

"PUT A LITTLE COLOR ON THAT!"

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ABSTRACT: *Drawing on more than five years of extended fieldwork, this article explores the tropes through which dancers express and explain their participation in the Lindy Hop revival. In this reconstruction, the author extends Bourdieu's notions of symbolic power, symbolic violence, and misrecognition to show how racial domination is produced and perpetuated, denigrating and erasing African American cultural identity. As a result, the discourses of the Lindy Hop revival provide a window into understanding how the dominant racial logic of American society circulates even in the most apparently innocuous of cultural practices.*

Keywords: Bourdieu; discourses; misrecognition; symbolic power; whiteness

African American cultural practices, marginalized in their inception, are often later adopted and canonized as part of the national American culture. After blues and jazz, the Lindy Hop has been one of the most recent practices to undergo such a transformation. The Lindy Hop, more colloquially known as Swing dancing, had a revival and zenith in the late 1990s, to such an extent that Coke and Gap marketed their products by featuring Lindy Hop dancers in their commercials. An interrogation of the revival of the Lindy Hop grapples with a fundamental contradiction in American society: How is it that African American culture continues to be symbolically central in American society, while African Americans remain economically and politically marginalized?¹ African American culture is central to the selling of images of the American dream and consumer capitalism, as seen in music, fashion, language, and athletics. Yet the marginalization of African American people is evinced by the African American majority's exclusion from power, money, and resources. Given this contradiction, we must ask: How does the simultaneous centrality of African American culture and the marginalization of African American people work to secure and perpetuate white racial domination?²

The case of the Lindy Hop provides an opportunity to understand how the white embrace of African American culture occurs through the severing of those

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cultural forms from the people that created and cultivated them. This simultaneous embrace and rejection that has traditionally defined the relationship of African Americans to the larger white society makes African American culture an especially contentious site of social interaction and an effective object lesson for understanding the mechanisms that structure the racial organization of society. Despite the post-Civil Rights climate of colorblindness and multiculturalism, this incongruity between the embrace of African American culture and people continues to shape contemporary social interaction and raises new challenges to theorize white racial domination.

As has been the case from blues through rock 'n' roll and most clearly seen today in white suburbia's consumption of hip hop and gangsta rap, whites have appropriated African American culture because it is often resistive or transgressive to white society (hooks 1994; Johnson 2003; Tate 2003). But according to people in the Lindy Hop scene, this is not what they are doing; in fact, nothing could be more repellant or incongruous except to a small minority of dancers. Ostensibly, the Lindy Hop practitioners are dancing simply because it is pleasurable. As a result, dancers have a difficult time recognizing or accepting the racial dimensions of their actions or understanding the history of racial oppression that makes the issue of white consumption and participation in African American culture so contentious. While this narrative could have focused on the various ways that dancers find joy and excitement in their engagement with the dance, the purpose of this article is to use the Lindy Hop as a window into the racial dynamics of society. Having taught the Lindy Hop to hundreds of students and having had hundreds of conversations with both male and female dancers, teachers, and performers over the years, I have noticed the emergence of a dominant theme: People are adamant that, despite how it may appear, the Lindy Hop has nothing to do with race.

In the ongoing discussions of race, culture, and identity within today's climate of multiculturalism, the issue of white interaction with African American cultural forms—with a few exceptions, such as Bonilla-Silva (2003), who argues for a structural racial analysis that is "beyond good and evil"—continues to be framed through discourses of either racism (appropriation, whitewashing, and commodification) or antiracism (neo-abolitionism, race traitor, and resistance). In addition, Wacquant (1997) argues that these approaches "[smuggle their] basic categories and problems in from everyday experience, [and] the sociology of 'race' has been mired in what I call *the logic of the trial*: the will to convict or exonerate this or that society, institution or group, for or from the terrible sin of 'racism'" (p. 225).³ These debates are usually waged by outsiders to those cultural forms and offer explanations from above—or from what Bourdieu refers to as the "scholastic fallacy," detached views from outside the particular lived cultural context—rather than attempting to formulate the ways that participants themselves come to conceptualize and articulate their cultural consumption and production (Bourdieu 2000b). These critiques impute motives, intentions, and desires to actors, but seldom do they inquire into the collective dispositions that dancers themselves use on the ground to articulate and express their worlds (Auyero 2001; Wacquant 1995).

This article breaks with these scholastic and external critiques that speculate about agents from the outside and instead offers a scientific perspective on the phenomenon that focuses on what participants themselves have to say about the racial dynamics around the cultural forms they participate in and within which they are situated (Bourdieu 2000b). This article, following Wacquant's analysis of the "pugilistic point of view" and Auyero's analysis of the "client's point(s) of view," is a reconstruction of the Lindy Hop point(s) of view through the discourses that dancers use to articulate, express, and explain to themselves and to others their engagement with the Lindy Hop (Auyero 2001; Wacquant 1995). In doing so, I reject the notion that there is one single point of view and instead insist that we must look at multiple points of view to understand the dominant logic at work within this world (Auyero 2001; Wacquant 1995). In this reconstruction, I extend Bourdieu's notions of symbolic power, symbolic violence, and misrecognition to situate the discourses of the Lindy Hop within the larger framework of racial domination in American society, in order to show how a misrecognized racial domination is produced and perpetuated through everyday cultural practices in the ways dancers think and feel about their engagement with the dance.

By extending Bourdieu's categories to an analysis of race, I aim to heed Wacquant's call to develop an analytic framework for racial domination by which we can move past the "logic of the trial" of convicting racists and exonerating antiracists (Wacquant 1997). The goal of this article is to offer a way to understand how racial domination is perpetuated without strategic rationalization or manipulation but rather as a form of symbolic power that operates through "the complicity of those who do not want to know that they are subject to it or even that they themselves exercise it" (Bourdieu 1991: 164; Bourdieu 2000b: 180). In doing so, this article advances our understanding of how racial domination works through everyday cultural practices without collapsing discourses, structures, or the participants under investigation into a one-dimensional analysis that obscures the different modalities and mechanisms of racial domination.⁴

In the first part of this article, I address the relevant literature in whiteness studies that serves as the contextual backdrop for the analysis. In the second, I discuss Bourdieu's concepts of symbolic power, symbolic violence, and misrecognition as the theoretical concepts through which I examine the dance world of the Lindy Hop. Third, I explain the specific methodological approach used for this analysis. In the fourth part, I discuss a series of discourses through which dancers express and articulate their engagement with the dance. These discourses of the Lindy Hop serve as mechanisms that enable whites to embrace and enjoy African American culture, while simultaneously engaging in a symbolic violence that misrecognizes and perpetuates white racial domination by dehistoricizing and decontextualizing these forms from their racial and cultural contexts. In conclusion, I discuss how Bourdieu's theoretical framework enables us to move away from analyses built around guilt or innocence toward a superior framework constructed around symbolic power/violence and misrecognition for understanding how racial domination is reproduced and perpetuated in American society.

HISTORICAL ORIGINS AND THE LINDY HOP REVIVAL

In order to fully understand the dynamics of the Lindy Hop revival, it is necessary to examine the historical origins and trajectory of the dance. During the early 1920s, as great numbers of African Americans migrated to New York City, the Harlem Renaissance began to take shape. This massive migration from the South to the North was also a paradigm shift in African American identity. Nothing represented this newfound identity and expression more than a new dance called the Lindy Hop, which was emerging out of the ballrooms of Harlem.

The Lindy Hop materialized as a distinct dance form by creating the first breakaway step, known as the "swing out," whereby partners would separate for a moment for an opportunity to improvise. It was a partner dance that combined the popular jazz steps of the day and social dances such as the Foxtrot, the Charleston, the Cakewalk, and the Black Bottom, among others.⁵ By combining these African, African American, European, and Anglo American steps, the dance emerged as a truly hybridized form, similar to the Swing music that accompanied it.

Yet like other fashionable cultural formations, the Lindy Hop eventually faded from mainstream popularity. Some say the Lindy Hop decline began in the early 1950s, when the great dancer Frankie Manning retired and began working in a post office, or in 1958, when the Savoy Ballroom closed its doors to make room for public housing. Yet others argue that as World War II changed the socioeconomic context of America, with the drafting of musicians and the lack of funds to pay big bands to travel and play during the war, these shifts gave way to smaller jazz combos. The music moved from being dance oriented to more experimental, taking on the aesthetic format of be-bop. Meanwhile, large dance halls and ballrooms closed in favor of smaller, more affordable commercial venues.⁶ As these changes took place and rock 'n' roll emerged as the popular music of the day, the Lindy Hop was left behind.

Although it lost popularity among mainstream African American society because of its inaccessibility, the Lindy Hop did not die. As the Lindy Hop faded from black consciousness, new forms of music, such as R&B and hip hop, emerged in African American communities in the 1970s and 1980s, and in place of the Lindy Hop, complementary dances arose to fit this music (Bop in Houston, Hand Dancing in Washington D.C., and particularly, Steppin' in Chicago).

The Lindy Hop dancing revival of the 1990s was part of a much larger "Retro Revival" within white America: the resurgence of mainstream white America's interest in the Rat Pack and Sinatra, the cocktail nation or "swingers subculture" of the 1940s and 1950s, and the cigar and martini atmosphere of indulgence, traditional gender roles, styles, and decadence.⁷ During the late 1990s, the Lindy Hop's popularity became pervasive throughout mass-mediated culture: in live entertainment (Super Bowl and Orange Bowl football half-time shows and a "Live from Lincoln Center" special tribute) and in movies (*Swingers*, *Swing Kids*, *The Mask*, *Blast from the Past*, *Malcolm X*, *Hoodlum*, and *Three to Tango*). In addition, Lindy Hop became the vehicle of advertisements and consumer marketing, most notably when the dance catapulted to national attention through the Gap

clothing company's major marketing campaign in spring 1998, "Khakis Swing," with music by Neo-Swing band The Brian Setzer Orchestra. Swing was also used to market such popular brands as Coca-Cola and Hagger Clothing. With the exception of African American dancers in *Hoodlum* and *Malcolm X*, all of these representations featured exclusively white dancers, creating a racial amnesia of the dance's African American origins.

Propelling this movement was a deep, subcultural music trend of punk bands, exclusively white in composition, turning toward older Black Swing and Jump Blues music, forming a new musical genre. This new hybrid of punk and Swing, known as Neo-Swing (a rock 'n' roll back beat with a jazzed-up melody complemented by a small horn section), caught the attention of white fans as disparate as skateboarders and yuppies. With radio airplay on mainstream white stations and band performances in highly successful mainstream films with all-white casts (Royal Crown Revue in *The Mask*, Big Bad Voodoo Daddy in *Swingers*, and the Atomic Fireballs in *Three to Tango*), Neo-Swing became the backbone and the soundtrack to the Retro Revival. As these bands rose in popularity and packed musical venues, they generated the revenue to provide large social spaces where their white following could dance. Once exposed, Lindy Hop dancing quickly captured mainstream white attention as the Retro Revival's most spectacular and athletic manifestation. This popularization extracted the Lindy Hop from the historical and racial-cultural context within which the dance began and was cultivated.

LITERATURE REVIEW: WHITENESS AND WHITE RACIAL SUBJECTIVITIES

In this section, I discuss three aspects of whiteness and white racial subjectivities that help inform the analytical framework of the article. First, I discuss the issue of making visible white racial identity; second, the performance of white racial subjectivities; and third, how whiteness and white racial subjectivities relate to discourses of colorblindness.

In marking and making visible whiteness and white racial subjectivities, it is often the case that this is done with implicit reference to the exterior racial "other" of blackness (Baker 1998; hooks 1994; Lott 1995; Roediger 1994, 2002). In defining white racial identity, black racial identity is simultaneously described. If whites are awkward and arrhythmic, then blacks are rhythmic and graceful. Within the context of performing dance, if whites are marked as restrained and rigid, African Americans are seen as expressive and dynamic. These binary definitions of black and white and the competencies and attributes that attach to them serve to reinscribe racial mythologies of racial difference and, in turn, operate as mechanisms of domination through their naturalization. These essentializing definitions also serve to stigmatize and essentialize white racial identity just as they do black identity (Gubar 2000; Lott 1995; Roediger 1994, 2002; Rogin 1996; Storrs 1999). Marking white racial identity reverses the norm of traditional racial scholarship, which tends to study the nonwhite "other" and therefore leave whites free of critical scrutiny.

A second major theme in the field of whiteness and white racial subjectivities in relation to the Lindy Hop is the performance or practice of racial identity (Lott 1995; Roediger 2002; Rogin 1996). The white embrace of African American culture has never been straightforward; in fact, this interaction has been a complex, contradictory, anxiety-riddled process of negotiation by which whites have simultaneously embraced and rejected, desired and disdained African American culture within the constraints of the dominant racial order (Lott 1995). This equivocal relationship has generated a particular racial logic through which whites have conceptualized African Americans and enacted African American cultural practices, resulting in either a form of minstrelsy by which overexaggerated derogatory stereotypes are enacted or a whitewashing by which cultural forms are deracialized and assimilated into white society (Gabriel 1998; Gubar 2000; Lott 1995; Roediger 2002).

Even in today's "multicultural" and "colorblind" society, this racial logic continues to define the interactions and racial politics of white society. As a result, white interaction with African American culture must be situated against these larger sociohistorical contexts of racial domination in order to break from the liberal myth that cultural appreciation serves to generate social equality. Whereas white attraction to, identification with, and enactment of African American popular culture is often undertaken in an explicit resistance to white societal norms and aesthetics or as a symbol of multicultural unity, here cross-cultural consumption ultimately works to affirm and perpetuate racial domination through the simultaneous marginalization and domination of African American people (Frankenberg 1996, 1997; Roediger 1994, 2002; Rogin 1996; Twine and Warren 2000). Through selective engagement, whites are afforded the luxury of "playing" black through cross-cultural consumption, while simultaneously never having to endure the consequences of being black in white America (hooks 1994; Lott 1995; Root 1998; Tate 2003). Therefore, cross-cultural engagement never can be seen as insignificant but rather as a crucial symbolic and material mechanism in the production, circulation, and consumption of racial meanings and racial divisions in American society.

In discussing race discourses of colorblind racism, which take multiple forms, the key underlying element is that of whiteness as the unacknowledged dominant set of norms, aesthetics, and values from which all others are defined and judged. Whiteness operates as the unacknowledged standard against which all other racial aspects are measured. These discourses remove white racial identity so that everyone else is raced except for whites themselves (Perry 2001). This transparency in turn reinscribes the dominant hegemonic position of whites and shapes the racial order and racial understandings of American society (Bonilla-Silva 2001, 2003; Bonilla-Silva and Doane 2003; Ignatiev and Garvey 1996; Omi and Winnant 1994; Wellman 1993). In this way, scholars of whiteness have linked whiteness and the organization of racialized social systems around inequality as a new modality of racism. This new form of racism occurs through covert racial discourses, the avoidance of racial terminology, and claims of reverse racism, among other behaviors and strategies that seek to secure white racial hegemony and racial inequality without the need for white people to be inherently racist (Doane and Bonilla-Silva 2003).

SYMBOLIC POWER AND SYMBOLIC VIOLENCE

Whereas previous eras of white racial domination have been explicit either physically or symbolically, in the post-Civil Rights period of colorblindness and multiculturalism, white racial domination works "without racists" in an implicit and often invisible form.⁸ Whiteness studies often have led to empirical analyses that are more about how white people appear to be rationalizing, manipulating, and conspiring to conceal their real thoughts and emotions about racial issues rather than how race actually operates in everyday life (Brubaker and Cooper 2000; Loveman 1999a, 1999b; Wacquant 1997). As a result, Bourdieu's categories of symbolic power, symbolic violence, and misrecognition help us better understand how contemporary white racial domination is produced and perpetuated. While keeping the issues of whiteness and white racial subjectivities as the contextual backdrop for the analysis of the Lindy Hop, Bourdieu's theoretical framework provides a deeper and more penetrating set of analytical categories through which to dissect the discourses that serve to produce and reinscribe white racial domination.

For Bourdieu, symbolic systems of categories and classifications are the stakes in the power struggle between groups (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1991: 12–14). Symbolic power is the ability to control the schemas of perception and appreciation that are constitutive of the ways we comprehend and conceptualize the world, won through social conflict and struggle (Bourdieu 1991). Symbolic power produces "symbolic violence" by making particular interests and invested understandings and social relations of the world appear to be universal, natural, and true. As a result, arbitrary social and cultural distinctions and valuations become misrecognized as the legitimated assumptions through which we make sense of the world around us (Bourdieu 2000b: 186). Symbolic violence occurs not through techniques of manipulation or strategic deception but through a process of dehistoricizing our taken-for-granted categories of thought that reinforce the dominant social order.

Bourdieu's categories, when applied to issues of racial inequality, enable us to understand that racial domination is not the cultivation of a false consciousness nor the strategic manipulations or covert strategies of whites to disguise their racism but a racialized commonsense embedded in our dispositions and everyday practices. Bourdieu's argument is not about creating a false consciousness; in fact, this is not about consciousness at all. For Bourdieu, symbolic power is so commanding because it is "constitutive of habitus which, below the level of the decisions of consciousness and the controls of the will, set up a cognitive relationship that is profoundly obscure to itself" (Bourdieu 2000a: 37, 39, 40). By socializing the very categories of thought, the basis of our social understanding remains hidden even to our self-conscious reflection (Bourdieu 2000a: 35). Symbolic power, like other forms of power, can be exercised with greater force by the dominant group, since they have the ability to impose their vision of the world as the correct one. Yet since these categories are taken as commonsensical, symbolic violence gets perpetuated automatically without reflection or consideration, just as much by the dominant group as by those who are dominated (Bourdieu 1991: 167).

Therefore, extending Bourdieu's framework to an analysis of race allows us to understand how discourses operate as a mechanism of domination in three novel ways. First, discourses speak through us, in a structural sense, in an almost subconscious way as they reinscribe hegemony of what can be spoken and articulated about race. Second, the framework Bourdieu advances allows us to understand how racial schemes operate without us being aware of them or their unintended outcomes. Finally, Bourdieu's framework allows us to understand the subtle nuances of these discourses and supersedes the dichotomy of looking at people either as helpless cultural dupes or as blatant strategic manipulators of language who conceal their real motivations.

Culture is an especially effective medium of symbolic power. As practices become separated from their underlying material interests through the process of decontextualization, people misrecognize the invested character of cultural practices as "disinterested" and therefore fail to understand the dynamics that structure them in racial dominance.⁹ By participating in everyday life, people unknowingly engage in cultural practices and misrecognize the symbolic and material consequences of their actions. As a result, the dominant social order gets reproduced not through coercion or manipulation by people in the dominant group but through the complicity of all people unaware that they are even participating in or perpetuating the very mechanisms that dominate them (Bourdieu 1991: 180). In the case of the Lindy Hop, the decontextualization of the dance is a process of symbolic violence whereby the dance is deracialized as it is erased from its historical and cultural context and racial identity.

METHODOLOGY

This article is based on a six-year ethnographic study of the Lindy Hop revival. The Lindy Hop scene in Chicago, like the larger Lindy Hop community, is almost exclusively white, predominantly middle- to upper middle-class young adults (primarily between twenty-one and forty-five years of age). I have witnessed and participated in all levels of the Lindy Hop dance scene through various roles, including that of student, teacher, performer, DJ, promoter, and social dancer. Because I was part of the Lindy Hop scene in Chicago since nearly the inception of the revival, I became established in the inner core of the Lindy Hop world. In this article, I draw on in-depth, semistructured interviews with more than fifty young adult dance instructors, dancers, and performers in the city of Chicago. These interviewees were predominantly white, with the exception of one African American and two black British instructors. All interviews were conducted after dance classes at the studio or after a dance workshop at the venue where it was held. The interviews are complemented by hundreds of informal and spontaneous conversations conducted while teaching and participating in the scene.

Because I was part of the local Lindy Hop landscape since its revival in Chicago, and likewise embedded in the center of this practice, I was fully conversant with all aspects of the scene. As a result, this project comes out of a deep intimacy with its key participants. I could therefore work with a level of candidness and familiarity, which I could contrast with extensive firsthand experience and observation

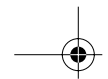
(Bourdieu and Wacquant 1991). I wasn't interested in what whites thought of other racial groups or in any individual prejudices; I was interested in the specific discourses through which they conceptualized the Lindy Hop racially and the consequences that had for understanding the intersections of race, culture, and society. As an "insider," I never felt that I was gaining any "hidden" or "secret" racial knowledge of whites' "real" attitudes, of beliefs the white participants I spoke with would have kept secret from nonwhites. The idea that such secret beliefs exist merely re-essentializes racial difference and assumes that there is always something that whites are really saying to other whites, concealed in politically correct language or euphemisms. Finally, scholarly knowledge of race, culture, and dance allowed me to identify the dominant discourses that I analyzed and illuminate the racial logic behind them.

Being in a privileged position as one of the dance's brokers, I was not an invisible observer capturing the scene without influencing the interactions taking place. Instead, I used my unique position to watch, listen, ask questions, and share and exchange with others my own opinions and ideas. As an ethnographer, embedded in this particular dance world, I was just as involved in discussions of the dance as everyone I was studying. Therefore, I was forced to maintain a vigilant reflexivity over my own conduct and concerns. This reflexivity kept me fully aware of my motivations for exploring the dance's history, the explosion of its popularity in the white community, and most important, how people felt and thought about the dance world in which they were so invested. Therefore, I did not position myself above or outside of the politics and discourses of this community; rather, I placed myself firmly at the center of how the dance was being discussed. I could use these exchanges as ways of monitoring and constantly confronting my own ideas. I then treated the responses to my perspectives as potential data. Reactions to my interpretations became an ongoing part of the social interaction, allowing a full range of expressions to take place. What emerged in my research were four dominant discourses that dancers used, which I refer to as (a) marking white identity, (b) blaming the victim, (c) talking around race, and (d) having fun. It is to these discourses that I now turn.

THE DISCOURSES THAT DEFINE THE LINDY HOP

Marking White Identity

Ironically, one central discourse for understanding and articulating the Lindy Hop is that of marking one's own white racial body. White racial domination as a system of social organization need not always deny that white identity exists as a category of racial classification; in fact, part of its very strength and power is its flexibility to acknowledge that white racial identity exists while minimizing the privilege that racial identity has. The discourses that function to misrecognize white racial domination come in two forms: by celebrating certain African American natural "talents," such as rhythm, grace, or expressiveness, in contrast to an implicitly marked white identity that lacks those talents and, conversely, by using expressions that denigrate white identity by magnifying white deficiencies or disadvantages in dancing ability that implicitly mark the naturalness of dancing in



the black body. Whereas the marking of white identity might appear to lead to the recognition of the racial issues involved in the politics of cross-cultural consumption in the Lindy Hop, instead these discourses become mechanisms for symbolic violence to reinscribe racial essentialism. The particular marking of white identity obfuscates dancers' abilities to comprehend the structural relations of racial domination by perceiving racial bodies differently around their respective talents or deficiencies, as something innocuous rather than as stereotypes that are woven into the social organization.

In one of my very first interviews, I asked a veteran white male Lindy Hop dancer in his late twenties an open-ended question about how race might play a role in the revival of the Lindy Hop. The dancer responded matter-of-factly that:

Black people are just better dancers than whites are. Look at the black dancers in the scene; they just look better than whites do. We look so stiff and awkward most of the time, but they look so natural. Whites just never seem to get it the way they do.

Within the larger context of multiculturalism, this sense of black superiority in the ability to dance appears to be a flattering comment. However, beneath the veneer of this compliment is the way that race implicitly operates in the minds of Lindy Hop dancers. Because the dominant racial logic of colorblindness shapes the dancers' understanding of racism as being simply prejudice and discrimination, grounded in individual thoughts and actions, not present on a social or systematic level, this perpetuates the notion that white interest in and enthusiasm for African American culture has no relation to white racial domination. Marking white identity, in this case the implicit recognition of whites embracing African American culture, proves that whites are not racist. Rather, it emphasizes how white racial domination is a larger structural issue, not one of individual cultural appreciation.

Marking white identity also takes the form of explicitly denigrating or making fun of one's whiteness. As both a student and an instructor, during Lindy Hop classes I would often hear white students, male and female, when frustrated by trying to learn a move or step, exclaim in embarrassment, "I just can't get this. I'm so white!" Often, white dancers of all ages looked for empathy in another dancer: "Reminds you how white you are, doesn't it?" These discourses of white deficiency, exhibited through the admission of lack of natural talent and rhythm, dramatize the essentialism of racial differences grounded in the racial body. While these discourses of self-denigration may appear to be flippant and self-mocking, they reinscribe the racial essentialism and traditional pejorative status of the natural qualities of the African American body (Baker 1998; Gottschild 2002, 2003; Lott 1995; Turner 1994).

In marking whiteness, I emphasize the differences between what whiteness *is* and what Whiteness is *not* in a strategic way, in order to designate the "racial situations" in which these issues of racial identity come into conflict (Hartigan 1999: 14). This contradiction resonates with the work of Doane and Bonilla-Silva (2003: 7), who argues that whiteness operates as the invisible or unacknowledged standard or norm against which nonwhites are measured and that whites are less likely to feel culturally different in everyday experience when not confronted

with other races or cultures. Conversely, this normality also works to make white identity opaque when confronted with the contrast of the "color" of nonwhites (see Flagg 1997: 630). Finally, Waters (1990: 94) suggests that since the normality of whiteness is taken for granted, whites often feel a sense of culturelessness or racelessness, and as a result, race becomes a default category defined through boundaries of exclusion by "not being of color."

By looking at these discourses through Bourdieu's categories, we not only gain insight into the racial stereotypes that circulate in different discourses; we also can see that the dominant group is just as dominated through their own categories of thought (Bourdieu 2000a). This discourse simultaneously prevents whites from understanding how white racial domination works against them in their understanding of the natural distinctions and capacities of different racial groups. These discourses of African American superiority and white deficiency ultimately work to reinscribe and essentialize stereotypes of both groups.

Blaming the Victim

Another discourse that dominates the discussion of the Lindy Hop is that of blaming the victim. This discourse manifests itself through an abstract liberalism and racial pluralism that conceptualizes society as racially neutral, as well as through explanations of the absence of African Americans in the Lindy Hop scene as a result of choice and interest. Blaming the victim generates a distortion by which the history of white exploitation of African American culture and the subordination of African American people that persists in contemporary society goes unnoticed. As a result, dancers fail to understand how the white embrace of the Lindy Hop may not be the result of a lack of African American interest in the dance but symbolic of the structural dynamics that define racial relations in contemporary American society. During an interview that I conducted with a popular, white, international, male instructor from the United States in his early thirties (one whose dress, musical tastes, and language were heavily influenced by African American culture), I asked how he felt about whites embracing the Lindy Hop and if he thought that this was "appropriating" African American culture in any way. He responded:

Why do you think that this is just a black dance, or that this is racist, or that white people are wrong for doing the dance? If African Americans want it back, then they can go work for it. I mean, black people dropped the ball on this, and white people picked it up. Is it the fault of whites that blacks dropped the ball and whites picked it up? Black people didn't revive this, white people did. White people brought this back when black people didn't want anything to do with it.

In framing his response in terms of a "game," in which blacks dropped the ball and whites picked it up, this instructor illuminates a much deeper logic of the way that race operates in American society. This metaphor of the game resonates with the logic of abstract liberalism whereby all racial groups have equal opportunity to compete in society and should be held responsible for the choices and decisions they make. Accordingly, racial domination is viewed through an abstract

liberalism that frames race as an individual problem and not the fault of one group having more power, money, or resources in influencing the way that society is constructed (Bonilla-Silva 2003). This logic of equal competition in the marketplace generates an unacknowledged commonsense belief that all racial groups have the same power in American society, distorting the historical trajectory of white engagement and cultivation of African American culture. It is this historical trajectory, one structured under racial dominance, that enables whites to consume African American cultural forms in a way that reinforces racial domination.

This attitude of framing the lack of African American involvement in the Lindy Hop in terms of African American "interest" could be seen as a way of "blaming the victim," whereby all the responsibility falls on the shoulders of African Americans and has nothing to do with white engagement (Bonilla-Silva 2003; Bonilla-Silva and Doane 2003). These notions of interest and blaming the victim resonate with the much larger ways that society has conceptualized the relationship between African Americans and white society (Massey and Denton 1998; Wilson 1987, 1997). Now the political nature of explaining racial group interest in terms of choice becomes more palpable and explicit. In the case of the Lindy Hop, this discourse of African American neglect or lack of interest generates a sense that African Americans would dance it if they wanted to, so since they don't dance, this must reflect the simple fact of their lack of interest in the Lindy Hop.

I once talked with one of the best dancers in the Lindy Hop scene, a midtwenties white male heavily influenced by hip hop and hip hop dancing, about what parallels could be drawn between these two African American cultural forms: Lindy Hop from the past and hip hop from the present. He commented:

Black people don't care about this stuff. They've already moved on to something else now. They're into hip hop. They are only interested in that now, not some old dance. They're only interested in something new. They don't care anything about Swing dancing and Lindy Hop; that's what white people are doing. Black people just create stuff, they do it, then they toss it away and move on to something else.

By articulating the dance using expressions that project motives or thoughts into the heads of absent African Americans, dancers assume that all racial interaction is equal and that African Americans have no interest or even pride in their culture. The transparency through which whites understand the world as race neutral shapes the ways that the dance is conceptualized and articulated, as well as the possible effects that this race-neutral vision of the world has on the feelings or choices of African Americans.

Presenting and articulating the world as racially neutral or as a place in which groups have equal opportunity distorts the material reality within which the exploitation of African American culture has historically occurred and the ways that the actors of one racial group shape the actions and reactions of others. This lack of African American interest could stem from numerous factors: the lack of marketing by Lindy Hop groups to African American communities; the lack of contemporary images of the Lindy Hop featuring African Americans; in Chicago, the fact that it is danced on the segregated, white, north side of the city in white venues; and the fact that many African Americans interested in social dancing are socialized to go

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Steppin', the popular social dance in Chicago's African American communities, not Lindy Hop dancing. Articulating the dance in a context of what African Americans have or have not done misconstrues the very racial dynamics that inform the structure of American society. These views of race neutrality, equal opportunity, and African American interest are not the exclusive beliefs of whites alone. In a telling interview, a midthirties, female, black British instructor commented:

Black people aren't dancing the Lindy Hop now because they've allowed white people to appropriate it. In some ways this is history repeating itself. I get very upset when there is no mention made or no reference made to the Lindy Hop as a black dance. In many ways it's about education; they don't do it on purpose. If you are a white person from a white neighborhood, you are probably not aware, so when you teach them the dance, you can't blame or attack or alienate white people. I can't blame white kids for learning what they've learned, but I can blame them for not being critical. My responsibility as a teacher is to open doors to other avenues, but students also need to take some of that responsibility. But black people gave this dance away, so they shouldn't feel too bad.

The tension expressed in this view highlights the strength of the dominant racial logic; even members of the dominated group use the same discourses as the dominant when they frame and express their views on the dance.

The discourse of blaming the victim, as expressed through racial pluralism and cultural choice, also serves to frame any African Americans who participate in the Lindy Hop world as explicit justifications of a race-free world. By their very presence, the few African Americans who participate become spokespeople for the race, and as a result, they reinforce the commonsense thinking that there are no racial consequences to the white embrace of the Lindy Hop. These discourses impose a distortion that leads whites to misinterpret the way that racial domination structures society and how the discourses of racial pluralism and African American choice reproduce the dominant racial logic of the larger social order about the status of African Americans in relation to other racial groups. The discourse of choice and neglect obscures the racial dynamics at play in shaping the context of white consumption and production of the Lindy Hop, and as a result, it prevents whites from understanding the consequences of their actions or why racial divisions remain so deep in contemporary American society.

Talking around Race

Another discourse of the Lindy Hop concerns naming or not naming the dance. This particular discourse takes on many forms in the ways that dancers discuss and conceptualize their engagement with the dance. The Lindy Hop is described as the "real" Swing dance, it is considered "authentic," and yet at the same time this real and authentic dance is never racially marked or discussed in terms of its African American identity. Others use the discourse of naming to not racially mark the dance. This nonracial marking generates a type of amnesia by which the dance is decontextualized and deracialized. When the Lindy Hop craze hit in the

late 1990s, it seemed as if everyone was promoting the teaching of “Swing dancing” instead of referring to the dance by its real name of “Lindy Hop.”¹⁰ In fact, the dance’s soaring popularity necessitated that the Lindy Hoppers distinguish their particular style of dancing from the other “Swing” dancers offering lessons all over the city.

At the same time, there was also a conscious effort to distinguish the Lindy Hop from the more formal version of Swing dancing known as “Jive,” performed in ballroom competitions, which ballroom dance teachers were promoting at their studios around town. As the Lindy Hop scene distinguished itself from the street Swing and ballroom styles, veterans and dancers in the know were no longer referring to it as Swing dancing: It was now “the Lindy Hop” or even “Savoy-Style Lindy Hop,” in reference to the famous Harlem ballroom that is considered the home of the Lindy Hop (Stearns and Stearns 1994; Vale and Wallace 1998). But while the dance’s proper name—the Lindy Hop—was emerging, the dance’s racial and cultural identity remained in a vacuum.

I finally asked the one African American male Lindy Hop master teacher, who is in his late forties, about his thoughts concerning the avoidance of identifying the Lindy Hop as African American. What did this say, I asked him, about the climate of the dance and possible future consequences for it? After struggling with the question, he replied:

People don’t want to go there. I mean, we have to go all the way there and talk about all the African in the dance, and people just don’t want to go there. Look at the originality and where it comes from. It’s African movement—that’s what’s missing; that’s what it boils down to. This is where I don’t go. I mean, can we get serious and talk about where this comes from? Can we really talk where it comes from? All these hip things? The shimmies? The stomps? I don’t say anything about this, but I want to sometimes. But this is my job. This is what I do for a living.

The constraint of discussing the dance within such narrow, deracialized parameters, even among African Americans, would serve to ignite my interest in pursuing research on the dance and fuel my own racial politics.

Framing the dance as racially unmarked, in effect as unnamed or “colorblind,” severs the African American identity from the dance. By separating the dance from its historical and cultural context, by arguing that the dance cannot “belong” to African Americans because there are more whites dancing it, we miss the central role that culture plays in defining racial identity and eviscerate the significance of African American culture, influence, creativity, and expression of the dance. It is this acontextual understanding that leads the white embrace of African American forms to generate racial domination through white people’s simultaneous rejection of the identity of those forms.

Teaching and cultivating the dance without explicit reference to African American culture neglects the very stylistic distinctions and dynamics that define the cultural form itself. This colorblindness is tantamount to cultural erasure; by naming or failing to name the dance in the context of African American identity, only certain particular racialized views of history, racial identities, and cultural struggles are acknowledged and institutionalized. The fear of bringing up race, by

marking the dance as having a racial identity, prevents white dancers from deepening their understanding—not only of the dance itself but of the history and trajectory of the very dance form they're actively cultivating.

Keeping the dance unmarked and never discussing its African American history denies the dance's rich history and culture. This discourse decontextualizes and deracializes the dance. Just as African American culture is appropriated and exploited without acknowledgement, whites are also dominated through this logic: It prevents them from understanding the rich cultural history of African American dance and from participating in a full cross-cultural understanding, as their understanding of the Lindy Hop necessarily remains impoverished and incomplete.

Having Fun

Another dominant discourse that circulates throughout the Lindy Hop community is that of "having fun." Despite the apparent innocence of this expression, this discourse takes on a different connotation when examined within the historical context and the contemporary racial dynamics of white interaction with African American culture. When African American cultural forms such as the Lindy Hop are practiced in insulated and autonomous white spaces, "having fun" leads to historical erasure or racial amnesia of the context and culture within which the form was cultivated. The issue is not about whites taking pleasure in dancing but how the discourse of "having fun" belies the racial politics and racial context of the dance. Since the days of minstrelsy, whites have taken pleasure in African American cultural forms, but this pleasure has usually come at the expense of African American people, who often have been degraded in the process (Gubar 2000; Guillory and Green 1998; Lhamon 2000; Lott 1995; Rogin 1996; Toll 1977). Whether having fun intentionally mocks people, as in the form of minstrelsy, or the pleasure is taken without intentional degradation, this discourse of having fun ultimately serves to sever African American culture from its racial context and prevents whites from fully participating in the Lindy Hop experience, because they are not fully aware of the historical context of their cultural engagement. Thus, the discourse of having fun generates a racial obliviousness and historical amnesia, sealing off the possibility for whites to cultivate a true multiculturalism built around reflexive cultural participation.

When discussing the pleasure of dancing the Lindy Hop, I would always ask whether the dance's African American identity was a significant factor in dancers' attraction to the art form or in their sensation of pleasure when dancing. While this question was intentionally aimed at gauging the cultural and historical awareness of the dancers, it was always misinterpreted as accusatory, provoking the same defensive reaction: Race had nothing to do with the dance. One veteran white female dancer and instructor in her early thirties, who considered my question a bit more, said:

I don't think people ever really think about stuff like that. And I can't really say in the time I've been doing this that anyone has ever really talked about race. I mean, Norma [Miller, who is considered one of the greatest Lindy Hop dancers

from the 1930s and 1940s] has definitely brought up issues of race. She even accused this one white woman of stealing the Lindy Hop at a panel that was hosted at one of the dance camps, where some of the old timers were telling stories about what the dance was like back in the day. But that's why she is so marginalized; nobody wants to hear that stuff. That's why she doesn't get invited to any of the events anymore. She's just way too intense and really puts people off. They just don't want to hear that stuff at dance events. They're just there to dance and have fun.

While having fun and taking pleasure in the dance remain the focus of the dancers' comments, their juxtaposition of having fun with issues of race makes the historical and cultural context of the dance and its racial identity appear as if they were in opposition or as if cultivating this knowledge would somehow dissipate the pleasure of dancing.

The idea that information about the racial identity and cultural history of the dance must necessarily be separated from the pleasure of learning the dance was disturbing, but this sentiment was even more worrisome because it had become an impediment to the cultivation of the dance (and, more important, to the economic profit for a select few gained by keeping students enrolled in dance classes). Why would raising the issue of African American identity turn students away from the dance? The discourse of having fun seemed to necessarily exclude discussion of race or historical context as somehow antithetical and incongruous to cultivating the dance as something that one could just enjoy for the fun of it.

While the investment in maintaining a colorblind or race-free community is couched in terms of the discourse of having fun, this is not coming only from whites as a strategy of rationalization; it is found among African American dancers as well. By following this discourse across racial lines, as one shared by blacks and whites, we can see the depth of its pervasiveness in the ways that dancers conceptualize and articulate the world of the Lindy Hop. The discourse of having fun misses the fact that conceptualizing and articulating the Lindy Hop in this way severs the historical and cultural context of the dance from its current cultivation. That the discourse of having fun is always used to counter or is juxtaposed to any discussion of race in relation to the dance, as if knowledge of the dance or the acknowledgement of its African American identity is somehow antithetical to having fun, suggests that the discourse belies much deeper sentiments about the negotiation of white desire in relation to African American culture. The discourse of having fun denies the material and symbolic consequences of the white appropriation of African American culture by deflecting the need to acquire any information about the cultural form other than what is needed for whites to cull pleasure from it. In a multicultural world where cross-racial interaction could be cultivated through the explicit and reflexive participation in shared cultural forms, the discourse of having fun seals off this possibility, generating an amnesia or vacuum around the dance. As a result, it is not just African Americans who are dominated through the severing of the form from its historical and cultural context but also Whites, in their inability to fully comprehend the cultural forms in which they are participating, the consequences of their actions, and that taking pleasure in African American culture could lead to a greater connection to African American people as well.

CONCLUSION: THE SYMBOLIC POWER AND VIOLENCE OF DISCOURSES

This article examines the dominant discourses or viewpoints through which dancers conceptualize and articulate their engagement with the Lindy Hop. Using Bourdieu's concepts of symbolic power, symbolic violence, and misrecognition with ethnographic analysis allows us to move beyond the racist/antiracist rhetoric that frames much of the work on white interaction with African American culture and the outcomes of that interaction, using what Wacquant (1997) refers to as the "logic of the trial": parceling out guilt or innocence to participants in attempts to convict or vindicate whites of racism.¹¹ Instead, the alternative theorization presented here, grounded in Wacquant's analytic of racial domination, illuminates the ways in which these discourses serve as mechanisms of racial domination by decontextualizing and dehistoricizing the Lindy Hop from its African American cultural and historical context (Wacquant 1997: 226).

By shifting the focus of investigation away from individual expressions and psychological guesswork over the "real" intentions or motivations of any particular individual and instead focusing on the discourses of their expressions, I expose how these multiple viewpoints on the Lindy Hop are articulations of larger racial ideologies that are not separate from, but rather embedded in, the very ways that people conceptualize and articulate everyday cultural practices. This analysis reveals how the seemingly innocuous ways we conceptualize our everyday worlds are never neutral but always the product of invested power relations; even in what people believe to be race-free settings like the Lindy Hop, the racial domination that is a product of these expressions may be contrary to the intentions and desires, both conscious and unconscious, of those who participate in them. As a result, we can understand how a society organized in racial domination does not consist simply of whites dominating African Americans through the severing of cultural forms from their social contexts or distorting the role that race plays in structuring everyday life. Rather, these relations of power dominate whites themselves, as they are prevented from full participation in the very practice they are trying to cultivate and denied the opportunity for forging a cross-racial multiculturalism built around common investments in shared cultural practices.

Only by revealing the mechanisms through which symbolic power/violence operate can we begin to dismantle a system of social organization structured in racial domination. This is a matter of changing not just people's minds but rather the very logic through which people conceptualize and articulate the world. Through this new form of conceptual schemata, based on a different racial logic, we can transcend the liberal myths of multiculturalism based on cultural appreciation and begin to forge an alternative multiculturalism based on cultural participation.

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NOTES

1. This article is part of a much larger project to address this issue. The Lindy Hop can be seen as one of many examples in a long line of African American cultural forms that are engaged and adopted by white society. The focus of this article is to pinpoint a specific case of white engagement with African American culture, the Lindy Hop—not to theorize or offer a definitive explanation as to how, why, when, and where white engagement leads to racial erasure or racial domination for all times and places.
2. I use the term *white racial domination* instead of *white racism* not as a semantic distinction but as an epistemological one. *White racism* retains the residues of prejudice, discrimination, and the intentions of agents, whereas *white racial domination* refers to the structural organization of society based on racial position.
3. For examples of discourses that fall into the traps that Bonilla-Silva (2003: 54) and Wacquant (1997: 225) argue against, see hooks (1994), Hall (1997), Maira (2002), Root (1998), and Ziff and Rao (1997).
4. By moving toward a paradigm of racial domination, we can understand how agents reproduce racial inequality without the need for deciphering intentions (prejudice or discrimination) or by relying on simple structural models of racial essentialism (structural racism).
5. See Emery (1998) and Stearns and Stearns (1964).
6. See Stowe (1994) and Erenberg (1998).
7. See Penner (1999) and Vale and Wallace (1998).
8. For a discussion of the logic of trial, see Wacquant (1997: 222).
9. See Bourdieu (2000b: 213), Bourdieu and Wacquant (1991: 25), and Auyero (2001: 175–77) for how the logic of disinterest and misrecognition operates.
10. For a discussion of the historical roots of the Lindy Hop, see Stearns and Stearns (1994) and Vale and Wallace (1998).
11. For recent sociological attempts to overcome this, see Bonilla-Silva (2001, 2003) and Bonilla-Silva and Doane (2003).

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