the discrimination of the past, while the material goods and resources are still accessible to an Appleton city population that remains predominately White.

OPPORTUNITY, ADVANTAGE, AND WHITE MATERIAL INTERESTS

The examination in this chapter of the benefits that White residents receive from living in Appleton is premised on the understanding that Whiteness as a meaningful racial category is, in

part, maintained because of the real, material benefits that it provides for White group members. This recalls the notion, discussed earlier, that White racial domination does not persist solely as a result of individuals' explicitly racist hostility and animus, but instead is maintained through systemic processes that work to maintain that dominance apart from the actions or beliefs of individuals (see Bonilla-Silva 1997), and it takes the form of rewards that have measurable effect on one's life. Harris (1993:1725) frames Whiteness as a form of property, pointing to the ways that the benefits that one expects to receive from *being White* have been intensely litigated and ultimately encoded and protected within the U.S. legal system, but she also notes the interplay between Whiteness as personal identity *and* Whiteness as something that confers social benefits: "Whiteness has functioned as self-identity in the domain of the intrinsic, personal, and psychological; as reputation in the interstices between external and internal identity; and, as property in the extrinsic, public, and legal realms." Thus, the benefits that are conferred upon White group members should not be understood in purely psychological *or* material terms, but instead reflect the totalizing system that Whiteness as an ideology represents and creates for its members.

Lipsitz (1998), alternatively, describes the *possessive investment* that White people have in their own White racial identity, and points to how racialized, frequently urban disadvantage has been well-observed, yet the resources and investments that are funneled *away* from those communities are instead channeled *towards* wealthier, White, often suburban spaces; in turn, White group members have come to both expect and militantly protect the benefits that they receive from being part of the dominant racial group. Echoing Tilly's (1999) notion of *opportunity hoarding*, Lipsitz (1998:viii) suggests that "white supremacy is usually less a matter of direct, referential, and snarling contempt than a system for protecting the privileges of whites

by denying communities of color opportunities for asset accumulation and upward mobility." Although they would likely not identify it in terms of conscientiously hoarding the benefits they are able to access by living in Appleton, in the remainder of this chapter I examine how White residents nevertheless are both aware of the benefits that are concentrated in Appleton, and are to varying degrees interested in protecting or keeping those benefits close to home where would-be "outsiders" cannot access them. As I begin to examine in this chapter, and discuss more fully in the chapter that follows, this right to access, as well as the determining of who does or does not "belong" in Appleton is, fundamentally, a racialized project; as Harris (1993:1714) notes: "whiteness and property share a common premise—a conceptual nucleus—of a right to exclude." It is what outsiders are excluded *from* that I consider next, and in the chapter that follows I examine *who* is excluded (or not).

BENEFITS OF THE CITY

Across a number of measures, the quality of life in Appleton is above average when compared to the rest of the country:

- The average expectancy in Outagamie County is 79.4 years, higher than both the Wisconsin state average of 78.9 and the national average of 76.4 (Robert Wood Johnson Foundation 2023).

- The median income per household in the city of Appleton in 2021 dollars is $68,364, compared to the national average of $69,021. However, while the percent of people in poverty nationally is 11.6%, that percentage is 9.6% for the city of Appleton (United States Census Bureau 2023). Additionally, nationwide 63.1% of people age 16 or older are in the civilian labor force, compared to 70.5% in Appleton (Ibid.).

- In 2021, 66.9 percent of housing in the city of Appleton was owner-occupied, with a median housing value of $165,900, compared to 64.6 percent and $244,900 nationally (United States Census Bureau 2023).

- The Appleton Area School District includes 38 schools and 15,217 students. For the 2019-2020 school year, K-12 public schools spent $13,606 per student (NCES 2023), which is higher than the 2020 Wisconsin state average of $12,694, and the national average of $13,185, despite the state ranking 23rd nationally in education spending (Hanson 2022).

- 93.4% of the city population age 25 or older is at least a high school graduate, and 34.9% of the population age 25+ has a Bachelor's degree or higher; in comparison, 88.9% of the national population is a high school graduate, and 33.7% of the 25+ population has at least a Bachelor's degree (United States Census Bureau 2023).

When asked what they enjoy most about the city and about what draws people to live there, in addition to the "good schools" and generalized discussions of Appleton being a "good place to raise a family" and "safe"—these latter two discussed in more detail below—participants also often mentioned Appleton's arts and cultural scene, making mention of the 2,100-seat Fox Cities Performing Arts Center, opened in 2002, that regularly hosts national touring acts, and the city's public parks system.

Community Satisfaction

Historically, national community satisfaction ratings—or residents' approval of the city or area where they live—has remained around 85 percent (Riffkin 2014). Furthermore, and relevant in light of the median age of my participants being 62, research by Fitz, Lyon, and Driskell (2016) has found that being older is associated with satisfaction with the social and infrastructure attributes of one's community. Thus, on the one hand my participants' overall contentedness with Appleton may reflect broader trends towards generally approving of where one lives. On the other hand, in light of the indicators and their national counterparts shown above, perhaps Appleton is "above average" in enough ways that people are more likely to enjoy living there and believe that compared to other places it is the superior residential option.

“IT’S GOOD PLACE TO RAISE A FAMILY”

When asked what people liked about Appleton, what attracts people to the city, or “what kinds” of people are drawn to live there, participants consistently responded with some variation of Appleton being a good place for families. Joan (61) noted that her own parents believed Appleton was a better community to raise small children compared to Chicago, while Nancy (66) recalled her perception of Appleton after moving to the city for her husband’s faculty position at Lawrence University: “so we moved to Appleton and we decided that we thought this was a good place to raise a family. So we stayed here.” For participants who grew up in Appleton, they also noted their own feelings of safety as young children growing up in the community:

> Anne, 74: I would just say Appleton was a great place to grow up. Never did I ever fear…it was almost like false security because [we] never locked doors. Never...it was just innocent times. And, umm, I just...I really had a great upbringing here and I think it’s a great place to raise kids.

Helen and Iris, similarly, describe the draw of Appleton in terms of neighborliness and unity, with Iris recalling specific instances of community members supporting each other:

> Helen, 72: I think that probably, probably it’s a... It's a caring community. In that they, um, you know, go out of their way to help people who are in need of help.

> Iris, 58: There is a sense of community here that I don’t see everywhere else…. if somebody, you know, gets diagnosed with cancer, you’ll see a sign up, you know, “We're gonna have a fundraiser for Joe at Frank's bar on Sunday night, and there's gonna be baskets, raffled off and prizes and games.”… That kind of stuff. So that if you have a problem, you say, “Hey, I need help,” and people are more than willing to help.
> …
> …it was shoveling each other’s driveways and sidewalks. And I remember when….we had this gigantic blizzard that came. I couldn’t even get the front door open to get out of the front door. [chuckle] It was that bad….and the next thing I hear snow blowers and all the guys from the neighborhood got together and took snow blowers out and did everybody’s driveway.

Addressing what is attractive about Appleton more broadly, Chris compares Appleton to nearby, similarly sized cities, although he does not specify either how Appleton has apparently declined in being a "good place," or what is problematic about the other communities he names:

> Interviewer: What do you think attracts people to living in Appleton?
>
> Chris, 73: Well…first of all, it used to be, and still is somewhat, a good place to raise a family…it's better than Green Bay, better than Oshkosh, better than Fond Du Lac.

When I interviewed the mayor of Appleton and asked what draws people to living in the city, he first spoke of the natural beauty of the area, before turning to plentiful job opportunities and the welcoming nature of civic participation and volunteerism in the community, but he, too, ultimately framed Appleton's attractions in terms of family:

> Mayor Ryan: I really think that people generally are looking for the same kinds of things…safety, access to education, access to quality education, affordability…clean air and water, reasonable climate. I'll say reasonable, not temperate [laughs]…Umm, but you know, people are looking for those kinds of things. Especially when they're thinking about family…and I think that's a huge driver for Appleton, just in terms of our population growth this year. People are looking for places that can deliver on all these fronts and still be accessible and affordable.

Accessibility and affordability, safety and cleanliness—even for the highest-ranking elected city official, Appleton's attractiveness is not purely economic, nor even is it about the recreational or housing opportunities of the city. Instead, here, too, Appleton is desirable to families in particular.

Evan refers to the smaller towns surrounding Appleton that collectively make up the "Fox Cities," suggesting that Appleton, despite its relatively small size, is likely to see more transient households as it functions as the "big city" in the area, while the surrounding communities are where households settle down over several generations:

> Evan, 43: You know, it's in Appleton the city, you're going to find a little bit more transients and people that might have moved from outside the state to come. But towns around…again, we're talking about the Fox City. So, um, it's hard to really quantify Appleton. There's these little towns that are around it. Those people like Kimberly, Little Chute...um, Kaukauna, those are predominantly more people that have grown up in that area, have maybe moved out and then come back. Um, and the people that do come back are usually coming back for family. It's a great place to raise their kids. And it's where they want to be, so it's predominantly family people.

Evan also points to the collective values of Appleton and its surrounding communities, noting that "traditionalism" may both draw people to the area and motivate them to stay long-term: "I'm not gonna say political conservatism, but traditionalism—so conservatism, and when it comes to family values and things like that." George (88), likewise, invokes shared values as central to Appleton's attractiveness: "Good old hometown friendly people…trustworthy people, upper Midwest values. That would be, I would say…number one. Trustworthy, you know what I mean?" It is not only external resources and opportunities that are attractive to would-be residents—families in particular—but also the unspoken social and community values that are considered a benefit to living in the area, although the boundaries drawn in George's specification of "upper Midwest" point to the ways that, as I discuss further below, perhaps Appleton's pleasantness is reliant on practices of exclusion.

In all of these cases, participants do not specify what, exactly, makes Appleton good for families, except its contrast with larger cities. Even Evan's reference to "traditionalism" and "family values" is invoked without detail or elaboration, but what is it about Appleton specifically that makes it desirable for families? Participants invoked the quality of schools and the cultural offerings available—especially notable, in their opinions, given the size of the city—yet what emerged most distinctly was the feeling of *safety* that participants received from living in Appleton, and I argue that this sense of safety is simultaneously illusory and racialized.

SAFETY IN APPLETON

On College Avenue

When I asked participants if there was anywhere in the city that they felt—or had heard—was unsafe (whether or not it actually was), two common answers emerged. First, unsafe space in the city, for many of my participants, was marked by people drinking too much at one of the numerous bars and pubs that are frequented by local residents on a half-mile long segment of College Avenue, the main street that runs the width of the downtown area. Dennis and Cathy, the couple interviewed together, discuss the sense of safety they feel as they travel throughout the city, despite the possibility of gun violence in bars in Appleton:

> Interviewer: Is there anywhere in the city of Appleton either that you feel, or you have been told is unsafe?
>
> Dennis, 79: Umm, not generally…we've had some, uh, issues in our downtown area with bars…People having, uh, arguments and things. We've had some shootings. But those are, uh, rare…really you can drive around the city.
>
> Cathy, 79: There isn't a, umm, a slum area…I would feel safe any place in Appleton.
>
> Dennis: If someone was coming here and wanted to walk around the community, or bike around or whatever, uh, there isn't any place that I would tell them [to] stay away from. And that's a wonderful feeling of safety.

Iris (58) notes that she simply avoids downtown in the evenings to head off the potential for conflict: "I try to stay away from downtown when there's a lot of people that have been drinking late at night. I just don't wanna deal with the drunks, I don't wanna deal with the attitude." George echoes Iris's sentiment, noting that with age he and his wife have become less interested in frequenting downtown Appleton in the evenings, primarily because of the potential for conflict with younger fellow patrons:

> George, 88: With the people that are hanging out in the bars, you gotta be careful. It may not be a safe...I think my wife and I, if we were to…of course we're a little bit older, but I would not wanna frequent downtown at night, 'cause I never know what I'm gonna run into. So if we go out, we try and go out into the surrounding area where it's a little calmer…We're not, uh…young people have different priorities, and they're...umm, they're a little more short tempered. And they like to drink a lot.

Finally, Jerry (65), a retired pharmacologist, sums up the temporally and behaviorally bounded nature of "unsafe space" in Appleton: "maybe like on the Avenue on like on a weekend, maybe like after 10, 11 o'clock, when alcohol is a factor."

In each of these instances, participants refer to a specific behavior, at a specific time of day—excessive drinking, late at night—rather than any geographic signifiers that marks the downtown area as "unsafe" or dangerous to any extent. Without people overconsuming alcohol and resorting to violence in the late evenings and night, this particular stretch of the main street is unremarkable, and pedestrians can be spotted there throughout the day. And yet, even in this racially homogenous space here too we can perhaps see a glimpse of who is welcome and who is not, who is abiding by what it means to be a good citizen and who is not, drawing on the oft-cited quote by Hall and colleagues (1978) that "race is the modality in which class is lived. It is also the medium in which class is lived." In the absence of a racialized other, it is being at the bars late at night and drinking to excess—a behavior marked as lower and working class—that is the source of any danger for law-abiding participants looking to avoid trouble.

The Transit Center

The second answer participants frequently gave in response to queries about safety in Appleton was a specific piece of land in the city: the bus station, a small transit center partly located in the parking lot of the former public library shown in Figure 6.1.

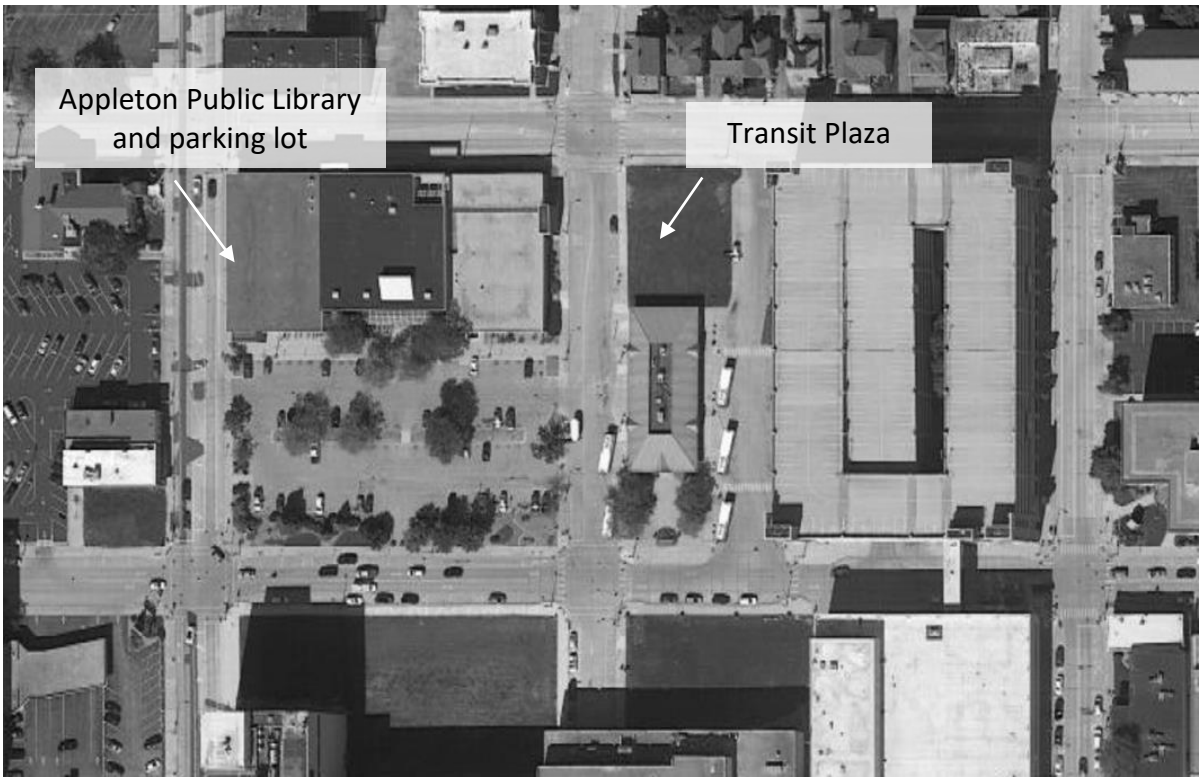


Figure 6.1. Appleton Public Library and Transit Plaza (Source: Google Maps 2023)

This station serves as both the main hub of Appleton's public transportation system, and as the only stop in the city for Greyhound buses coming to and from Stevens Point and Green Bay to the north and Milwaukee to the south. Gabe (32), a younger participant who grew up in Appleton, sums this up when he says that growing up he was often told the bus stop was unsafe because there were "a lot of sketchy people." Morgan (27), another younger lifelong resident, more pointedly gets to why residents are wary of the station area: "the library bus station area in general is where homeless people tended to congregate." Rachel (64), a retired librarian, confirms this, noting that the library was built prior to the transit center, and once the transit center was built, passengers coming off the buses for layovers would "hang out in the library and most of them were fine. No problem whatsoever. But some people thought well let's cause a little problem, and same with the homeless population."

A temporary relocation.

Notably, as of 2022 at the time of data collection, the library collection had temporarily been relocated while the building shown in Figure 1 undergoes an expansive, multi-year renovation. While the Appleton Public Library is part of the OWLSnet consortium of libraries in northeast Wisconsin, which includes small branch locations in many of the smaller communities in the Fox Cities, the downtown Appleton library had by far the largest building and on-site collection of physical materials, in addition to holding most of the city's historical property, genealogical, and newspaper archives. The temporary location is in a suburban former Best Buy building outside of the downtown area, and much more centrally located in a popular "big box" retail area. Nancy, a part-time librarian, noted how despite the limitations of the space for traditional library programming, people had been happier with the temporary relocation, in part because of its distance from the transit center:

> Nancy, 66: It's a lot easier to go to the Best Buy [to visit the library] 'cause really there's like been this many, you know, issues with that, you know?
> …
> We don't have the program rooms to do program for kids, so those have to be more offsite except for maybe like a story time to fit it in there. But other than that, I mean, it has some advantages because it's safer, people feel more comfortable and they don't have to pay for parking. If they have transportation, they like it better. If they walked or biked downtown, then they don't, so [laughter]…
>
> Interviewer: So have you seen a decrease in how many people visit the library?
>
> Nancy: Well, at first I saw an increase because some people that didn't feel comfortable coming downtown 'cause the downtown library is right by the bus station and there's lots of issues there. And, umm, I was there when there was a shooting and someone who was a first responder was killed and I had to take the kids into the basement and stuff. So there are people that are like, "I'm not going downtown." And so in some ways we have more people that live out there that they just thought it was too far to go downtown, and they could stop at Aldi [grocery store] and stop at the library or stop at Home Depot. People love it, but the library [board] is trying to say, "Oh no, we're going back downtown."

Here, Nancy brings up both the feeling of safety that would-be patrons feel by *not* having to go downtown near the bus station, as well as the convenience of the library being near a popular and busy shopping area, but she also notes the limitations of accessing this new location. Without a vehicle, the temporary library is a long walk or bicycle ride along a busy road, pointing to the ways that those patrons with the privilege of automobility are effectively prioritized with the temporary relocation of the library, at least for the time being. Nancy's statement also hints at future conflict once the building renovations downtown are completed, estimated to be done in late 2024, as patrons who apparently did not frequent the library while it was downtown are enthusiastic about its current location.

The shooting that Nancy refers to in her statement above took place in May 2019, when a passenger on a bus arriving from the city of Wausau to the northwest of Appleton appeared to be having a seizure, and when emergency services were called it was determined that the passenger,

Rubin Houston, a Black male, had overdosed on morphine. Upon awakening after being given Narcan to reverse the overdose, Houston was agitated and in the process of trying to refuse further assistance, he pulled out a concealed handgun, shooting and killing firefighter Mitchell Lundgaard, and injuring police officer Paul Christensen. Houston was shot and killed by other responding law enforcement—all White—and in the midst of this confrontation Houston grabbed a bystander, Brittany Scholwater, who was struck by police fire and suffered a brain injury in the course of the police attempting to subdue Houston ("Body Cam Footage Released" 2019; Mueller 2019).

Nancy, as well as Wyatt (35), a Protestant minister at a local college, refer to this event, while the other participants quoted above point to the fact that unhoused people are the most reliably visible and located in the plaza, as evidence in support of the bus station at least partly deserving its reputation as an unsafe space in Appleton. Although left unstated by participants, the area surrounding the bus station—by nature of passengers changing buses or waiting on layovers—is where people who look transient (e.g., carrying luggage, traveling on foot) are most likely to be seen, and it is also where people of color are more likely to be seen relative to the general residential population—again, by nature of the bus system bringing people temporarily to this specific point in the downtown area. Significantly, the bus station plaza is a very small, geographically bounded space. Thus, in answer to questions regarding safety in the city of Appleton, participants answered that danger, or a lack of safety in the city, arises from either people drinking too much late at night along College Avenue, or is found in the specific spot of the bus station, where people who do not necessarily look like the majority of Appleton residents are most likely to be seen.

Joan (61), seems to speak for the majority of participants when she states that Appleton "felt like…the safest place in the world." In addition to the people who note its attractiveness to families with children, participants also talked about Appleton's safety in terms of its size, and the benefits of living there without the "problems" that are found in larger cities. Alan (66) says people move to the city because it's "a very safe place…one of the things I've said is that it's like suburbs without a big city." As I examine next, Alan's statement here unintentionally highlights the ways that practices of racial residential exclusion and housing discrimination have historically established suburban neighborhoods as White racialized spaces, while residential options for racial and ethnic minorities have been limited to urban "big cities." Similarly, Molly (52) describes the city as "being a safe place, a good place to raise your kids and not have as many worries as other places maybe that have more violence or...Or, umm, it's just isolated. It's like an island." Both Alan's invocation of Appleton as feeling like a "suburb" but without the accompanying problems of the "big city," and Molly's description of Appleton as a place that is "isolated" and less violent than "other places" point to the specter or looming threat of violence that lurked just outside of Appleton's city boundaries, embodied in how participants spoke about the city of Milwaukee, one hundred miles to the south of Appleton.

SPEAKING OF MILWAUKEE

Participants frequently spoke about, and assessed, life in Appleton by way of comparison to other cities. Whether speaking about them in terms of their size compared to Appleton, their climates, or their degree of racial and ethnic diversity compared to Appleton, these other cities reflect in part participants' own experiences of living elsewhere before moving (and in some cases, returning) to Appleton, but they also point to how places—cities—are invoked as more than just geographic signifiers.

Controlling Images of Space

Scholars have spoken of the ways that—much like the stereotypes that are applied to *people*—places and space, too, can become racialized and reflect dominant ideologies of White superiority and non-White deficiency. Drawing on Collins's (2000) *controlling images*—harmful stereotypes invoked to justify the ongoing and systemic mistreatment of racial and ethnic minorities—Flores (2015:410) identifies the *controlling images of space* as "racialized images of physical geographic locations." Even over time after the spaces in question have transformed, Flores (2015) notes, the damaging controlling images remain, and the hierarchies of racial domination that created them often linger, and as Tuttle (2022) argues, the same symbols, images, and beliefs that justify the unequal treatment of *people* in a given space are often applied to the space itself.

Similarly, Bonam and colleagues (2020; 2016) found that people consistently hold *space-focused racial stereotypes*, in which assessments of areas associated with certain racial groups (e.g., through residential concentration) vary based on the group in question; in particular they note the ease with which anti-Black stereotypes are activated in spaces that respondents visually code as "Black." They observed that "the mere presence of Black people automatically triggers this impoverished and degraded generalized image of Black areas" (Bonam et al. 2020:25), and in fact racial stereotypes are more strongly activated by space-focused experimental content than by person-focused content (ibid.). Identification as being from the "wrong" neighborhood, too, can create a stigma that disadvantages individuals in more concrete ways as well, as Besbris and colleagues (2015) found that sellers were less willing to interact and exchange with people who they perceived as being from disadvantaged neighborhoods; unsurprisingly, the degree of stigma placed upon a given neighborhood was largely dependent on its racial composition.

At the same time, while neighborhoods visually marked as Black and middle-class were frequently—and incorrectly—labeled as lower-class, and subsequently viewed as less desirable and avoided by participants, Bonam and colleagues (2020) found that neighborhoods and spaces visually coded as White were consistently identified as middle- and upper-class, pointing to the ways that racial stereotyping not only creates harm and disadvantage for Black racial group members, but it also provides advantage and benefits for White group members. In a social context where residential choice and home ownership are important drivers of wealth creation and asset accumulation, it becomes clear how space-focused racial stereotypes play an active role in creating and reproducing racial inequality, yet too often these stereotypes are only seen for the harm they cause to racial and ethnic minority households, while the benefits they provide to White households, as I have discussed, are erased and rendered invisible or "natural."

This kind of controlling image, or stigmatization, I argue, is fundamental to the discussions of Milwaukee that I relay below. Namely, in addition to being much larger than Appleton, Milwaukee also has a much larger Black population—38 percent of the city's population, compared to Appleton's (as of 2020) three percent. As a result, participants often talk about Milwaukee the *city* in ways that could just as easily be invoked as anti-Black stereotypes of criminality, violence, and disorder, yet by framing their language around "Milwaukee" as a place, participants are able to remain within the limits of acceptable color-blind language.

A Tale of Two Cities

Milwaukee emerged as the place that stood as Appleton's opposite: large, dangerous, and criminal:

> Emily, 41: Umm, and we definitely know, you know, which areas of Milwaukee are considered high crime areas or whatever. I don't think that they're really, you know, there's... I don't think that we have those quite as widespread in Appleton.

> Julia, 76: I lived in Milwaukee. In fact, I drove cab in Milwaukee during the city... Right before the Milwaukee riots [in 1967]. And yeah. You had, you had to watch out where you walked.

Recalling earlier emphases on Appleton as a place for families, vis-à-vis its safety and "good schools," Milwaukee was also spoken of as the place that Appleton served as a sort of refuge from:

> Interviewer: Why do you think [new residents] have moved to Appleton? Why has it changed?
>
> Michelle, 72: Because they think it's safer. And I'm thinking mostly of people who come from Milwaukee or Chicago, they feel it's safer. I'm guessing maybe they hope the schools are better because they're smaller, it's not a big city atmosphere.
>
> Molly, 52: I think that's what attracts people there is, you know...you know, there's this, you can let your kids go outside and play and not have to worry as much about them in Appleton than you do in other larger metropolitan areas. So I think that's the biggest thing is thinking of it as a safe, isolated place. That's not...doesn't suffer a lot of the same other issues that bigger cities might have.
>
> Nancy, 66: And then I've had people as a teacher who would, like…the mom…there's a shooting in Milwaukee or Chicago, and she puts the kids in the car, and they come and sleep in the car, and they walk into school in the morning…which I say, good for her.

Molly, a computer programmer and college instructor, lived in Appleton from 1971 to 1998 before moving to a large suburb outside of Milwaukee, and throughout our conversation criticized the isolated, "small-town" nature of Appleton, insinuating that its lack of cultural and entertainment options were partly why she moved away. In her statement below, she is talking about the move that Tanya—her friend and a fellow participant in this project—made to bring her family, including her three Black adopted children, to Appleton after living in Milwaukee.

> Molly, 52: A couple of my good friends have, umm, three children who are, umm, all ethnically diverse. And they lived down here. And, umm...and the parents are, they're two females, so it's a, umm, lesbian couple and their kids. And they...one

> of them was from Appleton originally and one of them lived in Appleton in the 90s. And they decided to move to Appleton with their three kids because they thought it'd be safer than being down here in Milwaukee. Because they wanted to keep their kids out of trouble. You know, essentially is how I interpreted it. So yeah. I mean, I...I don't know. It's interesting because, I always...I'm like, "Why in the world would they move to Appleton?" It's just makes no sense to me.

Despite the somewhat awkward phrasing of "children who are ethnically diverse," Molly's statement seems to suggest that the so-called dangers of Milwaukee did *not* warrant a move to the—in her opinion, slow-paced and uninteresting—city of Appleton for her friends and their Black children, and that in fact their lesbian-parented, multi-racial family may encounter more trouble in Appleton than they would in Milwaukee.

Some, like Morgan and Tanya, discuss how *other* Appleton residents feel about people moving to Appleton from larger cities, while not necessarily claiming those views themselves:

> Morgan, 27: I think they view it as these people coming... I've heard comments, you know, these people coming from up from Milwaukee or coming up from Chicago and they're causing these crimes and things. I think that statement sums it up.

> Tanya, 48: So we moved up from um...we had a home in Milwaukee, on 86th and Burleigh, and that's where we were foster parents, that's…well, we transitioned in Milwaukee, but that's where we were when we had our three kids that we have now, um and those three kiddos ended up all being...umm, our children through adoption. Umm, and once we started looking at the schools in that area and umm, just some things that were going on in that area. The odds that they're gonna get into a good school in this part of town are sec...or...it's not gonna happen. Umm, so we moved up here primarily for the school system. I think some embrace it. Some one hundred percent blame, uh, people from Milwaukee coming up and ruining their city. Chicago and Milwaukee, you hear that all the time. People are moving here from Chicago and Milwaukee, they're ruining our city. So it's like you're always gonna get those angry White people who are like blaming...ready to blame every, everyone else for their...the issues in their town.

Tanya, who I interviewed after talking with Molly, confirms her rationale for moving with her wife and three children out of Milwaukee and to Appleton, stating that her doubts about her children getting into a "good school" in Milwaukee led them to move to Appleton. She also

notes the persistence of arguments from some "angry White people" in Appleton that "people from Milwaukee" are "ruining their city." Implicit in Tanya's criticism of these complaints is that on the one hand the "people from Milwaukee" are, presumably, not White and that they are only bringing problems to the city, and on the other hand, Appleton is *their*—the "angry White people's"—community, pointing to a conflict over who Appleton belongs to, who is welcome, and who has the right to make decisions about the city.

Such criticisms are seen in the comments of Chris, a retired attorney, and Michelle, a retired teacher. Here Chris is comparing Appleton's past to its present, but in clearly racialized terms:

> Chris, 73: Starting maybe ten, fifteen years ago, you had, uh, a lot of Blacks, uh…males came to Appleton area…took up, uh, with women. Hispanic. Not Hispanic, but American and got them in the drug trade. And there was a lot of that and a lot of, uh, CHIPS [child abuse] cases with Black fathers, White mothers, uh…mixed race children and all the various things that the kids had to deal with when mom and dad were on cocaine. And we went through that, now it's meth and it's even ten times worse than heroin or cocaine was, but that's what they're dealing with now. But you had them running drugs up from Milwaukee and Chicago, and distributed [drugs] in the Fox River Valley, and that was a growth industry for the last 15 years.

Over the course of our interview, Chris described how his career as an estate and family attorney entailed *pro bono* work in child abuse and neglect cases, yet his statement above suggests that both the movement of illicit drugs into Appleton, as well as child abuse and neglect, was concentrated among mixed-race couples; or, at the very least, those Black men and "Hispanic" women—presumably referring to Latinx American citizens—who moved to Appleton in the 1990s and early 2000s did so with nefarious and criminal intent, while his statement also excludes the potential for White criminal activity. Michelle (72), furthermore, notes, "I wouldn't attribute it to any one race, but people are bringing guns from the big city to here." As other participants stated above, families come to Appleton as a sort of escape from the dangers of the

big city of Milwaukee, but in Chris's and Michelle's statements the racialized nature of who is "escaping" Milwaukee versus who is bringing drugs, guns, and criminality begins to be made clear.

FEELING SAFE IN APPLETON

An understanding of comparative crime and population rates is a critical context that is often missing from participants' statements both about the safety and desirability of Appleton, and about the danger and criminality that seemingly lurks around every corner in Milwaukee. As shown in Table 6.1 below, which includes Appleton and the Wisconsin cities that it shares a bus route with, we see that although Appleton is the lowest in violent crimes per one thousand residents, on the whole there is not much variance between the places with the highest and lowest rates of crime, and that Appleton and Milwaukee are within five points of each other in overall crime rates per one thousand residents (CrimeData.org n.d.). Furthermore, Appleton's place in the 39th percentile for safety means that 61 percent of cities in the United States are *safer than* Appleton, placing it *below* the national average in safety (ibid.).

If Appleton is not remarkably safer than other nearby cities—and is indeed *less* safe than the majority of places in the United States—why was safety so often claimed as one of the most noteworthy benefits of living there? Here I argue that the sense of safety that my White participants spoke of comes about, at least in part, from the absence of racialized "others" who they perceive as threatening. Table 6.2 shows Appleton's racial and ethnic demographics, as well those of the surrounding cities shown in 6.1.

Table 6.1. Appleton and Nearby Cities Comparative Crime Rates, 2020

City	Total Pop. (2020)	Overall Grade	Total crime per 1,000 res.	Violent crime per 1,000 res.	Property crime per 1,000 res.	Other crime per 1,000 res.	Safety Percentile (Nat'l.)
Appleton	75,644	C	31.8	1.9	13.2	16.6	39th
Green Bay	107,395	D+	38.7	3.6	17.4	17.7	27th
Milwaukee	577,222	D+	36.6	4.2	14.7	17.7	30th
Wausau	39,994	C-	32.8	2.1	13.9	16.8	36th

Source: CrimeGrade.org

Table 6.2. Population of Appleton and Nearby Cities, 2020 by Race

	Appleton	Milwaukee	Green Bay	Wausau
Total Pop. (2020)	75,644	577,222	107,395	39,994
% Non-Latino White	79	32	64	77
% Latino	7	20	18	4
% Asian	6	5	4	12
% Black	3	38	5	2
% Other, Native American, mixed race	5	5	9	5

Source: U.S. Census Bureau. 2020 Census Redistricting Data

As shown, compared to nearby cities—particularly those that share a bus line with it and are therefore likely to bring people to the infamous transit center—Appleton has one of the highest proportions of White residents. To fully appreciate how the 79 percent-White population relates to a *feeling* of safety, despite a lower-than-average degree of *actual*, or *experienced* safety for Appleton residents, here I turn first to the social psychology of perceived threat and danger, and Blumer's (1958) concept of group threat.

Perceptions of Racialized Danger and Group (Absence of) Threat

One outcome of Whiteness as a racial ideology that its members are socialized into is that White people are more likely to perceive the people of color they encounter as threatening or as criminal, and to feel like they are in physical danger in interracial encounters—an effect that is intensified to a much higher degree in White peoples' interactions with Black men versus people of other races (see Eberhardt et al. 2004; March, Gaertner, and Olson 2021; Trawalter et al. 2008). Blumer's (1958) concept of *group threat*, additionally, states that unlike Allport's (1954) *contact hypothesis*—where increasing interracial interaction supposedly increases feelings of racial harmony and positive racial attitudes on the part of White people—as the proportion of the racial or ethnic minority population in a community increases, the racial attitudes of the White population are found to worsen or become more negative towards those other racial and ethnic groups (Taylor 1998). This increasingly negative attitude (sometimes turning to anti-Black behavior and action), Blumer (1958; see also Blalock 1967) argues, is the result of White people feeling threatened by the growth of the non-White population, either economically through job competition or in terms of culture, collective identity, or due to perceived differences in values and morality.

I am arguing here that the racial makeup and the majority-White population of Appleton, taken together with existing research on White perceptions of racialized threat, particularly from Black men, and Blumer's (1958) argument that the presence of racial minorities is seen as a threat to White group members, explains—at least partly—why safety is such a central "draw" or feature for current Appleton residents. Appleton, as shown above, is not especially safe, but in contrast to other nearby cities—in particular the majority-Black, and much larger, city of Milwaukee—it *is* especially White. Because racialization and the meanings that get attached to racial markers are an outcome of socialization, it follows that if the kinds of people that White people are socialized to most fear (i.e., Black people) are *absent*, then the outcome is a feeling of safety—the inversion of Blumer's 1958 hypothesis, where rather than the presence of a minority population is deemed a threat, their absence is an advantage or benefit to be sought out.

SAFETY AND THE RACIALIZED OTHER IN APPLETON

While many of my White participants emphasized the safe, welcoming, and family-friendly nature of Appleton, I argue in the previous chapter that the benefits my White participants pointed to were both made unavailable to people of other races in the past (via Appleton's Sundown history) and subsequently de-racialized and rendered "natural" through racial (non)knowing, and in this chapter I have argued that in particular the *safety* they feel is the result of a homogenously White community space and the absence of a significant Black population, even as crime statistics show that Appleton is not exceptionally low-crime. The place that participants *do* perceive as dangerous is the city of Milwaukee, even as its crime rate per one thousand residents is only five points higher than Appleton despite its total population being

more than 7.5 times larger.[13] Yet, unlike Appleton's three percent, Black residents make up 38 percent of Milwaukee's city population, as of 2020, and this presence of a significant Black population, I argue, is key to the labeling of Milwaukee as dangerous and criminal, while the majority-White population of Appleton is central to its perception as safe and "good for families."

Although Appleton's Sundown past in the late 1800s and early 1900s played a major role in shaping its racial and ethnic makeup throughout the rest of the 20th century, it is important to note that xenophobia and racial discrimination and violence are *not* isolated to Appleton's past, despite what my White participants claimed about the friendly and safe nature of the community today. It is telling that the one person of color who I interviewed, Ty, immediately moved to talk about racial discrimination and exclusion in the present after I asked him what he knew about Appleton's history; after telling me about Appleton's Sundown history, he continued:

> Ty, 36: Police brutality is not that huge of an issue here in Appleton, and police profiling and racial profiling is not a huge issue here in the Appleton area, but it happens. And so let's talk about [racial bias in policing], but then also I'm going, racism is present here in the Fox Cities. And it was amazing how many of my White friends said, "Oh, well, that doesn't really happen here, right? It's Appleton. Like, this is 2020." And I go, "You guys have no idea." Uh, I get followed. I mean, I get followed in stores, right? And people think I'm gonna steal or, you know, when I, and part of it, yes…part of it is my own trauma and my own experience. If I drive by a police officer and I automatically think, "Oh man, is he gonna pull me over? Is he gonna look for something wrong?" Umm, and so part of that's ingrained in me in experience and stuff. 'Cause it's happened before in the past. And, and then that's at the same time, like when I walk down the street, I'm wondering is some idiot going to call out a racial slur. And call me some names and tell me to go back to my country, uh, which happens. And it has happened. Still happens. Umm, yeah. So there was a lot of that coming up. Umm, there were people wrestling. People were actually like able to share some of their racial, racist stories, I guess. Which is really nice. Like we finally got a voice. 'Cause I think, I feel like pre-2020, umm, I felt like some people could understand

[13] In 2023 Milwaukee had a violent crime rate of 4.2 per 1,000 residents. Compare this rate to similarly sized cities, per 1,000 residents in 2023: 5.4 in Baltimore, 5.7 in Detroit, 4.4 in Kansas City, and 7.7 in Memphis (CrimeGrade.org).

> that there was racism present in Appleton. But I felt like most of my Anglo-White people just really were surprised that it still happened.

We reached this point in our interview after discussing the protests that had taken place in Appleton in the summer of 2020, so here Ty is describing the experience of living in Appleton as a racialized minority as he recalls both his own consciousness about how he is perceived by members of law enforcement as a Hmong man in Appleton, as well as his own, lived encounters with racist harassment and discrimination. He goes on, though, to discuss the extent to which his White friends and members of his social circle had not considered how the differences in their experiences had been mediated by their racial identities prior to the events of that year, pointing to the ways that for White residents, their racial identities are in many ways conceptually non-existent since they are almost never compelled to think of themselves as racialized.

Ty went on to tell me about two encounters of racist harassment against Hmong Wisconsin residents, the first of which refers to the history of Hmong resettlement in the Fox Cities. An understanding of how the Hmong population came to live in Appleton is useful to understanding Ty's frustration. Briefly, the Hmong are a southeast Asian ethnic group primarily found in Laos, Vietnam, and Thailand. During the Vietnam War, they were recruited by the CIA to assist with U.S. military operations in Laos and Vietnam, including disrupting North Vietnamese supply lines, providing intelligence, guarding U.S. stations and outposts, and, significantly, locating and rescuing downed U.S. aircraft and crewmembers (Behnke 2022a). Following the withdraw of American forces from the area and persecution by the Vietnamese communist victors, many Hmong fled to Thailand seeking political asylum as refugees before they were officially invited to resettle in the United States starting in the late 1970s (ibid.). I discuss participants' attitudes towards the Hmong resettlement in greater detail in the next chapter, but here it should be noted that the Fox Cities region, and Appleton specifically, was

one of the earliest, and primary, locations for resettlement.

> Ty, 36: I'll share two stories with you. One, happened at a Walmart here on the east side in Darboy. Where, you know, there was a Hmong mom that was speaking in Hmong to her daughter, and one of the employees told her to speak English because she lives in America. You know, and this is…this is the Fox Cities, right? And so it's like, hey, I don't...there's a part of me that gets frustrated. And I go, did you know that her husband fought in the Vietnam war to probably save, like, your grandpa from this plane crashing, or to rescue him in the jungles? And now you're telling her to speak English and like, I want you to move to another country and try to learn their language when you're in your forties or fifties. And you tell me how easy that is. And then when you go into the store to like, have them yell at you, because you're not speaking their language. And then where it really got me frustrated was it happened to my mom. At a, I think it's JC Penney in Manitowoc, where the cashier just told her she needs to speak English because she's in America. And my sister and I just said, "Good Lord, I'm glad I wasn't there"…I would've let her have it. Because…like, to me, this is ignorance. It's like, yes, it'd be great for her to learn English, but it's…she doesn't have to speak English. And so, yeah…the stuff like that happens. Umm, you know, like I haven't…I haven't had people, you know, paint stuff on my doors, or hang things in trees in my yard or anything like that. But, you know, it's just a lot of racial slurs.

Notably, the Walmart that he refers to above is in the same retail area as, and about four minutes away from, the former Best Buy that is temporarily housing the Appleton public library collection. Thus, when residents talk about preferring the new library location because it is further from the bus station and therefore feels safer, that safety is not equally available for everyone in the area. More personally, Ty tells a similar story of harassment that happened to his mother, and in Ty's retelling of both of these encounters, the evaluation of who "belongs" and who does not—or who is performing the role of an "American" Appleton resident correctly or not—is decided along primarily racial lines, as the Hmong ethnic minority in Appleton is rendered hyper-visible and their behavior is intensely observed and aggressively policed.

While I have examined the ways that my White participants understand Appleton's history, erase and forget its racially violent past, and then consequently reap the benefits of that past, Appleton is decidedly *not* an exclusively White city anymore. As of 2020 the city was 79

percent non-Latino White, and that proportion has been growing smaller since the 1990s. Thus, talking about Whiteness in Appleton does not tell the whole story of who actually lives there, and in the next chapter I turn to consider what my participants *do* say about race—namely, who belongs in the city, and how that determination is made.

CHAPTER SEVEN

MAKING SENSE OF A DIVERSIFYING APPLETON

In addition to examining how the enactment of Sundown policies in Appleton affected Black residents in the past, the previous chapters dealt with questions of how current White Appleton residents remember and make sense of the forces that have shaped the city's racial past and present, as well as what benefits they believe they receive from living in the city. I observed that, in general, my White participants understand Appleton as a city that is *safe*, and I argued that this feeling of safety is more the result of an absence of Black residents and minimal exposure or interaction with people of color rather than the city being exceptionally safe or free from threats of danger. Despite its Sundown past and long history of remaining predominately White, Appleton, like many places in the United States, has experienced growing racial and ethnic diversification in recent decades, as Table 1.2 in Chapter 1 shows. In this chapter, I consider how my White participants understand the place of current and recently arrived racial and ethnic minority residents within the social environment of Appleton, and I ask on what terms these minority residents are understood as belonging (or not) within the community.

QUESTIONING "ASSIMILATION"

With explicit and totalizing race-based exclusion (i.e., Sundown-style practices) no longer a socially acceptable, enforceable, or even desired option for controlling who is or is not recognized as a "real" Appleton resident, I argue that White residents welcome new racial and ethnic minority residents to the city based largely on their status as refugees who are "deserving" and in need of aid. This "deservingness," however, is contingent upon the expectation that new (non-White) households will assimilate into White, middle-class, Midwestern norms. Social scientists have criticized the conceptualization of "assimilation" as a process that inevitably (and

implicitly) assumes an incorporation into Whiteness. Glazer (1993), for instance, looks at how Black and Native Americans were historically excluded from discussions of "minority" assimilation to argue that the "indistinguishable incorporation of the races into the substance of American life" (Frances Kellor, qtd. in Glazer 1993:127) was a goal that *could* only include European (soon-to-be White) immigrants. Alba and Nee (1997:827) similarly reject notions of assimilation as a "state-imposed normative program aimed at eradicating minority cultures," and instead argue for a reformulation of its analytic utility as a "social process" that helps scholars understand how immigrants come to experience educational, employment, residential, and social mobility. In criticizing the normative Whiteness that was implicit in previous studies of "successful" assimilation (primarily seen among European immigrant groups), Alba and Nee (1997:827) note that in more recent times (at the time of their writing, and into the present) "assimilation has come to be viewed by social scientists as a worn-out theory which imposes ethnocentric and patronizing demands on minority peoples struggling to retain their cultural and ethnic identity."

Although this may be the common consensus among contemporary scholars of immigration, it is important to note that in my participants' statements—and in my use of the term throughout this chapter—assimilation is unproblematically understood as "indistinguishable incorporation" into this older understanding of White social norms and culture, and while this may appear out of date in social scientific circles, it is still uncritically used in the everyday lives and talk of my White participants (see also Feagin and Elias 2013). Thus, although I use the term because of its prevalence in participants' discussions of immigrant incorporation into the Appleton community, I do so with the critical eye that Glazer (1993), Alba and Nee (1997), and others have cast on the concept.

What emerged over the course of my conversations with my White participants about racial and ethnic "others" in Appleton was an implicit (although occasionally explicit) understanding of those racial and ethnic minorities who are "good"—that is, who deserve to be in the city and have access to its resources and are seen as having much to offer the community—and those who are not. These delineations fall along lines generally determined by *why* these groups are in Appleton: on the one hand is the refugee community, which began with the resettlement of the Hmong population in the 1970s and continues today with refugees from Afghanistan and the Congo, and on the other hand is migrants, including both immigrants into the United States and in-migrants from outside the city and state. Yet, participants decided which group a person of color belonged to— that is, refugee or migrant— in primarily racial terms, where their visible markers of racial or ethnic identity is used to determine why they are in the city, and by extension, whether or not they are welcome and seen as belonging in Appleton.

WELCOMING REFUGEES

Hmong History in Appleton

As briefly mentioned at the end of the last chapter, the Hmong ethnic community has long been established in Appleton and the Fox Cities more broadly. During the Vietnam war, more than 40,000 Hmong were recruited by the CIA to aid in U.S. military anti-Communist efforts in Laos in a project known as the "secret war." Following the withdraw of U.S. troops, Hmong soldiers who had aided and sympathized with the United States soon became targets of political retribution and violence (Vang 2020). In 1975, the Indochina Migration and Assistance Act (IMAA) provided funding to the Department of Defense and the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare to facilitate the resettlement of 130,000 refugees from Cambodia and Vietnam into the United States through July 1976; however, because of the covert nature of the

CIA's involvement with the "secret war" in Laos, Hmong people in Laos were not included in the initial 1975 version of the IMAA (ibid.). Weeks after the fall of Saigon and the withdraw of U.S. military troops from Vietnam in April 1975, the CIA airlifted about 2,500 Hmong military officials and their families to Thailand (ibid.), while more than ten percent of the population of Laos left the country as refugees, and more than one-third of those Laotian refugees were Hmong (Yang 2001). In June 1976, the IMAA was extended to include refugees in Laos (Vang 2020), and a group of 750 Hmong refugees from a temporary camp in Thailand were the first group to be brought to the United States in 1976 (Yang 2001), with Wisconsin, Minnesota, and California marked as the earliest states to welcome and formally resettle the Hmong households (Behnke 2022a). In October 1977, Congress amended the IMAA to both extend the period of refugee assistance through September 1981, and also "allowed for the creation of a record of residence status that would enable permanent legal record in the United States" (Vang 2020:34), meaning that the U.S. government recognized these Hmong refugees as permanent residents of the United States. Hmong refugees continued to come to the United States until the mid-2000s; in 1989 it was estimated that there were about 100,000 Hmong Americans in the United States, and that number had grown to 200,000 by the end of 1999 (Yang 2001). In 2019 more than 58,000 Hmong Americans were living in the state of Wisconsin, making up almost one percent of the state's total population (Behnke 2022a), and 29 percent of the state's Asian American population (Behnke 2022b). The most recently available ACS 5-year estimates in 2015 reported 3,335 Hmong residents living in the city of Appleton, an increase from 2,496 in the 2010 ACS 5-year estimate (United States Census Bureau 2010; 2015b).

Reception of the Hmong in Appleton

The first group of Hmong families were brought to Appleton in 1976, and their arrival marked the end of Appleton's nearly all-White population that had been in place since the Sundown era. Thus, the Hmong were the first people of color that many Appleton residents saw and interacted with in the city. Notably, there had been no significant history of Hmong migration to the United States prior to the resettlement of the refugees following the Vietnam war, thus the Hmong presence in the United States was tightly tied to U.S. military actions in Southeast Asia (Vang 2020). As I argue below, both the expectations of assimilation that were placed upon the new Hmong households by White residents (and the considerable support from the federal government to accomplish it) and subsequent perceptions of them as "good refugees," were detrimental to both the Hmong residents themselves and to subsequent racial and ethnic minority in-migrants who failed, in White estimations, to live up to the expectations of productivity and deservingness established by the earlier Hmong refugees.[14]

The pressures and narrow boundaries for success that such expectations create echo critical examinations of the "model minority" trope, in which, to borrow from Wing (2007:456), "Asians comprise the racial minority group that has 'made it' in America through hard work and education, and therefore serve as a model for other racial minorities to follow." The image of the model minority is harmful, both for how it is used to obscure the advantages that White group members continue to hold over other racial and ethnic minority groups, and for how it uses an overarching "Asian" identity to obscure social inequalities such as poverty and a lack of social

[14] For instance, Nguyễn (2021), in a related examination of the welcoming of Vietnamese refugees to the United States, argues that the high rate of married parents among Vietnamese households led to them being perceived as better-conforming to White, heterosexual standards of the "ideal family," which was particularly weaponized through racist stereotypes of Black familial dysfunction and disorder.

mobility that still trouble distinct Asian ethnic groups, including the Hmong (ibid.). In the analysis that follows, I argue that the "model minority" trope was at work both in the past with the reception of the Hmong, and today with how White residents understand the incorporation of the Hmong into Appleton community life as well as their evaluation of incoming racial and ethnic minority groups. Stereotyped expectations of Asian success and achievement have resulted in White Appleton residents accepting "Hmong-ness" (and the "ethnic-ness" of other, later newly arriving groups) so long as it fits within the realm of White acceptability, while also criticizing—if not outright punishing—those who fail to "make it" in a way that is legible to White community members.

Appleton was selected as a city for government-assisted refugee resettlement in part because of the aid resources established and available through Lutheran Social Services and Catholic Charities—church-run social service organizations and agencies in the city at the time—in line with national trends in Hmong resettlement, as nearly three-quarters of Southeast Asian refugees settled in the United States in 1981 were sponsored and aided by Christian and church-run organizations (Borja 2018). Despite the now-positive assessment of how the Hmong have contributed to social fabric of the city—which I examine in further detail below—my White participants recalled negative reactions towards their arrival in the 1970s and 80s from Appleton residents more broadly, centered largely around the perceived foreignness of Hmong families.

Joan, below, describes her family informally employing Hmong residents in manual labor, as well as the extent of their assimilation and upward mobility years later, but also notes the extent to which Appleton community members felt the need to educate newly arrived Hmong into Wisconsin cultural norms.

> Joan, 61: I remember when the Hmong arrived, and my parents... Umm, my mom taught reading to some of the Hmong. Umm…she definitely reached out to the Hmong community. That was very interesting to see. I mean, she... she employed some members of the Hmong community to work on our yard. I mean, they arrived and…and they were wearing donated clothing from churches, you know, Goodwill and everything. And then within about ten years, and maybe it was more of their kids, they were wearing cool clothes, like…hip clothing, very contemporary, umm, fashionable clothes. And then the guy, uh…the father of the family my mom hired to help with the yard was driving a Mercedes [chuckle] about 10 years after he arrived. And I remember reading something maybe in the Post-Crescent [newspaper] that the Hmong women were... were having to be kind of coached culturally, 'cause they were seen out in their backyards hanging laundry like wearing what we would consider to be a bra, I remember [chuckle]. I think it was in the Post-Crescent, that they... like there had to be some, some community outreach to the Hmong women about how they dressed, and what the standards of dress were, umm, so that was interesting.

Debbie, similarly, recalls several instances of overt hostility and xenophobia, which centered around disapproval of both Hmong cultural practices and, again, clothing.

> Debbie, 63: So if I can talk just a little bit about [the early years of Hmong resettlement in Appleton]. That was not…that did not go well initially. You know, like Lutheran social services was very involved. I was a member of Trinity Lutheran Church in high school. Umm, and Catholic social services were also involved in resettlement. Uh, but you know, the community... I would hear things at school about, “Oh, they were burning a goat out in the backyard." Or, “Oh, somebody is, you know, is keeping chickens in their garage,” and that this was just, you know, a horrible thing, right? And no understanding... or people would laugh at Hmong men who were dressed in women's clothes. But these were the only clothes that fit, right? And so all these transitions…when I went out to Fox Valley [Technical College] once, there was a sign above the bubbler [drinking fountain]. It was a drawing, a handmade sign by somebody at Fox Valley Tech, in which there was a slanty eyed man spitting into the bubbler a big circle with a red [line] through it. And I thought that is the most racist thing I have ever seen. It's like, could you not talk to people about, okay, this is not a spittoon and…it was just unbelievably racist at the beginning.

Towards the end of her statement Debbie also notes seeing a sign hanging up in the local technical college but suggests that the sign was an effort—albeit an overtly racist one—to tell Hmong men not to use the drinking fountain as a spittoon, and she suggests that instead of the sign, the offending men could just be “talked to” about cultural norms. Alternatively, rather than

understanding the sign as a misguided attempt to "teach" the newly resettled Hmong students, it could arguably be read as historically parallel to the racially segregated and labeled drinking fountains of the Jim Crow era, where *any* use of the school's facilities by the Hmong students, and indeed their presence, was considered unacceptable.

Logan, the evangelical pastor, attended elementary school in Appleton throughout the period of new Hmong households moving to the city.

> Interviewer: Do you remember the [resettlement] going on growing up?
>
> Logan, 45: Yep, I do. Umm, they were moved a little before I got there, but they had been settled. And so, you know, in my class at Columbus Elementary School, there was all White kids and six, seven Hmong kids. So to me it was just normal to have Hmong kids in... In school. Others didn't... didn't see it that way. And then, you know, so they had been settled. Their parents didn't speak any English at all. For me as a kid, their houses smelled weird. The food was different and they... They would... I would see them in their clothing doing things like that. To me, that was just fascinating and fun. But they were always poorer than everybody. Uh, struggled socially. And there was a whole lot of Vietnam vet angst toward them. So the names that were used to describe them were very derogatory. Umm, and people were angry, like, "Learn the language." You know, some real scummy, White trashy kind of comments for them. And I always, as a kid bothered me, I'm like, "What are you people doing?" You know like, I always had a heart for them so...

In this retelling, it was unremarkable to him as a young child that Hmong children were present in his classroom, and Logan recalled both the "weird" foods and smells of Hmong households; significantly, he pointed to understanding Hmong cultural practices as merely different—or, in a child's conception, "fascinating and fun"—rather than negative or undesirable. Logan also noted his perception as a young child that Hmong families were "poorer than everybody" and were subjected to racist verbal harassment and hostility, particularly from veterans of the Vietnam war, and he attributed these perceptions to his having a "heart" for intercultural ministry as an adult. I proceeded to ask about the discourse around the Hmong refugees that Logan heard at home and from influential sources during this period:

> Interviewer: If you don't mind me asking this, how did your parents talk about the Hmong? Did your parents kind of have the same attitude as you? Where did you hear the more positive messages or accepting attitudes?
>
> Logan: I didn't hear a lot. My parents weren't...weren't hot or cold with them. School systems knew they had to accommodate it. I didn't hear a lot of anti-Hmong talk from school leaders. It was the neighbors, it was listening to the dad of my neighbors and other people around saying, "What are these people doing here?" Calling them the names, you know, angry. And they had been at Vietnam, you know, they'd fought in Vietnam. So they were angry about them being here.

Although institutions like the public school system were not overtly hostile—although I consider the effects of the expectations of assimilation placed upon the Hmong in a later section—here Logan notes that the overt racist hostility towards the Hmong that he observed growing up was largely from individuals who were specifically angry about their status as Southeast Asian refugees following the end of the Vietnam war. This anger from veterans of the Vietnam war towards the Hmong who were living in Appleton is a particularly egregious deployment of racial ignorance considering that, as briefly mentioned at the end of the last chapter, the Hmong refugees faced violent political persecution in Laos and Vietnam in large part because of the aid they provided to the U.S. military.

Finally, Anne recounts a conversation had with her parents while driving through Appleton as adult. Although she does not specify the year or her age at the time of this interaction, it is apparently after the Hmong population had grown over several generations in Appleton, as she compares observing the social activities of Hmong families to her own seemingly idyllic childhood in the city:

> Anne, 74: It was really interesting when I would go, like in the summer…if you'd just be going around Appleton or something, and you'd see like where Erb Park is. Erb Park seems to be a park where a lot of Hmong activity goes on, and in the summer it's really a big deal, um, because they set up…they have volleyball nets, and they have soccer, and you see these little old grannies sitting in chairs taking care of little baby kids, you know, and that kind of stuff and everything. But one time, I was with my parents and we were driving past Erb Park in the summer,

> and you can... I mean, it's very obvious. I haven't been there lately if it's still like that, but it was real obvious because of you'd see all these dark heads and, you know, everything. Um, and then my dad says, "Look at that, they're taking over our parks." You know, they had that mindset like, oh, it's an invasion of foreigners that are coming to take over here. But what stuck in my mind was the fact that observing what they were doing in that park reminded me of my life back in the '50s here, where the men would be playing horseshoe and the ladies would be sitting on the sideline, chit chatting or taking care of little [kids.] You know, it was basically, uh, a reboot of Appleton in the '50s with these new people coming in. And…I don't... did not see that as threatening. I saw that as they were building community and they were going to a park because they probably didn't have area by their houses to socialize and stuff like that. So, and I'm not sure how much that has changed, or if that's still a thing.

In Anne's recounting of this event, like Logan above, the overt hostility against the Hmong as "foreign invaders" is heard from individuals at an interpersonal, rather than institutional, level; here, it is Anne's parents who had lived in Appleton for most of their adult lives, and who watched as the Hmong population had grown until, seeing multiple generations of Hmong families, they perceived the Hmong population as a threat. At the same time, I believe it is telling that the social and familial gatherings of the Hmong remind Anne of her own childhood in Appleton "back in the 50s," which she describes in very traditional terms of "the men playing horseshoes" while the women watched the children. Anne describes how seeing this gathering in the park was, in her perception, a positive gathering and *not* "threatening." Yet, Anne's positive assessment of how the Hmong people were interacting and spending time in a public park reflects deep-rooted expectations among White Appleton residents about Hmong assimilation, behavior, and livelihood within the Appleton community, and I consider how these expectations have not only been harmful to Hmong residents but have also defined and constrained the subsequent welcoming of other racial and ethnic minority groups into the city.

Good, Contributing Citizens

Over the course of our conversations, several participants spoke about both the extent of assimilation into White, Wisconsin culture seen among the Hmong population, and about the ways that their assimilation has been positive or beneficial to the Appleton community as a whole. In most instances, participants spoke about these things as being essentially the same, or two steps in the same process: learning English, assimilating into Western culture, and becoming a productive (i.e., employed) resident of the city.

Both Logan and Ty speak broadly to describe the changes they have observed as long-time Appleton residents in the social position of the Hmong community in the city

> Logan, 45: The Hmong people are moving out of the center part of the city and different diversity is moving in because they've been...they've, you know, economically and socially they've done great. And it's... in some ways the idea when you bring 'em into a community, like the Hmong people, is like all right give them more education, integrate them in. Then they become actually really productive, helpful citizens, contributing on a high level. And they don't wanna live where they were living. They were all my neighbors [in central Appleton] growing up and now they're like, "We don't wanna be here."

> Ty, 36: The Asian community has actually grown, I would say, in their affluence, uh, economically. And you're seeing more and more Asian families buy, you know, homes that are $200,000 plus, or they're leaving the city, and they're moving into smaller cities and so…or they're buying newer homes. And part of it is, is education and assimilation. And so the Asian community has assimilated well into the, uh, White Anglo culture or American Western culture here. And so they've—they've become more affluent and educated and keeping their jobs.

In describing the movement of Hmong households from the central, downtown area of Appleton into the suburbs as they have increasingly assimilated into the city's White cultural majority, the participants are in part providing a textbook example of *spatial assimilation* (Massey and Denton 1985:94), in which "As social status rises…minorities attempt to convert their socio-economic achievements into an improved spatial position, which usually implies assimilation with majority

members" (see also Crowder, South, and Chavez 2006). Thus, as several generations of Hmong families have remained in Appleton, it is unsurprising that a rise in socioeconomic status and mobility—in part through assimilation practices such as English language acquisition—has led to improved housing outcomes. In many cases, a move to "better housing" means increased residential proximity to White households, found largely in the city's suburban areas, and in the smaller towns and villages that make up the Fox Cities. Significantly, research has suggested that the spatial assimilation model does not accurately reflect the experiences of all racial or ethnic minority groups equally, as Black—and to a lesser extent, Latinx—households are more likely to experience what has been called place stratification, where persistent racial residential segregation keeps ethnic and racial minorities from attaining better housing outcomes, despite any social or economic capital they may possess (Crowder et al. 2006; Darden 2007; South, Crowder, and Pais 2008; Spivak and Monnat 2013; Woldoff 2008). In the residential context of Appleton, then, the residential integration of White and Hmong households over time is reflective of the spatial assimilation model but should not be understood as either the universal experience of all racial and ethnic groups in the city, a sign of equality between White and Hmong households being achieved, or even a necessarily desirable residential outcome.

Like Logan, the Mayor of Appleton, too, spoke about the Hmong refugees both to praise the (implicitly White) Appleton residents who welcomed them, and to note the "benefits" they have brought to the city. Notably, he also acknowledges that the social institutions of the city were not initially structured in a way that was useful or beneficial for the incoming refugee population:

> I think the fact that we've become a community open to resettlement of refugees is huge. When I think about what really spurred this change in Appleton, just in terms of openness, I really think that the resettlement of Hmong refugees into the community, umm, started to open up...open up the community to that change. But I think also it created a necessity for change—saying we have new neighbors in our community, who are part of our community, who live here, who contribute, and who have needs. And the way we were structured and designed, and, you know, our institutions were built, umm, needed to change necessarily to serve that new population.

The Mayor continues:

> There's the sort of political rhetoric that comes with refugee resettlement, and that's always been an issue in the community. I would say that the negative political rhetoric around refugee resettlement represents, umm, a narrow viewpoint in the community as a whole. And again, I wasn't…you know, I was a kid, I was a little kid when the...when the Hmong resettlement was happening in the city. So I think they had very different experiences in terms of that resettlement, and they had very different political issues to deal with. However, uh, I think that generally speaking, the community recognizes not only the responsibility we have as a community to be welcoming, umm, but also the incredible benefits and the richness that comes with welcoming new people to the community. Umm, you know, now the Hmong American population in the city of Appleton, uh, number is around six thousand. And so, you know, multi-generational now, and established…well established, uh, in the business community, in government, in education, and the contributions of the descendants of those initial refugees is just…is obvious, umm, and so important. I mean, I just— I think for me personally, I can't imagine what our community would be like without... it would be a... it would be less than, umm, without those folks. And so I think as we welcome new people to the community, there's a recognition that, yeah, this will ultimately be about the contributions that they make to the community—really good things.

When speaking about criticism of refugee resettlement in Appleton—although now from other countries and the Hmong people not making up who is actively being resettled in the 2020s—the mayor identifies it as anti-refugee "political rhetoric." Yet, although he points out that the political context in the city (and in the United States more broadly) has changed since the 1990s and 2000s, Mayor Ryan ultimately rebuts anti-refugee arguments in terms of "the contributions of the descendants of those initial refugees," again framing the desirability of refugees in one's community in terms of their potential (or, in the case of the Hmong residents, demonstrated)

productivity. Despite his own invocation of more intangible benefits that he sees the Hmong providing to the community (Appleton as a whole would be "less than without those folks"), even newly arriving refugees are welcomed primarily in terms of this productivity-based logic whereby "this will ultimately be about the contributions that they make to the community."

Vang (2020:29) looks to the original policies that brought the Hmong population to the United States to argue that refugee assistance regulations—that is, the requirements that allowed refugees to access a variety of social services and aid—were put into place in order to construct the Hmong refugee as "the perfect low-wage employee." On the one hand, the emphasis on American humanitarianism and the "liberation" of the Hmong "minimized the horrific impact of U.S. imperialism, and instead positioned and perpetuated the U.S. nation and its warriors as friends and rescuers….[to whom] refugees feel the need to perpetually be thankful [for]…for having rescued them from evil communism" (Vang 2020:33), where presumably the *grateful refugee* is willing to take whatever low-paying job they are offered. On the other hand, in an era of neoliberal welfare reforms and worries (built upon racist stereotypes) over welfare dependency particularly among people of color in the 1980s and 90s, gaining authorization to come to the United States as a refugee under the U.S. government's IMAA Act depended centrally on the construction of the would-be Hmong refugee as *employable* (ibid.). The inverse, then, of the ideal "good" refugee is one who does not feel appropriately grateful, or who fails—regardless of the cause—to become productive and independent of government aid.

Palatable Ethnicity and Catering to Whiteness

The potential for being welcomed into the city and positively contributing is narrowly circumscribed and is ultimately governed by White social expectations. Iris describes how the Hmong residents have become a part of the Appleton community since arriving in the city:

> Iris, 58: So the Hmong came back in the '70s because of what happened in Laos with the Vietnamese War, and you know, basically, a refugee had to come here, or had to…you had to escape; you had to leave where you were at. Umm, and I know the *Post-Crescent* did several articles of, "This is why these people are here. And the elders may never learn how to speak English, but don't let that stop you. You know, try to talk to folks. Ask their children to translate." You know, everybody likes to eat, right? And now that we're on about the third generation of kids from that, the younger Hmong kids, they're still participating in all of the cultures and traditions and all of that. There's this great thing called the Long Cheng Marketplace here in town, which has about four or five restaurants in the back of it, and you can buy, uh, the Hmong regalia, all of the festival clothing that they wear, and, umm, there's a grocery store that's part of it…umm, as we've had more things like that, Mai's Deli, which sells eggrolls. Yumhmie foods up on Wisconsin Avenue, that sells Hmong eggrolls you can buy in the grocery store in the frozen food section. Umm, I... I think food is really…is really the way that Appleton's getting their act together, 'cause we all love to eat all these different foods. There's a guy that has a eggroll thing on the farm market every Saturday, and there's always a long line of people waiting to get eggrolls from the farm market.

In Iris's description, the primary contribution of the Hmong isn't just their business acumen, but more specifically it is their establishment of restaurants that sell Hmong ethnic foods, and she points to White residents' lining up to purchase eggrolls at the weekly farmers market as a sign of (White) Appleton "getting their act together." Here, White residents' acceptance of a limited range of Hmong culinary traditions is equated with acceptance of the Hmong themselves as members of the community. On the one hand, this reflects the problematic notion of refugees being assessed as being "deserving" or "successful" in decidedly capitalistic terms of future earning potential (see Erickson 2020; Turner 2020; Vang 2020). On the other hand, as Ty points out below, even the newfound taste for Hmong food on the part of White residents is, in part, the result of the Hmong adjusting towards White, Midwestern preferences:

> Ty, 36: But [the Hmong restaurants in Appleton] are Americanized. They're like…take this for what it is, I'm not trying to make fun of White people. They're White-washed restaurants. It's geared towards White people. If you ask anybody—any Asian person—a good restaurant to eat at, they're not gonna mention all the ones that White people wanna go to. It's gonna be your hole-in-the-wall, service is really bad, but the food tastes amazing. And so...'cause if you

> want to survive as a restaurant in the Fox Cities, you have to cater to the majority. And 'cause…yeah. So I get it, but we're diverse in the sense of, yes, we have more flavor in the area…but community and living together and wrestling with tough issues in life, it's still not there.

Ty first points to the ways that attempts to create and maintain businesses in the area have, in part, necessitated modifying Hmong foods to be more acceptable to the majority-White clientele of the Fox Cities, which is troubling in light of Iris's belief above that the support and success of these (in Ty's telling) "White-washed" restaurants signals the acceptance of Hmong traditions into the White, Midwestern mainstream. Second, while acknowledging the success that those establishments have achieved, Ty also suggests that the mere presence of Hmong-owned businesses, and the patronage of White residents as paying customers in those businesses, should not be equated with, in his words, "community and living together and wrestling with tough issues in life." Achieving such interpersonal relationships, presumably, would require interaction and relational investment far outside the formality and norms of merely dining in a Hmong restaurant, and in Ty's telling White Appleton residents are unprepared to make such moves.

Ty goes on to describe how White acceptance of "Americanized" Hmong culture has been extended to him as a person:

> So I hate to say it, but I am one of the token Asian people in the Fox Cities…I'm one of the few Asian people that's willing to say yes [to involvement with majority-White organizations]. If you try to engage other Asian people, or even Latino or Black, they'll say no, because there's a lot of mistrust…because we as minorities in…a White majority culture feel like White people just want us to look, act, and talk like them. And if we don't look, act, and talk like them, then we're not really invited to the table. And so now if we...I'll say this too, I sometimes feel like I'm invited to the table because I'm not that Asian, culturally. I've been very Americanized, culturally. And so...and I have an Anglo wife, and I know how to play the suburban culture. But I also get a little bit of the urban culture too, having lived in Chicago, having grown up in gangs and drugs and poor. So it's…I'm always in this in-between…

Much in the same way that he describes Hmong foods being "White-washed" in Appleton, Ty's statement here points to the expectations of assimilation into middle-class Whiteness that are placed upon people of color in Appleton if they want to be given a public voice, suggesting that "there's a lot of mistrust" among racial and ethnic minorities towards White residents since being given an "invitation to the table" has historically depended upon "looking, acting, and talking" in a way that meets White standards. Ty describes the tension between, on the one hand, a personal history of interaction with gangs, drug use, and poverty, while on the other hand this "little bit of urban culture" is tempered—in the eyes of White Appleton residents—by his ability to perform White "suburban" culture appropriately, including his marriage to a White woman, and the nature of his occupation. This examination of how expectations of assimilation into Whiteness are understood and received by people of color is limited though, as Ty is the only participant who did *not* identify as White in this study, and his voice here and elsewhere should not be taken as representative of all racial and ethnic minorities in the city; instead, I include it here as one way that Whiteness is viewed in Appleton by those who are outside its boundaries.

Finally, returning to the 1970s when the Hmong were newly resettled in the Appleton area, Chris, the retired attorney with significant experience with the family court system in the city, spoke about how the cultural differences between Hmong and White, Midwestern parenting resulted in an increase in child abuse cases in the area. Like Ty describes above with the foods that Appleton residents will or will not eat, "success" in America is understood largely as alignment with White, middle-class cultural expectations:

> Chris, 73: I mean, you didn't have Hmongs until the end of the Vietnamese war in [the] late '70s. There were several thousand Hmongs that were relocated to the Fox River Valley, and they kind of congregated here from other areas in Wisconsin. And for a long time, they were the majority of CHIPS [child abuse] cases…were Hmong families, uh, that their way of parenting wasn't acceptable [laughs] with the American way. And you had, you know, just family after family

> of problems. Uh, and eventually the kids that were born here then got raised and went through school, and became pretty much productive members of society, and the parents were in the family unit, then the kids because the, the kids were westernized and…knew English, and knew how to get along and, the parents didn't and you know, that's, as they age... um, they're pretty much dying out, now they're in their '60s, and '70s, the parents of the families and the kids are the ones that are, um, had been, uh, westernized, if you will.

Chris describes this initial increase in cases as coming from "family after family of problems," but with time, in his telling, the Hmong children who were born in the United States and went through the full U.S. educational system became "productive members of society." Chris's explanation here becomes somewhat difficult to understand, as he seems to struggle with praising the "westernization" of the second generation while attempting to, supposedly, not overtly criticize the practices of the now-elderly Hmong residents who had failed to assimilate and who are now "dying out" as they age. This perspective though, I argue, is emblematic of the expectation in the past (i.e., during the time of active Hmong resettlement) of the ways the Hmong should assimilate: learn fluent English, fit into mainstream White society, and contribute economically to the community. Erickson (2020:70) deems this desired assimilation outcome *economic citizenship*, in which, under a capitalist and neoliberal logic, a "good citizen's" worth is measured in terms of "property ownership, wage work, and consumerism" while devaluing anything that does "not revolve around economic imperatives." When economic productivity becomes tied to definitions of who is a "good citizen"— as was the case with expectations of Hmong employment and eventual self-sufficiency—accomplishing anything less, or different, from the norm of capitalist logic (itself reflected in White, middle-class standards of the "American dream") is considered a failure, deviant, or criminal.

The Deviant Refugee

Unlike the "ideal" refugee described in the previous section who assimilates into White, Midwestern culture as an, to borrow Glazer's (1993) critical use of the term, "undifferentiated American," participants also spoke about those Hmong Americans—usually the descendants of the first generation of Hmong refugees to be resettled in the city and region—who failed to become productive, "good" members of the Appleton community. Consider Julia's recounting of the choices made by some second-generation Hmong youth:

> Julia, 76: So we've got some very good friends that are Hmong. In fact, we ended up getting to really know the first couple that was brought over here, umm...they are both clan leaders in their own right. Part of the Hmong community... Hmong, uh, society is they look back to their ancestors. And everything is looking back, looking back. Now the kids that are brought up here, it was an interesting thing. Well, the kids learned English faster than their parents did, and they were…they were doing all the legal work for their parents. And, you know, the load that they put on these kids…uh, but the kids were supposed to…they were told outright, they were at school that way— "You are to get a better life than we have"…You've got a, uh, couple of that have broke the mold and said, "No, we'll be smarter than this. We can do the drugs. We can sell the drugs. We can..." You know, uh, and part of the thing is I…I blame some of the movies. I blame some of the extreme video games. Because that whole generation grew up with that. And they're looking to that as a leadership or as, uh, as how they're learning their lessons. And like, how to move through the world—well, how many of these video games or the movies, especially that become a reality for them? Yeah, I'm sorry. You shoot... You shoot somebody. They don't get up afterwards…dead is dead. And like, the amount of, uh, kids that are just so overwhelmed with uh, supposedly trying to change things, but they don't have the ammunition to try and change.

Julia's mention of her "very good friends that are Hmong" bears similarities to the rhetorical strategy of the "Black friend" identified by Bonilla-Silva (2018), in which the presence of a personal relationship with a person of color is mentioned in order to lend a sort of racial credibility to the White speaker. In this case, Julia goes on to describe how second-generation Hmong American children (it is unclear if she is speaking about the children of her friends, or about Hmong youth more broadly), despite being raised to value education and create a better

life for themselves now that they are in America,[15] have turned to dealing drugs in part because of what Julie sees as the negative influence of violent movies and video games. Without evidence, Julie suggests that second-generation Hmong children (but apparently not White youth) have looked to violent media as sources of "leadership or how they're learning their lessons," which has resulted in, presumably, a willingness to participate in violence. Interestingly, though, Julie also notes the "amount of kids that are just so overwhelmed with supposedly trying to change things, but they don't have the ammunition to try and change. " On the one hand Julie blames violent video games for leading Hmong youth into illicit activities, yet here she also points to the possibility that they are without the (proverbial) "ammunition" needed to change the circumstances that they find "overwhelming."

Two participants, though, noted the ways that unfulfilled expectations of assimilation and acculturation were used to criminalize Hmong youth, while both underlying systemic inequalities and unexamined cultural differences were left ignored by those in power.

> Ty, 36: Among the community in Appleton in the '70s and '80s, like we were kind of forced to assimilate to the White culture here, and put into schools…and if we didn't fit [they] kind of pushed it out, pushed it out, pushed it out. So [a local pastor] used to be on the Appleton school board and he was fighting some of the issues that were happening in the Appleton school district, where they were fining these kids citations for, uh—whether they're poor, or they're minority backgrounds, because they weren't showing up in school, because they didn't have the proper things at home, or they didn't have support structures…and so these kids were like set up to fail. But that's been going on, in my opinion, since like the '80s and '90s, where pretty much, 'cause if you don't fit into the mold of the Appleton area school district, you're gonna get pushed out and you're just gonna end up trailer trash. You're gonna end up in jail. You're gonna end up a druggie. Or hopefully, you work in a factory and give something back to the city. And so like, I feel like Appleton has always been this…we have this idea of what we wanna be, but…we really don't wanna do the hard work to make that happen.

[15] Swartz, Hartmann, and Vue (2022) find that the children of Hmong refugees value and have goals of educational attainment at the same rate as non-Hmong youth.

Recalling the above discussion in which "good" Hmong refugees are those who contribute economically under a capitalist logic of productivity, it is telling that in Ty's description of what happens to Hmong residents who *fail* to assimilate and "fit in"—particularly within the American educational system—the perceived best outcome is "you work in a factory and give something back to the city." Rather than addressing the structural arrangements that lead to unequal and inadequate outcomes for Hmong students in the first place, within the logic Ty is relaying here, the mainstream White educational system is instead content to ensure that disadvantaged students secure positions in unskilled labor, as such employment would, at least, be "giving something back to the city"—also implying that their status as being poor, receiving government aid, and being the descendants of refugees comes with a debt that they owe to the community.

Emily, a defense attorney, discusses the ways that cultural differences—particularly in understandings of the nature of group conflicts—were used to criminalize Hmong families.

> Interviewer: Do you remember any of the kind of broader reception of the Hmong refugees coming to Appleton? Like how did White Appleton feel about that?
>
> Emily, 41: Oh, for sure. I mean, I definitely remember…can remember hearing people say, "They have to learn English" or, umm, the kids who English wasn't their first language at school. Umm, I found it…and I think it really hit home more when I became a defense attorney. Learning a little bit more about the culture that they came…some of them came from that, uh…where they came from, umm, their history was a much more tribal…umm, organized society than what we have, and I...I believe that there was a big misunderstanding by a lot of White people in Appleton about what…what a gang was. I mean, I can remember the...the grownups…the grownups talking about, you know, us having an Asian gang problem, and I really think that a lot of that was a misinterpretation of the tribal culture that the Hmong people came from…umm, and that we expected them to just, I don't know, forget about when they got here? And it was really more about, uh, a misunderstanding on our part of what their culture and their cultural norms were that, you know, what a true gang is.
>
> Interviewer: It's interesting that you bring that up…the way that any kind of conflict is just like, "It's a gang."

> Emily: Correct.
>
> Interviewer: Like people can still fight, and that doesn't mean it's this organized thing…
>
> Emily: Right, and when you get down to what the definition of a gang is…well, first of all, how do you define it, right? And do even 80-year-old grandma and grandpas know what that term actually means? As opposed to a tribe, or a clan, or…or a family group that...umm, functions in, uh, within the confines of their cultural definitions, which are different than ours? And…and does that make them a gang? No. [chuckle] It's just…it's all about labels. Umm, and I firmly believe that there was a…when I was a child, for sure, a very large misinterpretation of that cultural lifestyle, to the…to the detriment of those people.

In our exchange, I noted the seeming ease with which White Appleton residents turned to their understandings of what gangs are in order to make sense of these inter-familial or tribal conflicts, which Emily jokingly confirmed before noting how this misunderstanding of definitions—and the misapplication of the "gang" label (a term often, and overzealously, applied to groups of ethnic and racial minority teens; see Atiles and Bohon 2002)—had been detrimentally deployed against Hmong families. Such labeling can come with real and serious consequences, in which White fears and misunderstandings result in the criminalization of Hmong residents.

As I consider next, the same criteria of productivity and potential contributions that were applied to the Hmong starting in the 1970s have also been applied to more recent refugee populations being resettled in Appleton in an attempt to discern the "deservingness" of who is coming to the city. What emerges—in an extension of Emily's description of the fears of gang violence being brought to the city—is an evaluative criterion that in large part equates deservingness with assimilation into White, middle-class acceptability.

ASSESSING DESERVINGNESS

Since the end of the active resettlement of Hmong refugees in the mid-2000s, refugees have continued to come to the Fox Cities region, most recently through a national Protestant-affiliated

organization with an office in Appleton, and these more recent refugees have been primarily from Middle Eastern and south-central African countries. As I argued in the previous section, the acceptance of refugees into Appleton—starting with the Hmong—has generally relied upon the belief that the incoming individuals and families will "contribute" and "be productive" in the community, as such contribution would, seemingly, justify both allowing them into the city *and* providing them with assistance and resources. Participants, then, often spoke about the continued placement of refugees in Appleton as a matter of *deservingness*, which is framed in terms of their willingness and productivity in the workplace, even in occupations that are lower-paying than they are credentialed for, as Iris describes below:

> Iris, 58: So we have a need for workers here. And if you've got a skill where you can work, people are gonna leave you alone…so if people have come here, and I'm trying to think of who... there was somebody on the custodial staff at one of my son's schools who was a refugee who had resettled. And he was like... not a lawyer, but of a professional skill class in his original country…but because that wasn't recognized, his, umm…college credentials weren't recognized by anybody here, he got a job as a school custodian, which…you know, some people will look down your nose at that, but the knowledge that you need to deal with all of the different kinds of equipment in a school, plus the kids, and making it a warm, welcoming environment for them, and how do you fix this when you don't have a whole lot of money, 'cause schools never have a whole lot of money…umm, and just the relationships that he was able to build with the kids while he was learning English himself in order to be here, umm, you know, that…those stories don't often get told. And my... my experience with the folks that have come in through the refugee programs has always been, if you're gonna come here, we have to find a job for you first, that you will be able to earn the money to support yourself, because of course, if you're not a citizen, there's a whole bunch of government support programs that aren't open to you.

Suspicion, Deservingness, and "True Refugees"

This need for refugees to "support themselves" arises, in part, from a perception of limited resources. In Alan's estimation below, in a context of finite resources people will remain supportive as long as those being helped are "truly refugees":

> Alan, 66: I think that the community is relatively open to it and maybe…and I'll say this, umm, I…and maybe this is my opinion, but I think it....I think people who are identified as refugees, or like truly refugees…people are pretty open to resettlement. I think there's a always gonna be an issue…I can't say quantity, because I think you have a capability of helping a certain level of people. And uh, as long as it's not overwhelming, umm, and it doesn't appear that it's been overwhelming, umm, I think people are pretty open to it.

On the one hand, Alan notes the ongoing support of refugee resettlement from Appleton community members, and over the course of our conversation he stated no overt opposition to it. On the other hand, it is unclear whether the "capability of helping" is the concrete financial and material resources that are used to aid newly arrived families and individuals, or if it is the more emotional and psychological willingness or belief in the importance of aiding refugees. Alan seems to point to the latter, as he raises the possibility that not everyone who is categorized as a refugee is "truly" in need of assistance, pointing to a suspicion that the "capability of helping" is being manipulated or taken advantage of to some extent by those who aren't truly deserving.

My interview with Alan—and with the other participants in this project—took place in the spring and summer of 2022, when news coverage of the "migrant caravan" of tens of thousands of Central American asylum seekers heading towards the U.S. southern border was nearly unavoidable and dominated popular perceptions of the "refugee crisis" in the United States. A Google News search in May 2023 showed that in 2021 and 2022, over 11,600 news articles on the "migrant caravan" were published online, to say nothing of podcasts, online videos, and television broadcasts not included in this result, as well as the extent to which these sources were repeatedly shared and disseminated. Although a more studied examination of both the circumstances of the so-called "border crisis," along with how Central American immigrants were talked about in popular media during this time is outside the scope of this project, here I note that the migrants seeking asylum were frequently discussed in broad, dehumanized terms.

To take one example, in a June 2022 (n.p.) press release from the Office of the Texas Governor, Greg Abbott, the Texas Department of Public Safety and the Texas National Guard are praised for "securing the border" by making "more than 265,500 migrant apprehensions and more than 16,400 criminal arrests," as well as turning back "more than 22,000 migrants from crossing the border." The statement goes on to criticize the "open border" immigration policies of President Joe Biden, suggesting that the border apprehensions in the state of Texas are being used, in large part, as partisan "clout" on the stage of national politics. And yet, to the casual reader, the numbers provided by the governor's office are large and overwhelming and are presented as to emphasize the threat and criminal nature of these would-be migrants into the United States. Thus, at a time when refugees were being resettled in Appleton in small, predictable numbers, yet national news showed an faceless "mob" of Central American would-be migrants moving in an undistinguished mass towards the U.S.-Mexico border to seek asylum in the United States, Alan's statement about being "capable" of helping refugees as long as it is not "overwhelming" and they are "truly" refugees (instead of, one guesses, seeking asylum under false pretenses) carries more than a little insinuation that it is the refugees who are formally sponsored and resettled through the refugee agency in Appleton who deserve help (and who are generally *not* of Latinx ethnicity; see Garcia 2017), while those migrants coming on foot from South and Central America and applying for asylum at the border are less deserving, if not outright falsifying their claims of persecution.

Unfulfilled Expectations and the Willingness to Help

Danielle, an employee of the refugee resettlement agency in Appleton, describes a recent interaction that reflects a similar frustration, if not suspicion, on the part of White Appleton residents over what is owed to refugees, and what is expected in return:

> Danielle, 26: I mean, even last night I had a training with some volunteers and one of them was really frustrated because one of the families are working with the dad—they've been here six months, the family and the dad hasn't, um, really made much progress in English. And [the volunteer] was just really frustrated about that. Like, how could he not be prioritizing this? Um, you know, how's he gonna get a job? How's he gonna be a part? And um, one of my coworkers is, Hmong American and, you know, kind of shared the mindset of like, just because they…some of the parents have a certain threshold coming here. And they might not learn a lot of English. And maybe that's okay.
>
> Interviewer: And also learning a language as an adult is really hard…
>
> Danielle: Right, yes…exactly [laughs]…and as a refugee in your first six months here, you're dealing so much more than just language, right? So I guess I see it in just feeling like there is an assumption that they need to be grateful…that they come here, that…you know, they've been allowed to come here. Um, yeah—an assumption of like, now it's time to like pitch in and then, you know right, pay us back sort of a thing.

In line with how the subsequent generations of Hmong residents in Appleton were praised for "making it" in the United States, currently arriving refugees are similarly expected to find a job, assimilate into the White, Midwestern world of Appleton, and become self-sufficient. Yet, over the course of our conversations, it became clear among several participants that both the initial attitude of reception—and the ongoing response—towards people who were in the city as a result of refugee resettlement varied depending on how they were racialized.

DIFFERENCE AND RACIALIZED BELONGING

Thinking about how different groups of refugees were welcomed depending on their country of origin—and drawing on the groups of Ukrainian refugees who were just starting to come to the United States at the time— participants noted the beliefs and stereotypes on the part of White Appleton residents that underlie how they perceived incoming groups. Mayor Ryan, for instance, noted the ease with which (White) Ukrainian families were welcomed into the United States, compared to the arduous, drawn-out process of Afghan refugees being able to enter the country:

> Mayor Ryan: The politics around the Afghan resettlement, umm…really heated and intense, and, you know, a lot of political rhetoric about the process of what they had to go through, and, umm, the concerns about safety and these connections to 9/11 and this kind of like...you know, really fear-based and more about political rhetoric than anything grounded in reality…and then you look at the difference in the way Ukrainian refugees are being treated by the United States government, uh, compared to Afghan refugees, and I…they've only processed... I mean, it's a tiny fraction of the parolee applications that have been received from Afghan refugees. And meanwhile, you know, Ukrainians can come in with…basically stamping their passports, you know. So it's just a varied…it's disparate treatment of, uh…of refugee populations. Circumstances are of course very different, but anyway…

The mayor does not explicitly mention race in his discussion of the difference in treatment between Afghan and Ukrainian asylum-seekers; however, by criticizing the anti-Afghan "political rhetoric" invoking threats of terrorism and the events of September 11th, he seems to acknowledge the ways that the stoking of anti-Afghan (i.e., anti-Muslim) fears have consistently been based in racist stereotypes.

Danielle, however, moves to identify these differences in treatment in directly racial terms. In our extended conversation below, she first describes how conservative American Christian churches use the Bible to much more comfortably navigate questions of refugee aid compared to questions of racial injustice, before moving to examine how racial stereotypes directly affect her work with majority-White churches in the area:

> Danielle, 26: I do think, at least in my experience, um, within both my work and even within like the church, I think in Appleton there's a more positive perspective on refugees than there are on African Americans.
>
> Interviewer: Why do you think that is?
>
> Danielle: Um, I think because there is a level of empathy for refugees….like they've gone through this difficult thing. Their lives have been torn asunder. And I do think for a lot of, okay, I'm really going out on... but I'm just gonna say it. I think for a lot of conservative Christians, it's easier for them to find specific scripture that points to caring for a sojourner, or a foreigner in your land, and so that resonates more to them. Whereas the conversation around race in America…feels much more like, uh, liberal ideology and conservative

> Christians…I don't know if that makes sense…I just think that's been interesting 'cause I was curious what it would be like to do refugee work here... but, uh, I've been in multiple conversations where that has been much more well-received than the conversation of race.
>
> Interviewer: You said that folks can empathize with people who are victims of war-torn areas, but then systematic racial inequality and denial of access to all these kinds of resources [is dismissed as part of a liberal agenda]…in your opinion, why is that kind of U.S.-based history of racial disparity [considered to be a] leftist ideology, while sympathy for victims of war violence isn't?
> Danielle: Yeah, yeah…I feel like there's an attitude that, um, race within America—they've done it to themselves. Not saying I think that, but I feel like that's like the mentality I get of, like…
>
> Interviewer: Because, like, Jim Crow was also really violent…
>
> Danielle: Right, right…yeah, I feel like there's an attitude of like, you should be able to help yourself. Like a lack of awareness of like the poverty cycle, or all these resources, or whatever it is…yeah, that's such a good question…I'm just like, I wish I knew the answer.
>
> Interviewer: You bring up the contrast in people's acceptance of "these people are deserving of help" and "these people aren't"…
>
> Danielle: Well, and I think another way to that is seeing the difference in people's support of Ukrainian refugees who are White from a first world country, and the majority of our clients who are Congolese, who are Black and come from a third world country.
>
> Interviewer: Right…Do you have Ukrainian refugees [in Appleton yet]?
>
> Danielle: We just had our first family enrolled in a…but that's also different because they're coming here with sponsors and…but even just the general, like, community-wise…which was something that was really frustrating to all of us of like why, you know, prioritize. But I feel like that's reflective of like an unsaid bias towards a first-world, White sort of a thing, so that's interesting to see.

Here, Danielle identifies the anti-Black bias that is at work among the White residents she works with: refugees from White, Western countries are deserving of help and sympathy, while Black Americans and refugees from African countries are perceived as incompetent. Furthermore, inequalities that have emerged among the Black population in America as a result of institutionalized and ongoing racial bias and systemic racism are treated as suspect, since—in

Danielle's telling—what White, Christian churchgoers should "do" about those problems are less easily identified compared to relatively more clear-cut instructions from the Bible on the treatment of refugees.[16]

From Congolese to Black in America

As Danielle, Nathan, and Ty note below, anti-Blackness becomes a central part of how refugees, particularly those from the Congo, are acculturated as they come to the United States and become part of the Appleton community.

> Danielle, 26: The majority of the clients we resettle are Congolese. So to the average American who's seeing them on the street, which just know them as Black American…um, I think what I see more, that's really interesting to me not being from [here…] This feels like a really small town to me. I moved here from Atlanta…like lived in [downtown] Atlanta. So I think what's…I more hear is just the kind of, um, maybe an unhealthy approach and desire of wanting them to assimilate…not necessarily help them integrate, but to reflect like White northeast Wisconsin practices and values.

Nathan, a co-worker of Danielle's, is speaking about his discussions with Congolese clients during the protests in 2020 following the killing of George Floyd, which I examined from my White participants' perspectives in chapter 5:

> Nathan, 33: So from my context, we're pretty aware of what is happening being at [the refugee resettlement agency]. And, um, a lot of the protests happened downtown at Houdini Plaza…Um, I typically do not partake in rallies like that…the one thing that was interesting is seeing how…figuring out what could we do best to love our clients, especially at that time, you know— Africans who were Black, and it's fascinating because people in the community assume just because you're Black, that you're African-American, that you were born here…and it's a completely different culture. Um, so that was definitely an interesting thing where, you know, I feel like there were…we had clients with

[16] Frequently invoked scriptural references among Protestant circles for aiding refugees are verses commanding justice for the "sojourner" or "alien," such as Exodus 22:21—"You shall not wrong a sojourner or oppress him, for you were sojourners in the land of Egypt"—and Jeremiah 22:3—"Thus says the LORD: Do justice and righteousness, and deliver from the hand of the oppressor him who has been robbed. And do no wrong or violence to the resident alien, the fatherless, and the widow, nor shed innocent blood in this place."

> questions, and we had to kind of…coach them up a little bit and say, "Hey, this is what's going on"…we had to educate them, "This is what this means," you know.

It was unclear from Nathan's telling *what*, specifically, they said to their Congolese clients to explain the racial context of the United States that was particularly heated at that time, or how those clients made sense of being socially rendered as "Black Americans" upon arriving in Appleton. Ty, despite questioning his own use of the term "urban Black" to identify Black Americans, echoes other participants' earlier statements about the expectation placed upon refugees that they will assimilate and demonstrate their deservingness by becoming productive residents, except here he identifies the additional layer of complication, where Congolese refugees are *not* aware of White, Midwestern norms in the same way that Black Americans would be:

> Ty, 36: So the Congolese has been really telling to me. So you have these African men and women who are coming from the Congo. They've never experienced winter here before [chuckle] and it's…we're expecting them to fit in and…and then people think that Congolese people are urban Black African Americans. I'm like, "No, they're not." It's…there's African Black and then there's urban Black, right? And I don't know if that's the PC term, but they're just different culturally…very, very different. And so when I…there's just this desire for people to just…get their act together right away. And there's not a lot of empathy and a desire to learn. And 'cause people here are very familial, I guess—in, uh, the sense of everybody hangs out with their family and their tribe and they don't do a lot of blending with others—so then when you're forced to, that's like where the conflict arises.

These three participants—who by nature of their occupations were far more likely to have regular contact and close personal ties with racial and ethnic minorities in the city than the other participants in this study—in different ways identified how being perceived as Black in Appleton was, essentially, to be perceived as not belonging. Where refugees were welcome in Appleton—since aiding and supporting refugees is widely accepted as a moral responsibility and social good (Hoewe et al. 2022)—the descriptions above of the Congolese experience in Appleton points to

how refugees are only identified as such if they are *not* racialized as Black and U.S.-born. That is, within the moral imagination of White Appleton residents, refugees need and deserve help (providing they "make themselves useful" soon after their arrival), and if the Black people they see in public are known to be Congolese, then they, too, are welcome as people in need of assistance. However, to be a Black American—and *not* a refugee—in Appleton is to be out-of-place.

"Why are You Here?": Suspicion and (Non)Knowing

Here we reach the intersection of Appleton residents understanding themselves as welcoming, neighborly, and liberal-minded citizens, and the history of anti-Black exclusion in the city that has led to a social environment where Black people, if they are not "read" as being refugees, are seen with puzzlement, if not hostility. Max, a retired teacher, recalled how in the past Black men seen in the city were assumed to play for the Green Bay Packers football team:

> Max, 76: In 1970 when the only African-American was assumed to be a Green Bay Packer [player]…you know, if it were a male, kids would run up to him. I mean, it's a [chuckle] terrible story, but...the kids would run up to any large African-American male and get...try to get an autograph.

Evan, below, expresses a similar sentiment in the present; although not assuming that Black people seen in Appleton are professional athletes, his implicit questioning of their presence points to the ways that visible Black people in Appleton *cannot* be ordinary residents:

> Evan, 43: You see that's why, when I see African Americans walk around in Appleton or I get to meet some of them, some of my heart like is just…maybe it's very bad, but... I say, "Why are you here?" Do you know how difficult it would be to be an African American in Appleton? There's hardly any [African Americans] here.

Evan gives credence to the possibility that racial and ethnic minorities face "difficulty" living in Appleton, but understanding Appleton as an unwelcoming environment is cognitively

disconnected from his own questioning regarding their presence in that space. Evan's reaction is on the more innocuous end of responses, as the discussion in the preceding chapter has shown how Milwaukee—by virtue of its much larger proportion of Black—is perceived as a source of danger and threat that people come to Appleton to escape *from*; and, by extension, the Black *people*—who may or may not be from Milwaukee, what matters is that they *could* be—are themselves a danger and threat to the fabric and safety of the city. Debbie identifies and critiques the role that such stereotypes play in how Black Appleton residents are treated, noting first the disproportionate incarceration of Black people in the county jail, and then the assumption that Black people are in Appleton only if they have a loved one or relative who is incarcerated:

> Debbie, 63: We also have the problem of, you know, more than half of the Black residents in Appleton are incarcerated in our county jail...and half of those are not originally residents from Appleton. So the people who are seen in Appleton to be Black are seen as affiliated with crime. Now those may be family members who are visiting, who have come up here and are staying to be close to their person who is incarcerated…those people are seen as outsiders. And that's the way they're treated…if you're Black, you're not from here. It's like some of these families have lived here [chuckle] for a whole lot longer than any of my family have lived here—three- and four-generation families. You know, and these are the families that, you know, still live in the same houses that they bought in the 30s and 40s and 50s.

Debbie's reasoning here seems to rely in part on a questionable logic that people "belong" in Appleton if they are "from" Appleton, suggesting that one proves their "belonging" by living in the city for a long enough time. Nevertheless, she accurately points to the ways that anti-Black stereotypes of criminality play a role in the assumption that Black residents are out of place and don't truly "belong" in the city.

Being seen as Black and out-of-place is a precarious position that is not without deadly consequences in the United States. The murders of Trayvon Martin and Ahmaud Arbery, among others, demonstrate that the racialization—and subsequent policing—of White space is not an

abstract project for White defenders of what is perceived as "theirs." Furthermore, the erasure of Appleton's Sundown history allows White residents to elide the racial hostility that could very well face would-be Black residents—hostility that relatively few have chosen to risk, considering the minimal growth of the Black population compared to other racial and ethnic minority groups in the city over time—and instead attribute the absence of Black households and residents to simplified matters of personal preference, like the undesirability of the climate. This selective (non)knowing—including the belief that systemic racism is at work to maintain racial inequality in the United States more broadly, while simultaneously arguing that Appleton is a town *without* racial problems—allows White residents to live in a town shaped by White homogeneity and privilege without having to see themselves as beneficiaries. The experiences of racial and ethnic minority groups in Appleton—most distinctly the Hmong—are themselves shaped by the extent to which members of those groups can align themselves to cultural and economic expectations shaped by, and with the purpose of maintaining, White social dominance.

CHAPTER 8

CONCLUSION

Building on the well-observed histories, mechanisms, and consequences of urban-suburban residential segregation, this study explores the role of Sundown-style segregation, a pattern of racial exclusion that reached its peak between 1880 and 1940 and relied on formal and informal policies and practices to keep racial and ethnic minority residents (in the Midwest, most often Black households) from settling within city and sometimes county limits, which in turn produced homogenously White residential populations. Communities that practiced this form of segregation—which came to be known as Sundown towns—are found across the United States, yet the racially exclusionary histories of many of these towns and small cities remain unacknowledged and unexamined.

In this research, I argue for the inclusion of Sundown towns in more widely known narratives of residential segregation and begin to consider how the White residential homogeneity that results from such segregating practices are seen in both the contemporary characteristics of these towns, and in how White residents understand their community's racial past and present. To do this, I conducted interviews with thirty-one White current and former residents of Appleton, Wisconsin (a small city with a known Sundown history), and I review those results below. What emerged over the course of my interviews was a pattern of acknowledging the persistence of systemic racism at a broad, depersonalized level, while using a number of strategies to actively remain ignorant of Appleton's history of anti-Black racial violence and discrimination. Such moves, I believe, worked to maintain the internal belief in one's innocence for my participants, as it ensured that racial discrimination and racism were problems that remained "out there," far from requiring action of the part of my White

participants. The ubiquity of historically Sundown towns across the United States suggests that such attitudes and beliefs are likely common among residents of these communities in the present, thus further critical inquiry into the mechanisms and contemporary effects of historical Sundown segregation is necessary for social scientists who are seeking a fuller and more accurate understanding of racial residential segregation in the United States.

RESULTS

Residential Outcomes in the Sundown Era

In Chapter 2, I asked what the residential outcomes were for Black Appleton residents during the Sundown era from 1880 to 1940, and how did they compare to their White residential contemporaries? Using census and other archival data, I found that while many Black residents lived in Appleton to the end of their lives, those who left the city primarily moved to much larger cities that already had large, established Black populations in the Midwest and Northeast. In contrast, among a comparative sample of White residents who lived in Appleton at the same time, I found that White people moved to other small towns and cities outside of Appleton, including in the western United States, which was not an outcome seen among *any* Black households. I argue that this migration of Black people exclusively into larger metropolitan areas reflects the extent to which Sundown-style violence and exclusion kept Black families from settling anywhere *except* in large cities—a migration pattern that is often obscured by the much larger-scale Great Migration of Black households out of the South and into Northern cities. Furthermore, the exclusion of Black households from smaller towns and cities is also an under-considered source of urban population growth, leading to residential crowding, under-employment, and the emergence of the "ghetto" in large, metropolitan centers.

Although I cannot assert from these findings *why* Black households left Appleton during the Sundown era, the growth of Appleton's White population while the Black population declined to zero, taken together with the growth of all racial and ethnic groups at the state level, shows that Black residents were decidedly *not* moving into Appleton, although they were moving to other parts of Wisconsin. The exclusion of Black households from Sundown towns is not just a story of Black residents being compelled to live in larger cities due to lack of other residential options, and the real threats of violence that likely faced them were they to try settling in a Sundown town. Instead, the exclusion of Black households through formal and informal policies and practices was the result of active and ongoing enforcement and action by White Sundown residents, in which creating and maintaining a homogenously White population was the intended outcome. For towns and small cities like Appleton, the legacies of Sundown-era violence and exclusion often still linger in who is absent from the community, as well as in histories of long-delayed diversification and residential integration. However, rather than being recognized as the result of ongoing and intentional White boundary-keeping, the histories of these communities are erased or forgotten, and their characteristics are instead rendered "natural" and unquestionably "normal," and questions of who is present or absent are reduced to being matters of "personal preference."

Understanding the Past

Turning to the qualitative results from my interview data, in Chapter 5 I then asked, how do current White Appleton residents remember and make sense of Appleton's racial past, particularly its history of anti-Black exclusion and status as a Sundown town? Although participants were generally aware of 1) the history of systemic and institutional racism in the United States, such as Jim Crow laws and residential segregation, and 2) Appleton's past as a

Sundown, racially exclusionary community, the events of the past were not understood as shaping (or still happening in) the present. Instead, drawing on Mueller's (2017, 2020) and Mills' (1997) theory of racial ignorance, I argue that in an enactment of selective (non)knowing, events of the past are seen as distant history that have no bearing on Appleton's current characteristics, while more recent events of racial violence and inequality are unknown, or minimized in their significance, by participants.

Rather than understanding the racial violence of the past and present as a possible explanation for the majority-White population that has characterized Appleton for most of the 20th century, participants naturalized the absence of racial and ethnic minority populations through explanations that relied on personal preference, suggesting, for instance, that Black people choose not to live in Appleton because of its cold climate (although they live in nearby Milwaukee). Such strategic erasure of the past also works to preemptively exclude White residents from benefitting from racial conflict or in perpetuating racism or racial inequality since, as Joan notes in her relaying of this common logic, there are no people of other races to be racist "towards":

> Joan, 61: [People say] "We aren't racist, we don't have racism, because we have no races," you know? [The argument goes that] there were no race relations in Appleton 'cause there were no other races to relate to, so you think that, "Oh, I'm not a racist." Well, not necessarily true.

Here, Joan identifies the conceptual boundaries that are created through the strategic forgetting and (non)knowing about the past; according to this logic, White residents cannot "be racist" because there is no one to be the object of their racial hostility, yet ignorance of Appleton's Sundown history erases the fact that the small racial and ethnic minority population in Appleton is the direct result of overt racism and hostility in the past. Furthermore, such erasure forecloses the possibility that the racial and ethnic minority residents who *are* present in the city have had a

different experience and perception of life in Appleton than those of White residents.

Explaining the Present

The racism of Appleton's past created a community context shaped by White advantage and opportunity hoarding, and in Chapter 6 I explore how Appleton's history as a former Sundown town is experienced by residents today, and where can the influences of the city's Sundown history can still be seen. Although Appleton does offer its residents a high quality of life across a number of measures, participants consistently pointed to the feeling of safety as a primary draw or benefit to living in Appleton, particularly for families with children, despite the city's higher than average crime rate. When participants spoke about being *unsafe* in Appleton, the absence of safety was narrowly confined to either people overconsuming alcohol along a specific stretch of the main street that runs through downtown, or the downtown transit plaza that services both the city's public transportation system and inter-city buses.

Drawing on Blumer's (1958) conception of group threat, I argue that rather than being the site of exceptional danger, the transit plaza is instead where people of color are most reliably visible in the city (see also Blalock 1967 and Taylor 1998). In a city marked by decades of White homogeneity, the (small, rigidly bounded) site where racial and ethnic minorities—particularly Black people—are consistently located is seen as a source of threat. This is made all the clearer in light of how participants talk about the city of Milwaukee: while Milwaukee is talked about by White Appleton residents as profoundly dangerous and a place that people come to Appleton to escape *from*, in reality the per capita crime rate in Milwaukee is only slightly higher than that of Appleton, despite being 7.5 times larger in overall population. Important, though, is the fact that in 2020 Appleton was 79 percent non-Latino White, while Milwaukee was only 32 percent non-Latino White, with Black residents making up 38 percent of Milwaukee's population (while

Black people in Appleton, in 2020, made up 3 percent of the population). Social psychologists have found that White people are likely to perceive Black people in particular as a threat to their safety (see Eberhardt et al. 2004; March et al. 2021; Trawalter et al. 2008), and this sense of threat is the result of anti-Black socialization that is fundamental to maintaining White social dominance. I argue, then, that the benefit of feeling safe that White residents receive from living in Appleton is just that: a *feeling*, derived in part from the absence of a racial group that they have been socialized to fear.

Who is Welcome?

Finally, I asked how has Appleton's history as a Sundown town affected White residents' receptions of racial and ethnic minority groups who began to settle in Appleton following a nearly all-White population for most of the 20th century, starting with the arrival of Hmong refugees in the 1970s? As the Hmong were the first ethnic minority group to settle in Appleton in significant numbers and disrupt the all-White population of the city, the reception of the Hmong refugees by White residents—as well as the expectations of assimilation and productivity that were placed upon Hmong families by White community members—were constraining not only to the Hmong, but also to subsequent racial and ethnic minority groups who would later move to Appleton. Understood by White Appleton residents as refugees who had been "rescued" by the U.S. military in Laos and Vietnam, Hmong residents who were perceived as sufficiently grateful and who participated in the market economy as productive workers were considered "good" and "deserving," while those who did not adequately abide by White, middle-class expectations of culture, productivity, and family were seen as deviant, if not criminal.

More recently, as refugees and other immigrant groups—particularly from Central America and Mexico, the Middle East, Central and West Africa, and to a lesser extent Eastern

Europe—continue to move to and settle in Appleton, White residents evaluate the motivations for these groups to come to the city, and by extension the welcome and place they should be given, using the same White-normative criteria of expected assimilation that was placed upon the Hmong starting in the 1970s. Additionally, White residents assess "why" people of color are in the city (e.g., resettled refugees who deserve aid and assistance, or not) based on racialized physical markers, such that people who appear to be Black and Latinx are *not* seen as possible refugees, and therefore do not warrant aid or particular welcome. Thus, despite the claims that Appleton is a city that welcomes everyone and where all its residents have a fair chance to build a good life for themselves, the anti-Black attitudes that established Appleton as a Sundown town in the past and maintained a decades-long White homogeneity is still seen in the fear towards communities that are *not* predominately White (the city of Milwaukee, in particular) and in the suspicion towards particular racial and ethnic groups that are increasingly visible in the city.

Overall, the results presented in Chapters 5–7 are limited somewhat by the narrow range of participant that I was able to sample. Here, I am interested in the racial attitudes and beliefs, and racial self-conceptions of White people, but the use of snowball recruitment resulted in a participant pool that was fairly homogenous in age, educational attainment, and political orientation. Politically, most of my participants self-identified as moderate, independent, or liberal-leaning, which I believe excludes a wide range of beliefs and ideologies from the results of this study that would surely add nuance to the picture of White racial cognition that I have painted here. Only one participant, for instance, identified as a supporter of former President Donald Trump, despite the fact that he received 54 percent of the popular vote in Outagamie County during the 2016 election. At the same time, following Beeman (2022), liberal political affiliation is not mutually exclusive with participating in maintaining racial inequality and White

racial dominance; however, I suspect that on the whole the liberal skew of my participants suggests that I may be understating my findings.

SCHOLARLY CONTRIBUTIONS

The results that this study offer intersect with research into place, geography, and immigration history, as well as more theoretical inquiries into the social formation of Whiteness, racial cognition, and collective (non)knowing.

First, particularly with the use of historical census data, I have complicated the Great Migration narrative of "push" factors compelling Black people to leave the rural South and the "pull" factors that drew them into large Northern and Midwestern central cities. Instead, I believe the historical presence and geographic prevalence of Sundown towns across the United States should be incorporated into understandings of the influential Black migration patterns of the past, as Sundown towns effectively funneled would-be Black households away from smaller cities and into large metropolitan areas. This exclusion of Sundown towns—which were often small- and mid-size cities—from social scientific research also points to the ways that Sociology has frequently focused on either large cities, or very small rural areas, much to the detriment of small cities that, as Ocejo, Kosta, and Mann (2020) remind us, make up the majority of incorporated places in the United States. Such an exclusion, particularly in research into race and racism, effectively isolates the study of "race problems" to large urban areas with significant racial and ethnic minority populations which are thus perceived as places where people "have race," majority-White smaller cities and communities are considered to be "without race," and the effects of White racialization are rendered natural, invisible, and a non-issue.

Thus, second, I argue that the increased inclusion of Sundown towns into segregation and racial inequality research is, in part, also a call to critically examine Whiteness as a meaningful

racial identity category, particularly one that holds a dominant position in racial hierarchies. Rather than studying racial inequality to observe the disparities and penalties that are seen among racial and ethnic minority populations as an effectively one-sided outcome, in this study I have attempted to study Whiteness as a racial identity that confers real and significant benefits and advantages to its possessors. In this view, racial inequality is not examined just to observe which racial groups receive the *penalties* of racist social systems and institutions, but also to identify how White group members reliably and intentionally *benefit* from racist social systems (Bonilla-Silva 1997). These benefits provide real and active motivation for White people to maintain racial stratification; yet, because overt racism is no longer socially acceptable, the benefits of Whiteness are instead maintained through strategic (non)knowing, where the origins of racial inequality are obscured, erased, and forgotten, and consequent concentrated White advantage is uncritically understood as "normal" and the result of individual preferences and choices (see Mills 1997 and Mueller 2017, 2020) A tension then arises between the benefits White people receive from racial inequality, and self-declared moral obligations on the part of those same White people to *do something* about persistent and systemic racism—a tension that is resolved, in part, through the enactment of racial (non)knowing. By showing how participants foreclose understandings of racial relations as "normal" with no possibility for other explanations, I consider how White racial cognition relies on ignorance to maneuver around logics and evidence that may reveal the socially maintained nature of racial stratification, as well as the interests that White people have in maintaining White advantage, both psychically and materially.

BROADER SIGNIFICANCE

This work offers a sustained focus on the consequences of, and racial attitudes within, a historically Sundown town. As noted above, not only do small cities make up the majority of

types of places in the United States, more specifically, former Sundown towns are numerous and widespread across the United States, such that current residents of small cities may be living in a historically Sundown town without being aware of its racially exclusionary history, and the effects of that history may still be largely unconsidered. Alternatively, strategies of racial (non)knowing like the ones I observed among Appleton residents may be found in other formerly Sundown towns, as White residents seek to maintain the benefits accrued through racial exclusion while erasing the unsavory histories of their communities' racist and violent enforcement of Whiteness.

At the same time, many investigations into the degree and effects of racial inequality focus exclusively on who is penalized or disadvantaged within racially unequal social structures and institutions. These disadvantages reliably fall on people of color, frequently Black Americans, yet these results are often understood as a sort of a one-way street of racial inequality: while Black people are *harmed* by racial inequality, there is no clear beneficiary to such disparities. For instance, all-Black urban neighborhoods with a high degree of poverty have been subject to a multitude of social scientific studies (see Anderson 1992; Dunier 2000, Fernández-Kelly 2015; Massey and Fischer 2000; Rankin and Quane 2000; St. John and Miller 1995; Wilson 1987), yet more affluent all-White suburbs and towns are considered unremarkable, even boring, and are therefore excluded as objects of racial attention or inquiry. By looking at the effects of Appleton's Sundown past through the lens of its White residents, I have attempted to show how Whiteness provides a totalizing ideology through which White participants can care about racial inequality and racism as problems with a moral imperative, while simultaneously understanding neither themselves nor their community as the outcome of racializing processes. This project is a case study, then, of how White people understand racial

inequality as a condition in which there are only those who are *harmed* or *penalized* (i.e., racial and ethnic minorities, specifically Black households) and no real beneficiaries, even as the results of this research have shown how the Sundown history of Appleton is the story of concentrated White advantage and opportunity hoarding.

One goal of this research, then, is to challenge the "one-way-street" view of racism and racial inequality common among those racialized into Whiteness, and to encourage further exploration into how White people *benefit* from the very same policies and practices that penalize and disadvantage people of color in the United States. Furthermore, this examination of Appleton, Wisconsin is a look into how Sundown policies and practices in the past have shaped the attitudes and population of just one formerly Sundown town, but my hope is that readers might identify with characteristics of their own communities, particularly those that have maintained a White racial majority, and consider both *how* and *why* homogenously White populations are so often understood as normal, natural, and having "nothing to do with race."

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Several avenues for productive future investigation emerge from the issues raised in this study. First, scholars should continue to refine sociological understandings of Sundown towns and their exclusionary practices. As McConnell and Miraftab (2009) and O'Connell (2018) have observed, formerly Sundown communities have varied in the degrees and causes of their racial and ethnic diversification, and further inquiry may reveal patterns and predictors of specific diversification outcomes, such as economic, employment, or cultural factors that may also vary by region or overall population size. This is a particularly relevant question in light of the ongoing growth of Latinx populations in many small cities including Appleton. Reproducing the historical census study presented in Chapter 2 at a larger geographic scale may also aid in this direction of

research, as it may reveal geographically distinct outcomes for minority populations forced out of Sundown towns (the race and ethnicity of which varied by region), which in turn might influence how those towns diversified (or not) in the future.

Second, Chapter 7 in particular addresses how White Appleton residents understood the incorporation of Hmong refugees into the community in the past, as well as how their attitudes towards current and ongoing refugee resettlement were possibly shaped by initial reception of the Hmong. Additional research may provide insight into how the order in which various racial and ethnic groups settle in a community, as well as their reasons for moving to a place (e.g., refugee resettlement versus voluntary migration), influences the reception of subsequent groups, both in terms of racial attitudes and beliefs, and in more material outcomes such as employment, education, and social mobility.

Finally, I have forayed into the study of racial ignorance by examining how White people rationalize the White majority of their community while simultaneously ignoring the anti-Black racial violence of the past and acknowledging the reality of systemic racism. Future inquiry should identify and parse the circumstances under which White people *know* and *not-know* about racism and collective White racial advantage and investigate the cognitive and rhetorical moves that facilitate such (non)knowing. Over the course of my conversations with White participants, it became clear that while they all agreed that "racism is bad," and some maintained clear understandings of the mechanisms and ideologies underlying persistent racial inequality in the present, for many of them perceptions of race and the significance of racial categories still played out in highly emotional, internal, and personal ways, particularly in regards to place, safety, and family; although seen at the individual level, the observed discourses of safety and who "belongs" in Appleton map clearly on to boundaries defined by a broader ideology of Whiteness.

To return to the perennial debate of structure versus agency, sociologists would do well to further observe the affective, internalized, and formative force of Whiteness on the individual and how White people see themselves (or not) within broader institutionalized expressions of Whiteness as a social system. Many of my participants were willing and able to recognize "the system" and its harms, yet their participation as individuals—as well as their capacity to challenge it—remained largely out of the range of recognition. This failure-to-see, however, does not reflect a true *incapacity* on the part of my participants (or of White residents more broadly); the histories of racial violence and harm that have been strategically erased and hidden from view, and more significantly the ways that one's own Whiteness continues to extract benefits from these ongoing wrongs, are able to be found by those willing to know them.

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VITA

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