

## Getting Rid of Racism: Assessing Three Proposals in Light of Psychological Evidence

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At the end of a chapter in his book *Race, Racism and Reparations*, Angelo Corlett notes that “[t]here remain other queries about racism [than those he addressed in his chapter], which need philosophical exploration . . . Perhaps most important, how might racism be *unlearned*?” (Corlett 2003, 93). We agree with Corlett’s assessment of its importance, but find that philosophers have devoted relatively little attention to the issue of how to best deal with, and ultimately do away with, racism. Discussion is often confined to cursory remarks at the end of articles mainly devoted to defining “racism” or attempting to capture the essence of racism itself. In this article, we put the issue of how to best deal with racism front and center.

We need not start from scratch, however. Despite not being central to many philosophical discussions about race, a number of different strategies for dealing with racism have been suggested. We have identified three of the most concrete proposals made by philosophers and social theorists, each of which seeks to mitigate racism by inducing psychological changes in individuals.<sup>1</sup> For each, we formulate the line of thought behind the strategy as clearly as we can, supply the psychological justification suggested by its respective advocates, and spell out how the strategy might be concretely applied in practice. Finally, we assess each proposal in light of current empirical work on racial cognition. We conclude that some proposals are likely to fare better than others. Furthermore, the empirical literature shows that even the most promising proposals can be refined in light of empirical findings, to help maximize their effectiveness or prevent them from backfiring.<sup>2</sup>

Something needs to be said about how we are conceiving of racism, and so what getting rid of it amounts to. Because our discussion will be rather wide-ranging, we assume an inclusive characterization: A mental state (an emotion, a belief, a motivation, and so on) or an action is racist if it is race-related and if it is morally problematic. We do not take any stance here about what makes racist mental states and actions morally problematic, but instead rely on an intuitive grasp of the notion. So understood, Smith’s belief that Asians are devious is racist because it is about Asians and because it is morally objectionable, while Jones’s judgment that Moses is probably unpleasant since he is Jewish is racist because Jones makes this judgment based merely on the fact that

Moses is Jewish. While this characterization itself is certainly vague around the edges, most of the specific actions and mental states we consider below straightforwardly fall under it.

Because we are interested in the psychological aspects of racism, we also follow cognitive scientists in distinguishing three of its most important psychological facets: A cognitive component of racist thought, usually associated with stereotypes, beliefs, memories, or other forms of information and informational biases about members of some race; an affective component of racist thought, such as fear of, or disgust toward, some racial group, usually discussed under the heading “prejudice”; and motivational or behavioral aspects of racism, which are often caused by stereotypes and prejudices, and that fall under the heading “discrimination.” Given this picture of the psychology of racism, we will assess different proposals based on how effective they are in addressing and undermining each of these aspects, according to the available evidence.

In what follows, we first consider the idea that disseminating scientific information about the biology of race will undermine racism (the dissemination hypothesis). Next, we examine the idea that increasing interracial interactions will weaken various components of racism (the contact hypothesis). Finally, we consider the proposal that, instead of attempting to eliminate racist beliefs and prejudices, people should learn to control them (the self-regulation hypothesis). We end with some concluding remarks on the potential compatibility of the three proposals.

## 1. The Dissemination Hypothesis

According to Naomi Zack, “[r]acism and widespread ignorance concerning the scientific facts about race and racial difference overlap” (Zack 2003a, 263). Her favored approach for dealing with racism flows from this conviction, and amounts to a recommendation of explicit education: We should aim to teach people the most important scientific facts about race because those facts show that races do not actually exist. Once a “wide-scale dissemination” of this information about race is achieved, Zack holds, racist attitudes will disappear along with people’s ignorance of the facts about race.

### *1.1 The Proposal: Getting Rid of False Beliefs and Stereotypes*

Zack’s proposal is best understood against the background of her theory of natural kind terms. According to that theory, the folk regularly use natural kind terms, but it is scientists who determine what those terms refer to. Built into the meaning and usage of terms like “water,” “gold,” or “race” is a (perhaps tacit) belief that scientists know or will come to know what falls in the extension of these terms. For instance, scientists tell us that anything with the chemical structure  $H_2O$  properly falls in the extension of “water.” Sometimes, however, scientists discover

that a putative natural kind term fails to refer to anything at all. Standard examples are terms like “witch” or “phlogiston.” When it is discovered that nothing in fact falls within their extension, the terms and corresponding entities are said to have been *eliminated*.

Zack holds that such elimination is the fate destined for race. First, she maintains that racial terms (e.g., “Blacks”) function as natural kind terms. Second, she maintains that science has discovered that those racial terms fail to refer to anything because the science of race has revealed that racial groupings are not natural kinds: There is no underlying structure—genetic, psychological, moral, or otherwise—shared by all and only those people grouped together by particular racial terms (Zack 1998, 1999, 2002, 2003a,b).<sup>3</sup>

Pairing this reading of the biology of race with her favored theory of the reference of racial terminology, Zack concludes that races will eventually go the way of witches or phlogiston. In her own words:

So as the development of modern science contributed to the construction of a secular social ethos that supplanted a religious one, so will the dissemination of conclusions already accepted in the biological sciences eventually contribute to the construction of a raceless society. (Zack 2003b, 144)

This does not appear to be happening quickly, however. By all appearances, the folk still believe in the reality of races, and they still tend to structure their social interactions around ideas associated with race. Why? One explanation invoked by Zack appeals to widespread ignorance, “a failure to recognize that there is no basis for racial categories” (Zack 2002, 13). Given this diagnosis, a solution to the situation is straightforward: Eliminate ignorance by better publicizing and teaching the relevant science. As she puts it, one of the phases of the project of relinquishing false biological notions of race—what she calls the “cognitive phase” of the project—will be “the acquisition and distribution of the required information about human biology. This scientific literacy will proceed at a slow pace through the academy until it is disseminated at the secondary and primary school levels” (2002, 113).

## 1.2 *Psychological Justification*

Zack’s proposal rests on two psychological ideas, each of which we discuss in turn. The first concerns the form of knowledge responsible for racism, and the second concerns the way this knowledge is acquired.

Zack’s way of thinking about the form of racial knowledge is somewhat peculiar. She first holds that racial thinking is fairly recent, dating from the eighteenth century. Race is at the center of a cluster of ideas—a kind of loose theory proposed by philosophers such as Hume or Kant to explain human differences—that have been used to rationalize European domination of other groups of humans. She also thinks that these ideas are articulated in Kuhnian

paradigms, ensconced in sets of beliefs (some concerning the existence of race, others about specific groups such as Blacks), ways of seeing, categorizing, talking, and so on. As she puts it:

I will use 'racial paradigm' to refer to a set of ranges of beliefs about issues. [...] a paradigm, in the sense at issue, includes not just linguistic-ideational entities but their applications to persons, things, and events that exist independently of language and ideas. (Zack 1999, 299–300; our emphasis)

Given her adoption of this Kuhnian perspective, Zack hopes that if her proposal is enacted and widespread education about the biological facts of races is achieved, the result would be analogous to a scientific revolution: The abandonment of the older, classical paradigm of race for a new outlook on human groups, and thus a fundamental change in worldview amongst the folk.<sup>4</sup>

Zack's second idea is that racial taxonomies are taught to children, as opposed to being innately specified or to children arriving at those taxonomies on their own. As she puts it:

[Racial] taxonomy is taught to children early in their socialization. Along with the classification go physical, cultural and psychological stereotypes for each race, which are less complicated than the (astrological) traits of Aquarius, Pisces, and so forth. (Zack 2002, 106)

Given this view of how racial taxonomies are transmitted from one generation to the next, Zack holds that publicizing the fact that the terms they employ fail to pick out anything in reality will, in turn, provide the incentive for people to stop explicitly teaching those terms to children. Over time, this will help push the entire old racial paradigm out of use, and ultimately help undermine racism in general.

### ***1.3 Making the Proposal Concrete: Applications in Practice***

To understand Zack's social policy proposals, it helps to keep in mind the distinctions she draws between different kinds of racism. In her *Thinking about Race* (Zack 1998; see also 2003a), she distinguishes between "classic racism" (sometimes called "*mens rea* racism"), "unintentional racism" (in her 2003a, Zack refers to this form of racism as "less-than-conscious racism"), and "institutional racism." In this article, we will leave aside institutional racism (see Machery, Faucher, and Kelly 2010 for some discussion) and focus on the two other forms.

"Classic racism" refers to the conscious and deliberate racism that is typically accompanied by feelings of hatred or contempt (Zack 2003a, 248). Although she acknowledges a number of possible emotional causes of classical racism, she favors an explanation couched in terms of cognitive causes—specifically, that classic racism is typically caused by ignorance.

Unintentional racism differs from classic racism in that it is characterized by racist consequences rather than by reference to particular motives and intentions.

Unintentional racists do not engage in actions with the conscious intention of directly harming a particular group or the members of a particular race, but their actions bring about such harm nevertheless. Moreover, the harmful action *is* driven by mental states about the relevant race. As Zack puts it, “Usually, acts of unintentional racism follow from derogatory assumptions about all members of nonwhite groups” (Zack 1998, 43). Importantly, however, those “derogatory assumptions” are often only tacitly, rather than overtly, held. Examples of unintentional racists might include elderly people who switch to the other side of the street when they see young Black teenagers heading their way or a policeman who arrests a Black teenager for a crime he assumes is typically committed by Black teenagers. In such cases, the individuals in question need not harbor any consciously held racist belief, or feel any hatred or contempt toward (in our examples) Blacks. That does not, however, mean that the actions are not racist, merely that these are instances of unintentional, rather than classic, racism.

Zack suggests that the main cause of unintentional racism is the operation of stereotypes. Thus, as stereotypes are false beliefs, unintentional racism, like classic racism, can be cured by better education about race: “The remedy for this type of racism has been to correct unsubstantiated generalizations and educate unintentional racists toward a realization that their actions harm nonwhites” (1998, 43).

As of yet, Zack has not gotten much more specific about how to enact her ideas concerning how to cure these different forms of racism. By extrapolating from her views, however, we can formulate some more concrete suggestions. First and most obvious, there is the question of the specific type of information that should be disseminated. Zack’s proposal implies that, rather than information about, for instance, the history of Blacks in America, or narratives designed to inculcate moral values or increase empathy between members of different putative racial groups, the best way to fight racism is to educate people about the biological facts of race. That is, people should be taught that, according to our best sciences, there really are no such things as races, as we commonly conceive of them—just as there are no such things as witches. On her view, once this is done, the edifice upon which more objectionable racist attitudes and stereotypes rest will be undermined, and racism will crumble. This, we submit, is a genuinely interesting proposal.

Additionally, there is a question about how Zack thinks the relevant information should be disseminated, or whether she thinks there are any pedagogical methods that would be particularly effective in getting the word out that race is a myth. For instance, it is left unsaid *when* schooling on these racial issues would ideally be performed—should it be taught in high school, middle school, or perhaps even earlier?

As we saw earlier, Zack’s view is that racial taxonomies are learned as a result of socialization early in childhood, perhaps even before elementary school. On this assumption, she would plausibly endorse beginning the process of proper education about race as early as possible, and then continuing and refining that education throughout elementary, middle, and higher levels of education (see, for instance,

Zack 2003a, 265). Given early education is often performed by parents and other adults, one might think that, ideally, the biological facts of race would be made readily available to adults as well. Indeed, in this case, rather than formal education, other methods of disseminating the relevant information might be employed as well (via websites, community meetings, children's books, and so forth).

#### ***1.4 Assessing the Proposal***

As Zack herself mentions, the method she proposes has never been tried before:

[I]t is therefore unknown whether wide-scale dissemination of such information [about the lack of foundation of biological racial taxonomy], on levels appropriate to grade-based learning abilities, would be another effective remedy for white racism as well as the false beliefs about race held by members of all social racial groups. (2003a, 266)

Like Zack, we do not know of any studies examining whether racism decreases when people are taught that racial taxonomies have no biological foundation or that races do not exist.<sup>5</sup> Thus, although we would like to be able to assess her proposal directly, our discussion will have to be more circuitous. We first argue that people have racist beliefs and stereotypes in part because these provide a justification for conclusions and views their racist emotions motivate them to hold—a psychological phenomenon called “motivated cognition.” Second, we will argue that various aspects of racism are tied to emotions that are to a substantial extent impervious to people's beliefs (they are “encapsulated”).<sup>6</sup>

Generally, in the case of motivated cognition, people are inclined toward a set of beliefs if those beliefs seem to justify some other view that they want to be true, or whose truth they are emotionally invested in. According to Kunda (1990), people motivated to arrive at a particular conclusion

maintain an ‘illusion of objectivity’ (. . .). To this end, they search memory for those beliefs and rules that could support their desired conclusion. They may also creatively combine accessed knowledge to construct new beliefs that could logically support the desired conclusion. It is this process of memory search and belief construction that is biased by directional goals (. . .). (483)

The phenomenon of motivated cognition is well illustrated by how people evaluate scientific evidence. In a series of experiments reviewed by Kunda (1990), participants are presented with some body of evidence. Those who are motivated to disbelieve the conclusion supported by the evidence tend to be more skeptical of the body of evidence than those motivated to believe the conclusion. For instance, participants told that they have a low IQ are more likely to view studies establishing the validity of IQ tests with suspicion (Wyer and Frey 1983). After reviewing more evidence fitting this pattern, Kunda (490) concludes that “[t]aken together, these studies suggest that the evaluation of

scientific evidence may be biased by whether people want to believe its conclusions.”

Returning to Zack’s proposal, if racist beliefs and stereotypes are typically involved in this kind of motivated cognition, then disseminating biological information about race is unlikely to effectively undermine racism on its own—although it could very well help. People will be disposed to develop counter-explanations to keep the views they are motivated to have, and question the strength and viability of evidence against them. As a result, it becomes unlikely that the racial beliefs and stereotypes that justify those views will be easily undermined. In addition, if racist beliefs and stereotypes are involved like this in motivated cognition, then psychological interventions aimed at correcting people’s erroneous beliefs will also have to attend to people’s race-related motivations if they are to succeed. As Gordon Allport once said (1954, 485), “Information seldom sticks unless mixed with attitudinal glue.”

At this point, one might reasonably ask: Do people really endorse racist stereotypes in part because these justify opinions they *want* to be true? Evidence indicates that people’s propensity to hold biased views against out-group members is connected to certain emotions such as disgust and fear. A primary function of disgust is to prevent contamination from parasites by motivating avoidance of likely sources of contamination (Curtis, Aunger, and Rabie 2004; Kelly, in press, chap. 2). Faulkner, Schaller, Park, and Duncan (2004) proposed that people sometimes view out-group members as somehow infectious or contaminating, and respond to them with disgust. Further, they propose that biased judgments and opinions against out-group members are influenced by the emotion. Experiments have supported their hypothesis: They have found that the more people feel vulnerable to disease, the more they hold disease-related stereotypes against unfamiliar immigrants (e.g., for Canadians subjects, that immigrants from Africa or Eastern Europe—but not Western Europe—are a source of contamination). Building on Faulkner et al.’s work, Navarrete and Fessler have also shown that disgust correlates with xenophobia. The more people are sensitive to disgust and the more they feel vulnerable to disease, the more likely they are to make xenophobic judgments (Navarrete and Fessler 2006). Similarly, women are more likely to make xenophobic judgments in the final trimester of their pregnancy, when their disgust sensitivity is increased relative the first two trimesters (Fessler, Eng, and Navarrete 2005; Navarrete and Fessler 2007).

We suspect that these findings about the influence of disgust on xenophobia in general extend to cognition about racial out-groups (for more discussion of disgust and its role in social and moral cognition, see Kelly, in press). Indeed, sensitivity to other emotions, such as fear, influences people’s racist opinions exactly as disgust influences xenophobia. For instance, Schaller, Park, and Mueller (2003) have shown that people’s fear sensitivity (as measured by their feeling of vulnerability) correlates with the likelihood of making fear-related biased judgments against racial out-groups (e.g., that they are dangerous or untrustworthy) in anxiety-eliciting situations.



These studies show that judgments about out-group members are closely linked to emotional sensitivities: What someone thinks about out-groups, including other races, depends on how that person feels about those out-groups in particular, and sometimes about how that person feels in general. So, people seem to be motivated to hold the stereotypes they hold, and as a consequence research on motivated cognition, suggests that they would find ways to discard and overlook the type of information Zack thinks should be disseminated.

Second, racism is tied to emotions that are encapsulated in significant ways from people's entire store of beliefs. Most psychologists now recognize that not all conditioned stimuli are created equal: We seem disposed to acquire fears of natural objects that were consistently present and dangerous in our species' evolutionary past (like snakes, spiders, or angry faces) faster than fears of natural objects that are typically not dangerous (flowers) or of dangerous objects that are latecomers to the scene, from an evolutionary point of view (guns or electric outlets). These easily acquired fears (called "prepared fears," Seligman 1971) are also more difficult to extinguish, regardless of what other types of beliefs a person might have about them.

Olsson, Ebert, Banaji, and Phelps (2005) recently examined whether responses to faces of racial out-group members behave like prepared fears, and found that in several ways they did. For example, these fear responses took longer to extinguish than analogous responses to faces of racial in-group members. The effect varied across races: White subjects took longer to extinguish their fear response to Black faces, while Black subjects took longer to extinguish their fear response to White faces. Moreover, the measures were not moderated by explicit beliefs or attitudes about the out-group members, nor by the amount of contact subjects had with members of the opposite race. Indeed, the *only* moderately diminishing factor was interracial dating.<sup>7</sup>

The character of fear (and of other race-related emotions) and the fact that fear of out-group members was not moderated by people's beliefs and attitudes suggest that many race-related emotions are partly encapsulated (for a discussion of other emotions, see Faucher and Machery 2009). We think it thus unlikely that merely inducing changes in explicitly held beliefs would prove sufficient to eliminate or extinguish such emotional responses.

The two points discussed in this section lead us to be skeptical of Zack's idea that the best way to defeat racism is by teaching people the biological facts about race. First, given what is known about motivated cognition, including how motivated thinkers evaluate scientific research, those who have these underlying emotional dispositions and racist attitudes will likely be motivated to discredit or ignore the biological evidence itself. Much of the cognitive machinery underlying racial thought is shot through with affect and emotion, and as a result people will be motivated to interpret scientific facts in a way that enable them to preserve racial opinions that are dear to them. Second, given the resilience of emotional responses such as prepared fears, simply exposing people to the biological facts is unlikely to extinguish the underlying emotional responses that provide the



motivation to retain the racist attitudes in the first place (we discuss a similar point in section 3). Even if one learns and explicitly accepts Zack's interpretation of those biological facts, we think it unlikely that this would thereby extinguish the underlying emotional responses. This leaves open the possibility that, in Zack's terminology, people might be cured of their "classic racism" and of some of the false stereotypes that drive unintentional racism. However, the emotions associated with racism (fear, anger, disgust, jealousy, and so on) could well remain untouched. These might incline people to maintain some of their false racial stereotypes, and may very well motivate actions that are harmful to members of other races, even if those agents do not consciously intend that harm. Surely, racism would not have been eliminated if these negative emotional reactions remain in place. And so, while we believe that Zack's proposal may be a useful component of a larger strategy to combat racism, we are skeptical that it can serve as the centerpiece.

## 2. The Contact Hypothesis

The second proposal we consider has been endorsed by many philosophers and social theorists who see interracial interaction as the key: Increasing the frequency of interracial contacts, it holds, will help reduce or even help bring out the end of racism. Following the literature, we will call this proposal "the contact hypothesis."

### 2.1 *The Proposal: Interracial Contacts*

The philosopher who has expressed the most optimism about this proposal is probably Lawrence Blum. His enthusiasm for this approach stems from the following conviction:

There are psychic structures and cognitive schemas that exist at least partly at levels of consciousness not directly susceptible to straightforward cognitive engagement. Often there is an emotional investment in prejudices and stereotypes not directly susceptible to cognitive treatment through disconfirmation. (Blum 2009, 262–63)

His most recent discussion urges that contact be taken more seriously in educational settings: "Students' contact in school with members of out-groups clearly merits attention for its potential to reduce prejudice against those groups (and perhaps out-groups more generally)" (2009, 462).

This approach construes "contact" in a narrow sense: Contacts are interpersonal *interactions* between members of different races, not cases of mere physical proximity. Thus, living in a racially mixed neighborhood by itself does not count as being in contact with members of other races, although, naturally, it can lead to interactions that are instances of genuine contact (Festinger and Kelley 1951; Pettigrew and Tropp 2006). Furthermore, for the contact hypothesis to be deemed

successful, the reduction of racism induced by contact must not be limited to the individuals involved in the interactions, but, rather, it must generalize to the members of the relevant racial group qua racial group. Thus, for the contact hypothesis to be deemed successful, it is not sufficient that when Jim (a White male) interacts with his Black neighbor John, Jim's prejudice is not manifest. What matters is whether Jim's prejudice toward Blacks in general is diminished as a result of his interactions with John.

The simplest version of the contact hypothesis proposes that simply increasing the frequency of interracial interactions reduces racism; Sampson (1986) has called this "the warm-body hypothesis." As Blum notes (1999, 2009), psychologists have long been skeptical of the warm-body hypothesis because field studies of the outcomes of desegregation (e.g., in schools) revealed that increased contact did not always decrease prejudice or undermine stereotypes (for review, see Stephan 1978; Cook 1984). To explain these findings, they have proposed that, contrary to the warm-body hypothesis, there are social and psychological conditions that must be satisfied for contact to work; more specifically, for it to reduce prejudice and undermine stereotypes or make interracial interactions less strained (Cook 1984, 1985; Pettigrew 1998). In developing this idea, Allport's formulation of the contact hypothesis in his celebrated book *The Nature of Prejudice* has been particularly influential. According to the account set forth there, four conditions have to be met in order for interracial interactions to reduce racism: (i) the two racial groups must have equal status; (ii) they must have common goals; (iii) they must cooperate; and (iv) their cooperation must be officially acknowledged, either by institutions or by custom. In a similar vein, Stuart Cook (e.g., 1985) proposed five conditions that need to be met in order for contact to reduce racism: (i) the two racial groups must have equal status; (ii) contact must be an opportunity to falsify stereotypes; (iii) the racial groups must cooperate to fulfill a common goal; (iv) interactions must not be superficial, so that participants must be viewed as individuals rather than merely as members of their social groups; and finally (v) social norms must sanction interracial contact. There is substantial overlap in these two formulations of the relevant conditions, but disagreement remains concerning their nature, number, and many details (e.g., Brewer and Miller 1984; Hewstone and Brown 1986; Gaertner et al. 1989; Gaertner and Dovidio 2000; Voci and Hewstone 2003; for review, see Pettigrew 1998).

## 2.2 Psychological Justification

Support for the contact hypothesis is based on the hope that interracial contact can influence two of the central components of racism: stereotypes and prejudices. It is plausible that people have racial stereotypes at least in part because they are simply ignorant about the other races. In turn, a possible cause of this ignorance is the physical and social separation between racial groups. Thus, goes the line of thought, increasing interracial contact between groups would be an obvious way

of undercutting an important source of racist stereotypes. Furthermore, even if ignorance is not solely responsible for the persistence of stereotypes (as suggested by our discussion of motivated cognition in section 1), it remains reasonable that boosting the frequency of interracial contacts would provide numerous occasions for people to be directly confronted with experiences revealing their stereotypes to be false, which could lead people to abandon them.

Proponents of contact also hope that this approach can help undermine the more affective aspects of racism, namely racial prejudice. It might be that some prejudices are caused by people's stereotypes: For instance, if Asians are stereotypically represented as being devious, those with such anti-Asian stereotypes might not just hold false beliefs about Asians, but come to *feel* distrust toward them *as a result* of those stereotypes. In cases like this, if contact could undermine the stereotype, it could plausibly undermine the prejudice that is predicated upon it as well.

Finally, contact could address another potential source of prejudice as well, namely a lack of familiarity with other races, which could easily generate feelings of apprehension or fear toward members of other races. By abating that lack of familiarity, interracial interactions would thereby reduce racial prejudices that are plausibly sustained by it.

### ***2.3 Making the Proposal Concrete: Applications in Practice***

Unlike the other two proposals we consider, various forms of the contact hypothesis have already been implemented. Most obviously, it is part of the justification for many policies mandating the increase of racial diversity in working environments, associations, universities, and neighborhoods: Boosting racial diversity increases the likelihood of interracial contacts, which, if the contact hypothesis is correct, will help reduce racism. Universities and colleges take diversity (including racial diversity) into consideration in the recruitment of undergraduate and graduate students. Following the Regents of the University of California v. Bakke ruling (1978), the Grutter v. Bollinger Supreme court ruling (2003) acknowledges the legitimacy of this policy in university admission partly because of the positive effects of the resulting contact (see the discussion of Grutter v. Bollinger in Chang, Chang, and Ledesma 2005; Pidot 2006). While many desegregation policies, including school desegregation in the wake of the Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka decision, were not explicitly justified on the grounds that contact would reduce racial prejudices and stereotypes (equality and justice are two commonly and explicitly invoked justificatory grounds), the potential of desegregation to reduce prejudice and stereotype was never overlooked. Thurgood Marshall, who represented Linda Brown in Brown v. Board of Education as Chief counsel for the NAACP, and who later went on to become a Supreme Court Justice, explicitly tied desegregation and prejudice reduction in his 1954 speech "Segregation and Desegregation" (reprinted in Marshall 2003, 83–84; see also Clark, Chein, and Cook's 1954 amicus brief submitted to the Supreme court). Anecdotes also illustrate the

influence of the contact hypothesis on the formulation of social policies. Following a racist incident (a cross burning) in 1991 in Dubuque, Iowa, a city of about 60,000 residents that counted only 331 African Americans, an official task force recommended to increase the number of African Americans on the grounds that more contact would decrease racism (Brewer 1997).

The contact hypothesis has also influenced education (Cook 1984). An influential methodology called “the jigsaw classroom” is explicitly meant to favor contact (Aronson and Patnoe 1997; for philosophical discussion, see Blum 2009). The jigsaw classroom theory draws its inspiration from Allport’s discussion of the conditions likely to make interracial interactions effective in undermining racism. It recommends that classroom projects be structured such that students from different racial backgrounds cooperate to reach the assigned, common goal. Members of each race fill different, equally important roles, and the value of the interracial cooperation is identified and praised by the teacher.

#### 2.4 *Assessing the Proposal*

Psychological research into the effectiveness of contact in reducing racism goes back many decades (Brophy 1946; Williams 1947; Allport 1954) and is by now quite extensive (for review, see Pettigrew 1998; Pettigrew and Tropp 2000, 2006). Overall, empirical evidence supports the contact hypothesis: Interracial interaction does in fact reduce racism. Indeed, Dovidio, Gaertner, and Kawakami have affirmed that the contact hypothesis is “one of psychology’s most effective strategies for improving intergroup relations” (2003, 5), while Richeson and Shelton (2003, 287) have also gone so far as stating that contact may be the “only viable antidote” to prejudice. Some key findings support these optimistic claims.

As noted above, psychologists have long thought that the warm-body hypothesis was incorrect. It turns out that this might have been a mistake: Pettigrew and Tropp’s (2006) meta-analysis suggests that, even when Allport’s and others’ optimal conditions are not met, interracial interactions *do* reduce racial bias. The importance of this finding for assessing the contact hypothesis cannot be overstated. Because psychologists have typically assumed that numerous conditions had to be in place for contact to reduce racial prejudice and weaken stereotypes, one could be justifiably skeptical of the contact hypothesis if one could show that the relevant conditions are rarely, if ever, met. However, as it seems that contact can be effective even when those conditions are not satisfied, this straightforward form of skepticism loses some of its bite.

The conditions expressed by Allport and others are not irrelevant to the question of effectiveness, however. Research indicates that they are in fact *moderators*: Meeting Allport’s conditions increases the effectiveness of interracial contact (Pettigrew and Tropp 2006). For instance, Sidanius and colleagues have run a series of longitudinal studies that broadly support this claim (Levin, van Laar, and Sidanius 2003; Sidanius, van Laar, Levin, and Sinclair 2004; van Laar, Levin, Sinclair, and Sidanius 2005; for another example, see Cook 1985). Van

Laar et al.'s (2005) five-year field experimental study examined the attitudes of those freshman undergraduates who were randomly assigned to share a dorm flat with undergraduates of other races. They also examined the attitudes of those undergraduates who chose to live with members of other races in their second and third years of college. Such living situations are likely to meet many of the conditions articulated by Allport and others. Van Laar et al. found that the greater the racial diversity of one's roommates, the more one's racial bias decreased, as measured by a number of indicators. They also found that contact with members of a particular racial group often led to less prejudice toward other racial groups. Voluntary contact with members of other races led to similar results.

The findings do not amount to an unmitigated vindication of the contact hypothesis, however. For instance, as we will discuss shortly, the effect size was small, and concerned mostly the affective component of racism. Additionally, contact with Asian Americans actually *increased* many measures of racism in Whites and Blacks. Similarly, contact with Whites increased some measures of racism in Blacks and Latinos.

A couple of other conclusions of Pettigrew and Tropp's (2006) meta-analysis should also be highlighted here. The reduction in prejudice and the weakening of stereotypes brought about by contact generalizes to the members of the relevant racial groups (e.g., to Blacks in general) and to circumstances that are distinct from the circumstances in which contact took place (e.g., Whites who interact with Blacks in a professional context are less prejudiced against Blacks in a schooling context). Second, the reduction even generalizes to other races (e.g., Whites who interact with Blacks are less prejudiced against Latinos). Finally, the reduction brought about by contact is not fleeting, but persists (Eller and Abrams 2003; Levin et al. 2003).

Most of the research on the contact hypothesis has focused on explicit attitudes, but recently researchers have turned their attention to the effect of contact on implicit racism. One of the main complications raised by recent empirical work is that many elements of racial cognition can operate implicitly and automatically; that is, without the knowledge or conscious intention, respectively, of the person involved. In addition, studies have repeatedly found that individuals can harbor implicit racial biases that *contradict* their explicitly held racial attitudes of, for instance, tolerance and racial equality, or their sincerely professed egalitarian ideals. Moreover, those implicit racial biases have been shown to influence judgment and behavior in a number of ways, both in controlled experimental settings, and, only slightly more speculatively, in real-world situations (for recent overviews of experimental work see Lane, Banaji, Nosek, and Greenwald 2007, Greenwald, Poehlman, Uhlmann, and Banaji 2009; for examples of implicit biases' likely influence on real-world settings see Bertrand and Mullainathan 2003, Sabin, Nosek, Greenwald, and Rivara 2008, Price and Wolfers forthcoming; for more discussion see Kelly, Machery, and Mallon 2010). Returning to the contact hypothesis, Shook and Fazio (2008) provide experimental evidence that, in addition to reducing explicit racism, contact also reduces

implicit biases in advantaged and in disadvantaged racial groups.<sup>8</sup> They compared the implicit attitudes of White undergraduates who were randomly assigned to share a dorm room with another White undergraduate to those of White undergraduates randomly assigned to share a dorm room with a Black undergraduate. They found that more than a quarter the implicit biases of the latter were reduced, while the implicit biases of the former remained constant.

Research has moved beyond the question of whether contact is effective, and begun to develop hypotheses about the causal links (mediators) between interracial interaction and the reduction of prejudice and weakening of stereotypes. While it is likely that several mechanisms link contact to prejudice reduction and stereotype weakening (Pettigrew 1998; Shook and Fazio 2008), Hewstone and colleagues suggest that one important mediating factor is anxiety, and that interracial interactions help undermine racism by easing people's racial anxieties (Islam and Hewstone 1993; Voci and Hewstone 2003). Pettigrew and Tropp (2000) estimate that about a third of the drop in racial bias brought about by contact results from reducing the anxiety produced by members of other racial groups.

So contact works: Philosophers, social scientists, and policy makers have rightly embraced contact in their attempts to reduce racism. However, we maintain that proponents of the contact hypothesis have painted too rosy a picture. To spell out our worries, we focus on two different kinds of issues. First, the research itself suffers from two important limitations. We do not know the extent to which the experimental results also hold in real-world racial interactions. Second, what we do know indicates that the capacity of contact to undermine racism may be limited: Contact seems to have only a small effect on prejudice and stereotypes.

Our worry about real-world applicability stems from the fact that several aspects of interracial interactions remain unknown. Research has often focused on the post-contact attitudes of the advantaged racial group, such as Whites in the United States, and it is unclear whether interracial interactions have similar (slight) influence on the attitudes of those traditionally disadvantaged groups, such as racial minorities in the United States (but see van Laar et al. 2005). Tropp and Pettigrew's (2005; Pettigrew and Tropp 2006) meta-analysis suggests that their influence is indeed smaller for these minorities.<sup>9</sup>

Furthermore, too little attention has been paid to the circumstances in which contact could backfire. For instance, Cook (1985) notes that when members of different races cooperate to achieve a common goal, if an individual is unable to adequately play her role or to "pull his weight" in the cooperative endeavor, the others involved might end up with *increased* bias toward the underachiever's racial group. More research on this would be especially useful in thinking about how to best implement contact-based suggestions in classrooms, where groups could include minority students who might perform less well simply because they come from poorer schools.

In addition, it is unclear whether experimental findings about the efficacy of contact can be easily exported to real-life situations (Brewer 1997; Dixon, Durrheim, and Tredoux 2005). Not only are the conditions in a controlled studies

extremely different from the conditions in which contact takes place in real life, but the latter might include (unknown—see above) factors that prevent contact from reducing prejudice and weakening stereotypes. College laboratories (and campuses) are unlike most other places, and sociological studies show that the kind of intimate, equal, normative interracial interactions that are thought to render contact optimally effective remain uncommon, especially in societies that have a history of racial tension (for review, see Dixon et al. 2005; but see Ellen 1998). For instance, Pidot (2006) reports that prior to going to college 90 percent of White freshmen at the University of Michigan lived in almost exclusively White neighborhoods and had gone to almost exclusively White high schools. Worse, the contact hypothesis offers no guidance concerning how to address the racial tensions that often stand in the way of increased, optimal contact in the first place. Bruce Berry, the headmaster of a high school in Bradford, England, where violent racial conflicts took place in 2001, expressed a similar opinion in *The Guardian* in 2003 after having participated in a colloquium on the contact hypothesis (cited in Ward 2003):

The seminar did not come up with an idea about what you can do when that [ideal of integration] is not possible. All the research in the world is not addressing the situation that some cities find themselves in now.

Our second concern about the contact hypothesis is that, based on what we do know, the effectiveness of interracial interaction in undermining racism seems somewhat limited. Pettigrew and Tropp's (2006) meta-analysis shows that the mean effect size is  $r = -.2$ , which in the social sciences is small (Cohen 1992). Although surely not negligible from a practical point of view, this effect size seems disappointingly small to us, especially in light of the amount of attention the contact hypothesis has received.<sup>10</sup> Even granting its effectiveness in influencing some aspects of racism, research indicates that contact might leave other important aspects untouched. While it has been consistently found that interracial interactions reduce prejudice—the affective component of racism—they seem less effective in undermining people's racist stereotypes (van Laar et al. 2005).<sup>11</sup>

As mentioned above, contact can also backfire: Interracial interaction can actually *decrease* people's motivation to help improve racial inequality, which would in turn be detrimental to any attempts to get rid of racism. More specifically, members of disadvantaged groups who have positive contacts are less inclined to support social policies meant to reform group inequalities and more inclined to have exaggeratedly positive views about racial equality (Dixon, Durheim, and Tredoux 2007; Wright and Lubensky 2008; Saguy, Tausch, Dovidio, and Pratto 2009). For instance, Arab Israelis who have positive contacts with Jewish Israelis tend to have exaggeratedly positive views of the equality between Jews and Arabs in Israel, and they tend to be less willing to support social reform meant to improve the lot of Arabs (Saguy et al. 2009). Thus, as Saguy et al. put it



(2009, 120), “because positive contact improves attitudes and blurs group differences, it can undermine the necessary conditions for collective action to occur.”<sup>12</sup>

In sum, we are confident that interracial interaction should remain part of the toolkit for social reform regarding race. However, especially given how central it has been to the thought of theoreticians, experimentalists, and policy makers, we have emphasized some of the uncertainties that still cloud the research on the contact hypothesis. Moreover, we have pointed to research indicating that the capacity of contact to reduce prejudice may be somewhat more limited than many have hoped.

### 3. The Self-Regulation Hypothesis

Finally, we consider the prospects for getting rid of racism (or as we will see, at least mitigating it) via the strategy of self-regulation. We will approach the topic through a provocative discussion offered by the philosopher Laurence Lengbeyer. In his article “Racism and Impure Hearts,” Lengbeyer (2004) argues that, rather than continue trying to work out how we might best cleanse the world of all racist beliefs, we should instead aspire toward a different, more realistically achievable ideal: Rendering racist beliefs ineffectual.

#### 3.1 *The Proposal: Virtue Without Purity*

Lengbeyer laments that much discussion of racism is dominated by the ideal of purity of the kind, for instance, Zack proposes. As we saw, for people adhering to this ideal, “[r]acism’s cure involves removal, in one way or another, of all racist beliefs” (Lengbeyer 2004, 159).<sup>13</sup> Lengbeyer maintains that efforts to mitigate racism are better spent pursuing other aims than trying to purify those who are tainted by racist beliefs:

[T]here is an alternative course that combating an individual’s racism might take, an ethical goal both more achievable and more constructive than the simplistic picture of the pure heart. Racism can be effectively defeated in the many individual hearts that harbor it, but only by eschewing a sentimental and overly ambitious ideal for an approach that is more adult, sober, pragmatic, and realistic. (171)

Lengbeyer also suggests a positive alternative that we will call “the ideal of virtue without purity.” According this ideal, effectively controlling the expression of racist beliefs in judgment and behavior is a goal that is as morally worthy as trying to completely remove them from individuals’ cognitive economies. It also has the benefit of being more practically viable:

The aim should be *management* of one’s racist ideas, not their absolute elimination. Rather than make futile efforts to simplify one’s cognitive system by uprooting the racist ideas, one ought to seek to *complicate* that system in ways that offer control over the offending idea’s influence and manifestations. (171, italics in original)

Finally, Lengbeyer describes different means for managing one's racist beliefs. Before taking a closer look at these, we will first turn our attention to the psychological justification he offers in support of the ideal of virtue without purity.

### ***3.2 Psychological Justification***

Lengbeyer's justification for abandoning the ideal of purity rests on two claims. The first is that purity is unattainable, or at least that achieving the ideal is, as a matter of psychological fact, extremely difficult. The second is that embrace of the ideal of purity itself is not just unrealistic, but indeed counterproductive in dealing with the problem of racism.

Lengbeyer offers two arguments for the claim that complete eradication of racist beliefs is unachievable. The first focuses on the fact that it is often difficult to get those who harbor racist beliefs to acknowledge that those beliefs are false.<sup>14</sup> The argument begins by making a general point about belief revision that is familiar from Quine (1951): Any particular belief may be (perhaps rationally) maintained in the face of *prima facie* falsifying evidence by questioning the evidence, or by adjusting other peripheral beliefs. Lengbeyer maintains that racist beliefs are "often quite deep-seated" (160) in those who harbor them and that, as a result, racist individuals are likely to engage in various epistemic contortions in order to retain them, even in the face of evidence that they are false (see Appiah 1990 for similar comments and the discussion of motivated cognition in section 1).

The second argument that complete eradication of racist beliefs is practically unachievable focuses on the phenomenon of belief perseverance.<sup>15</sup> Here Lengbeyer points to a large body of empirical research showing that renouncing a belief, that is, acknowledging it as false, is tantamount neither to removing it from one's cognitive economy nor rendering it causally inert. Rather, beliefs known to be false often remain in our cognitive economies; in Lengbeyer's terminology, repudiation does not guarantee elimination. Worse, this empirical literature indicates that such beliefs are still able to exert causal influence on our behavior and judgment.

It is worth emphasizing how the difficulty raised by the second argument is different from that raised by the first argument. The upshot of the first argument was that racist beliefs are often deep-seated and recalcitrant, so that those who harbor them will be unlikely to acknowledge or accept that those beliefs are false. The argument from belief perseverance raises the difficulty that even when an individual who harbors racist beliefs repudiates them and acknowledges that they are false, those beliefs linger. They are not thereby cast out from the individual's cognitive economy, nor are they rendered inert with respect to that individual's judgment or behavior.

The second claim Lengbeyer makes in support of his proposal to abandon purity is that, when it comes to effectively mitigating the effects of racism, the ideal of purity is not just unrealistic but destructive. The line of reasoning behind

this claim is less worked out than the arguments offered in favor of the first, but what is clear is that Lengbeyer maintains that purity is counterproductive *because* it is so unrealistic:

The current dominant understanding, which takes purification as the standard for whether people have transcended their racism, is not only misguided in theory but harmful in practice. Because the standard is so high, it can dishearten, and discourage from further efforts, those whose attempts at full eradication of their racist attitudes do not meet with success, even if their efforts are paying off in increasing control of those attitudes and undermining of their influence upon reasoning and behavior. (177)

We can see two specific ways in which pursuit of purity might be counterproductive. First, it may simply be a matter of opportunity costs: Time, resources, and energy invested in any doomed endeavor cannot be spent in the service of other goals, including more attainable or realistic ones. So the unrealistic ideal of purity may be counterproductive to the project of dealing with racism because the resources devoted to achieving purity could be better spent on other approaches that are more likely to succeed. Second, and perhaps closer to what Lengbeyer has in mind, is the thought that purity is counterproductive because when individuals aspiring to live up to such a demanding standard fall short—as Lengbeyer maintains they very often will—that failure will have a deflating effect that will sap or undermine their willingness to continue dealing with the problem of racism.

### 3.3 *Making the Proposal Concrete: Applications in Practice*

The general practical upshot of the considerations Lengbeyer raises is that, in his own words, “[w]e might be wise to redirect some of society’s efforts that are aimed at eliminating racism” (176). Embracing an ideal of virtue without purity would require rethinking how to best go about pursuing those new goals on both individual and policy levels.

On an individual level, Lengbeyer advocates various forms of self-regulation: “Eradication is psychologically out of the question, so the task becomes one of management” (172). He recommends that individuals monitor their own thoughts, actions, and habits for evidence of racist beliefs. Rather than simply trying to uproot those beliefs, individuals should devote their efforts to self-control, and attempt to manage and suppress the expression of whatever racist beliefs they discern. Note that the recommendation to individuals is not just that they redirect their efforts toward control and suppression, but that they acquire the cognitive resources that will be most effective in managing those racist beliefs. Lengbeyer also proposes that “the techniques must be routinized if they are to be effective” (173).

Lengbeyer goes on to discuss a few of the techniques that individuals might add to their belief-management toolkit. He first notes that many people are already familiar with methods to cope with unwanted but ineliminable desires (cravings for fatty food, lustful urges, and so on), and suggests that counterparts to such

strategies might usefully be employed in dealing with repudiated racist beliefs. He also discusses two more specific strategies for dealing with unwanted but ineliminable racist beliefs. The first strategy is one of credential rechecking. He is here recommending a form of continual epistemic vigilance, advising individuals to engage in habits of thought that involve explicitly checking the truth of beliefs before they employ or act on them. Credential-checking individuals will be able to “catch” the racist beliefs that linger in spite of having been repudiated before these are able to exert any unsavory influence.

The second strategy Lengbeyer mentions calls for a slightly different kind of self-regulation, one that involves meta-beliefs. Rather than check the truth of some problematic belief  $p$  every time it is to be used, Lengbeyer suggests that individuals explicitly token a belief about the belief,  $e(p)$ , whose content is that the first belief is false, dubious, unjustified, or problematic in some way. Then, one can develop habits of thought such that any time  $p$  is tokened,  $e(p)$  will automatically be tokened as well. This will raise a flag that the problematic belief  $p$  is active in the individual’s cognitive economy, and he or she will be able to take the appropriate countermeasures to ensure that it does not influence behavior or judgment.

On a policy level, Lengbeyer adds his voice to the chorus of calls for more education about race and racism, but his proposal implies an importantly different twist on this common theme. Because he embraces an ideal of virtue without purity, he holds that education should teach lessons about how individuals can most effectively suppress any racist beliefs they might harbor: “The central practical solution to racism is thus affirmatively educating people, and helping them train themselves to continually activate such lessons as needed” (177). The goal of education should be one of helping people manage their racist beliefs, and increase their repertoires for being able to regulate themselves and control those racist beliefs.

### 3.4 *Assessing the Proposal*

We believe that Lengbeyer is on to something important, and that the case for pursuing an approach that emphasizes self-regulation instead of complete eradication, or even a more pluralistic approach that actively pursues self-regulation alongside attempts at eradication, is compelling. Indeed, the viability and effectiveness of various types of self-regulation of bias and racial prejudice has been the subject of much empirical investigation in the past decade. This research can offer important guidance into what is likely to be effective, and what is not, and also reveals a number of relevant complications in the psychology of race that Lengbeyer’s discussion does not take into account (many of which have only been discovered since his article was published).

We should begin by noting how our position on some of the surrounding issues differs from Lengbeyer’s own. First, we are less pessimistic that the eradication of racism is an unattainable goal, especially in the long run. As we have argued elsewhere (Machery et al. 2010), nothing about the current work in the

psychology of race indicates that racism is completely inevitable or inescapable. Moreover, while his reasons for thinking that too much focus in the short run on an ideal of purity may be counterproductive have intuitive force, we refrain from endorsing that claim, at least until it is better supported by empirical evidence. We do agree, however, that it would be “wise to redirect some of society’s efforts” toward helping people self-regulate extant forms of racism. Finally, it goes without saying that we endorse Lengbeyer’s methodology, which suggests that the specifics of how those efforts are best redirected, and which methods of self-regulation should be promoted, should be informed by the empirical psychological research.<sup>16</sup>

As we pointed out in section 2, evidence continues to mount that much of racial cognition operates implicitly and automatically outside of awareness or immediate conscious control. A fairly general but important implication of this research is that for self-regulation to be effective, strategies for rendering all of one’s own racism “beliefs” (in Lengbeyer’s inclusive sense) inert must take into account not only explicitly held attitudes, but the aspects of racial cognition that are implicit and automatic as well.

Another complication revealed by recent empirical work is the discovery that certain initially appealing strategies of self-regulation are not only ineffective, but can backfire. For instance, Apfelbaum, Sommers, and Norton (2008) looked at one self-regulative method employed by many Whites, namely strategic colorblindness, which they describe as “avoidance of talking about race—or even acknowledging racial difference—in an effort to avoid the appearance of bias” (918) and “to promote positive interracial interactions” (929). They found that despite the good intentions that motivate strategic colorblindness, those who employed this method were more likely to engage in negative or unfriendly nonverbal behavior than those who did not, perhaps because doing so weakened their “capacity to exert inhibitory control” (929). Not only did strategic colorblindness have unwanted effects on the behavior of those who engaged in it, but it backfired in another way as well: In situations where race was a clearly relevant issue, Whites who avoided talking about or acknowledging it were *perceived* by Black observers as being *more* racially biased than those who were not strategically colorblind!<sup>17</sup>

Beyond the research specifically on racial cognition, reflecting on the literature on self-control only strengthens our worry about backfiring. In making a case for his theory of “ironic processes of self-control,” Daniel Wegner (1994) reviews a large amount of data indicating that constantly monitoring one’s own mind for specific kinds of unwanted thoughts can often have the “ironic” effect of bringing those very thoughts to the fore, and increasing the likelihood that they will be expressed or acted up, especially when one is mentally fatigued. This general point suggests that one strategy Lengbeyer proposes be included in the belief-management toolkit, namely the sort of credential rechecking that requires the constant monitoring of one’s own thoughts, might also be ineffective and even backfire. In fact, given that interracial interactions have been shown to themselves be mentally fatiguing activities for many people (see Richeson and Shelton 2007,

Richeson and Trawalter 2008 for discussion), credential rechecking of racial and racist beliefs could very well backfire *often*, and lead people to “ironically” act upon or express the very racist beliefs they wish to rein in.

Other research suggests that methods of self-regulation incorporating Lengbeyer’s idea of rehearsed meta-beliefs may be in better shape, however. As Stewart and Payne (2008) showed, inculcating specific habits of thought in oneself can help lower the effects of implicit biases and automatic stereotypes, even in the types of less than optimal circumstances that usually activate them (i.e., when one is mentally fatigued).<sup>18</sup> They call these habits “implementation intentions,” which can be thought of as simple if-then action plans that can be practiced, and hence routinized, prior to the type of situation in which they might be needed. One needs to specify that type of situation as the antecedent of a conditional, and the desired behavioral, cognitive, or emotional response as the consequent. For example, one might rehearse the following: “if I see a Black face, I will think ‘safe.’” Stewart and Payne found that if the implementation intention is practiced enough, then when the situation specified in the antecedent is actually encountered, the rehearsed response proceeds automatically, resulting in the desired, nonbiased responses quite effectively.

This strategy highlights what appears to be a distinction that could be crucial to assessing different methods of self-regulation, which might have some basis in the neural underpinnings of automatic and implicit biases (see Amodio, Master, Yee, and Taylor 2008; Stanley, Phelps, and Banaji 2008). On the one hand, some methods have a downstream orientation, and focus on *repressing the expression* of racist beliefs, or automatic and implicit biases, in either judgment or behavior. This requires monitoring not just one’s own social environment but also one’s own mental states, a process which, as noted above, can often have ironic effects. Additionally, several lines of evidence suggest that suppressing the expression of the relevant mental states, once they have been activated, involves effortful control, and that the cognitive processes needed to curb their influence on judgment and behavior operate like a type of mental muscle, a finite resource that can become fatigued, and whose effectiveness can then degrade (Payne 2005; Govorun and Payne 2006; Richeson and Shelton 2007; Amodio, Devine, and Harmon-Jones 2007).

Other types of methods of self-regulation, however, have an upstream orientation, and focus their attention and efforts closer to the point of *activation* of these various biases. Rather than waiting for the relevant “racist beliefs” to be triggered, and then attempting to deal with them and their downstream effects—perhaps by consciously suppressing them, or using deliberate, on-line control to take countermeasures against the types of influence on behavior and judgment they typically exert—methods in this second class seek to intervene before the problematic mental states are even triggered, to “get out in front of them.” Although the evidence is preliminary, it appears that the mechanisms that underlie activation of implicit biases, on the one hand, and those mechanisms brought to bear in attempting to suppress their expression, are distinct. Consider again Stewart and Payne’s (2008)

“implementation intentions.” On one plausible interpretation of how they function, the process of rehearsing a particular conditional statement like “If I see a Black face, I will think ‘safe’” breaks the connection between a particular input, specified by the antecedent of the conditional, from an unwanted, but implicitly and automatically triggered kind of output, namely some biased or racist response. It does this by linking the input to whatever kind of downstream response one explicitly chooses and rehearses. Hence, the problematic racist response is *never triggered in the first place*, and so does not have to be actively suppressed. What is triggered instead is, in our example, the thought “safe.” The problems that seem to beset the attempts at self-regulation through online suppression—degradation under conditions of mental fatigue, impairment by alcohol consumption, various manners of backfiring, and so on—may never have an opportunity to arise.

It may also be that the focus at or prior to the point of activation rather than on containing responses after they have already been triggered is what unites a number of methods of self-regulation that have little else in common, other than that they appear to yield better results than suppression-based methods. For instance, making a concerted effort to see members of another race as individuals, rather than instances of a category, lessened subjects’ scores on one test for implicit racial bias—it even increased their ability to recognize and distinguish faces of members of that other race, that is, it lowered what is known as the “Other Race Effect” (Lebrecht, Pierce, Tarr, and Tanaka 2009). On the interpretation we are suggesting, that concerted effort to see those faces as individuals mobilized cognitive resources other than the implicit and perhaps default racial biases, so the problematic responses were never activated in the first place. In addition to focusing attention externally on the individuating characteristics of others, other types of self-regulation, such as simply being internally motivated to have positive interracial exchanges, rather than always monitoring one’s self and attempt to catch any missteps before you make them, appear to be more effective in general.<sup>19</sup>

While we disagree on some of the details—particularly the likely effectiveness of his idea of credential checking beliefs before acting upon them—our final assessment of the spirit of Lengbeyer’s proposal for how to deal with racism is largely positive. We certainly agree that some of society’s efforts should be directed at containing racism, and that this will involve in part self-regulation on an individual level, and education about self-regulation at a more social, perhaps policy level. Methodologically, we agree with the pragmatism that guides his suggestions, and appreciate his willingness to look to empirical work on racial cognition for clues about the obstacles faced, and advantages enjoyed, by different variations on the broad theme of self-regulation.

#### 4. Conclusion

In this article, we have looked more closely at three proposals made by philosophers on how to best deal with the problems of racism. We selected Zack, Blum, and Lengbeyer as our subjects not only because they each engage with a



practical side of the issue that philosophers do not often discuss at length, but because their proposals have an explicitly psychological flavor. Ultimately, we have expressed more optimism about Lengbeyer's and Blum's suggestions, and the potential effectiveness of self-regulation and contact, than about Zack's hopes that more and better explicit education about the nonexistence of races alone can effectively cure racism.

One might argue that we are being unduly pessimistic, and that we should use every idea at our disposal to deal with racism. We disagree; some ideas are better than others, and we hold that empirical psychology can provide guidance on how to best allocate our all too limited resources. However, we should also point out that suitably refined proposals such as those considered above could very well be compatible, and could even be used to effectively complement each other. For instance, different strategies may be employed in conjunction to address the different psychological aspects (cognitive, affective, and motivational) of racism. Likewise, some may be more effective in the short run, or over the course of an individual lifetime (e.g., self-regulation), while others may be better equipped to bring about deeper changes that may take generations to take root (e.g., dissemination—indeed, at present we simply do not know how effective Zack's proposal would be in the long run). In fact, if racism and racist attitudes are not explicitly taught and instead spread more tacitly from individual to individual via conformity and model-based imitation, then collective self-regulation may be the sort of strategy that can yield both short-term and long-term fruit: If one person is able to refrain from expressing those (perhaps implicit) racial biases he harbors in any sort of behavior or judgment, that is one less person transmitting those biases to others, and if a large portion of one generation is able to effectively regulate their (perhaps implicit) racial biases, then, perhaps, such biases will be transmitted to considerably fewer members of the next generation.<sup>20</sup> Thinking through such possibilities in detail is a worthy project, but one we will have to take up at a later time.

*We would like to thank Daryl Cameron for helpful suggestions, the members of the Purdue Political Science Department, especially Cheryl O'Brien, for useful feedback on previous drafts, and an anonymous reviewer for helpful comments. While writing this article, Luc Faucher was visiting scholar at the Centre d'éthique de l'Université de Montréal (CREUM)*

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Some philosophers and social theorists have insisted on the importance of promoting social changes to undermine racial inequalities and discrimination (Wellman 2007; for discussion, see Machery, Faucher, and Kelly 2010; for a discussion of similar issues in the domain of education, see Short 1991). Without denying the importance of addressing the institutional and social aspects of racism (redressing resources disparities, eliminating race-based inequalities in access to desired goods, and so on), our focus in this article will be on its psychological aspects.

- <sup>2</sup>In this article, we will neither be concerned with which proposal for reform should be first put into practice (an important question if our capacity to put such proposals into practice is limited) nor who should implement the proposals for dealing with racism (e.g., whether the state has such a right).
- <sup>3</sup>For the sake of the argument, we will take for granted both Zack's theory of natural kinds (but see Machery 2009, chap. 8) and her interpretation of the research in biology related to races (for a different interpretation, see Sesardic 2010). If Zack is wrong about either of these, her proposal about racism would appear to be a nonstarter.
- <sup>4</sup>As with scientific revolutions, changes in racial paradigms will be caused in part by recalcitrant anomalies. Zack (2003a) thinks that the growing number and visibility of self-identified mixed-race individuals constitute the relevant type of anomaly for traditional racial categories. In this article, we do not discuss the validity of this claim.
- <sup>5</sup>Although not oriented to undermine the biological idea of race, multicultural curriculum-based education has received a bit more critical attention. Bigler (1999) evaluates intervention programs designed to reduce racial biases in children through the use of multicultural curricula and material. In these programs, for instance, children's racial biases are challenged through presentation of counterstereotypic information. She concludes that "[E]mpirical data suggest, [. . .], that extant intervention have been largely ineffective in altering children's racial attitudes, and that is true across the various forms of multicultural programming that have been evaluated" (690). We mention this because the difficulties faced by Zack's biology of race-based programs discussed in the rest of this section might also inhibit the effectiveness of these types of multicultural curriculum-based programs.
- <sup>6</sup>Zack acknowledges that some forms of racism might not be eliminated by the dissemination of information, but she seems to believe these are atypical (2003a, 266–67). By contrast, we hold that such perseverance of racist belief in the face of biological information is likely to be the rule rather than the exception. See section 3 below for some discussion and references.
- <sup>7</sup>These initial findings are complicated by Navarrete et al. (2009), who found that the slower extinction of fear toward members of other races occurred only with pictures of *males* (consistent with the social functional framework adopted in Faucher and Machery 2009). In contrast to Olsson et al. (2005), Navarrete et al. also found that contact moderated extinction: Greater contact correlated with faster extinction. See our section 2 below for more discussion of the contact hypothesis.
- <sup>8</sup>However, Henry and Hardin (2006) did not find any effect on the implicit biases of members of advantaged groups.
- <sup>9</sup>Some might hold that members of disadvantaged racial groups cannot be racist. We do not have room to deal with this view here, but the moral and factual similarities between the racist mental states and actions of the members of advantaged groups and the mental states and actions of the members of disadvantaged groups that we call "racist" speak against it.
- <sup>10</sup>We are also aware that small effect sizes at one level can scale up to larger effect sizes at another level, especially given time and numerous iterations.
- <sup>11</sup>There is preliminary research on the influence of contact on a range of other types of attitudes, behaviors, tendencies, and so on relevant to the broader problem of getting rid of racism, but no clear pattern has yet emerged. On the one hand, interracial interactions might not increase people's motivation to behave in nonracist ways (e.g., to include members of racial out-groups among one's friends, and so on), nor do they straightforwardly translate into greater support for social policies meant to undermine or compensate for inequalities. Jackman and Crane (1986) have provided some evidence that contact can reduce prejudice without increasing support for social policies meant to compensate for past and present racial injustices (see also Van Laar et al. 2005). On the other hand, Dixon, Durrheim, and Tredoux (2007) have provided some evidence that contact does reduce *opposition* to social policies among White South Africans. We certainly do not wish to claim that, for example, a lack of motivation to promote racial equality is a form of racism, but a proposal for dealing with racism would be better off if, everything else being equal, it helped motivate people to promote racial equality.

- <sup>12</sup>Although positive contact does not necessarily undermine collective action. Saguy, Dovidio, and Pratto (2008) argue that contact can promote support for social change when inequalities are emphasized during contact.
- <sup>13</sup>Lengbeyer is up front that he is using a very inclusive notion of “belief,” which includes “all manner of cognitive resources, including assumptions and presuppositions, whether embodied in representations that are sentential or imagistic.” One can be said to have racist beliefs in this permissive sense if one engages in behaviors such as having “ ‘visceral’ hostile or aversive reactions (as some dogs have been known to display), unthinking shifting into patronizing street slang and slouching whenever meeting black men, and perhaps handing out compliments for articulateness only to blacks” (158, fn 1). Because the use of “belief” is permissive, we assume it include other psychological entities such as stereotypes, exemplars, and biases.
- <sup>14</sup>Although he does not make explicit what the contents of racist beliefs are, Lengbeyer assumes for the sake of his discussion that all racist beliefs are, in fact, false.
- <sup>15</sup>Lengbeyer mainly leans on Wegner (1989) in his description of this, but also cites with approval other philosophers who have taken note of this class of phenomenon (Harman 1986; Goldman 1986).
- <sup>16</sup>We are not alone in this conviction. For example, Burgess, van Ryn, Dovidio, and Saha (2007) explicitly look to work on racial cognition to craft recommendations for healthcare providers about how to overcome their own racial biases. Some of our suggestions will be similar to theirs.
- <sup>17</sup>Apfelbaum et al. (2008) conclude from their four studies that: “[I]ntuitions regarding effective strategies for navigating the perceived minefield that is race-relevant interaction are sometimes inaccurate and can even be counterproductive. Whereas the attainment of a truly colorblind society remains an objective to which many continue to aspire, bending over backward to avoid even mention of race can create more problems that it solves” (930).
- <sup>18</sup>See Amodio and Devine (2006) for similar findings.
- <sup>19</sup>See Trawalter and Richeson (2006) for differences in effectiveness in what they call “promotion focus” versus “prevention focus,” as well as Shelton and Richeson (2006) for extended discussion. Also see Wheeler and Fiske (2005), who discuss how “goals also influence cognitive stereotype activation” and how “default differential response can evaporate, given a conscious effort to individuate.” Finally, see Ito et al. (2006), who discuss their results in terms of the “spreading attitude effect,” and Johnson and Fredrickson (2005), both of which provide evidence of how something as simple as positive affect (induced via facial feedback caused by smiling in the first study) can lower the influence of implicit biases on various indirect tests.
- <sup>20</sup>See Richerson and Boyd (2005) for discussion, informed by a population level perspective, of the role of imitation, conformity and model-based biases in social learning and the transmission of behaviors, mental states and attitudes from one individual to another.

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