OTHERING & BELONGING

EXPANDING THE CIRCLE OF HUMAN CONCERN

The Problem of Othering: Towards Inclusiveness and Belonging

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Introduction

The problem of the twenty-first century is the problem of "othering." In a world beset by seemingly intractable and overwhelming challenges, virtually every global, national, and regional conflict is wrapped within or organized around one or more dimension of group-based difference. Othering undergirds territorial disputes, sectarian violence, military conflict, the spread of disease, hunger and food insecurity, and even climate change.[1]

In a remarkably candid and wide-ranging recently published interview, US president Barack Obama cited tribalism and atavism as a source of much conflict in the world.[2] In his view, many of the stresses of globalization, the "collision of cultures brought on by the Internet and social media," and "scarcities," some of which will be exacerbated by climate change and population growth, lead to a "default position" to organize by "tribe—us/them, a hostility toward the unfamiliar or unknown," and to "push back against those who are different."

To see the extent to which group-based differences shape contemporary global conflicts, consider a few less prominent examples from recent headlines:

• Violence erupted between the ethnically Burmese Buddhist majority and the Muslim ethnic minority Rohingyas in Myanmar in 2012. Since then, hundreds of thousands of Rohingyas have been driven from their homes and denied full citizenship rights, despite having lived in Myanmar for centuries.[3] In June 2015, President Obama called upon Myanmar to end discrimination against the Rohingyas.[4]

• In early April 2016, violence erupted in Nagorno-Karabakh, a predominantly ethnically Armenian enclave in southwestern Azerbaijan, where over sixty people were killed and dozens more remain missing. The Armenian population is Christian in the predominantly Muslim country and favors secession and reuniting with bordering Armenia.

• In the fall of 2015, the Turkish government ordered a military attack on separatist Kurds in southern Turkey, and subsequently instituted a curfew in Kurdish-majority towns.[5] Turkey waged military campaigns against Kurds in Syria and northern Iraq, and is afraid that Kurdish rebels are intent on carving out a Kurd nation-state out of the territory of all three states.

Group-based identities are central to each of these conflicts, but in ways that elude simplistic explanations. It is not just religion or ethnicity alone that explains each conflict but often the overlay of multiple identities with specific cultural, geographic, and political histories and grievances that may be rekindled under certain conditions.[6]

In June 2015, a white supremacist walked into a black church in Charleston, South Carolina, during a prayer meeting and shot and killed nine African Americans congregants, including the pastor.[7] The incident prompted deep soul-searching in this former confederate state, which ultimately led to the removal of the historical confederate battle flag from flying atop the state's capital building upon discovering that the shooter had symbolically wrapped himself in that flag.[8] The incident was a painful reminder of how bitterly contested the history of race and the legacy of Civil War and the failed secessionist cause remains.

Recent terrorist attacks in Paris and Brussels also prompted soul-searching among publics in Western Europe, regarding the lack of cultural and geographic integration of ethnic and racial immigrant groups (many of whom hail from former European colonies) and the persistence of discrimination.[9] As one resident of a French *banlieue* put it, "You do everything for France, to be accepted, but you feel you're not welcome."[10] These ethnically identifiable enclaves, a product of urban policy and discrimination as much as housing choice, are a source of alienation and were the site of riots in 2005.[11]

In an interview shortly after the Paris attacks, in which he refused to use the term "Islamaphobia," French prime minister Manuel Valls explained that "[i]t's difficult to construct a single term that captures the variegated expressions of a broad prejudice."[12]This article proposes the term "othering" as an answer to Valls's challenge.

"Othering" is a term that not only encompasses the many expressions of prejudice on the basis of group identities, but we argue that it provides a clarifying frame that reveals a set of common processes and conditions that propagate group-based inequality and marginality. Although particular expressions of othering, such as racism or ethnocentrism, are often well recognized and richly studied, this broader phenomenon is inadequately recognized as such.

We define "othering" as a *set of dynamics, processes, and structures that engender marginality and persistent inequality across any of the full range of human differences based on group identities*.[13] Dimensions of othering include, but are not limited to, religion, sex, race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status (class), disability, sexual orientation, and skin tone. Although the axes of difference that undergird these

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expressions of othering vary considerably and are deeply contextual, they contain a similar set of underlying dynamics.

based inequality and marginality.

In this article, we are primarily concerned with group-based othering. Othering and marginality can occur on a group basis or at the individual level. We have all likely experienced the discomfort of being some place or with people where we did not feel that we belong. For many of us, this feeling is transitory and relatively harmless, such as the discomfort of entering into a conversation in which we are not well versed or the embarrassment arising from being dressed inappropriately for a place or occasion. In this article, our focus is expressions of othering that are more enduring and systematically expressed on the basis of group-based identities or membership.

"Othering" is a broadly inclusive conceptual framework that captures expressions of prejudice and behaviors such as atavism and tribalism, but it is also a term that points toward deeper processes at work, only some of which are captured by those terms. It is not uncommon, for example, to hear commentators refer to Islamaphobia or ethnocentrism as "racism," although religion and ethnicity are not racial categories.[14] Similarly, antigay and lesbian marriage laws or exclusionary gender norms are expressions of othering, yet those who suffer under them are not defined by ancestry, nationality, religion, or tribe.

The fact that so many leaders and writers fumble when describing these expressions of prejudice while grasping for imprecise analogies underscores the lack of a readily accessible term or frame that reflects the full set of intended meanings. "Othering" is a broadly inclusive term, but sharp enough to point toward a deeper set of dynamics, suggesting something fundamental or essential about the nature of group-based exclusion. Similarly, the term "belonging" connotes something fundamental about how groups are positioned within society, as well as how they are perceived and regarded. It reflects an objective position of power and resources as well as the intersubjective nature of group-based identities.

The language of Othering and Belonging does more than capture and describe processes and forces that undergird group-based marginalization and inequality. Othering and Belonging is a pithy and accessible framework by which we might more productively discuss and develop a range of inclusive responses to group-based marginalization and inequality.

Without purporting to offer comprehensive or exhaustive analysis, this article investigates the forces that contribute to othering and interventions that might mitigate some of the excesses. First, we explore conditions under which processes of othering seem to arise and in which specific group-based identities become socially significant. Second, we begin to illuminate the critical forces that structure othering in the world and by which categorical

boundaries and meanings emerge and become institutionally embedded. Finally, we turn toward solutions. We will examine a spectrum of responses to othering and critique many of them as well-intended failures.

We conclude with a call for belonging and inclusion as the only sustainable solution to the problem of othering. As dispiriting as world events may seem, humanity has made tremendous progress toward tolerance, inclusion, and equality. We live in a period of dramatic social change and unprecedented openness in human history. Whether we continue to march toward a more inclusive society while taming our "baser impulses and steadying our fears" depends on us.[15]

Cecilia Paredes | Both Worlds

I. Demagoguery and Power

Millions of Americans were shocked and alarmed when presidential hopeful, and leading Republican presidential candidate, Donald Trump, not only announced his intent to build a wall along the United States-Mexican border to keep out "criminals and rapists," but also demanded a ban on Muslim immigrants, even Syrian refugees, from entering the United States.[16]

Mitt Romney, the 2012 Republican nominee, condemned Donald Trump for "creat[ing] scapegoats of Muslims and Mexican immigrants," as well as for "mock[ing] a disabled reporter," decrying Donald Trump's remarks as "one outrage after another."[17] Speaker of the House of Representatives and putative Republican Party leader, Paul Ryan, denounced Donald Trump's proposal to ban Muslims from entering the United States as anti-American, noting that freedom of religion and antidiscrimination are fundamental constitutional principles.[18]

Nonetheless, Trump's proposal resonated with millions of Americans, anxious of terrorism in the wake of the San Bernardino shootings. Pointing to the prominence of xenophobia in the Trump campaign, some commentators have concluded that Trump is reviving a twenty-first century version of the so-called "Southern Strategy."[19] From the late nineteenth century until the Civil Rights Movement, the American South had been a one-party region, dominated by the Democratic Party. Upon signing the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Democratic president Lyndon Baines Johnson announced that he had "lost the South for a generation," anticipating a white backlash.[20]

Republican political strategists capitalized by quietly appealing to white resentment, even stoking massive resistance to the federal government's push to end segregation and racial apartheid.[21] They did so not only by criticizing federal civil-rights legislation and impugning federal desegregation orders, but by railing against busing, government dependency, welfare, or by espousing such seemingly race-neutral ideas as "states' rights" and "local control" as signals to shield Jim Crow from federal intrusion.[22]

The "southern strategy" was an overwhelming success. Within a decade, the South had flipped from solidly Democratic to Republican, as Richard Nixon won forty-nine out of fifty states in the 1972 presidential election and carried every southern state by large margins. His opponent, George McGovern, only carried Massachusetts and the District of Columbia, a complete realignment of the national electoral map.

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every period of American history.

- In the mid-nineteenth century, the "know-nothing" movement arose in response to waves of Irish and German immigrants, and enjoyed notable electoral success. Railing against these immigrants not only on the basis of their ethnicity but also their religion, they feared the spread of "papist" designs.[23]

- In the early nineteenth century, fears of slave revolts in the South, following the failed uprisings of Nat Turner, Gabriel Prosser, and

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Denmark Vesey, were skillfully manipulated by local politicians to strengthen and reinforce the ramparts of racial slavery in the South, as well as to reinforce federal proslavery legislation, including the Fugitive Slave laws.[24]

- At the turn of the twentieth century, Thomas Watson, one of the leaders of the populist movement and the vice-presidential nominee on the People's Party ticket in 1896, began to stoke racial resentment in order to revive his political career. As a populist, Watson had waged an inclusive campaign against the robber barons, banks, and railroads, championing the common farmer.[25] Watson abandoned his racially inclusive position by 1904 and 1908, and launched racist and nativist attacks in speeches and in his writings to gin up public support in state-wide elections.[26])

- Karl Rove, a senior political adviser whom President George W. Bush called the "architect" of his 2004 campaign, credited eleven antigay and lesbian marriage ballot initiatives for helping reelect the president.[27] He and other Republican strategists believed that these ballot initiatives, which all passed with overwhelming support, were instrumental in getting evangelical, rural, and socially conservative voters, a key part of Bush's electoral base, to the polls in record numbers in key battleground states.

Political strategies informed by "othering" are hardly unique to the United States or even democracies. Aristotle and other ancient Greeks warned of "demagogues"—leaders who used rhetoric to incite fear for political gain.[28] Many autocratic and authoritarian leaders stoke nationalism or resentment or fears of the "other" to prop up or reinforce their own support.[29] Such demagoguery usually involves more than mere appeals to latent fear or prejudice in the population. Demagogues actively inculcate and organize that fear into a

political force. Where prejudice was latent, it is being activated; where it is absent, it is being fostered.

Political and economic instability is an objective condition under which demagoguery becomes a more likely political strategy. The end of the Age of Empires during World War I and the end of the Cold War mark two prominent historical junctures in which tribalism, ethnic tensions, and other forms of othering became especially salient. As empires fall, solidaristic nationalist identities may give way to latent or subordinate group-based identities.

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In a tragic illustration, the Armenian genocide, the first genocide of the twentieth century, was perpetrated as part of an effort to build a more homogenous Turkish state from the ashes of the Ottoman Empire. Similarly, the breakup of Yugoslavia at the end of the Cold War precipitated the Srebrenica genocide in Bosnia, the first European genocide in more than half a century.[30]) In fact, the end of the Cold War and the fall of the Iron Curtain is linked to six different "frozen conflicts" in the former Soviet Union, including the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh noted at the beginning of this article.

Ultimately, however, demagoguery is not an inevitable feature of political life in periods of geopolitical change or economic turmoil. It is a strategy dependent upon the choices of political actors. Adolf Hitler's anti-Semitic rhetoric blamed the economic conditions of the Weimar Republic on the nation's minority Jewish population.[31]) Iraqi prime minister Nouri al-Maliki played to his majority Shia base by refusing to create an inclusive national government, even as his country became riven with internal ethnic and religious conflict that led to his ouster in 2004.[32]

These concerns partly explain President Obama's reluctance to use the term "Islamic" terrorism in association with many of the attacks around the world. Although he has been criticized repeatedly by Republican politicians, President Obama objects to the term "Islamic" terrorism, not only on the grounds that it alienates American allies, such as Saudi Arabia and Pakistan, but the problem he "worries about most is the type that would manifest itself in anti-Muslim xenophobia or in a challenge to American openness and to the constitutional order."[33] In other words, President Obama is keenly aware of how readily

public passions may be inflamed when stoked by strategic othering.

Cecilia Paredes | Transition

II. The Mechanics of Othering

Throughout history and across the globe, elites and political opportunists have promoted social cleavages and appealed to group-based identities to advance their agendas and accumulate or reinforce political power. But how do those cleavages emerge in the first place? How are social groupings translated into policies that sediment these social cleavages and exacerbate intergroup inequality? Without purporting to answer these questions definitely, we sketch out some of the processes that explain these dynamics.

CLASSIFICATION SCHEMES AND CATEGORICAL REASONING

Scholars have long observed a tendency within human societies to organize and collectively define themselves along dimensions of difference and sameness. Studies since the 1950s demonstrate the tendency of people to identify with whom they are grouped, no matter how arbitrary or even silly the group boundaries may be, and to judge members of their own group as superior. Studies dividing students into completely fabricated groups lead to consistently different perceptions of in-group and out-group members.[34] In the 1954 Robbers Cave study conducted on white middle-class boys at a summer camp, researchers discovered that even the smallest perceived differences may generate -intergroup conflict.[35]

Research in the mind sciences in recent decades has begun to reveal processes by which such outcomes may be explained. In particular, research in social psychology and neuroscience illuminates the social construction of group boundaries, the fluidity of these boundaries, the mechanisms by which individuals are sorted into groups, and the emergence of associations and socially significant meanings that map to group differences and extend to individual group members.

To begin with, classification schemes are now understood as necessary to both survival and intelligence, and that human beings may be hardwired to make categorical distinctions. As one scholar explains, "If our species were 'programmed' to refrain from drawing inferences or taking action until we had complete, situation-specific data about each person or object we encountered, we would have died out long ago."[36] To function efficiently, our brains have evolved processes for simplifying the perceptual environment and acting on less-than-perfect information. The mechanism for accomplishing both goals is the use of categories. Associations between color and poisonous berries or appearance and venomous snakes are examples of such categorical reasoning, but they extend to everything in the world, including social life.

Although "human beings are cognitively programmed to form conceptual categories and use them to classify the people they counter," the content, definition, and meaning of those categories is not automatic.[37] In other words, although human beings have a natural tendency to make categorical distinctions, the categories themselves and meanings associated with those categories are socially constructed rather than natural**.**

Our environments and social contexts, which include families, community leaders, and friends, tell us which distinctions matter and which associations, stereotypes, and

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meanings map to those categories. In that way, our environments prime us to observe particular differences and instruct us on which differences are relevant. These associations are not only descriptive; they impart social meanings that help us navigate our social worlds.

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In the 1950s, sociologists developed "group position theory" as a way of explaining race prejudice.[38] According to this theory, group definitions, boundaries, and meanings are the product of complex collective and social processes rather than a result of individual interactions or bias:

> *Through talk, tales, stories, gossip, anecdotes, pronouncements, news accounts, orations, sermons, preachments, and the like, definitions are presented and feelings expressed…If the interaction becomes increasingly circular and reinforcing, devoid of serious inner opposition, such currents grow, fuse, and become strengthened. It is through such a process that a collective image of a subordinate group is formed, and a sense of group position is set.[39]*

This theory suggests how race, or any group-based identity, becomes socially constructed.[40] Rather than arising from an orderly, sequential process, the boundaries of group definition and the constellation of meanings and associations that map to those categories emerge simultaneously.

Once established, group-based identities may seem so fundamental that we ordinarily perceive them as "natural." As one scholar noted, "Race may be widely dismissed as a biological classification, [but] dark skin is an easily observed and salient trait that has become a marker in American society, one imbued with meanings about crime, disorder, and violence, stigmatizing entire categories of people."[41] These associations and shared meanings, in turn, affect our perception of those groups. [42]

UNCONSCIOUS BIAS

Although the discovery of "mirror neurons" suggests that human beings are soft-wired for empathy,[43] the degree of empathy we feel depends on the extent to which we perceive we belong to the same social group. In one study, researchers measured subjects' experiences of pain across races, but they registered a stronger activation of the brain's anterior cingulate cortex (the part of the brain responsible for perceiving the emotions associated with pain) when the subject was of the same race.[44]

In another study, images of persons identified by varying social groupings triggered different responses in the brain when observed under an MRI.[45] Persons belonging to these especially marginalized outgroups did not even trigger recognition at a neural level as being *human*, as if they were animals or objects.[46] Importantly, these studies register results and associations that hold across social groups, even for members of marginalized or stigmatized groups. In the Implicit Association Test, which measures the strength of unconscious group-based associations, 50 percent of African American test-takers registered an unconscious implicit preference for whiteness.[47]

In the last fifteen years, social cognition research has produced similar findings that support elements of group position theory. In particular, scholars have identified two universal dimensions that locate group positions in society: warmth and competence.[48] According to this model, social groups rating low warmth and low competence are regarded as "despised outgroups," which include poor blacks and the homeless according to research findings. Social groups that are viewed as low warmth and high competence are an "envied outgroup," and groups that are viewed as low competence and high warmth are viewed as a "pitied outgroup." Researchers cite Asian Americans as example of the former, and the elderly as examples of the latter.

OTHERING IN THE WORLD

The categorical boundaries and social meanings inscribed in our minds, consciously and unconsciously, do not remain there but manifest in the world. They affect our behavior and inform our decisions, from whom to marry to whom to hire.[49] Individual acts of discrimination on the basis of group-based stereotypes harms its victims, but group-based categories and meanings are social and collective. When replicated across society and over time, individual acts of discrimination have a cumulative and magnifying effect that may help explain many group-based inequalities.[50]

As harmful as discrimination, conscious or unconscious, may be on shaping group outcomes, it is the institutionalization and structural features of othering that perhaps most explain group-based inequalities.[51] Today, the most common mechanism for institutionalizing group-based differences is policies or laws that restrict access to communal resources by out-groups, and thereby hoards those resources for in-groups. Such laws may be explicit, such as racialized immigration and naturalization rules that prevent members of certain groups from becoming citizens, or Jim Crow segregation laws that relegated black Americans to separate and inferior schools, jobs, train cars, restaurants theatres, public bathrooms, parks, and even water fountains. Such laws may also be designed more surreptitiously to maintain group-based advantages.

An example of such an approach is exclusionary land use laws designed to keep out low-income families of color or that restrict whether a social group can move into a neighborhood or a community and allow a dominant social group to control access to community assets and social capital.[52]

Although most effective when state mandated, spatial segregation and market dynamics facilitate the hoarding of communal resources even without the hand of the state.

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For this reason, segregation is often a central feature or revealing marker of societies where othering is occurring. As one scholar explains, "If out-group members are spatially segregated from in-group members, then the latter are put in a good position to use their social power to create institutions and practices that channel resources away from the places where out-group members live, thus facilitating exploitation."[53] Patterns of residential segregation thus facilitate linkages between educational and employment opportunities that protect in-group members' resources and facilitate the exclusion of outgroups, rendering these patterns durable.[54]

When spatial segregation is not possible, group-based stratification is more difficult and costly because "disinvestment in the out-group must occur on a person-by-person, family-by-family basis."[55] It may nonetheless occur on the basis of group-proxies, seemingly "neutral rules" that act as barriers to access, or by prohibiting access to critical institutions, as when women are denied access to prestigious social clubs, such as Augusta National Golf Club, or educational institutions, such as the Virginia Military Institute.[56]

In contrast to the assertions of some economists that businesses with a "taste for discrimination" may become uncompetitive, recent research demonstrates the opposite conclusion: discrimination is "persistent and long lasting in market-based economies."[57] At a minimum, there is evidence that markets do not do an effective job of promoting tolerance.[58] This suggests that curbing discrimination is the provenance of policy rather than market forces.[59]

In summary, human beings appear psychologically programmed to categorize people we encounter at a

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level below conscious awareness. It is this fact that makes othering ubiquitous, yet the expressions so varied across time and space. Neuroscientists have mapped the networks in the brain that define group boundaries and that internalize meanings and assumptions about different social group into mental shortcuts. These shortcuts are used to evaluate groups, events, and anything encountered in the world, but they also underpin and inform judgments about groups and people that are members of those groups. Perception of individuals as members of a group is then filtered through these shared social meanings. Othering then becomes structured in the world through processes that are institutionalized or culturally embedded at different levels of society, from the neighborhood level to the larger political-legal order.

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Cecilia Paredes | Paradise Hands

III. Expanding the Circle of Human Concern

The problem of othering defies easy answers. There have been many responses to this problem, some of which seemed promising but failed to produce a more inclusive society. Other attempts to resolve the problem of the "other" led to crimes against humanity.

In this part of the article, we briefly survey a range of responses and conclude by suggesting the parameters of a sustainable and effective resolution. The range of failed or disastrous responses greatly exceeds interventions that have successfully resolved intergroup conflict and improved intergroup equality. The search for a single, standardized paradigm or intervention may be futile, but there are principles that must inform any sustainable and effective response.

A sustainable and effective resolution must not only improve intergroup relations but reduce intergroup inequities and group-based marginality. A solution that reduces conflict and fosters stability but fails to reduce group-based marginality is not only unsustainable in the long run, but it does not actually address group-based othering.

SEGREGATION

In part II, we noted that segregation plays a critical role in the institutionalization of othering by channeling resource distributions inequitably across social groups.[60] Paradoxically, segregation generally arises as a policy response to resolve social tensions and improve outcomes. For example, gender-segregated schools are sometimes demanded, even in the United States, as a way to improve learning outcomes for boys and girls, who, its defenders argue, have difficulty learning in cross-sex environments, which manifest more behavioral problems.[61] Similarly, military officers long advocated for gender-segregated military units for reasons of cohesion and morale, although, more paternalistically, military leaders privately fear negative public reaction to female casualties.[62]

Among progressive educators today, ability-based education segregation is widely supported and broadly practiced to provide personalized instruction and individual support, whether as a result of a physical disability or to tailor programming to ability levels, such as gifted or advanced placement curriculum. There may be reasons to view ability-based grouping as a

way to provide additional care or superior curriculum differently than educational segregation on the basis of a racial, religious, or gender identity, but it should be noted that many of the arguments for race- or gender-segregated education in the nineteenth century appear suspiciously similar. This explains a growing movement to integrate students with physical disabilities into regular classrooms—it is an attempt to reduce their marginality by socializing with ability-normed students.

However, good faith paternalism often leads to disastrous outcomes. When sectarian tensions began to escalate in Baghdad during the early years of the American occupation of Iraq, Paul Bremer, the US administrator, segregated the city into sectarian enclaves in the name of peace. As a result, Iraq in 2009 was much more segregated than in 2003, unwittingly replicating a colonial trope.[63] Even when presented as a temporary solution to social conflict, segregation should be viewed skeptically. Segregationists in the American South and apartheid South Africa often defended segregation in terms of social differences between the races, justified in the name of avoiding violence and conflict, and few Americans today would defend the internment of Japanese American citizens during World War II, even though the Supreme Court upheld this broadly supported action in the name of national security.[64]

Some scholars assign partial blame for the Rwandan genocide on colonial leaders who, decades earlier, made sectarian identity more salient than it would have been otherwise. Indeed, there is evidence that pan-Iraqi national identity was much stronger before the Bremer regime asked citizens to identify sectarian affiliation.[65] In 2006, then-senator Joe Biden even proposed dividing up Iraq into three different countries—a proposal that many viewed with similar skepticism to the oft-maligned Sykes-Picot Agreement that shaped the national boundaries in the Middle East after World War I and the fall of the Ottoman Empire.[66]

When implemented on the basis of group membership, segregation is not simply physical separation; it is an attempt to deny and prevent association with another group. Denying association with another group is another way of denying that group's basic humanity. In that sense, segregation is not just spatial projects but ontological.[67]

As James Baldwin wrote, "We are all androgynous, not only because we are all born of a woman impregnated by the seed of a man but because each of us, helplessly and forever, contains the other…we are a part of each other."[68] The project of segregation fails to

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acknowledge this deeper reality, and in doing so, exacerbates othering. As one commentator observed in the case of Palestinians and Israelis, segregation has "heightened dehumanization."[69] Segregation, no matter how well intended, must fail to resolve the problem of the "other." It is either a denial of the "other's" full humanity or results in greater intergroup inequality.

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SECESSIONISM

Another response to the problem of the "other" is secession. Rather than being forcibly separated or expelled, this occurs when a group seeks to separate from another by choice. From Scotland in the United Kingdom, to the Catalonian region in Spain, to South Sudan, to Belgium, the secessionist impulse is evident across the globe.[70] Following the Brussels terrorist attack, critics of the Belgian (French speaking) federal government's urban and immigration policy openly speculated whether northern Belgium, ethnically Flemish and Dutch speaking, should secede from the southern, ethnically Walloon, and predominantly French-speaking region.[71]

When a group feels oppressed by another group, secessionism may seem like a reasonable response to resolving intergroup conflict; however, secessionism is actually a close cousin to segregation, if not segregation writ large. Whereas segregation occurs within national boundaries, secession is actually segregation between new boundaries. Although not imposed like most forms of segregation, secessionism suffers from most of segregations flaws. Like segregation, secessionism may reduce intergroup violence, but it does not resolve the problem of the "other." Secession is a denial of civic bonds and, therefore, seeks to cement group-based differences into nationalistic identities.

More deeply, the trend toward balkanization or breakaway movements cannot resolve the problem of othering for practical reasons. Even where a set of identities correspond to potential geographic boundaries, the overlap is unlikely to be perfect. This leaves some members of the other group in the new territory. For example, the proposal to create a Kurdish state out of parts of Syria, Turkey, and Iraq ignores the fact that this new state will have many other minority groups that may have been majority groups in their former states. In creating an ethnic state for Kurdish minorities, a Kurdistan would have new minorities with similar risks for marginalization and othering.

Similarly, the United States has long supported the so-called "two-state solution" for the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as a way of resolving all of the tensions that arise from Israeli occupation of Palestinian territory. However, the two-state solution does not answer the question of what may happen to Palestinian citizens of Israel who do not reside in Palestinian territory.

The destruction of the Austro-Hungarian Empire at the conclusion of World War I also illustrates the varying ways in which remnant nation-states dealt with the multiethnic populations within their borders.[72] Almost every new state "contained fractions of those minorities that had caused the Hapsburgs such problems."[73] The threat of othering and intergroup conflict will always remain, no matter how small the remaining geography. In that sense, secessionism is a project of endless balkanization, with no theoretically stable endpoint except the mass forced migration of peoples, with all of the attendant harms that would entail.

Moreover, group-based identities are multifaceted and complex. No matter how homogenous a society may appear along one dimension of difference, it will always contain a multitude of possible diversities along other dimensions of human difference. There will always be human difference in any society, and a minority or marginalized group in any geography can never be fully extirpated without violence.

The failure of secessionism is already evident in the world's newest nation, South Sudan, whose existence was intended to resolve racial and ethnic marginality by breaking away from Sudan, yet simply reversed them, creating a new majority. Shortly after coming into existence, South Sudan was riven by civil war. And although a fragile peace was negotiated in 2015, the conflict is spilling over the new nation's border.[74]

ASSIMILATION

Another, perhaps more benevolent response to the problem of the "other" is assimilation. Assimilation is an attempt to erase the differences that define group boundaries, such as by teaching the dominant language to a subordinate group or converting the out-group into the dominant religion.[75] Assimilation was a mode of resolving ethnic differences in American society when immigrant groups arrived into the "melting pot." This is how Germans, Irish, Polish, and many other European ethnic groups became "white."[76] However, it is also what happened when many governments, including the American, Australian, and Canadian, attempted to "civilize" native and aboriginal populations. The result was a devastating loss of cultural knowledge and identity.

Assimilation is also a false solution to the problem of othering, as we have defined it, in terms of reducing group-based marginality and inequality. Rather than reduce intergroup

inequality or marginality, assimilation seeks to erase the differences upon which othering is structured. If those differences or identities become socially relevant or personally significant, assimilation, as a project, is a nonstarter.

Moreover, group-based identities and differences cannot be entirely erased. In an assimilationist paradigm, they are submerged or repressed. In this way, assimilation is inherently hierarchical. It demands that the marginalized group adopt the identity of the dominant group, leaving the latter's identity intact. When doing so on the basis of, say, religion, this is not only oppressive but antithetical to American values.

BELONGINGNESS

We believe that the only viable solution to the problem of othering is one involving inclusion and belongingness. The most important good we distribute to each other in society is membership.[77] The right to belong is prior to all other distributive decisions since it is members who make those decisions. Belongingness entails an unwavering commitment to not simply tolerating and respecting difference but to ensuring that all people are welcome and feel that they belong in the society. We call this idea the "circle of human concern."[78]

Widening the circle of human concern involves "humanizing the other," where negative representations and stereotypes are challenged and rejected. It is a process by which the most marginalized outgroups are brought into the center of our concern through higher order love—the Beloved Community that Dr. King envisioned.

A prime example of how we might do this is by sending messages to outgroups that they belong and are welcome in our community and society. In an effort to improve academic performance and graduation rates among marginalized student populations at the University of Texas, the university began reaching out to at-risk students with welcoming messages.[79] This was a product of research that demonstrated that student performance was impacted by self-doubts of one's academic potential. The simple

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message of belonging not only improved academic performance but also improved student health, with those who had received the message having significantly fewer doctor's visits in the study period.

Belongingness must be more than expressive; it must be institutionalized as well. To counteract othering, we must focus on providing access to resources and critical institutions to disadvantaged groups. At the same time, integration is necessary but not always sufficient. Many groups require more than access; they require special accommodations.

The Americans with Disabilities Act, one of the most successful, landmark civil-rights laws in American history, did more than prohibit discrimination; it required proactive accommodations to ensure that merely "equal" treatment did not produce or reinforce inequality.[80] Formal guarantees of equal protection or equal rights are often insufficient to create inclusive structures.

Design of societal-level arrangements must be inclusive to all but especially sensitive to the most marginalized and most multiply disadvantaged.[81] Individuals and groups that are "othered" in multiple ways—known as "intersectionality"—may experience multiple binds of oppression.[82] When individuals or groups experience multiple forms of disadvantage simultaneously, interventions that merely address or target one form of disadvantage will fail to free those individuals from disabling barriers.

Democratic societies may tend to advantage electoral majorities over the interests of minorities, which merely underscores the need for structural safeguards for fairness and inclusivity. There must be representational forms that give voice to minority needs and to ensure that the structures and political processes do not burden minority groups. With a rights-based approach, there are successful examples of overcoming polarization, such as the new consensus on same-sex marriage.[83]

Beyond structural safeguards, we need a vision of society that is inclusive with new identities and narratives that inoculate societies from demagoguery and demonization of the "other" while improving the well-being of everyone. One possible alternative to the "acculturative" strategies of assimilation, integration, separation, or marginalization is "voice" and "dialogue."[84] Voice can give expression to group-based needs and issues without resorting to segregation or secession. This approach is consistent with pluralism and multiculturalism in a democracy.

Pluralism and multiculturalism are solutions to the problem of othering that provide space for not only tolerance or accommodation of difference but that ultimately support

Beyond structural safeguards, we need a vision of society that is

the creation of new inclusive narratives, identities, and structures. If the idea of creating new identities seems radical, consider how recent American national identity is in a historical context, let alone the myriad forms of gender and sex-based identities have emerged only in recent years.[85]

inclusive with new identities and narratives that inoculate societies from demagoguery and demonization of the "other" while improving the well-being of everyone.

In the United States, "Irish" was once a racialized category but is now encompassed within "white."[86] Socially constructed group-based identities are subject to revision and redefinition, and may become more or less salient depending on social conditions. Even individuals may be sorted differently depending on social cues that may map to categorical meanings. In one study, a researcher found that funeral directors were more likely to list a deceased person as "black" if they died as a result of homicide (even when family members listed the person as being of another race).[87] Categorical boundaries are surprisingly fluid, not only at the individual level but at the group level as well.

We must not only create inclusive structures, but we must foster new identities and inclusive narratives that can support us all. This means generating stories of inclusion that reframe our individual and group identities while rejecting narratives that pit us against others. This is partly why President Obama rejects the cultural and ethnic arguments visible in the work of scholars like Samuel Huntington, who counsel in favor of curtailing Latin American immigration and pit Islam as antithetical to the liberal order.[88]

As we transition through political and economic realignments, we also go through a remaking of ourselves. The end of empires and the Cold War were large-scale structural changes that dissolved one set of identities without replacing them with viable, solidaristic alternatives. It is little wonder that latent ethnic and religious identities become most salient. We must offer inclusive alternatives.

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identities while rejecting narratives that pit us against others.

Conclusion

This article explored the widespread problem of othering in the United States and the world. Virtually every global and regional conflict, as well as persistent form of marginality or inequality, is undergirded by the set of processes that deny full inclusion and membership in society. This article argued that othering is not only a more descriptively inclusive term that captures the many expressions of broad prejudice across any of the dimensions of group-based difference, but it serves as a conceptual framework featuring a generalizable set of processes that engender group-based marginality.

Othering and Belonging is a framework that allows us to observe and identify a common set of structural processes and dynamics while remaining sensitive to the particulars of each case. Group-based othering may occur along any salient social dimension, such as race, gender, religion, LGBTQ status, ability, or any socially significant marker or characteristic. This article presented mechanisms by which social differences become institutionalized and structured in the world, and conditions under which identities may shift and demagoguery may seem most appealing.

Finally, we examined how promoting belonging must begin by expanding the circle of human concern. Belonging is the most important good we distribute in society, as it is prior to and informs all other distributive decisions. We must support the creation of structures of inclusion that recognize and accommodate difference, rather than seek to erase it. We need practices that create voice without denying our deep interrelationship.

We cannot deny existential anxieties in the human condition.[89] These anxieties can be moved into directions of fear and anger or toward empathy and collective solidarity. In periods of turbulent upheaval and instability, the siren call of the demagogue has greater power, but whether a society falls victim to it depends upon the choices of political leaders and the stories they tell.

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similar across contexts.

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23. ↑ A central tenet of the know-nothing movement was the belief that Catholicism was inconsistent with democratic principles and that Catholic voters would be compelled to vote on the basis of their religion. As a historical parallel, it is worth noting that similar reasoning has been advanced in defense of the proposals to prohibit Muslim immigrants and refugees, accompanied by critiques of sharia law as inconsistent with democratic principles and individual liberty. It should be noted that this was a critique of JFK as

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50. ↑ Rebecca M. Blank, "Tracing the Economic Impact of Cumulative Discrimination," *The American Economic Review* 95, no. 2 (2005): 99–103.

51. ↑ See Charles Tilly, *Durable Inequality* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999). Charles Tilly identifies exploitation and opportunity hoarding as two of the critical mechanisms for institutionalizing group-based difference. The most extreme mechanism of othering is outright exploitation of marginalized groups. Exploitation allows one social group to expropriate resources produced or held by another social group, as was the case during antebellum slavery or European colonialism. See also Ali Jarbawi, "Israel's Colonialism Must End," *New York Times*, August 4, 2014, accessed February 16, 2015, http://www.nytimes.com/2014/08/05/opinion/ali-jarbawi-israels-colonialism-must-end.html. Centuries of European colonialism have provided the world with certain basic lessons about subjugating colonized peoples: the longer any colonial occupation endures, the greater the settlers' racism and extremism tends to grow. This is especially true if the occupiers encounter resistance; at that point, the occupied population becomes an obstacle that must either be forced to submit or removed through expulsion or murder. In the eyes of an occupying power, the humanity of those under its thumb depends on the degree of their submission to, or collaboration with, the occupation. If the occupied population chooses to stand in the way of the occupier's goals, then they are demonized, which allows the occupier the supposed moral excuse of confronting them with all possible means, no matter how harsh.

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53. ↑ Massey, *Categorically Unequal*, 19.

54. ↑ Tilly, *Durable Inequality*.

55. ↑ Tilly, *Durable Inequality,* 19.

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64.	↑	"Korematsu v. United States (1944)," PBS—The Supreme Court, 2007, accessed June 1, 2016, http://www.pbs.org/wnet/supremecourt/personality/landmark_korematsu.html.
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76.	↑	David R. Roediger, *Working Toward Whiteness: How America's Immigrants Became White: The Strange Journey of Ellis Island to the Suburbs*, (New York: Basic Books, 2006).
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80, 81.	↑	Title 42 of the US Code, chapter 126 § 12101 et seq., accessed on May 30, 2016, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Title_42_of_the_United_States_Code. Public Accommodations and Commercial Facilities (Title III) or see 42 US Code §§ 12181–12189, accessed on May 30, 2016, http://www.ada.gov/ada_title_III.htm.
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85.	↑	For an example, see Julie Scelfo, "A University Recognizes a Third Gender: Neutral," *New York Times*, February 7, 2015, accessed February 16, 2015, http://www.nytimes.com/2015/02/08/education/edlife/a-university-recognizes-a-third-gender-neutral.html.
86.	↑	Lani Guinier and Gerald Torres, *The Miner's Canary: Enlisting Race, Resisting Power, Transforming Democracy* (United States: Harvard University Press, 2002).
87.	↑	Shankar Vedantam, "Study: Stereotypes Drive Perceptions of Race," *NPR*, February 11, 2014, accessed February 16, 2015, http://www.npr.org/blogs/codeswitch/2014/02/11/275087586/study-stereotypes-drive-perceptions-of-race.
88.	↑	Samuel P. Huntington, *Who Are We? The Challenges to America's National Identity* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2004). See also Michiko Kakutani, "Review: Michel Houellebecq's 'Submission' Imagines France as a Muslim State," *Books* (*New York Times*), November 3, 2015, http://www.nytimes.com/2015/11/04/books/review-michel-houellebecqs-submission-imagines-france-as-a-muslim-state.html. The most recent prominent cultural product to play on such fears is French author Michel Houellebecq's wildly successful and controversial novel *Submission*, set in 2022, in which an Islamic party sweeps into power in France. The novel entered a cultural matrix in which debates over immigration, integration, and fear of terrorism are central elements. Although a satire, the novel preys upon fears within Western Europe of growing Muslim populations, just as refugee numbers crest toward numbers not seen since WW II.
89.	↑	David R. Loy, *A Buddhist History of the West: Studies in Lack* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002).

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and

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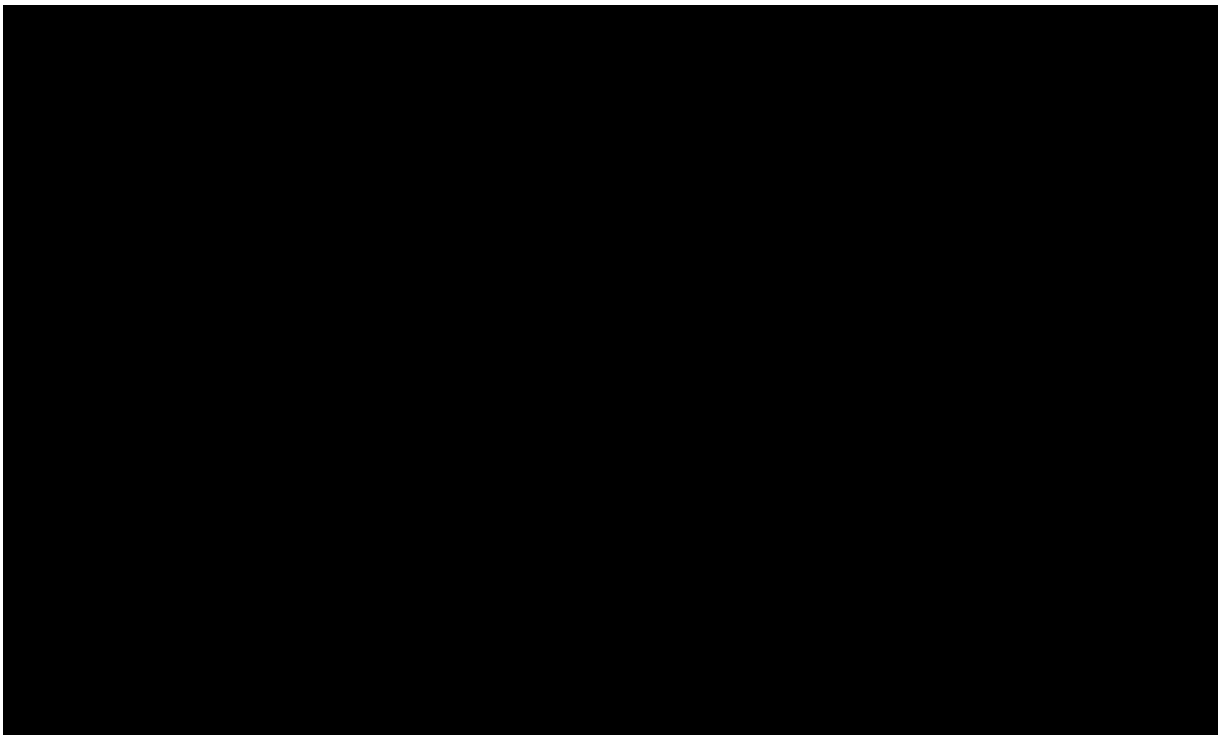## FROM OTHERING & BELONGING CONFERENCES
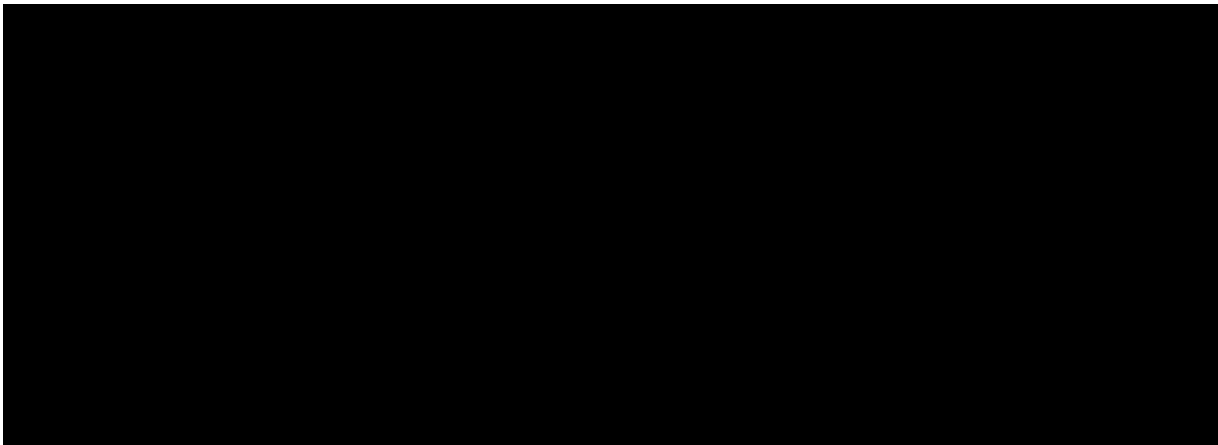
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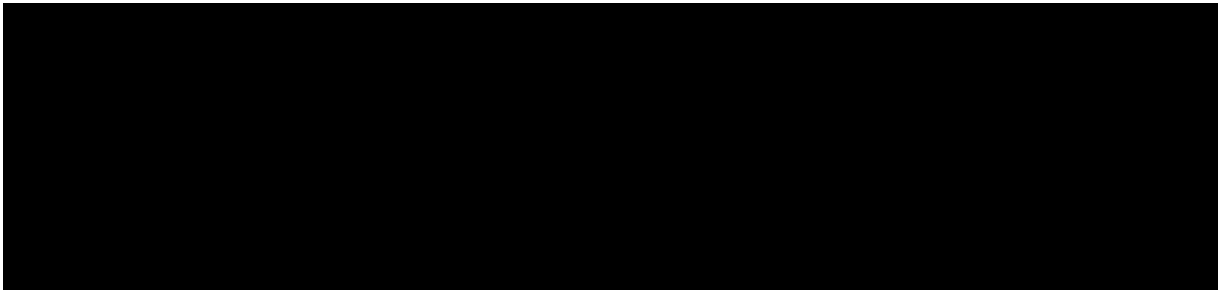Tarell Alvin McCraney
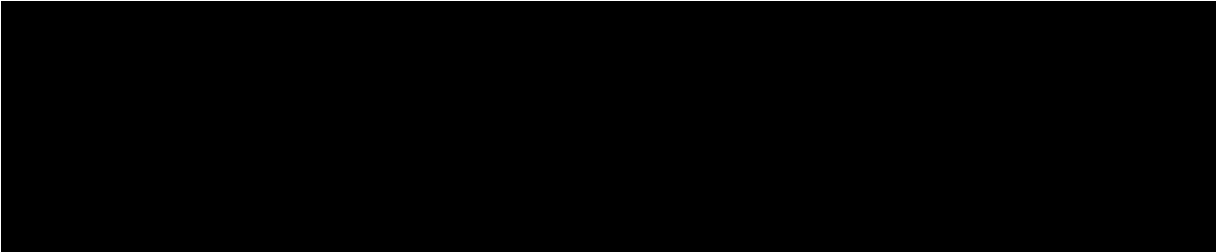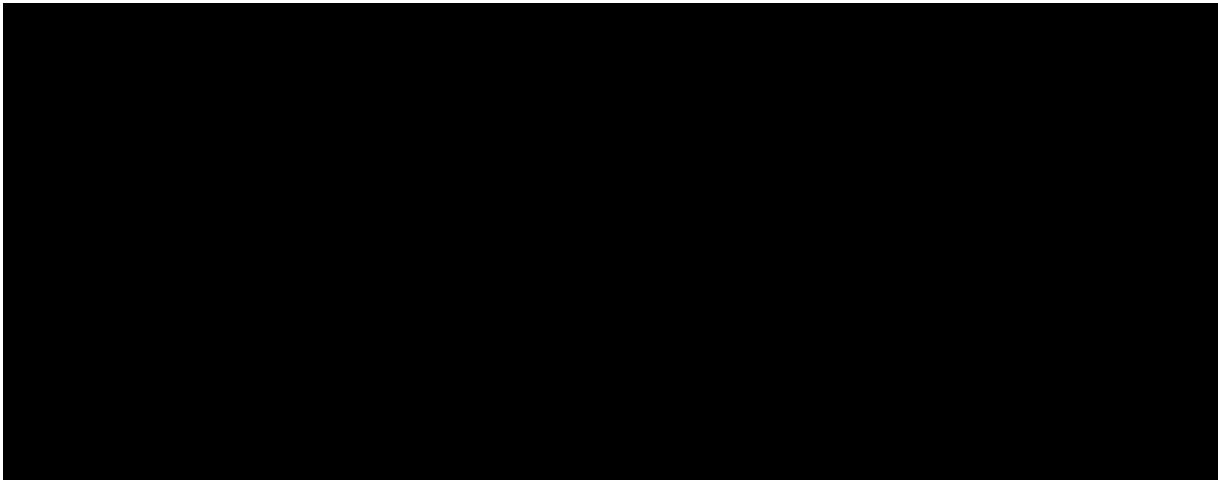
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