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Embodiment & Oppression: Reflections on Haslanger

> "As I understand them, feminist and queer theory consist not only in giving account of the meaning of lives of women and men in all their relational and sexual diversity…Feminist and queer theories are also projects of social criticism. These are theoretical efforts to identify certain wrongful harms or injustices, locate and explain their sources in institutions, and social relations, and propose directions for institutionally oriented action to change them. The latter set of tasks requires the theorist to have an account not only of individual experience, subjectivity and identity, but also of social structures" (20). *On Female Body Experience*, Iris Marion Young

1. Introduction

In *On Female Body Experience: Throwing Like A Girl & Other Essays*, Iris Marion Young argues that social criticism is the aim of feminist and queer theory. The task is to understand oppression and how it functions. Know thy enemy, so as to better resist.

Much of Sally Haslanger's work fits Young's description of feminist and queer philosophy, and her newest article, "Cognition as a Social Skill," is no exception. In it, Haslanger theorizes the mechanisms of social oppression as well as modes of resistance. My aim in this essay is to specify what I believe is insightful and special about Haslanger's project. However, I will also explore what is missing from it, namely, an account of what Young calls "individual [embodied] experience, subjectivity, and identity." This omission constitutes a serious problem, in my view—one that has been noticed repeatedly by philosophers engaged with her recent work. This essay begins to document the problem and why it matters, both for theory (specifically, for the task of theorizing oppression) and practice (specifically, for the task of identifying ameliorative interventions).

2. Haslanger's project: the big picture & what's new

There is a lot to love about Haslanger's project, so let me start with that. In her work, one finds a special framework for understanding oppression. In particular, she is interested in "ideological" forms of oppression, i.e., "those that are enacted unthinkingly or even willingly by the subordinated and/or privileged" (Haslanger 2018, 1). On her view, ideological oppression is especially worth theorizing because it is "insidious" and "far more difficult to identify and critique" than "directly coercive" and violent forms of oppression (1).

Her newest article—"Cognition as a Social Skill"—extends this project in new directions. Its stated aim is to explain how human consciousness and agency "can be colonized under conditions of injustice" (FN 2, p. 1). How, and why, do we get co-opted so easily and, sometimes, without our

apparent notice? This is not a new question for her. In two recent articles, she notes that humans have "psychological capacities…to be responsive to and learn from each other" and argues that these have a role to play in maintaining injustice (Haslanger 2017b, 156-7; Haslanger 2017a, 14). The new article nonetheless is a departure. Whereas a phenomenon called *mindshaping* used to be a blip on the radar, it now moves front and center. Haslanger identifies it as the psychological capacity—or, rather, the set of capacities—responsible for humans' tendency to participate in unjust practices and patterns of thought.

Had Haslanger exclusively discussed mindshaping in her article, it would still be worth reading. The mindshaping literature is fascinating, and it has not received great uptake in the feminist philosophy community. This is surprising, in a way. Like many feminist philosophers, advocates of mindshaping argue that human cognition is inherently *interpersonal* (hence social) and *embodied* (hence reflects one's social and historical positioning). Like feminist philosophers, advocates of mindshaping also emphasize the kind of looping effects in which theorists of oppression have long been interested (Mameli 2001, 613).

The views of phenomenologists and mindshaping advocates also overlap. Both groups have been avid critics of the view that humans' primary mode of cognition involves explanation and prediction. In *How The Body Shapes The Mind*, phenomenologist Shaun Gallagher calls attention to "our pragmatic way of 'being in the world'" and argues that,

> phenomenology tells us that explanation and prediction are relatively rare modes of understanding others, and that something like evaluative understanding about what someone means or about how I should respond in any particular situation best characterize most of our interactions (Gallagher 2005, 212).

Additionally, phenomenologists have emphasized the value-laden, normative nature of perception and cognition, something that advocates of mindshaping also emphasize. For example, in *Visible Identities*, Linda Martín Alcoff argues that, "racism is manifest at the level of perception itself" (Alcoff 2006, 184). Her point is not just that racist predictions and explanations affect what we see and don't see. Rather, she suggests that perception involves epistemic practices and bodily habits, which embody a kind of *racial etiquette* (184–5). Etiquette is, of course, inherently prescriptive.

These convergences are noteworthy. They suggest that theorists with methodologies and views quite different from Haslanger's are likely to be interested in mindshaping. Advocates of mindshaping provide a new kind of argument for the kind of claims that feminist philosophers have traditionally wanted to defend. Mindshaping arguments are "new" because they are rooted in claims about the evolutionary development of humans.

However, before feminists—or anyone, for that matter—can decide whether the mindshaping literature is ultimately useful, more information is required, much more than Haslanger provides. I, for one, have a great many questions. What, exactly, are the costs and benefits of the mindshaping model of social cognition? What is the empirical evidence in its favor? How does this evidence compare to that in favor of its competitor, the mindreading model?

Haslanger does not fully answer these questions, but she does provide a basic sense of what the mindshaping model says. According to it, humans have evolved to possess a tendency towards *conformity* and *cooperation*. In particular, we are good at picking up whatever practices and ways of thinking dominate our immediate environments. Not just that, humans are natural norm enforcers. We regulate both our own and others' behavior and thoughts, so as to reduce "counter-

social dispositions" (Zawidzki 2013, 114). Humans do so in a number of ways, according to the model, "including imitation, pedagogy, norm cognition and enforcement, and language-based regulative frameworks, like self- and group narratives" (29).

While the story sounds plausible, the details get controversial, fast. To fill out some of these details, consider the work of Tadeusz Wiesław Zawidzki, a theorist whom Haslanger cites approvingly and at length. According to Zawidzki, every instance of mindshaping has two components: "it aims at something, that is shaping minds" and, second, "it requires representing that which it aims to accomplish, that is, shaping minds in a specific way" (30). Yet, as he notes, one must be careful. An advocate of mindshaping cannot interpret "representing" as something that requires language. Nor can one understand "aiming at" as something an agent does, intentionally.

The reason why is simple, though not obvious if you're reading only Haslanger: mindshaping is supposed to be *prior to* mindreading. Here is what this means. When it comes to evolutionary history, humans must have had the capacity to shape others' minds before we had the ability to attribute beliefs or desires or emotions to other humans, i.e., to read minds. Moreover, mindshaping mechanisms are supposed to explain why human beings have evolved to develop sophisticated language. As a result, the representations involved in mindshaping must be conceptualized non-linguistically. Mindshaping must be able to occur, even if we take no view on what other people think, feel, or perceive and even if we had no language in which to conceptualize what they might think, feel, or perceive.

The alleged priority of mindshaping raises a puzzling question: how can you shape someone's else's mind, and "aim" to do so, without having a view about what that person thinks or even a language in which to think? As Zawidzki notes, this is a hard question. But it must have an answer, if mindshaping is to be a viable model of social cognition. Here is the key if he right:

> the goals, functions, purposes, or aims that help constitute mindshaping are [and must be] understood *teleofunctionally*, that is, in terms of what the mechanisms associated with mindshaping were selected for in evolution (31).

Accordingly, he defines mindshaping as follows:

> To state the definition formally, mechanism X mindshapes target Y to match model Z in relevant respects R, S, T…if and only if (1) effecting such matches is X's "proper function" in Millikan's (1984) sense; (2) X is performing its proper function, that is, causing Y to match Z in respect to R, S, T,… (3) Y is a mind, understood as a set of behavioral dispositions or the categorical basis for them; (4) X's performance of its proper function is guided by representations of R, S, T,…; and (6) Z is or is somehow derived from an agent other than the agent to which Y belongs (32).

This definition says a lot, and what it communicates to me is this: "CAUTION!" Though mindshaping resonates with claims that I find appealing as a feminist, the required assumptions for endorsing the model are quite heavy. People don't mindshape. Mechanisms do. Some of these mechanisms are sub-personal: they are exclusively "neural" (60). For example, Zawidzki discusses "a series of powerful yet counterintuitive experimental results in social psychology" that suggest, "human beings automatically, unintentionally, and unconsciously match each other's non-

functional behaviors" (50). These behaviors include "postures, mannerisms, gestures, facial expressions, and accents" (60). Other mechanisms are partially outside the brain and are "distributed across multiple agents, as in pedagogy or guided imitation, where a teacher can help the target match the model" (31). In all such cases, we must say that the mechanisms "have an aim" and "a proper function." Moreover, to get the model going, we must say that the relevant neural or extra-neural mechanisms are guided by "representations" in a very specific *telosemantic* sense. Furthermore, one must be willing to endorse an extremely controversial evolutionary story about how, when, and why these mechanisms were selected and the way in which language emerged out of mindshaping.

I am not, in principle, against endorsing controversial claims! My point is this: readers of Haslanger's article deserve to know the philosophical and empirical baggage associated with mindshaping. Since Haslanger cites Zawidzki approvingly and relies on his evolutionary story, she appears to be endorsing the above claims. As readers, we deserve to know whether she thinks that the mindshaping model (for example, as developed by other theorists like Victoria McGeer) requires such claims and why we ought to endorse them. Zawidzki is clear. He believes that the model does require the above claims. Without an evolutionary story, there is no way to establish the priority of mindreading over mindshaping, or vice versa. "The distinction between mindreading and mindshaping," he writes, "cannot be captured in terms of simple empirical tests…no crucial experiment can vindicate one understanding at the expense of the other" (xii). Both models of social cognition embrace the same empirical results; they just understand their significance differently.

Let me now turn to a related issue. "Cognition as a Social Skill" is not just about mindshaping. Indeed Haslanger is only interested in mindshaping for instrumental reasons, i.e., because it purports to explain why humans participate so naturally in oppressive patterns of thought and action. "In my paper," Haslanger writes, "I aim to show how social meanings shape thought and action and how this provides us with resources for thinking about ideology and ideology critique" (7). This way of putting her project takes the emphasis off of mindshaping and places it on culture. Culture, she explains elsewhere, "is a network of social meanings, tools, scripts, schemas, heuristics, principles, and the like, which we draw on in action, and which gives shape to our practices" (2017b, 155). To better analyze culture's role in the colonization of consciousness, Haslanger deploys a new set of theoretical resources in her article, borrowed from sociologist Pierre Bourdieu and political scientist James Scott.

The article's second novel feature consists in Haslanger's incorporation of these new tools into her theory. In particular, Haslanger adopts the following concepts: doxa, heterodoxy, orthodoxy, and hidden transcripts. Each of these concepts is complicated in its own right, and I will not explain them here. My point for now is only that these are novel additions to her theory, and they bring her account of oppression into deeper conversation with a wider set of literatures in sociology, history, and political science. They also serve to supplement her existing account of the ways in which people absorb—as well as resist—oppressive views and practices.

3. An aesthetic & political interlude

Now that I've sketched what is new and provocative in Haslanger's article, I want to say something about my experience reading it. This article was not an easy read for me. In fact, it left me feeling disoriented and, if I am being honest, a little bit upset.

I wasn't initially sure why, but I knew this: I had the feeling of déjà vu. When I was an undergraduate, Foucault was my first love, and I studied Merleau Ponty and Heidegger with Hubert Dreyfus and Hans Sluga. As a twenty-something, when I encountered conceptual bricolage, assorted concepts layered one upon the other, I saw it as a challenge. That's why, at the time, I read anything and everything by Foucault. Every article, lecture, interview, every book. Not to mention the secondary and tertiary literature. I was obsessed. I wanted to master all the concepts and the arguments associated with them. I found it exhilarating to unravel the initial mystery and understand a small piece of intellectual history. Doing so gave me a sense of mastery, and it changed the way in which I understood the world.

Yet, over time, the feeling of exhilaration gave way. The more that I wrote about Foucault and those in his intellectual orbit, the more frustrated I became. Just as *you* need to buy in to the system to understand it, so do your interlocutors. Of course buying in takes time and patience, and it is costly. When everyone buys in, the result is endless interpretative battles. These began to seem insular to me, even pointless. I decided that I wanted to do a more accessible kind of philosophy. I got a second bachelors degree, where I studied exclusively analytic philosophy.

In "Cognition as a Social Skill," Haslanger draws on a bevy of diverse concepts, which all fit together in a very particular way. Mindshaping, doxa, heterodoxy, orthodoxy, and hidden transcripts. Five new and complicated conceptual tools, introduced quickly. Plus half a dozen graphs that are supposed to show how all the parts fit together. Encountering the bricolage, I experienced dread this time, not excitement. I put down the paper, got up from my uncomfortable seat on the airplane, and paced the aisles for a while. Understanding Haslanger's theory of oppression already takes a lot of work, even without these new additions. The concepts are not intuitive. Reading is like navigating a dense forest, tangled with underbrush; one gets lost quickly and getting out is not easy.

This, in retrospect, is part of what upset me. To really engage with Haslanger's new article, a costly investment is required. One can't simply access what interesting about it by reading. One must sink weeks and weeks, if not longer, into doing the research that illuminates the significance of the various distinctions, concepts, and arguments. These things don't jump off the page and explain themselves. As a reader, I was upset that this was being demanded of me—and others. Hadn't inaccessibility and insularity been the reason that I abandoned a certain kind of philosophy, so many years ago?

As I reflected more, I realized my reaction had feminist roots. Beautiful articles—articles that I aspire to write and read as a feminist philosopher—are not esoteric. They are both intellectually challenging and accessible. Accessibility is a paramount virtue, for which I am willing to sacrifice a lot. When I think of these virtues, I think of theorists like Iris Marion Young and bell hooks. I think, too, of what I call "the bell hooks rule." In her first book *ain't i a woman: black women and feminism*, hooks writes:

> I decided early on that I wanted to create books that could be read and understood across different class boundaries. In those days, feminist thinkers grappled with the question of audience: who we did want to reach with our work? To reach a broader audience required the writing of work that was clear and concise, that could be read by readers who had never attended college or even finished high school. Imagining my mother as my ideal audience—the reader that I most wanted to convert to feminist thinking—I cultivated a way of writing that could be understood by readers from diverse class backgrounds (hooks 2015/1981, xi).

According to hooks, accessibility and clarity are crucial, both aesthetically and politically. This is also writer Claudia Rankine's position. In a recent interview, Rankine talks about her first book, *Don't Let Me Be Lonely*, the predecessor of *Citizen*. She says:

> One of the things that I wanted in *Don't Let Me Be Lonely* was for the language to be transparent. I didn't want people to have to stop and think, I don't know what she means by that. I wanted it to feel simple, accessible, conversational. As a writer, this was the challenge—How do you get the ideas of Butler or Laurent Berlant or Derrida or all the reading you've done, inside the seven sentences that say, I saw this thing and it made me sad? And how do you do it in a way that the research material is not effaced, that trace elements are still present? That seems to me always to be the challenge—to create transparency and access without losing complexity (Rankine 2016).

One might complain: Rankine is a poet. There are special challenges that go with writing poetry. Perhaps so. On the other hand, analytic philosophers celebrate these very same virtues. In "To Do Metaphysics as a Feminist: Reflections on Feminist Methodology in Light of the Hypatia Affair," Ásta notes that what attracted her to analytical philosophy was its emphasis on clarity, as well as its radical potential. "Clarity and precision," she writes, "is a sharp knife for cutting through the obsfucation of demagoguery, ideological manipulation, and plain confusion" (Ásta 2017, 2).

All of this is to say: I felt, and feel, conflicted about the new article. While it is chock full of interesting concepts and insights, good feminist theory ought to be accessible. Much of Haslanger's other work is. However, this new piece drifts into obscurantism. Obscurity and complexity are not the same thing.

4. The problem of embodiment

As I thought about the accessibility of her new work, it began to dawn on me that there was another, related problem. Often Haslanger uses personal experience as a touchstone for theorizing. For example, in "Race & Gender: (What) Are They? (What) Do We Want Them to Be?" she begins her analysis by noting "it is always awkward when someone asks me informally what I'm working on and I say that I'm trying to figure out what gender is" (Haslanger 2000, 31). Similarly, in "Changing the Ideology and Culture of Philosophy: Not by Reason (Alone)," she opens with a personal observation about her experience as a female philosopher, announcing:

> there is deep well of range inside me. Rage about how I as an individual have been treated in philosophy; rage about how others I know have been treated; and rage about the conditions that I'm sure affect many women and minorities in philosophy, and have caused many others to leave (Haslanger 2008, 1).

When writing about adoption, family, and race, Haslanger also makes it clear that the subject matter is personal: she is an adoptive parent of two African American children (Haslanger 2005, 265-6; Haslanger 2009, 7). However, there are no personal reflections in "Cognition as a Social Skill."

One could argue that the omission is coincidental and that she could add a few vivid examples to make the theory more accessible. But I suspect the fix is not so easy. As far as I can tell, the failure to cite personal experience—hers or anyone else's—in "Cognition as a Social Skill" is a symptom of her methodology.

Consider the framework Haslanger uses to explain ideological oppression. She uses the lens of *social practices*, i.e., "patterns of behavior that enable us to coordinate and distribute resources" (2017b, 3); *social structures*, i.e., "sets of interconnected practices" (2018, 4); *social relations,* i.e., "links between nodes in a structure" (2) and *ideological formations*, i.e., "the practices, institutions, along with the thinking and acting shaped by ideology" (7) which both justify and help constitute the system as a whole.

Within this conceptual landscape, individuals are understood as "nodes" in social structures. As nodes, they are integral to the system. However, there is no exploration of the ways in which individuals *experience* oppression. Nor is any there any explanation of how *bona fide* agency is possible, given humans' affinity for social conformity. Nor do we hear how, exactly, humans are capable of changing the social structures in which they find their choices and agency "shaped" and "constrained."

Haslanger's view of gender fits nicely with this model. To be a woman, according to Haslanger, is to occupy a particular position in a social structure. She formulates the view as follows:

> S is a woman iff S is systematically subordinated along some dimension (economic, political, legal, social, etc.) and S is "marked" as a target for this treatment by observed of imagined bodily feature presumed to be evidence of a female's biological role in reproduction (2000, 39).

According to this view, what makes you a woman is not your lived experience or your relationship to gender norms. What makes you a woman is that you are subordinated in particular ways due to your perceived reproductive function.

There is a problem with accounts like this, and it is not about accessibility per se. Haslanger's analysis of oppression, like her view of gender, lacks an account of what Young calls "individual [embodied] experience, subjectivity, and identity" (Young 2007, 20). The omission is not accidental. When Haslanger explains ideological oppression, she intentionally frames her explanations in terms of social structures and the processes by which they are maintained. Such processes can be described without resorting to the nitty-gritty details of any particular individual's psychology, including facts about how it *feels* for someone to inhabit a certain kinds of body. Such details are therefore irrelevant.

Many feminists will object here, and rightly so. Compare Haslanger's view with Iris Marion Young's. Like Haslanger, Young offers a structural analysis of gender. "What it means to say that individual persons are gendered," Young argues, "is that we all find ourselves passively grouped according to these structural relations, in ways too impersonal to ground identity" (22). However, Young does not end her analysis there. Instead she argues that a theory of gender—defined structurally—must be supplemented with an analysis of the lived body.

Young also sinks time and effort into understanding oppression from an embodied perspective. The lived body, she writes, "is a unified idea of a physical body acting and experiencing in a specific sociocultural context; it is a body-in-situation" (16). Drawing on research

in the phenomenological tradition, including the work of Simone de Beauvoir and Toril Moi, she fills out the concept of a lived body in a vivid, relatable way. "Each person," Young writes, "is a distinctive body, with specific features, capacities, and desires…is born in a particular place and time, is raised in a particular family setting, and all these have specific sociocultural histories that stand in relation to the history of others in particular ways" (18). Each lived body is therefore unique. On the other hand, individuals face a range of limitations and possibilities that apply across the board to people like them. So there will be commonalities in how people live out their embodiment. For instance, in "Throwing Like a Girl," Young argues that there are typical "modalities of feminine body comportment, manner of moving, and relation in space" (30). Here is one example:

> Women tend not put their whole bodies into engagement in a physical task with the same ease and naturalness as men. For example in attempting to lift something, women more often than men fail to plant themselves firmly and make their thighs bear the greatest proportion of the weight (33).

Note that Young is not asserting a universal claim. "The account developed here," she writes, "claims only to describe modalities of feminine bodily existence for women situated in contemporary advanced, urban, industrial society" (30).

With the concept of the lived body, intentionality and agency rise to the forefront. "The most primordial intentional act," Young writes, "is the motion of the body orienting itself with respect to and moving within its surroundings" (35). We can choose to go this way or that, respond to an obstacle blocking our path in one way or another. Similarly, she argues, individuals have options in how they respond to the "systems of evaluation and expectations" that shape and constrain them (17). "The idea of a lived body," Young explains,

> …recognizes that a person's subjectivity is conditioned by sociocultural facts and the behavior and expectations of others in ways that she has not chosen. At the same time, the theory of the lived body says that each person takes up and acts in relation to these unchosen facts in her own way (18).

The interplay of choice and constraint is constant.

Haslanger might interject: I, too, recognize the importance of embodied experience! If individuals weren't agents with particular identities and experiences, there would be nothing for culture to colonize. Moreover, "Cognition as a Social Skill" recognizes individuals' capacity for agency. Hidden transcripts and heterodoxy wouldn't be possible if humans had no choice but to conform. Moreover, individuals are partially constituted by social relations and practices; so they are necessarily embodied beings with embodied minds. She even says: "social meanings are responsive to our embodied engagement with the world" (2018, 7).

Notice the difference, though. Haslanger's theory of oppression is perhaps consistent with the existence of embodied experience, as well as the possibility of resistance. Maybe it even presupposes their significance. Nevertheless, one finds no substantial engagement with embodied experience or individual agency in her theory. Haslanger offers a "top-down" structural theory of oppression, supplemented by a discussion of mindshaping. But it is never clear how mindshaping relates to agency. Mindshaping mechanisms are "exclusively neural" or they are "socially

distributed" (Zawidzki 2013, 62). First-person experience is not central to the model. Nor does mindshaping give you any handle on how or why individuals could resist oppression and realize their agency, for example, by creating hidden transcripts.

The mystery thus remains. How is resistance possible, if we accept Haslanger's theory of oppression? How, if at all, does embodied experience matter? And, more generally, how do individuals and their agency fit into explanations of how oppression is functioning "on the ground."

5. The problem of embodiment: theoretical and practical ramifications

The fact that I am circling back to these questions is not surprising. They constitute a constant thread in critical appraisals of Haslanger's recent work. Follow the threads with me, by way of conclusion.

Criticism 1–Pigeonholing and Disrespect. One thread of criticism goes as follows. Because Haslanger's theory ignores embodied experience, it ends up pigeonholing individuals in problematic ways.

Though Young could certainly lodge this criticism, one finds it articulated forcefully by other feminists. Katharine Jenkins, for example, argues that Haslanger's account of gender is disrespectful to transwomen (Jenkins 2016, 396). Diagnosing why, she points to the purely structural nature of Haslanger's view. To count as a woman, according to Haslanger, you must be perceived as having a certain kind of body, namely, one capable of fulfilling a female reproductive role. As Jenkins notes, some transwomen will not be subordinated for this reason. They will be subordinated for other reasons. If so, they won't truly be women, according to Haslanger. Jenkins objects: "the concept of *being classed as a woman* [in the structural sense] and *having a female gender identity*" should be given equal weight in feminist theory (416). If feminists would give these concepts equal weight, they could craft an analysis of gender suitable for the purposes of feminist liberation. They would be able to see transwomen as *bona fide* women. Haslanger cannot do this, Jenkins explains, because her analysis prioritizes social structures.

Criticism 2–Explanation & Agency. Remember, next, that Haslanger characterizes individuals as nodes in a structure. One could perhaps argue that this way of describing human beings is disrespectful because it characterizes individuals as interchangeable, agency-deprived cogs. However, there are *explanatory* worries in the vicinity as well.

Consider this one. Theresa Lopez and Bryan Chambliss argue that Haslanger's explanations of individual choice are incomplete (Lopez and Chambliss ms). According to Haslanger's theory, individuals act in certain ways because of their location with historically contingent, culturally specific social structures. Yet not all individuals react to the constraints of their social position in the same ways. Two similarly situated people might have radically different relationships to social norms; they may have conflicting values and preferences, as well as divergent attitudes toward risk. If so, structural explanations cannot tell the whole story about individual choice. What we need, Lopez & Chambliss argue, are explanations of choice that appeal both to unique features of *individual psychology* as well as *social structures*. They call these *integrative* explanations of choice.

Critical race theorists often argue for integrative explanations as well. There is a vast, rich literature here. Let me mention two recent examples, from sociology. In "Producing

Colorblindness: Everyday Mechanisms of White Ignorance," Jennifer Mueller criticizes structural models of colorblindness. She argues that such models "generate explanations that are prone to reify structures while minimizing the agency, creativity, and militancy of whites as a corporate group" (Mueller ms., 8; Mueller 2016). For example, theorists who endorse structural explanations invariably emphasize constraints on individual choice, painting individuals as passive cogs in a larger system. However, she argues, individual actors perpetuate injustice—and hide their complicity—in creative and effortful ways. Moreover, their strategies will not catch your notice if you are looking only at institutions or habitual behaviors. In a recent article, Glenn Bracey and Wendy Moore take a similar tack when explaining why the evangelical church is so white. Noting that structural explanations of racial segregation dominate the sociological literature, they argue that such explanations hide the ways in which evangelicals in majority-white churches actively exclude potential black congregants. Bracey—a black man with an evangelical history—gathered the data himself. "While we acknowledge the role that macrosocial forces play in maintaining segregation" they write, "we contend that structural relations require institutional dynamics and human actors" (Bracey & Moore 2017, 284).

Though these sociologists do not engage with Haslanger's work specifically, their criticisms apply to her theory. Like Young, they argue that one cannot adequately explain how oppression functions without paying close attention to embodied agents *and* the ways in which they exert their agency within social structures.

Criticism 3–Embodiment & Resistance. A final thread of criticism focuses on Haslanger's account of resistance.

Think of Audre Lorde. In "The Uses of the Erotic," she writes that, "the erotic cannot be felt secondhand" (Lorde 2007/1984, 59). It can only be felt first-hand, from the inside. Explaining what she means, Lorde writes:

> As a Black lesbian feminist, I have a particular feeling, knowledge, and understanding for those sisters with whom I have danced hard, played, or even fought. The deep participation has often been the forerunner for joint concerted actions not possible before (59).

As Lorde observes, being together with others in an embodied way—dancing, sweating, arguing—is a source of solidarity. However, this source of solidarity is obscured if we use a methodology that focuses exclusively on structural aspects of social reality, for example, habitual patterns of behavior or thought.

Alex Madva makes a complementary point. In addressing sexism, racism, and other forms of injustice, Haslanger recommends that we focus our activist energy on structural-level reforms. Madva thus dubs her a "structural prioritizer" (Madva 2016, 703). Structural prioritizers argue that we should reform social structures, and individual-level changes will follow. For example, if we better integrate neighborhoods using public policy, racial prejudices will decrease. Echoing the other critics mentioned so far, Madva takes issue with the strategy: "I believe that it is false and misleading to claim that we should prioritize structural over individual change" (702). Neither deserves priority, he argues. We need both kinds of changes to fight oppression; moreover, structural-level interventions must be accompanied by individual-level interventions in order to be maximally stable and effective.

In a similar vein, Robin Zheng criticizes Haslanger's exclusive emphasis on structural reform. "It is all very well to say that we need structural solutions rather than reformed individuals," she writes, "but it is much less obvious what kind of collective action should be taken and how" (Zheng forthcoming, 6). According to Zheng, justifying collective action to individuals requires convincing them that they should take personal responsibility for unjust social structures. However, questions of personal responsibility are "necessarily addressed from the first- and second-personal practical perspective" (5).

Know thy enemy so as to better resist. In Madva and Zheng, in Jenkins, in Lopez and Chambliss, as well as others, one hears the echo of Iris Marion Young. A purely structural theory of oppression, Young argues, cannot explain how oppression gets its hooks in the lived body, as well as the variety of ways in which individuals perpetuate and experience oppression. Nor can it explain why and how and why resistance is possible. To fully explain oppression, she insists, and to effectively fight it, a theory must incorporate both social structures *and* the lived experience of individuals.

"Cognition as a Social Skill" returns us to this basic problem. Despite its new bells and whistles, the essay is more of the same. Indeed, if anything, it underscores more than ever the need for Haslanger to give embodied experience its proper due.

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