

# We Aren't All Integrationists: A Radical Critique of Racial School Integration

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Volume 30, Number 3, 2023

URI: <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1111137ar>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7202/1111137ar>

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Publisher(s)

Canadian Philosophy of Education Society

ISSN

2369-8659 (digital)

[Explore this journal](#)

Cite this article

Wheeler-Bell, Q. (2023). We Aren't All Integrationists: A Radical Critique of Racial School Integration. *Philosophical Inquiry in Education*, 30(3), 221–239. <https://doi.org/10.7202/1111137ar>

Article abstract

*Since the Second World War, racial integration has been the dominant way of framing racial justice. Those who advocate integration believe that racial justice would be achievable if Blacks were given an equal opportunity to compete on par with Whites. However, racial integration was critiqued most radically and vocally during the 1970s and early 1980s Black Power era. While the Black Power movement never coalesced into a unified critique of integration, it radically shifted debates within the Black public sphere. The attack on Black radicalism and the rise of neoliberalism combined to create a condition in which critiques of capitalism and demands for radical social transformation were increasingly seen as outdated, irrelevant, or a promotion of totalitarianism. This paper focuses on how the ideology of integration manifests in Derrick Darby and John Rury's (2018) book, *The Color of Mind*. The ideology of integration is the hegemonic system of explicitly or tacitly held beliefs that misrepresents significant aspects of social reality by assuming that racial justice is solely, or even primarily, about integrating Blacks and other racialized groups into liberal capitalism. Darby and Rury reproduce the ideology of integration by framing racial justice as a fight for integration. To move beyond the ideology of integration, we must seriously engage the Black radical tradition, which requires philosophically reconstructing reasonable, but radical arguments within the Black radical tradition.*

# *We Aren't All Integrationists: A Radical Critique of Racial School Integration*

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*Since the Second World War, racial integration has been the dominant way of framing racial justice. Those who advocate integration believe that racial justice would be achievable if Blacks were given an equal opportunity to compete on par with Whites. However, racial integration was critiqued most radically and vocally during the 1970s and early 1980s Black Power era. While the Black Power movement never coalesced into a unified critique of integration, it radically shifted debates within the Black public sphere. The attack on Black radicalism and the rise of neoliberalism combined to create a condition in which critiques of capitalism and demands for radical social transformation were increasingly seen as outdated, irrelevant, or a promotion of totalitarianism. This paper focuses on how the ideology of integration manifests in Derrick Darby and John Rury's (2018) book, *The Color of Mind*. The ideology of integration is the hegemonic system of explicitly or tacitly held beliefs that misrepresents significant aspects of social reality by assuming that racial justice is solely, or even primarily, about integrating Blacks and other racialized groups into liberal capitalism. Darby and Rury reproduce the ideology of integration by framing racial justice as a fight for integration. To move beyond the ideology of integration, we must seriously engage the Black radical tradition, which requires philosophically reconstructing reasonable, but radical arguments within the Black radical tradition.*

## **Introduction**

Racial integration has a long and contentious history, and since the Second World War, it has been the central way of framing racial justice (see Dawson, 2003; Winant, 2002). Advocates for racial integration believe justice could be achieved if Blacks were given an equal opportunity to compete with Whites. However, Black radicals have challenged the notion that justice requires racial integration, the most fervent critiques expressed during the Black Power era of the 1970s and early 1980s. While the Black Power movement never coalesced into a unified critique of integration, it radically shifted debates within the Black public sphere. During this time, even staunch advocates of integration had to confront the question: How can integration be desirable if the basic structures of America are unjust? However, as Black radical organizations were attacked and Black activists killed or jailed during the 1980s, this question was increasingly discredited and dismissed. In addition, the fall of the Berlin Wall and the rise of neoliberalism created a cultural ethos in which liberal capitalism was interpreted as the ultimate horizon of political and economic possibilities (see Fraser, 1997; Traverso, 2017). Because of the rise of this neoliberal ethos, radical critiques of capitalism increasingly appeared as outdated, irrelevant, or a promotion of totalitarianism (see Wheeler-Bell, 2018). This made it challenging to frame racial justice in

a discourse around radical social transformation and strengthened the ideological hold that integration had, and currently has, over the public imagination.

This paper challenges the commonly held belief that racial justice means integrating schools to ensure Blacks are given an equal educational opportunity to compete on par with Whites. We shall call this belief the “integrating to equalize opportunity” argument for clarity. As I explain in this paper, this argument reproduces what I term the “ideology of integration.” I define ideology pejoratively as the system of explicitly or tacitly held beliefs that mask deep-seated structural injustices (Geuss, 1981; Thompson, 1990). The ideology of integration is the hegemonic system of beliefs, held explicitly or tacitly, that misrepresents significant aspects of social reality by assuming racial justice is solely, or even primarily, about integrating Blacks (or other racialized groups) into liberal capitalism (see Wheeler-Bell, 2018). The integrating to equalize opportunity argument is problematic because it assumes integration into capitalism is morally desirable, which masks the structurally unjust nature of capitalism. In other words, the ideology of integration operates by making it seem as if Blacks have not levelled reasonable critiques against integrating into mainstream liberal capitalist America.

In this paper, I explain how the ideology of integration manifests in Derrick Darby and John Rury’s book, *The Color of Mind*. I focus on this book because it is a “historically informed justice-based argument” for racial integration—that is, it uses history to make a case for racial integration. However, this book reproduces the ideology of integration by neglecting the historical (and current) critiques Blacks have levelled against integration, thereby framing racial justice as integrating Blacks into “mainstream America” (read as liberal capitalism). Had Darby and Rury acknowledged the historical debates around integration, they would have needed to normatively confront the fact that not all Blacks were, or are, integrationists. Organizations like the Black Panthers, the Nation of Islam, and the Dodge Revolutionary Workers Union, to name a few, believed integration within American society to be undesirable because it is inherently a white supremacist capitalist society. However, by neglecting these historical debates, Darby and Rury problematically start their normative argument from the unquestioned and ideological position that racial justice requires integrating Blacks into liberal capitalism. Had these historical debates been taken seriously, they would have needed to address the question: How can integration be desirable if the basic structures of America, including capitalism, are unjust?

Before proceeding, let me clarify that I am not critiquing all racial integration arguments. I am critiquing only the integrating to equalize opportunity argument: the idea that racial justice requires integrating Blacks into social institutions and practices that Whites have access to so that Blacks can be allowed an equal opportunity to compete on par with Whites in capitalism. Not all scholars frame their case for racial integration this way (see Blum & Burkholder, 2021; Stanley, 2017). However, I argue that racial justice is commonly framed this way, which is ideological. Thus, I use *The Color of Mind* as an example of how the integrating to equalize opportunity arguments ideologically mask capitalist domination. I develop this argument as follows. Section 1 briefly explains my interpretation of the *Color of Mind*, aimed at pre-empting accusations of misinterpretation. Section 2 outlines Darby and Rury’s definition of the *Color of Mind* and critically examines their approach to linking dignity injustice, opportunity gaps, and racial integration as a unified solution to eradicating the *Color of Mind*. Section 3 defines the ideology of integration and explains why integration has become the dominant way to frame racial justice. Section 4 explains how Darby and Rury’s argument for integration masks capitalist domination. Section 5 briefly sketches a critical theory of racial justice that avoids the ideology of integration. Section 6 confronts three potential criticisms against my argument: 1) a possible ideological bias towards the Black radical tradition, 2) the conflation of social integration with school integration, and 3) concerns about the legitimacy of Black-controlled institutions.

## A Matter of Interpretation?

Before diving into my analysis of Darby and Rury's work, it is crucial to clarify the interpretive lens that shapes this critique. My approach is rooted in an ideological critique, a method aimed at unearthing the unspoken or tacit assumptions that underpin an argument and may conceal forms of domination or oppression (Haslanger, 2021; Wheeler-Bell, 2021). It is worth noting that while Darby and Rury never explicitly invoke the term "liberal capitalism," their argument rests on assumptions about the moral desirability for Blacks to integrate into liberal capitalism. This becomes evident when scrutinizing their work closely. Specifically, two primary issues surface: first, their reliance on a social mobility argument for integration, and second, their reduction of the range of Black political perspectives.

In giving Darby and Rury a close reading, as I argue, it becomes evident that their argument for integration inherently relies on what David Labaree (1997) terms "social mobility arguments." These arguments are based on equipping individuals (or groups) with the requisite skills, habits, and credentials (including academic classes) to increase their chances of accessing finite societal goods, like employment or elite education. What makes this relevant to my critique is the tacit, and ideological, assumption behind these "social mobility arguments": they apply social mobility within a liberal capitalist class structure. Therefore, my critique aims to illuminate this implied aspect of Darby and Rury's argument, exposing how it offers an unspoken endorsement of liberal capitalism.

Second, a pivotal question sits at the heart of my critique: Who is the intended audience for Darby and Rury's argument for integration? Is it Whites, Blacks, or both? This question is not trivial. Their case seems predominantly aimed at persuading Whites of the benefits of integration. However, it lacks moral grounding when it comes to the Black community. This oversight is not just problematic but significant. For one, any fair discussion on integration must engage with Blacks and Whites, providing the philosophical underpinning for each. Furthermore, a fair argument for integration should also engage the (radical) Black intellectual tradition. Specifically, it should address the debates among Blacks who argue that overt or implied integration requires accepting liberal capitalism (Harris-Lacewell, 2006, pp. 26–28). Strikingly, these debates should be included, but are not, in Darby and Rury's work and many other philosophical defenses of integration (see Anderson, 2010; Blum & Burkholder, 2021; Darby & Rury, 2018; Stanley, 2017). This absence is not merely an oversight; it is where the ideological groundwork of their argument lies—a point I will revisit shortly.

## The Color of Mind

In *The Color of Mind*, Darby and Rury analyze the racial history behind the achievement gap, revealing it as a social construct rather than a reflection of innate or cultural deficiencies among Blacks. They introduce the term the "Color of Mind" to capture the ideological history perpetuating the belief in Black intellectual inferiority. As they state:

The Color of Mind is a caustic ideology that has buttressed white supremacy, understood both as a *descriptive* thesis indicating that whites are superior to blacks and as a *prescriptive* thesis signaling that whites should dominate blacks or enjoy a more favorable allotment of social benefits and burdens. (p. 12)

They track the construction and reproduction of the Color of Mind to explain how the ideological belief in Black intellectual inferiority has been (and is still) integral to perpetuating racial domination.

However, unlike other historical accounts, Darby and Rury bring a normative dimension to their argument; that is, they philosophically explain the harms resulting from the Color of Mind. They ground their normative argument in what they term "dignitary injustices," which are injustices "present when practices, processes, or ways of treating persons render them unable to stand in relations of equality with

other persons” (Darby & Rury, 2018, p. 3). While Darby and Rury do not fully develop the idea of dignitary injustice, the gist of their argument is this: human dignity is based on a sense of mutual recognition in which everyone should be socially recognized as moral and social equals (see Darby, 2009). The Color of Mind prevents Whites from recognizing Blacks as social and moral equals because it constructs a socially accepted ideological belief that Blacks are intellectually inferior to Whites. The debate concerning the Black–White achievement gap reproduces the Color of Mind because it falsely frames this gap as one that stems from Blacks’ educational deficiencies (i.e., intellectual inferiority) rather than one that is “rooted in the opportunity gaps of the present and the past” (Darby & Rury, 2018, p. 11).

While adding a normative dimension is noteworthy, their approach intertwines three distinct and only somewhat related concepts: dignitary injustices, opportunity gaps, and integration. They string these concepts together by arguing that to achieve dignitary justice, it is essential to address opportunity gaps, which necessitates integration. However, this conflation raises critical questions: How are the distinct “dignitary injustices” they identify intrinsically linked to this chain of arguments?

Darby and Rury link these different conceptions together by advocating for what they term an “integration realist approach.” Their advocacy centres on the need to eradicate the Color of Mind to achieve what can be interpreted as racial justice. According to Darby and Rury, the Color of Mind must be eradicated to achieve dignitary justice (read as racial justice). Schools can combat the Color of Mind by taking what they term an “integration realist approach,” which they distinguish from an “integration idealist approach.” Integration idealists, they state, “believe that simply mixing people of different races together within institutions and neighborhoods will be sufficient to overcome the stigmatizing effects of the Color of Mind” (Darby & Rury, 2018, p. 108). They take issue with this approach because it overlooks how schools can have an integrated student body while perpetuating sorting practices that can create internal segregation. The integration realist approach, on the other hand, avoids this problem by “bring[ing] black and white students together within schools, formally and socially, [and] work[ing] in tandem with contravening the Color of Mind” (Darby & Rury, 2018, p. 155). By this, they mean schools must be formally integrated and structured to eradicate practices that reproduce the Color of Mind. Darby and Rury claim that school administrators can implement an integration realist approach by eliminating three interschool practices: tracking, racialized disciplinary practices, and racializing special education students.

The crux of Darby and Rury’s argument is that achieving dignitary justice necessitates addressing opportunity gaps, which they believe naturally calls for integration. However, this line of reasoning encounters a problem: not all harms they identify are intrinsically tied to their proposed chain of logic. For instance, consider the specific examples of dignitary injustices perpetuating the Color of Mind, such as racialized disciplinary actions and special education practices. In these cases, the primary injustice is not necessarily their potential impact on opportunities—although those implications are undoubtedly significant. Instead, the core harm resides in the stigmatization of Blacks through unjust status labels, thereby undermining the inherent respect they are due. It is important to note that not all the injustices Darby and Rury identify are connected to opportunity gaps. This brings us to a pressing question about their integration realism approach: If the harm stemming from racialized disciplinary actions and special education are not primarily rooted in opportunity inequalities, then why conflate these issues with opportunity gaps and place them under the broader umbrella of integration?

While Darby and Rury may leave these moral questions unanswered, their emphasis on opportunity gaps finds its roots in the problems around school tracking. However, upon closer examination, it becomes evident that their primary justification for integration hinges on a functional argument aimed at social mobility rather than a moral one founded on achieving Black dignity. They write:

Where opportunities to take such classes and be taught by the “best” teachers are limited, and where future opportunities for advanced education and quality employment prospects are so extremely competitive that academic preparedness can make a difference in who gets them and who does not, allowing better-off families to hoard these valuable opportunities seems unfair to

lower-SES [socio-economic status] students, whose parents may lack resources, social capital, and wherewithal to gain access to them for their children. (Darby & Rury, 2018, p. 131)

Their commitment to a functional argument for integration becomes evident as they continue their critique of schools that relegate Blacks to lower-tracked classes. They assert: “The less demanding classes where these students generally land offer scant intellectual or academic growth, doing little to prepare them for future study at the collegiate level or for skilled employment” (Darby & Rury, 2018, pp. 115–116).

In extending Darby and Rury’s focus on high-status classes and social mobility, we find that this perspective serves as the crux connecting the following elements: dignity injustice, opportunity gaps, and integration. Specifically, they argue that providing Blacks with access to courses that prepare them for college and skilled employment is crucial. Their opposition to tracking in schools—and, by extension, their advocacy for integration—rests firmly on this social mobility argument. They assert that de-tracking classes broadens opportunities, particularly for Blacks, to engage in coursework with Whites that is conducive to upward mobility. Implicit in this argument is an ideological assumption: equalizing opportunity within the framework of liberal capitalism is both morally justifiable and practically achievable. This line of reasoning underscores what I term the “ideology of integration,” a concept we will now unpack and critique.

### The Ideology of Integration

We are now faced with the following conundrum: How has racial justice been reduced to a plethora of social and educational policies aimed at ensuring that Blacks are given an equal opportunity to compete on par with Whites in capitalism? Moreover, how do these policies get labelled “racial integration”? Simply put, how has the term “integration,” which identifies a process, come to represent the end goal of racial justice? This conundrum occurs because “integration” has become an ideology, specifically, *the ideology of integration*. Integration now operates as a hegemonic system of explicitly or tacitly held beliefs that misrepresent significant aspects of our social reality by assuming racial justice is solely, or even primarily, about integrating Blacks (or other racialized groups) into liberal capitalism. As argued elsewhere, we live in a time when liberal capitalism has become falsely interpreted as the ultimate horizon of political and economic possibilities (Brown, 2008; Fraser, 1997; Traverso, 2017; Wheeler-Bell, 2018). Within our neoliberal ethos, it has become increasingly natural and ideological to frame justice in terms of equalizing opportunity within liberal capitalism rather than within the language of radically transforming liberal capitalism (Fraser, 1997). Consequently, racial justice is ideologically framed as integrating Blacks into mainstream America to give them an equal opportunity to compete on par with Whites in liberal capitalism.

I cannot fully recap here the social-historical circumstances that led to the transformation in the discourse of (racial) justice. Instead, I shall briefly outline how this shift has occurred. Racial integration has been the dominant way to frame racial justice since the Second World War (Dawson, 2003). Those who advocate for integration believe racial justice would be achievable if Blacks could compete on par with Whites. However, racial integration has been challenged; some of the most radical and vocal critiques of integration having been expressed during the Black Power era of the 1970s and early 1980s (McCartney, 1993). While the Black Power movement never coalesced into a unified critique of integration, it radically shifted debates within the Black public sphere (Eyerman, 2001). During the Black Power era, even staunch advocates of integration had to confront the question: How can integration be desirable if the basic structures of America are unjust? However, this question was increasingly discredited and dismissed as Black radical organizations were attacked and Black activists were killed or jailed during the 1980s (Joseph, 2007). In addition, the rise of neoliberalism created a cultural ethos in which liberal capitalism is interpreted as the ultimate horizon of political and economic possibilities (Brown, 2008;

Harvey, 2007; Traverso, 2017). Thus, the attack on Black radicalism and the rise of neoliberalism are two factors that gave rise to a condition in which critiques of capitalism and demands for radical social transformation are increasingly seen as outdated, irrelevant, or a promotion of totalitarianism. As a result, the hegemonic discourse for justice (racial or otherwise) has increasingly centred around equalizing opportunity within liberal capitalism. Only within this context can Darby and Rury argue that integration presupposes liberal capitalism as desirable.

### ***Ideology and the Misrepresentation of the Black Tradition***

To explain how the discourse on racial justice has ideologically shifted, I will use a brief thought experiment. Imagine Darby and Rury writing *The Color of Mind* during the height of the Black Power movement. It would be hard to imagine a reasonable normative argument for integration during this time that did not address the debates over the politics of integration, which would also explain why integration into capitalism is justified. With the rise of neoliberalism, it now seems reasonable to make such an argument because liberal capitalism is taken as the ultimate horizon of economic and political possibilities. In other words, we live in a social ethos in which people do not even see the need to address the moral demands for radical social transformation and the abolition of capitalism. Instead, people ideologically assume that integration into liberal capitalism is desirable. Moreover, within this neoliberal context, the term “integration,” which identifies a process, can come to represent the end goal of racial justice.

With this brief background in mind, let us examine how the ideology of integration operates within *The Color of Mind*. Here, I use the term “ideology” pejoratively to mean a system of explicit or tacit beliefs that mask or distort deep-seated structural injustices (see Geuss, 1981; Larrain, 1979; Thompson, 1990). Pejorative conceptions of ideology are often associated with false consciousness; however, I do not equate ideology with false consciousness. False consciousness is one way ideologies are reproduced; there are other ways our belief systems distort injustices. The task of an ideological critique is to trace the various ways beliefs operate, either explicitly or implicitly, to mask structural injustices (Bohman, 2000b). Here, I am concerned with *the ideology of integration*, the hegemonic systems of beliefs held explicitly or tacitly that misrepresent significant aspects of social reality by assuming racial justice is solely, or even primarily, about integrating Blacks into liberal capitalism (see Wheeler-Bell, 2018).

To understand how Darby and Rury reproduce the ideology of integration, we first must investigate how they frame (or fail to frame) the historical debates around integration. While Darby and Rury correctly detail the history of the Color of Mind, they fail to investigate the historical debates surrounding integration. As a result, their integration realist approach is based upon an is–ought fallacy; that is, their assumption that one’s “natural conclusion” that racial integration ought to be the solution once one knows that the Color of Mind *is* a problem. This is–ought fallacy is exemplified in Darby and Rury’s normative argument for integration. For example, they argue that the Color of Mind is a dignitary injustice and that human dignity requires “pursuing social arrangements in which persons can relate to each other not as superiors and inferiors but as moral and social equals. In practice, it entails ordering social practices and institutions to enable such interactions” (Darby & Rury, 2018, p. 144). While human dignity does indeed require ordering social practices and institutions to make individuals stand as moral and social equals, it does not logically follow that integration ought to be the process of achieving this goal. Their description of the Color of Mind does not lead one to conclude that integration is necessary and sufficient for eradicating this problem.

Darby and Rury take the first step towards reproducing the ideology of integration by neglecting the historical (and current debates) over the politics of integration. Had Darby and Rury investigated the poignant and reasonable critiques against integration, they would have needed to confront their is–ought fallacy. By neglecting these debates, they fall into the problem of *conflating the ends with the means*. This problem is aptly articulated by Malcolm X when asked about Dr. King’s integrationist politics. He states:

No, well, that's where Dr. King is mixed up. His goals should be the solution of the problem of the black man [and woman] in America, now. Not integration. Integration is the method toward obtaining that goal. And what the Negro leader has done is gotten himself wrapped up in the method and has forgotten what the goal is. The goal is the dignity of the black man in America. He wants respect as a human being. He wants recognition as a human being. Now, if integration will get him that, all right. If segregation will get him that, all right. If separation will get him that, all right. But after he gets integration and he still doesn't have this dignity and this recognition as a human being, then his problem is still not solved (X, n.d.-b).

Despite some of Malcolm X's problematic language, he aptly critiques integrationists for confusing *the goal* of racial justice with *the means* of achieving this goal. Malcolm X explains why conflating the means with the ends is problematic. As he states, "instead of working for [the White man] and helping him hold up a government that continues to suppress us socially and exploit us economically and oppress us politically, let us go and enter our own territory and use our own talents to uplift ourselves by our own bootstraps. And then he will recognize us for what we are" (X, n.d.-a). The takeaway here is not Malcolm X's argument for lifting oneself by one's bootstraps but rather his observation that integration is desirable *only* if the basic structures of America are *not* designed to suppress, exploit, and oppress Blacks and others. For Darby and Rury to make a robust normative case for integration, they must also explain why the pre-established institutions and goods they envision Blacks accessing are justly structured. If these institutions *are* designed to suppress, exploit, or oppress Blacks and others, then integration is *not* a morally desirable means for achieving racial justice. They, however, do not make this case. Instead, they assume racial justice requires integrating Blacks into pre-established institutions.

### ***Ideology and Equalizing Opportunity in Capitalism***

Darby and Rury's second step towards reproducing the ideology of integration is equating racial justice with *equalizing opportunity*, thereby presupposing capitalism to be a morally desirable economic system. For instance, when Darby and Rury argue that dignitary justice (read as racial justice) requires providing Blacks with an equal opportunity to compete on par with Whites, they also assume the social arena in which Blacks and Whites compete is justly structured. However, the social arena is capitalism, which means Darby and Rury assume capitalism is *not* designed to exploit and dominate Blacks and others, thereby interpreting integration into capitalism as morally desirable. However, Black radicals have, and do, contest these premises. They argue that capitalism is not a morally justifiable economic system because it structurally incentivizes exploiting and dominating workers, especially Black workers (Bhattacharyya, 2018). As such, many Black radicals view capitalism as inherently unjust and would therefore disagree with the normative claim that racial justice should be equated with equalizing opportunity within capitalism (Bush, 2000).

As a counterexample that might explain why Black radicals would oppose framing racial justice in terms of equalizing opportunity within capitalism, imagine advocating for equal opportunity within the context of American slavery. It would amount to saying that justice entails integrating Blacks into a slave economy and providing them with an equal opportunity to compete with Whites over the ownership of slaves. This example is hyperbolic, but it echoes sentiments amongst Blacks who have opposed and currently oppose integration. For instance, Kwame Ture (aka Stokely Carmichael) critiqued integration in his 1966 speech given at the University of California, Berkeley, in which he stated:

We are raising questions about this country. I do not want to be a part of the American pie. The American pie means raping South Africa, beating Vietnam, beating South America, raping Philippines, raping every country you've been in. I don't want any of your blood money. I don't want it. Don't want to be part of that system. And the question is, how do we raise those questions? How do we raise them as activists? (Carmichael, 1966)



Echoing a similar structural critique of America, Angela Davis states, “I believe profoundly in the politics of democracy, but democracy needs to be emancipated from capitalism. As long as we inhabit a capitalist democracy, a future of racial equality, gender equality, economic equality will elude us” (quoted in Morrison, 2014). If we take the Black radical perspective seriously, my slavery example seems less hyperbolic. Black radicals like Angela Davis and Kwame Ture argue that capitalism is inherently an unjust and exploitative system. From a Black radical perspective, equating justice with equalizing opportunity within capitalism amounts to saying that *justice entails integrating Blacks into a capitalist economy and providing them with an equal opportunity to compete with Whites over who should exploit and dominate the working and lower class.*

In sum, when Darby and Rury neglect the historical and current debates over the politics of integration, they make two ideological moves. First, they neglect those within the Black radical tradition who have already reasonably critiqued integration politics. This paints the ideological picture that all Blacks are, or ought to be, integrationists. Second, by equating racial integration with equalizing opportunity, they tacitly assume Blacks should integrate into capitalism, which relies upon the assumption that capitalism is desirable (Dawson, 2003). To be clear, I am not saying philosophical arguments that rely upon unquestioned assumptions are ideological; philosophers often rely upon unquestioned but *reasonable* presuppositions to frame their arguments. Instead, I argue that Darby and Rury reproduce the ideology of integration by relying upon the *unquestioned* and *unjustifiable* assumption that integration into America (i.e., liberal capitalism) is desirable. They do so by relying on social mobility arguments to justify integration.

Darby and Rury could make two counterarguments. First, they could claim that they do not assume integration into capitalism is desirable but focus on integrating schools. However, this counterargument would chafe against their primary argument for integration. For Darby and Rury to claim they are focused only on integrating schools, they would have needed to put forth an intrinsic argument for integration rather than an instrumental argument. *Intrinsic* arguments claim that racial integration is the only way to achieve a specific value—for example, a claim that students can only learn how to treat others as social and moral equals within integrated schools (see Blum, 2001). On the other hand, an *instrumental* argument claims that school integration is a means to achieve some desired end. Darby and Rury put forth an instrumental argument when they claim Blacks must be integrated into White schools and classes to ensure they have an equal educational opportunity to compete on par with Whites, not an intrinsic argument. Their primary argument for integration is based on the likelihood that racial integration will equalize opportunity.

The second counterargument Darby and Rury could make is that the Black radical tradition is wrong and that integration into capitalism is desirable. We should note that this counterargument contradicts the one above. Darby and Rury can either make the moral claim that integration into capitalism is desirable or that they are *only* focused on integrating schools; they cannot argue both simultaneously. While they may believe that capitalism is morally desirable, they do not defend this position; yet their argument depends upon accepting this as accurate. For example, Darby and Rury do not argue for integrating high-status classes because these classes are more morally worthwhile than other classes. Instead, they claim that we should integrate high-status classes because they are connected to “future opportunities for advanced education and quality employment prospects” (Darby & Rury, 2018, p. 131). This argument, however, depends upon three assumptions about capitalism: 1) capitalism is justly structured to ensure that everyone has access to “quality employment prospects,” 2) quality employment prospects are not based upon exploitative relationships between workers and owners, and 3) the link between educational attainment and access to the capitalist labour market is morally justified. If any of these three assumptions are false, then it is ideological to assume that school integration is morally desirable to equalize opportunity within capitalism. Even the empirical evidence that Darby and Rury use to make their case for integration shows that at least two of these assumptions are morally problematic. I will expand on this below.

### ***Opportunity Hoarding***

Above, I argued that the ideology of integration partly functions by screening out voices that critiqued racial integration. Thus, when integrationists neglect these debates, they paint the ideological picture that the basic structure of America is just (relatively speaking) and that all Blacks ought to be integrationist. However, two additional issues must be addressed to substantiate my ideological critique. First, how do Darby and Rury tacitly assume that integration into capitalism is desirable? Second, what is morally problematic about capitalism? To address these issues, I will explain how Darby and Rury's empirical evidence for arguing in favour of integration illustrates a moral problem with capitalism. By this, I mean Darby and Rury base their case for integration on research on how middle- and upper-class families "opportunity hoard" within education. However, opportunity hoarding is incentivized because of the unjust link between educational attainment and the access it provides to a capitalist labour market that limits the number of available "quality employment opportunities." Simply put, the moral problems surrounding opportunity hoarding within education are incentivized by structural problems within capitalism.

To explain how Darby and Rury tacitly assume integration into capitalism is desirable, I will discuss the problem with how they frame opportunity hoarding, a problem they attribute to tracking. As Darby and Rury argue, "one way high-SES family influence can play out is in their efforts to hoard access to high-track classes and curriculum, and to the 'best' teachers who typically instruct these classes" (Darby & Rury, 2018, p. 130). While Darby and Rury explain that high-SES families engage in opportunity hoarding, they do not explain why they do so. Instead, they misframe opportunity hoarding as a racial issue. As they state:

However, they might take [opportunity hoarding] to show that class, not race, explains how kids get tracked in school. But, as we know, blacks are disproportionately represented in the low-SES category, so this race-neutral proxy for explaining tracking is only one step removed from the point that race does indeed influence who ends up where. Therefore, so long as blacks remain underrepresented in the high-SES group, and this group is best situated to monopolize access to advance educational opportunities in schools, race remains a vital variable in school tracking. (Darby & Rury, 2018, p. 131)

For clarity, we will call this problem "using class as a proxy for race." When Darby and Rury use class as a proxy for race, they misrepresent how capitalism incentivizes opportunity hoarding within education. For example, as Charles Tilly (1999) explains, opportunity hoarding is not an arbitrary phenomenon; rather, it is structurally incentivized. One reason groups hoard is to ensure a competitive advantage when accessing finite goods needed to secure or advance one's life chances. This means opportunity hoarding is not *always* a consciously malicious act. Social structures can sometimes encourage groups to hoard, creating conditions in which even well-intentioned people are strongly incentivized to hoard. When opportunity hoarding occurs systematically, scholars must accurately identify the social structures incentivizing this problem. So, when Darby and Rury use class as a proxy for race, they encourage the assumption that racism is the primary mechanism that incentivizes middle- and upper-class families to hoard. Even their evidence points towards class as an incentive for opportunity hoarding; class-driven opportunity hoarding harms Blacks because they are disproportionately represented in the lower class.

### ***Capitalism and Opportunity Hoarding***

It is impossible to explain comprehensively how capitalism incentivizes opportunity hoarding within education, so I will briefly summarize this argument. A capitalist economy is structured to allow access to finite goods, like employment opportunities, through competitive market arrangements. In addition, capitalism is structured so that a small group of people controls the means and distribution of production

(Wright, 2015). This undermines the possibility of creating an egalitarian labour market that ensures a just distribution of wealth and social goods (Deranty et al., 2007). This means that capitalism limits the number of quality employment prospects and that access to these jobs is determined by competitive market arrangements. Moreover, within capitalism, the life chances and well-being of the middle and upper classes vastly differ from those of the poor and working classes. These factors combined create a hyper-competitive social ethos in which people have strong incentives to opportunity hoard. Thus, in a capitalist society, refusing to opportunity hoard can result in being locked out of the middle and upper class, and facing conditions that severely impact one's life chances (Tilly, 1999).

Furthermore, education is the primary way families ensure that their children can reproduce or better their class status within America and most modern capitalist societies (see Green et al., 1980). A structural connection, therefore, exists between educational attainment and access to the capitalist labour market; this connection incentivizes opportunity hoarding within education. Stated differently, a significant reason middle- and upper-class families influence education to ensure their children "take the right classes taught by the 'best' teachers" is to secure or better their children's life chances within capitalism. Middle- and upper-class families will always have incentives to opportunity hoard so long as education is linked to a capitalist society that only has a limited number of quality employment prospects.

To be clear, I am not saying racial domination cannot be a factor (or even a primary factor) behind opportunity hoarding within education; instead, I argue that the empirical evidence demonstrates otherwise. For example, Linn Posey-Maddox (2014) shows how middle-class White families who choose integrated schools still engage in opportunity hoarding to ensure their children are in the best position to reproduce their class status—for example, taking the right classes taught by the best teachers. In addition, Rollock et al. (2014) demonstrate how Black middle-class families are faced with the conflicting dilemma of negotiating their racial identity and ensuring their children's access to future opportunities and advantages. As they illustrate, even Black families who want their children to develop a positive racial identity with other Blacks face the structural dilemma of needing to opportunity hoard to ensure their own children receive a "quality education." Often, their need to opportunity hoard conflicts with their desire to develop a positive racial identity with other Blacks. These studies demonstrate that class factors are the primary mechanism behind opportunity hoarding. Moreover, both studies indicate that capitalism places both Blacks and Whites within a larger system in which almost everyone has a structural incentive to opportunity hoard if they hope to achieve or maintain a middle- or upper-class lifestyle.

Using class as a proxy for race allows Darby and Rury to misrepresent how capitalism incentivizes class domination *via* opportunity hoarding. This misrepresentation then gives them license to ideologically assume that the basic structure of American capitalism is just. This ideological move becomes apparent in their interpretation of their empirical evidence. For example, I explained above that the integrating to equalize opportunity argument depends upon three moral assumptions about capitalism. However, the empirical evidence Darby and Rury use to explain opportunity hoarding within education demonstrates that at least two of these assumptions are untrue. First, capitalism is *not* justly structured to ensure that all qualified people have access to quality employment prospects. Instead, capitalism limits the number of quality employment prospects and creates stark differences between the middle/upper class and those within the poor/working class (Harvey, 2007; Kotz, 2015). As a result, capitalism creates structural conditions in which different class positions also represent structurally unjust relations: the middle and upper classes tend to occupy positions of the dominating and exploiting class. In contrast, the working and lower classes occupy the position of the dominated and exploited class (Sayer, 2005). Stated differently, those occupying higher socio-economic positions within capitalism are placed in a structural position in which it is in their best interests to engage in practices of class domination *via* opportunity hoarding. This description of the unjust nature of capitalism justifies those Black radicals who critique integration by demonstrating that equating racial justice with an equal opportunity to compete on par with Whites in capitalism amounts to saying: justice entails integrating Blacks into a capitalist economy and providing them with an equal opportunity to compete with Whites over who can exploit and dominate the working and lower class.

Second, the empirical evidence about opportunity hoarding within education shows that the relationship between educational attainment and access to the capitalist labour market is unjust (see Apple, 2006; Ball, 2003; Cucchiaro, 2013; Rollock et al., 2014). This relationship creates what Joseph Fishkin (2014) calls a “bottleneck”: a situation in which many people have to pass through the same narrow passageway to attain a set of goods. As Fishkin argues, the solution for morally problematic bottlenecks is not to push more people through the same narrow passage, as doing so only incentivizes people to hoard more opportunities. Instead, these morally problematic bottlenecks must be radically transformed, which can happen in at least two ways. First, multiple paths can be created for people to acquire the desired goods—for example, fostering diverse ways to attain the skills and credentials needed to access the labour market. Second, bottlenecks can be loosened by de-commodifying the desired set of goods. This would entail providing some goods universally rather than through competitive arenas. For example, a universal basic income grant would help de-commodify labour by making people less dependent on the capitalist labour markets for acquiring basic needs. My point is that the bottleneck created by the unjust relationship between educational attainment and the capitalist labour market helps incentivize opportunity hoarding within education. As such, racial justice should not be framed in terms of integrating to equalize opportunity because it paints the ideological picture that racial justice can be achieved if more Blacks are given the means to compete with Whites over who gets to pass through these narrow bottlenecks. This, however, is a misdiagnosis of the structurally unjust relationship between education and capitalism. Instead, I argue that racial justice should be framed in terms of radically transforming these relationships so that Blacks are given multiple pathways to a meaningful life, including providing some goods universally.

In sum, by relying upon the morally problematic assumption that integration into capitalism is feasible and desirable, Darby and Rury reproduce the ideology of integration. They construct this ideological perspective through a series of problematic moves. First, by neglecting the historical debates over the politics of integration, they start their normative argument from the historically incorrect position that all Blacks are, or ought to be, integrationists. Second, by using the coded language of “integrating into mainstream America,” they mask the fact that they advocate for integrating Blacks into capitalism. Finally, by using class as a proxy for race, they misinterpret opportunity hoarding within education as a racial problem, though the empirical evidence demonstrates that this problem is primarily class driven. All in all, the integration for equalizing opportunity argument paints the ideological picture that integration into liberal capitalism is feasible and morally desirable, and that all Blacks ought to be integrationists.

### **Moving Beyond the Ideology of Integration**

In this section, I briefly explain how to move beyond the ideology of integration. Doing so requires developing what Lucius Outlaw (2005) calls “a critical theory in the interests of black folk”: a critical theory capable of critiquing the complex nature of racial domination, including, but not limited to, injustices tied to capitalism. A critical theory in the interests of Blacks must also explain why justice requires expanding the democratic social power of Blacks and providing them more control over all aspects affecting their life. This theory departs from integrationist approaches, like Darby and Rury’s. The integrationist approach asks: How can we integrate Blacks into mainstream society so they can gain access to the goods and compete on par with Whites in liberal capitalism? As a result, integrationists focus on providing Blacks with access to pre-established goods and institutions to compete on par with Whites. This way of framing racial justice assumes that the basic structure of America is just (relatively speaking), thereby neglecting the need for radical social transformation. On the other hand, the critical approach asks: How can Blacks have greater democratic control over the construction and governance of all the social institutions and practices affecting their lives to ensure they meet the standards of public justification? This way of framing racial justice aims to provide Blacks with greater democratic control to

determine what goods are produced, the institutional arrangements through which they are produced, and the social practices and institutions assigned to distribute these goods.

From this perspective, a critical theory of racial justice is grounded within the Black radical democratic tradition and operates on the premise that *justice is about justification* (Forst, 2014). Justice means ensuring all social practices and power relations affecting someone's life are reasonably justified to the person affected, and democracy is the process by which these public justifications are established. From a critical perspective, justice and democracy are coextensive ideas. Framing justice in this way reflects the reasonable insights found within the Black radical tradition (see Dawson, 2003; Shelby, 2014; Wheeler-Bell, 2018). For example, the first principle of the Black Panther's Ten-Point Platform states:

**We want freedom. We want the power to determine the destiny of our black and oppressed communities.**

We believe that Black and oppressed people will not be free until we are able to determine our destinies in our own communities ourselves, by fully controlling all the institutions that exist in our communities. (Bloom, 2016, p. 71)

### *Justice as Justification: Black Democratic Empowerment*

Despite some problematic Black nationalist rhetoric, the Black Panther Party correctly notes that racial justice should not be equated with integration or equal opportunity (see Bush, 2000). Instead, justice requires providing all people, but primarily Black and other oppressed people, the democratic right to collectively determine their destinies—that is, to democratically control and structure the social institutions and practices affecting their lives. Justice as justification coincides with the Black radical tradition in two respects. First, it allows us to identify domination, injustice, and oppression by tracing the power relations that fail to meet the standards of justification, and therefore are not democratically legitimate. Second, it recognizes that justice is also an emancipatory demand. As Rainer Forst (2011) explains, “The demand for justice is an emancipatory demand ... its basis is the claim to be respected as an agent of justification, that is, in one's dignity as a being who can ask for and give justification” (p. 2).

From a critical perspective, justice, democracy, and collective self-determination are mutually reinforcing ideas. Each mandates the ability of individual people to come together and collectively determine how to govern their lives. Moreover, the norms, laws, and social institutions are reasonably sharable to all those affected, thereby meeting the democratic standards of public justification (Bohman, 2000a). To explain how these ideas interrelate, I will briefly define each term:

- *Justice*: the process of ensuring all social practices, institutions, and power relations affecting a person's life are reasonably and publicly justified. Justice as justification requires the establishment of two conditions: *reciprocity* and *generality*.
  - *Reciprocity* means that democratic deliberation must include all those affected. The condition of reciprocity requires that all people, especially those oppressed, are included in a democratic process and provided with a real and effective opportunity to reasonably influence public deliberation.
  - *Generality* means that the outcomes of democratic deliberation are reasonably sharable among all affected, including the ability to construct social institutions and practices that value individual people as social and moral equals.
- *Democracy* consists of the social, cultural, and institutional practices needed to ensure that people can create, maintain, and govern social arrangements that are publicly justified, as well as participate in the democratic process of public deliberation (Knight & Johnson, 2011; Meckstroth, 2015). Democracy requires ensuring that everyone, especially oppressed people, has the means to collectively participate in the democratic process. Moreover, only by democratically

empowering those who are oppressed can we ensure that social institutions and practices are designed to treat people as social and moral equals (Forst, 2011).

- *Collective self-determination* is the process by which people collectively mobilize their social power to control the social and institutional practices that affect their lives. We should not assume that collective self-determination is inherently valuable because people mobilize for progressive or regressive reasons (see Apple, 2006; White, 2017). Instead, we should interpret collective self-determination as a contingent value: its value is derived from its place within democracy. Collective self-determination is valuable because democracy depends upon individuals forming collective associations, including associations designed to ensure democratically legitimate social institutions and practices (see Warren, 2000).

To sum up the interrelationship between democracy, justice, and collective self-determination: *Collective self-determination* is the mobilization of a group to participate in the democratic process. *Democracy* consists of the cultural norms and institutions that allow individuals and groups to come together and democratically determine how to construct, organize, and run the institutions and social practices that affect their lives. Furthermore, *justice* is about ensuring that the democratic processes and outcomes are publicly justified, meeting the standards of generality and reciprocity.

From this perspective, a critical theory of racial justice is not outright dismissive of integration. Instead, it aims to critique integrationists *who conflate the ends of racial justice with the means of achieving this goal*. The goal of racial justice is to expand democracy to ensure that all, but especially Blacks, are empowered to construct social arrangements and practices that respect all as social and moral equals. The means of achieving this goal are contextually dependent upon the social, cultural, and institutional arrangements that oppress Black people. As a result, an essential task of a critical theory of racial justice is to adequately critique the social institutions and practices that produce and reproduce racial domination and oppression; only then can we identify the appropriate means for realizing justice. Sometimes justice will require reforms to the status quo; other times, it will require integration. However, it may also require radical social transformation. Before identifying the means for achieving racial justice, we must correctly diagnose the causes of racial domination. This is why I argue that a critical theory of racial justice must *critique* the complexity of racial domination and *normatively* account for the need to empower Blacks democratically.

Ultimately, we can contrast the critical conception of justice with Darby and Rury's conception of dignitary justice. For Darby and Rury, dignitary justice does not require expanding the democratic empowerment of Blacks. As a result, they neglect the following questions: Who gets to design and govern the social institutions and practices affecting the lives of Blacks? And who gets to determine what goods are produced and under what conditions? On the other hand, the critical approach interprets dignity and justice as mutually supporting values. Blacks are treated as social and moral equals only when given greater democratic social power to control the construction and governance of the social institutions and practices affecting their lives, including the democratic ability to determine what goods are produced, how they are produced, and under what conditions (see Dawson, 2011; Young, 2011).

### Three Potential Critiques

Before concluding, I wish to address several potential critiques that could be levelled against my argument. These critiques fall under three distinct categories. The first point of contention would be that I am ideologically biased towards the Black radical tradition. The argument here would question whether my focus on the Black radical tradition results in an ideological bias, given that I do not fully engage with some of this tradition's more challenging or problematic aspects. A second critique could be that I am conflating "social integration" and "school integration." This critique would suggest that while social

integration could be interpreted as advocating for integration into a capitalist system, school integration does not necessarily lead to the same outcome, particularly in how Darby and Rury frame it. The third critique might concern the legitimacy of Black democratically controlled institutions. This line of questioning would probe whether my argument might inadvertently legitimize forms of Black control that do not lead to just outcomes. The purpose of addressing these critiques is to expose the ideological underpinnings in Darby and Rury's argument for integration rather than offering a fully developed theory of Black democratic empowerment.

### ***Ideological Bias Towards the Black Radical Tradition***

One might assert that my argument suffers from an ideological bias, notably due to my selective focus on the Black radical tradition of the 1960s and 1970s while sidelining its more problematic or separatist views. In addressing this critique, I offer two points for clarification. First, let us acknowledge that all arguments, mine included, are susceptible to an ideological critique. However, to advance this critique, one would need to demonstrate how I am ideologically masking specific forms of domination, particularly those perpetuated within the Black radical tradition. Second, I am not engaged in formulating a complete philosophical defense of the Black radical tradition. Instead, my focus is narrower: I highlight the Black Panther's platform as an example of a normative argument within the Black intellectual tradition that counters arguments for integration. My reference to the 1960s and 1970s serves to spotlight these often-ignored debates. My contention, therefore, is not to offer a full justification for the Black radical tradition; in fact, I find many (though not all) of their separatist positions morally problematic. Instead, my aim is to outline the contours of a normative argument that captures the insights of the Black radical tradition. These contours align with the normative discussions in the critical theory tradition, which offers a normative framework distinct from—and often opposed to—the liberal analytical framework espoused by Darby and Rury. However, exploring this debate exceeds the scope of this article (see Forst, 2002; Fraser & Jaeggi, 2018; Hedrick, 2010; Laden, 2012; Rostboll, 2009).

Second, I argue that integrationists like Darby and Rury mistakenly treat the Black intellectual tradition as a monolithic entity that universally values integration. The Black intellectual tradition is rich with various perspectives ranging from Black Marxists to Black nationalists and even Black conservatives, each offering a unique critique of integration. The absence of these perspectives in Darby and Rury's argument perpetuates the ideological belief that all Blacks do, or should, value integration. Herein lies my central contention: I am not seeking to provide a robust justification for the Black radical tradition; instead, my argument exposes the ideological shortcomings in Darby and Rury's approach. They sidestep these crucial debates within the Black intellectual tradition, advancing a distorted view that positions integration as universally and normatively desirable for Blacks. More significantly, they fail to provide a compelling normative justification for why Blacks should accept this integrationist stance.

### ***Conflating Social Integration with School Integration***

The second critique one might level against my argument is that I need to differentiate between social and school integration. Critics might assert that while arguments for social integration, like those of Elizabeth Anderson, may either tacitly or explicitly advocate for integration into capitalism, the school integration model advanced by Darby and Rury does not carry the same implications. Indeed, this critique could contend that Darby and Rury are primarily concerned with addressing the various forms of segregation and dignitary injustice occurring within schools that perpetuate the "Color of Mind." Therefore, their call for integration focuses on education, not capitalism.

In response, I concede that there is a difference in arguments for school integration and social integration; the former targets educational settings, while the latter addresses broader societal structures. However, this distinction does not negate the underlying ideological commonality that binds both: they argue for integration (school or social) to ensure Blacks can be more socially mobile within a framework

of liberal capitalism. While social integration arguments may be more overt in their advocacy for integrating into capitalism, this does not preclude school integration arguments from being motivated by the same fundamental logic. As explained above, Darby and Rury advance a functional argument for school integration, which rests on ensuring that Blacks have more social mobility.

For example, Darby and Rury argue that de-tracking schools will provide Black students with better access to higher social classes, thereby increasing their opportunities for accessing elite colleges and career paths. This position fundamentally rests on a social mobility argument. However, what remains unstated in their argument is a discussion of the economic system within which this social mobility is supposed to occur. The implicit answer is capitalism. And it is this implicit assumption that the Black radical tradition has consistently critiqued integrationists for relying upon. In sum, this reveals the ideological work embedded in Darby and Rury's argument: an unspoken assumption that we should restructure the tracking system in education to ensure that Black students can integrate into competitive, high-status classes, thereby increasing their likelihood of accessing elite colleges and career opportunities—in essence, enhancing their ability to access the capitalist labour market. Although the link between school integration and capitalism may not be as overt as in broader social integration arguments, both are motivated by a similar unstated premise: increasing opportunities for social mobility within capitalism.

### ***Legitimacy of Black Democratically Controlled Institutions***

The third critique posits questions about the legitimacy of Black democratic control over institutions, particularly schools. The argument is not that Blacks should not control their schools but rather that having such control does not automatically result in just outcomes. While I recognize the merits of this critique, my response has two prongs. Firstly, the scope of this paper does not permit a fully developed normative argument for Black democratic empowerment; instead, it sketches the contours of such an argument ((Wheeler-Bell, 2022b)). Secondly, my conception of justice as justification demands that schools—whether controlled by Black communities or otherwise—adhere to the standards of justice as justification. The objective is to empower Black communities and ensure that schools are structured in a manner that meets the standards of justice as justification: generality and reciprocity.

My argument parallels the work of scholars like Kathleen Knight Abowitz (2014) and Archon Fung (2003, 2006, 2015), who call for reimagining democratic institutions to empower communities. However, my focus is on the empowerment of Black communities. Expanding local control of schools, as Knight Abowitz suggests, enhances the school's relationship with the local public spheres of a community. In Black communities, this would foster a more robust connection between schools and the Black public sphere—where one finds Black Marxists, Black nationalists, Black liberals, and Black conservatives. Reimagining the schools in this manner is not an integrationist approach; instead, it is a transformative approach: transforming institutions to expand democratic control, especially for (but not only) the Black community, which has historically had such democratic control severely limited (Wheeler-Bell, 2022a).

This brings me back to my critique of Darby and Rury, whose integrationist approach glaringly overlooks alternative avenues for social transformation. This oversight constitutes a significant ideological blind spot. It ignores the possibility of reimagining education to democratically empower Black communities—a theme central to the Black intellectual tradition. It is crucial to clarify that I am not fully developing a theory of Black democratic empowerment in this work. Instead, I introduce the concept to contrast it with Darby and Rury's integration-focused argument, thereby pointing to alternative normative pathways that challenge the misleading notion that the Black community is monolithically pro-integration.



## Conclusion: A Critical Approach

I am sure some might critique my call for radical social transformation as being undesirable or unachievable. However, those who believe radical social change is undesirable must philosophically defend the claim that liberal capitalism is a justifiable political and economic system. While scholars have philosophically defended capitalism, integrationists have failed to do so (see Anderson, 2010). Instead, integrationists, like Darby and Rury, use terms like “mainstream society” or “liberal democracy” as shorthand for a society they deem worthy of integrating into. However, these terms function ideologically to encourage the assumption that capitalism is morally desirable. As a result, it would be unfair for these critics to denounce my call for radical social change without also morally defending liberal capitalism.

Some may also support integration because they believe radical social change is unachievable in the near future. These critics make the categorical and ideological mistake of confusing “what is desirable” with “what is achievable.” Part of the task of normative philosophy is to explain what is desirable, even if the demands of justice seem unachievable soon. However, integrationists ideologically misdiagnose racial domination when they base demands for justice on the likelihood of achieving it. This move is ideological because it requires accepting certain injustices as being unchangeable. As a result, people are not given the full range of philosophical tools needed to diagnose the complex nature of racial domination, especially within capitalism.

The critical approach avoids the ideology of integration in three respects. First, the critical approach does not conflate “what is desirable” with “what is achievable”: the demands of justice should not be compromised because society seems unlikely to achieve these demands. In this regard, a critical conception of racial justice requires that Blacks have greater democratic control over the construction and governance of all social institutions and practices that affect their lives, so they can ensure these institutions and practices meet the standards of public justification. Second, the critical approach provides the conceptual tools to diagnose the various factors that reproduce racial domination, including an interrogation of capitalism. Until and unless we properly diagnose racial justice, we cannot identify the non-ideological yet morally appropriate means for advancing racial justice. Third, the critical approach does not outright dismiss all integrationist approaches but reframes how we understand integration. Ultimately, the critical approach challenges the ideological assumption that racial integration is the means and the end of racial justice. Only by doing so can we analyze the complex nature of racial domination within a capitalist society.

## Acknowledgments

I want to express my sincere gratitude to the following people for their invaluable contributions and support throughout the completion of this research project. Bradley Levinson, Caitlin Howlett, Barry Ball, Cristina McEwen, David Hansen, Lawrence Blum, Lauren Kapalka, Lilly Lamboy, Megan Laverty, Sigal Ben-Porath, Winston Thompson, and two anonymous reviewers at *Philosophical Inquiry in Education*, thank you for your guidance, expertise, and insightful discussions. Your contributions have significantly enhanced the quality of this study.

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### About the Author

**Quentin Wheeler-Bell**, PhD, is an assistant professor in Educational Leadership and Policy Studies at Indiana University. His research explores the intersections of education and democratic theory, focusing on critical pedagogy and the philosophy of education. Dr. Wheeler-Bell holds a PhD in Educational Policy from the University of Wisconsin. His scholarly publications in renowned journals such as *Educational Theory* and *Educational Policy* critically analyze topics including neoliberalism, urban poverty, and social justice education. Currently, he is working on a book exploring the normative dimensions of critical pedagogy.