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White Supremacy as an affective milieu

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Abstract
Some critical philosophers of race have argued that whiteness can be understood as a technology of affect and that white supremacy is comprised partly of unconscious habits that result in racialized perception. In an effort to deepen our understanding of the affective and bodily dimensions of white supremacy and the ways in which affective habits are socially produced, I look to insights from situated affectivity. Theorists in this field maintain that affective experience is not simply a matter of felt inner states, but rather socially and environmentally embedded and fundamentally relational. Jan Slaby presents the concept of an 'affective arrangement' as a way to approach affectivity in terms of relational dynamics unfolding within a particular setting. Applying this concept to the societal level, Paul Schuetze introduces the notion of 'affective milieu.' I argue that these notions of 'affective arrangement' and 'affective milieu,' together with an organicist account of habit, can help to illuminate the workings of white supremacy in the United States. My proposed account highlights the extent to which white supremacy is an affective, bodily phenomenon and how racist habits are formed over the course of learning and ongoing affective engagement, in the context of various social settings. Crucially, these affective habits are fully bound up with habits of appraisal, interpretation, and judgment, and therefore inseparable from how subjects come to see and understand their world.

Keywords Situated affectivity · Affective arrangement · Habit · White supremacy · Racism

1 Introduction

Mills (1994) maintains that that white supremacy is not merely a set of attitudes or opinions, as the term 'racism' sometimes is taken to suggest. Instead, it should be understood as a system of domination, one which has its own "special norms for allocating benefits and burdens, rights and duties, its own ideology, and an internal logic" that influences law, cultures, and consciousness (p. 108). This system is premised on an assumption of white superiority and Black/Brown inferiority and structured so as to advantage whites. Mills is careful to note that this system does not operate in synchronically uniform or diachronically static ways (p. 111). Global white supremacy can be understood as the overarching system of European domination whose long history has left us with the racialized distributions of economic, political, and cultural power that remain today. In different parts of the world, white supremacy operates somewhat differently, takes on different forms, and intersects with other axes of oppression (e.g., patriarchy and heteronormativity) in different ways.[1] Here, I focus on white supremacy at it manifests in the United States.

While I do not dispute Mills' characterization of white supremacy, I believe it needs to be supplemented; a fuller understanding of the workings of this system requires that we examine not just its legal and political dimensions, but also its emotional dimension. As Sullivan (2014) notes, philosophy and critical race theory must reckon with the lived reality of human physiology and affects. How do emotional dynamics and relations help to generate and sustain this system of racial domination? Some critical philosophers of race have argued that white supremacy is comprised partly of unconscious bodily habits that result in racialized perception (Al-Saji 2014; Ngo 2016; Sullivan 2014; Zembylas 2018). Building on this work, I look to insights from situated

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[1] A discussion of the myriad ways that white domination manifests, as well as the non-white populations that have been impacted by it, is beyond the scope of this essay.

affectivity. Theorists in this field maintain that affective experience is not simply a matter of felt inner states, but rather socially and environmentally embedded and fundamentally relational. Slaby (2018) presents the concept of an 'affective arrangement' as a way to approach affectivity in terms of "relational dynamics unfolding within a socio-material setting," in which individual subjects of experience are merely contributing elements (198). Applying this concept to the larger-scale, societal level, Schuetze (2021) introduces the notion of 'affective milieu.'

I argue that these notions of 'affective arrangement' and 'affective milieu,' together with an organicist account of habit, can help to illuminate the workings of white supremacy in the United States. My account highlights the extent to which white supremacy is an affective, bodily phenomenon and how racist habits are formed over the course of learning and ongoing affective engagement, in the context of various social settings. My proposed conception of affective habits builds upon Wynter's (2001) conception of the human as a sociogenic being, one whose existence and experiences are deeply impacted by historical sociocultural forces. By way of habit formation, social influences are internalized and rooted in patterns of bodily dynamics and engagement. Via the coupling of brain and bodily dynamics and the formation of habits, there is a genuine sense in which a human subject *internalizes* social influences and norms, so that their body becomes "socially saturated" and socio-normatively laden. Crucially, these affective habits are fully bound up with habits of appraisal, interpretation, and judgment, and therefore inseparable from how subjects come to understand their world. In my view, this discussion of situated affectivity and affective habits deeply resonates with the insights articulated by some critical race theorists. Integrating these two lines of research can help to deepen our understanding of the affective underpinnings of white supremacy, shedding light on why racist orientations persist and how they might be transformed.

2 Situated Affectivity and Affective Arrangements

Affectivity, as I understand it, encompasses not only occurrent emotions, but also moods, feelings of liking or disliking, and background "existential orientations" (Ratcliffe 2005). These modes of consciousness all involve interests, concerns, or feelings about what matters (Baier 2004), and are ways in which subjects *care* about objects, events, states of affairs, other people, or their own life. *Situated affectivity* has come to be the label for an array of views that emphasize the social and environmental embeddedness of affective experience. This includes work on embodiment, enactivism, and extended affectivity. But whereas some accounts have highlighted how material and social resources support, augment, and enhance affectivity and cognition, it is important to acknowledge that environmental resources also have the potential to distort these processes. Slaby (2018) describes how individuals who are embedded in a meshwork of socio-material elements sometimes are molded, formed, and policed by way of various discursive and material elements; and in many cases, these environmental influences have a pernicious impact on the subjects involved. What is more, although subjects sometimes play an active role in influencing how they come to think and feel, there are many cases in which environmental influences induce various feelings and behaviors without their being aware of it (Colombetti and Krueger 2015; Slaby 2018, 200). In fact, religious spaces, shopping malls, airports, restaurants, and office spaces often are *designed* to have such effects. Acknowledging how affectivity is continuously modulated by the material, interpersonal, and socio-cultural context in which it unfolds should prompt a critical investigation of these environmental influences.

Slaby's notion of an "affective arrangement" puts us in a strong position to begin this sort of critical investigation. Affective arrangements are ensembles of persons, things, artifacts, discourses, spaces, or other materials that coalesce into a coordinated formation of mutual affection. The components of an arrangement retain their distinctness and self-standing character while being dynamically linked together in a rather fragmentary, open-textured formation. Affect is relational in the sense that it is not merely an internal mental state, but rather a matter of *actively engaging* with the world, usually in highly social ways (Slaby 2016, 3); it consists in relations of affecting and being affected. The way in which a subject is situated in the world is largely a matter of how they are positioned in this network of relational affect dynamics, which includes material, social, and discursive elements. Dynamic tangles of affective relations comprise the core of an affective arrangement and link together all the participant components (Slaby, Mühlhoff, and Wüschner 2019). Affect comes neither before nor after the other elements, but instead inheres in the arrangement, and its various contributory elements enable the affective dynamics to unfold as they do. Slaby (2018) presents the example of a party: when people gather in a particular location where there is music, food, drink, and decoration, there are myriads of micro-engagements between people, and also between people and the material layout of the space. Together, these elements generate the party's overall affective atmosphere.

The notion of an affective arrangement highlights the way in which subjects are molded by their social environment, often without the imposition of a strict or formal code. Instead, affective arrangements exert their influence

by bonding people together, integrating them, and activating certain kinds of affectivity. Slaby points to classrooms, corporate offices, and restaurants as "zones of relatively higher intensity, higher density of affective relatedness, higher emotional energy" (Slaby 2018, 211). Because subjects are molded by these larger, heterogenous "dynamic constellations," affectivity often unfolds "within the lines and paths laid down in chains of previous interactions within affective arrangements" (Slaby 2018, 213–214). The pre-formatted affective relationships and response patterns exhibited by individuals immersed in an arrangement can be understood as 'roles' or 'subject positions' that often are occupied by individuals in routine and unreflective ways. Examples of affective roles that exist alongside more formal social roles include the 'class comedian, 'the grumpy critic,' and the 'energetic leader' (Slaby 2018, 213).

Crucially, the notion of an affective arrangement remains neutral on whether social and environmental influences have a positive or negative impact. Whether an affective arrangement generates and sustains affectivity in productive or distorting ways depends on the dynamics of the arrangement, the nature of the affective relations it promotes, and the extent to which these affective relations enhance or impair the cognitive functioning and agency of the human participants. Slaby, Mühlhoff, and Wüschner (2019) propose that the concept of an 'affective arrangement' might be used in an explorative way, to help chart the material layout and functional design of social spaces, focusing on the structured interplay of elements that are central to the production and continued circulation of affect. This would involve examining which roles or subject positions that it involves, and what sorts of affective involvement and habituation are enabled by the arrangement.

Could the concept the concept of an 'affective arrangement' be used to conceptualize the workings of white supremacy and examine the various material and social elements that contribute to the production and continued circulation of specific kinds of affect? It seems clear that different individuals will have varying experiences of the "affective atmosphere" (Slaby 2018, 210) of white supremacy, in large part depending on their social position. What is more, white supremacy appears to be considerably more far-reaching than the sorts of affective arrangements that emerge at parties, workplace environments, or other local settings. To understand the dynamics that help to support and sustain white domination, we will need to examine the channeling of affect in broader, larger-scale formations.

3 Affective Milieus and Habit Formation

Schuetze (2021) maintains that because the notion of an affective arrangement focuses on local and specific situations and captures only "special kinds of marked-off" settings (2), it neglects a more large-scale, societal approach to situated affectivity. In addition to the relatively localized affective arrangements that arise at social events or in the workplace, there are broader forces of acculturation that shape how subjects are affectively positioned which need to be understood. Although Slaby, Mühlhoff, and Wüschner (2019) do briefly note that "even entire affective or emotional cultures at large" might qualify as an affective arrangement (9), more needs to be said about how "persistent social structures influence our capacity to experience the world, not just in isolated instances but in a way that is deeply constitutive of who we are and how we make sense of things" (Guenther 2020, 13). Processes of affective habituation occur continuously in our day-to-day dealings as we navigate a wide range of social settings. Dynamics of relational affect often function as mechanisms of acculturation that enforce specific modes of engagement and result in sedimented patterns of affecting and being affected.

What Schuetze (2021) calls affective milieus are not physical territories that stabilize once in a while, but rather social formations that are always there in some sense, though they change over time; "they are structures residing in social domains of practice" and can be understood as "societal and large-scale formations, which subdivide social space in a way that individuals are seamlessly integrated simply by being there" (7). It is worth noting, though, that such integration is seamless not in the sense that subjects are necessarily comfortable or happy with their affective positioning, but rather in the sense that their affective habituation within this social space is ongoing and continuous, and often occurs without them being self-reflectively aware of it. Affective milieus are comprised of both social and material relations and can be understood as broad territories in social space. While it is possible to zoom in on localized settings (arrangements) within a milieu, taking a larger-scale view allows us to appreciate the wide range of material and social elements that modulate affect and mold subjectivity. Schuetze maintains that all subjects who are affectively situated and embedded within the milieu are similarly oriented and share a similar horizon. However, we will see that the thread or current that runs throughout the milieu of white supremacy is one of *affective difference*, i.e., one that generates different patterns of affecting and being affected for whites and non-whites. These different past experiences and affective relations modulate subjects' present and future modes of feeling and patterns of relating, so that affective milieus function like *habitats* (Schuetze, 2021, 9) in which

affective habits develop and take hold. Recurring patterns of emotional response also feed back into the affective milieu and play an integral role in perpetuating it.

Here I adopt an organicist conception of habit, which is rooted in the work of theorists such John Dewey, and recently developed further by enactivist philosophers of mind. This organicist approach treats habits not as rigid and mechanical behaviors whose execution is inflexible and completely unconscious, but rather as built-up dispositions or practical skills that incorporate "variability within a general scheme of control" (Lombo and Giménez-Amaya 2014, 2). These "dynamically configured stable patterns, strengthened and individualized by their enactment" (Barandiaran and Di Paolo 2014, 6) are central to embodied intentionality, effective agency, and task execution. Much of the enactivist theorizing about habits has focused on overt behaviors and the development of bodily skills such as handling a tool, painting a picture, or driving a car. Along these lines, Froese and Di Paolo (2011) maintain that sensorimotor coordination patterns are formed and sustained via continuous interactions with the environment (18), allowing for the development of a broad range of bodily skills. However, in addition to these coordinated movement patterns, subjects develop fully embodied habits of interpretation and patterns of attention. Just as sensorimotor patterns are reinforced through repetition, what subjects tend to notice, emphasize, or ignore is modulated by what they have paid attention to in the past. Such *habits of mind* encompass schemas for interacting and engaging with one's environment, and include, for example, a tendency to notice specific features of people and events while ignoring others, or to ascribe status and authority to some people while discounting the views of others.

As I will discuss further in Sect. 5, these habits of interpretation are fully intertwined with *habits of feeling*, which include characteristic patterns of affective interaction as well as recurring patterns of emotion-activation, expressivity, and response. Along these lines, Colombetti (2014) characterizes adult emotional expressions "as relatively recurrent and fixed patterns whose specific shape has been carved in development as certain structures occurred more frequently" (62). This includes breathing patterns, facial expressions, and characteristic gestures, which together form a subject's emotional comportment and comprise their characteristic modes of affective engagement. Similarly, what Candiotto and Dreon (2021) term 'affective habits' are relatively stable, more or less flexible ways of channeling affectivity that favor "relatively regular transactions between embodied agents and their natural as well as culturally shared environment" (2). Affective habits prompt specific forms of human sensibility and are produced, reinforced, and potentially revamped via our affectively charged transactions with the surrounding world. This conception of affective habits is meant to emphasize that we are not simply biological subjects, nor social subjects, but rather hybrid beings (Wynter and McKittrick 2015) whose bodily, biological, and cultural aspects are deeply intertwined.

Affective habits, like coordinated movement patterns and skills, develop within a sociocultural context, which is comprised partly of an affective milieu. As Dewey (1922) rightly notes, habits are socially acquired responses, formed under the influence of other people, which we come to amass over the course of a lifetime. Likewise, Bourdieu's account of the habitus emphasizes that the individual, family, school, and state are all embedded within a still larger social system, and that all of these subsystems mutually influence one another. By way of habit formation, the living body becomes "charged with a host of social meanings and values" (Bourdieu 1977, 87). Material artifacts, the emotions of other people, and the discourses and norms that operate within that milieu all solicit particular forms of emotional expression and engagement, so that subjects begin to exhibit recurring patterns of bodily expressivity and response. Sociocultural influences thereby are internalized and anchored in the body, by modifying subjects' neurobiological dynamics and patterns of bodily attunement. These affective habits not only develop and take root in the context of an affective milieu, but also help to sustain and reinforce the milieu's relational affective dynamics. Affective milieus and affective habits are thereby linked together by way of reciprocal causal links.

4 White Emotionality, Oppressive Things, and Whitely Scripts

I argue that these concepts of affective arrangement, affective milieu, and affective habits can help to shed light on the affective relational dynamics associated with white supremacy. My proposed account builds on the work of theorists such as Fanon (1952), Hook (2005), and Zembylas (2018), who all emphasize that affect relations help to comprise white supremacy and that these patterns of affectivity are socially organized and produced. Fanon (1952), for example, points to the ways in which historical structures of racial oppression and white privilege exist in affective forms; these 'affective formations' of exclusion and inclusion comprise relations of belonging and entitlement. Likewise, Hook (2005) points to practices, techniques, and discourses that function as a 'technology of affect' used to channel and sustain specific modes of feeling. Similarly, Zembylas (2018) maintains that the notion of an 'assemblage' captures how flows of affect, material elements, and

discourses dynamically coalesce to form social phenomena that are beyond any single individual's affective responses.

The notions of affective arrangement and affective milieu likewise emphasize that emotions do not simply reside in a subject, but instead are "socially and politically produced within the material, affective, and discursive assemblages of whiteness and white supremacy" (Zembylas 2018, 91). However, the notion of an 'affective milieu' puts even more emphasis on the idea that white supremacy is a large-scale social formation and that habitual patterns of affecting and being affected are a central binding element of this formation. Approaching white supremacy as an affective milieu allows us to study the interplay of a wide range of elements that contribute to its characteristic affective relations and help to generate and sustain particular orientations. By virtue of inhabiting this affective milieu, white subjects tend to develop and exhibit specific affective habits, whereas the affectivity of people of color will be channeled and molded along notably different lines. Subjects' habits also will vary depending on other aspects of their social position, including their gender, class, and sexual orientation. What are some of the key elements and relational dynamics that form part of this broad affective milieu?

In some cases, affective habits will be sustained via the relational dynamics that unfold in a localized setting (i.e., an affective arrangement). Yancy's (2008) description of a white woman encountering a Black man on an elevator offers one example of a local ensemble that is relatively marked-off from the surrounding world and functions so as to generate and stabilize a specific kind of affective relationship. This ensemble is comprised of heterogenous elements that form a characteristic layout which includes the woman with light skin, the man with dark skin, the enclosed space, the woman's expressive act of clutching her purse, the woman's attempt to distance herself from the Black body, and background discourse that says that Black men are dangerous. Within the elevator, there is a simultaneous affecting and being affected. On the part of the White woman, there is a general bodily orientation that consists of flinching, tensing, and calling toward panic (Ngo 2016, 854). On the part of the Black man, there is discomfort, shame, anger, or a desire to reassure the woman that he poses no danger. There also may be fear on his part, namely fear of the reactive danger of white fear, or what Cooper (2018) terms 'white girl tears.' Her panic contributes to his discomfort, just as any emotional expressiveness on his part may very well lead to heightened fear on her part.

However, to understand how the white woman's habits of fearfulness have developed and taken root, we will need to look beyond the affective-relational dynamics that unfold on the elevator. Although it is a single white woman who has a tensed, knotted stomach and seizes up in fear, her reaction is an instance of collective white fear that is centuries deep (Yancy 2008). Likewise, the myth of the Black male rapist that generates shame or discomfort on the man's part has a long history. Since this setting can be understood as a microcosm of broader social and political dynamics that unfold in society at large, we will be unable to understand the affective relations that unfold within the elevator without also examining the broader affective milieu of white supremacy. That is, although we can zoom in on specific settings where characteristic affective relations are especially salient, white supremacy needs to be understood as a broad, large-scale societal formation that cultivates a particular set of affective orientations and manifests historically sedimented patterns of affecting and being affected. The notion of an affective milieu aims to highlight the power relations that are manifested in routine affect dynamics and the "affective formative processes subjects are exposed to and immersed in every day" (Schuetze 2021, 5).

One central element of the affective milieu of white supremacy is discourse that calls for white folks to "live in a constant state of fear—a fear of harm, a fear of not being safe, a fear of losing those resources and social goods to which [they] feel entitled" (Bailey 2018, 1216). An example of how discourse operates as an affect-generating and affect-intensifying mechanism comes from Bailey's (2018) description of the race riots that occurred, during the summer of 1967, when she was six years old. From the adults around her, she learned that this was "not our Newark," that the appropriate response was fear, not compassion, and that "Newark was everything that whiteness was not" (1214). Her childhood was punctuated with cautionary tales that began with the phrase 'the Negroes (or Puerto Ricans) from Newark.' Adults advised:

> "lock the doors when you drive through Newark. The Negroes from Newark aren't trustworthy. They are not like us. They will rob you. The Negroes from Newark will destroy what we have worked so hard to make." (1215).

They warned her that the Negroes who drink all day and are on welfare were moving closer, to West Orange.

Similar messages, communicated routinely via political rhetoric and various forms of media, convey "neatly layered messages about the value of whiteness" (Bailey 2018, 1214) and also channel and intensify feelings of fear, unease, or anxiety regarding the proximity of Black bodies. Racist discourse thereby functions as an example of what Hook (2005) (building on the work of Foucault) terms an affective 'apparatus,' i.e., a device oriented to produce affect, in this case feelings of fear or a felt sense that she will be harmed by the "invasion" of Black people. Other discursive aspects

of the affective milieu of white supremacy are claims of reverse discrimination, expressed worries about the scarcity of "our" jobs, and concerns about cultural decay due to the infiltration of non-white ways of life. Such discourse helps to generate and sustain particular forms of reciprocal affective interplay among white subjects regardless of whether an encounter with non-white bodies ever actually occurs.

However, the affective milieu that generates and sustains these felt emotional borders also includes a wide range of non-discursive elements, including the organization of social and bodily space. The actual physical distance between whites and Blacks that frequently occurs as a function of de facto segregation or redlining, for example, moves whites away from bodies who are recognized as "feared" or "hated" and toward others who are recognized as "trusted" and "loved." In cases where people of color are more concentrated in areas with dilapidated buildings, and far removed from bodies of water and open space, this reinforces the felt borders between areas that are "safe" and "ghetto" spaces that should be feared and avoided, especially at night. Even smells can take on affective salience and reinforce the felt distance between whites and people of color. Sullivan (2014) gives the example of her own adverse reaction to the smell of cumin, a spice frequently used in Mexican and Tex-Mex food (p. 68). She says that she associates its smell with the perceived body odor of "Mexicans"—a group that in her West Texas town included Mexican-Americans, Chicano/as, and other Latino/a Americans. Habitual feelings of aversion help to constitute the felt "oppositional relationship between white and non-white people" (68) that Sullivan encountered as a young person and continues to experience despite her recognition that this association is racist. Along similar lines, MacMullen (2010) points to a "habit of antipathy to the strange" that can fuel more intense hostility, and Wynter (2003) describes how contemporary antipathy to the "Other" represents a continuation of historical dynamics whereby Black and Brown people have been constituted as outside the domain of the fully human.

Such affective dynamics are an integral part of what Young (2011) terms 'cultural imperialism.' This occurs when the dominant meanings of a society render the perspectives of non-dominant groups invisible while simultaneously marking these perspectives as "Other." Whereas the cultural expressions of the dominant group are disseminated widely, those of the subordinate group are marked as deviant and inferior (Young 2011, 59). When people of color find themselves defined by negative images and stereotypes, they may exhibit what DuBois (1903) terms 'double-consciousness': "this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's self by the tape of the world that looks on in amused contempt and pity" (29). People of color also may experience themselves as invisible, and as "Other," simultaneously, resulting in habitual feelings of alienation, shame, anger, or general discomfort. Wynter (2001) emphasizes that the feelings of abjection and self-alienation experienced by non-white people are not natural, but rather brought into being through processes of cultural socialization. Alongside these socially structured feelings of inferiority are socially structured feelings of superiority on the part of whites. The notion of an 'affective milieu' helps to make sense of the relational nature of these dynamics: these affective experiences are not simply opposed, but dialectically so, in the sense that each quality of subjective experience (one negative and the other positive) depends upon the other (Wynter 2001).

The felt borders and separations between whites and people and color are created and maintained largely via white emotionality and the affective investments of white people. Slaby, Mühlhoff, and Wüschner (2019) note how affective arrangements exert a kind of "pull" or allure, drawing individuals into their ambit by offering them occasions for immersion within a sphere of resonance and intensity and providing opportunities for attachment and a sense of belonging. Just as it feels good to be a spectator at a football game, it feels pleasant and comfortable to be "at home" in white spaces. White supremacy is reproduced, in part, by the fact that white subjects experience their whiteness as a form of "positive residence" (Ahmed 2007, 154). Along these lines, Hook (2005) points to powerful strands of attachment and belonging among white subjects and describes them as a "force-field of intersecting identifications and investments" (75). These affective resonances operate in a way that often is not explicitly formulated or articulated, but nonetheless powerfully felt. There are various material elements that generate and reinforce emotional attachments to whiteness and also generate a tacit field of exclusions for people of color. Artifacts such as Confederate statues, for example, lend legitimacy to racial exclusion and subjugation via the reinforcement of emotional borders between "us" and "them," and also provide opportunities for white attachment and feelings of pride or belonging. These statues also may conjure up feelings of nostalgia for a time when people of color assumed their "proper place."

Building on these ideas, it seems clear that the affective milieu of white supremacy includes what Liao and Huebner (forthcoming) term 'oppressive things,' i.e., material artifacts that are in congruence with, and help to sustain, an oppressive system. To illustrate this, they point to artifacts of visual culture technology that have a light-skin bias. For many years, professional photographers relied on Kodak's Shirley Card to calibrate skin color balance during the printing process. Use of a Shirley card not only assisted photographers with the process of visual matching, but also reinforced assumptions about what "natural skin" color

should look like, and thereby imposed a light-skin bias on its users. These authors rightly note that material artifacts can function as material anchors that play a critical role in structuring subjects' cognitive niche and organizing their patterns of thought. However, it is important to acknowledge that such artifacts also function as material anchors for habituated emotional responses. Just a few examples of the material artifacts that form part of the affective milieu of white supremacy include "natural" colored band-aids, nooses, the infamous Willie Horton ad[2], and T-shirts and hats that say, "Make America Great Again." Whereas some artifacts more subtly contribute to white normativity, others more overtly cultivate white fear of the "Other." They operate together, in mutually enforcing ways, to sustain feelings of entitlement and defensiveness on the part of white subjects, while simultaneously alienating people of color. President Trump's border wall between the U.S. and Mexico is a particularly striking example of a physical object that channels and sustains fear among White subjects about losing their raced-based privileges and watching "their" country be overrun by morally degenerate "outsiders."

Relatedly, there are various social settings that distribute comfort, ease, and entitlement differently among those who enter their spaces. Such dynamics result in a kind of affective privilege, whereby white subjects are free from the distress frequently experienced by people of color. Ahmed (2007) notes that Black bodies routinely face obstacles and frequently are stopped: "Who are you? Why are you here? What are you doing?" Each question functions as a stopping device, reinforcing everyone's felt sense that some bodies are 'out of place' and do not belong in particular spaces. While those seen as white can navigate more smoothly through legal, governmental, or educational institutions, those perceived as non-white are often at risk of being slowed down, probed, viewed with suspicion, or greeted with outright hostility. As a result, white people habitually feel at home or at ease, while people of color are more likely to feel uneasy, anxious, or insecure. Ahmed (2007) rightly notes that those who are stopped by police, singled out at the border, or surveilled in shops also may become defensive: "we assume a defensive posture as we 'wait' for the line of racism to take our rights of passage away" (163). The feelings of unease and negation often experienced by people of color, of being stopped or feeling out of place, comprise a set of affective habits that are generated by way of a broad array of elements, which include police practices, beauty ideals, workplace bans on dreadlocks, and immigration practices such as infinite detention. Resulting feelings of fear or shame are part of what West (1994) describes as a project of degrading Black and Brown bodies in order to control them (85).

Another element that contributes to the affective privilege of whites is "the fundamental opacity of Black feeling in societies shaped by ongoing White supremacy" (Zembylas 2021, 3). The invalidation of the emotional expressions of Black people (e.g., anger about police brutality) operates in conjunction with the normalizing and privileging of the emotions of white people (e.g., fear of rioting) to perpetuate racial domination. What Hong (2020) calls 'minor feelings' are the "difficult" emotions of marginalized people, e.g., anger, which are in tension with the desires and expectations of those in the dominant group. When the affective experiences of non-white people are viewed as excessive or inappropriate, or repeatedly dismissed as unintelligible or unworthy of concern, this not only provokes further negative feelings on their part, but also helps white subjects to avoid feelings of distress.

All these elements contribute to patternings, routings, and conductions of affect (Hook 2005) whereby feelings are channeled in recurrent and repeatable ways (Slaby et al. 2019, 5), so as to sustain white domination. As affective dynamics unfold, there is a "bringing to life" of the sedimented past. This is because affective arrangements and milieus have an important *normative dimension*: there are expectations and rules embodied in these affective relations that mold the individuals involved. Subjects become part of these affective formations and take on particular affective roles by way of *habituation.* Schuetze (2021) introduces the example of a family gathering at Christmas. As each family member becomes part of the network of affective relations and begins to act according to a role, there are subtle forms of reciprocal affective interplay that produce and enforce specific modes of being. The affective arrangement of the Christmas dinner therefore can be understood as a "conservation device" (Slaby et al., 2019, 9) in which the family history of interaction and collective habituation of the family members have become sedimented. As a result, the individuals affectively relate to each other in a particular way without being forced to do so and often without even noticing they have adopted that orientation.

Similarly, there are affective roles and "whitely scripts" (Bailey 1998) that are internalized at an early age and become embedded in people's language, bodily reactions, feelings, and behaviors. As in the case of the family gathering, these affective roles vary depending on an individual's social positionality, e.g., their gender and sexual orientation.

[2] This ad, produced by supporters of George H.W. Bush, aired during his presidential campaign against Michael Dukakis in 1988. Horton, a Black man, was convicted of murder and then raped a white woman and stabbed her partner while furloughed from prison under a Massachusetts program in place when Dukakis was governor. The ad features an off-screen narrator telling the story of Horton's crimes together with a menacing mug shot of Horton. The narrator notes that Bush supports the death penalty and concludes with the tag line "Weekend prison passes, Dukakis on crime."

The ongoing affectedness that takes place within the arrangement modulates the affective habits of the participants and shapes their social and bodily orientation. Examples of these scripts include being nervous around people of color, avoiding eye contact, or adopting closed, uncomfortable postures in their presence. Along these lines, Yancy describes “acting whitely” as “a form of orientation that comes replete with a set of sensibilities that unconsciously/ pre-reflectively position or configure the white self vis-à-vis the non-white self” (2008, 865). Returning to the elevator example, the white woman plays the role of the “at-risk white woman” as she encounters the “dangerous Black man.” Enacting this role consists largely of a particular affective orientation and sensibility that centers around feelings of fear, unease, and distrust. The momentary unfolding of this scene of relational affect dynamics links together past, present, and future, and can be understood as a “differential re-enactment of past processes” (Slaby et al. 2019, 8).

However, to understand the way in which affect dynamics are molded over the course of acculturation and socialization, we need to look beyond any single affective arrangement and investigate the affective milieu that forms the broader backdrop for subjects’ affective lives. A person’s “habitualized affective engagements with her socio-material surroundings” shape their entire mode of being, not only in idiosyncratic and demarcated situations, but in the social world more generally (Schuetze 2021, 2). Because participants are habituated according to the affective requirements and possibilities of an established milieu, they learn how to express and enact affectivity in line with its demands. In some cases, children even receive explicit instructions that contribute to racist habits of feeling. For example, if a white child is repeatedly told, “you say ‘colored woman’ and ‘white lady’—never a ‘colored lady’”) (Bailey 1998, 35), they are likely to develop feelings of aversion to women of color. However, in many cases these lessons are unspoken. White children pick up on the avoidance of eye contact, the nervousness, and the spatial layout of where people sit, and all these affectively charged elements help to cultivate habits of feeling. By way of emotional resonance and mimicry, they learn to feel “at ease in white worlds where [they] are fluent speakers, where [they] know and can safely animate whitely scripts, where people of color are out of [their] line of vision, and where [their] racial identity is not at risk” (Bailey 1998, 40).

People develop associated habits partly because there is a sense in which it contributes to their flourishing, as members of a culture. Along these lines, MacMullan maintains that habits “become sedimented in a person’s behavior because they enable him to find equilibrium within the surrounding environment” (2009, 76). For a white child growing up in a racist society, finding equilibrium is partly a matter of exhibiting the “proper” sort of affective orientation. Customary feeling patterns tend to persist because each generation is brought up under the affective milieu established by the previous generation, and therefore acquires its set of affective routines and habits. And although these patterns are partly stimulated, arranged, and orchestrated by the overarching formation of white supremacy, they also arrange themselves in processes of creative adaptation. Note, for example, the habitual tendency of whiteness to project itself as its own alibi: “Whites have built anti-racist understandings that construct the racist as always someone else, the problem residing elsewhere in other Whites” (Leonardo and Zembylas 2013, 151). This allows them to maintain their distance from people of color without having these affective routines disrupted by feelings of guilt or remorse.

The organicist notion of habit helps to shed the light on the development and maintenance of the characteristic patterns of affecting and being affected that emerge within the milieu of white supremacy. Such habits develop via repeated enactment, become sedimented in the body in the form of neurobiological patterns associated with emotion-activation, expressivity, and response, and help to constitute a subject’s particular bodily-affective style and overall attunement to the world. To understand affective dynamics as habitual is to recognize the way in which they become second nature, unthinking, repetitive, and routine. Once recurring, repeatable patterns of affective engagement get engrained in the body, they become more resistant to change; there are “sedimented remainders [of affectivity] that infuse, burden, and potentially suffocate ongoing comportment” (Slaby 2017, 19).

Viewing white supremacy as an affective milieu also helps to make sense of why efforts to put white supremacy back on track (after anti-racist efforts have gained a foothold) frequently make an appeal to people’s emotions, in particular white people’s feelings of fear or resentment. It is quite striking, in fact, the way that white supremacy in the U.S. has adapted and reorganized itself over time, with new elements helping to sustain familiar patterns of feeling and interaction. Hartman (2016) maintains that the threat of violence and premature death that “hangs over the head of a population that remains the target of the state’s militarized violence” is a continuation of the threat Black subjects encountered on slave slips in the 18th century (209). Recent efforts to challenge police brutality have been met with increased political and media discussion of “thugs,” “mobs,” “rioters,” and the need to “restore law and order” and “protect the suburbs.” Such discourse provokes fear of the “Black criminal” (or the Black protestor) and can be understood as an effort to sustain familiar affective routines.

5 Affective Milieus as Cognitive Habitats

Because affective habits are sedimented in the body, they are much more immediate than thought. To understand the workings of white supremacy, we need to examine immediate, moment-by-moment experiences, with their accumulation of small interactions in everyday life (Lee 2005, 86). Still, it is important to acknowledge that the channeling and modulation of affect that occurs within affective arrangements and affective milieus is also, simultaneously, a channeling and modulation of cognition. That is, by cultivating particular habits of feeling and patterns of affective relationality, these milieus also shape how subjects interpret, perceive, and understand their surroundings. In large part, this is because affective habits contribute to customary modes of racialized perception, whereby some bodies are viewed as superior and others as inferior.

Elsewhere, I have argued that habits of feeling help to constitute patterns of attention whereby some aspects of one's surroundings become salient and take on felt importance (Maiese 2014). Bodily-affective habits that develop within the affective milieu of white supremacy thereby serve as a sort of "sounding board" (Ratcliffe 2005, 188) that structures someone's orientation toward the world and allows them to focus their attention on what they care about. What affects the subject arouses bodily feelings, what is experienced *matters* in some way or another, and the very way in which the world is disclosed to the subject is shaped and contoured by these bodily feelings. Patterns of bodily sensitivity and responsivity comprise what an embodied subject *feels to be important* and thereby shape how they gauge the significance of people, objects, and events in their surroundings. Thus, habits of feeling function as the lenses through which subjects perceive and interpret their world and help to comprise the point of view from which they construe meaning.

There is good reason to think that racialized perception, in particular, is structured by our bodily and lived concerns (Ngo 2016, 847). Racism in the form of habitual perception and bodily response includes, for example, suspicious surveilling in shops, holding on tightly to one's handbag, and constricted breathing when confronted with the Black male body (Ngo 2016). In these cases, feelings of fear highlight specific considerations as salient and thereby inform both what is noticed and how things are interpreted. It is in and through her feelings of fear, for example, that the white woman on the elevator constitutes the Black man as "Other, marginal, ersatz, strange, native, inferior, uncivilized, ugly" (Yancy 2008, 846). Hook (2005) further notes how "proof of affect" can be used as evidence of the "reality" that such feelings help to construct: "the proof that black men are violent is in my fear of them" (93). Insofar as racialized perception often operates at a pre-reflective bodily level, habitual ways of thinking and habitual ways of feeling are not truly separable. Affect not only modulates cognitive processes, but also can serve as a kind of scaffolding for various judgments insofar as it selectively attunes subjects to specific considerations and lends them valence.

Notably, the affective milieu of white supremacy is partly a matter of affects that do not get generated or transmitted, so that some things that *should* be felt remain unnoticed or neglected. This obscuring or occluding of affectivity is, simultaneously, an obscuring of facts and considerations that should stand out as especially salient. Slaby (2017) notes how established presentations of reality, whether in the mainstream media or dominant political discourse, help to frame some humans lives as proper targets of emotions such as grief, empathy, guilt, or shame; however, not all human lives receive this same emotional attention. In cases of violent conflict, victims on the "other side" tend to be placed outside the official frame of grievability (Slaby 2017, 23). Consider, for example, the lack of grief on the part of many U.S. citizens in response to civilian deaths in Iraq during the 21st century. And after George Floyd's death, many people became affectively preoccupied with rioting and looting; feelings of empathy and grief for Floyd and his family were muted or absent. Habits of *unfeeling* render subjects unresponsive to relevant considerations and result in significant omissions from discourse and public representations. These kinds of affective gaps are central to the affective milieu of white supremacy.

Conceptualizing the intertwinement of affectivity and cognition in terms of habit helps to shed light on how persistent affective habits can help to generate and sustain intransigent thinking patterns. Ideally, habits constitute a situation-sensitive, flexible, and adjustable ability to engage with the world that allows subjects to act intelligently. However, habits can lose their "residue of dynamic criticality" and begin to operate more like unthinking, "unchangeable automatisms" (Di Paolo et al. 2017, 102) that make it difficult for subjects to see and feel otherwise. If intransigent thinking patterns and inflexible affective habits are enacted even under circumstances that appear to call for a different mode of engagement, this may signify narrow-mindedness and a failure to be responsive to relevant considerations. Along these lines, Al-Saji (2014) describes racializing affects as rigid, frozen, and repetitive, so that past feeling patterns are "congealed as schema" and future responses are "projected and mapped in advance based on the ossified schemas of the past" (141). Racializing affect also has a kind of temporal immobility: "there is a lack of fluidity or becoming to racializing affect, a totalizing sense of completeness or absorption" (142), and a lack of openness to other affective responses. Deeply engrained affective habits

thereby obscure the workings of oppression and white privilege, making it difficult for people to gauge nuance and engage flexibly with their surroundings.

Returning to the elevator example, the perception and interpretation of Black men as dangerous is routinized through the repeated enactment of a particular set of affective habits so that eventually, it is not possible for this woman to see otherwise: "habitual ways of seeing may fail to engender a genuine openness and receptivity to others as they are" (Ngo 2016, 859). As a result, the body of the Black man is viewed in and through the affective habits associated with the affective milieu of white supremacy and cannot be seen otherwise. These overly rigid habits can be understood as "encrusted bodily ways of engaging-in-the-world" (Yancy 2008, 863) that help to generate and sustain cognitively false beliefs. Via such affective habits, the white woman's "knowledge" that the black man is threatening operates primarily on a non-cognitive, bodily level, guided and sustained by her tensed, knotted stomach, constricted breathing, and even her levels of hormone production (Sullivan 2014). Such habits breathe life into racist discourse (Ngo 2016, 853) and provide a backdrop for perception and interpretation.

6 Conclusions

Insofar as racialized perception is comprised significantly by bodily habits, white supremacy often is sustained more by way of affectivity than by explicit beliefs. Such orientations often remain invisible precisely because they are a matter of "gut reactions" rather than conscious decisions or choices (Sullivan 2014, 593). However, it would be a huge mistake to suppose that once they become sedimented, affective habits are fixed and unchangeable; on the contrary, insofar as they are held in the body in a continuous and ongoing way, they are both active and continually activated (Ngo 2016, 864), and open to being activated differently. To change subjects' habits of feeling, we need to destabilize the overarching affective milieu in which affectivity is channeled, routed, and molded. Since whites and Blacks inhabit fundamentally different experiential and affective worlds, these experiential and affective worlds need to be interrogated and disrupted. This can be accomplished partly via the removal or displacement of "oppressive things" (e.g., the removal of Confederate statues), or through the triggering of certain kinds of emotional experience. For example, feelings of discomfort when confronted with one's own privilege or racial bias can function as a point of departure to challenge dominant beliefs and normative practices that sustain social inequities (Zembylas 2018, 93).

Thus, the end of white domination will require not just changes to discourse and explicit beliefs, but also a revamping of the societal-wide affective milieu that molds subjects' habitual patterns of affective sensitivity and response. White people, in particular, need to uncover ways to transform their sedimented patterns of affective engagement and cultivate new affective habits.

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