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The "Situation" in Micronesia: The Rise of Behavioral Dispossession

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ABSTRACT

In one of the largest ethnographies ever produced, American anthropologists subjected nearly the entire population of Micronesia to psychological testing. This battery of tests created databases to universalize patterns of economic behavior by collecting "aberrations" in rational thought. Perhaps ironically, the methods developed through Micronesian data experiments provided the formal tools to model corporate decision-making. In the process, economists created a new space of racialized capitalist expansion by producing raw behavioral data. I theorize these early forms of data dispossession as a violent procedure that creates a rift between old modes of subjective identity and new modes of production. My analysis of the weaponization of behavioral modeling—both bypassing the individual as a locus of economic value and dividing the common—sheds new light on the development of so-called data mining on contemporary online platforms.

INTRODUCTION: THE BEHAVIORAL REGIME

The "situation," a set of ethnographic methods to extract data from human life, rose to its most prominent usage in the 1940s, strangely, in unison with American nuclear testing in the Marshall Islands of the South Pacific. As one of the most influential social psychologists of the time, Talcott Parsons, was keen to say, Micronesia was also a test site to split open the "social atom." Due to its isolated location, Micronesia, contested geopolitical territory that encompasses many different political territories, became a field laboratory for Cold War social scientists to test the rational behaviors of individuals. American researchers used the term Micronesia to denote the region of their operations. These researchers subjected nearly the entire population of Micronesia, including the islands of the Marshalls, Carolines, Truk, Ponape, and Marianas, to psychological and moral testing. From 1947–1948, over forty researchers from cultural anthropology, linguistics, geography, sociology, medicine, and botany were assigned posts across the territory. The overarching mission was, essentially, to study the effects of war on the native populations. Unofficially, economic behavioralists were interested in measuring the varieties of "aberration in rationality." Under the guise of the Coordinated Investigation of Micronesian Anthropology (CIMA), methodological pursuits varied from the seemingly straightforward to the more convoluted. CIMA marks an important moment in Cold War social sciences, as it was the training ground of many young anthropologists from American universities such as Harvard, Yale, the University of Chicago, the University of Pennsylvania, and the University of Wisconsin. Ideologically, the field of anthropology has since criticized its own roots in places like

Micronesia, yet as I argue, methods derived from CIMA have moved across disciplines, and they have become mechanized in behavioral modeling.

CIMA researchers cataloged indigenous uses of plants, mapped kinship formations, measured depopulation, and studied the effects of the recent war on the native population. Arguably, however, their most interesting research output was the plethora of situational methods that blossomed in the pursuit of modeling human subjectivity. Rorschach tests, life histories, population samples, the Stewart Emotional Inventory, Bavelas Moral-Ideological tests, the Thematic Apperception Test—each test utilized the situational construct to isolate behavior.[1] While Rorschach tests are rather well known, the Thematic Apperception Test was more methodologically dense. The test-taker would be shown a picture and asked to describe the ambiguous scene in detail. The Bavelas Moral Ideology Test asked children to describe three "good things" they could do and three "bad things." Some of the methods were even more absurd. One approach, the "Instrumental Activities Inventory," sought to reveal how non-white subjects viewed "white man systems of instrumentalities and social reality."[2] This myriad of procedures was part and parcel of the "projective test movement" that sought to create methodological instruments to peer into the psyche.[3] An obsession with methods and standardization took precedence, and the "situation" became a catch-all term for these constructed procedures to extract, capture, and measure human behavior.

During the first third of the twentieth century, neoclassical economics was the dominant approach to political economy in the US. The field was built on the foundational belief that individuals were motivated by a rational understanding of risk and reward. Neoclassical economics, however, began to lose credibility during the interwar years. For instance, how could economists predict individual behavior after a seemingly irrational panic had sent the market into free fall?[4] And just as concerning, how could democratic theory account for individuals voting against their own best interests (such as in Hitler's election in 1932)?[5] During this period, the dominant methodologies for understanding behavior shifted from the sciences of the unconscious toward observable, predictable, controllable external behaviors. An emerging *behavioral regime* grew in popularity, beginning with John Watson's "Behaviorist Manifesto" in 1913. Watson defined behavioralism as "an objective and experimental branch of natural science whose goal was to predict and control behavior."[6]

One of the central concerns of the emerging behavioralist movement was how to isolate behavior from human complexities in order to find patterns in endlessly differential phenomena. The development of the observational "situation" was indispensable for early experiments in behavioral data extraction. The term "situation" here indicates a problem, a place of uncertainty.[7] Specifically, "situation," as this article explores in depth, describes a transmedial method to mechanize observation and study uncertainty in group dynamics. Situational methods introduced algorithmic (step-by-step) procedures that allowed researchers to construct a controlled environment, dividing human actions from their social context. The interdisciplinary social sciences that eventually coalesced into behavioral economics (sociology, psychology, anthropology) were the first fields to take up these methods.

During the 1940s and 1950s, the "situation" became a field laboratory of sorts, containing and abstracting the complexities of the world. The "situation" atomized behavioral data, and ultimately created a "toy space" that *resembled* reality.[8] Leaving behind rigid ideas of rational behavior, the "situation" was part observational construct, part statistical model. Behavioral situations were so

powerful because they mapped the complexities of social interaction while normatively establishing decision-making protocols. This data collection process produced a universal model of all possible human behaviors while erasing aberrations in rational thought. For my purposes here, the "situation" was important for the development of computation. It provided an initial algorithm to automate decision-making and to control the risks of individual human behaviors. But one should note that the "situation" was not linked solely with one institution or function. The "situation" mutated across various facets of society, from economics to popular culture, from the "sitcoms" of the 1950s to the White House "situation room." These media situations were designed to contain geopolitical conflict in a microcosm of communicational command. Later, in the 1960s, Guy Debord's "constructed situations" were a progressive detournement of the behavioralist ideal of controlling and predicting behavior. Debord turned the "situation" inside out, creating a performative separation from the conditioning forces of everyday life that seep in through the contours of the city. Interesting though the overlap between Situationism and the behavioral "situation" may be, this article focuses instead on the "situation" at RAND as it sets the stage for data dispossession.

This article will describe the "situation" as it dismantled the self-possessed subject as the prime unit of decision-making in Micronesia. Instead, Rorschach tests and various other forms of datafication stood in for the individual. This is what we can refer to as *data dispossession.* I will track how non-signifying performatives were extracted from the observed behavior of individuals while pre-existent biases shifted the formal relationships of subjects through racial bias. The "situation" became portable and generic across contexts. As such, I theorize the "situation" as a violent procedure linking the extraction of cultural differences and the formal procedures of the so-called management sciences.

The approach of this essay is genealogical: I trace a persistent form of dispossession across technological innovations that have given rise to our present condition. This essay locates an origin point of data dispossession with implications for the media genealogy of data mining and digital practices that bypass the individual as a locus of power dynamics. I mobilize the term genealogy here to indicate persistent forms of mediation, whereas archaeology indicates a focus on historical aberrations within technological development. My genealogy intervenes within theoretical debates around the production of individual identity. For instance, two theoretical traditions theorize dispossession and subjection. The first, Marxist tradition, focuses on the self-possessed laborer as the imagined subject of dispossession. I push back against this language that abstracts the asymmetrical costs of dispossession. I am more specifically invested in the work of Black Marxism, Feminism, and Indigenous, De-Colonial, and Anti-Racist traditions that center cultural difference as the ultimate a priori to any capitalist development. In this essay, I combine Marxist approaches to technology with these more radical traditions of intersectional critique. For instance, I argue that the symbolic practices of data mining are universal modes of capitalist accumulation. However, their effects are situated and asymmetrical. So here, my approach to the "situation" is archaeological because I trace the rise of a seemingly new mode of technological subjection. It is also genealogical in the sense that I locate this new medium as a mutation of persistent dispossessive techniques, specifically those of racial capitalism.

I should also acknowledge here that the Cold War provides the historical backdrop to this essay. However, my focus is not to theorize the Cold War in general but to home in on specific practices that demonstrate shifts in algorithmic subjection. There are many historical accounts of the Cold

War that inform my understanding of the cultural identity politics of the time.[9] I contribute to these scholarly discussions by analyzing the "situation" as a technology of white racial capitalism.

Building from the foundational work of Cedric Robinson in his 1983 book *Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition*, Jodi Melamed describes how *all* capitalism is racial capitalism. She writes:

> Capital can only be capital when it is accumulating, and it can only accumulate by producing and moving through relations of severe inequality among human groups—capitalists with the means of production/workers without the means of subsistence, creditors/debtors, conquerors of land made property/the dispossessed and removed. These antinomies of accumulation require loss, disposability, and the unequal differentiation of human value and racism enshrines the inequalities that capitalism requires. (Jodi Melamed, "Racial Capitalism," *Critical Ethnic Studies* 1, no. 1 (spring 2015): 77) [10]

Following from Melamed's definition, Cheryl Harris writes that whiteness, as the legal definition of property-of-the-self, is the a priori distinction of racial capitalism in the US.[11] I am not claiming that whiteness is the a priori condition for all of capitalism. However, in the historical specificity of the United States, whiteness defined who had the right to citizenship, labor, and property. As such, I focus my analysis on white racial capitalism for two clear reasons. First, I follow Thomas Nakayama and Robert Krizek in their assertion that whiteness is a strategic rhetoric, a discursive formation. As such, "there is no true essence to whiteness: there are only historically contingent constructions of that social location."[12] Along similar lines, Harris writes that whiteness is "a relation between people that takes on the character of a thing and thus acquires a 'phantom objectivity,' an autonomy that seems so strictly rational and all-embracing as to conceal every trace of its fundamental nature: the relation between people."[13] In other words, whiteness remains intact through institutional backdrops. Second, this essay focuses on data extraction methods designed by white men in white institutions that benefit from what Robinson calls the "privileged position of possessor."[14] White racial capitalism describes how both white people and white institutions derive value from non-whiteness. This essay ultimately locates the "situation" as an extension of white racial capitalism's phantom objectivity, an informational milieu operating through isomorphic measures across vastly different material contexts.

THE "SITUATION" IN MICRONESIA: DATA EXTRACTION AND DISPOSSESSION

The social psychologist John Dewey was the first to coin the term "situation" as a methodological approach to the study of rational behavior. He was initially inspired by John Watson's "Behavioralist Manifesto" of 1913. In his manifesto, Watson implored researchers to measure the outward patterns of behavior rather than imply any internal psychological state.[15] Dewey adopted this position by shifting psychological research from individual interiority to social interaction—or the social *situation*. This work culminated in his 1938 treatise titled *Logic: The Theory of Inquiry*. Searching for a method to approach the study of social psychology, he wrote, "Inquiry is the controlled or direct transformation of an indeterminate situation into one that is so determinate in

its constituent distinctions and relations as to convert the elements of the original situation into a unified whole."[16] This early methodological formulation defines the "situation" as a slice of observed behavior converted into a determinate whole. So, here at its outset, the "situation" was a site of exchange, moving from preconceived notions to observed specificity and back to universal value judgments. The "situation" was also fundamentally algorithmic as it provided a structured, step-by-step method that feigned a mechanical objectivity. And it is the "situation's" focus on translatability and scalability that will recur throughout our examination of the concept.

In his early work, Dewey resisted the idea of singular events and response-stimuli as constituting the subject within a closed "theater of consciousness."[17] Instead, he developed an organicist viewpoint, where subjects were formed through the "environment of experience."[18] Again, the external relations of social interaction were the crux of Dewey's methodology. As he searched for patterns across behavioral specificities, Dewey also embraced the self-reflexive feedback between his own presupposed concepts and the behaviors he observed. N. Katherine Hayles notes that this "behavioralist approach was well suited to a relational epistemology because it concentrated on the transmission of patterns rather than a communication of essence."[19] Here analogy, as a universal exchange, allowed data to move across mediums of cultural specificity with the feigned objectivity of the observer-in-situ. So, for Dewey to study the "continuous adjustments of subjects to their environments," he needed to devise a construct of judgment where empirical observation, the preconceived notions of researchers, and a performative structure of feedback coalesced into a measure of behavior.[20]

Kurt Lewin's "Field Theory and Experiment in Social Psychology" (1939) further developed the "situation" as a technical procedure that allowed researchers to isolate and observe behavior.[21] Lewin, echoing Dewey's relational epistemology, defined the "situation" as a "construct which characterizes objects and events in terms of interdependence rather than phenotypical similarity or dissimilarity."[22] Interdependence was a form of exchange for Lewin. Further, he sought an operation to classify behavior through the "construction, derivation, and axiomatization of laws."[23] Both Lewin and Dewey saw rationality as an algorithmic procedure of decision-making that followed specific rules. And through situational observation, the rules of rationality would become apparent. Lewin moved beyond Dewey's initial considerations and freed the "situation" from its laboratory constraints. His subsequent "field theory" allowed researchers to abstract the general patterns of behavior from the specificities of everyday life. The "situation" became a mobile construct to study human behavior across cultural milieus. Lewin wrote that "if the views of the field-theoretical approach are correct, there is a good prospect of approaching experimentally a great number of problems which previously seemed out of reach: if the pattern of the total field is generally more important than, for instance, size, it becomes possible to study fundamental social constellations experimentally by transposing them into an appropriate group size."[24] Lewin posited that seemingly endless rules could be extracted from specific situations and transposed onto other settings. This development set the stage for researchers to venture into "the field."

On the island of Ifaluk in Micronesia the population participated in the tests of a CIMA researcher named Melford Spiro. Spiro was a young white anthropologist, deeply influenced by Lewin's field theory, who set out to measure the cultural values of the islanders through a series of moral identity tests and emotional responses. He found that within existing ethnographic studies, there was a "lack of concrete data on the nature of psychopathology among primitive peoples" and that there was

very little analysis of "abnormality" in "concrete individuals."[25] Spiro ultimately sought to fill this lacuna of knowledge on the "mechanisms of abnormality in rational decision-making."[26] Rebecca Lemov, a historian of behavioral science, notes that Spiro created twenty-five thousand pages of extracted data from the islanders, including dreams, tests, and free-form drawings. Despite Spiro's exhaustive process of evidence gathering, one particular test subject, Tarev, failed to register. During one of Spiro's favored tests—The Stewart Emotional Response—Tarev would either continuously agree with Spiro's questions or refuse to answer.[27] At other times, Tarev merely responded to the absurd structure of the "situation."

> Spiro: Have you ever been happy?
> Tarev: I like what you say. When you talk I am happy, for your talk is like my talk.
> Spiro: Have you ever been sad?
> Tarev: I like you because you like this place. You came here, though it is very small ...
> Spiro: Do you still think of that place in the North?
> Tarev: I like the North very much. A very fine place. When another man calls me, I go there.
> Spiro: What man?
> Tarev: I don't know. (Melford E. Spiro, "A Psychotic Personality in the South Seas," *Psychiatry*, 13, no. 2: (1948), quoted in Rebecca Lemov, "On Being Psychotic in the South Seas, Circa 1947." *History of the Human Sciences* 31, no. 5 (2018): 82) [28]

As Lemov draws to the fore, Tarev's responses fail as statistical data. His answers exceeded the closed, predetermined logic of the "situation." Spiro's solution to this problem was published in an essay titled "A Psychotic Personality in the South Seas."[29] No matter what could be extracted from his behavior, Spiro reduced Tarev to a behavioral black box, a known unknown. The imprecision of the data could be described simply as an outlier. Although Tarev could not be divided into smaller data bits, he was nevertheless surveilled as a "case study," informing the structure of the "situation" itself.[30] Spiro utilized the adaptable structure of the "situation" to clean his dataset while simultaneously foreclosing what counted as rationality. Lemov writes that case studies were used when evidence was still needed to understand the standardization of psychological tests, yet no generalizations were possible.[31] What is so troubling about this example is how easily a seemingly objective approach to understanding "rational behavior" devolves into what it truly is—a foreclosure of what exactly counts as rational in the first place. Here subjectivity can be quite problematic because nearly anything can fit within its loose framework—the human, rational decision-making, the laborer, the self-possessed individual, autonomy, sovereignty, etc. So instead of reinscribing the subject position of Tarev, the structure of desubjection surrounding him reveals much more. Even though Sprio (and the CIMA project at large) was studying rationality in decision-making, we immediately see that the reality of Tarev's life, which exceeds pre-existent racial biases and scientific frameworks, is unceremoniously erased from the data. Tarev was already desubjectified upon the first contact with Spiro. At once, Tarev was both robbed of subjecthood, while Spiro's representation of Tarev's divided subjectivity also denies him agency. The "situation" only remediated CIMA's pre-existing assumptions and epistemological enclosures.

Micronesia was not alone as a test site for the projective test movement in the immediate postwar era. Cornell University built an "experimental hacienda" in the Peruvian village of Vicos. Behavioralists also targeted the Blackfeet, Arawak, Oglala Sioux, heroin addicts, and the mentally

ill in state institutions.[32] In short, the "situation" echoed a long history of white racialized and normative violence. Despite the fact that this essay catalogs epistemological violence in Micronesia, it does not aim to reinscribe colonial violences of erasure of Tarev and his people, but instead, to target the internal logics of white racial capitalism. In the case of Micronesia, the abstraction of behavioral modeling created a link between a new model of economic exploitation and the histories of colonialism. Nick Couldry and Ulises Mejias identify this historical shift in capitalist production as "data colonialism." They define data colonialism as a system for "appropriating life as raw material whether or not it is actually labor or even labor-like."[33] As the term signals, the expansion of capital into new spheres of production appropriates raw materials not yet made to function within the circulation of the economy. They write that "data extraction and analyses open up new continents for the operations of capital."[34] Thus, capitalist dispossession finds a new expression in Micronesia. A traditional form of colonial expansion, i.e., the American appropriation of geopolitical territory, combines with an experimental technique of behavioral dispossession.

Data colonialism in Micronesia relied on two procedures of appropriation. First, life was configured as a raw material or resource. In this sense, the Coordinated Investigation of Micronesian Anthropology created a partitioned field of observation using the "situation" as a construct from which it could extract life studies. As a divisive medium, the "situation" separated the observer from the observed and ideology from instrumentalism. It was precisely the *invisibility* of the "situation," as a construct known only to the researchers, that granted CIMA the fictive position of so-called objectivity. Diane Nelson reminds us that despite claims for the objective nature of data collection, there is always an asymmetry between the researcher who counts and those who are counted.[35] The asymmetry of power was achieved through the "situation's" imperceptible and seemingly random nature. White American researchers, working under the aegis of CIMA, were also encouraged to mobilize interpretations of signifying systems (Rorschach tests, Thematic Apperception Tests). Not only did the white researchers construct a mechanism of behavioral division, but they also automated and erased their own intentionality from the frame, leaving their whiteness as an unmarked abstraction.[36] Ruth Frankenberg writes that "whiteness operates as the unmarked norm against which other identities are marked and racialized. Whiteness is the seemingly un-raced center of a racialized world."[37] Through the practices of CIMA, whiteness masquerades as a scientific objectivity suturing pre-existing judgments to whatever empirical evidence the researchers encountered at the time.

Here the "situation" also exemplifies Lisa Nakamura's definition of surveillance—signification that produces a social body through transparency, translating the body into the spectacle of data.[38] Accordingly, the interior lives of Micronesians were similarly made transparent, counted as singular, different, and irregular through an abstracted matrix of random values. These data were non-signifying performatives extracted from life itself, made to make sense in the shifting arbitrary relations defined by the researchers. Perhaps most disturbing is Lemov's eloquent summary of the aim of data extraction: "Behavioral science was interested in what the individual did not want to tell and what he himself did not know."[39] Behavioral data produced a new form of self beyond self-perception. Observations of human behavior were manufactured in (or extracted from) coercive situations. These observations were broken down into data and abstracted from their situated contexts, only to be reassembled elsewhere. Kevin Haggerty and Richard Ericson call this operational structure the "surveillant assemblage."[40] Within the surveillant assemblage, the individual's alienation from their abstracted behavior registers as a "data double."[41] The data double

is an accumulation of non-signifying performatives. An enumerated stand-in for the subject. A biological sample. A Rorschach test. A morality test. These scores index a subject outside of self-perception—a raw material to be reworked. As Shoshana Zuboff highlights, contemporary online platforms mine human behavior from so-called free online services, only to be transformed into psychological profiles and sold to advertisers.

The second key process in the production of behavioral data was the accumulation of a relational database. The use of the "situation" as a standard practice created consistency and comparability across various fields of human experience. Yet the data it produced could be made useful only through comparative judgments. The goal in Micronesia, and sites like it, was not to analyze local knowledge. Instead, the focus was to "amass data-rich psychological portraits from around the world, comprising all types of people known to humanity."[42] Hence, the quantity of data was much more important than the quality. As such, the active production of huge datasets became imperative. The accumulation of expropriated behavioral data settled in the archives of the elite universities of the time. Harvard University sponsored the Comparative Study of Values of Five Cultures and the Six Cultures Study comparing child-rearing practices around the globe. Yale University developed the Human Relations Area Files. Yale also housed the "Primary Records in Personality and Culture," which became the first searchable database for the unified cross-cultural study of economic behavior.[43] In these records, one would find the expropriated interpretations of the inner lives of countless people from around the world. The majority of CIMA and Spiro's data can be found here.

There is also an arbitrary logic that links the two procedures of behavioral dispossession (data extraction and the creation of a behavioral database). First, data extraction is arbitrary because, via pseudoscience, life is reframed as behavior that can be measured and captured as a resource. Second, the database itself is arbitrary, since it employs a teleological semiotic system that only reinforces preexistent judgments. For instance, Micronesians were subjected to a matrix of power in which each individual was identified within the coordinates of preexistent social differences. CIMA mandates produced clear exclusions at the very foundation of what counted as behavior. And the data, the marks of difference, linger on as deferred threats, suggestions of possible use-value in the future. Here Micronesians are dispossessed from below their level of self-awareness. Symbolic materials are arbitrarily extracted from situational methods such as Rorschach tests and vague "studies of life." And once a database is formed, the shifting referents of identity categories bypass the data extracted in the first place only to re-inscribe preexisting notions of "rationality" (read here as racial exclusion). The relationality of the database also creates the threat of searchability. This is a threat of future exploitation of the Micronesian people through further geopolitical dispossession and the capitalist gain of white researchers in American institutions.

Still, despite the reference to surveillance and identification, it is too simple to understand the data double as a numerical reproduction of the individual. There is a mimetic feature that does not rely on the relation between subject and data. As Rebecca Schneider reminds us, mimesis is not representational but iterative, bringing with it the trace of contact, cross-temporal lag, and the production of difference.[44] Following Schneider, the data double has an iterative life of its own, separate from its indexical relation to the subject. Behavioral data are recombined, autonomous from their initial point of extraction. Patterns are recursively applied as rules, or prescriptions for future behaviors. As such, the data double was never a "projection" from the interior life of the subject to be discovered by an impartial observer. The "situation" was more akin to a formal

projection of the researcher's white idealism onto the test subjects, doubling and dividing the individual from a position of exterior epistemic violence.

It is important to note here that, despite the maximalist attempt of CIMA to understand the interior lives of Micronesians, these datasets were largely ignored as indices of behavior. As we will recall from the work of Spiro, the formalism of the extractive system was what mattered, not its specific content. The arbitrary, teleological, extractive formalism of the "situation" is what mattered. The proceduralism of its algorithm mechanized its "objectivity" to pass as a social science. Yet, the dataset would always be "cleaned" in the performative feedback of the researcher. As such, the "situation" cannot be critiqued from a position of truth-value as if there is a more "accurate" understanding of human behavior to be found.

Instead, the "situation," illuminates the arbitrary teleology of behaviorism. The "situation" produced its own objects of analysis, pre-judged. Put another way, each data point (Rorschach test, morality test, etc.) was a non-signifying function of the system that produced it. Again, within behavioral economics, there was no interest in the unconscious projection of the individual to be "discovered" by empirical observation. As Simone Browne writes, behavioral data merely "reify boundaries and the discriminatory treatment of those negatively racialized by such surveillance."[45] Behavioral economics was only interested in creating a new space of capitalist expansion through the production of data, or *data-as-raw-data*. Data beget data; dispossession creates more dispossession. Antoinette Rouvroy and Bernard Stiegler detail exactly *how* the production of "raw" data was a process of substitution—not a process of signification or meaning-making, but the creation of arbitrary signals:

> The production of Big Data, or rather raw data is a work of canceling out all meaning so that these raw data can be calculable and function as signs in relation to what they represent; they substitute themselves to the meaningful reality. This meaningful reality is substituted by a set of a-significant data that function as signals, and therefore is stripped of any signification so as to be calculable. (Antoinette Rouvroy and Bernard Stiegler, "The Digital Regime of Truth: From the Algorithmic Governmentality to a New Rule of Law," *La Deleuziana: Online Journal of Philosophy,* 3 (2016): 8) [46]

It is crucial to note that the "situation" makes subject positions malleable before *and* after the data extraction process. But ultimately, the "situation" in Micronesia introduces a seemingly new form of desubjection to dispossess certain individuals of their sovereignty. Life was "substituted" by behavior within an arbitrary system of "meaning," which could be "calculated" according to a neo-colonial logic.

What then are the consequences of the severance of the individual from the data double? Data doubles dispossess those subjected to behavioral modeling of their own possibilities of self-determined expression in the future. A new form of disembodied, abstract selfhood is possessed by an archive, a researcher, a database. In short, the "situation" creates data doubles that are a disembodied foreclosure of one's own self-possession. In this case, data dispossession in Micronesia justifies its own violence, both in a virtual sense (the limitless potential violence of future harm of informational reassembly) and in the material sense (the dispossession of the subject

from their situated contexts). These violent acts were justified through the claims of scientific objectivity, rationality, and economic expansion.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, let me reiterate the arbitrary function of behavioral modeling. In Frantz Fanon's understanding of the "epidermal schema," racialization was never interested in the true links between the surface and depth of selfhood. Racialization, in fact, severed the links between the body and the capacity to become otherwise through arbitrary distinctions.[47] In Micronesia, there was no "more profound understanding of humanity" at stake. Instead, researchers created an arbitrary system designed to be self-naturalizing as it created a new enterprise—a behavioral market. For instance, after the CIMA project, one prominent behavioral scientist, David McClelland, sought to answer this question: "Why was it that Germans and Americans seemed to succeed in business while Peruvians, Indians, and others were less adaptable to capitalism's demands?"[48] And perhaps more menacingly, once the American nuclear tests subsided, the promise of behavioral data became clearer. CIMA researchers realized that knowledge of Micronesian culture "would make for a much better administration" of the US territorial holdings.[49] The "situation" extended the logic of white horrors into the realms of data dispossession and administration—in this case with the added compression of life-as-resource captured into the database.

At this point, it is also clear that data dispossession can never be considered solely an "immaterial" process where self-possessed subjectivity is substituted with data doubles. Data colonialism performed in Micronesia was part and parcel of a larger project by the United States to rehearse its geopolitical might through spectacular "technological demonstrations" at the beginning of the Cold War. The physical force of twenty-three nuclear tests and their grotesque effects must be considered together with the behavioral data extraction process. Dewey's view of the "situation" not only as extraction, but also as overcoding and replacing reality coincides with the destruction of Micronesia's social environment by nuclear testing. The Micronesians subjected to a battery of behavioral tests were also dispossessed of their island homes when the nuclear tests commenced. Ironically enough, once marked as different, these data were "smoothed" into behavioral models—the measure of all men. In Aime Césaire's *Discourse on Colonialism*, he writes, "the west has never been further from being able to live a true humanism—a humanism made to the measure of the world."[50] It is horrifying that proponents of behavioral economics were, in fact, trying to create a more "true measure" of human behavior. This adds a grim irony to the voice of Admiral William H. Blandy as he commemorated Operation Crossroads with the utterance, "These tests are for the benefit of all mankind."[51]

Colonial violence, old and new, converged in Micronesia in 1946. We are still left to reckon with the violent severance of the data double from the embodied self. Erickson et al. put this severance into the most explicit terms: "The landmass of Elugelab may have disappeared in a nuclear test one November day in 1952, but its information was preserved."[52] Clearly, while the applied sciences were winning the physics battle, the behavioral sciences were hard at work creating new weapons to fight the ideological Cold War. With the data double, it seems the site of dispossession, the site of struggle, has been moved to a different sphere altogether—away from embodiment and self-reflexivity toward the incorporeal, symbolic behavioral regime.

The "situation," in its general movement across sites of difference, claims a universal behavioral economic subject. However, the effects of data doubles are manifested in starkly different outcomes. As Tiqqun write in their *Cybernetic Hypothesis*, "The project of recreating the world within an infinite feedback loop involves two moments—representation-separating, and communication-connection, the first bringing death, the second mimicking life."[53] The Micronesian "situation" dismantles the individual self from above, to separate and dismantle the behavior into a relational database. The "situation" then dismantles the individual subject from below, breaking the individual into component parts only to be replaced by the performative imperatives of capitalist logic. Symbolic dispossession brings social death, and communicational connection forces the endlessly deferred threat of the data double.

ENDNOTES

[1] Paul Erickson, Judy L. Klein, Lorraine Daston, Rebecca Lemov, Thomas Sturm, and Michael D. Gordin, *How Reason Almost Lost Its Mind: The Strange Career of Cold War Rationality* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013), 119.
[2] George Spindler and Louise Spindler, "The Instrumental Activities Inventory: A Technique for the Study of the Psychology of Acculturation," *Southwestern Journal of Anthropology* 21, no. 1 (1965): 1–23.
[3] Rebecca Lemov, "X-Rays of Inner Worlds: The Mid-Twentieth-Century American Projective Test Movement." *Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences* 47, no. 3 (2011): 251–78.
[4] This was precisely the question of the Cowles Commission after the market crash of 1929. Herbert Simon was a leading figure to come out of this school of economics, which critiqued neoclassical economics and its conception of individual rationality, the sovereignty of choice, and autonomy from systemic influence.
[5] Wilhelm Reich, for instance, in his *Mass Psychology of Fascism* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1970), wonders how we account for individual subjects desiring their own repression.
[6] John B. Watson, "Psychology as the Behaviorist Views It," *Psychological Review* 20, no. 2 (1913): 158.
[7] In common parlance, "situation" generally refers to how something is placed within its surroundings, as in "situated." In Webster's dictionary, "situation" can also refer to "a particular or striking complex of affairs at a stage in the action of a narrative or a drama."
[8] For a discussion on "special situations" in the context of Cold War sciences, see Erickson et al., *How Reason Almost Lost Its Mind*, 112–14.
[9] For more complete sources on the history of behavioral science, see Lemov, "X-Rays of Inner Worlds."
[10] Jodi Melamed, "Racial Capitalism," *Critical Ethnic Studies* 1, no. 1 (spring 2015): 77.
[11] Cheryl Harris, "Whiteness as Property," *Harvard Law Review* 106, no. 8 (1993): 1707–91.
[12] Thomas K. Nakayama and Robert L. Krizek, "Whiteness: A Strategic Rhetoric," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 81, no. 3 (1995): 9
[13] Harris, "Whiteness as Property," 1731.
[14] Cedric Robinson, *Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition* (London: Penguin UK, 1983), 5.
[15] Watson, "Psychology as the Behaviorist Views It," 158.

[16] John Dewey, *Logic, The Theory of Inquiry* (Atlanta: Southern University Press, 1938), 13.
[17] Dewey, "The New Psychology," *Andover Review,* 2 (1884): 278.
[18] Dewey, *Logic, The Theory of Inquiry,* 7.
[19] N. Katherine Hayles, *How We Became Posthuman: Virtual Bodies in Cybernetics, Literature, and Informatics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 113.
[20] Dewey, "The New Psychology," 56.
[21] Kurt Lewin, "Field Theory and Experiment in Social Psychology: Concepts and Methods," *American Journal of Sociology*, 44, no. 6 (1939).
[22] Lewin, "Field Theory," 22.
[23] Lewin, "Field Theory," 23.
[24] Lewin, "Field Theory," 23.
[25] Robert C. Kiste, and Mac Marshall, *American Anthropology in Micronesia: An Assessment* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1999), 3.
[26] Rebecca Lemov, "On Being Psychotic in the South Seas, Circa 1947," *History of the Human Sciences* 31, no. 5 (2018): 80–105.
[27] Lemov, "On Being Psychotic in the South Seas," 82.
[28] Lemov, "On Being Psychotic in the South Seas," 82.
[29] Melford E. Spiro, "A Psychotic Personality in the South Seas," *Psychiatry* 13, no. 2: (1948): 189–204.
[30] Lemov writes that case studies were used when evidence was still needed to understand the standardization of psychological tests, yet no generalizations were possible. Lemov, "On Being Psychotic in the South Seas," 83.
[31] Lemov, "On Being Psychotic in the South Seas," 83.
[32] Erickson, et al., *How Reason Almost Lost Its Mind.*
[33] Nick Couldry and Ulises A. Mejias, "Data Colonialism: Rethinking Big Data's Relation to the Contemporary Subject," *Television & New Media* 20, no. 4. (2019): 340.
[34] Couldry and Mejias, "Data Colonialism," 346.
[35] Diane M. Nelson, *Who Counts?: The Mathematics of Death and Life After Genocide* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015).
[36] Unmarked abstraction does not mean that whiteness vanishes from social practices. It has real visible and catastrophic consequences for those who inhabit whiteness and those marked by white surveillance. White racial capitalism is both violent and spectacular, yet its practices mutate through ever more subtle and banal abstractions.
[37] Ruth Frankenberg, "The Mirage of an Unmarked Whiteness," *The Making and Unmaking of Whiteness*, eds. Birgit Brander Rasmussen, Eric Klinenberg, Irene J. Nexica, and Matt Wray (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001), 76.
[38] Lisa Nakamura, "The Socioalgorithmics of Race: Sorting it Out in Jihad Worlds," in *The New Media of Surveillance,* eds. S. Magnet and K. Gates (London: Routledge, 2009), 153.
[39] Lemov, "X-Rays of Inner Worlds," 257.
[40] Kevin D. Haggerty and Richard V. Ericson, "The Surveillant Assemblage," *The British Journal of Sociology* 51, no. 4 (2000): 608.
[41] I find the term *data double* to be more accurate than Deleuze's *dividual,* which I critique in the introduction to my dissertation. "Seizing the Means of Desubjection: Machine Intelligence, Behavioral Dispossession, and White Racial Capitalism" (Ph.D. Dissertation, Brown University, 2021), Brown University Database.
[42] Lemov, "X-Rays of Inner Worlds," 255.
[43] For more on these records see Rebecca Lemov, "Toward a Database of Dreams: Assembling an Archive of Elusive Materials, 1947–1961," *History Workshop Journal* 67, no.1 (2009): 44–68.

[44] Rebecca Schneider, *Performing Remains: Art and War in Times of Theatrical Reenactment* (New York: Taylor & Francis, 2011).
[45] Simone Browne, *Dark Matters: On the Surveillance of Blackness* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015), 27.
[46] Antoinette Rouvroy and Bernard Stiegler, "The Digital Regime of Truth: From the Algorithmic Governmentality to a New Rule of Law," *La Deleuziana: Online Journal of Philosophy* 3 (2016): 8.
[47] Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* (New York: Grove Press, 1962).
[48] McClelland, quoted in Lemov, "X-Rays of Inner Worlds," 261.
[49] Kiste and Marshall, *American Anthropology in Micronesia.*
[50] Aime Césaire, *Discourse on Colonialism (*New York: Monthly Review Press, 1972), 22.
[51] It is also worth noting here that the archival film *Radio Bikini* features reenactments of ceremonies between Navy Commodore Ben Wyatt and "local chieftain King Juda," when the King "gave away" their atoll. The reenactment did not go smoothly, as King Juda had to be prompted many times to say, "We are willing to go. Everything is in God's hands." quoted in Jonathan M. Weisgall, *Operation Crossroads: The Atomic Tests at Bikini Atoll* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1994), 113, 194.
[52] Erickson et al. *How Reason Almost Lost Its Mind,* 119.
[53] Tiqqun, *The Cybernetic Hypothesis* (South Pasadena, CA: Semiotext[e], 2020), 12.

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