I. Introduction

In his latest book, *White Guilt: How Blacks and Whites Together Destroyed the Promise of the Civil Rights Era*, Shelby Steele, a research fellow at Stanford University’s Hoover Institute, offers an in-depth perspective on the forces created by the Civil Rights Era and how those forces created a societal construct that is still very much in place. Though the Civil Rights Era was originally thought to have held much promise for the improvement of race relations in American society, the guilt experienced by whites coming to terms with racism was turned into a type of “black currency” which ultimately led to a rejection of individual responsibility by blacks. This allowed whites and American institutions to accept responsibility for black advancement as a means to relieve the guilt and stigmatization associated with the racist past. However, this redistribution of responsibility has resulted only in the illusion of social justice, rather than a true advancement of the black minority.

Steele has written extensively on race and the effects of social programs on race relations in America. *White Guilt* is an extension of the...
ideas found in Steele’s earlier books, The Content of Our Character: A New Vision of Race in America (1991) and A Dream Deferred: The Second Betrayal of Black Freedom in America (1999). White Guilt is an insightful and important book that should be read by both blacks and whites, especially those that are concerned with current social justice issues or work within academic or social welfare institutions. Steele, voicing the black conservative perspective, is extremely critical of the white liberal agenda and its intent on creating a dichotomy between the two. Unfortunately, he leaves other prospective viewpoints entirely out of the picture, leaving the reader curious about the views of white conservatives and black liberals. Despite this, Steele’s analysis of the events of the Civil Rights Era and his focus on moral authority and white guilt are crucial to gaining a comprehensive understanding of past and current social and political issues. While some readers may feel alienated or attacked due to his obvious disdain toward white liberals and discussion of the political left versus the political right, ultimately, Steel delivers insightful ideas and powerful examples that are right on target.

II. SUMMARY OF CONTENTS

*White Guilt* is divided into four parts. Part One, titled “The Story of White Guilt”, constitutes the bulk of the book. It gives much of the background information pertinent to Steele’s later revelations. Steele includes historical data highlighting the events of the Civil Rights Era, as well as some of his personal history and its relevance to the topic. More importantly, Steele describes the transformation of white supremacy into white guilt, as well as his belief that white guilt and black power are essentially the same thing. In Part Two, “An Expanding Guilt”, Steele discusses the white counterculture, the baby-boomer generation, and the need of whites to dissociate from the evils of the past. Part Three, “The Ways of Blindness”, centers around the “white blindness” which occurs when whites, specifically white liberals, do not see their true motivations in racial matters or that these motivations actually have a negative effect on racial minorities. Part Four, “Dissociation and Culture”, discusses the current emphasis on social morality. Steele explains that social morality is really nothing more than dissociation
by whites that has led to blacks experiencing “race fatigue”, a sort of schizophrenia which results from blacks feeling pressured to wear a mask for the world while internally experiencing something different. The book ends with an explanation for Steele’s dislike of the political left and his reasons for believing that the political right is poised for political and cultural ascendancy.

III. Textual Analysis
The backdrop of Steele’s book is his drive through California. As he drives along listening to radio personalities discussing the Clinton – Lewinsky scandal, questions of moral relativism and moral authority begin to form in Steele’s mind. He allows the reader to enter his head and travel along with him on his physical journey through the state. The stops he makes during his drive lead to examples from both the past and present and seem to indicate Steele’s appreciation of the journey in its entirety. Obviously symbolic, it creates a minor, yet, very interesting sub-plot that compliments Steele’s intellectual journey throughout the years perfectly.

As Steele’s journey from Los Angeles progresses, a discussion of moral relativism including an illustrating comparison of President Clinton’s sexual mishaps and President Eisenhower’s rumored use of the word “nigger” on the golf course in the 1950’s indicates that in addition to black vs. white, the book will address past vs. present. Steele claims that while Eisenhower’s presidency never would have survived a sex scandal, he got away with something that Clinton’s presidency never would have survived today. Morality is relative to the time period; the time determines moral and social responsibility. When Steele makes a stop in San Luis Obispo, he remembers traveling during his youth when his father would have to find a black person simply to resolve where they could eat or sleep. Since this is no longer the case, Steele realizes that much has been gained from the shift from individual morality to social morality.

Abundant examples reflecting Steele’s personal experiences are arguably what give the book its persuasive edge. As the book progresses,

6 Id. at 5
7 Id. at 6
8 Id. at 8
it becomes harder to question Steele’s perspective because after all, he saw firsthand these societal developments. They are incorporated into his very life experience. Thus, it becomes very difficult for the reader, especially a young reader, to challenge his position as an authority on the subject. From being a twelve-year-old boy who desperately wanted to be a batboy for an all white YMCA baseball team\(^9\), to storming into his college president’s office to make demands\(^10\), and to being marginalized by a white academic colleague\(^11\), Steele’s examples are sometimes shocking and always thought-provoking. While Steele may have done this intentionally to dissuade the reader from challenging his ideas, it is not likely. Over the years, his own experiences have taught him much and developed his character. His choice to use personal experiences was most likely to aid in the explanation of his ideas. Steele allows the reader to travel with him on his journey from the Civil Rights Era to the present day and his examples show a real-life manifestation of his ideas.

For example, Steele, the son of Civil Rights activists, recalls the moment when he flew into a rage at the sight of his mother crying over Bobby Kennedy’s assassination and hearing her lament that “history had lost a chance.”\(^12\) Rejecting the idea that black advancement could be dependent on a white man in office, Steele realized in that moment that his generation had to replace passivism with militancy, which would provide opportunity and power to blacks.\(^13\) The Civil Rights Movement forced white America to acknowledge its racism and that the very idea of “white supremacy” was wrong. But white supremacy and white power is what gave white America its moral authority and when the era of white supremacy ended, white America, having lost that authority, was no longer qualified to speak on the subject of race.\(^14\) Whites replaced their lost moral authority with moral ambivalence and guilt, which could be exploited by blacks.\(^15\) Steele illustrates this point beautifully with the example of storming into his college president’s office to make demands on behalf of him and other black students.\(^16\) The president did not exert his authority as one would expect, Steele explains,

\(^{9}\) *Id.* at 12–13
\(^{10}\) *Id.* at 18
\(^{11}\) *Id.* at 157–158
\(^{12}\) *Id.* at 16
\(^{13}\) *Id.* at 18, 21
\(^{14}\) *Id.* at 24
\(^{15}\) *Id.* at 21
\(^{16}\) *Id.* at 22
because the president knew that behind the outrageous behavior of the students was "a far greater American outrage": the racism experienced by black Americans.\textsuperscript{17} In this moment, Steele first saw "white guilt" in action; "white guilt" being the vacuum of moral authority that comes with knowing that one's race is associated with racism.\textsuperscript{18} Steele further explains, "Whites (and American institutions) must acknowledge historical racism to show themselves redeemed of it, but once they acknowledge it, they lose moral authority over everything having to do with race, equality, social justice, poverty, and so on. They step into a void of vulnerability."\textsuperscript{19} This is precisely why, according to Steele, white guilt is the same thing as black power; the authority lost by whites is transferred to the victims of historical racism and becomes their power in society.\textsuperscript{20}

With white skin came the stigma of racism. Since America acknowledged that racism was wrong, white Americans and American institutions had to prove themselves; they were racist until proven otherwise.\textsuperscript{21} Steele claims that efforts by whites and American institutions were not motivated solely by goodwill toward minorities, but rather by the need to refute a racist stigma.\textsuperscript{22} To regain moral authority, whites needed blacks; only the acknowledgement by blacks that a white individual or an American institution was not racist could restore such authority.\textsuperscript{23} This is precisely what blacks, according to Steele, knew to exploit; blacks knew that white guilt created a sense of obligation toward blacks as a group rather than toward any particular individual or particular principle.\textsuperscript{24} At this point, the reader may, and probably should, become fairly uncomfortable with some of Steele's assumptions. While it may be believable that white America was not motivated by good intentions alone, the claim that blacks, as a group, intentionally sacrificed individual freedom to exploit white guilt is a bit harder to accept. Serious questions will most likely begin forming in the reader's mind at this point. As Steele readily acknowledges, the teachings of Dr. King were that whites were only obligated to morality and to democratic principles, not to

\textsuperscript{17} Id. at 24
\textsuperscript{18} Id. at 24
\textsuperscript{19} Id.
\textsuperscript{20} Id.
\textsuperscript{21} Id. at 27
\textsuperscript{22} Id.
\textsuperscript{23} Id. at 34
\textsuperscript{24} Id. at 34:35
black people.\textsuperscript{25} Steele believes that it was the new black leadership of the time that paved the way for such exploitation; leaders that, unlike Dr. King, would not appeal to the nation’s moral character, but leaders that would “set up a trade with white guilt.”\textsuperscript{26} Steele refers to these men as “bargainers, bluffers, and haranguers” as well as “specialists in moral indignation”, yet identifies only one, Dick Gregory, by name.\textsuperscript{27} Instead of encouraging blacks to accept full responsibility for their individual lives, leaders such as Dick Gregory led blacks to believe that accepting responsibility made blacks complicit in their own oppression because a racist society had pushed responsibility onto them while “denying them the freedom to do anything with it.”\textsuperscript{28} Blacks needed to trigger white guilt in order to be excused from responsibility, moral constraints, and in some cases, the law.\textsuperscript{29}

Modern black leaders with philosophies similar to Gregory’s use the concept of “global racism”, with which even a small racial incident could prove systemic racism, to seize everything they can from white guilt without actually showing widespread acts of racism.\textsuperscript{30} The beating of Rodney King and the subsequent Los Angeles riots are used as examples of this technique. The riots were held out as the product of black rage toward systemic racism, which reinforced black leverage against white guilt. The only appropriate response to systemic racism is systemic redress.\textsuperscript{31} Thus, instead of redress for Rodney King, the only actual victim of an act of racist violence, systemic redress in response to these events benefited blacks across America.\textsuperscript{32} Although Steele’s ideas make complete sense, they tend to come across as some type of conspiracy theory and the reader may wonder what point Steele is ultimately going to make.

Soon enough, however, Steele takes a different direction and the reader will begin seeing a more complete picture. Suddenly, Steele focuses much more on the behavior of whites than on blacks. Beginning with President Johnson’s Howard University speech, Steele swiftly moves into his revelation of how the denial of responsibility by blacks

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{25} Id. at 34
\item \textsuperscript{26} Id.
\item \textsuperscript{27} Id.
\item \textsuperscript{28} Id. at 52
\item \textsuperscript{29} Id. at 54
\item \textsuperscript{30} Id. at 56
\item \textsuperscript{31} Id. at 57
\item \textsuperscript{32} Id. at 57-58
\end{itemize}
allowed whites to regain their moral authority. President Johnson, launching his “Great Society”, indicated that it would be morally wrong, considering what blacks had been through, to expect them to be fully responsible for pulling themselves up and asked white America to assume much of the necessary responsibility for the advancement of black America. There was no mention of black responsibility, nor any mention of shared responsibility. The President was essentially agreeing with the new militants that it would be morally wrong to ask blacks to be fully responsible for their own development. The implication was that racial inequities could be overcome solely by the efforts of whites and American institutions. At first, this seems chronologically amiss because modern-day examples of the exploitation of white guilt have already been discussed. However, upon re-examination, it appears that Steele only fast-forwarded to fully explain certain concepts such as white guilt. Additionally, many of the psychological processes of blacks and whites are intertwined and played out even today. Thus, while Johnson’s “Great Society” speech pushed white America to accept responsibility for black advancement thereby alleviating some of white America’s guilt, it did not strip black America of its power to exploit white guilt. It actually allowed for a continuation of such exploitation.

According to Steele, no worse fate could have befallen black America. Never in human history has an oppressed group been lifted into excellence by another group; the group can only transform if it takes full responsibility for itself. Assistance by others is acceptable but only after the group has taken complete responsibility for its advancement. By allowing whites and American institutions to take responsibility from them, blacks ended up with no more than an illusion. To regain moral authority, whites needed only to provide a display of social justice, not actual developmental progress. Instead of holding blacks to the same standards, which would force them to accept responsibility, American institutions simply focus on affirmative-action style reforms which generate results, in the form of diversity, without having to bother with actual minority development. To get away with

33 Id. at 53
34 Id.
35 Id. at 62
36 Id.
37 Id.
38 Id. at 63
39 Id. at 64
this, minority underdevelopment is portrayed as a problem of social injustice.\textsuperscript{40}

One can easily see how this is a never-ending cycle leading to more “reforms” and less development. Steele makes an interesting comparison of black achievement in academics versus black achievement in sports and entertainment to illustrate the effects of such a cycle. Whites and American institutions do not assume responsibility for black achievement in athletics or the entertainment industry as they do for academics.\textsuperscript{41} Yet, blacks have no problem being successful in sports or music. As Steele puts it, “the same poverty and deprivation that afflict us as we walk to school in the morning afflict us later in the same day on the playground or in the tenement basement where we practice obsessively on a cheap electric keyboard.”\textsuperscript{42} There are no excuses and no pity. Steele compares a young black boy that cannot dribble a basketball to a young black boy that cannot read or write well.\textsuperscript{43} No one will view the basketball deficiency as a result of injustice; yet, his academic deficiency will most certainly be viewed as the result of racial and psychological determinisms. He will be expected to take full responsibility for his basketball skills; yet, no one will expect him or his family to be responsible for his academic shortcomings.\textsuperscript{44} By allowing white America to take responsibility instead, Steele claims, black America threw away the greatest power they have: complete responsibility for their own development.\textsuperscript{45} Steele is fairly quick to dismiss the belief that athletic and musical abilities are innate.\textsuperscript{46} While hard work is absolutely an integral part of being a successful athlete or musician, there are certain individuals of all races that have innate skills and talents in these areas. Others, no matter how dedicated or hard-working, will never be successful in sports or music. While Steele might be on to something with this example, it would benefit from a more in-depth discussion. Claiming that an acceptance of responsibility will lead to success in music and sports while a denial of responsibility will lead to failure in academics is insufficient.
Additionally, the reader may wonder how this denial of responsibility came about and who was to blame. Steele’s answer will seem obvious, yet incomplete. He claims that white guilt is to blame, for it wanted nothing more than to confuse black America’s relationship to responsibility.47 This almost seems to personify a psychological concept. Although Steele follows up with a more direct accusation of white people, he fails to fully explain who, specifically, is responsible for such a widespread phenomenon. Implicating every white American seems irresponsible and even malicious, just as implicating the majority of black Americans in the complete denial of responsibility is unwise.

In addition to his examination of black America’s response to white guilt, Steele makes an effort to show other societal responses to white guilt. He addresses the movements of young white America during the mid-Sixties or the “counterculture”, which included feminism, environmentalism, and opposition to the war in Vietnam.48 The discussion of the youth consciousness of the mid-Sixties serves its purpose by allowing the reader to understand exactly how broad the phenomenon of white guilt really is.49 White America’s moral authority was vanishing right before the eyes of young people; the escalating war, women’s rights issues, degradation of the environment, and black and white poverty “converged spectacularly to give the impression that oppressiveness, greed, exploitation, and violence were the essence of the American character.”50 Due to the moral vacuum created by white guilt, the youth rebellion of the mid-Sixties was able to overpower the older generation. Consequently, this gave the young generation an inflated sense of authority and an entitlement to break recklessly from the past instead of taking direction from it.51 This inflated sense of authority led to an expansion of white guilt into issues other than race; stigmatization could be used with any issue. To illustrate this point, Steele discusses the issue of environmentalism by describing America as the oppressor and the environment as the victim; America was an environmental “racist”. The same foul qualities that were behind racism were presumed to be behind anti-environmentalist attitudes.52 This is not one of Steele’s best examples as it could certainly be offensive to those

47 Id. at 68
48 Id. at 80
49 Id. at 82
50 Id. at 83
51 Id. at 86
52 Id. at 88
that have experienced racism. Likening careless attitudes about the environment to the hateful, oppressive attitudes of racist white America will certainly make some readers feel uneasy. Steele’s point, however, is understood; the moral authority and power lost by the older generation was transferred to the baby boomer generation. Steele claims that the baby boomer generation happened upon one of the greatest political, social, and cultural forces in American history: white guilt.53 The reader may question: did not the transfer of moral authority move from white America to black America after white America acknowledged its racist past? The reader may also wonder who actually holds the moral authority: Black America? The white baby-boomers? Or both? Steele never directly answers those questions, but the remainder of the book indicates that there is an ongoing struggle for moral authority between groups.

The power of the political left, including the white liberals of the baby-boomer generation, came from their ability to restore moral authority to American institutions by promising to take responsibility for inequality and poverty even though they had no authority to define such problems.54 Steele clearly has a strong dislike of the political left which, by itself, does not have to influence the effect of the book. However, it starts to feel as though Steele is not talking about the entire political left, but only the white political left. The reader will wonder why the black political left is not taken into account and if Steele feels differently about that segment of the left. The reader will, however, temporarily become unconcerned with those questions when Steele delivers what is arguably the most powerful example in the book. The example and subsequent discussion are so thought-provoking and important that consideration of alternative political viewpoints seem rather irrelevant to the point Steele makes. Through an examination of Grutter v. Bollinger, the University of Michigan affirmative action case decided by the Supreme Court in 2003, Steele illustrates the struggle for moral authority. The court opinion, written by Justice O’Connor, is typical of the white liberal mindset and is an excellent example of white blindness.55 In holding that universities should be allowed to use affirmative-action style programs, the majority reaffirms the role of responsibility for white Americans and American institutions. The

53 Id. at 94
54 Id. at 122
55 Id. at 127
majority insinuates that without such programs minorities could not possibly be adequately represented in higher education. Instead of holding minorities to the same standards as their white counterparts, schools are allowed to fill their “quotas” without addressing the question of whether those students are actually as qualified. These programs do not advance or improve the ability of minorities to compete for such highly sought-after positions; they simply give the illusion that social justice and equality are occurring in order to restore their own moral authority. In addition, O’Connor fails to address an issue of the utmost importance: the constitutionality of preferring one race over another.

Steele also points to a newspaper article criticizing Justice Thomas’ dissent. Thomas’ dissent was a scathing rejection of racial preferences and a demand that blacks be seen and understood first and foremost as human beings. He further asserts that affirmative-action style programs are actually an insult to minorities and, more importantly, unconstitutional. Thomas’ dissent, driven by the “rage of invisibility”, calls out the social morality of white liberals as being nothing more than dissociation and gives them zero credit for being on the side of good.

The article criticizing Thomas’ dissent was written by New York Times writer, Maureen Dowd. In her criticism, Dowd was standing in for white liberals everywhere. After Dowd’s conception of herself as a morally and socially responsible human being was virtually annihilated by Thomas’ dissent, she was sent into an “invisibility rage” of her own. Dowd goes as far as to say that Thomas should show “gratitude” for programs such as the one employed by University of Michigan, not so subtly insinuating that he was accepted by Yale Law School and became a member of the United States Supreme Court not because of his accomplishments but because he was black. Her insinuation that Thomas’ achievements only exist because of affirmative-action type programs is, at the very least, offensive. Steele does not hold back his

56 Id. at 128
57 Id.
58 Id. at 144, 145
59 Id. at 145
60 Id.
61 Id. at 147
own opinion of her statement; according to him, although Dowd thinks she is incapable of racism, “she effectively called Thomas a nigger.”

While Steele fully explains the concepts of “white blindness”, “rage of invisibility”, and “dissociation”, this example really illustrates how these concepts tie together and are exhibited in everyday life. The reader gains understanding of the attempts by both white liberals and blacks to claim or reclaim moral authority, and the emotions and thought processes that drive such attempts. Steele’s argument that the American struggle is no longer over betrayed principles, but over moral authority is significantly strengthened by the use of the Grutter example. Steele uses this and another striking example of these concepts as a build up before he moves into the last segment of the book.

Steele briefly discusses “red” states, “blue” states, and the role of both John Kerry and George W. Bush in the 2004 election. The reader may be disheartened and wonder whether such insightful ideas and examples were all just a build up to an unnecessary political rant. Steele, however, follows through with a powerful explanation for his dislike of the political left. The political left of Steele’s youth was not the same political left that exists today. For the left of Steele’s past, race was not taken seriously. There was merely an illusion of race that needed to be punctured so that all could live freely, as individuals. The new left is one of dissociation, one that devolved from a left of democratic principals and individual responsibility. By using affirmative-action style programs instead of encouraging individual responsibility within black America, white liberals are able to completely dissociate from white guilt. However, doing this has resulted in the complete abandonment of the traditional principles of the political left. The big problem is that the dissociational left destroys the principles that would realize its goals, and the right lacks the authority to enforce those same principles. In the current culture war, the left is impotent before social problems and alienated from the very principles that could solve them. Steele believes that the political right “enjoys a new political and cultural ascendancy.” The left ceded to the right the democratic principles and values of individual freedom and responsibility while

62 Id.
63 Id. at 173
64 Id. at 174
65 Id. at 175
66 Id. at 177
67 Id.
the right has learned that racism, sexism, and reckless militarism are morally wrong. A politically-aware reader has to question the truth of that statement; the current American military policy would surely be viewed by many as “reckless”. Regardless, Steele feels that George W. Bush is only the current face of an ascending historical judgment. Just as the baby-boomer generation used historical corrections to shame and defeat its parents’ generation, historical corrections are moving toward the dissociational left. Steele is not self-righteous about his own departure from the political left, which almost comes as a surprise. He simply states that he could not handle being caught in the contradictions of the culture war. One of the last statements of the book sums up Steele’s view quite succinctly: “if you want to be free, you have to make yourself that way and pay whatever price the world exacts.”

Such a simple statement leaves the reader feeling that, in spite of lingering questions, missing evidence, and a complete disregard of the views of certain political factions, Steele ultimately knows what he is talking about.

IV. Discussion

White Guilt is without a doubt a very persuasive book. Steele’s derives his strength from incorporating historical and personal examples to examine conceptual problems and illustrate their real-life applications. His ability to maintain a very personal relationship with the subject matter is an effective persuasion tactic; he never shies away from including his own past behavior in his criticisms of black America. This leaves the reader believing that while Steele may be overly harsh at times, he is not particularly self-righteous in his beliefs. The closeness of his relationship with the subject matter, however, also contributes to some of the negative qualities of Steele’s writing. The subject is so personal to Steele that his extreme dislike of white liberals and the political left can be off-putting at times, even to those that do not identify as white liberals. There are times when Steele seems to be doing nothing more than taking cheap shots at whites and liberals. While this may be understandable to many, a perceptive reader will find this unnecessary. Steele’s
ideas are solid enough; the bitterness and hostility that have seeped into some of the writing do not add to the persuasiveness of Steele’s work. Overall, Steele’s not-so-objective viewpoint is perfect for the tone of the book. Steele makes criticisms of both black Americans and white Americans and while he indicates that white America is more to blame for the current state of affairs, this is supported by solid arguments. However, Steele focuses only on the opinions and agendas of white liberals and, through his own voice, black conservatives. The reader would benefit greatly from a brief discussion of the perspectives of black liberals and white conservatives. Considering that these groups make up a rather large percentage of the American population, Steele was slightly careless by failing to include them.

In addition, Steele would have done well to include a brief discussion on how black musicians and athletes are regarded in black communities compared to black academics. If black athletes and musicians are fully responsible for their own success, as opposed to blacks that have been aided by whites and American institutions in their academic endeavors, the reader has to wonder if black musicians and athletes are more respected in the black community. If that was the case, Steele would have to query whether part of the problem was a perpetuation of black America’s attitude toward academics. The reader must wonder if even a general description of such perspectives would negate any of Steele’s ideas. Such an effect is unlikely, however, and Steele’s arguments do not suffer too much from their omission. A more important omission is Steele’s failure to include statistical proof. While Steele’s arguments are persuasive, there is no statistical evidence to substantiate claims that are of great importance to the book itself.

Steele’s claim that American institutions produce only the illusion of social justice rather than actual minority development is not supported by any research or statistical evidence. While his claims are not incredibly difficult to believe, especially for readers with experience in teaching or social work, they would benefit from a short discussion of sociological or educational studies. Readers with little knowledge of the American school system or social welfare programs may be skeptical of Steele’s blanket statement that American institutions produce merely an illusion. Such a statement also will likely offend those that put much time and energy into their employment within such institutions. Since there is little doubt that such evidence exists, Steele would have done well to include some of it in his book. While the inclusion of statistical
evidence would have added strength to Steele’s claim, its omission does not necessarily detract from the overall effectiveness of the book. The reader may wonder about the statistical backing of certain claims, but will not likely dismiss the entire piece simply because it is lacking.

Upon finishing the book, the reader will likely be persuaded by Steele’s arguments, despite some lingering questions. After taking a step back and allowing those questions to percolate, there may be some hesitance to buy into Steele’s arguments completely. Accepting that such huge psychological concepts are in play throughout the entire American population and that both white America and black America are capable of such destructive “group-think” is quite difficult. However, after taking a moment to peruse back through the book and re-examine Steele’s arguments and examples, the reader should be ready to view sociology and politics quite differently.

V. CONCLUSION
White Guilt, despite its omissions of statistics and certain perspectives, is a book that should be read and considered carefully by all. Steele’s ideas and examples are insightful and thought-provoking. Both whites and blacks will gain a deeper understanding not only of their own race, but more importantly, of each other. In addition, White Guilt would certainly be an informative read for anyone working in an American institution, such as the education or social welfare systems; questioning whether real results are being achieved is, no doubt, of the greatest importance to such readers. Those readers that will feel attacked or alienated are perhaps Steele’s most important audience and should make every effort to move past Steele’s occasional disdainful tone to perceive the deeper purpose of his arguments.