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IMPLICIT PREJUDICE AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR HOW

COMMUNITIES SHOULD RESPOND TO RACIAL INJUSTICES

By

Harry Kleinberg Kainen

May 2014

Abstract

In the spring of 2013, a racially controversial incident occurred on the Washington University Campus. The incident raised questions about the racial tolerance of the university community as well as exactly who should be held responsible for the injustice. Most importantly, the community's response to the incident exemplified how a community with the potential for substantial collective action can fail to mobilize and improve when they are called upon to do so. This paper examines recent psychological research that studies the existence of subconscious racial prejudices in order to examine its implications in community responses to racial injustices. Results show that the majority of people hold unconscious prejudiced attitudes and are unaware of it, and that these attitudes can lead to discriminatory behavior. This suggests that when a racial injustice occurs in a community, the perpetrators may have been influenced by implicit prejudices held by the communities to which they belong. While literature on structural injustice considers how communities are responsible for the actions of those within them, they are insufficient to deal with issues of race, as they do not account for human reactions to such a sensitive subject. The Community System of Responsibility is introduced as a system that assigns responsibility to community members in a way that is practical in its expectations of individuals and that motivates community progress. Rather than searching for others to accuse, individuals following the community system look inward at consequences of their own behavior and the behavior of the communities to which they belong.

Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I would like to thank my primary advisory Professor Hayward for her assistance and patience in guiding evolution of my ideas in this process. I would also like to thank Professor Schechter for raising important questions that provided me with useful critiques to improve my work, as well as Kimberly Mount for her advice and assistance in keeping my progress on schedule. Special thanks should also be given to Dr. Mustakeem for inspiring my interest in racial prejudice, my sister Sophie Kainen for leading by example and encouraging me to write a thesis, my parents for their everlasting support, and all of my friends for the many stimulating conversations that motivated this project.

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"Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere."

-Martin Luther King, Jr.

Introduction

In the spring of 2013 at Washington University a group of white male students, on a scavenger hunt as a part of their fraternity pledging, used the n-word while performing a rap song in front of a group of African American students. In the perspective of the perpetrators, the incident was a simple slip of the tongue, a lapse of judgment where the rapper forgot to censor himself. However, to the African American students present the incident felt like a purposeful and public expression of racism. While the exact details of what occurred are disputed, the reactions when the story went public were extreme and widely varied. Calls for discussions about inclusion and diversity on campus were muffled by arguments over who was to blame. Some blamed the students directly involved, some blamed the Greek organization, and others blamed the African American community for alleging racism where none existed. Controversial articles published by the campus newspaper only fueled the fire. Comments on the article included one alumnus stating, "This is 2013. These [fraternity] kids are not racist. Rather than worrying so much about 'sensitivity,' Wash U needs to be teaching its students to be a bit more rational.[1]" Another student called Wash U "a culture that allows [discrimination] and deems it to be ok.[2]" The comment sections of the newspaper's website turned into a battleground where students argued about whether white people could ever understand a black person's accusation of racism or whether the black students were, in fact, being racist themselves for calling the incident a racist one just because the students involved were white.

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[1] See comments in: "SAE Suspended after Racial Slur in Pledge Activity." *Student Life*.

[2] See comments in: Student Life. *SAE Suspended after Racial Slur in Pledge Activity.*

In this thesis, the principal questions to be answered are: "To what degree are individuals responsible for racist behavior, and how can we eliminate or minimize such behavior? Who deserves to be held responsible for injustices that occur within a community, and how can responsibility be distributed in a way that motivates progress towards racial tolerance?" Drawing on the Implicit Association Test, which measures implicit racial bias, and on the philosophical literature on collective responsibility, I argue for assigning forward-looking responsibility to all individuals within communities involved in an injustice, while also distributing responsibility in a fair way that takes into account each individual's level of involvement and communal membership.

I begin, in the first section, with a summary of the Implicit Association Test results and the implications for how individuals measure their own prejudices and how those prejudices influence their behavior. Next, I argue that the IAT results demonstrate that the currently used systems for distributing collective responsibility to individuals are not effective when considering injustices involving implicit racial prejudice, as they are not sensitive to human reactions. I use the work of Iris Young, a political theorist, to exemplify which aspects of the current systems need to be reexamined. I then introduce my own system, the Community System of Responsibility, as a practical system that is designed to distribute responsibility in a way that promotes progress within communities and minimizes detrimental reactions like the ones at Washington University. Finally, I conclude by mapping out the practical implications of the system and how it can be adopted into everyday life.

Though the rules are presented in a detailed and official manner so that the system can be understood, the Community System is meant to serve as a set of rules of

thumb that individuals should adhere to when their community is responding to an injustice. The importance of the Community System lies not in the exact amount of responsibility that is distributed to each individual, but rather the mentality with which individuals respond to injustices within their own communities and consider injustices in other communities. Even if some readers are not convinced of the accuracy with which the Community System distributes responsibility, this thesis is still successful if it motivates readers to take the IAT and consider how the findings change the way they should examine their own roles in injustices within their communities.

Implicit Prejudice and its Implications

Psychologists Anthony Greenwald and Mahzarin Banaji wrote the book *Blindspot* as a means of convincing readers to rethink their own prejudices and how those prejudices influence behavior.[3] Through their research Greenwald and Banaji had discovered that much of the prejudice that exists within people is beyond their consciousness, and that behavior can be affected just as much from implicit attitudes as explicit ones. They started Project Implicit in order to "foster dissemination and application of implicit social cognition[4]" and titled their book *Blindspot* to represent the prejudice most individuals have that they are unable to notice in their everyday lives. The research is focused on a test called the Implicit Association Test that could measure one's implicit biases: that is, biases that may not be conscious to those who hold them. This test works by showing images one by one and asking an individual to categorize it in one of two groups. For instance, someone could be shown different flowers and insects and asked to press one button if the image were of a flower and another if it were of an insect. In the Implicit Association Test (IAT), images then are mixed with words that the individual is also asked to place into the pleasant or unpleasant category.[5] For instance, after viewing a flower, a subject could be given the word "poison," and then shown another flower or an insect. The inclusion of two different sets of categories is an integral part of the IAT, because it allows the psychologists to view how the previous categorization of either pleasant or unpleasant affects the time taken to answer the next

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[3] Banaji, Mahzarin R., and Anthony G. Greenwald. *Blindspot: Hidden Biases of Good People*. New York: Delacorte, 2013. Print.

[4] *Project Implicit.* https://www.projectimplicit.net/about.html

[5] Banaji and Greenwald. *Blindspot*. 34

question. For example, if one button is to be pressed for both the flower group and the pleasant group, individuals will tend to be faster to complete the test because people usually associate flowers with pleasant things. If subjects are given a button to press for both flowers and unpleasant, they will tend to take longer to press the correct button because that association is unnatural to them.[6] By intertwining both the word tasks and the image tasks, Banaji and Greenwald have been able to measure the strength of associations between groups (such as flower and pleasant).

Greenwald and Banaji took this structure and created an IAT to measure racial associations. The pictures they used were either of African Americans or European Americans, and they were again separated by pleasant or unpleasant words. Each individual was given the test twice (though the specific pictures and words were different). In the first test button A was to be pressed for both a white face and a pleasant word and button B was to be pressed for both a black face and an unpleasant word. In the second test button A was to be pressed for both a white face and an **unpleasant** word, and B was a black face and a **pleasant** word.[7] If the subject was faster completing the first test than the second, Banaji and Greenwald would conclude that s/he more closely associated white faces to pleasant words, if the times were not statistically different the subject would associate both groups to pleasant words equally, and if the subject was faster completing the second test s/he would more closely associate black faces to pleasant words.

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[6] Banaji and Greenwald. *Blindspot*. 38

[7] Banaji and Greenwald. *Blindspot*. 42

The Race IAT was Banaji and Greenwald's attempt to bring conclusive evidence to the debate over whether or not we have reached a 'post-racial society' where racism only exists in a small fraction of Americans. While it may be true that surveys about racial attitudes show that a steadily decline percentage of Americans report being racially prejudiced, Banaji and Greenwald, along with many others, believe that, "rather than disappearing, Americans' race prejudices have merely metamorphosed into harder-to-see forms," and that "these evolved forms of prejudice may remain potent as sources of race discrimination.[8]" While studies do show that African Americans have inferior "earnings, education, housing, employment, status in the criminal justice system, and health,[9]" that does not necessarily mean that they were not given enough opportunities and could possibly be attributed to a difference of ability between blacks and whites in taking advantage of those opportunities. However, studies have found that the disparities mentioned can at least partially be attributed to racial discrimination. For instance, African Americans are much more likely to be searched when pulled over than whites, and African American candidates are less likely to be given jobs or real estate even when controlling for other attributes such as income, age, and occupation.[10] The Race IAT was created to prove that the prejudices that people claim cause these inequalities actually exist, even if they are not easily apparent.

The results of the Race IAT were strong, finding that 75 percent of subjects associated white faces more closely to pleasant words, or in other words showed

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[8] Banaji and Greenwald. *Blindspot*. 170.

[9] Banaji and Greenwald. *Blindspot*. 190.

[10] Banaji and Greenwald. *Blindspot*. 194-200.

"automatic white preference.[11]" Not only were the majority of people who took the IAT found to have unconscious preference for whites over blacks, but they also explicitly denied having these feelings. While this was an astonishing figure, as "automatic white preference" had never been measured before it was still unknown what implications the preference had on explicit behavior. Since then psychologists have been able to prove that that the Race IAT results do, in fact, predict racial discrimination. Psychologists have been able to prove that the white preference measured by the IAT can predict prejudiced behavior such as favoring whites in hiring situations, being friendlier to whites in interviews, and even recommending optimal treatment more often to whites in an emergency room than minorities.[12] Corell, et. al.'s "The Influence of Stereotypes on Decisions to Shoot" also found that when controlling a weapon in a hostile videogame simulation, those with higher implicit biases towards African Americans were more likely to shoot them than members of other racial groups.[13] A meta-analysis of similar studies found a correlation of .24, a medium strength correlation, between the Race IAT and discriminatory behavior.[14] The discriminatory behavior predicted by the Race IAT does not involve any obvious discrimination, but rather instances where the prejudice cannot be detected without knowing where to look. In this way the Race IAT can uncover the prejudices that many think have disappeared completely.

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[11] Banaji and Greenwald. *Blindspot*. 47.

[12] Banaji and Greenwald. *Blindspot*. 48-49.

[13] Correll, Joshua, et al. "The influence of stereotypes on decisions to shoot." *European Journal of Social Psychology* 37.6 (2007): 1102-1117.

[14] Banaji and Greenwald. *Blindspot*. 50.

It is important to clarify that this test is showing *implicit* associations; if you ask a subject whether they associate a specific race more closely to pleasant words they might give an answer completely different from the results of the IAT test, and they would not necessarily be lying. The reflective process is how we make decisions we are conscious of, such as whether we want to see a movie or whether we like Apple computers more than Windows. The automatic process, on the other hand, controls our instinctive behavior, such as flinching when a fast-moving object comes towards you. While the subject's explicit answer represents their reflective attitude, the IAT test is measuring their automatic associations. As the IAT test is given such a fast pace, there is not enough time to rely on reflective processes, and subjects must instead use their automatic systems. The reason this distinction is important and the reason the IAT test is necessary is that our reflective and automatic attitudes can often be at odds with each other. This is called disassociation, "the occurrence, in one and the same mind, of mutually inconsistent ideas that remain isolated from one another.[15]" Even if inconsistent, both systems are influential to our behavior in different situations. As simple interviews could only measure reflective attitudes, something like the IAT was necessary to measure the other half.

The IAT has shown strong associations between black faces and other things besides unpleasantness. For instance, Banaji and Greenwald found a strong association between black faces and weapons when replacing pleasant or unpleasant words with weapons or harmless objects.[16] What was most surprising was that even African

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[15] Banaji and Greenwald. *Blindspot*. 58.

[16] Banaji and Greenwald. *Blindspot*. 105.

American subjects showed an association between black faces and weapons, though it was less pronounced than in white subjects. This association of black faces and danger affects black Americans on a daily basis, when they enter a store, pass a white person on the street, or try and hail a taxi. While discrimination in daily interactions such as these is troubling, the association is most dangerous when concerning law enforcement. In 1999, four plainclothes police officers in New York City approached Amadou Diallo, a black immigrant who could not speak English, mistaking him for a serial rapist they were looking for. Diallo, not understanding what the officers were saying, reached for his wallet to show them identification. One police officer mistook Diallo's action and yelled "gun," and the four police officers proceeded to fire 19 bullets into the unarmed man.[17] There is no way to know whether Diallo's race influenced the behavior of the police officers, but since "black men carrying harmless objects such as cell phones are indeed more likely to be shot at mistakenly,[18]" it is possible that had Diallo been a member of a race that was not as strongly associated with violence and weapons the encounter would have ended differently. If true, it would be important for the police to know that their instinct may be affected by the race of the suspect they are pursuing.

Implicit prejudice can have devastating effects not only on specific encounters, but also on the balance of racial equality. Greenwald and Banaji have deemed the area in which implicit prejudice is most dangerous as "hidden discrimination.[19]" It is hidden because rather than African Americans being harmed in anyway, white Americans are

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[17] "Amadou Diallo." *NYTimes.com*. New York Times, n.d. Web.

[18] Banaji and Greenwald. *Blindspot*. 170.

[19] Banaji and Greenwald. *Blindspot*. 142.

being helped. Many studies done show that African Americans regularly receive less help than whites, which "[leaves] them without advantages that were received by the White Americans who were, by contrast, helped.[20]" For example, if a manager is hiring a new assistant, they will be more likely to hire someone they with which they share more in common. As upper-level employees such as managers are more likely to be white, it is likely that the person hired will be a white person. This type of discrimination is particularly dangerous because there is no obvious villain. The person hiring is doing nothing wrong by hiring a qualified applicant, and the person being hired is doing nothing wrong by accepting the job. What makes it worse is that neither the manager favoring the white applicant, the white applicant being hired, nor the qualified black applicants not being hired are aware of the existence of any discrimination in the hiring process.

Aversive racists are defined as, "white Americans who describe themselves as egalitarian but, nevertheless, display subtle forms of race discrimination.[21]" Since they, like the manager, do not realize their own prejudice, it is nearly impossible to convince them of the racial inequality that results from their behavior. If they are not convinced of their prejudices, they will not attempt to get rid of them and the prejudices will continue to exist. Banaji and Greenwald believe the in-group favoritism that aversive racists display "may be the largest contributing factor to the relative disadvantages experienced by black Americans.[22]" This group is not a small one; forty percent of those who take the

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[20] Banaji and Greenwald. *Blindspot.* 142.

[21] Banaji and Greenwald. *Blindspot.* 158.

[22] Banaji and Greenwald. *Blindspot.* 162.

IAT show explicitly egalitarian views but have automatic white preference.[23] As whites have more opportunities to help, whites will continue to receive assistance, and without recognizing this and attempting the level the playing field racial inequality will only continue to grow.

In an ideal world individuals would be required to take the IAT and read about what their results mean in order to raise awareness of the continued prevalence of racial prejudice. The problem is that people will not be willing to learn about the influence prejudice can play in everyday life without first accepting that prejudice *does* influence their own lives, which has been shown to be very difficult. Many people deny the validity of the IAT because they would rather the test not work than have to accept that prejudices exist in their mind that are inconsistent with their explicit beliefs. Recent racially charged controversies such as the Trayvon Martin murder,[24] the more recent "black party" held by a fraternity at Arizona State University on MLK day,[25] or the incident at Washington University all resulted in both accusations and denials of racism. Similar to the Washington University article comments, in the comments of the noted Arizona State article there are claims that the environment in Arizona State is prejudiced as well as responses that say the behavior of these few students is completely unrelated to the

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[23] Banaji and Greenwald. *Blindspot.* 158.

[24] Kuo, Vivian. "Florida Teen's Shooting by Watchman Questioned." *CNN.* Cable News Network, 13 Mar. 2012. Web.

[25] "ASU Fraternity Under Scrutiny for MLK Day Party." *ABC News.* ABC News Network, 22 Jan. 2014. Web.

campus environment or that the party itself was not an instance of racism.[26] While it is

impossible to prove that Trayvon Martin's murder was racially motivated, that the "black

party" at ASU was representative of an intolerant atmosphere, or that the Washington

University students' behavior was influenced by racial prejudice, the prevalence of

prejudiced attitudes discovered by the IAT supports the theory that the likelihood is much

higher than most believe.

      Though the Race IAT is a crucial step to helping people come to terms with their

own biases, it does not single handedly bring implicit prejudice into consciousness. Even

with a test that has been shown to measure automatic white preference and other studies

have shown that the preferences are correlated with discriminatory behavior, people are

still skeptical about the claim or reluctant to accept that prejudice exists in their minds

when they see no evidence of it and explicitly denounce it. "It is hard for human beings,

endowed with the capacity for conscious thought, to accept that the beliefs and

preferences that so define us can be shaped by forces outside our awareness,[27]" and this is

especially true when their conscious thought is contradictory to their unconscious

attitudes. People come into contact with stereotypes all around them, whether it is a joke

made by a co-worker or images of black criminals on the news, but in a time period

where discrimination is publically condemned people convince themselves that they have

the ability to keep cultural surroundings from affecting them. However, it is up to each

individual to come to terms with the fact that they cannot prevent their attitudes being

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[26] See comments in: "ASU Fraternity Under Scrutiny for MLK Day Party." *ABC News*.
ABC News Network, 22 Jan. 2014. Web.

[27] Banaji and Greenwald. *Blindspot.* 61.

influenced by their surroundings, and accept that their prejudices are weaknesses that have to be confronted.

The creators of the Race IAT understand that as helpful as the IAT is, "it is at least partly up to each individual to use that knowledge to move beyond dismay and to find ways to understand hidden biases and, if desired, to neutralize them before they translate into behavior.[28]" The problem with implicit prejudice is that people are often unaware that their behavior has any influence on their surroundings at all. According to Larry May, the "response of members of…communities to racially motivated violence is often to say that they do not share in responsibility for these events since they have played no causal role in the incidents" and that "when people do not feel responsible at all (for having played necessary but minor roles in the harm or for merely increasing the likelihood that the harm would occur), they will generally not seek to change their behavior.[29]" If the community members were conscious of the implicit biases they might hold and how those biases affect behavior, they would be more likely to accept responsibility for the events and seek to change their behavior. Bringing these automatic attitudes into conscious awareness will give people the opportunity to consider how these attitudes come to exist and how they influence behavior. However, that will only happen if we can create an environment that encourages people to face and acknowledge their prejudices without feeling so ashamed or embarrassed that they refuse to confront them.

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[28] Banaji and Greenwald. *Blindspot.* 70.

[29] May, Larry. *Sharing Responsibility*. Chicago: University of Chicago, 1996. 37. Print.

Collective Responsibility for Racial Injustices

In his book *Sharing Responsibility*, Larry May includes a quote in which a university president responds to a cross burning at his school. "The recent cross-burning incident at the Black Cultural Center was outrageous and deplorable," the president says, "It brings shame to the responsible person, but we must not allow it to bring shame to our community[30]" This quote is representative of the issues that arise when considering collective responsibility. While it was one or a group of individuals who committed the act of cross burning, some argue that we must also consider the environment and whether the university community contributed to the hateful attitudes that led to the injustice or made them feel comfortable to commit such an act and able to get away with it. Assuming that the perpetrators were not born with inherent prejudices, they must have been learned, and the university community could have been involved. However, in this case the leader of the community, who may be the best positioned individual to stop something of this nature from happening, is denying any portion of responsibility and telling other community members to do the same. It sends a message to everyone else in the community that they do not need to feel guilty about the incident.

Do you assign responsibility for the burning to the whole university, or just those directly involved? Could students who did not have a hand in the cross burning have contributed to the event taking place? When an injustice occurs within a society, there tend to be three different requirements in the punishment in order to satisfy the community members. The victims must be compensated for the harm they suffered, the perpetrators must be punished, and others must be deterred from committing an injustice

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[30] May. *Sharing Responsibility*. 36.

in the future. The current justice system used in the United States is designed for the first two requirements to satisfy the third. When a crime occurs, the victims can pursue criminal charges to punish the perpetrators as well as sue for damages. The negative outcomes of these cases are meant to deter others that consider committing the same crimes from doing so, or else they suffer the same consequences. However, this model assumes that the responsibility for the injustice lies solely in the perpetrators. If others who were not held accountable by the legal system somehow influenced the perpetrators, they would not be deterred from influencing others to do the same.

In the case of racially motivated injustices, it is likely that the racial attitudes were not unique to the perpetrators. Implicit Association research has shown that racially prejudiced attitudes are much more prevalent than expected, but those that hold them are often unaware.[31] It is also common knowledge that individuals acquire their attitudes and values from those with whom they are in contact. Therefore, when there is a racially motivated injustice in a community, it is probable that many members of the community hold similar racial prejudices to those of the perpetrators. If these members are not also held responsible and they are unaware of their own prejudices, then the attitudes will go undiagnosed and untreated, and future community members could be influenced to commit similar injustices. While punishment and compensation may be sufficient to deter others for committing certain crimes, in the case of racial injustices it is likely that the underlying prejudices are not unique to the perpetrators, and that others bare responsibility for those prejudices as well.

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[31] Banaji and Greenwald. *Blindspot*.

Many theorists, such as May, have attempted to create systems of assigning responsibility to those involved in in a similar type of injustice called structural injustice. Iris Young uses a common example in her literature concerning a hypothetical individual named Sandy that is effective in demonstrating what instances of structural injustices are. Sandy has two children and her apartment building is being turned into condominiums, so she has to find another place to live. When Sandy begins looking for apartments, she finds out that the apartments near her job are too expensive and the apartments in the city are too dangerous for her children. The only safe and affordable apartment she can find requires her to get a car in order to drive to work. However, once putting a down payment on the car she finds out that she needs to pay three months' rent in advance. The eviction date is coming up on her current apartment, and she does not have enough money left to pay for more than one months' rent on the new apartment, so Sandy and her two children are now at risk of becoming homeless.[32]

Structural injustices, like injustices due to implicit bias, complicate our traditional understanding of responsibility. While this is not unjust in the traditional sense because no specific agent is purposely violating Sandy's rights, the outcome of the situation is still unfair and undeserved. She did not lose her job, spend her money on nonessential goods, or do anything else that would suggest she is responsible for her current situation. However, there is no other individual who alone bears the responsibility. The landlord who turned Sandy's building into condominiums needed to do so to provide for his own family. The real estate agent who helped Sandy did her best to find Sandy an apartment that fit her needs. The responsibility lies not in any individual but rather in the structure

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[32] Young, I. M. (2003). Political responsibility and structural injustice. *LINDLEY LECTURES*.

of the housing system, hence the term structural injustice. Structural injustices are particularly controversial because the blame cannot be given to one individual, but rather falls on social structures or institutions that include many people. Theorists such as Iris Young and Larry May have realized that conventional models of responsibility do not work for structural injustices. There is not always a responsible agent that can be punished in order to prevent the injustice from occurring again. Structural injustices and injustices due to implicit biases are similar in that they can occur with no malicious intent, and as in the case of structural injustices, injustices due to implicit biases require a model of responsibility that does not simply blame specific agents. Both in structural injustices and injustices due to implicit bias, the issues at hand are not specific to the individuals directly involved but may effect the entire community. However, unlike with structural injustice, theorists have not yet considered how to assign responsibility for injustices due to implicit bias. As the nature of racial prejudice changes in America, demonstrated by the *Blindspot* research, it has become imperative that discussions of collective responsibility turn to instances of racial injustice that result from implicit bias rather than explicit discrimination.[33] In order to come up with a system that is truly practical and not just hypothetically effective on paper, it is important to consider what the IAT results can tell us about what a model of responsibility needs to do in order to be effective in influencing how communities and individuals respond to acts of prejudice.

While traditional literature on collective is valuable when considering severe acts of explicit racial injustice, more contemporary works like that of Iris Young are much more relevant to the issues of structural injustice and racial prejudice that America faces

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[33] Banaji and Greenwald. *Blindspot.*

today. Young acknowledges that when a racial injustice occurs, people are more inclined to search for someone or something to assign blame than to consider a model of responsibility with multiple agents and the role of their own prejudice. Rather than widening the lens to include members of the community who were not perpetrators, communities instead narrow it to a few individuals who can than be banished, absolving the rest of the community of any responsibility for the injustice. The event at Washington University should have created an opportunity to examine the type of community that the university fosters. It instead led to little more than name-calling. If issues of race continue to be followed by efforts to assign blame, then the prejudices and behavior of those indirectly involved will go undiagnosed. Young sees the key to remedying this issue not only in the punishment of the perpetrators of the acts themselves but also in the handling of the reactions. In her book *Responsibility for Justice*, Young not only considers individual reactions to the assigning of responsibility but also focuses on assigning it in a way that motivates future progress, rather than punishing people for past actions.[34]

While the literature on structural injustice cannot be perfectly applied to consequences of implicit biases, it does give guidance on how to consider assigning responsibility for issues that involve a collective in which it is not obvious who should be held responsible. In *Responsibility for Justice,* Iris Young critiques the model most commonly used to assign blame that she calls the liability model. Under the liability model, the goal is to find one agent to absorb the responsibility for an event.[35] This is used in our justice system when we choose whom to charge for a crime and is attractive

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[34] Young, Iris M. *Responsibility for Justice*. New York: Oxford UP, 2013. Print.

[35] Young. *Responsibility for Justice*.

because it absolves all others from being viewed as contributing to the crime. For example, Arizona State will likely discipline the perpetrators of the MLK party, but will not consider disciplining students or administrators who did not participate but may have tolerated or even encouraged expressions of racial discrimination on campus. The most detrimental result of using this model is that the individuals and structures that contribute indirectly to the occurrence of a condemned action are forgotten, and all the blame is given to the agent most closely related to the event. People are motivated to use this model because by assigning blame to those directly involved, everyone else is absolved. In the words of Larry May, "if we focus only on personal responsibility for what we fully control, proper attention is not given to the fact that many people contribute indirectly to a harm, or that many people have the same attitudes and dispositions as the people who cause harm.[36]" In regards to extreme injustices, such as hate crimes or systematic explicit discrimination, it is necessary to use a liability model to remove those directly responsible from greater society in order to limit their influence and make sure they do not repeat themselves. It would also be unfair for victims of discrimination not to receive restitution for the damages to their lives, which requires certain people to be held accountable. However, when considering ways to prevent injustices from repeating themselves in a community, especially injustices that are influenced by implicit attitudes, the liability model is inefficient on its own.

Young believes that, considering the influence environment and cultural surroundings can have on someone's actions and character, it is necessary to create a term that accounts for the role someone plays in an event without necessarily assigning

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[36] May. *Sharing Responsibility*. 38.

blame. Instead of using only the liability model, she advocates for a new model to be

included that she believes is much more beneficial to society. It does not require that a

specific agent is to blame and acknowledges the power of cultural influence over

behavior. In this model, the social connection model, "all who dwell within the structures

must take responsibility for remedying injustices they cause, though none is specifically

liable for the harm in a legal sense.[37]" Instead of assigning blame to few and absolving

the rest as the liability model does, it assigns everyone involved the responsibility to

confront the underlying issues within their community that allowed the injustice to occur.

She calls this responsibility *political responsibility* because those involved are

responsible for entering the political realm to prevent future similar injustices.[38] Political

responsibility, in the words of Young, "is a kind of collective responsibility, and one

where the responsibility borne collectively is not dissolvable to the self-conscious

collaborative acts of individuals.[39]" As the responsibility assigned is meant to prevent

future injustices rather than punish past perpetrators, Young called this model a forward-

looking model.[40] A forward-looking system motivates the entire community to prevent an

injustice from repeating itself. In a backward-looking system, instead of focusing on how

things need to be changed so racial injustices do not occur again, people are more

concerned with whom to assign blame for past events.

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[37] Young. *Responsibility for Justice*. 105.

[38] Young. *Political responsibility and structural injustice*.

[39] Young. *Political responsibility and structural injustice*.

[40] Young. *Responsibility for Justice*. XV.

Young's work is relevant to injustices that concern implicit prejudices because, as with structural injustices, blame and responsibility need to be separated. Modern racism is hidden; it often occurs in subtle ways and can come from people who are not explicitly immoral. A company can systematically hire white applicants over equally qualified black applicants without there being a specific perpetrator and without anyone being consciously aware of it. Individuals are often unaware of their own attitudes and how those attitudes influence their behavior and community. Therefore, it is important to consider the responsibility of all individuals within a community after an injustice occurs, not only the ones directly involved. However, rather than assigning blame to people who were not actively involved in the injustice, Young's system assigns these individuals the responsibility for the wellbeing and progress of their community. Young wants to change holding people responsible from a call for punishment to a chance for people to consider how they can change their surroundings for the better, so that the injustice that occurred will not happen again.

One of the most difficult aspects of a system of assigning responsibility is how to convince members of a community to accept responsibility for injustices in which they are not directly involved. This is primarily due to an effect Juha Raikka, a political theorist, calls the dissociation condition. In this condition someone considers him or herself "free from collective responsibility if s/he disassociates himself from an evil by opposing it.[41]" The disapproval of an evil is sufficient enough for people to absolve themselves of any feelings of personal responsibility and dissociate themselves from the groups responsible for the injustice. In the case of injustices stemming from implicit

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[41] Räikkä, J. (1997). On disassociating oneself from collective responsibility. *Social Theory and Practice*, *23*(1), 93-108.

prejudice or structural injustices, individuals would dissociate themselves by denying either that their community was involved in the injustice or that their actions had any influence over others in their community. However, Banaji and Greenwald's work showed that many people who oppose racial prejudice are still found to hold it. The mere disapproval of an unjust event or practice does not mean individuals do not hold prejudices that could have contributed to it. May believes that individuals do not want to attempt to resolve great tragedies because "to confront them as one's own responsibility means admitting that one's inactivity is connected to these tragedies,[42]" and the dissociation condition explains why there are so many people connected to tragedies who are unwilling to 'confront them as one's own responsibility.'

When accused of being involved with an injustice, many people respond by being defensive and denying the allegations without even considering the possibility that they may have unconsciously influenced others through their own behavior. This tendency has been attributed to an effect called cognitive dissonance, or more specifically the belief disconfirmation paradigm. Cognitive dissonance occurs when people receive information that is inconsistent with their personal beliefs. For instance, someone would experience cognitive dissonance after being raised to believe the biblical story of creation and then being introduced to the theory of evolution. In the belief disconfirmation paradigm, a subcategory of cognitive dissonance, "if the dissonance is not reduced by changing one's belief, the dissonance can lead to misperception or misinterpretation of the information,

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[42] May. *Sharing Responsibility*.105.

rejection or refutation of the information…[43]" The religious person, after learning about the theory of evolution, would either find a reason to discount the theory or would find a way to reconcile it with the story in the bible. In the case of racial prejudice, being accused of holding implicit racial biases or of contributing to a racial injustice would be inconsistent with most people's explicit support of racial equality. Since explicit racial prejudice is not acceptable in modern society, rather than reacting by becoming explicitly prejudiced, people would reject the accusations as false and would be particularly defensive about any mention of their relation to a racial injustice.

While forward-looking systems attempt to hold the community as a whole responsible for the changes necessary to get rid of injustices, the dissociation condition can motivate community members to try and minimize their own responsibility by assigning it to others. Young gives three reasons why it is dangerous for assigning responsibility to lead to such defensiveness among those responsible. The first is that it will lead to people involved playing the "blame game," and accusing others of being more responsible for the injustice while denying or downplaying their own responsibility. The second is that the series of accusations will lead to a division within the community and feelings of mistrust among members, which makes it more difficult to achieve any sort of collective action. The third, and most important reason, is that all of the effort put into figuring out who is to blame will focus the debate on the past, preventing any effort to be made to address the problem in a forward-looking way that examines what can be done better in the future. According to Young, "a spirit of resentment allows those who lay blame to wallow in the past…a more expansive spirit will affirm that equivalence

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[43] Harmon-Jones, Eddie. "A cognitive dissonance theory perspective on persuasion." *The persuasion handbook: Developments in theory and practice* (2002): 99-116.

cannot be found for every harm and that going forward into a transformed future sustains greater power than reinscribing the relationships of the past.[44]" Feelings of shame, guilt, and defensiveness that can lead to dissociation are the most dangerous outcomes of a system of assigning responsibility.

Imagine that a town of 500 people discovers that employers are unconsciously discriminating against minority candidates, and the citizens vote to raise one thousand dollars that will go to educating businesses about ways to increase diversity. Once this has been decided, the town must then figure out where the funds will come from. Citizens will likely argue that the money should come from the businesses themselves, whereas the business may argue that since the discrimination was not purposeful their prejudice is a result of the community they live in and everybody should be asked to contribute. Each person in the town will have a rational argument as to why they did not contribute to the employment discrimination and should pay less than others, and in doing will convince themselves that they do not belong in the group held responsible. Consequences like this highlight the need to consider practical implications and reactions when creating a system of assigning responsibility. When there is a hierarchy of responsibility, people will always try and fight their way to the bottom.

Some theorists believe that feeling ashamed is a good thing. For example, Judith Radzik's approach to collective responsibility relies on feelings of shame as a motivator of positive behavior, leaving it particularly susceptible to detrimental human reactions. Radzik's argument is that members of a group in which other members committed an injustice will feel a 'duty to respond' and will accept association to those accused of

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[44] Young. *Responsibility for Justice*. 115.

being prejudiced and subsequently be motivated to act differently.[45] This duty, Radzik claims, is motivated by the fact that though individuals may not consider being in a group with those directly involved in an injustice to mean that they are also involved, members of the victimized group may think otherwise and would judge them accordingly.[46] However, the aftermath of the controversy at Washington University demonstrates that this does not always happen. In the aftermath of the event, many minority students made the claim that the behavior of white students at Washington University created an environment that makes minority students feel excluded. However, many white students believed that the behavior of a small group of individuals did not represent a problem with their own behavior, and believed that the claims made by the minority students were overstated. In Radzik's system, the treatment of white students by minorities who believe they behave in a prejudiced way should have motivated those white students to change their behavior, but in actuality it only motivated white students to remove themselves from the conversation.

While a society of individuals that hold themselves accountable in this way would most likely be less prejudiced, this is not the way people seem to work. Members of different races assume that they are being viewed a certain way by those not of the same race on a daily basis, and there are certainly racial tensions that would result in Radzik's 'duty to respond.' However, rather than bringing individuals closer to acknowledging their role in injustices, this tends to lead instead to further denial from group members that are closely related to injustices or prejudices in order to absolve oneself of any guilt

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[45] Radzik, L. (2001). Collective responsibility and duties to respond. *Social Theory and Practice*, *27*(3), 455-471.

[46] Radzik. *Collective responsibility and duties to respond.*

or shame, and is in fact detrimental to making any sort of change. In the Washington University community, once white students no longer considered themselves at all responsible for the events, on-campus discussions about diversity and inclusion became one-sided and subsequently unsuccessful. Rather than feeling a 'duty to respond' that motivated positive changes in behavior, the white community responded by dissociating themselves from the group of individuals involved and denying that their behavior was representative of the entire group. Radzik is one of many theorists that take the acknowledgement of one's contribution to injustice for granted, without considering the many ways people can absolve themselves of association to issues that make them uncomfortable.

Young is by no means alone in her belief in a more collective system of responsibility. However, her perspective is unique and refreshing in that it is practical; it considers the likely human reaction to her own and opposing theories. Other systems, such as Larry May's, are primarily concerned with how exactly to assign blame to individuals in a group rather than how collective responsibility can bring about tangible change. While May's views on inaction and collective responsibility are valuable as they endorse a collective view on responsibility within a community, his system fails to consider the possible reactions to confronting one's own contribution to injustice. In *Collective Inaction and Shared Responsibility*, May uses a hierarchical structure to assign responsibility in which after a group member commits an injustice other group members receive more or less responsibility based on their position in the group and their

opportunities to act.[47] This theory fails to consider the dissociation condition and the possibility that individuals will disassociate their positions in the group from any involvement in the injustice in order to minimize their opportunity to act and subsequent received responsibility. No matter how much responsibility May decides should be assigned to someone, it is only useful if that person accepts it. May's own example of the cross burning demonstrates the detrimental consequences of his system. The university president, the individual that May would likely argue has the best opportunity to act against the injustice that occurred in his university, separates the perpetrators from the rest of the community and in doing so absolves the community *including himself* from receiving any part of the blame for the cross burning.[48] If the leader of the community in question is not willing to accept any responsibility, how can other community members be expected to?

While May's style of holding those with the most power most responsible has its advantages, it is important to consider the practical outcome and try to minimize the opportunities for individuals to downplay or deny their own responsibility. Those who minimize their contribution to an injustice by pointing fingers at other 'more responsible' people will likely refuse to accept that their involvement in the community contributed to it and will not be motivated to confront their own prejudices. As shown in the town hypothetical[49], a hierarchical system of assigning responsibility motivates people to downplay their own contributions to an injustice and dissociate their role in the

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[47] May, L. (1990). Symposia Papers: Collective Inaction and Shared Responsibility. *Nous*, *24*(2), 269-277.

[48] See page 14.

[49] See page 20.

community from the injustice as much as possible. If at Washington University all students were motivated to consider how they could help make minority students feel more included in the campus community, rather than denying their involvement and passing the responsibility on to the perpetrators and administration, their collective action would be much more influential than the actions of a few administrative committees that are currently considering the issue and have done little more than send carefully worded emails to the student body. In these situations Young's social connective model is more effective than are models like May's because it attempts to avoid the creation of defensiveness and resentment among those held responsible and maximize the number of individuals who accept their responsibility.

A forward-looking approach to responsibility like that of Iris Young has yet to be widely accepted in collective responsibility literature. Judith Radzik mentions that many critiques of the approach feel it marginalizes the victims of an injustice in *Collective Responsibility and Duties to Respond*.[50] However, this criticism does not carry as much weight when implicit bias or structures are the motivators of the injustice. With structural injustices, compensating the victims does not solve the underlying issues. It would be difficult to find someone to punish for Sandy's injustice, and putting Sandy in a better apartment would not solve the issue that the current housing system does not allow for working class parents to live comfortably. It is the same with implicit bias. The state of racial inequality in America is not as obvious as it once was; racial prejudice does not come exclusively from explicitly racist members of society anymore, and includes subconscious influences to policy and social groups that reinforce disadvantages. In a

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[50] Radzik. *Collective responsibility and duties to respond.*

situation in which an African American applying to a job is one of many people not offered the position that is ultimately given to a less qualified white person, it would not solve the underlying issue of disproportionate minority hiring by fixing that specific instance. It is too idealistic to think progress is just as likely when the victimized communities are left out of the conversation. The work done on the implicit association test has shown how disguised instances of prejudice can be and how difficult it is for people to recognize their part in them when the instances are discovered.[51] In these cases it becomes more important that communities acknowledge the prevalence of acts of prejudice and the fact that well-meaning people can unknowingly contribute to them. No progress can be made towards minimizing prejudice until the prejudice is acknowledged and those involved accept their involvement rather than attempt to focus the blame on one agent. For this reason, a backward-looking model of responsibility that focuses on retribution is detrimental to the potential for progress in the responses to injustices both structural and stemming from implicit prejudice.

Iris Young's work is crucial in that it helps people understand the many different individuals and structures that can contribute to the occurrence of an injustice and explains the problems with relying exclusively on systems of blame. Though she does not mention implicit bias in her work and instead focuses strictly on structural injustices, it is easy to see that Young's arguments are applicable to both. For example, in Iris Young's example Sandy experiences an injustice without any contribution from implicit bias. It is also plausible, though, that in the same situation the real estate agent could have called in a favor to get a more affordable price for Sandy on a certain apartment she was interested

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[51] Banaji and Greenwald. *Blindspot.*

in. Unfortunately, since Sandy was a black single mother, the agent was subconsciously less motivated to go out of her way than if Sandy was a white married woman with a more traditional family and the thought never came to mind. In that case, it would have been both structural influence and implicit bias that kept Sandy from finding an apartment that fit her needs. However, while Iris Young helped pave the way for an effective system of assigning responsibility by introducing political responsibility, she does not address exactly how this new perspective on responsibility effects the individuals involved. In order for individuals to take this information and change their behavior in a way that helps improve their communities, there needs to be concrete instructions dictating how responsibility is to be divided among individuals and what that responsibility means. By creating a specific system that assigns forward-looking responsibility to all individuals within communities involved in an injustice, and distributes responsibility in a fair way that takes into account both the involvement of individuals and the communities to which they belong, individuals will be able to respond to both types of injustices in a practical and effective manner.

During her argument, Judith Radzik makes the assumption that "our attitudes are the product of habits of thought and action that are, at least most of the time, within our control.[52]" Unfortunately, with injustices that stem from implicit prejudices that assumption cannot be made. Once individuals are aware of their implicit attitudes than they should be held responsible for controlling them. However, it is often the case that someone holds attitudes of which they are completely unaware. Aversive racists[53] have

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[52] Radzik. *Collective responsibility and duties to respond.*

[53] See pages 10-11 for definition.

been found to be "extremely unlikely to notice that their differential behavior towards Whites and Blacks contributes in any way to the disadvantages experienced by Black Americans.[54]" Even if differential behavior is noticed, it is still difficult to convince someone that it was caused by an implcit prejudice. While the models previously referred to would work in a situation where it is easy for one to confront his or her own prejudices, it is not realistic to think that the subsequent feelings of shame and guilt would result in a 'duty to respond' rather than denial and defensiveness that could lead to dissociation from the issue entirely. In structural injustices, the Sandy example makes it clear that, like with implicit prejudices, people who mean well can contribute to an injustice without even knowing they are doing it. While forward-looking systems are encouraging, the danger of defensiveness and disassociation needs to be addressed in order to make the systems practically useful for injustices that's causes are not overt. Fortunately, the literature from Greenwald and Bahzarin that demonstrates the practical implications of confronting people about their own prejudices can help contribute to the creation of a system that allows individuals to accept the influence of structures and implicit biases surrounding and can realistically lead to progress.

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[54] Banaji and Greenwald. *Blindspot.*

The Community System and Why it is Needed

When devising a forward-looking system of assigning responsibility that is truly practical in its implications, a balance must be reached between holding those closely involved in an injustice most accountable and acknowledging that all members of a community share responsibility for the actions of other community members. If all community members are not held responsible for injustices within their community, the ones who are held responsible will be more likely to get defensive and downplay their own roles, rather than accept the responsibility given to them. However, in the Washington University controversy, it would be unfair to hold a non-Greek freshman at Washington University and the fraternity member who planned the scavenger hunt equally responsible for improving the university community. Hierarchical models such as Larry May's motivate individuals to deny blame for the injustice and pawn off responsibility for future action on those deemed "more responsible." Forward-looking models like that of Iris Young avoid this issue but approach the distribution of responsibility from a general perspective that does not provide practical guidance for individuals responding to injustices within their community. The difficulties in getting individuals to accept their own prejudices and the resulting effects on their behavior, as highlighted by *Blindspot*,[55] show that systems of responsibility must be sensitive to human reactions. It is my hope that this new system, the Community System of Responsibility, will be able to take all of these considerations into account and will be the most practical system to use when considering injustices stemming from racial prejudice.

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[55] Banaji and Greenwald. *Blindspot.*

The Community System of Responsibility evolved from three main arguments: the assignment of responsibility and blame should be kept separate, the main goal of assigning responsibility should be to give the community the best chance to improve, and all individuals within a community should be held responsible for any injustices that involve the community. It is meant to be a truly pragmatic system of responsibility, avoiding detrimental reactions such as the blame game, defensiveness, or dissociation. Each rule was written while keeping in mind how individuals would react to it and how effective it would be in improving a community if implemented.

The first characteristic of the Community System of Responsibility (or Community System) is that it is not a system meant to assign blame, or even consider it. The reason for this is the same reason that led Iris Young to distinguish between the liability model and the social connection model.[56] It is important that the perpetrators of the injustice are held liable for their actions. However, community members who are perpetrators of an injustice may not be the only members who contributed to the events leading up to the injustice and who bear responsibility for examining the community and attempting to improve it. Rather than replacing the liability model, the Community System of Responsibility serves in conjunction with it and assigns forward-looking responsibility to all involved in the injustice, while relying on the liability model to hold the perpetrators legally accountable.

It may seem controversial that by considering all involved, the Community System includes victims and their communities responsible. However, this responsibility is purposely distinct from liability and the victims are not being held liable. In an ideally

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[56] Young. *Responsibility for Justice*. 97.

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moral system victims would not have to participate in improving the environment that

fostered the injustice that victimized them, but history has shown that without having

victims and their communities involved in the examination and diagnosis of the

environment it is much more difficult for it to result in sincere progress and

improvements. For example, during the civil rights movement African Americans were

subjected to physical and emotional violence that they did not deserve. However, having

the power to do something to prevent future injustices empowered them and motivated

action, and without their involvement the civil rights movement might never have

occurred, and would never have been so successful. It is for this reason that the

Community System of Responsibility requires that everyone involved, even victims, to

be responsible for the community's wellbeing in a way that promotes justice while also

respecting the agency of the marginalized groups.

The second characteristic of the Community System is meant to remedy the issue

of assigning responsibility within a community to members with various levels of power

and opportunity to impact the community, as well as to multiple communities with

various levels of collective influence. For instance, within a university, responsibility

could be assigned to both the community of administrators with the ability to implement

new policies and the community of undergraduates who, for the most part, can enact

changes through speaking out and demonstrating. Within the community of

undergraduate students, members vary from members of student government who are in

direct communication with university officials to new students who have a harder time

having their opinions heard by an influential member of the university. It would be unfair

to hold both of these communities, or even the individuals within each community, equal

in terms of what is being asked of them and would likely lead to unrealistic expectations. However, it would also be detrimental to the progress of the community to reduce the responsibility of any member regardless of their influence. In order to avoid these two issues, the Community System of responsibility distributes equal amounts of effort rather than specific action. For example, the average Washington Unviersity student is not expected to have the same impact with his or her actions than the University President, but rather to spend the same amount of effort considering and attempting to improve his or her impact on the community and the behavior of the community in general. In the town example,[57] individuals would not be required to pay the same amount of restitution but would instead be required to pay the same percentage of their income. The only factor leading to differences in individual impact would be the differences in opportunities and power of the people in the community.

The Community System of responsibility assigns responsibility to members of communities involved in an injustice in a way unlike Iris Young, Larry May, or any of the other theorists previously mentioned. In order to avoid the shortcomings explained in the previous section, the Community System does not simply consider the assignment of responsibility within one community but uses an aggregate of all the communities of which an individual is a member. The rules by which responsibility is distributed are as follows:

a) After an injustice is committed, all individuals who share membership in a
   community that was involved in said injustice are held responsible for making an

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[57] See page 14.

effort to improve the state of that community in a way that diminishes such an injustice from occurring again.

b) All individuals within an involved community are responsible for putting in equal effort to contribute to the progress within that community, although the tangible contributions from community members may differ in impact.

c) As multiple communities would likely be involved in an injustice, rules b and c apply to all communities involved.

d) The effort asked of the individuals within a community is inversely related to the number of members within the community; the larger the community, the less effort each individual is responsible for putting in. This way each community, regardless of size, is expected to give the same collective effort.

e) If an individual is a member of multiple involved communities, the effort asked of him or her is an aggregate of the effort asked of that person in each involved community of which the individual is a member. Therefore, those who are members of the greatest number of involved communities are expected to put the most effort into contributing to creating an environment in which it is less likely for the injustice to repeat itself. However, it is important that the effort put forth is appropriately distributed among the communities of which the individual is a member, and not focused on one or a select few.

By adhering to the rules stated above when assigning responsibility, members of communities would be held responsible for putting in an equal amount of effort for the wellbeing of that specific community, minimizing any resulting feelings of defensiveness

or guilt that could lead to the denial of responsibilities or individuals dissociating their communities from the injustice. However, those most closely involved with the injustice would still be held more responsible in the sense that they would be held responsible for the wellbeing of more communities than those less involved. In order to demonstrate the applications of the system, I will apply it to the previously mentioned example of the Washington University students who used a racial slur in front of a group of minority students and give examples of hypothetical individuals involved and how responsibility would be assigned to them using the Community System.

Many communities were involved in the injustice at Washington. The university community, the Greek community, the fraternity of the students involved, the administration, and various student groups charged with handling the matter were all involved, Outside of the university, as this was a racially charged incident, the white and black communities in the United States, as well as the nation as a whole, can also be considered involved even if the connection is more indirect. Though members of a community like the United States seem to be much less responsible than members of a community such as the university administration, they will not be held responsible for the same amount of effort by the rules of the Community System as the US is an exponentially larger community and therefore individual efforts are not asked to be as large. For example, someone who is not involved in an injustice other than being a US resident might fulfill his or her responsibility simply by talking to someone about racial sensitivity or attempting to use offensive language less often.

The first hypothetical individual to consider is the person in the most involved communities without being a perpetrator: the pledge educator of the fraternity in question

who instructed the pledges to perform the rap song in a public place. This individual would belong to many involved communities, such as the fraternity's executive board, the fraternity, greek organization members, the community of individuals of his race, the Washington University community, the community of college students, and United States citizens. As a member of the group that planned the pledge events, he would be responsible for considering how their actions put the pledges in a position where they felt it necessary to use explicit language in front of a group of African Americans, and how they could avoid that in the future. For instance, he could try and make the pledges feel more comfortable speaking up when they are uncomfortable doing something they were instructed to do. As a member of the fraternity, he would be responsible for reconsidering the environment among members and whether it was too compliant in the use of offensive language, or whether there may be a general issue with behavior among Greek institutions. He would also be responsible for considering how members of his race treat and are treated by members of other races, whether there are issues with the interracial relationships at Washington University that need to be confronted and dealt with, and then more broadly whether there is anything about Washington University that makes students more comfortable using offensive language and what he as a student could do to improve the feelings of minorities.

This individual would be responsible for considering how each one of these communities may have contributed to the environment in which the injustice occurred. However, membership in some of these communities is optional. For instance, one cannot choose not to be white, but can choose what school to go to or what fraternity to be in, and can leave either of those communities. If this individual was so upset about the

injustice that he decided to leave the fraternity, then he would no longer share the burden of improving that community. However, unless he felt so strongly that he transferred schools or even left the United States, he would still bear some responsibility for improving the remaining communities he is involved in. Hypothetically, he could remove himself from all involved communities except the human race and communities based on inherent attributes, in which his responsibility would be minimal.

Other individuals involved this injustice would be responsible for some of these communities as well as others of which the pledge educator is not a member. For example, a member of the fraternity who was not involved in the planning of the pledge events would be responsible for the same communities as the pledge educator other than those specific to pledge education. However, that same individual could be a member of the diversity affairs council on campus and would then bear responsibility for considering how issues of diversity on campus contributed to the injustice. The university president would not be responsible for the fraternity community, or the community of Greek students, but would be responsible for the various groups he is involved in on campus related to student behavior and diversity issues, as well as the group of administrators who are responsible for responding to controversial issues on campus and are able to make policy changes. In this system, every community will be held responsible for considering its contribution to the injustice and the environment that encouraged or allowed it to happen. More effort will be asked of individuals who are members of more communities involved with the injustice, while all individuals involved in any way will be asked to consider what they can do to improve the communities they are in.

While it is inevitable that some individuals will react by denying that one or many of the communities to which they belong were actually involved in the injustice or by claiming that it is the responsibility of the individuals who belong to the most involved communities to act, the purpose of assigning responsibility in this way is so that these reactions are minimized. It is much more difficult to claim that an entire community was not involved in an injustice than to claim that an individual was not involved, simply because a community is made up of a large number of individuals. The system is also set up so that within communities no one is held more or less responsible than someone else. While one Washington University student may be a member of multiple involved communities, within the discussion of the Washington University community specifically, that student is no different than any other. While the pledge educator may belong to more involved communities than a general member of the fraternity, they are considered responsible for putting in an equal amount of effort to improve the fraternity as a whole. Though some Washington University students also belong to the community of Greek students on campus, they are still held responsible for putting in the same effort as non-Greek students to improve the behavior of the Washington University community. By holding individuals within communities responsible for equal effort, even if some individual efforts are more effective than others, discussions among community members will be less likely to lead to finger pointing or feelings of defensiveness, and more likely to lead to collective action.

There is also a risk that responsibility being inversely proportional will lead to a sort of bystander effect, where members of larger communities will assume that because other communities, as well as other members of their community, must be making an

effort, their individual effort is less necessary. Such an effect is expected when a community is large enough that most members have never met one another, and it would be illogical to claim that every American should be held equally responsible to a smaller group such as Washington University students. What is most important is that when members of a large community such as Washington University students discuss the injustice they consider each other equal parts of a collective. It is then the responsibility of that community to bring as many members together in a dialogue to ensure that the effort put forth by community members will be effective. Another possible response would be to say it is unfair to include large groups such as all of the United States who are just barely involved in the injustice in the group of people held responsible, even if their responsibility is minimal. Larry May confronted a similar criticism in *Collective Inaction and Shared Responsibility* when responding to philosopher Immanuel Kant's theory that "a person should not be held responsible for a harm which s/he could not have prevented.[58]" May points to the fact that so many global issues, like world hunger, cannot be prevented by one person but can be diminished with collective action. In the Community System, it is not that Americans are being blamed for the actions of a few college students, but rather that they are being asked to consider the event that took place and how their own behavior contributes to interracial relationships within their own community and how they can improve it. The more people who actually sit down and consider this, the more likely things will change for the better.

One final objection to consider is that the creation of a system like this or any similar system is unnecessary, because it would be impossible to actually divide and hand

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[58] May. *Collective Inaction and Shared Responsibility*.

out responsibility to the individuals in question and make sure they behave as requested. When reading literature on collective responsibility is it easy to think that theorists are debating the assignment of responsibility in a hypothetical way that has minimal practical application. However, the Community System of responsibility is not meant to be a list of laws, but rather a set of mental guidelines for how individuals should respond when their community is involved in an injustice. As a Washington University student and a white member of a Greek organization, my communities were immediately blamed for the events that took place, and my community members were put on the defensive so quickly that they denied any responsibility for the injustice or the response and removed themselves from the dialogue. Instead of considering how their own communities' behavior could be improved, students were condemning the behavior of communities to which they did not belong and therefore did not have sufficient knowledge to accuse.

By using the Community System when considering how to respond to an event like the one that took place at Washington University, the response could have been one that led to positive progress for the university, rather than one that left everyone angry and nobody satisfied. The easiest behavior to change is our own, and we can hope that by making an effort to change ourselves others in the community will be motivated to do the same. Given another chance to respond to what happened at Washington University, I could consider how the actions of the Greek community led to accusations of racism, and how the community could be more inclusive of minority students. I could consider how my behavior as a white student at Washington University made non-whites feel and whether there was anything I could do better. If society considered introspection a positive response to an injustice rather than a sign of guilt, individuals would put their

effort into trying to make positive change for themselves and their communities rather than searching for other communities to blame in order to absolve their own. The Community System encourages that reflection in order to make responses to injustices opportunities to move forward instead of step back.

Conclusion and Practical Implications

In this paper I have mapped out a new system of responsibility that is better suited to encompass injustices that involve implicit prejudice as well as structural injustices. In this system:

- Rather than assigning blame, responsibility is assigned for individuals to make an effort to improve the communities of which they are members. Blame should be given to the perpetrators, but that assignment should be dictated by a separate system.

- All members of communities that were involved in the injustice are held responsible for responding to the injustice and for improving the environment, including, for practical reasons, the victimized communities.

- Each community involved and all individuals within those communities are treated equally. From a wide perspective those who are members of multiple involved communities or are members of smaller involved communities will be held responsible for more effort. However, within a specific community each individual is responsible for the same effort, and all communities are responsible for the same collective effort.

The problem with injustices that concern implicit racial prejudice is that, as the people responsible are not aware of their prejudices, communities are often unaware that racial discrimination was even involved. The first step to solving any problem is to admit that there is one, and in the case of racial prejudice that step is the most difficult one to accomplish. Previous instances like the controversy at Washington University demonstrate that accusations of racism lead not to acceptance but denial. The Implicit

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Association Test and the results that have come from it can help people come to terms with the prevalence of racial prejudice without having to accuse them. However, before people will be motivated to inquire about their own prejudices and whether prejudice ever influences their behavior, they need to be in an environment that encourages self-reflection. In contemporary society even the mention of racism is taboo. Most people are too nervous to be labeled a racist to have a discussion about the role of racial prejudice in everyday life. Instead, they assign blame to others as a way of convincing themselves that it is not necessary to consider their own behavior.

The Community System of Responsibility remedies this issue from having individuals examine their own roles and prejudices rather than that of other individuals. When an injustice occurs, each individual would think only about what factors within their communities may have led to the occurrence. That person would then consider how his or her individual behavior contributed to those factors, and would be called upon to make an effort to minimize the future prevalence of those factors and his or her individual contributions. The system separates blame from the equation and encourages all individuals to contemplate their own roles in injustices within their communities. That way, people responsible for their own behavior and will not be motivated to make judgments or accusations about others that could be detrimental towards progress. By having individuals use this system as a guideline for how to respond to racial injustices, damaging injustices can be transformed into opportunities to reassess the community welfare and figure out what needs to be done to improve it.

In many theories of justice, the system develops by focusing on how to reach one specific goal. The Community System of Responsibility developed in a similar way, from

the opinion that the ultimate goal of assigning responsibility should be to maximize improvement in the community in which responsibility is assigned. Therefore, every decision as to whether and how someone is held responsible should be based solely on whether it will increase the chance of progress within that community. It may be less time consuming to hold fewer individuals responsible or more natural to treat blame and responsibility equally, but both options would be detrimental to the possibility of progress. There may be a select few individuals that are held responsible in the Community System who may not have contributed to the injustice, but they will simply be asked to help improve their own communities, and that is better than failing to hold those responsible who should have been. Systems that assign responsibility with no practical implications other than to label specific individuals 'responsible' do nothing but condense the collective responsibility of an entire community into small faction that is condemned in order to absolve everyone else. Abiding by the rules of the Community System of Responsibility will maximize the chances that communities will be able to discover the influence of racial prejudice and be motivated to construct practical strategies to diminish the underlying attitudes that lead to racial injustices.

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