



A theory of whiteness as symbolic racial capital: Bourdieu 2.0

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Abstract

This article seeks to propose a theoretical and analytical framework for examining whiteness as a symbolic, racial capital. I propose to treat whiteness as an unexplained residual for different outcomes, similar to how human capital has been treated by economists when explaining income inequality or wealth disparities. To unveil the different dimensions of racial capital, this article builds on the treatments of whiteness as offered by different scholars working in the critical whiteness studies tradition. It then seeks to integrate this literature with the work on human capital, on one side, and on social and cultural capital, as elaborated by French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, on the other.

Keywords: symbolic capital, human capital, social capital, cultural capital, Bourdieu

Introduction

In this article I seek to elaborate a conceptualization of whiteness as a symbolic racial capital by embedding whiteness into the literature on human capital, social capital, and cultural capital. My purpose is to point out how such a conceptualization can be applied and operationalized for empirical research. While seeking to offer a general theory of racial capital and whiteness as a form of racial capital in particular, I will also show that such a generality has clearly definable (national) limits. By elaborating these limits, I aim to demonstrate that while whiteness as racial capital is not a general theory, it is still generalizable, as long as the limiting factors are considered and adapted accordingly. I end with a call to economists to measure the impact of whiteness as a residual so that concrete policies can be designed to compensate for unfair advantages, which, it can be assumed, affect income, wealth, employment, educational achievements, housing, and health by a magnitude of 10 to 97 percent, depending on the sector. (Chetty *et al.* 2018; Dettling, *et al.* 2017) ^[10,15]

The proposal I seek to advance here is to treat racial capital as a *residual*, that is: a factor that accounts for inequalities in income, wealth, but also incarceration rates, victimization by the police, and other inequalities – *after* all other factors have been already accounted for. A residual, therefore, is not a category of secondary importance or influence but one of central relevance and explanatory power, considering its potential magnitude and its ability to account for racial inequality. Racial capital provides tangible benefits after human, social, cultural, financial, and gender capitals have all been accounted for.

In countries with a European colonial history, whiteness carries high racial capital – but this is not universally the case, as in other contexts successfully claiming to be Asian, Arab, Persian, Japanese, Buddhist, Muslim, Hindu, Christian, etc. will fulfill the same, or a very similar, function. In contexts shaped by European colonialism and by European science, however, it is whiteness that carries the strongest value in most, but not all contexts. Racial capital is thus context specific. In the United States, for

example, in certain contexts, it can be advantageous to be, or display to be, Asian or Indian (think about the IT context). In others (think sports), it might be advantageous to claim and display blackness. However, in the most consequential and relevant domains and contexts of European post-colonies, being white carries significant value. This is because European conquerors and scientists have spent tremendous time, money and effort to “prove” that they themselves are superior beings, justified to conquer, kill, measure, categorize, use, and abuse those they colonized and enslaved. Colonialism, slavery, and the systematic dehumanization of non-Europeans required some sort of justification, and European racial science readily provided it. As a result of such prolonged and systematic discrimination, misrecognition, exploitation, and mistreatment, whiteness to this day over-determines those able to claim it in that it signals the presence and absence of other capitals – financial, social, cultural, and symbolic. In the European colonial context, whiteness signals belonging to the colonizer, not the colonized; to the group of modern, progressive, and civilized peoples, instead of the barbaric, uncivilized, primitive – and all the other labels that racist European scientists and their descendants have invented, mostly during the 19th and early 20th centuries. Historically, then, whiteness is connected to European colonization and the efforts by colonizers to justify their unearned privileges as well as their exploitation of others.

To situate this work, the first section of the article provides a schematic overview of the existing literature on whiteness.

Whiteness in the Social Sciences

Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770 – 1831), the father of dialectics, argued in the early 19th century that the being of the master is bound to the being of the serve and constrained by it, their fates chained together. Two of Hegel’s students have taken up this thought and developed it further. Karl Marx wrote in 1866 that “labor in white skin shall never be free while labor in black skin is branded” (Marx, 1967:301), thus introducing race and whiteness into the study of labor history. Marx went to Berlin to study Law and Philosophy –

a field then thoroughly dominated by Hegel's teachings. He arrived in Berlin just after Hegel's death, but joined a group of radical philosophy students, the *Young Hegelians* in 1837.

William Edward Burkhardt du Bois (1868 – 1963) [17] also went to Berlin to study Hegelian thought, attending lectures by such prominent Hegelian historians as Heinrich von Treitschke and Gustav Schmoller during the early 1890s. In 1920, Du Bois writes: "Neither Roman nor Arab, Greek nor Egyptian, Persian nor Mongol ever took himself and his own perfectness with such disconcerting seriousness as the modern white man. We whose shame, humiliation, and deep insult his aggrandizement so often involved were never deceived. We look at him clearly, with world-old eyes, and saw simply a human thing, weak and pitiable and cruel, even as we are and were." (Du Bois, 1996:500) [17]

The American historian Winthrop Jordan, in *White over Black: American Attitudes Toward the Negro, 1550-1812* (1968) picked up this insight and turned his analytical gaze around, attesting a "white problem" opposed to the traditional accounts of the American "Negro Problem." This "turning the analytical gaze around" is what characterizes most of the academic treatments of whiteness, produced by American sociologists, psychologists, historians, film studies professors, legal scholars, and philosophers, including the work by Theodore Allen (1993 and 1997) [2], Peggy McIntosh (1988) [46], David Roediger (1991) [57], George M. Frederickson (1981) [24], Ruth Frankenberg (1993) [23], Cheryl Harris (1993) [28], Janet Helms (1990a, 1990b, 1991, 1992) [30], Richard Dyer (1997) [18], Howard Winant (1997), Charles W. Mills (1998) [48], Grace Elizabeth Hale (1998) [26], Anthony Marx (1998) [44], George Lipsitz (1998) [41], Ira Katznelson (2005) [40], Nell Irvin Painter (2010) [54], Michelle Alexander (2010) [1], Lisa Spanierman and Mary Heppner (2004 and 2009) [60], Helen Neville (2013 and 2016) [52], Joe Feagin (2013) [20], and Eduardo Bonilla-Silva (2003) [8]. During the late 1990s and early 2000s, the first whiteness readers appeared. In 1997, Mike Hill edited *Whiteness: A Critical Reader* (1997) and in 2005, Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic published *Critical White Studies: Looking behind the Mirror*. In the same year, Alfred Lopez edited *Postcolonial Whiteness: A Critical Reader on Race and Empire*. The academic field of *Critical Whiteness Studies* was born. The most recent treatments, e.g. by Ashley Jardina (2019) [39], focus on white identity as a new political phenomenon in the U.S. emerging in response to the perceived advances and conquest of minorities through affirmative action and the Obama presidency.

The theme of interconnected fates is of course not American alone – it connects to similar arguments made by scholars adopting a broader, more global lens, such as Hannah Arendt (1951) [3], who pointed out the contradictions between democracy and imperialism and Uday Singh Mehta (1999), who showed how the achievements of the British empire can only be understood in connection to domination. In the American context, Critical Whiteness Studies allowed for an examination of hitherto unexamined racial privilege. Most authors writing in this field define whiteness along the lines of Derron Wallace (2018) [62], namely as "a historical system of thought and action that affords undue structural, material and political privileges that often remains unmarked and unquestioned..." (Wallace, 2018:467) [62]. Following Anoop Nayak (2007) [51] and David Gillborn

(2005) [25], Wallace further specifies whiteness as "a set of unspoken norms and a category of positional superiority that exists in juxtaposition to "non-whiteness"" (Wallace, 2018:467) [62].

What the available literature does not explain is to what extent whiteness can account for privilege. Lacking such an explanatory specification severely limits the analytical utility of the concept. It is my purpose here to remedy this shortcoming. To achieve this, I will first introduce another body of literature, which, while strongly related, has not been integrated into this debate by the aforementioned authors, with few exceptions, mostly in the field of educational sociology.

Bourdieu's Symbolic Capitals

It is somewhat surprising that none of the many sociologists writing on whiteness connect it to the work of fellow sociologist Pierre Bourdieu. Only Eduardo Bonilla-Silva (2003) [8] references Bourdieu's main work, *Distinction* (1984) in a footnote – but only to expand on Bourdieu's notion of *habitus*. The French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (1930-2002) has offered a comprehensive theory of social structuration. Bourdieu understands society as a playfield of constant struggle of groups and individuals against each other with the purpose of reaching, and defending, privileged positionalities vis-à-vis each other and, through them, secure advantages and privileges. He expands on classical Marxism by focusing not on material goods as the main avenue to secure class belonging alone, but on life-style, consumption, and habitus. Habitus, according to Bourdieu, "is both the generative principle of objectively classifiable judgments and the system of classification of these practices." (Bourdieu, 1984:170) To operationalize this Marxism of taste and consumption, Bourdieu introduces the concepts of cultural and social capital, which work in addition to the traditional economic capital.

In general, argues Bourdieu, capital "is accumulated labor (in its materialized form or its 'incorporated,' or embodied form) which, when appropriated in a private, i.e., exclusive basis by agents or groups of agents, enables them to appropriate social energy in the form of reified, or living labor." (Bourdieu, 1986:46) He stresses the importance of history, or better: the historical accumulation of capital in structuring the playfield upon which contemporary individuals and groups compete over social positionalities within a given society. The possession of capital determines, according to Bourdieu, the chances of success in different fields of practices. Bourdieu critiques the reduction of capital to economic capital and argues that it is not only in the economic sphere that agents compete over relative positionalities and status – but everywhere and all the time. Economic reductionism has thus, according to him, reduced the sphere of self-interested action to economics when in reality, we constantly compete with each other in those spheres deemed disinterested by economists, namely within civil society, the arts, in education, and even within the private and intimate spheres of life. Bourdieu argues that "A general science of the economy of practices, capable of reappropriating the totality of the practices which, although objectively economic, are not and cannot be socially recognized as economic, and which can be performed only at the cost of a whole labor or dissimulation or, more precisely, *euphemization*, must endeavor to grasp capital and profit in all their forms and to establish the laws

whereby the different types of capital (or power, which amounts to the same thing) change into one another.” (Bourdieu, 1986:47)

In short: The struggle over relative positionality is everywhere and never ending, similar to the way power permeates all our interactions – not just the ones in the economic realm, as Bourdieu’s contemporary and fellow French philosopher Michel Foucault (1926-1984) also argued.

Bourdieu explains that symbolic capital works in indirect ways: “to be unrecognized as capital and recognized as legitimate competence, as authority exerting an effect of (mis)recognition, e.g., in the matrimonial market and in all the markets in which economic capital is not fully recognized, whether in matters of culture, with the great art collections or great cultural foundations, or in social welfare, with the economy of generosity and the gift.” (Bourdieu, 1986:49) He then argues that capital can present itself in three fundamental guises: as economic capital, cultural capital, and social capital. Economic capital is “directly convertible into money and may be institutionalized in the form of property rights.” (Bourdieu, 1986:47) Cultural capital is “convertible, on certain conditions, into economic capital and may be institutionalized in the form of educational qualifications.” (Bourdieu, 1986:47) Social capital, finally, is “made up of social obligations (‘connections’), which is convertible, in certain conditions, into economic capital and may be institutionalized in the form of a title of nobility.” (Bourdieu, 1986:47) Here is Bourdieu’s own definition of cultural capital:

“Cultural capital can exist in three forms: in the *embodied* state, i.e., in the form of long-lasting dispositions of the mind and body; in the *objectified* state, in the form of cultural goods (pictures, books, dictionaries, instruments, machines, etc.), which are the trace or realization of theories or critiques of these theories, problematics, etc.; and in the *institutionalized* state, a form of objectification which must be set apart because, as will be seen in the case of educational qualifications, it confers entirely original properties on the cultural capital which it is presumed to guarantee.” (Bourdieu, 1986:47)

Persons and groups in a given society use different capitals, tangible economic and intangible symbolic, in their perpetual struggle over privilege, advantage, and relative positionality – and their contemporary struggles occur on a playfield that was structured by past achievements and achieved positionalities that can be passed on to the next generation. Concretely, cultural and social capital either add to the amount of economic capital a person or groups holds, or they provide the canvas upon which economic capital works – thereby either enhancing or hampering its effectiveness in achieving distinction, advantage, and privilege. This means that a person who can draw on a Ph.D. from Harvard University (cultural capital) and whose parents were already members of the local yacht club (social capital) can potentialize the effectiveness of his or her economic capital. This also means that cultural and social capital, both of which have historical dimensions and need to be accumulated over generations in most cases, are inherited.

Not only do these different capitals determine the relative standing of an individual or group in a given society. According to Bourdieu, the very structure of a given society

is formed according to the different capitals individual and groups hold. In short, powerful individuals elevate their own ‘habitus,’ which is the way different capitals are displayed, to the top of social hierarchies. Explains Bourdieu:

“Agents are distributed in the overall social space, in the first dimension, according to the overall volume of capital they possess and, in the second dimension, according to the structure of their capital, that is, the relative weight of the different species of capital, economic and cultural, in the volume of their assets.” (Bourdieu, 1989: 17)

That is the crux of Bourdieu’s analytical approach to society. Those who control and embody the highest levels of different capitals construct social hierarchies and they do so by elevating their own values, norms, and behavior – their habitus – to the very top of the social pyramid. ‘Upper class’ behavior and manners is thus nothing more than the actual behavior and manners of the upper class, elevated to the status of a norm and standard, to which all others, aspiring to climb the social ladder, must adhere.

Bourdieu does not address race, however, making it appear as if cultural capital is something inherently connected to whiteness. To remedy this shortcoming, several authors, mostly writing in the field of educational sociology, have shown that minority groups also use cultural capital. In her seminal article “Whose Culture Has Capital,” Tara Yosso (2005) ^[63] amended Bourdieu’s treatment of cultural capital with linguistic, aspirational, social, navigational, resistant, and familial capitals – all applied, as she shows, by minority groups in England. Diane Reay *et al.* (2007) ^[55], introduces “multicultural capital” and Stephen Ball *et al.* (2003) ^[4] find “transnational cultural capital” at work among non-white immigrant families in the UK. Tariq Modood (2004) ^[50], finally, discusses the “ethnic capital” Chinese and South Asian immigrants use to their advantage in the UK.

These treatments make it clear that symbolic capitals can and have been applied by different groups in different circumstances.

The American sociologist James Coleman (1990) ^[12], while ignoring the work of Bourdieu, links social capital, a concept he credits to Glen Loury (1976), to Human capital – thus opening the door for a further conceptualization of racial capital. The human capital approach, as I shall now demonstrate, has indeed much to offer to a theory of racial capital.

Human Capital Theory

Human capital theory has a long pedigree in economics, reaching back to Adam Smith [1776], John Stuart Mill [1848], and Alfred Marshall [1890]. (Sweetland, 1996) ^[61] In 1906, Irvine Fisher argued that wealth included human beings, thus laying the groundwork for the idea of human capital.

Human capital theory, in economics, was official established in 1950s. Jacob Mincer (1958) ^[49] explained income differences with reference to educational and training levels achieved in school and on the job. Solomon Fabricant (1959) ^[19], when seeking to explain productivity, found that investment in ‘intangible capital’ was more consequential than productivity per se in the explanation of productivity outcomes. Gary Becker, (1960) ^[6] is credited with launching the studies on the return of education on income and thus human capital in a more technical sense. Becker found that college education had an average return on income of seven to nine percent. Theodore Schultz

(1961) explained national growth as a direct result of investment in human capital – mainly in education and health. Edward Fulton Denison (1962) ^[14], finally, argued that, “human capital investment accounted for at least 43% of national income growth.” (Sweetland, 1996:350) ^[61]

Most of the accounts provided by these economists treated human capital as a *residual*, that is: the unexplained remainder, once all other known factors were accounted for when seeking to explain income and wealth disparities. However, all of the accounts provided by these authors are ahistorical and focus on individuals only, following the predominant methodology of economics – radical individualism.

The author credited with moving beyond this methods-imposed restriction and integrating history, as well as groups into the human capital debate is also an economist: Glenn Loury (1976). In a discussion paper for the Center for Mathematical Studies in Economics and Management Science at Northwestern University, Loury added history and group dynamics to the explanation of income inequality. Loury’s focus was to explain the racial income gap – and he argues: “The fact that parental achievement in education and occupation influences less favorably the qualifications of black children than white belies a more subtle racial bias than that which the Doctrine I intended to rule out.” (Loury, 1976:8) He finds that “the static labor market equilibrium for any generation must always be conditional on that equilibrium which obtained for the preceding generation.” (Loury, 1976:32) At work to explain the racial income gap are, according to Loury, family background, community environment, and innate capabilities, so that family background and community environment explain the income gap between blacks and whites. He then proposes the term “Social capital” to capture the historical and community factors at work beyond individual ability in the explanation of the racial income gap. He concludes:

“An individual’s social origin has an obvious and important effect on the amount of resources which are ultimately invested in his development. It may be useful to employ the concept of “social capital” to represent the consequences of social position in facilitating individual acquisition of (say) the standard human capital characteristics.” (Loury, 1976:46)

With this, Loury adds social capital to human capital – paralleling the theoretical work of Bourdieu, who had already used the term in his 1972 book *Outline of a Theory of Practice*. However, *Outline* was only translated and published in English in 1977 and it is difficult to determine if the two authors knew of each other’s work.

Thus, while economists have approached this topic by expanding from the human capital approach, Bourdieu’s contribution departed from Karl Marx by expanding from economic towards symbolic capitals. To advance further towards a general theory of racial capital and whiteness as symbolic capital, those two strains of literature must be integrated.

Racial Capital

I want to add to this debate by focusing instead on whiteness as an analytical tool and a way to operationalize research on social inequalities in societies with a European colonial history. Most of the information I have to elaborate the concepts of racial capital and the specific case of whiteness as a racial capital in European post-colonies come from the

United States. This is simply a matter of data availability. However, if my argument holds, then my conceptualization will also hold for all other societies falling into same category of having been colonized by European powers.

Residual, in this context, means that after human, economic, social, and cultural capitals are all accounted for, there still remains a gap separating black, brown, and indigenous from white people and groups in such competitive and positional markets as income, wealth, housing, educational achievement, job achievement, and incarceration rates. Life expectancy itself differs by race, as white Americans can expect to live 4 years longer than African Americans at birth. (US National Center for Health Statistics) In terms of life pure and simple, we can thus take whiteness to be worth four extra years of life.

Lifetime earnings are influenced by this residual – after taking account of all the other capitals. To be sure: American whites earn some 18 percent more than blacks and Native Americans. (Chetty *et al.* 2018) ^[10] Wealth disparities are much more pronounced. According to U.S. Federal Reserve data, in 2016, white families had a median net worth of \$171,000 compared to \$17,600 for blacks. (Dettling, *et al.* 2017) ^[10, 15] Whiteness thus accounts for 18 percent, all else being equal, of income advantage and for a stunning 97 percent of the wealth disparity separating white from black Americans. Such a large number should, however, not cause surprise, as it is in wealth that both history and group dynamics come to bear.

Economists are slowly becoming aware that a hitherto unexplained residual must be at work, as, for example, income inequalities alone cannot explain the tremendous wealth gap separating black from white households in the United States. Robert Barsky, John Bound, Kerwin Ko-Charles, and Joseph P. Lupton (2002), for example, argue that, “income difference alone cannot explain the wealth gap between black and white households. Identifying all the unknown factors responsible for the wealth gap once income is accounted for will undoubtedly prove a challenging task for future researchers.” (Barsky *et al.*, 2002: 672) ^[5] Given the outrageous and morally unjustifiable gap separating average household wealth gap among white and black families, accounting for this wealth gap should certainly be a priority for economists.

Glenn Loury (2002) offers an approximation towards a theory or racial capital. In his previous work (1976), he had already argued for the inclusion of history into the calculation of human capital, as discussed above. In a chapter entitled “Why should we care about Group Inequality,” published in 1989, Loury concludes that, “The inequality of family circumstances by historical economic discrimination is exacerbated by differential access to the benefits of those quasi-public resources available only on the affiliational clusters of “communities?” (Loury, 1989:274) The central argument he advances is that individuals and families growing up in economically deprived neighborhoods lack the social capital of those growing up in affluent neighborhoods. In the United States, this deprivation of social capital disproportionately affects African Americans, who, until the late 1960s, were forced to live in certain “redlined,” i.e. undesirable, neighborhoods. Finally, in his book on *The Anatomy of Racial Inequality* (2002), Loury argues that blackness in the United States is associated with negative stereotypes, which makes it costly for white people to enter into contracts with blacks. For

whites, it is less costly to guide their actions according to widely prevailing negative stereotypes and thus rational to avoid contacts and contracts with blacks. In other words, whiteness constitutes a tangible advantage when it comes to entering contact and contract with others – white or non-white.

What this literature indicates is that racial capital can be added to the three capitals already described by Pierre Bourdieu (1986) and treated in similar ways to human capital. Racial capital works in addition to the other capitals and, as such, what matters is the total amount of capital one can hold and claim, taken together. In this sense, the lack of one capital can be partly compensated by the availability of others. We can observe this strategy routinely in attempts of symbolic whitening, which refers to using one's economic, educational, cultural, or social capital to compensate for a lack of racial capital. At the same time, however, racial capital is not as fungible as the other capitals. First and foremost, because racial associations and categorizations are determined, to a great extent, not by the agent, but by other members of a society. Claiming whiteness thus has society-imposed limits, even if these limits differ from one society to another. While in the United States, given its history of legal segregation and apartheid, access to whiteness is highly circumscribed and restricted, in countries such as Brazil the boundaries defining whiteness are more malleable. In such countries as the Dominican Republic, where hardly anybody is "white" by US standards, claiming to be white is open to most people who have some degree of non-African ancestry – even if remote.

Second, racial capital is not as fungible as the other capitals, because it fulfills a signaling function for the relative presence or absence of the other capitals. Whiteness, in European postcolonial societies, signals the presence of economic, educational, cultural, and social capitals. By doing so, racial capital over-determines its bearer and either curtails or enhances her opportunities of contact and contract, to stick with Loury's (2002) terms. Racial capital thus provides unearned upfront opportunities or restrictions that are associated with status. To most people, white or black, in European post-colonies, a "white" person is entrusted with more esteem than a black, brown, or indigenous person. This esteem is based on the assumption that the white person is endowed with educational, economic, social, and cultural capitals. In this sense, racial capital works similar to gender, which also over-determines by signaling the presence or absence of other capitals.

Racial capital, similar to cultural capital, can be embodied, institutionalized, and objectified. It also has a performative dimension.

Racial capital is, by its very nature, embodied and ascribed to certain bodily features, where the ascription is a multi-pronged process, involving census categories, laws and social practices. Censuses "invent" racial categories the same way they invent other categories aimed at classifying and subdividing populations. Those inventions, however, are informed by the scientific productions of specialists – and when it comes to race, the specialists whose work serves to this day to justify racial categorizations were European and European descendent racist scholars of the 19th and early 20th centuries, who divided the world in white, black, yellow, and red populations and attributed to each one innate characteristics. With this, they strategically associated whiteness with superiority and they contributed

to the justification of slavery and colonialism. Legal segregation and apartheid laws were built on the same scientific foundations and they further consolidated the embodied nature of race and white supremacy. Social practices, finally, reproduce the available categories, with the purpose of creating, justifying, and defending relative individual and group privileges.

Racial capital is institutionalized and reproduced by apparently color-blind policies and institutional settings, as such authors as Feagin, Bonilla-Silva, and Lipsitz, have shown. Particularly within formal educational institutions, the cultural content taught is not colorblind and serves to reproduce white privilege.

Racial capital can be partly objectified. Certain objects indicate belonging to either a white or a black group. Expensive cars, luxury apartments, boats, and other material goods and belongings carry symbolic value beyond their mere materiality. They signify belonging to a privileged group and they achieve this by their association with whiteness and Europeanness.

Finally, and in addition to Bourdieu's conceptual framework, racial capital has a performative dimension. "Acting white" is a well-known and described phenomenon in many multicultural societies (e.g. by Painter, 2010) [54]. "Acting white" refers to adopting a habitus that is associated with white privilege and supremacy. There also is a linguistic dimension to this performance – "talking white."

Whiteness, then, is a racial capital, working along several dimensions – embodied, institutionalized, objectified, and performative – and, in societies with a European colonial history, it serves as a means to create, justify, and defend relative privilege vis-a-vis other groups categorized as belonging to different racial groups.

It is not from Bourdieu, but from the Human Capital literature, discussed above, that this working can be best captured. Similar to human capital, racial capital functions as a residual when it comes to explaining racial gaps in educational achievements, incarceration rates, income, wealth, and life expectancy. In this context, people able to claim whiteness for themselves escape the negative stereotyping associated with blackness (Loury, 2002). Those people successfully able to claim whiteness for themselves thus have an unearned advantage over those being perceived as black, brown, or indigenous – in most societies and in most contexts.

Racial capital, which in societies colonized by Europeans is white capital, thus is one of several capitals: human, economic, cultural, and social. Gender, education, money, connections, prestige, and race all impact a person's chances of successful contact and contract. Together, they impact a person's life chances and her chances of happiness, thus impacting a person's capability to live the kind of live they want to live (Sen, 2000).

Conclusion

Analytical concepts in and for the social sciences should be useful above all else. I propose the general concept of racial capital here, and associated with it, whiteness as a symbolic capital in societies that have been European colonies. I am not an economist, so I am not equipped to calculate the magnitude of this residual – but I understand enough about the calculations of the impact of human capital to know that racial capital and whiteness *can* be calculated. I hope some economists will carry out this important task soon, as it

would allow us to calculate what it would take to counteract white supremacy and undue racial advantage.

What I can, and hopefully have, achieved is to introduce this concept and offer ways to operationalize it for the purpose of research.

As stated previously, racial capital is context specific. What whiteness is able to achieve in former European colonies, Arabness can achieve in countries colonized, or dominated, by Arabs, Persianness has the potential to achieve the same among its formerly dominated, and so does Japanese descent vis-à-vis Koreans and Han-Chinese vis-à-vis the Non-Han. Racial capital impacts the capabilities of a person and group to live the kind of life they want to live. It provides those able to claim it successfully with unearned and undue advantages over those unable to claim it. As such it is unfair and a ground for the perpetuation of inequality. We should all be concerned about racial capital and seek ways to dismantle it for the sake of justice and fairness.

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