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Indoctrination into Hate: The Development of Racial Neuroses Resulting from Racist Socialization Under White Supremacy

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**Indoctrination into Hate: The Development of Racial Neuroses Resulting from
Racist Socialization Under White Supremacy**

An Undergraduate Honors Thesis Presented for
Degrees in Psychology and Sociology
In the Haslam Scholars Program at
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Aliya Kathryn Benabderrazak
May 2023

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ABSTRACT

Racial-ethnic socialization is critical to our unique and individual conceptualization of reality. This socialization occurs explicitly and implicitly across the lifespan and has significant implications for one's behavior, social relationships, and ideological beliefs. Two of the most notable and impactful spheres in which racial-ethnic socialization occurs are within the family unit and schooling contexts. The treatment and teachings within these two spaces shape our social and psychological development. The first part of my project considers the neurosis of Whiteness as a psychological consequence of racist socialization within school settings and primarily White communities—as a macro example of the family unit—to understand the societal ramifications. The second part then seeks to formulate an action plan which addresses the role of racialized power in the psychological development of White people living under White supremacy. Investigation in this area is necessary to aid in efforts to prevent the cyclical re-creation of racial prejudice. It aims to provide valuable information regarding the process of adopting racially prejudicial perspectives and the development of the Neurosis of Whiteness. This project also aims to analyze the agents of racist socialization, specifically within Western colonial contexts of schooling and family development. Children and adolescents are highly impressionable and construct mental schemas daily based on the societal occurrences they observe. By taking an interdisciplinary approach to this investigation, I can consider both sociological agents of socialization (schools and families) and the subsequent psychological consequences of said socialization (racial neurosis).

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Chapter One: Introduction

My father is a Brown-skinned Arab man from Morocco. He is a practicing Muslim, and his first language is Arabic. Nevertheless, for as long as I can remember, he has insisted that he is White during conversations at home about race. Once, he triumphantly presented me with a screenshot of a diagram online in which Moroccans and North Africans were racially classified as White. For years his attempts to conform to constructions of Whiteness frustrated and confused me until I began to study critical race theory and developed an understanding of the niche intricacies of racial categorization, social power, and racism. Because my father has been a U.S. citizen for almost four decades and speaks English fluently, he strives to be afforded the privileges associated with Whiteness as a racial and sociopolitical classification. Still, he is (at least implicitly) aware that accessing Whiteness involves rejecting his ethnic culture and heritage.

The United States' socioeconomic system was built on and continues to exemplify the unjust exploitation and mistreatment of poor people, people of color, and their collective labor. Nonetheless, contemporarily, discussions of racist acts are more often criminalized than the racist acts themselves. Highly publicized at the moment is the nationwide attempt to censor discussions of race and racism in classrooms (Sykes & Hinger, 2021). Bills targeting critical race theory, anti-bias education, and other primarily politicized “harmful ideologies” in schooling spaces are becoming increasingly common in several states across the United States (Sykes & Hinger, 2021). To date, efforts to restrict teachings of racism and bias have been identified in 36 U.S. states (Stout &

Wilburn, 2022). Silence is complicity, and the suppression and prohibition of education about racial prejudice and discrimination threaten to maintain and reinforce perceptions of inherent racial superiority or inferiority and, subsequently, unjust mistreatment based on racist ideals (Carlee, 2020; Sykes & Hinger, 2021). Bodies of color are consistently and methodically devalued within societal systems founded upon White supremacy.

Consequently, racism infiltrates our politics, legal systems, relationships, and self-perceptions. Racial socialization within this Western colonial context shapes our entire worldview. In completing this project, I will consider the psychological components of processes of racist socialization within societies exemplifying White supremacy.

Specifically, this will include a review and analysis of current literature discussing racist socialization leading to the re-creation of racial prejudice as a neurotic disorder (both the neurosis of Blackness and the neurosis of Whiteness). I will then propose an approach to minimize the automatic adoption of racial prejudice in diverse societal contexts.

To begin this project, I conducted a literature review to understand the current research surrounding racial socialization and the developmental processes of racial neuroses. Primarily relevant to the interests of my project were the past works of Frantz Fanon (1952), Patricia Hill Collins (1990), Sigmund Freud (1917), and others. After identifying a gap in the literature concerning the Neurosis of Whiteness and racial prejudice in White psyches due to racial socialization within a White supremacist context, I settled on my research questions and prospective research methodologies. The main focus of my research is the development of the Neurosis of Whiteness in individuals invested in Whiteness and how this psychosocial/emotional disorder manifests in ways

that directly impact the world around us. Data was collected from publicized instances of racial prejudice, which exemplified the presence of the Neurosis of Whiteness. Data was drawn primarily from media and news sources, though the analysis of data points is entirely reliant on theories and conclusions from peer-reviewed sources and journal articles. Once I had developed a definition for the Neurosis of Whiteness, I created infographics to illustrate how the disorder develops. Finally, I am developing educational materials and tools to aid anti-bias education efforts. The educational materials, informational videos, and workshops I continue to develop will be housed under the social media and website title “Unlearning Hate.”

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Critical Social Psychology

Psychiatrist and philosopher Frantz Fanon utilized critical psychology and psycho-politics to analyze power dynamics—specifically colonial racism—by applying psychoanalytic theory to considerations of the sociopolitical. Fanon’s work provides groundbreaking insights into the sociological processes and psychological consequences of colonial racism. His theory will be central to my discussions of racist socialization under White supremacy.

The concept of race is socio-politically constructed, with categorizations changing periodically for the sociopolitical benefit of Whiteness. Nonetheless, Whiteness is not *just* a racial category. Whiteness permits an existence beyond racial categorization and may be implicitly perceived as the default or norm. Individuals of darker skin tones have racial categorizations forcibly and automatically assigned to them (Lindner, 2018; Harris, 1993; Lipsitz, 2006). Whiteness provides the benefit of “invisibility” and societal power and privilege (Lindner, 2018; Du Bois, 1903; Fanon, 1952; Harris, 1993; Lipsitz, 2006). As Du Bois notably stated, “Whiteness is the ownership of the Earth forever and ever, amen!” (Krinks, 2017; Rabaka 2006; Du Bois, 1920; Roediger 1994). Whiteness bestows access and ownership within societal systems founded on White supremacy. More profoundly, though, Whiteness impacts our conceptions of personhood and humanity. Sociology scholars have been evident in asserting that under White supremacy, people of

color are not comparable to darker versions of White European men; they are not perceived as “men” at all according to standards of personhood created by White European men (which only they are likely to fulfill) (Du Bois, 1903: Scott, 1857: Rabaka 2006: Mills, 1997). “Whiteness and maleness are prerequisites for personhood in the world that modernity made” (Rabaka, 2006). In this way, Whiteness is not only a constructed racial categorization but a component of hierarchical systems of power intimately tied to our perception of reality and humanity.

Fanon’s book *White Skin, black masks* (1986) is a clinical psychoanalysis of the White and Black races in the context of colonization. He predicted various adverse psychological outcomes likely from the ‘massive psycho-existential complex’ within which the colonizer and colonized races coexist (Hook, 2004). The neurosis of Blackness is a principal aspect of Fanon’s psychoanalysis. Firstly, neurosis is an emotional disorder that influences personality, stemming from an internal conflict between a powerful impulse and the need/desire to suppress said impulse (Hook, 2004: Fanon, 1986). The neurosis of Blackness is the ‘dream of turning White,’ or the desire to be valued according to perceptions of personhood within a racist/colonial context (Fanon, 1986). This neurosis results from the conflict between the wish to be valued wholly and the existence of one’s body of color within a racist society, which prevents the systemic possibility of this desire being fulfilled (Hook, 2004). Despite having psychological consequences, Fanon’s discussion of neurosis regards it as an *explicitly social phenomenon* resulting from historical and sociopolitical circumstances of White supremacy and colonization (Fanon, 1986: Hook, 2004). Neuroses can lead to various

irrational and harmful behaviors and automatic beliefs, causing notable impacts on daily life and social relationships.

Freud's foundational work considering neurotic disorders concluded that symptoms were nearly always tied to past psychic trauma, specifically during childhood. Trauma during childhood is often repressed from the conscious mind after the fact to protect the psyche, and the trauma itself can have been confirmed or fantasized, repeated or not, and the individual may or may not have perceived the event(s) as traumatic (Hook, 2004: Freud). Nonetheless, separating a child from their emotions is a consistent and distinct effect of childhood trauma. The adverse effect is too much for the child to bear with only infantile cognitive and communicative abilities (Maté, 2022). Given the variable qualities and impacts of infantile trauma, it is also important to touch on the significance of cultural trauma throughout development (on which Fanon focused great attention). Fanon identified that the colonial context might be an agent of the development of neurotic disorders resulting from internalized racism. He argued then that the basis for the neurosis of Blackness is *the infantile trauma caused by the black child's exposure to the racist values of the oppressive colonial environment* (Fanon, 1986: Hook, 2004). Through expressions in media, news reporting, advertisements, and political propaganda, racist beliefs are ingrained in our worldview as we are socialized in White supremacist societies (Fanon, 1986: Hook, 2004: Rabaka, 2006: Collins, 1990).

In the United States today, educational settings are experiencing a censorship epidemic, with new legislation routinely being introduced to restrict crucial conversations about race and racial justice in classrooms (ACLU, 2022). Not only do members of our

younger generations have the right to learn the truth about our world throughout history and contemporarily, but it is also crucial to social improvement and justice that they do so. Current research supports the efficacy of discussing race and racism in classrooms in improving student engagement and performance (Barnum, 2021). Specifically, and unsurprisingly, these discussions were most notably seen to improve the experience and performance of *students of color*. Less research considers the impact of race discussions on preventing racial prejudice in White students, though much evidence suggests that intergroup contact effectively reduces racial prejudice. Thus we can reasonably assume that exposure to lessons about race and racism will likely reduce the development and persistence of racial prejudice in most students, regardless of age or race (Nordstrom, 2014).

Including critical race theory in education is an opportunity to impede and limit processes of racial prejudice acquisition. By restricting the legality of teaching said academic content, White supremacist values are being upheld in many educational settings across the United States. This effort is misrepresented and subsequently misunderstood by many proponents as an effort to “protect” White students and prevent feelings of guilt or blame relative to racism and racial prejudice. In actuality, preventing White students from learning about racial prejudice and actively understanding racial socialization leaves them vulnerable to the seductive pull of Whiteness and White supremacy, subsequently threatening their ability to regulate their implicit judgments and opinions and develop healthy interracial relationships. Miseducated children who are taught a manipulated version of history or are shielded entirely from subjects concerning

race grow up to be perpetually scared and confused adults concerned with protecting the ideological pillars of racial capitalism more so than of cooperation and the prosperity of humanity.

Methodology/Approach

This thesis is centered around identifying the in-depth psychological processes occurring when the state and educational institutions minimize conversations around race in America, consequently carrying out attempted indoctrination into White supremacist values. To clarify the social processes without losing the complexity and nuance of this racialized psychological disorder, I will involve assemblage thinking as a methodological approach. Assemblage thinking brings together an array of humans, materials, technologies, organizations, procedures, and norms in response to particular social and political events (Li, 2007; Baker & McGuirk, 2017; Prince, 2010; Clarke et al., 2015). Specifically, within the context of my project, I will provide three specific lenses (racialized language, actions, and imagined realities) based on a combination of government policies, news articles, and social media posts to further our collective understanding of how this psychological phenomenon neurosis of Whiteness materializes in very visceral ways. As such, my research questions are as follows 1) What psychological responses have developed in response to large-scale conceptualizations of race and racism in America? 2) What processes lead a person invested in Whiteness to develop a Neurosis of Whiteness? 3) What can we learn about racial neuroses and their harms from explicitly racist mistreatment and violence? 4) What methods and resources are available to inhibit the development of racial neuroses?

When finding and analyzing data points, recurring themes that stood out to me most were White people using stereotypes and controlling images to classify and dehumanize Black people. Aggressive language and treatment were also consistently notable, as people of all ages and societal positions (authority figures, customers, students) displayed cruel behavior towards people of color. Lastly, White aggressors almost always insisted they were right and maintained their innocence despite how far any situation escalated. On occasion, individuals even sat in court being shown footage of their incidence of racist mistreatment, sitting back and pleading not guilty.

Chapter Three: Whiteness as Neurosis

Whiteness as a Social Psychology Disorder

Our socialization shapes us to the point that our existence mirrors the fundamental principles and ideologies which govern human life within the societal context in which we were socialized. One of these powerful societal principles in the Western world is Whiteness. So, it is not a surprise that within a Western context, we are all racist to some extent. In this societal context, we are taught (whether explicitly, implicitly, or both) how to further and maintain White Supremacy on this earth. Bodies of color are consistently and systemically devalued within societal systems founded upon White supremacy; consequently, racism infiltrates our politics, legal system, relationships, and self-perceptions. Racist socialization within this Western colonial apparatus shapes our worldview, including but not limited to the adoption and projection of racial prejudice. The Neurosis of Whiteness refers to the psychosocial, emotional disorder which results from the internalization of White Supremacist values and beliefs by primarily White individuals (given that they are often those most invested in Whiteness). This disorder infiltrates individuals' personalities (on occasion unknowingly) and subsequently affects their behavior, language, perception, and imagination.

Despite the global value and relevance of understanding potential disorders caused by racist socialization, research has yet to consider the converse disorder to Fanon's previously mentioned neurosis of Blackness, which would be called the Neurosis of Whiteness. This disorder presents in individuals who are invested in Whiteness, and

some researchers may argue its development is unavoidable within contexts of consistent institutionalized racist socialization.

Similar to Fanon's Neurosis of Blackness, the Neurosis of Whiteness always stems from past psychic trauma, often during formative childhood. When discussing the neurosis of Blackness, infantile trauma caused by the black child's exposure to the racist values of the oppressive colonial environment is considered the root cause of the disorder's development (Fanon, 1986; Hook, 2004). While the development of the Neurosis of Whiteness also depends on a foundation of infantile trauma, this trauma is not aimed at the White child's body. Instead, the traumatic incident is the White child's received preferential treatment stemming from assumed inherent superiority over the earth and the racist oppression they witness directed at individuals of color.

Ultimately, the Neurosis of Whiteness is a psychological disorder caused by living under White supremacy. People are constantly exposed to evidence suggesting an inherent superiority of White bodies. As such, people, especially those who identify as White, build a psychological persona in which Whiteness correlates with privilege, innocence, wealth, favorable treatment, increased access, and status. Throughout their lives, it becomes deeply ingrained that bodies coded and perceived as White are placed higher in the racial hierarchy and receive greater access to resources, opportunities, benefits, and state-sanctioned protections (Lipsitz, 2006). As a result, individuals develop an investment in and commitment to Whiteness (ibid). Eventually, as adults, individuals possess a conscious understanding of the elevated position of Whiteness within the racial hierarchy and begin to take active and intentional steps to maintain their position and

continue receiving protection and privileges within socio-political spheres (Lipitz, 2006). It is important to recognize that when individuals come to understand Whiteness, they do not understand it as an isolated identity. Rather, Whiteness is understood as the accumulation of resources through the excluded participation of other racial groups. Thus, White individuals become invested in Whiteness due to the threat of domination and lack of resources if they reject the White identity.

Later in life and throughout adulthood, these profoundly ingrained norms become automatic expectations, and individuals invested in Whiteness expect better treatment than those perceived as individuals of color. Reaching adulthood, many individuals experiencing neurosis of Whiteness have developed a God complex or expectations similar to those of a spoiled child. Because “Whiteness is ownership of the Earth forever and ever” (Dubois, 1920), individuals invested in Whiteness expect access, ownership, and control over what they desire, along with the immediate fulfillment of any desires.

A God complex is a psychological illusion presenting an assured belief and feelings of inflated personal ability, privilege, worthiness, and infallibility. Common signs of a God complex include gaslighting, inconsiderate/bullying behaviors, lack of empathy, disrespecting boundaries, lack of responsibility, and so on (Regan, 2021). In reference to the Neurosis of Whiteness, individuals invested in Whiteness are socialized to expect God-like control and treatment, leading to harmful, explicit, and implicit perceptions and treatment of those they feel are inherently inferior to themselves. This racialized God complex has been illustrated explicitly on social media in recent years by posts about “Karens” and “Kevins”: almost always White adults, acting

aggressively and inappropriately in public places. To some, it may seem shocking and disturbing to see adults behaving with so much uninhibited aggression, but it is more logical when we compare their behavior directly to that of a spoiled child throwing a tantrum. Some of the detriments most relevant to this discussion include a lack of proper coping mechanisms, the inability to tell wants from needs, frequent protest, disrespect for the rights of others, and a low tolerance for frustration (Tufts, 2022). When spoiled children do not get what they want, they throw a fit and demand that their desires are met. Such behavior of adults illustrates the Neurosis of Whiteness in which expectations of racial superiority are not met; they protest and demand the preferential treatment they believe they deserve. As such, the actions of adults can have widespread influence spanning socio-political spheres and directly influencing the lives and well-being of others. On many occasions, the Neurosis of Whiteness leads to dangerous reactions when possessors of unearned privilege feel privileges (often misidentified as “rights”) are being taken away. Self-centered attempts at ensuring access to privilege (perceived by those with the Neurosis of Whiteness as rectifying “injustices”) is where skewed racist perceptions encounter the real world (through language, behavior, and imagination), and the lives and well-being of others can be severely threatened.

Whiteness as a Neurosis (Language)

Language and communication are central to the construction of our worldviews. Our perceptions of reality are constructive, meaning how we interpret and respond to stimuli is inseparable from the experiences and information we have internalized, which decide how we understand the world. Concerning the Neurosis of Whiteness, language is

crucial in systematically dehumanizing people of color within White Supremacist contexts. What is said about the world translates to what we believe and eventually establishes itself as an implicit or explicit attitude. When White people are told they reside at the tippy top of the racial hierarchy they created and are continuously exposed to discriminatory and hateful messaging about bodies and individuals of color, the reality they experience is constructed to reflect those same values and expectations. This is extremely important to the sequential expression of Neurosis of Whiteness because attitudes predict spontaneous behavior, and attitudes are formed by language and other forms of (direct and indirect) communication—meaning after racial discrimination is established as a tenet of a worldview, the communication which took place to construct that pillar then predicts discriminatory behavior on that person or institution’s behalf. One of the multiple sectors of public service where racist language has unsurprisingly been a recurring issue, is police departments. In April 2022, a Cincinnati police officer was caught using derogatory language towards a Black teenage boy who had walked past her police car and given her the middle finger. The adult White woman in a position of authority over public safety responded to the teenage student by yelling, “Oh, I hate them so much. I hate this f*****g world. F*****g n*****s, I f*****ing hate them” (Planalp & Baker, 2022). During the subsequent investigation, the officer claimed she holds no racial biases which would affect her job, and she does not use racial slurs (ibid). This individual’s perception of her reality is skewed, as she actively engages in racial discrimination and exhibits racial prejudice. Said police officer may think she has no relationship with racist discrimination or mistreatment, but as we know, language

constructs perceptions of reality. Officer Valentino's language paints the picture of someone actively participating in systematically dehumanizing people of color.

There is a second layer to the role of language in the development and expression of the Neurosis of Whiteness. Not only do language and communication build worldviews, but they also maintain and contribute to the construction of reality itself. "Secondary deviance" is a phenomenon discussed within criminology that occurs when deviant behavior results from a person being previously labeled as deviant. Societally, a powerful form of racism is controlling images (Collins 1999), which label and categorize individuals based on stereotypes and unfounded biases. When someone as influential as the president of the United States says to his audience, "laziness is a trait in Blacks. It is...I believe that" (Prince, 2016), he is not only expressing his prejudice, but he is also constructing new and bolstering pre-existing arrangements of structural oppression which prevent the prosperity of communities of color under White Supremacy. It is not only worldviews built through language but also the real world in which everyone must exist, regardless of whether they are valued, appreciated, and treated as they deserve.

Whiteness as a Neurosis (Action)

Much of how the neurosis of Whiteness manifests in daily practice and behavior can be explained by introductory social psychology with a concentration on U.S. cultural norms. Throughout recent history in the United States, it has not been unusual to turn on the T.V. or open social media and see reports of another act of racial violence. Whether it be an Uber rider or college student spewing racial slurs at a person of color trying to do

their job or an innocent life being taken by racist police brutality, it rarely seems like visible progress is being made.

Three pillars of U.S. culture are capitalism, White supremacy, and patriotism. Despite Americans' deep value for not conforming, American residents undergo operant conditioning as we are systematically trained via punishment and reward to conform to the behaviors, perceptions, and opinions valued and deemed correct within our communities. Social Impact Theory clarifies this pattern of behavior by concluding that all conformity based on social influence depends on the influential group's importance, immediacy, and size. Knowing this, it is no surprise that so many individuals grow up believing the same thing as their family or friend group, almost by default. It is also essential to know that the two central human motives that govern our existence are a need to feel positive about ourselves and the need to perceive ourselves as accurate. So, no matter who you are, where you came from, or what you were taught, your mind and body are programmed to make you like yourself and think you are right about everything. Lastly, because of naive realism, most people assume their perception to be correct and others to be biased. As such, human beings are most likely to assume the same judgments and opinions as those they are closest to and most value, and regardless of the validity of these individual perceptions, each human inherently thinks they are correct and assumes the views of others to be skewed and incorrect.

Now let us dig deeper into the relevance of social psychology dynamics to the Neurosis of Whiteness manifesting in behavior. Schools in the United States are more racially segregated than in the 1960s, and housing segregation continues to increase.

Social psychology would suggest this is just the environmental dynamic that results from and further maintains intense racial prejudice, considering the propinquity effect, which finds that the more we see and interact with people, the more likely they are to become our friends, and the mere exposure effect, which finds the more exposure we have to a stimulus, the more likely we are to like it. Significant research studies have suggested on various occasions that the way to minimize racial prejudice is to encourage integration in all societal spheres. Instead, U.S. societal dynamics today promote discomfort, apprehension, and fear between individuals and communities of different races and identities. Perpetually confused and predisposed to hate, people are left to fill in the blanks about strange things, including others. This leads to the “critical misunderstanding” referenced by Vusamazulu Credo Mutwa, where individuals of different races forever “guess” about one another, causing unprecedented and arguably never-ending suffering. However, these guesses people make are not random, and they are considered “educated” guesses based on information from trusted sources—media outlets, authority figures, religious leaders, society, etc. In many cases, though, the information individuals receive is not only objectively wrong but hateful and promotes harm.

An instance of the Neurosis of Whiteness manifesting as behavior can be found in the case of Sophia Rosing, a young White woman who was a student at the University of Kentucky. Rosing verbally and physically assaulted a young Black woman named Kyla Springs, who was working in a campus residence hall. In the video, Rosing was intoxicated and can be heard using the N-word well over 100 times, insulting Spring

using racist stereotypes, and violently attempting to attack Spring. If we were to make some assumptions to find an explanation, social psychology would suggest Rosing grew up almost entirely isolated from people of color, except for acting in a service role, accommodating her in some way. Growing up in a White upper-middle-class household in the South, Rosing was possibly exposed to racist rhetoric from media, authority figures, and peers. To her, Kylah Spring was not a lover of animals, Kit Kats, and basketball. She was a vague embodiment of stereotypical controlling images (Collins, 1999), dehumanized by racist prejudice, belief perseverance, and the justification of cruelty effect. Explicit and implicit attitudes predict spontaneous behavior like the threatening behavior we frequently see when the Neurosis of Whiteness manifests in action and behaviors of aggression.

Whiteness as a Neurosis(Imagination/Embodied)

Neurosis of Whiteness and a conscious investment in White Supremacy depend on constructing reality based on imagined realities/truths. These imagined realities are multilayered and embody the Neurosis of Whiteness as individuals move through the world and make choices based on fictitious tenets of a deluded reality. A pervasive and illustrative example of this disordered perception is the Great Replacement Theory, which far-right politicians and political commentators often reference. The Great Replacement Theory, also called the White Replacement Theory or simply the Replacement Theory, points to an (imagined) intentional plot to undermine and “replace” the White majority in the population, political power, and “culture” in some regions of the world—specifically in the United States and Europe (NIF, 2021). This specific theory

was employed by Adolf Hitler as motivation and claimed justification for the genocidal atrocities of the Holocaust, which is one reason its recent re-emergence in far-right political discourse is incredibly terrifying.

For example, Tucker Carlson, the conservative political commentator who hosts Tucker Carlson Tonight on Fox News, has consistently referred to the Great Replacement Theory as an issue of fact that presents an urgent threat to “the American way of life.” Among countless racist statements made on air, Tucker is quoted as having said, “The great replacement? Yeah, it is not a conspiracy theory. It is their electoral strategy”, in addition to “sometime around 1965, our leaders stopped trying to make the United States a hospitable place for American citizens, their constituents, to have their own families”. Referring to the year the Immigration and Nationality Act was passed in the second quote (Bump, 2022).

In May of 2022, Payton Gendron carried out a racially motivated mass shooting, targeting a grocery store in Buffalo, NY, based on zip code demographics which suggested a large Black population in the area (ADL, 2022). In a 180-page manifesto left behind detailing his motivations and the development of his attack, Gendron not only claimed his goal was to “spread awareness to fellow whites about the real problems the West is facing” and “encourage further attacks that will eventually start the war that will save the Western world,” but also directly cited the Great Replacement Theory (ADL, 2022), explicitly calling Black Americans and immigrants “replacers,” and claiming they “invade our lands, live on our soil, to attack and replace our people” (Keay, 2022).

After the apparent connection between Gendron’s attack and Carlson’s support of the Great Replacement Theory, Carlson intentionally attempted to distance himself from the discussion of the theory. However, that does not change the fact that his prejudicial ideological claims, made in the interest of political manipulation, led to racial violence in the real world and represent a large-scale attempt to infiltrate the perceptions of White conservatives further and redefine their image of “reality.” The perceptual embodiment and imagined rationalization of the neurosis of Whiteness is the root of the distorted racial reality upon which White supremacist perceptions rely. Racial ignorance is central to the development and progression of the neurosis of Whiteness in that ignorance is weaponized to equate Whiteness to victimhood and invalidate systemic racism and White supremacy despite having all the resources and information available to become educated about the racial hierarchy in place and the constant impacts of White supremacy (Mueller, 2020).

Representation/Materialization of Neurosis of Whiteness

I have created the following Figure to illustrate and clarify the steps through which the Neurosis of Whiteness develops in individuals invested in Whiteness. In Figure 3.1, this is broken down into seven stages. However, future research could expand on the procedural mechanisms and increase the complexity and specificity of the developmental process and subsequent charts and diagrams.

DEVELOPMENTAL PROCESSES OF THE NEUROSIS OF WHITENESS

NEUROSIS OF WHITENESS IS A PSYCHOSOCIAL EMOTIONAL DISORDER WHICH PRESENTS IN INDIVIDUALS INVESTED IN WHITENESS WHO HAVE UNDERGONE RACIST SOCIALIZATION UNDER WHITE SUPREMACY

1

INCIDENCE OF INFANTILE CULTURAL TRAUMA

- White children in Western colonial contexts receive preferential treatment, build schema in which Whiteness correlates with privilege, innocence, wealth, positive treatment, increased access and status, and so on.

WHITE PRIVILEGE BECOMES AN EXPECTATION

- Deeply ingrained norms become automatic expectations, and individuals invested in Whiteness expect access, ownership, and control over that which they desire, along with the immediate fulfillment of all desires.

2

3

A GOD COMPLEX DEVELOPS

- Psychological illusion presenting as an assured belief and feelings of inflated personal ability, privilege, worthiness, and infallibility.
- Common signs include gaslighting, inconsiderate/bullying behaviors, lack of empathy, disrespecting boundaries, lack of responsibility, and so on.

RACIAL PREJUDICE INFILTRATES THE PSYCHE

- Whiteness is understood as the accumulation of resources through the *excluded participation of other racial groups*.
- White individuals become invested in Whiteness due to the threat of domination and lack of resources if they were to reject the White identity.

4

5

WORLDVIEW CENTERS AROUND NEUROSIS OF WHITENESS

- Individuals begin to take active and intentional steps to maintain their position of power and continue receiving protections and privileges within socio-political spheres.

NEUROSIS MANIFESTS IN LANGUAGE, ACTION, & IMAGINATION

- Behavior, thought processes, and communication are overtaken by Neurosis of Whiteness in stressful racialized scenarios.
- Skewed racist perceptions come into contact with the real world, lives and wellbeing of others can be severely threatened.

6

7

THE CYCLE IS REPRODUCED

- Individuals affected by Neurosis of Whiteness do not educate their children against the tenants of White Supremacy, thereby facilitating the process's reproduction in the future generation.

[Figure 3.1]

The phases I have outlined in this diagram are visual impacts of racist socialization, ultimately leading to a clear embodiment of the Neurosis of Whiteness. As I had previously discussed, the process begins with infantile and cultural trauma in the form of preferential treatment based on perceived belonging within the boundaries of Whiteness. Slowly but surely, throughout development, children's brains are physically morphed to include schema which upholds and reflects societal values concerning racial prejudice and the inherent superiority of White people and bodies. This results in a God complex (implicit or explicit) through which individuals project their trained expectations on the world around them. Around this same time, racial prejudice notably infiltrates the psyche, and along with a God complex, individuals develop a conscious psychological investment in Whiteness. Soon after, individuals' perceptions of the world around them reflect these deeply ingrained norms and values, and they continue working to uphold racial capitalism and their position of power. This worldview manifests through their language, actions, and imagined realities. Lastly, the cycle is reproduced as future generations are indoctrinated into the values and systems that compose White Supremacist societies and undergo their development in line with this process, leading to an eventual racial neurosis.

In order to prevent the automatic replication of racial neurosis, we must alter the societal dynamics of social existence. We must turn inwards to each other and ourselves to prioritize humanity and inclusive prosperity. We are only doomed if we sacrificially submit ourselves to the habitual functioning of unjust systems.

Chapter Four:

Conclusion

Throughout my undergraduate career, I was told countless times that racism was not a solvable problem and that there was minimal hope of actually abolishing the purposefully unjust system in place. I have consistently resisted these claims, as I am unwilling to resign myself to hopelessness and let injustice win. Nonetheless, the most considerable challenge of my undergraduate thesis and career was entertaining the countless ideas and possibilities of “fixing” these issues. It seemed no course of action would solve all issues entirely and create a lasting impact. Empower voters, vote in new representatives, create racial therapy, expand anti-bias education efforts, teach Black history, restructure the school system, the ideas were endless, but their predicted efficacy always seemed to be undermined by some inevitable obstacle like access or willingness or ignorance—I could not figure out what would work. There were moments when I began to feel overpowered by the pervasive inequities, which manifested in a million ways and seemed to seep into all nooks and crannies of life. Until I realized no one effort would repair the system and its inherently harmful dynamics, which have been developing for centuries. I needed a multifaceted approach that addressed all aspects of lived racialized existence and impeded the reproduction of cyclical patterns of fear and hate. Ultimately, the process in which individuals escape the indoctrination into the Neurosis of Whiteness is by making intentional yet relatively simple changes to their life and perception. Figure 4.1 illustrates the accessible, holistic approach to treating the racial Neurosis of Whiteness.

Escaping Indoctrination into Hate and Neurosis of Whiteness

Neurosis of Whiteness develops out of a perverse racialized disorder around survival. People believe they are at risk of being killed mentally, emotionally, and physically, and so they reject the world and those racialized to be Black. Societal propaganda has instilled in us a fear of the proverbial boogeyman, causing us to hate our neighbor. Now we must escape the hate and unite our communities.



70% of Black Americans think that at least half of White people in America hold White supremacist beliefs.

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/nation/2022/05/21/post-poll-black-americans/>

What Do We Do?

WE CARE!



"Care is our individual and common ability to provide the political, social, material, and emotional conditions that allow the vast majority of people and living creatures on this planet to thrive"
(The Care Collective)

To address this issue, we must build newer communities where spaces are truly desegregated, and everyone engages in caretaking and caregiving. What happens when we care for one another and live collaboratively together to truly thrive in this world? The answer is simple, the Neurosis of Whiteness cannot develop, and these newer spaces are anti-capital and anti-racist.

WE ARE PRODUCTS OF OUR ENVIRONMENT

The societal environment Americans live in today is built on laws which are fundamentally incompatible with the laws of nature. Individuals are governed by competition, fear, and forced dissociation. U.S. society prioritizes and furthers Whiteness. White supremacy being as elusive, seductive, evasive, and invasive as it is, it infiltrates all aspects of our communities and lives. When our fears and insecurities racialize, we see the development of racial neurosis as a means of guaranteeing personal protection from "others" whose success may impede our own.

WE MUST REIMAGINE WHAT THE FUTURE CAN LOOK LIKE

The reality we are currently living in the U.S. is not sustainable. Rather than passively accept that "this is the way things are", we must invigorate people to want to live in a society that cares. In order to achieve a just society in which all members thrive, we must center anti-capitalism and anti-racism as pillars of social life. Future societies must prioritize humanity over capital and profit, at all costs. Mutual aid is an organizational theory based on cooperation and the voluntary reciprocal exchange of goods and services between community members for individual and collective benefit. Mutual aid is crucial to a just future society in the converse way that the contemporary competition and inequitable division of wealth and resources is detrimental to society today.



<https://blog.jasonm.com/2021/05/25/pollant-7-mutual-aid-both-an-ethnic-history/>



<https://a11y101.org/mutual-aid-community-care-finding-social-and-environmental-justice/>

[Figure 4.1]

Figure {2} above provides a summary of actionable plans to build a better societal future in which racial neurosis cannot develop. The fundamental motivators for developing the Neurosis of Whiteness are fear and competition. U.S. society is built around social Darwinism's survival of the fittest. Humans have built their societies and measures of success around the function and standards of the economy. However, the workings of the economy are fundamentally incompatible with the laws of nature and ecology (Pinciaro, 2023). Humans are aware that resources are limited, and we must compete to protect our best interests and those of our loved ones and community. Thus, we attempt to isolate ourselves from that and "those" we perceive as unfamiliar or different because we assume they threaten us and our future success. In order to build caring communities to facilitate the prosperity of all people, societies must be positioned in opposition to capitalism and racism. Caring communities prioritize humanity and life over profit and prejudice. These communities center around cooperation, inclusion, and mutual aid. Mutual aid is critical to these communities and societies. Mutual aid is the voluntary reciprocal exchange of goods and services in the interest of mutual benefit. We must build networks of support and communities full of meaningful relationships, increasing connectivity and trust. Isolation and miseducation fuel the fire of ignorant prejudice and hate. We must inhibit these currently inevitable processes of acquisition of hatred by redefining what it means to be a member of society and reminding ourselves and others of all we share as members of the same human race and the lasting power of humanity.

Imagine, for one second, what your life would be like if you did not have to worry about being taken care of. What if the responsibility for your health, wealth, education, well-being, and stability did not solely rest on your shoulders? What if you had countless people you could rely on to help you when you needed it? What if your society had systems to support and protect you from harm? What if you were *taken care of*? This reality is almost inconceivable for many of us because we spend our whole lives worrying about and learning to take care of ourselves. Will I have enough money? What if I get sick? What if I cannot get the food I need to feed my family? What if someone else gets the job I wanted and need? What if I am suffering all alone, and I cannot find anyone to help me? What if someone tries to *kill* me or what I love? Our lives are full of worries because we do not feel protected, and we do not feel safe, so we are confused and scared. Confusion and fear lead us to hatred as an attempted protection method.

In order to eradicate racial neurosis and prevent them from re-developing, we must minimize the perceived need for protection. We must build caring communities full of meaningful relationships so that individuals feel secure. We must develop trust and intimacy so that people are not making guesses about each other and the realities of life that differ from theirs. We must redefine what it means to exist in a society collaboratively with others rather than competitively. In the words of Glennon Doyle, “You cannot heal in the environment that made you sick.” We must heal our societies because they are making us sick. It will be difficult, but that is ok because “we can do hard things.”.

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VITA

Aliya Benabderrazak was born in Wellesley, Massachusetts, and spent her childhood in Framingham, Massachusetts. She attended a bilingual elementary school where she learned Spanish beginning at age five. When she was thirteen years old, her family moved to San Miguel de Allende, Mexico, where they have lived ever since. In high school, Aliya developed a passion for migrant justice and early childhood education. She committed to the University of Tennessee Knoxville after being accepted into the Haslam Scholars Program. At the University of Tennessee Knoxville, Aliya pursued a dual degree. She graduated with two Bachelors of Arts degrees, one in Psychology and the other in Sociology, emphasizing Ethnic Studies and Critical Race Theory. Aliya also graduated with three minors: Africana, Hispanic, and Child & Family Studies. At UTK, Aliya developed a dedication to large-scale social justice efforts. She decided on her thesis research after being exposed to the pervasive dynamics of discrimination and learning about the role of racial capitalism in American institutions. Post-graduation, Aliya plans to continue working as an educator and aiding in global activism efforts.