

**Unearthing Postracialism: A Critical Socio-Historical Survey and Analysis of
the Scientific, Political and Ethical Critiques of 'Race'**

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Declaration

The work presented in this thesis is my own.

Signed,

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Abstract

This thesis examines two central research questions: Can ‘race’ as both a historical and contemporary concept be dispensed with when it is perceived as socially real and has significant material consequences? And, can ‘race’ ever be justified as an acceptable category and concept if it (re)produces ‘natural’ and hierarchical differences which function to both explain and validate racism? Important historically and presently as seemingly every aspect of social and political relations has become deeply inflected by a racial dimension, these questions frame a problematic I refer to as postracialism. Methodologically a work of historical sociology this thesis draws significantly on original archival research *and* qualitative interview data in its critical analysis of the ongoing controversy surrounding the scientific, political and ethical status of ‘race’ through an exploration of the social, political and institutional histories of postracialisms. My project significantly expands contemporary postracial discussions which remain largely library based by examining unpublished archival material and qualitative interview data alongside ongoing literature and debates. This original data enables the thesis to open up a mutually beneficial dialogue between antiracist theory and antiracist practice, to assess the possibility of a postracial antiracism and to engage in critical reflection on the relation between activist and intellectual work. Ultimately, this thesis assesses whether race is a necessary, contingent, or dispensable category through an examination of the scientific, political and ethical stakes of getting rid of the category.

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Chapter 1 Introduction: Outlining Postracialism

Among the words that can be all things to all men, the word race has a fair claim to being the most common, the most ambiguous and the most explosive (Jacques Barzun, 1937:3).

Perhaps it is wrong to speak of ['race'] at all as a concept rather than as a group of contradictory forces, facts and tendencies (W.E.B. Du Bois, 1940:133).

1.1 Dislodging Racial Eternalism

'Race' has never been a neutral descriptor of 'obvious' physical difference. It has *always* been ensnared in power relations and hierarchical differentiation. This project engages two enduring questions: Can 'race' - as a historical and contemporary concept - be dispensed with when it is perceived as socially real and has substantial material consequences? And, can 'race' ever be justified as an acceptable category and concept if it (re)produces 'natural' and hierarchical differences which function to both explain and validate racism? These interlocking questions frame a problematic I refer to as postracialism which is important as seemingly every aspect of social and political relations has become inflected by a racial dimension. This thesis – a work of historical sociology drawing significantly on archival and interview data – critically analyses the ongoing controversy surrounding the scientific, political and ethical status of 'race' through an exploration of the social and political histories of postracialisms. Ultimately, this thesis assesses whether 'race' is a necessary, contingent, or dispensable category through an examination of the scientific, political

and ethical stakes of getting rid of the category. Before outlining postracialism, I will recapitulate the ‘race’ concept in history in order to contextualise the postracial intervention.

The iniquity of ‘racial obviousness’ (‘race’ is intuitively recognised as an almost natural observation) is worsened when ‘race’ is projected backwards to time immemorial. Racial commonsense dispels the historicity of ‘race’ and reasserts ‘race’ as *the* timeless and universal category of human classification. Racial commonsense predictably returns to Greek antiquity, the mythologised birthplace of ‘civilisation’ and assumes ancient social organisation to have been thoroughly racialised. Social distinctions, however, were ethnocentric and xenophobic and did not involve ‘race’ (Banton, 1977).

Difference pivoted on cultural and political cleavages while exclusion operated through the value-laden political and cultural binaries of democracy/despotism and civilised/barbarian (Eze, 1997). The special significance accorded to phenotypes and the indissoluble commitment to fundamental difference did not feature. The Ancients understood ‘obvious’ physical difference as the effect of diverse environments upon a uniform human (Snowden, 1983). The doctrine of nonracial species singularity would remain a longstanding conviction splintered only with the modernist creed of racialism.

Scientific and popular forms of ‘race’ are historically located within modernity crystallising during the European capitalist expansion and conquest of the mid 18th century (Banton, 1987; Horsman, 1981). ‘Race’, a product of the modernist mission

to catalogue the natural world into a rational pattern, emerged with the discourse of racialism. Racialism rejected the authoritative biblical account of a singular human 'race' reworking the narrative such that humanity was subdivided into racial groups with each 'race' possessing certain unfailingly heritable and unevenly distributed intellectual, moral, cultural and physical characteristics. 'Race' became a historically purposive and permanent feature of being.

Racialism as an explanatory system did not proceed from one philosophy or movement. Racialism was a composite ideology of previously distinct traditions with roots in and ties to liberal political outlooks, the rise of the nation state and imperialist capitalism, biological and zoological investigation, and the invention of its arch pseudo-sciences of racial classification; phrenology (character divined by an examination of one's exterior skull) and physiognomy (character explained through observation of one's face, limbs and gestures) (Augstein, 1996: xi). Racialism provided the scientific 'answer' for armchair European naturalists vicariously encountering the puzzlingly diverse varieties of humankind in the travelogues of colonisers, missionaries and traders.

The classificatory impulse of modernity reached its zenith with the botanist Carl Linnaeus (1707-1778) who introduced the first biological classification system to include humans. Linnaeus' seminal contribution preserved the logical residue of the 'Great Chain of Being'- the ancient belief that God organised creation such that all living things could be classified in a ranked order from the divine likeness of 'mankind' downwards through to the smallest observable creature. His analysis of human physical varieties attributed racially specific characterological traits and

ranked the 'races'. The evaluative character of these 'objective' classifications illustrates how racism underpinned racialism fuelling the creation of 'race' as an intelligible concept and a boundary marker for humanity.

The historical inseparability of the racism/racialism nexus is present in the (in)famous frontispiece to Linnaeus' *A Genuine and Universal System of Natural History*. The image introduces the readership to a scientific cosmology with an orang-utan clutching his 'Negro' mate as he absconds into the jungle (1795). The painting suggests a natural kinship between the sub-human Negro and the non-human ape. Before the written arguments the reader is told that blackness is excluded from the province of humanity. The 'Negro' is of a qualitatively different nature ('race'), outside the liberal universe of freedom, rights and equality.

Linnaeus' foundational text overflows with racialised assessments of worth (Hannaford, 1996). From these exclusionary origins racialism would continue substituting racist judgments for 'scientific' ones reproducing itself as always-already steeped in the value judgments of ancient mythology (wild men), travellers' tales (noble savages) and aesthetic presuppositions derived from ancient Greece. Linnean racism became an institutionalised standard informing anthropological descriptions of racialised 'Others' for centuries (Eze, 2001:29) and even persisting in contemporary thought (see Rushton, 2000).

Racialism in K. Anthony Appiah's widely accepted definition is the intellectual precondition for racism. Racialism is not necessarily ethically perilous and can allow for 'separate but equal' 'races' provided positive moral qualities are distributed

across them (Appiah, 1990:7). Inverting Appiah's formulation I argue that racism is the ideological system producing racialism and ultimately 'race'. The emergence of the idea of 'race', the ascription of a biological content and the 'scientific' legitimation of a biological hierarchy were the end products of racism. Racism as a process of signification attributed meaning to certain phenotypical or genetic characteristics and created a system of categorisation attributing negatively evaluated characteristics to the people sorted into those categories (Miles, 1993). Racial categorisations became the basis for a hierarchy and prefigured the terms of in/exclusion in the allocation of resources and services. The causal ordering of 'race'/racism is something of a chicken-and-the-egg conundrum. How can you have racism before 'race'? How can you have 'race' and not racism?

I am not interested here in a final resolution to the issue of chronological ordering. I *am* interested in engaging the deep interconnections and contradictions between racism and 'race' and evaluating these implications in relation to postracialisms. Racialism, ever plagued by appraisals of innate moral, intellectual and physical worth, can never realise Appiah's ethico-political indemnity. In this project, racialism is the ideological system engendered by racism, the essentialised and reified discourse used to justify and explain racist domination. Birthed by racialism, 'race' is ineluctably steeped in assessments of worth and naturalised difference. 'Race' science was underwritten by two evaluative assumptions (1) human (racial) types can be arranged hierarchically according to intellectual and moral capacity and (2) such characteristics are unchanging even in the face of social engineering. 'Race' was constructed and used to authorise violent domination, to reproduce social

hierarchies and to provide Europe with the racialised ‘Other’ of the uncultivated and prehistoric so central to European self-definition.

The constructedness of ‘race’ is revealed in the contentious disagreements that characterised its scientisation (Eze, 1997). Naturalists labouring frenetically to specify the concept produced countless racial indicators. Skin colour, naturalised as that marker of difference which the innate perceptual scheme intuitively recognises, proved ever unreliable with permutations running imperceptibly into one another. The obvious ‘truth’ of racial difference was, quite simply, not so self-evident. The infinite variability of the human form meant ‘race’ had to be constantly (re)created in order to produce a stable racial truth.

In this scramble for coherence, innumerable often contradictory classificatory systems emerged and collapsed under the weight of logical inconsistency and empirical evidence. Buffon, for example, protested Linnaeus’ claim that individual criterion could inform a racial methodology. Buffon’s ‘resolution’ considered an ensemble of physical and mental traits but only generated *more* confusion blurring the distinction between ‘race’ and ‘nation’ to one of degree. These classifications though factually groundless and scientifically spurious continued for centuries with constant modification, expansion and abandonment.

While these classificatory debates are well rehearsed in the annals of anthropology (Hudson, 1996), lesser known are the dissents. The dissents varying in content and form maintained that humankind was not divisible into a specifiable number of ‘races’ with fixed characteristics. This historically muted counter-discourse, what I

term 'nonracialism', rejected 'race' on philosophical, political, scientific and religious grounds. Nonracialism is a framework for physical variation where categorisation according to the immutability of 'race' does not feature. 'Race' as a category of natural and social recognition and representation does not exist. Nonracialism finds epistemological mooring for human sameness and difference in philosophical (universalism), political (natural rights doctrine), scientific (species unity), and religious (Christian fraternity) distinctions.

The social constructedness of 'race' is evident in its historical variability. The Harlem Renaissance exemplifies how 'race' has always been a protean political resource continually transformed in struggle. The renaissance rearticulated 'race' without the biological traces of a fixed essence and drew upon constructionist notions to combat racism. Constructionism marks a paradigmatic shift. 'Race' as a biological concept is abandoned while 'race' as a social category is cemented and appropriated for oppositional cultural-political campaigns. Constructionism perhaps hastily assumes that in this re-articulation 'race' can be liberated from its essentialist premises. This in contrast to the way biological categories are assumed to be inevitably trapped within essentialism. Can constructionism free 'race' from the legacies of essentialised fixity and its use for purposes of subjugation? Presently it is important to note that the variability of 'race' discredits understandings of it as a permanent and inevitable principle of differentiation.

Howard Winant (2002), in an error not too dissimilar to presentism, projects racialised dynamics infinitely into a racialised future; 'Race is here to stay baby. Go home and tell your momma (2004: xix).' 'Race' becomes incontestable with the

historical conditions which (re)make the discourse obscured. Postracialisms break with orthodoxy putting the taken-for-granted category under critical examination, even erasure. Distinct from nonracialism, postracialisms remain unconvinced of the efficacy of 'race', critical of its iniquitous applications and *crucially* advocate for its elimination. What I consolidate under postracialism, in no sense unitary or consistent, refers to the utopian ideas and practices that might enable a process of racial erasure. Unlike declarations of the postracial as existing in the here-and-now this is postracialism as a utopian ambition (St Louis forthcoming).

Postracialism(s) aware of the scientific myths and spurious rationality of 'race' critically question(s) the political and ethical viability of the concept with attention to its reified descriptive and explanatory premises. Postracialism(s) has varied widely in both academic and popular discourse. I will now specify how I use the concept by sketching out its three major threads (1) scientific (2) political (3) ethical/ontological. Each discussion will also summarise the opposing conservationist position advocating the preservation of the category, discourse and practice of 'race'.

1.1.1 Racial (Pseudo)Science Today

The conceptual crisis of 'race' in modernity is a fitting origin story for a mythic category informed by an inherently judgmental brand of science (Hoberman, 1997; Marshal, 1993). The scientific pedigree of 'race' has been contested since such legitimacy was first asserted. Today a near consensus in the biological and social sciences maintains 'race' has no reliable biological foundation (American Association of Anthropologists, 1998; American Association of Physical

Anthropologists, 1996). Molecular biology and genetics have produced results disavowing 'race' and have uncovered extensive evidence of human sameness (Graves, 2001). Technological developments have enabled a new threshold of visibility revealing the internal sameness of bodies rendering phenotypical difference and the racialised perceptual paradigm obsolete (Gilroy, 2000). Academic opinion notwithstanding, acceptance of the unified corporeality of humanity still lags in a public consciousness populated by everlasting racial myths such as the anatomical superiority of West African sprinters.

Recently a scientific resurgence calling for the preservation of the biological concept (while also dismissing social constructionism as irrational dogma) has reopened debate. Racial realists, as the cohort is known, argue 'race' is genetically discrete, reliably measurable and scientifically meaningful. Racial realism encompasses far-right racists such as J. Phillippe Rushton (2000) and Arthur Jensen (1969) to the more nuanced, 'scientific' arguments of John Entine (2000), Robin Andreasen (2004/5), John Arthur (2007), Phillip Kitcher (1999), Vincent Sarich & Frank Miele (2004) and Armand Marie Leroi (2005). In broad terms, racial realism refines 'race' to accommodate genetic evidence by maintaining that 'race' (phenotypic racial signifiers) has significant statistical correlation with the DNA markers that indicate genetic relatedness (genotype). Racial realism holds different 'races' - groups sharing distinctive genetic and ultimately phenotypic traits - result from ancestrally demarcated breeding populations produced through extended geographic isolation (Witherspoon *et al*, 2007; Yu *et al*, 2002). These breeding populations, however, do not comport onto the groups defined by the folk concept of 'race'. The on-sight

logics of racialism do *not* hold at the genomic level revealing a massive disparity between phenotype and genotype.

Racial realists have also resuscitated the biological concept through discussions of disease susceptibility and racially specific therapeutics. Different ‘races’, they maintain, are more susceptible to various genetically based diseases and in turn more responsive to certain courses of treatment or drug regimens (Risch *et al*, 2002). A wealth of research, however, demonstrates ‘race’ and disease linkages are determined by a complex entanglement of political pressures, cultural practices, environmental toxins, access to health care, education, economic resources and diet (Condit, 2004; Cooper, Kaufman & Ward, 2003; Root, 2001; Schwartz, 2001).

Racial biology was first emphatically rejected after the atrocities of the Nazi Final Solution with the United Nations Educational, Social and Cultural Organisation’s (UNESCO) refutation of Nazi ‘race’ science. The statement condemned ‘race’ science through a searching examination of its basic unit of analysis, ‘race’. The statement - far from relegating ‘race’ defunct - reignited an old debate still alive in the racial realism dispute. The backdoor (re)entrance of ‘race’ in genetics and its use in justifying atrocities such as the Tamil genocide and mass internment in Sri Lanka in 2009 highlight the ethical need for continued contestation¹. Racial realism threatens to render social-scientific theorizing about the (in)significance of ‘race’ obsolete and so underscores the ethical stakes of postracial bioscience. The research assigns an independent reality to racial categorisation and refuels the enduring logic that genetic disorders *and* an ensemble of human traits and characteristics are

¹ <http://www.hrw.org/en/news/2009/02/19/sri-lanka-end-war-civilians> (accessed 10 February 2013)

differentially distributed by 'race'. 'Race', as a natural concept outside of human intervention, stands as one of the most persistent residues of racism

Science has an imperative ethical task to use its rhetorical authority to dismantle commonsense racial biology and discredit naturalised notions of 'race'. Widespread contestation remains a departure point although an excessive dependence on scientific formalism risks reducing the critique to an ethically vacuous discussion of competing scientific claims (St Louis, 2005a). Such a singular strategy is limited considering the allure of 'race' as both a constitutive feature of modern power and a formative prism shaping lived experience is not grounded on an understanding of its scientific status. Critical inquiry, aware of the deep social attachment to and material investment in 'race, attempts to extend beyond the biological non/status of 'race' to a comprehensive engagement with what 'race' does, a re-orientation towards an ethico-political confrontation. I will continue by elaborating those political dimensions.

1.1.2 'Race' & Antiracism

Postracialist positions scrutinise antiracisms exposing how its sometimes dictatorial character and narrow categories of operation evade ethical consideration and proceed unquestioned despite dubious alliances (Rev. Farrakhan and the KKK) and erroneous assertions (racialised diseases). Broadly speaking, postracialism(s) confront(s) the political dimension of 'race' through a reflexive examination of how 'race' operates in antiracism. Critical interrogation points to the unsettling truth that some antiracisms smuggle an absolutist ideology of 'race' into their frameworks. A

fanatical sense of insurmountable cultural and phenomenological divisions comes with this conceptual stowaway.

Indigenous rights struggles in Ecuador's petroleum-rich El Oriente region, for example, use a politicised indigeneity which appropriates the noble savage discourse to combat rapine expropriation, water contamination and deforestation by multinational oil corporations (Moore, Pandian & Kosek, 2003). This form of antiracism in collusion with racism makes 'race' into a fixed origin and institutionalises the imagined neat separation of 'races'. The promise of a nonracial human community becomes an established impossibility. Conceptual and rhetorical dovetailing between antiracism and racism urges questioning; how radically transformative and analytically insightful can antiracism be if, as a discourse of resistance, it prompts identification with and in terms of the categories fundamental to the discourse of oppression?

Much antiracism beyond its conceptual overlaps with racism also unwittingly recycles the ideological apparatus established to combat Nazism remaining powerless to stop the development of or even contest new patterns of exclusion and segregation (Hesse, 2011). Contemporary forms of culturalist racism forsake racial biology and hierarchy and borrowing the terms of liberal antiracism transmute 'race' into culture (Balibar, 1991). The right's relativist multiculturalism has in successfully co-opting antiracism and its normative ideological values shattered commonplace political certainties.

During the 2012 US Republican presidential primary Newt Gingrich appeared to successfully disavow racist intent and to distance himself from extreme forms of intolerance while describing President Obama as the ‘food-stamp president’ and arguing that ‘blacks should demand jobs not food-stamps’ (Harris, 2012). An interpretive repertoire of individualism and aspirationalism replaces the now discredited biological referents. Gingrich vilifies and essentialises African-Americans not in terms of their genetic makeup but for their supposed demands to ‘special privileges’ and their pathological shiftlessness. Postracialism(s) advocate(s) the excising of the ‘race’ concept as a necessary political step to (re)empower antiracism against new forms of racism and to end the cyclical (re)production of ‘race’ - the ideological prerequisite for racism.

In postracialism social injustice and oppression will be tackled without recourse to analytically defunct forms of social description and explanation which reify ‘race’ as a normative social formation (St Louis, 2005b). Activism, freed from the naturalistic predicates of ‘race’ and its dubious explanatory frameworks, will be able to more effectively battle culturalist racisms. This is in contrast to institutionalised antiracisms such as a professionalised antiracist consultancy which trivialise racism and fail to raise important issues of social justice, and economic power. Antiracism has at times been superseded by a trite multicultural politics in education and government which reduced racism to the superficial and relegated it to the political periphery. Systematic trivialisation under the guise of ‘cultural enrichment’ in multicultural education reinforced unequal access, subverted minority resistance, reproduced socio-economic inequalities and ignored volumes of evidence of how

racist practices have (re)produced fundamentally in-egalitarian social and economic structures (Troyna, 1993).

1.1.3 Politics Without Guarantees

‘Race’-based identity politics, the constructionist counterpart of antiracism and the site of hard-won oppositional identities, is long overdue for a theoretical and political interrogation. In pursuit of a reflexive and democratic society such an examination is welcomed. Identity politics as Brubaker (2004) has argued naturalise thinking in terms of bounded groups and assume the existence of racialised political alliances as self-evident. Its identitarian language occludes alternative ways of conceptualising political affiliation by falsely assuming a causal relationship between ‘race’ and political affiliation. This forecloses communication across difference and retreats inwards away from the searching ethico-political questions posed by postmodernity (Gilroy, 1997).

These are the questions tested and risked in the encounter with that which is radically ‘Other’. The encounter requires imagination and hermeneutical sensitivity. Critically engaged dialogue requires the opening of oneself to the full power of what the ‘Other’ is saying without which the encounter descends into a self-deceptive monologue where one never risks testing one’s prejudgements. In the retreat toward security and stability, naturalistic claims solidify an empty political solidarity, unsustainably built on arbitrarily ascribed traits. Particularly alarming is how this pseudo-solidarity demands an unthinking dedication bypassing discussion and dissent. Mediated resolution is sidestepped and coercive techniques become

necessary to secure an ‘unearned’ solidarity which insists on conformity to authentic group behaviour and only underscores the need for an ethically empowered political discourse (Gilroy, 2004).

For postracialism(s) resistance can only be realised with the abolition of ‘race’ and the creation of a postracial subject emboldened to think through and justify her ethical commitments and political ideas without the safety net of non-negotiated political positions (St Louis, 2002). Postracialisms maintain that if an authentically democratic political culture, not organised around the practical currency of ‘race’, is to be had, a deeper and more reflexive consideration of the global processes of community formation and representation is required. Having discussed the political critiques, I will now continue to the ethical critique.

1.1.4 Beyond the Ethics of the Colour line

Hard-won oppositional identities and solidarities, the sources of progressive ‘race’-based mobilisations, are not easily relinquished. Racial conservationists while recognising the social constructedness of ‘race’, reject the postracial turn maintaining that the category is politically necessary to mobilise against racism (Hardimon, 2003) and integral to self-identity and group cohesion (Mallon, 2004).

Conservationism represents the conventional social-scientific approach.

Postracialism(s) sourced from a radical and future-oriented politics contend(s) that ‘race’ is over-determined by a discourse that cannot be rearticulated without the historically inescapable taint of its absolutist predicates. Continued reference only exacerbates its reifying effects, dangerous commonsense meanings, phenotypical

allusions and its mobilisation for purposes of social exclusion and subjugation. The constructionist alternative remains hostage to the mythical ideas and political short-circuits of racialism.

For conservationists 'race' opens up an existential space for oppositional projects and a healthy psychology in the face of virulent racism (Alcoff, 2006). Postracialist critiques enumerate the regulatory and disciplinary tendencies of oppositional identities in an attempt to recover the critical self-consciousness regularly lost in 'race'. The disciplinary regimes of 'race', Appiah suggests, impose constricting life scripts, dissolve individuality and bind individuals to ready-made identities (1996). Compressing identity to the monadic focus on 'race' reduces the individual to a single descriptor through the exclusion of other converging social categories. The self when restricted to a prior racial ontology is over-determined with false essentialism, preformed values and choice-less frames of interpretation.

'Race' proves incapable of being readily re(de)-signified without its reified tendencies and exclusionary history and only capable of reinforcing embittered distinctions between racial groups (Appiah, 1996). Postracialism(s) in an imaginative leap toward a radical freedom commence(s) a momentous moral evolution where the subject assumes a heightened ethical and political responsibility for her decisions and allegiances (Hill, 2001). The self is transformed from a project of being into a project of becoming without racially ontologised rules forbidding multiple social affinities and pre-political categories precluding negotiated positions.

1.1.5 Not to Be Confused With...

Often this imaginative aspect of postracialism is sharply criticised as naively utopian, wholly semantic or worse consummately bourgeois individualism. Detractors accurately note postracialism's utopian imagining beyond the strictures of 'race'. Postracial utopianisms could be located in the radical traditions of Atlantic abolitionism and the suffragette movement. Utopian aspirations as for the abolitionists and suffragettes function as sources of strength and hope in working to transform the fundamentally unequal structures and institutions of power. Postracialism(s) promises to confront contemporary racisms, combat the social and economic reproduction of inequality engendered by racism, revive political culture beyond identity politics and to develop an authentically peaceful accommodation of otherness predicated on a fundamental commonality (Gilroy, 2004).

Critics also accuse (confuse?) postracialism of offering little more than neo-conservative colourblind rhetoric. Colourblindness suggests postracialism is attainable if practically adopted through 'race'-neutral social policy and legislation. Contemporary racial inequality, if acknowledged at all, is understood as the outcome of nonracial dynamics with racialised stratification rationalised as the product of market dynamics, naturally occurring phenomena and imputed cultural limitations. Colourblindness perpetuates racial inequality by leaving the fundamentally racist social and economic structures untouched and by actually codifying racism into ostensibly 'race'-neutral legislation (Crenshaw, 1995). Colourblindness seeks to erase all formal reference to 'race' and to hail this semantic deletion as the realisation of true equality.

Another far right discourse celebrates the achievements of postracialism as having already arrived. Adherents cite the irrelevance of ‘race’ (and/or its declining significance) and racism in determining life chances and opportunities (D’ Souza, 1995). Tokenistic examples of racial equality such as the growing presence of racialised minorities among the political elite become testimony to the post-racist era. Former US Secretary of State Colin Powell, for example, was heralded as the embodiment of the American struggle to extend political rights to racialised minorities and prominently positioned to provide an official face to American diversity. President George W. Bush’s cabinet, the most racially diverse in US history, was supposed evidence that old racist hierarchies are no longer an intrinsic feature of today’s political order.

Postracialism is distinct from these discourses in three crucial ways. First, postracialism presents a developed analytical paradigm capable of understanding and explaining the power of the diverse racisms that have taken shape today. Second, it imagines and works to bring into being a postracial political landscape that enables a radically democratic project unfettered by racial parochialism. As such, it promises a creative view of humanity complete with the conceptual sophistication for appreciating the fluidity of identities that stress experiential plurality, multiple affinities and negotiated political associations. And thirdly it facilitates the desperately needed ethical turn as it forces the subject to become self-critical and self-reflexive in both her political allegiances and affiliations.

A central paradox lurks at the heart of postracialism. Charles W. Mills captured this well: ‘That race should be irrelevant is certainly an attractive ideal, but when it has

not been irrelevant, it is absurd to proceed as if it had been' (1998: 41, original emphasis). This rearticulation of the postracial dilemma offers a powerful rejoinder to postracialism. Racism has made 'race' significant to life chances and opportunities, to science and to ontologies. The racial categories rejected by postracialism are paradoxically necessary to identify and combat racism and to develop ameliorative strategies. We cannot simply move beyond 'race'. We need 'race' in some form to track racialised inequality and to challenge it. Mills' formulation of the postracial paradox presents a serious hurdle for postracialism and forms the foundation for manifold reservations. It refigures the postracial ambition in terms of the paradox of working both with and against 'race'. I will return to this persistent challenge throughout this thesis.

1.2 Chapter Outline

This project beginning with nonracialism critically surveys and analyses the thus far unmapped intellectual lineage of postracialism. The project - driven by unpublished archival and interview data - interprets the significance of this unexamined heritage and critically evaluates its implications for contemporary theory. Chapter two outlines my methodology and discusses my approach to the qualitative data. Chapter three offers a broad historical survey of the existing literature and situates my work within the existing body of knowledge. Chapter four explores the concept of narcissistic non/postracialism and critically interrogates the humanistic epistemology underpinning these non/postracial expressions. Chapter five charts the ethical critique in postracialism showing how although 'race' is not biologically warranted it is nevertheless socially real and is crucially a central part of self-conception and

determinant of life chances. Chapter six explores the possibilities of a postracialist antiracism highlighting several key dimensions of the postracial problematic through interview material. Chapter seven examines postracial bioscience arguing it provides the affirmative basis for the ethical and political critiques of postracialism, extends beyond the empiricist assumptions of positivistic paradigms ultimately enriching epistemological, methodological and ethical understandings. Chapter eight explores 'postracial cosmopolitanism' through theoretical literature and qualitative interview data arguing that in spite of its limitations it offers an ethically laudable attempt to reimagine how we live with difference and how we might do so beyond 'race'.

Chapter 2 Methodology

2.1 The Historiographical Origins of Sociology

Sociology aims, ‘to enable men...to become aware of historical structures and their own place within them’ (Mills, 1959: 139). The sociological promise, as expressed by Mills, is deeply interconnected to historiography and consonant with sociology’s ‘hallowed’ foundations. The collective oeuvre of Emile Durkheim, Karl Marx and Max Weber - the holy trinity of sociological luminaries - inscribed the discipline with a strong historical consciousness. Durkheim’s *Suicide: A Study in Sociology* was an extensive analysis of official governmental records (1951). Weber’s research on religion which formed the bulk of *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* was based on historical material (2010). And finally, Marx’s *Capital Volume One* grew out of an investigation of government records archived in the British Museum (1976).

What distinguished this analysis as historical sociology was how it investigated social change and phenomena through an acute attention to the crucial patterns, processes and trajectories linked to specific contexts and locations (Abrams, 1982). Disciplinary boundaries were more permeable - indiscernible even - in the time of the sociological ‘founders’. My project follows the intellectual footprints of Marx and Mills with an orientation rooted in historical sociology and bolstered by archival and interview data. Original historical research and qualitative interviewing have

methodological merit and the promise of rich empirical data can greatly enrich social theory. Before explicating my methodology I will contextualise the lack of an historical sensibility in contemporary postracialisms to which my project *and* my methodology are responses.

2.1.1 Loss of Historical Sensibility

Recent decades have witnessed an increasing professionalization of the academy through the canonisation of ‘classical social theory’ (Wilford, 1995).

Institutionalised in great part through the work of Talcott Parsons, the shift towards social theory displaced the tradition of historical inquiry in favour of contemporary concept formation and systematisation (Calhoun, 2003). Professionalization resulted in the formerly accessible intellectual discourse being replaced by a highly technical one, inscrutable to outsiders. Current postracialism, reawakened with the publication of *Against Race* (Gilroy, 2000), retraces Parsons detour around the methodological challenges of historical research and qualitative interviewing. Postracialisms offer a developed analysis of popular culture (Gilroy, 2004) but perhaps neglect the *longue duree* of its own histories and the possibilities for and problems with its realisation in the here-and-now. Gaps in the overarching historicity are exemplified in its failure to engage with its own key thinkers (i.e. Barzun) and moments (i.e. UNESCO debates) in any sustained manner.

Contemporary postracial debates remain trapped in a specialised language and a self-referential conversation confined for the most part to the private environment of scholarly life. Distanced and perhaps even disconnected from the production of

public ideas informed by engagement with radical struggles for social justice, postracial discussions are not linked to a discrete praxis or a concrete political programme. Chapter six 'Postracial Futures: Practicing and Imagining Postracial Antiracisms' represents my own struggle as an academic-in-training with this disconnect. The chapter can be seen as a critical response to the limited existence of anything resembling a postracial programme.

Loose and fragmentary, postracialist positions (St Louis, 2009) advance theoretically sophisticated critiques of 'race'. But reflexive dialogue and critical reflection on the formative patterns and trajectories of its own histories are lost in these abstract discussions. This in spite of the fact - as the next chapter demonstrates - that postracialisms have a long history spanning centuries and continents. Across space and time, postracialisms have varied tremendously in content and form, in concrete expression and reception in specific social relations and historical and institutional contexts. For example, why did Alain Locke's trenchant dismissal of racial biology in 1916 not garner widespread recognition for decades? What about that historical moment marginalised his critique? And how and why were his once tendentious arguments amenable to UNESCO in 1950?

My project centres archival and interview material in the exploration of postracialisms in 'real-world' contexts. This archival (re)turn is a methodological and theoretical response to the absence of historical and empirical work in current debates. The return to qualitative data is made with the belief that more empirical research is needed to support theoretical claims and to make social theory more relevant, more robustly evidenced. After all, the theoretical, political and ethical

issues surrounding the formation and proposed dissolution of racial categorisation only assume meaning in specific contexts. Such historical awareness is essential if postracialisms aim to broaden the diagnosis of the theoretical state of ‘race’ and/or to work in tandem with an engaged politics.

2.1.2 Why a Qualitative Postracialism?

A qualitative postracialism is further compelling considering how such a project would (re)visit both the ethical and political implications of ‘race’. Racialism is ethically problematic because it ranks humanity through somatised political relationships. Fundamentally political relationships are explained as natural, outside of time. The discourse transforms racial distinctions into an unquestionable commonsense that explains, rationalises and is used to interpret any number of complex social processes. In the US, for example, the Asian-American model minority myth offers a prefabricated theory that makes sense of the world through the exclusion of complex political, cultural, and economic factors (Saito, 1997). The comparative educational and economic success of Asian-Americans and their perceived assimilation into mainstream American culture is attributed to traditional cultural values and family structures. Other ‘minority’ groups are implicitly considered failures with blame attributed to endemic cultural and moral failings.

The naturalness and assumed permanence of ‘race’ also flourishes amongst certain academics - the biological falsity of ‘race’ is recognised but the category is nevertheless reified. Howard Winant (1994), Joshua Glasgow (2009) and Anna Stubblefield (2005) defend the preservation of ‘race’ through an anti-eliminativist

constructivism – ‘race’ is socially constructed and while lacking a biological foundation it is symbolically and materially real, and therefore should not be eliminated as a theoretical term and/or political concept. In the main, conservationists want to purge ‘race’ of hierarchy and to reconstruct an alternate model that is socially and politically useful and consistent with democratic justice (Outlaw, 1996).

Certain accounts seem to reproduce the logics of biological essentialism in their treatment of difference and sameness. In the work of Glasgow and Stubblefield ‘race’ is given a normative social status - the antiracist social justice agenda is limited as it can only be conceived in and through a racial politics. This conservatism tacitly positions the critique of the salience of racial identities as apolitical disengagement with the ‘race world’ and as out of touch with the practical lives of ordinary people. The reification of social structures, relations and actors presents difference and sameness as objective facts obscuring the naturalising process within difference discourse and its constant reinforcement by moral and rhetorical authority (St Louis, 2005b). Incorporating archival and interview data, I hope to highlight the process of reification and to show the dangers associated with constructionism.

The constructionist matrix makes ‘race’, as both a political and ontological category, into something of an illusion of false necessity. Michael Omi and Howard Winant famously rejected postracialism arguing that, ‘It is rather difficult to jettison widely held beliefs, beliefs which moreover are central to everyone’s identity and understanding of the social world’ (1994:55). The framework theorises ‘race’ as an

unstable and decentred complex of social meanings continually reworked by political struggle. Conceivably the framework could include an anti-‘race’ formation. To paraphrase Winant, such a project would be disastrous; the end of ‘race’ is thus to contemplate the liquidation of western civilization (Winant, 1994: xiii).

Constructionism inadvertently perpetuates a paradox. The meaning of ‘race’ is understood to be mutable, not real in any essential way. However, social reality becomes immutable over-determined by the incontestability and permanence of ‘race’. Where this occurs the radical promise of constructionism, which betokened a move away from essentialism, appears gestural. In the final instance, ‘race’ *must* be preserved as an essential category for understanding human society.

Constructionism, having endorsed ‘race’ in perpetuity, overlooks its most basic insight - the methodological cornerstone of historical sociology and a source of strength for postracialist aspirations. That racialism happens to be the organising model for 21st century Western social relations does not necessitate that it is what must be. Nor has it always structured the socio-political order. Admittedly obvious, viewing the present in relation to the past is an essential technique for recognising its contingency and pressing oneself to attend not simply to surface phenomena but also to underlying causes and conditions that produce those phenomena (Calhoun, 2003).

My semi-structured interviews complimented these perspectives offering a dialogic space for considering the future of ‘race’ in antiracism by opening up a mutually beneficial dialogue between theory and practice². The interview was a critical site for thinking postracialism in practical contexts, some real and some imagined. This

² For more on the interviewees themselves please refer to Appendix 1

exercise enabled a critical analysis of postracialism and a richer engagement with the relationship between ideas and actions.

Unlike the resignation of conservationism, my work grows out of a tradition that does not locate present-day social arrangements as beyond criticism. Not seeking an escape from categories into some ideal realm of pure facticity, my project hopes to stress the social factors that contribute to the (re)production of racial ways of understanding. My concern is not with ‘discovering’ ‘correct’ categories of thought but rather appreciating how the categories we use are constitutive of reality. And of course to use categories in an appropriately self-aware and critical fashion (working with *and* against ‘race’) requires attention to theory *and* history. A sociological understanding of past and present dynamics shaping the use and implications of such categories is essential.

My excavation of postracialism explores episodes of contestation demonstrating the contingency of racialism - the conditions of possibility that allowed for the counter-discourse to emerge, to gain traction and in other moments to dissipate. Beyond historical recovery, my inquiry sketches a genealogy of postracialism. Following Foucault I do not attempt a total history but rather map out a ‘general history’ focused on discontinuities (Foucault, 1989). This translates methodologically into the avoidance of treating history in terms of development and progress. General history is the abandonment of the philosophical project of reconstitution. General history makes historical evidence intelligible in terms of particular problems. Postracialism is not addressed in its totality rather my project brings particular problems to bear upon archival and interview data (Cousins & Hussain, 1984).

2.2 Genealogy and the 'History of the Present'

My exploration of postracialism dispels the theoretical fatalism discussed above proving valuable for loosening the naturalised chokehold of 'race'. Writing a 'history of the present' is not a complete understanding of the historical record. But neither is it a facile plotting of how the present has straightforwardly emerged from the past. It is a methodological intervention using history as a way of diagnosing the present. The concept combines seemingly opposing ideas - history and the present - to reflect on contemporary postracialisms. Reflection precipitates Foucauldian questions for the archives and the interviews; what are the conditions of reality for the discourses of postracialism to emerge then and now? How are they possible? (Kendall & Wickham, 1999: 96). A qualitative approach also makes it possible to grasp postracialism in its contexts of production and application. Greater critical reflexivity requires careful attention to theory *and* history.

If postracialism is to think through the production of knowledge and the politics of researching 'race' the historical dilemmas and 'stuck places' through and into which the body of theory has travelled need to be addressed (Lather, 2001). Historical inquiry and qualitative interviewing offer methodological spaces for thinking through the complexities, ambiguities and contradictions of postracial projects concerned with recognising difference and pursuing social justice. My methodology explores how events, understandings, structures and action are embedded in other simultaneous phenomena and time. Uncovering the complexity of the present

through the inventorying of the infinity of traces left in the present resonates with Gramsci's methodological project.

2.2.1 Genealogy and the Political Stakes of the Conjuncture

My methodology borrows Antonio Gramsci's central concept, the conjuncture, as a conceptual frame (1992). I use an attenuated version through a Foucauldian lens to minimise the obvious contradictions of combining Foucauldian and Neo-Marxist orientations. Propounded by Gramsci and developed by Stuart Hall, the conjuncture is an analytical device for theorising the present. Guided by Foucault and Gramsci my methodology embraces complexity and avoids the teleological and fatalistic tendencies of historiography.

The conjuncture is a social formation characterised by a complex articulated unity or totality. Lawrence Grossberg summarises the conjuncture as:

...a description of a social formation as fractured and conflictual, along multiple axes, planes and scales, constantly in search of temporary balances or structural stabilities through a variety of practices and processes of struggle and negotiation' (2007: 107).

Not simply a slice of time, it is a concept indexing a particular moment defined by a condensation of contradictions, a fusion of different currents or circumstances (ibid).

A concrete example will help to clarify.

In the 1980s Stuart Hall took up Gramsci's interest in historically specific institutional regimes and his concern with historical variation in class struggles.

Thatcherite neoliberalism, for Hall, marked a rupture with the post-war consensus of

social democracy and its characteristically strong welfare state (Hall, 1985). The conservatives sought not simply to remodel society but to undermine the philosophy of social co-operation, mutual aid and care for the underprivileged which had historically formed the discursive basis of the Left. Thatcherism was committed to the philosophy that in order to really dominate and restructure a social formation political, moral and intellectual leadership must be wed to economic dominance. The Right must 'win' in civil society as well as in the state (Hall, 1985). A massive struggle unfolded as conservatives worked to institutionalise a social ethic of self-interest in place of the social-democratic moral universe (Hall, 1988). Thatcherism moved to reconstruct the terrain of what was 'taken for granted' in social and political thought and so to form a new common-sense.

Conjunctural analysis foregrounds contingency so although history is not already determined there are, nevertheless, determinate forces. These forces do not spontaneously arise. Forces have specific conditions of existence. Conjunctures contain dissimilar currents - some of a long, some a relatively short duration, that condense at particular moments into a particular configuration. It is precisely that configuration with its balance of forces which informs this inquiry (Hall, 2007).

A genuine public intellectual, Hall has always been conversant with politics (Hall & Jacques, 1989) understanding the conjuncture not only as a social-historical category but crucially as a moral-political category. Oriented to the present political state the conjuncture pursues, 'understanding the present...grasping it in its conjunctural specificity, in terms of the new problem-space of questions it poses, and the possibilities it both lays open and shuts down' (Scott, 2005: 6). At heart the

conjuncture involves the reorganisation of an existing cognitive- political problem-space, the reorganisation of an existing configuration of questions and answers. It is both an historical *interruption* and a conceptual *reconfiguration* in which one field of argument is displaced by another (Scott, 2005:5). The conjunctures highlight smaller uncertainties, imbalances and struggles of significance for the pathways of postracialism. Broadening the conjuncture to address the political, my project asks; Is ‘race’ a category that is worth having morally and politically?

Not defined by the practice of guaranteeing some preconceived community, conjunctural politics understands solidarity as *earned* in struggle and not effortlessly derived (Scott, 2005). How identity is conceived and how it operates is central to any political movement. Through interviews exploring the relationship between postracialism and antiracism, my project investigates what modes of identity certain postracial formulations endorse and what modes of difference they seek to exclude. This attention to the inherently political activity of boundary-making centres the political stakes and implications of such a methodology.

2.2.2 Foucauldian Methodology

Having sketched some central Foucauldian insights, I will now discuss how I intend to use them. Grasping the histories of postracialisms necessitates empirical interpretation *and* theoretical explanation. Obviating the pitfall of false necessity is aided through empirical research. My methodology employs archival materials not to reconstruct the past but to methodically call into question what is given to us and what we take for granted in postracialism. In close dialogue with qualitative data, I

forge my critical concepts to assemble different, multiple and incomplete paths of development. Once denaturalised, the history can be lifted above the horizon of the taken-for-granted, put in context and broken up (Dean, 2003).

To uncover the contingencies in postracialism, I extend beyond history as little more than a succession of isolated events in which the expert discovers discrete patterns. My work is concerned with the categories of discontinuity and difference, the notions of threshold, rupture and transformation (Sheridan, 1980). My thesis revisits some under-examined postracial moments and draws out their significance for the intellectual lineage. Through interview data the project also aims to contribute to shifts that are beginning to occur. Historically, for example, the status of 'race' in Christian universalism has remained under-examined, despite its significant role in structuring the lines of in/ex-clusion in a putatively nonracial community. In chapter three, I revisit this literature and critically assess nonracial Christian universalism and its complex relationship to racialism.

My analysis draws on Foucault's 'historical *a priori*' - a period delineating the paradigm through which a thinker operated and by which the limits to her perception were set (Poster, 1984). The historical *a priori* refuses to use the terms of the present *and* those concepts developed in earlier times. Foucault reminds us; 'The men of the 17th and 18th centuries do not think of wealth, nature or languages in terms that had been bequeathed to them by preceding ages or in forms that presaged what was soon to be discovered...' (Foucault, 1970: 208). My approach excavates an account of the existence of various systems of thought, of the possibilities of development that lie within the paradigms from which they originated (Roth, 1981). The historical *a*

priori assumes an integral function becoming the fundamental structure of experience.

While situated in a bounded moment my methodological intention is to return to history to address and explore the concerns of the present. In *Discipline and Punish* Foucault regularly returned to his present to engage the, ‘overall political issue around prison’ (Foucault, 1977:308). Foucault’s activist intellectualism included the formation of the Information Group on Prisons which established numerous groups investigating the conditions of prisons - not to effect reforms but to let the prisoners speak for themselves and to unify struggles inside and outside the prisons (Major-Poetzl, 1983:49). Writing a history *of* the present is inextricably joined to the writing of a history *in* the present. Similar to the political impulses sustaining Hall, the ‘history of the present’ signifies a self-conscious undertaking set in a particular field of power relations and political struggle.

Our current moment is of serious significance for postracial debates. Here in London the ascendancy of the ‘declining significance of race’ discourse in the mayoral and central governments has pushed the issue of institutional racism largely off the political agenda.³ The discourse has been perniciously effective in regard to the undoing of antiracist demands for social justice, while simultaneously appearing to be engaging in a well-informed and even well-intentioned response to racial inequality. Racism is ‘taken into account’ only to be shown to no longer be occurring - irrelevant to contemporary politics because of its ‘pastness’ (Lentin & Titley, 2011). Neoliberal subjects through the repertoires of freedom and choice in this

³ See Prospect Magazine (2010) *Rethinking Race* Issue 175, October

aspirational meritocracy can choose to ‘go beyond ‘race’’. The continued usage of ‘race’ especially in mobilisations for inclusion and equality is made to seem redundant. Appropriated by the new right, postracialism has been emptied of any progressive meaning or connection to materialist antiracism. This is the postracial moment as the moment where inherently racialised (and racist) perspectives can be discursively laundered such that the racial position articulated can claim racial neutrality.

Writing a ‘history of the present’ requires a certain imagination and hopefulness as it invokes pressing questions. How can contemporary postracialism combat this hegemony? How should it engage this field of power relations which etches new lines and (re)produces new realms of injury and injustice? And what would be effectual tactics in such a struggle? Across the Atlantic, colourblind rhetoric as exemplified in California’s 2003 Racial Privacy Initiative and the colourblind discourse of the Obama presidency threaten to push any serious sociological conception of postracialism to the margins. The Obama presidency is often presented to suggest that real equality has been achieved in order to install a whole repertoire of new meanings which emphasise that civil rights protection and equality legislation is no longer needed - it is a spent force.

2.3 Archaeology in the Archive

Informed by Foucault’s interpretive process in the *Archaeology of Knowledge*, I will (re)construct a coherent history from the scattered postracialist fragments themselves shaped by and located within particular historical conjunctures (Foucault, 1989).

Foucauldian methodology informs the hermeneutic method in this thesis that attempts to engage with postracialism in its historical and textual specificity. Postracialism does not simply exist ‘out there’ – independently of the theoretical mode through which I am both constructing and interpreting it. In other words, a central issue in this methodology is not simply what is produced (a definition of postracialism), but how I produce it. These are inseparable issues in the process of social research (May, 2011).

My project responds to the shortage of original research in postracial debates that engage only existing published material. Without greater interaction with primary data, the ability to explain and understand the findings of research that make ‘sense’ of data is limited. If sociology aims at the systematic study of particular phenomena, might that perforce entail a direct examination of those phenomena – the dynamics, content, context and structure of social relations? Postracial theory certainly has a role to help inform our understanding of the scientific, political and ethical problems with ‘race’ which, in turn, assists us in making research decisions and making sense of the world around us. These theoretical contributions have allowed us a perspective on our social universe which breaks free from everyday thinking on ‘race’ to consider ethical issues beyond our normal frames of reference (see Gilroy, 2000).

I want to also call attention to how primary research *can also* perform this sensitising and orientating function. The experiences of conducting research and generating findings can influence our theorising. In the research process, we embark on empirical work and collect data that initiates, refutes or organises our theories and enables us to understand or explain our observations (May, 2011). Primary research

can work as a way of interrogating postracialism and perhaps even, ‘open our eyes to dilemmas that we can’t avoid and for which we have to prepare ourselves’ (Habermas, 1994:116-117). Habermas’ suggestion is evident in my later discussion of how postracial antiracism may trivialise the grave realities of ‘race’. For postracialism to continue to become more relevant to antiracisms and to be of use in understanding or exploring the social world, postracial theory *needs* research *and* research needs theory. There is a mutual interdependence between the two (Bulmer, 1986).

The results and practices of social research ‘feedback’ into social life; people engage in the interpretation of its findings and are co-participants in its process. The ‘feedback’ of ideas and research into social life suggests postracial theorists may need to make connections between the language used in social theory and the methods of interpretation people already use in attributing meaning to their social environment. Research practice must take account of people’s everyday understandings and how and why those are constituted - what Giddens calls the ‘double hermeneutic’ (1987). Being sensitive to the double hermeneutic would mean that postracialism cannot pre-emptively dismiss all forms of race-based identity politics. ‘Race’ has had and continues to have an informative role within socially transformative democratic struggles. Race-based identity politics signifies a worthy aim of building (in)formal political coalitions capable of identifying, articulating and tackling the injustice experienced by sectors of society that understand themselves as racial groups whether imagined or not. There are larger ethical and political considerations involved highlighted in my later discussion of the how the experience of racism can be an important site for forging of antiracist solidarities.

The constant slippage between the languages used to understand and explain social life and the meanings which people already employ in everyday life raises questions. How do translations between specialist and lay frames of meaning occur? And how are they negotiated and acted upon? And with what consequences? These are key questions considering the ontological role of 'race' for some. Primary research can aid in the development of a theory of social life which takes a fuller account of people's experiences and understanding in the everyday.

Standpoint feminists remind us of this in regarding experiences as a starting but not finishing point for research – theory is then deployed to situate the experiences of women within a wider context and the production of knowledge is regarded as a social activity (Harding, 2004). What primary research can potentially do for postracialism is enrich its theorisation by building democratic and participatory situations – as attempted in my interviews. This decision was informed by the concern that a postracialism too removed from the 'state of affairs' can regard the experiences of people as 'faulty' as opposed to understanding how certain types of knowledges predominate and the exercise of power sustaining and reproducing those knowledges.

I return to the unpublished record in an attempt to grasp the social problems which are important to specific 'historical and structural' contexts (Mills, 1959: 42). Instead of descending upon the social world armed with a body of theoretical propositions about how and why social relations exist and work as they do, following Glaser and Strauss (1967) I attempt to observe those relations, collect data on them and then

proceed to generate my theoretical propositions - to enable the, ‘imaginative engagement with data that the simple application of a string of procedures precludes’ (Bryant & Charmaz, 2010: 25). Looking into the past through the archive I hoped to gain a richer understanding of postracialism in the present in order to empower theory with the hope for greater clarity in the future.

(Re)constructing the history of postracialism and its conditions of possibility in the here and now places contemporary theory in conversation with its own history enhancing our understanding of our own present and more imaginatively the contemplation of our future. Mapping this is a sociohistorical endeavour attentive to the constructed rather than ‘found’ nature of its referents. The unity and significance formulated from the archival materials will not be given. The data is not simply waiting to be ‘read-off’ from the text itself but rather will be derived elsewhere from the interpretative task of ‘deciphering’ that which is both manifest and concealed within the text. Foucault argues that archaeology is another way of approaching the past of getting at history that can be complimented by existing methods of historical inquiry (Cousins & Hussain, 1984). I compliment my archaeology with archival research and semi-structured interviews. Having discussed my methodological practice, I will now unpack the archival dimensions of my project.

2.3.1 Why the Archival Turn?

The archive...is not a quiet retreat for professionals and scholars. It is a crucible of human experience. A battleground for meaning and significance. A place and a space of complex and ever-shifting power-plays. Here you cannot keep your hands clean (Cook & Schwartz, 2002: 183).

In *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression* Derrida reminds us that the archive was originally defined as a privileged site where records were officially consigned *and* guarded by legal authority (1995). There has always been an intimate relationship between the institution of archives and the operation of state power. The historically durable procedures for guarding and authorising access demonstrate the equally longstanding association between the law and the integrity of a body of records.

This symbiosis was evident at the American Philosophical Society, a private archive housing over eleven million items. Access required completion of a detailed form, two forms of identification and evidence of local address. Additionally, I was obliged to specify my project, its relationship to the archives and my intended usage of material. Publication of sourced material required prior approval. Through a network of surveillance and monitoring, the APS maintained strict control over its holdings.

The practices associated with controlling access play a role in history as well in the scholarly practice of history. For Derrida, the struggle unfolds in the concepts of *archontic* power - control over the authorship, collection and interpretation of a body of writings and the counter-active anarchic power - a resistive power characterised by control over the drafting, destruction and dissolution of records to enhance the equivocality of interpretations (Lynch, 1999). The ensuing struggle over the control, and interpretation of records transforms the very concept of history rendering history less as stuff (historical description/information) and more as process (of imagining of remembering). The interpretive turn was a methodological move away from the study of documents to the making of them. Probing what constitutes the archive, how

documents collide and converge with memory forced me to rethink the archive beyond the inert site of conservation (Stoler, 2002).

I strove to engage with material as cultural artefacts of fact production, of disparate notions of postracialisms. While reliability and representativeness remain pressing issues, my work followed the Foucauldian attentiveness to the social and political conditions that produced documents. Concern with distinguishing ‘fact’ from ‘fiction’ waned with the heightened focus of tracing the production and conceptualisation of those facts themselves. The archive became my gateway into an enquiry into the grids of intelligibility that produced paradigms at a particular time, for a particular social contingent and in a particular way (Stoler, 2002: 91). Reading Hubert Harrison’s lecture notes, I was interested not in its authenticity but what they told us about understandings of racism in New York during the 1920s.

Documents come layered with the received account of earlier events and the cultural semantics of a political moment. What constitutes the archive, what form it takes and what systems of classification it signals at specific times is the substance of politics (Stoler, 2002). Harrison’s commitments to socialism, antiracism and atheism (in a capitalist, racist and Christian nation) reinforced a neglect of his scholarship following his death. Eighty years later with Columbia’s acquisition and the publication of a digital finding aid, Harrison’s corpus was resurrected. The Harrison collection entered in a politicised manner having been collated by the independent socialist scholar Jeffrey Perry (personal communication July 2010). This example demonstrates the political aspect of the archive inasmuch as Columbia holds the

Harrison material that was collated by Perry, which indicates the position from which the material is presented.

For Foucault, the archive is not an institution possessing the weight of tradition - the library outside time and place - but the 'law of what can be said'. It is, 'the system that establishes statements as events and things' (Foucault, 1989: 123).

Methodologically I wanted to explore how the archive reveals the rules of practice of what we can and can no longer say. In Montagu's papers I encountered an unpublished compendium of 'race' sceptical and 'race' critical thought stretching centuries. Considering Montagu was widely published and commercially successful, why did this manuscript lay fallow? What does its non-publication tell us about postracialism in his time?

I made the archival turn because that glimpse 'behind the scenes' was the only means of accessing the primary data needed to respond to the paucity of original research which can result in a body of theory detached from the processes and trajectories of its own history (Gidley, 2004). How can serious sociological theories and questions about the contemporary world be asked or proffered without historical questions (Abrams, 1982)? How can adequate theorizations and contentions not be couched in historical terms?

2.3.2 Which Archives? Which Interviews? And why?

In 2010 I generated a list of intellectuals integral to the development of postracialism. Through bibliographic snowballing I settled upon an intellectual

community from across the social and biological sciences. Their holdings were fortuitously centralised with repositories at Columbia University in New York, The American Philosophical Society in Philadelphia and the Moorland-Spingarn Research Centre in Washington D.C. During this time, I also attempted to secure an interview with C. Loring Brace, the evolutionary biologist who played a pivotal role in the dismantling of 'race' as a biological category (2005). Brace could have complimented my work through thick descriptions and a biographical exploration of that process. A concerted telephonic and e-mail effort to request an interview went unanswered. The 'failed' interview encapsulates the gap between the imagined research project and the missteps of actual social research. Challenges such as this force us to reflect on and think through methodological impediments (Law, 2004:44). With the archives identified, I attended a research training course at the Institute for Historical Research which familiarised me with compiling a bibliography, using repositories and equipped me with effective research skills. I also learned practical skills such as working well with archivists and archival holdings. In short, the training enhanced my existing qualitative research skills.

My Economic and Social Research Council recognised research training also equipped me with a skill set for approaching my interviews. In the interviews I wanted to respond to the dearth of engagement with postracial concepts *and* to explore the postracial problematic, framed by Gilroy, that 'action against racial hierarchies can proceed more effectively when (it)...is purged of any lingering idea of "race"' (Gilroy, 2000:13)? Drawing on original data, this empirically informed and theoretically engaged thesis opens up a mutually beneficial dialogue for critical

reflection on antiracism asking when and why is 'race' necessary? In what conditions is it (in)defensible?

Postracialism rejects racial concepts understanding them to support exclusionary practices such as discriminatory employment and hiring practices. Paradoxically, the concepts rejected under postracialism are needed in order to monitor these discriminatory practices. Longitudinal racial data is arguably entangled in reification and may even reinforce the damaging categories antiracism is attempting to challenge. Nevertheless, it provides the evidentiary basis of patterned inequality for developing corrective strategies and solutions. A foundational contradiction underscores the apparent divorce between postracialism and antiracism.

Can the disconnect be remedied? Can postracialist insights enhance the effectiveness of antiracism? These questions guided me in identifying with whom I wanted to speak and in specifying what I wanted to explore. The interview data is principally concerned with investigating the implicit suggestion that (if possible) postracialism can enable a more efficacious antiracism. Questions explored the theoretical and practical efficacy of 'race' and investigated postracialism's capacity to make possible resistance to racism.

I contacted fifteen different organisations in London each involved in different aspects of antiracist work. Though the choice of organisations was my own, I sought guidance from 'gate-keepers' whose endorsement helped me to identify myself as a legitimate researcher, as well as triangulating my own views on who the relevant people within an organisation might be. My previous work with the Runnymede

Trust meant I was already familiar with institutional structures and key organisations in the field. Rob Berkeley, director of Runnymede, is the only interviewee who has not been anonymised. With his approval I named him because the interview data herein describes projects that would be immediately recognisable for anyone familiar with British antiracism. For those interviewees I did not know, an endorsement from my supervisor provided institutional imprimatur as did usage of a Goldsmiths email address to arrange the interview.

Many interviewees were as interested in understanding my research as a source of knowledge for themselves as in providing data for me. With most organisations my university credentials, my supervisor's support and in some cases my previous work or personal acquaintance with them seemed to identify me as a friendly researcher and my project as one they were interested in participating in and learning more about. For one organisation though my institutional capital and my existing connections did not work well and perhaps even operated as a barrier to access. The organisation's deep commitment to intellectual autonomy and radical activism seemed to engender circumspection towards academic research or so it seemed in the email rejection.

In many instances research participants appeared nervous in interviews with some confessing such explicitly. Part-way through an interview, even the most senior members of antiracist organisations might ask, 'Is this alright? Is this what you wanted?' or perhaps apologise for 'rambling on'. In moments such as these I offered reassurance that I did not have a model answer which I 'wanted' them to articulate, and that I was glad that they were leading the conversation in the direction that was

most relevant to them. It is conceivable that participants might have had a suspicion that I could have 'ulterior motives'. In my initial interview request letters and my face-to-face introduction I reassured interviewees that my recording and transcripts would not be shared with anyone and that extracts would be anonymised and that if interviewees wished any specific comments to remain completely confidential they had only to say so. I also explained that the research was to understand the potential insights that postracialisms could contribute to antiracism and not an exercise to find 'right answers' or 'best practice' - or indeed bad practice.

Nevertheless, perhaps a mutual distrust or antagonism between theory and practice created the feeling in certain instances that my presence was seen as potentially a 'checking up' exercise. Non-replies and cancellations left me with five organisations all under the 'race' equality umbrella, each nevertheless had a focused approach; three worked in social policy, one in direct activism and the final was a think tank. In accordance with British Sociological Association ethical codes I have anonymised the organisation and the speaker to protect them from breaches of confidentiality.

Data collection followed the principles of the semi-structured interview. Interviews were sites of prepared conversational interaction structured by research concerns.

During the interviews I used an active-follow up strategy consisting of questions and statements in the idiolect of the research encounter to enable respondents to impose their own system of understanding. It was challenging to develop a language for having a sophisticated discussion on the moral and political dilemmas associated with 'race' that would not disable communication. This was a case in point for Back's argument that as, 'our discipline has become ever more elaborate and

theoretically complex the impulse to communicate has been eclipsed by the desire for epistemological sophistication and theoretical elegance' (2007:8).

As I progressed through the interviews I began to modify my questions - analysing them in real time to be reflexive and to improve practice. I discovered early how postracialism could easily be misunderstood as colourblindness rhetoric and/or the declining significance of 'race' discourse. The discussion is very abstract and involves a sophisticated conversation about 'race' and racism. Miscommunications and misunderstandings threatened to take the interview into an entirely different direction than I had envisioned from my central research question. Gradually I was able to clarify how I was using the term and what the critiques were 'really saying' - all part of becoming a reflective practitioner.

The analytical themes organising the chapters emerged from the data. To organise my data, I created 'codes' according to the themes within the qualitative data analysis programme *NVivo*. *NVivo* enabled me to systematically apply these codes to the transcripts as I re-read each one in turn. In the process of coding, additional themes emerged inductively and I created new codes for them to aid the organisation of the data. It is worth noting that as I coded my data much of the data was given several codes. Perhaps a different methodology would have investigated systematic correlations between codes (Fielding, 2002: 165). Not a technique to scientise this data, my coding functioned as a research tool for thinking about the data, for organising my thoughts and interpretations, and my data became my own coded archive.

In transcribing fifteen hours of interview material I became extremely familiar with the detail of the material and its broader themes. When thinking about emerging themes throughout my analysis, I was able to refer back to the coded archive to locate material I recalled as significant. Having the archive organised in this manner also enable me to re-read juxtaposed sets of interview material from different participants, thereby creating a different context for pieces of data than when embedded in their own individual interview transcripts.

My interviewing method was largely wedded to a receptive mode of interviewing predicated on minimalist interviewer intervention. The interaction would begin with a single question to induce a narrative then move to focused issues through questions of clarification. Adherence to a ‘principle of deliberate vagueness’ (Wengraf, 2006:124) enabled the respondent to impose her own system of relevance.

2.3.3 Methodological Issues in Researching Postracialism

Primary research on postracialism must negotiate the complexities of ‘race’ as something other than a dispassionate sociological concept. ‘Race’ involves the subjective attachments and investments of individuals. ‘Race’ is not just confined to the terrain of knowledge production. Racial categories also affect our ontologies (Gunaratnam, 2004). Many of my interviewees, for example, described their involvement in antiracist work through narratives about the experience of racism and the need to contest the dehumanisation and violence of racial prejudice. Their involvement and investment in antiracist work was not reducible to political

commitments or professional dedication alone. Research in postracial debates can create vulnerabilities for the researcher as well as the researched. Gunaratnam writes:

The fundamental problematic of interpretation...is that it is always a risky, emotion-laden and ethical business...[to] practise our...crafts in ways that aspire to the honing of technique and skill and that give recognition to our being touched...while all the time remaining faithful and vulnerable to the unknown (2009:59).

Emotions are embodied response to situations (Sayer, 2005: 37) attached to commitments which *mean* something to the individual and which are part of the self-not just a preference. Emotions, in the context of research into postracialism, should be taken seriously. In some interviews commitments came into conflict (professional and political) and the tension produced an emotional response as much as a rational or articulated one. Researchers should not be surprised if difficult subjects like imagining the end of 'race' create situations in which individuals feel uncomfortable. And we should not necessarily dismiss this discomfort as self-indulgent or self-protecting.

As sociologists we might usefully reflect on and take into account what provokes such emotional reactions and how these reactions can motivate action including within postracial projects. Although there is not space for a more rigorous discussion it may be worthwhile for future postracialist research to perhaps direct attention to the ways that affect and emotion inform social action and interaction and refract political behaviours. Attention to this is crucial *not* to produce empathy for the subjects whose emotional and emotive negotiations are at stake, but to concentrate on how this emotional filter comes to dominate discourse, process and action *because of* a particular moment of political and social formations, and how such a

filter (as a result of these formations) then informs and inflects the types of political and social action that is possible (Ahmed, 2004b; Sayer, 2005).

Even in this small-scale project it was evident that emotions cannot be dismissed as inherently conservative or unthinking. Where a settlement is reached to cope with an oppressive situation emotions can function in conservative roles but they can also provoke resistance to dominant norms (Sayer, 2005:100). Emotional complexes - as Berlant describes in relation to compassion - have, 'powerfully material and personal consequences' (2004:11), whether progressive or conservative. Emotions and the emotionally uncomfortable positions of doing research on postracialism are worthy of study not simply as an experience within the self, but for their impact on social relations (Skeggs, 2002:350).

Respondents and I spoke not from stable and coherent standpoints but from varied perspectives - structured and historically grounded roles and hierarchies of British society, particularly gendered, 'raced' and classed. How social positions emerged in the interview itself - apparent in talk and interaction between interviewer and respondent - was significant. Several of my respondents often moved between different social positions speaking in one instance as a victim of racial abuse then as women living in a sexist world (Holstein and Gubrium, 1995). I approached the interview encounters as a constructed space in which I took seriously what the respondents shared. I did not dismiss their articulations as simple self-justifications ('they would say that wouldn't they'). At the same time I did not understand the interview transcript to be a straightforward explanation of 'how it really is'. Taking the interview encounter seriously means understanding it as a negotiation in which

both the interviewer and interviewee reflect on *and reproduce* elements of the process of doing antiracist work and the self-making process. In this sense the interview provided concentrated access to such negotiations in process, rather than an unquestioned or unquestionable explanation of the situation (Jones, 2011)

Interviewing leading officials in antiracist organisations did not easily slot into the methodological discussions of researching ‘up’ or ‘down’. My research participants are powerful and could most certainly be considered ‘elite’ in that they are opinion formers and being researched precisely because they are influential and powerful. Their elite status was in many cases directly comparable to that of the academic. In a few instances they may have been colleagues; or the same person may cross ‘between worlds’ at different points. In my project I attempted to carve out a space between the assumption that power needs to be shared with the research participants and that the researcher is manipulated by the participants. I attempted to negotiate this position by paying close attention to the research participants’ accounts, being clear about the contexts of these accounts and explaining the grounds for my analysis and findings within the thesis so that they can remain open to challenge from the reader.

2.3.4 Constraints & Power in the Archive and the Interview

In many ways archival and interview work contested the conventional research sensibilities I developed in my research training. What you find determines what you can analyse and what you analyse structures what you look for in archival collections and what probing questions you ask in the interview (Wengraf, 2006). Archival

investigations and qualitative interviewing cannot be predicted or neatly packaged in guaranteed methodological formulas. The archives proved a series of perpetual surprises and intrigues. Similarly in avoiding leading questions, the interview became a site for potential surprise. At times I confirmed and in other moments disturbed my own speculative understanding of what 'existed'. The possibility of disturbance or confirmation reflected the speculative nature of my research methods.

Propelled by the deductive reasoning that a 'richer' story illuminating the history of postracialism lay in dusty manuscripts and in the 'on-the-ground-view' of antiracist organisations I made the qualitative turn with no certitude about the destination of that intellectual course. Uncertainty engendered an unending reflexivity and prepared me for discovery *and* disappointment. The odyssey into the unknown was rewarding in its challenging puzzles and unexpected revelations. In Montagu's letters I encountered a series of exchanges with L.C. Dunn detailing how his anti-'race' position negatively impacted upon his professional career and weighed heavily on his interpersonal relationships. These exchanges textured the history of ideas and provided a rich context for understanding social and political backdrops. Similarly an interviewee stressed racism as the determinant force in (re)creating 'race' demonstrating a keen awareness of the biological non-reality of 'race' and the (re)production of 'race' in racism.

Archives are not just storehouses of aging rare materials. The archive is a multifaceted space - irreducible to the sum of its materials it exerts a two-fold power. On one hand, the holdings provided in-depth empirical data. On the other, the institutional apparatus of the archive subjected me to various technologies of power

(Ketelaar, 2002). The search room of the Rare Books and Manuscripts library functioned as a classical panopticon. Accessing the room itself involved a host of policing measures – registering, signing a statement of compliance, leaving my personal belongings behind before entering and obliging to have my possessions inspected upon exiting. A network of uniformed security personnel, CCTV cameras and archivists formed an enveloping gaze. Initially the experience of reading while being carefully observed, seen, heard and recorded was anxiety-inducing.

In a related sense the interviews as communicative events occurring within a given social setting created its own set of circumstances. To manage the inevitable power balances I tried to select neutral social locations and timed the interview outside of normal working hours. In the interview we do not inhabit just one social role as ‘research interviewer’ but rather carry a bundle. Like the archive, the interview involves its own set of power asymmetries that emerge through ‘metacommunicative norms’ - principles that invest the interviewer with control over the reverential content of what is said (by posing questions) the length and scope of answers (by deciding when to probe) and the way that all participants construct positionality with respect to the interview (Briggs, 2002).

In designing my interviews I researched the interviewees’ biographies to understand what collective history we might share and the histories I imagine we might not share. For example, one of my interviewees had completed her PhD at an institution with which I was familiar. I made use of that prior to the interview to create some familiarity and relax our discussion. Throughout the interviews I strove to stay sensitive to the unofficial goals and purposes of the interview doing my best to

understand that conversation is artful by interpreting the hints, clues, silences and the fluctuating power balance between the interviewee and I (ibid).

In the archives I encountered more constraints and limitations when I wanted to photocopy Boas' lecture notes at the APS. Photocopying is conducted solely by archival staff. At the Moorland-Spangarn Research Centre viewing Locke's fragile correspondence required the acceptance of more intense surveillance including a solitary viewing room. The system of archival surveillance and discipline is ingrained in the archivist's professional distrust of anyone other than archivists (Ketelaar, 2002). Issues of power inevitably raise political questions about ownership, inclusion and preservation. The archive is an active site where social power is negotiated, contested and confirmed (Brown & Davis-Brown, 1998). Memory and history are not found but (re)made. Documents are not 'simple truths' or empty templates (Foucault, 1989). Inside the reading room I often ruminated on these Foucauldian impulses reflecting on how a text is chosen and shaped, privileged or marginalised by archivist's interventions. Had the holdings been catalogued to reflect an original order or rather to better reflect some 'truth' the archivist sought to elicit?

Similarly meaning in the interviews was not only located in the words but the voice and tone in which they were delivered. Analysing the words alone would produce an impoverished sense of meanings neglecting how words are said and the rich complexity offered by the insights of paralinguistics. The use of irony to subvert meaning and the hesitations and declarations formed styles and modes of delivery that were central to unpacking the meaning of particular statements. Similarly non-

verbal forms of communication such as shifting and moving about in the chair were part of a non-verbal language communication through infra-auditory channels. The interview, in other words, is not just a speech-event but a whole-context event.

Much literature on archives focuses on technical issues such as implementing archival standards and record-keeping requirements and reflects the persistent legacies of positivism. With the proliferation of a postmodernist sensibility a new openness, a new visibility - a willingness to question and be questioned, a commitment to self-reflection - is slowly taken root (Cook and Schwartz, 2002: 182). Crucial to my methodology was appreciating that no archivist is ever neutral in any documentary process nor is any 'text' a transparent window to some past reality. Everything takes place within a context; inside of that context, everything is filtered, mediated, or influenced by considerations of discourse, personal psychology and power (Cook and Schwartz, 2002:183).

In the interviews I constantly reflected on what inferences I could or could not make from the 'facts' of the interview. Interviewees were meaning makers not passive conduits for retrieving information from a vessel of answers (Holstein and Gubrium, 1995). Pressing myself to justify and explain how I made such inferences involved asking; what can I learn from this data? In analysing the interviews I attempted to identify the 'deep structure' underlying the 'surface performance' of the things actually said. In reviewing the data I would reflect on what the organising principles of the flow of talk in the interview were. For example, the significance of any one response cannot be gauged without understanding the implications of the question for the production of that response.

The research process engenders a unique set of structural constraints. Archivists wield considerable power over holdings as I learned when denied access to Barzun's 'closed stacks'. Unlike library benefactors, archival donors (and literary executors) frequently retain rights over deposited materials (Hill, 1993). Barzun's proprietary controls forced me to refigure my research itinerary and raised methodological issues of access (Gidley, 2004). Having contacted the archivists in advance and introduced them to my project, access was generally easy.

Archival collections are non-circulating collections. Access required travelling to the research sites (Scott, 1990). Online digital finding aids enabled me to remotely browse holdings and to explore a network of indexes. This digital advancement lessened traditional constraints on access. The absence of the digital finding aid at Howard University was a conspicuous reminder of the uneven distribution of financial resources. One of the world's largest repositories for the documentation of the history and culture of people of African descent in Africa, the Americas, and other parts of the world, the Moorland-Spingarn Research Centre has recently experienced massive funding cuts and staff redundancies. The combination of reductions in funding and employee layoffs threatened the 95 year old institution with closure in 2009.⁴

As a London resident, I unavoidably faced certain spatiotemporal contingencies including the time and expense of travel, food and lodging in the USA. Structural constraints were mitigated by sufficient time (research leave) and finances (grant

⁴ <http://www.thehilltoponline.com/moorland-spigarn-set-to-stay-open-1.2058120> (accessed 14 February 2011)

money). Financial and spatiotemporal limitations illustrate how access to information - and thus knowledge - is shaped by the allocation of wealth, income and other resources (Cook, 1993). My decision to pursue this methodological project reflected a realistic appraisal of anticipated constraints.

2.3.5 The Sociological Imagination in the Archive & the Interview

Archival repositories challenge and extend methods of finding and collecting data. Accessing unpublished materials enabled me to document and explicate the lives, ideas and institutional embeddedness of key thinkers. As C. Wright Mills put it, ‘We have come to see that the biographies of men and women, the kinds of individuals they variously become, cannot be understood without reference to the historical structures in which the milieu of their everyday life are organised’ (1959:158). I used the sociological imagination in order to explore the dynamic relationship between society and biography in the context of non/postracialisms. Exploring the traces of these thinkers through this intimate lens offered insights into the myriad institutional processes in which they themselves were ensnared.

I participated, like my respondents, in the interview from historically grounded biographical as well as disciplinary perspectives. Biographical perspectives in some instances framed entire analyses and even affected the selection of illustrative quotes. The biographical material expressed in my interviews draws from and is mediated by experiences from well beyond the interview situation and any one respondent’s life. Where interpretations of interview data are concerned, I was not concerned with reporting my findings but with linking the biographical with the

social and historical. Research practices that respect and reveal the social world of the lived subject are an important procedural step toward decomposing ‘standards’ into the variety of historically and socially relevant experiences that characterise a diverse society (Dunbar, Rodriguez and Parker, 2002).

Making sociohistorical sense out of the documents proved an emergent process, much of my reflexive learning actually transpired in working with the documents. Spatiotemporal chronologies of networks and cohorts helped to organise materials and structure my research. While not revelatory, the strategies made seeing patterns and relationships easier. Biographies unfold over time and combing over personal papers I reconstructed a chronology of sociohistorical events. In time I developed some necessarily partial biographical timelines. These chronologies reflected my assumptions, convictions, and subsequent decisions about what to include and what to exclude.

In archival research, interpretation and selection go hand in hand as one distinguishes the important from the irrelevant (Hill, 1993). I paid specific attention to dates of events documenting the subject’s entry into new roles and institutional arenas, changes in her status within a particular setting and her involvement in any roles that promoted cooperation or conflict between distinct spheres. I used a variety of materials - scrapbooks, passports, etc. - to trace their journeys. Correspondence with friends, colleagues and relatives provided clues to the rhythm of their lives. The chronologies were open-ended research vehicles that I repeatedly updated to articulate the subject’s biographical journey (Dean, 1994). Parallel comparisons of cohorts revealed previously unrecognised patterns. For example, Alain Locke and

Franz Boas attenuated the severity of their critiques of 'race' to preserve jobs and secure upward advancement. In the face of draconian First World War censorship, both made strategic choices in favour of pressing their critiques further.

Comparisons helped identify anomalies and information gaps in the chronologies of cohorts. With more extensive chronologies I was able to pose and think through more sophisticated questions and to reflect on how the decision to document, describe, to make visible, to remember or to forget is positioned within and is shaped by larger forces that contest the terrain of social memory. Personal histories, institutional cultures, class relations etc. are always-already at play in processes of records description and in the interview. The archivist and the institutional value system select what to highlight and what to ignore (Duff and Harris, 2002).

Equipped with this I explored in my preparatory notes the influential relationships between particular academics and showed how specific individuals exemplified various patterns of organisational participation. I traced the linkages by asking who of the new names I encountered and always connecting the frequency and nature of the individual to my target. In my exploration I was wary of the process of serialisation which archivists can use to bring the appearance of coherence to otherwise fragmentary pieces; an illusion known as the 'trick of truth'. Through the formal archival process hearsay can acquire the status of fact sounding like truth through the use of specific modes of writing and filing (Gidley, 2004).

Strategic choices usually in support of metanarratives also show the archive to be a site where social memory is constructed. Archivist mediation in setting standards,

preserving, cataloguing and contextualising the record is important in shaping that meaning. No passive guardian of an inherited legacy, the archivist has an active role in shaping societal memory. Equally, no text is a mere innocent by-product of action. The 'fact' in a text cannot be separated from its ongoing and past interpretation. Power relationships shape the documentary heritage and indeed the document's structure. My methodology explored how the text is anchored in historical power relations, how knowledge is organised and how discursive hegemonies operate. Beyond questions of political (mis)use of archives there exists a practice of archival politics, the 'micro-physics of power' in collection, classification, storage, processing and transfer (Foucault, 1989).

Grasping archival data is an iterative process of imputing meaning through repeated reconsideration of older data combined with the constant infusion of new data (Dean, 1994). The intellectual and historical significance of materials shifts continually during the investigation. Particular aims initially identified as interests come to frame part of an evolving sociohistorical picture as was the case with my 'discovery' of Hubert Harrison. Methodologically, I remained open to alternative modes of making sense of the traces residing in the archives. The archive never speaks to us as a thing in and of itself. It speaks through the specificities of particular relations of power and societal dynamics. Never a faithful reflection of reality memory is (re)shaped and (re)figured by the dance of imagination (Harris, 2002). Asking how it may otherwise be organised, what is missing and what channels are missing were Foucauldian inspired questions of interpretation and deciphering.

Throughout my research I grappled with the ethical issues inherent in the production of knowledge and the politics of doing research on 'race' (Bulmer & Solomos, 2004). Working with and against 'race' involves the challenging task of thinking through the complexities, ambiguities and contradictions involved in doing qualitative research which seeks to recognise difference and pursue justice. Methodologically it proved challenging to use qualitative data to contest and transform, rather than to reproduce, 'race' and racial thinking. An un-problematized reliance upon categorical approaches to 'race', presents obvious and fundamental methodological dangers (Gunaratnam, 2004: 18).

But equally challenging is resisting in discussions of (post)racialism the pull of 'race' to overwhelm, to make postracialism complicit with racial thinking and reification. The doubled research practice of working both with and against categories is no easy task with the historically persistent and discursively pervasive category of 'race' (Gunaratnam, 2004). The central methodological problem I encountered was to generate and excavate from this entangled past a present and perhaps even a future where 'race' can be put to rest. While this obstacle was not entirely resolved, this research locates itself in an emergent tradition that refuses the commonsensical approach that produces straightforward and generalizable knowledge about 'race' often under the appearance of progressivism. The next chapter maps the lineage of this emergent tradition of non/postracialism and locates my own project within that intellectual heritage.

Chapter 3 Literature Review

(Proto)Postracialism(s) span centuries, continents and boundaries of knowledge. Racialism and the counter-discourse of nonracialism formed during European modernity. The conceptual forerunner to postracialism, nonracialism opposed racialism through its historical mutations. Before continuing I will briefly restate racialism and nonracialism, two central concepts in this thesis. Racialism is the ideological system produced by racism, the essentialising and reifying discourse used to justify and explain exclusionary practices. Nonracialism, conversely, rejected racialism's assessments of worth and naturalised difference on philosophical, political, scientific, religious and spiritual grounds. Biological categorisation according to the immutability of 'race' did not feature in these frameworks for human origins and physical variation. 'Race' as a category of natural and social recognition did not exist.

Nonracialism finds epistemological grounding for human sameness in philosophical (universalism), political (natural rights), scientific (species unity) religious (Christian) and spiritual (holism) distinctions. Difference moved along cultural, political and religious axes. Globalised and centuries-old, nonracialism incorporated and expanded arguments and evidence from philosophy, biology, anthropology, and theology. Small wonder, it represented a complex and contradictory ideological system.

This chapter critically surveys the seminal thinkers and critiques of nonracialism and postracialism. The critical survey contains a description of previous work while also identifying leading concepts, definitions and theories that have informed nonracialism and postracialism. The review also considers the way in which ‘new’ definitions and critiques were developed and operationalized as solutions to problems seen in previous research. To situate my own intervention in postracialism I will use this chapter to both identify and describe dimensions of the debate that other researchers have considered important. Through these descriptions I will also discuss some of what I contend to be shortcomings, tensions or potential areas for further analysis to be discussed in detail in subsequent chapters.

In (re)constructing the historical fragments of nonracialism I explore how the ideology rejected racialism and presented a counter-hegemonic paradigm that laid the foundation for postracialism. In tracing the conjunctures of non/postracialism, the history I assemble will not be a linear one. Thinking with the conjuncture - an historical interruption and a conceptual reconfiguration where one field of argument is displaced by another - involves jumping over periods where social formations were *not* conflictual, constantly in search of temporary balances through processes of negotiation (Scott, 2005).

I have organised the diffuse literatures of non/postracialism into three historical periods - subdivided thematically and arranged chronologically. The phases map paradigmatic shifts in the central concerns and extensiveness of the critiques. The first encompasses the (pre)history of ‘race’ before the 18th century ending at the start of the 20th. The second begins in the 20th century and stretches through to the 1980s.

The final period spans from the 1980s to today and includes a developed discussion of what I am consolidating under the term contemporary postracialism.

3.1 Before 'Race'

16th century 'voyages of discovery' brought 'Western' explorers into contact with scores of diverse cultures. In the encounter with the 'Other' who differed historically and in pattern(s) of development, discussions of her ontological and historical status arose (Hall, 1996). Not yet a usable or consistent concept, 'race' was discursively absent (Mosse, 1978). The conceptual antecedents of 'race' (i.e. what constituted a 'human'), however, were present (Snowden, 1970). In medieval Spain, for example, autocrats enacted blood laws (*limpiezas de sangre*) to stigmatise converted Jews and Muslims who faced exile, imprisonment and even death.

Legislated population management limited 'crossing' between Moor and European preserving a 'pure' line uncontaminated by 'foreign' corpuscles (Davis, 2001). The application of (proto)biological concerns to political boundary-making would become an organising principle in racialism. But in this moment, identity operated with flexibility and ambivalence unlike the scientific certitudes of racialism to come. The Spanish Inquisition and genocidal practices such as the extermination of the Aztecs comprise part of the nefarious histories of proto-racial thinking. Justifications for the expropriation of land and the requisition of 'free' labour relied on these discourses projecting a lack of intellectual faculties and morality onto the 'Other' (Poliakov, 1974). Moral and cultural ascriptions over-determined the 'Other' as incapable of reason and faith occupying a sub-human rank in the scale of creation.

Racialism was underwritten by presuppositions about the unalterable nature of racial others, and their status in the natural world. The (non)possession of rationality determined who was accorded moral treatment (Hobbes, 1651/ 2009; Locke, 1689/1966). Rational capacity set limits upon the natural equality of humanity and circumscribed political participation. This short historicisation gives some context for Descartes' pronouncement; 'Because reason...is the only thing that makes us men, and distinguishes us from the beasts, I would prefer to believe that it exists, in its entirety in each of us...' (1637/1961:222). Descartes' statement of the equal distribution of reason commands recognition for its implicit call for full moral treatment and political inclusivity.

Cartesian humanism is an oft-overlooked predecessor to the Hegelian consensus which concretised racialism by ranking the species in racial terms. Hegel froze the 'African' in pre-political being (Hegel, 1892/1991). The binaries introduced in and extrapolated from Hegel's philosophy rationalised European capitalism and brutalised humanity by reducing it to an obstacle in the path to progress. It was in this context that the economic and political domination of Africans appeared a necessary moral task.

Recalling Locke's endorsement of slavery ('Negro' irrationality), the assertion of the universal possession of reason is considerable. Slavery became defensible when based on a 'just war' in which captured 'Negroes' must forfeit their claim to life (Locke, 1689/1966). With grave stakes, the magnitude of these objections is appropriately established. Although 'race' did yet not denote visible, biological

identity these objections remain a vital chapter in nonracialism. Contemporary postracialist humanisms (Eze, 2001) duly establish Descartes in this heritage. The critique of proto-racialist concepts would continue to strengthen paralleling racialism as it garnered conceptual shape in the 18th century.

3.2 Dissonances in Modernity

Some have thought fit to employ the term race for four or five divisions originally made in consequence of country or complexion: but I see no reason for this appellation. Race refers to a difference of origin, which in this case does not exist...In short, there are neither four nor five races, nor exclusive varieties on this Earth. Complexions run into each other: forms follow the genetic character: and upon the whole, all are at last but shades of the same great picture, extending through all ages and over all parts of the Earth. They belong not, therefore, so properly to systematic natural history, as to the physic-geographical history of man (Herder, 1784/1997:298).

Johann Herder (1744-1803) argued that ‘race’ lacked scientific credibility and remained analytically irrelevant to the philosophy of history. It is, however, difficult to ascertain a straightforward Herderian ‘position on race’ because of the fragmentary and contradictory nature of his corpus. There is no definitive text to consult for transparent position statements. Herder’s disavowal though conflicted did provoke a debate with his erstwhile teacher, Kant, who endorsed racialism as the structuring framework for Anthropology.

Herder dismissed Kantian racial essentialism instead affirming the anti-essentialist singularity of humankind (Schutze, 1921: 362). Herder maintained species singularity established a fraternity that should *always* be respected. This position was connected to his rejection of ‘race’ as an ‘ignoble word’ (Herder, 1800:150). Sharp

categorical divisions, Herder feared, were likely to support oppressive treatment. Herder's anti-race position is not without its own contradictions. An explicit opposition to Eurocentric judgments remains incongruent with aesthetic evaluations based on implicit Eurocentric criteria - of which he seemed to be unaware. Most notably his association (equation?) of China with despotism and insularity painted a distorted picture of almost every facet of its culture and history (Herder, 1997).

Herder's renunciation synthesised ancient science with recent discoveries in anatomy and physiology. Herder's studied examination of the iniquitous implications of 'race' is a formative antiracist statement uttered at the apex of European imperialism discrediting the 'civilizing mission' and assumed European superiority. Herder also incorporated the science of the natural historian Georges Buffon (1707-1788). Historically Linnaean taxonomy enabled the development of 'race' as a workable scientific concept. Buffon criticised Linnaean classifications as arbitrary catalogues unreflective of the continuous gradations in nature – loosening the racist emphasis on value (Bernasconi, 2001:116). Buffon's conception of 'race' included inconsistent positions - although human varieties were capable of an indefinite quantity and quality of change over numerous generations, individuals born in presently existing types (folk 'races') did have innate characters (akin to racial essences) which remained fixed during their lifetimes.⁵

Buffon facilitated the transition from Platonism (unconscious striving toward metaphysical destiny) to biology in shedding some of the racist residues of immutability and eternalness. This initiated the shift away from essences to the

⁵ Cf. the section, 'Varieties dans l'espece humain' in Buffon's 'Histoire naturelle de l'homme' (1749) (Buffon 1853, 2, pp. 137-221)

contention that *only* organisms are real. That contribution helped to establish an intellectual space for appreciating the scientific import of the absence of sharp morphological gaps albeit within the terms of debate predominant in Enlightenment intellectual circles. Here a strong condemnation of the African slave trade coexisted with the suggestion that ‘Negroes’ were naturally less intelligent (Buffon, 1853 vol. 2:189). Nature’s continuous line of imperceptible gradations encouraged the rejection of the generalising trends of racialism (Hull, 1967: 322).

Buffon’s rule - a species consists of a succession of individuals who procreate to produce fertile young - affirmed species unity and the fertility of ‘mulattoes’. Both would become powerful tools in later critiques of ‘race’. For Buffon, phenotypic diversity - commonly (mis)understood as essentialised difference - signified the slow, imperceptible modification of the human by temperature, the transmissibility of the characteristics thus acquired, and the general correlation of latitude and skin colour (Buffon, 1749/1997). This reinforced the scientific credibility of environmentalism and inveighed against the racist tenet that visible difference reflected an innate essence. Colour difference was superficial difference and the mutability of form, part and parcel of the human constitution (Buffon, 1749/1997: 481-484, 511-514.).

Buffon also aided in discrediting racist hierarchy by theorising ‘race’ as superficial difference. Buffon, however, did not discard ‘race’ although he refused to introduce a determinate concept preferring to acknowledge its continued imprecision. The science - part of a larger humanist project of peace - supplied evidence for nonracial

humanism, recognised human biological interconnectedness and questioned doctrines of superiority.

Thomas Jefferson's (1743-1826) impassioned rejoinder offers a historical snapshot for grasping the contentiousness of Buffon's arguments (Jefferson, 1781/1943). Jefferson assailed these democratic implications asserting the aesthetic superiority of white women - preferred by black men as uniformly as the orang-utan prefers 'Negro' women. From such racist premises indebted to Linnaeus frontispiece discussed in my introduction, Jefferson advocated eugenic practices and decried miscegenation. Humanity was hierarchised by 'race' which explained the 'Negroes' inferior power of reason (Jefferson, 1781/1943: 662). Through Jefferson's riposte - 'race' was *the* organising concept of the geo-political order of modernity - we might glimpse the larger implications of Buffon's work.

Against Jeffersonian typology, Charles Darwin (1809-1882) emphasised the individual and stressed the significance of variation. The individual, an organism governed by the unpredictability of natural selection, enabled the exhaustive appreciation of nonracialist intra-species variety. Darwin's focus on complexity coupled with historicism problematised the extra-environmental status of 'race':

The variability of all the characteristic differences between the races, before referred to, likewise indicates that these differences cannot be of much importance; for had they been important, they would long ago have been either fixed, and preserved or eliminated (1871: 249).

Scrutinising grand typologies Darwin noted the conceptual imprecision of 'race' and spotlighted the indeterminacy of 'race' (1871: 223). The hazy border of 'race' was no border at all. Darwin weakened racialism as a scientifically convincing system

without completely rejecting 'race'. *The Descent of Man* renounced bigotry, affirmed the need for self-critique and cross-cultural interaction and called for expanding the circle of human sympathy. In considering Darwin historically we must be aware that the belief that peoples are genuinely varied in the degree and proportion of their human capacities and even that they can be hierarchically ordered as a result (Darwin endorsed both) is not logically incompatible with the belief that they should be treated decently.

Darwinian science demonstrated natural selection produced abundant variation in every generation and so initiated the gradualist discrediting of permanent types (Mayr, 2001:491). Evolutionary theory emphasised the irrelevance of 'race': 'But the most weighty (*sic*) of all the arguments against treating the races of man as distinct species, is that they graduate into each other, independently in many cases, as far as we can judge, of their having intercrossed' (Darwin, 1871: 226). Assiduously collected evidence established the common origin of all life giving scientific proof of interrelatedness to theological nonracialism and secular ethics. Darwin also introduced history into scientific thinking a cross-fertilisation that fused ethical and scientific postulates into nonracalist arguments. The resulting conceptual system invalidated polygenism which maintained innately different 'races' - possessing specifiable moral, cultural and biological traits - originated in separate acts of creation.

Natural selection and the explanatory significance of time also enabled the rejection of determinism, creationism and essentialism - hegemonic reinforcements of racialism (Banton, 1987:88). Evolving entities superseded stable types and created a

sophisticated language for making sense of the complexity of populational variation (Mayr, 2001). Evolutionary theory questioned the explanatory significance of ‘race’ and generated innumerable problems forcing anthropologists working under the banner of racialism to acknowledge that those groups designated ‘races’ were usually political units of mixed origin *and* that natural selection showed types to be alterable and impermanent - pushing typology towards the dustbin of ideas (Banton, 1998:86). Darwinism loosened the epistemic grip of ‘race’ and enabled the assertion of an empirically supported nonracialism. Of course Darwinian principles were *also* mobilised for explicitly racist ends in Social Darwinism. In this thesis I am not interested in situating Social Darwinism as a corruption of the progressive nonracial science of Darwinism but rather in pointing to how evidence can be mobilised in various political directions.

3.2.1 Nonracial Universalisms

In addition to secular critiques, Christians championed (hu)man’s singular biblical beginning described in Genesis - implicitly suggesting a nonracial humanity. Nonracial fraternity was common to 18th century Quaker abolitionists (Benezet, 1783) which held man possessed a physically and spiritually unified origin anathema to racial subdivision. Some refused racialism recovering conceptions of difference where religion and culture were salient. ‘Race’ as a social category was for many in contravention of scripture (Jordan, 1968: 279). Others implicitly dismissed racialism because of the evaluative assumptions (1) human (racial) types can be arranged hierarchically (2) such characteristics are impervious to religious conversion. In the

main, Quakerism believed humanity to be one family of equal worth and common origin. I will critically discuss Christian universalism in the next chapter.

Secular universalisms such as Herder's *Humanitat* eschewed purity and partition presenting a nonracialist pluralism dismissing cosmopolitan 'citizens of the world' as delusional 'human shadows' (1784/1997: 333). Herder's nonracialism respected and preserved the particularisms of different cultures. The study of human difference therefore belonged, 'not so properly to the systematic study of natural history, as to the physico-geographical history of humanity' (G 6:256, C 166). Thus there could not be a single standard which determines whether an individual is cultured.

The cultural and moral essences of racialism were incongruent with his secular relativism. 'As soon as it is shown that what I on the basis of reasons take to be true, beautiful, good, pleasant can likewise on the basis of reasons be regarded by another as false, ugly, bad, unpleasant,' Herder wrote, 'then truth, beauty and moral value is a true *Proteus* who by means of a magic mirror ever changes, and never shows himself the same'. (1784: 247). Herder's revolutionary doctrine of cultural pluralism could not help but have ethical and political implications - an obvious ground for opposition to colonialism and imperialism. Herder's relativism attempted to liberate humans from essences allowing the discovery of moral orientations within the horizons of particular cultures. Herder believed different societies and ages hold distinct systems of belief regarding what is good and bad, right and wrong. And there are no objective trans-historical cultural criteria for judging between these. The genuine valuing of cultural diversity preserved diversity without pluralism's

blindness to difference. Herder's relativism was a world yet-to-be, an imagining of life without the dictates of racialisation.

3.2.2 Destabilising Racialism

Herder's utopianism was strengthened by earlier denaturalisations of slavery asserting slaves were legally constituted by social laws. Critics (Benezet, 1767) emphasised the legal construction and economic (re)production of 'race', an emphasis that refined future critiques. Dispelling racial essentialism the Quaker abolitionist, Anthony Benezet (1713-1784) highlighted how segregation and exclusion (re)produced Black slavery (*ibid*). Racial subdivision was *also* vigorously contested because it undermined Christendom. Benezet's friend and fellow Quaker abolitionist John Woolman (1720-1772) attributed physical variety to social and environmental conditions stressing habituated social exclusion and subordination *not* racial essences were at the roots of inequality (Woolman, 1805).

Quaker abolitionism was part of that mosaic of 18th century revolutionary political ideology igniting the American struggle for independence. In this conjuncture, natural rights theory, environmentalism and revolutionary philosophy coalesced into an evanescent political indictment of racialism (Jordan, 1968). Racism was understood to be an unforgivable contradiction of inalienable rights. A racially stratified polity revealed the aporia of revolutionary rhetoric. How could democracy be furthered by such a narrow claim to liberty? David Cooper (1725-1795), another Quaker abolitionist, remarked upon the Declaration of Independence:

If these solemn truths, uttered at such an awful crisis, are self-evident: unless we can show that Africans are not men, words can hardly express the amazement which naturally arises on reflecting, that the very people who make these pompous declarations are slave holders, and, by their legislative conduct, tell us, that these blessings were only meant to be the rights of white men not of all men... (1783: 290).

Cooper showed how natural rights discourse secularised equality extending Christendom to the political actor. Racialism was untenable *not* because it fractured spiritual union but *because* it (re)produced hierarchy and violated ‘natural’ rights. Slavery was a violation of political *not* Mosaic Law signalling a shift from a theological foundation (equal as candidates for immortality) to a secularised foundation (equally entitled to rights and privileges). Nonracial brothers in Christ were transubstantiated into nonracial sons of liberty due recognition and fair treatment as political beings. Questions of the scientific validity of ‘race’ were forever present in these debates. But it would be the increased interest in the science of ‘race’ in the early 20th century which would create the conditions for a more forceful contestation.

3.3 20th Century ‘Race’ Science

Early 20th century critiques, indisputably more forceful than their predecessors, reveal a complex and uneven rejection. Differentiating between defenders and reformers of ‘race’ was not always straightforward as *both* often believed in the existence of mental or physical differences between the ‘races’. Confusion aside, the interregnum of war marks an important conjuncture when scientists across the disciplines documented the epistemological deficiency of ‘race’ and expressed empirical concerns with its endless inconsistencies and irresolvable contradictions.

The Boasians, an intellectual circle of cultural anthropologists based at Columbia University and working under the leadership of Franz Boas, repeatedly cited the lack of consistent racial indicators with which to establish a meaningful definition (Herskovits, 1928; Klineberg, 1935). Interwar critiques extended Enlightenment scepticism by directing attention to wider impacts - concentrating on how racial classifications became entangled with politicised categories such as national identity and events such as Jewish ghettoisation. Blighted by taxonomic chaos and the impossibility of formal categorisation, 'race' was put under searching critique by the Boasians.

But equivocation in the critiques (re)produced much of the ambiguity and inconsistency in racialism. Equivocation and contradiction as will become clear throughout this thesis characterise much of nonracialism and postracialism. I will discuss a particularly illuminating example in the next chapter in relation to the mixed-race movement and white abolitionism. The interwar conjuncture witnessed not so much an unequivocal hostility to racial categorisation as it did see the rise of a new scientific timidity ('race'/intelligence debate, see Klineberg, 1928) and an ethico-political hesitancy (Nazism, see Barzun, 1937) about drawing firm conclusions regarding racial difference. The accumulation of contradictions marks this conjuncture as a moment where a new problem-space was posed in relation to 'race' which opened up possibilities for an ethical critique. These steps, although tentative, were nevertheless significant milestones in the deconstruction of racialism.

3.3.1 Rejecting Racial Determinism and Formalism

Boas (1858-1942) laid the groundwork for the dismantling of 'race' by problematising 'races' as discrete units. Boasian anthropology gleaned evidence which rendered phenotypic differences inconsequential and offered a dynamic alternative to racial determinism. Anthropology before this culturalist turn was essentially physical, that is racial. Boasian anthropology rebutted racial determinism and contested the aetiological dominance of 'race'.

Through a fastidious exposition of culture, the Boasians unwound what was *the* unifying concept in anthropology (Benedict, 1942; Herskovits, 1941). The Boasians did not dismiss 'race' altogether but *did* succeed in prying the concept away from culture and disproving its causal relationship to intelligence. Stripping racialism of certitudes they staked an ethico-political territory from which credible, nonracialist arguments could be articulated and popularised in widely read texts and popular news media. Boas and his renown student Margaret Mead were published and discussed in the widely read periodical *TimeMagazine* for example (Baker, 2004).

In the escalation preceding WWII, the cultural historian Jacques Barzun (1907-2012), dismissed 'race' as 'ethnic fiction', explicitly engineered for political purposes (1937:198). Barzun cited Boas' environmentalist investigations an intertextuality exemplifying the growing popularity of 'race'-sceptical thought. In 1935, with Germany gearing for a global 'race' war, the British scientists Julian Huxley (1887-1974) and Alfred Cort Haddon (1855-1940) published *We Europeans: A Study of Racial Problems* which explored the conceptual imprecision and definitional inconsistency of 'race'. In a more unequivocal pronouncement they

described 'race' as, 'a pseudo-scientific rather than a scientific term...with no precise and definable meaning' (1935: 322).

The critique of racial formalism (the exaggerated scientific concern for racial classification) was a composite of psychology and biometry (Boas, 1940). The Boasians established continued variance and transformation both of which would become key themes in later non/postracial formulations discussed in chapter seven in relation to postracial bioscience. Reflecting longstanding ethical concerns Boas cautioned against the reductivism linking cranial capacity to intellectual endowments and creating a naturalised hierarchy of inferiority. The success in contesting racialism is attributable to the shift from morphology to culture (Gosset, 1963). Critics warned that, 'to interpret as racial character what is only an effect of social surroundings' represented a cavalier determinism capable of naturalising egregious social conditions (Boas, 1911: 123). Racial formalism's eventual decline came through the dynamic science of human biology and the challenge of the virtually unquestioned assumption of the stability of hereditary characteristics under any environmental conditions (ibid).

Alain Locke (1885-1954) the American philosopher also detailed how anthropology could not isolate any static factors; 'Really when the modern man talks about race, he is not talking about the anthropological or biological idea at all. He is really talking about the historical record of success or failure of an ethnic group' (1992: 133). This decisive rejection criticised racial formalism as mythic rationalisation and pointed to the determining role of history in constructing racial naturalism. Locke went beyond his contemporaries declaring 'race' fiction though preserving a thin

account as a political resource for progressive change. I will discuss critical forms of racial conservatism more fully in my discussion of postracialism and ethics in chapter five.

His scientific rejection would become indispensable to later nonracialisms. Barzun extended the critique illustrating how racism spills ‘race’ into culture. He dealt a *coup de grace* to racial formalism in noting the fallacy of exception, ‘If race is an unchanging factor which marks humans distinctively, it cannot break down at any point but race-mixing and intra-group racial variation clearly disproves this’ (Barzun, 1937: 144). Detractors echoed Locke dispelling phrenology and the spuriousness of racialist anthropology (Haddon & Huxley, 1935). Critiques exposed the tautology of racial reasoning and the absence of agreement as to what ‘race’ was or could be. In short, logical and principled argument enabled the steady deconstruction of racialism.

3.3.2 Relativist and Methodological Interventions

Relativists also dismantled racial formalism through a critique of the hierarchical cultural scales on which ‘races’ could be appraised. Above all, relativism offered an anti-essentialist understanding of groups - each group possessed value sets and practices valid on its own terms. Relativism provided an egalitarian theory of difference and developed analytic categories and evaluative standards that did not valorise Europe as the standard of perfectibility (see Boas, 1911). Relativist paradigms also refused Durkheim’s distinction of irrational/rational cultures using

more sophisticated understanding of the formative role of culture. Definitions of culture as unitary and bounded were not congruent these frameworks.

Universally possessed, culture was understood as axiomatic evidence of a common and (formally) equal humanity. The scholarship of Locke (1992), Boas (1911) and Hogben (1936) demonstrated that purity was a racialist fantasy neither achievable nor desirable. In nonracialism the difference that mattered was cultural not biological (Stocking, 1982). Relativism shifted racial theory with its dismissal of biological determinism, its rejection of ethnocentric standards of evaluation and its appreciation of the role of unconscious social processes in the determination of behaviour (Adler, 1911).

In addition to epistemic challenges methodological interventions (i.e. historicism) utilised an antiracist particularism focused on individual facts over broad categorisation. This approach dismissed the search for causal relations and if/then statements (Harris, 1968: 250). The idiographic method ('in ethnology everything is individuality') emphasised individual phenomena, not over-determined by 'race' (Boas, 1911: 77). General anthropological (read racial) laws, 'will be necessarily vague, and we might say, so self-evident that they are of little help to a real understanding' (Boas, 1940: 258).

Historical emphasis discredited racialist grand narratives and re-humanised groups stripped of dignity through controlling racist representations. The Caribbean (St. Croix Danish West Indies) socialist Hubert Harrison (1883-1927), for example, recovered Egyptian contributions to the ascent of Greece challenging the folklore of

European self-creation and the myth of Africa as a cultural wasteland⁶. Decades before Martin Bernal's *Black Athena* (1991), Harrison showed that the experiences of Black people were integral to modernity and global development. His scholarship criticised obsessions with racial purity and yielded a course of lessons about the instability of identities which are inescapably hybrid.

Nonracialisms also subverted the methodologies of racial realism challenging 'race' in science where it had enjoyed almost unanimous support. For example, Boas successfully applied statistical methods to human metric variation demonstrating the importance of variation and discrediting typology (Boas, 1911). Investigations interrogated existing methods and discredited reliable racial indicators - debunking a longstanding taken-for-granted premise of 'race' science. Chapter seven will examine the contemporary expression of this science, postracial bioscience an integral part of the affirmative basis for ethico-political postracial projects.

Under this emergent Boasian paradigm, culture and the environment replaced biology and behaviour as causal forces signposting the decline of biological determinism (Caspari, 2003:67). Methodological conflicts between biometricians and geneticists also facilitated the scientific decline of 'race' (Barkan, 1996). While neither championed an avowedly non-racial analysis, the mutual acceptance of new methodological ground-rules of population and inheritance analysis from the Darwinian synthesis eased the deconstruction of racialism (Schaffer, 2005). Many assessments of this literature overstate the radical depth of contributions. We must

⁶ Hubert H. Harrison Papers at the Rare Book and Manuscript Library Columbia University
Socialism and The Negro Box 13 Folder 1 'In the melting pot (re Herodotos)' *New Negro* 4 Oct
1919 pp. 14-15.

not lose sight of these thinkers as prisoners of their time. Many of them were more reformers than revolutionaries and sought only to empty 'race' of its iniquitous folk meanings while preserving a revised scientific version. Very often the terms in which 'race' was contested were those established by Social Darwinists committed to racial hierarchies (Baker, 1998).

3.4 Early 20th Century Political and Ethical Critiques

Subsequent decades witnessed a growing enthusiasm for nonracialism and with Hitler's election in 1930 a public antiracist science emerged (Stepan, 1982). Violent applications of eugenics together with racist subjugation formed the political backdrop for the scientific engagement with 'race'. The centrality of 'race' in Nazi policy caused a decline in its scientific respectability and opened the concept to ethico-political interventions. Reformists included Alfred Cort Haddon who maintained that rational capacities were equally possessed, Gordon Childe, the Australian Marxist who advanced a straightforward political critique (Childe, 1933) and Lancelot Hogben, a critic of eugenics (Hogben, 1936). J.B.S. Haldane drew on his socialist affiliations to help defeat typological thinking (Barkan, 1996). Julian Huxley expressed the hesitancy common to these critiques: 'The term race is often used as if races were definite biological entities, sharply marked off from each other. This is simply not true (1931: 15-16)'. The interwar period signalled a shift in the critique of 'race' because of how it foregrounded the dangerous political context for 'race' showing how the concept functioned political and how it was applied. The concern was no longer strictly about the scientific question what 'race' is or is not, but the social function and political applications of 'race'.

We Europeans (1935) written for a popular readership, undermined the scientific basis for racism and offered an explicit rejoinder to Nazism. Additionally it integrated ethical and philosophical issues into the science of 'race' including an hostility towards British colonialism. This politicized science opposed racial thinking and its ethical consequences. By the mid 1930s a broad coalition of British scientists responded with a critique of Nazi racial theory (Hogben, 1936; Huxley, 1931). Growing concern with totalitarianism in 1934 led the Royal Anthropological Institute to host a 'race' conference. While no consensus emerged, the event was a pivotal intellectual response to the politicisation of 'race' in Nazism and a call for further engagement with the ethico-political issues in racialism (Schaffer, 2005). Chapter five will examine the ethical critique of postracialism in relation to these historical forerunners and more contemporary concerns.

'Reformist' nonracialism challenged 'race' as a usable concept and produced substantial scientific rejections showing 'race' to be an invalid concept, useless in scientific analysis (Haddon & Huxley, 1935: 322). Barzun also noted the duplicity of 'race'; 'The race science of Nazi Germany cannot be exonerated of charges that they were inspired and brought to completion for some other motive than the discovery of divisions' (1937: 134). Reformists demonstrated that racialism was thoroughly enmeshed in racism. The nonracialist tenor strengthened tremendously after 1930 and included a public debate which compelled recognition of the lethal potential of 'race'.

3.4.1 Ethical Beginnings

Ethical objections to racialism - such as concerns over racialised intellectual capacities - were also put forth by the American philosopher, Josiah Royce (1855-1916). Royce problematised the common usage of 'race' and exhorted against its scientisation:

No argument has ever been advanced by any reasonable man against the fact of differences among men. The whole argument is about what differences exist and how they are to be gauged. It is impossible to fight the real forces behind race-hatreds until they have been uncovered by the general recognition that race theories are pretexts-unconscious hypocrisy or wilful camouflage (1908:201).

Royce recognised how projects of domination masquerade as objective research. His anti-essentialist position exposed the intrinsic signification of values to human morphology. The argument, in a limited sense, began to unwind 'race' in the terrain of values demonstrating the limitations of scientific formalism as a singular deconstructive strategy. The history traced in this chapter shows racism has *never* required a credible referent in order to structure the social and economic order. 'Race' has always been slippery and incoherent. Royce implicitly contended that antiracism must encompass ethical concerns and value systems, sites where 'race' acquires its social weight and meaning.

Some scholars have interpreted Royce anachronistically as antiracist and described his philosophy as multicultural (see Kegley, 2005; Sullivan, 2008). We must consider the *historical a priori* of Royce - the historically relevant lens through which he operated and by which the limits of his perception were set. Royce held an anti-essentialist position on 'race' while *also* adamantly championing British colonialism and assimilation as remedies to the 'race problem'. It is as dangerous as it is erroneous to assume that anti-essentialism is of necessity *not* racist.

While Royce did not believe that inherent differences among the ‘races’ determined cultural achievements and further that any one ‘race’ was naturally superior and possessed the right to conquer the others, he did apparently think that people of African descent were culturally inferior to their Euro-American counterparts. Royce’s contradictions (Curry, 2009; Tunstall, 2009) signal the complexities of his position, the difficulties in thinking with and against ‘race’. It is not doubt clear at this stage that such contradictions and hesitancies are characteristic of the larger body of nonracialist work.

Royce also recognised how racialism precluded egalitarian interaction labelling certain ‘races’ ontologically (psychologically) and functionally (cognitively) deficient (Eze, 2001). Racialism defined ‘races’ as endowed with different constitutions and held that these differences in kind yielded different *kinds* of human beings:

How are we to deal with men who seem to us somehow very widely different from ourselves in physical constitutions, in temperament, in all their deeper nature, so that we are tempted to think of them as natural strangers to our souls, while nevertheless we find that they are stubbornly there in our world, and that they are men as much determined to live as we are, and are men who, in turn, find us as incomprehensible as we find them (1908:266).

In answering the dilemma of how to treat the ‘Other’ humanely, Royce’s suggested seeing beyond the body - transcending the corporeal. This approach directed attention to the constructed nature of what appears to be natural (‘race’) both in terms of physical constitution and deeper nature:

...in dealing with races, in defining what their supposedly unchangeable characteristics are, in planning what to do with them, we are all prone to confuse the accidental with the essential. We are likely to take for an essential race-

characteristic what is a transient incident, or a product of special social conditions (1908:277).

Royce's positions, while not amounting to a complete rejection of 'race', represent an interrogation of Enlightenment conceptions of man focused beyond the corporeal - a move from brain and body to mind and soul. Royce also dismissed man's rational essence, the cherished precept of racialism. Royce distanced himself from modernist rationality and instead privileged the spiritual. The universal possession of soul not rationality unified his conception of humanity.

3.4.2 Cosmopolitan Beginnings

Royce's critiques were expanded at the 1911 Universal Race Congress where the damage wrought by capitalism moved scholars to testify to planetary fragility and the need for nonracialist ethical sensibilities (Spiller, 1911). Contributors advocated a cooperative society that safeguarded Earth and worked towards international accord. The Congress' attention to practical concerns is remarkable considering nonracialist critiques and political programmes have remained excessively abstract. Uniting the theoretical with the concrete, they serve as important reminders that to be politically relevant the marriage of theory and praxis is necessary *and* expedient. I will return to this complicated relationship between theory and praxis in chapter six through a discussion of postracialism and antiracism.

Not long after the ink had dried on the treaty ending WWII, the American polymath WEB Du Bois (1868-1963), published *Negro in the Warsaw Ghetto*, a cosmopolitan exposition of racism. Reflecting on the prohibitions against Jewish Poles and their

exclusion from education and employment, Du Bois sketched a nonracialist understanding of racism. Previously, he conceptualised racism in terms of colour with particular reference to slavery (distinctively American historical realities) but 'race' in Poland challenged his taken-for-granted understandings. In Poland racism did not necessarily involve physical characteristics nor was Nazi slaughter simply religious. Du Bois re-theorised racism as an adaptive ideology which remade 'race' such that it cut across lines of colour, belief and status.

Beyond the black/white binary, racism became a complex, worldwide problem (Du Bois, 1941: 472). Du Bois disputed white supremacy as the only form of racism intimating an ethics beyond Manichaeism. This cosmopolitan leap recognised the mutability of 'race' and pointed to an ethical need for liberation not only from white supremacy but perhaps too from all racialising thought and racialised seeing. Du Bois' hoped to reactivate politics beyond the coordinates of 'race' and nation to tackle the complexity of racism and appreciate that resistance cannot arise effortlessly from shared phenotypes. A contemporary postracialist may well argue that the realisation of this vision will require new forms of racially transcendent cosmopolitan connection. I will discuss this contention and cosmopolitanism more fully in chapter eight.

3.4.3 Constructionism Takes Shape

Like Du Bois' cosmopolitanism, Locke's conception of 'race' focused on how the subject's relationship to power under imperialism was defined through 'race'. Racism marked out the enslaved and the murdered. Locke also explored how

imperialism organised power racially, symbolically inventing and materially making 'race' through racist practices. Locke's nonracialism stressed 'race' as a fictive category cohered through social relationships and typified by subjugation.

Dispensing with the superiority/inferiority axis, he transmuted 'race' into a concept to be used (against its own essentialist logics) for progressive change. This analysis concentrated on the socioeconomic forces producing the racial relationship. Locke strategically deployed 'race' to challenge racist stereotypes (1992) and stressed the specificity and worth of Black experience as having universal applicability. He combined individual particularity and general humanity through a strategy committed to imagining justice beyond the colour line.

Locke's interlocutor, the poet and novelist Jean Toomer (1894-1966), adumbrated a nonracialism that re-worked an ascriptive category into an elective category.

Dissatisfied with his inability to escape its essentialist predicates, Toomer jettisoned 'race' altogether. He imaginatively theorised a nonracialist subject empowered to consciously author herself and assert control over her socialisation through scrutiny and critical rejection. Long before the vocabulary existed, Toomer sculpted a postracial space beyond the prescribed racial self. In sum, Toomer rejected racialism and the order it implemented to produce and regulate individual subjects by shaping how they come to know, understand and indeed constitute themselves as racial beings.

Weber (1864-1920) also advanced a constructionist position:

... race creates a 'group' only when it is subjectively perceived as a common trait: this happens only when a neighbourhood or the mere proximity of racially different persons is the basis of joint (mostly political) action, or conversely

when some common experiences... are linked to some antagonism against members of an obviously different group (1958:385).

For Weber 'racial problems' were not 'natural' but rather socially determined through the 'monopolization of social power' (1958: 386). Causal inversion mistakenly understands racial signifiers as preceding classification and determining social position. This obfuscates the relations which constitute racial categories and make 'race' into an independent variable causing the observed inequalities. Weber cautioned against naturalism which makes history invisible and conceals how the association between category and signifier is born in specific relations. He posited that political and socio-cultural factors not racial kinship influence the importance of blood relationships (1958:387). For Weber, 'race' was cohered through common history and shared experience, constituted and imagined through social practices.

3.5 Post-War Critiques

In 1950 the UN convened a panel of specialists to confront Nazi 'race' science. UNESCO's examination trenchantly condemned eugenics reaching a global public through its accessible language and signalled the beginning of the decline of 'race' and the advent of cogent postracialism(s) (Reardon, 2004). The statement dismissed the myth that 'race' determines intellectual faculties and social habits. The folk concept - whatever commonsense thinks about race (i.e. bio-behavioural essence) - was labelled dangerous and recommended to be dropped. 'Race' could only continue in a strictly scientific definition divested of ideological content. The critique discredited racism at the level of international politics, initiated the repudiation of scientific racism and defined 'race' as a social construct.

UNESCO's rejection nevertheless failed to raze racial taxonomies - only their implications were denounced - and so the debate persisted into the 21st century. Montagu, *rapporteur* of the first *Statement*, proposed dropping 'race' and replacing it with ethnic group, a non-biological term signifying cultural difference. Montagu's substitutionism could not realise its aspirations. Conceptual seepage resulted in ethnicity performing all the essentialising work of 'race' (Montagu, 1997). The ethical, analytical and political problems of 'race' could not simply be solved with a 'new' and 'accurate' concept.

3.5.1 Ending 'Race'

The rejection initiated by UNESCO has since become scholarly commonsense (American Association of Anthropologists, 1998; American Association of Physical Anthropologists, 1996). The near agreement has, however, faced opposition. Racial realism in genetics has brought a 'halo of legitimacy' to racist stereotypes where purely genetic arguments are invoked to account for behaviours resulting from a complex combination of factors threatening to render social scientific theorising about the (in)significance of 'race' obsolete (Bourdieu, 2003). Racial realism remains dangerous because it confers an independent reality to 'race' and re-fuels the logic of 18th century racialism - if genetic disorders are differentially distributed by 'race', why aren't other human traits and characteristics (Bourdieu, 2003; xi).

Unlike earlier incarnations, contemporary postracialisms extensively refute 'race'.

'Race' can only be said to exist if the genetic distance (degree of variation) between

a set of populations is lower than the amount variation between that set and others. Studies consistently demonstrate that populations are so polymorphic that the genetic variation within any one population exceeds the variation between it and another population (Alland, 2004). 'Race' has no scientifically verifiable referent.⁷

Continued discoveries in genetics further discredit racial taxonomies and explode the coherence of 'race'. Indeed some scientific and medical research exhibits explicitly postracialist approaches (Barbujani, 2005; Wilson et al, 2001). Chapter seven includes a developed discussion of postracial bioscience presently I will attempt only an introduction. Postracial researchers do not use 'race' to describe genetic relatedness. Barbujani (2005), for example, advocates a postracial bioscience which tracks gene flows instead of gene isolation, often a scientific euphemism for 'race'. He maintains this will enable a better understanding of patterns of human diversity and the underlying evolutionary processes. And it will also be indispensable for the development of diagnostic and therapeutic tools designed for the individual genotype, rather than for ill-defined racial genotypes.

With no descriptive utility for representing genetic variability most modern racial classifications are crude re-framings of 18th century typologies amounting to little more than a recycling of arbitrarily selected differences (Livingston, 1993). Significantly no features employed to define 'races' unambiguously correspond to the 'existing' social groups commonly referred to as 'races'. In summary, 'race' does not correspond to observable natural variation.⁸

⁷ The literature demonstrating this is vast see: Cartmill, 1998; Cavalli- Sforza, 1995; Gannett, 2004; Gould, 1997; Olsen, 2002; Smedley, 1999; Templeton, 2002.

3.5.2 'Race' Science Returns

Recently, epidemiology has become the primary place for 'resolving' problems with racial biology and for reasserting 'race' as a scientifically verifiable concept. A genomic zeal has in some instances led to the selective ignoring of data and the improper categorisation of various disorders as racial. 'Race' is being smuggled back into the province of legitimacy. Deference to genetic determinism oversimplifies complex conditions and readily services the scientising of 'race'.

Ashkenazi Jews are often (mis)represented as a discrete biological 'race' because of the presence of the diagnostic allele for Tay-Sachs disease whose incidence is notoriously high - with a carrier frequency around one out of every twenty six among Ashkenazi Jews as compared to one out of every one hundred and sixty-six in other European populations (Charrow, 2004). Complicating this data is the similar presence of Tay-Sachs amongst Irish populations (Branda *et al*, 2004). More to the point, twenty-five out of twenty-six Ashkenazi Jews do not carry the Tay-Sachs allele, and in this way one defines a set of subjects at risk, not a 'race' (Barbujani, 2005).

Racialising disease is pregnant with concrete consequences.⁹ The tendency to characterise multifactoral disorders as racial shapes how they are understood in both public and scientific domains and can easily reinforce commonsensical racial

⁸ For examples of the dissonance between 'race' and natural variation see Graves, 2001; Race, Ethnicity and Genetics Working Group, 2005.

⁹ Differential access to healthcare is the obvious example here. See Duster, 2003

biology. Despite the absence of identifiable genes, an increasing racialised emphasis is being placed on heart disease and cancer, conditions in which environmental factors contribute both to disease initiation and progression (Duster, 2003). Research agendas examining racial causality can lead to the marginalisation of preventative strategies and integrated approaches that examine the environmental factors involved in disease initiation and progression.

Ironically, (re)constructions of 'race' inside of the DNA revolution produce an unavoidable crisis in which the very meaning of 'race' is being unmade (Graves, 2001). Discoveries have falsified 'race' showing it to be a crude, useless concept. Nuclear magnetic resonance spectroscopy and other innovations in medical imaging have certainly transformed the relationship between the seen and unseen and rendered 'race' increasingly irrelevant (Gilroy, 2000: 49). Nevertheless, how forcefully (and perhaps responsibly) can this breakthrough be asserted considering racism particularly in the US exiles millions to lives of privation without access to even basic healthcare (Auerbach & Krimgold, 2001)? Blindness to the material inequalities of racism can only discredit postracialism and risks conflation with colourblind discourses.

While reversion to Marxist nostrums (i.e. the abolition of class will end racism) is certainly not the solution here, to be politically credible and theoretically robust postracialism must address materialist manifestations of racism. It is also important to appreciate that commonsense sentiments that both obscure and justify the biological foundations of 'race' feature commonly from widely read magazines

(*Runner's World*)¹⁰ to specialist publications (*New England Journal of Medicine*)¹¹.

Lay readership unfamiliar with the science of 'race' are at the mercy of racial folklore or worse still the commercial advertising blitz for racially specific pharmaceuticals.¹² The commonsense salience of racial biology suggests postracialism cannot only be involved in (dis)proving the scientific facts of human corporeality. What is at stake is not whether the 'objective' facts of racial biology are accurate but how they are understood and interpreted *and* what meanings are given to them.

Postracialisms (St Louis, 2005b) also perhaps too boldly declare the death of 'race' while not fully appreciating the realist dissent. Academic arguments (Sarich & Miele, 2004) and 'tabloid science' (Burfoot, 1999; Entine, 2000) demand ethical contestation in light of the implications of the 'halo of legitimacy'. Still, the 'crisis of 'race'' concept proves an innovative critique using scientific developments to successfully puncture 'race'. Unequivocal rejection and the restatement of a nonracial humanity are invaluable contributions to the eventual transcendence of 'race'.

Given the authority of science in the 'Age of Biology' illuminating the conceptual imprecision of 'race' remains ethically imperative. Postracialism cannot be reduced to the circular logic that only allows for the (counter) assertion of truth claims (St

¹⁰ Amby Burfoot (1992) 'White Men Can't Run', *Runners World* August 89-95.

¹¹ Bibben-Domingo, K. et al (2009) 'Racial Differences in Incident Heart Failure Among Young Adults' *NEJM* 360:1179-1190.

¹² In 2005, the US Food and Drug Administration approved the first drug labeled for a racially identified population: BiDil® for the treatment of chronic heart failure in African Americans. Also in 2005, the European Patent Office renewed a patent for the *BRCA2* gene test 'for diagnosing a predisposition to breast cancer in Ashkenazi Jewish women', because mutations of this gene are frequently found in that population.

Louis, 2005a). Purely scientific rejections reduce themselves to the following linear reasoning: 'race' is without a measurable and scientifically meaningful referent. *Ergo* it is analytically defunct and unsuitable for sociological analysis.¹³ Such reasoning - given the symbolic effectiveness of 'race' is not based on its scientific status - is of limited use. The inherent constraints in formalism direct debate towards ethico-political complexity. Appreciating not only the definitional status (what 'race' is/is not) but also its operative function (what 'race' does) postracialism can engage 'race' politically and ethically.

3.5.3 Constructionism and the Political Rejection

Postracialism also details the crisis in social constructionism. Feminist (Bryson, 1992) and queer theory critiques of essentialism (Butler, 1993) presaged this with the examination of the reification of gender and sexuality. The critiques showed how reification continued to the point of naturalised fixity and also scrutinised the essentialised political positions which emerged from these reified identities. Extrapolating from these insights we can witness how constructionism can potentially remain complicit in reification through the tautology of biology. The constructionist crisis can be precipitated by the inescapably reified premises of 'race' which (re)produce ideas of embodied racial identification and group solidarity short-circuiting chosen political positions (Bhatt, 1997). Essentialist approaches to solidarity can unwittingly remain part of constructionist versions of 'race'. The

¹³ Neo-Marxist such as Darder & Torres, 2004 fall prey to this reasoning.

continued reliance on the effects of racial hierarchy to supply a binding agent that precedes political consciousness raises questions (Gilroy, 2000: 208).

'Race', postracialists maintain, also lacks conceptual sophistication for making sense of the manifold social affinities and negotiated political affiliations of postmodernity (Hill, 2009). The discourse of 'race' prefigures its meaning with absolute predicates and hierarchical language. Continued reference only aggravates its reifying effects and re-activates its divisive history (Gilroy, 2000). In general, postracialisms places the formerly inviolable concept under tireless interrogation by resisting and combating the very category of oppression.

Some expositions of 'race' also analyse how the category operates in antiracism (Gilroy, 1992; Taguieff, 1999). The critiques exploit real-world examples to indicate how 'progressive' mobilisations can be sustained by ethnic absolutism (Brubaker, 2004). This postracialist acuity broadens the ethico-political maturity of Hall's 'end of the essential black subject' breaking the causal relationship between 'race' and politics - deconstructing the white oppressor/black oppressed schism (Hall, 1996: 443). Postracialisms attempt to reject non-negotiated positions inextricably linked to biology and to critically reflect on the premises of activism, which have come to resemble both conceptually and rhetorically, its authoritarian counterparts. Some struggles rely on unitary narratives to the suppression of cultural difference between victims - which can impose an exclusive and racially biased framework for action and theory (Bonnet, 2000).

To this end, some welcome the re-framing of antiracism beyond the negative (what it is opposed to) towards the affirmative moment of debating what it is for. Noticeably no affirmative postracial antiracisms (explored in Chapter 6) have been described or proposed. Detractors have seized upon this reticence charging it to be the aporia of postracialism (Asante, 1998 & 2001). For conservationists, antiracism loses its salience without recourse to the tried and tested category of 'race'. The role of 'race' in moulding and influencing counter-narratives and its function as an inescapable predicate for antiracism suggests that postracialism must confront 'race'.

Paradoxically disavowal requires acknowledgement. The term cannot simply be cast away in the dustbin of the history of ideas, but rather racist discourse and practice must be dismantled. Defending against the conservationist charge of hollow utopianism may require a prescriptive politics. What is demanded from antiracism is also needed from postracialism - what are postracialism's political prescriptions?

Hegemonic antiracisms frequently shore-up support through an homogenisation of identity flattening social and political processes into an abstracted communitarianism (Hall, 1990). This gives 'race' a reified and normative status akin to national origin. 'Race' is presented as existing *prior* to racism (Giddens, 1985). Certain postracialists hope to requisition antiracism's radical potentiality and to discontinue its reification as given and normative. Postracialism of this variety arguably represents a project of coming to terms with injustice and oppression without recourse to spurious forms of description, explanation and justification.

Postracial proponents maintain that purging naturalistic predicates from its arguments (Hill, 2001) will empower antiracism to more effectively deal with

racisms. But what will antiracism look like without 'race'? How will it obviate the trap of individualization that has derailed intersectional approaches such as human rights? I examine these and other questions closely in chapter six in relation to antiracist politics and chapter eight in the context of postracial cosmopolitanism. With few affirmative prescriptions this utopianism approaches bourgeois individualism. Such cynicism perhaps misses the importance of critical reflexivity and the movement of ideas from the theoretical to the practical. Although abstract, postracialist theory could be understood as a necessary first step - a theoretical rehearsal of what might later be translated into concrete political programs. Postracialism, in this sense, represents an imaginative mode of sociological thinking interested in what can be and how that might be realised.

3.5.4 The Ethical/Ontological Rejection

Building on the above critique, certain positions subject the oppositional identities of 'race' to ethical scrutiny and unpack the disciplinary tendencies of these 'liberating' modes of being (Blum, 2002). Ethical dissection explores how racialised life scripts compress individuals to preformed identities. In general terms, postracialisms work to deconstruct raciology, which situates 'race' as a constitutive and permanent feature of one's humanity. Certain postracialists suggest that after raciology being can exist beyond scripted existence and preordained frames of interpretation. Broadly speaking, postracialisms attempt to open and to transform the self, from a project of being into a project of becoming (Hill, 2001). These ethical critiques of 'race' is examined in detail in chapter five.

Some varieties draw on a revived humanism to outline a prescriptive politics beyond the tight boundaries of 'race' (Gilroy, 2004; Hill, 2009). This perspective confronts the deprivation of individuality and the alienation from species life resultant from racism (Gilroy, 2004). In it, cosmopolitan estrangement and democracy introduce new modes of thinking about 'race' and its relationship to politics and power which go beyond identity politics. Postracialist cosmopolitanism hopes to restore the human dignity stripped away in racial assignment by re-focusing the 'human' beyond 'race' (Butler, 2003; Gilroy, 2000). The (re)turn to humanism represents an interesting move as humanism has been widely understood to partner 'race' in modernity.

An audacious jump, cosmopolitanism must now redeem a philosophy historically handcuffed to racial division. Such theoretical intrepidity is surprising considering the summary judgment of 'race' as beyond redemption, always-already trapped in essentialised premises (Gilroy, 2000). The creation of a counter-history which reckons with the destructive consequences of 'race' and refuses the colonial denial of modernity (Eze, 2001) could produce an ethically invigorating political project. But can this exhumed 'human' be re-signified in a way that escapes its ethnocentric history? Cosmopolitanism offers little compelling instruction on how the histories of suffering will be sensitively approached so as to not exalt victimage or reinforce the hierarchy of world-historic injustices. I will return to cosmopolitanism in chapter eight.

Conservationists suggest these 'planetary' (Gilroy, 2000) humanisms lack a defined political project with systematic ideas for engendering political activity. Without a

specified project, these works remain deeply vague and even politically impotent. However, the promise of a creative view of humanity with the conceptual sophistication for appreciating experiential plurality remains a powerful counterpoint. Through principled estrangement from one's own culture, cosmopolitanism could engage complex contemporary dilemmas. Significantly, cosmopolitanism expands estrangement beyond the nation enabling the individual to connect with and understand the globe - to build a multicultural society beyond xenophobia and the paranoia of ontological jeopardy (Levinas, 1998).

Chapter 4 Escaping the Allure of 'Race': Narcissistic Non/Postracialisms

Humanistic universalism(s) inextricably partner 'race' in the discourses and practices of modernity. Bound to this divisive history, universalisms face the burden of conceptual redemption. Can non/postracialist universalisms transcend their historical association with racism? In this chapter with the aid of qualitative data I explore non/postracial universalisms attempting to (re)signify the human in ways that refute the ethnocentric histories of modernity. A closer look reveals contradictory features. Critiques of racial exclusion, for instance, coexist with a fidelity to existing racialist conceptions. I develop narcissism, racial ventriloquism and anti-identity identity politics as concepts to discuss what I contend represent three forms of narcissistic non/postracialism: religious universalisms, mixed-racialism and white abolitionism. Section 4.1 examines Quaker universalism, Baha'i nonracialism and secular nonracialism critically exploring the connections, complexities and contradictions between these and postracialism. Section 4.2 investigates postracialist mixed-racialism and unpacks the promises and problems of this approach through the above framing concepts. Section 4.3 examines white abolition arguing that this incomplete postracialism highlights several critical dilemmas in the postracial ambition. Fleshed out in the coming pages, I will briefly introduce these concepts now.

Narcissism refers to the pattern of self-focus and inflated superiority underpinning certain universalisms (Lasch, 1979). The concept shows how these discourses challenge *and* reproduce the identity, sets of relations and ideological apparatuses

they seek to move beyond. Racial ventriloquism is a discursive act that assails racialism through a well-intentioned form of racialism - hiding its sources and throwing itself disembodied into the 'Other'. Racial ventriloquism entails a violent silence on the part of another showing how racist language is a function of power. Anti-identity identity politics recognises how narrowly defined identity politics can impede more inclusive solidarities. In the disavowal there is an insidious re-inscription of a particular identity. Unwittingly held to be universal this particularism (re)produces homogenisation and essentialism.

4.1 Quaker, Baha'I and Secular Nonracialisms

Quaker universalism imagines a racially transcendent community linked by common theological roots and ancestral lines (Benezet, 1767; Woolman, 1805). Racial taxonomies violate Biblically enshrined equality. This subsection investigates the contradictory relationship of nonracist universalisms in the transmission and reproduction of racist logics. I argue that narcissism expressed as an obsessive concern with self-construction invites reflection on the challenge of escaping the 'allure of race' and the problem of how we constitute identity and live with 'difference'. Narcissism raises key questions for postracism concerning modes of identification based on sameness and the recovery of histories of suffering. Racial ventriloquism offers insights on thinking through the dilemmas of recovering histories of suffering for the non/postracial project and the dilemma of speaking for racial 'Others'. With anti-identity identity politics I explore the limitations of social constructionist non/postracisms namely the reliance on ontological security arguing that this limits the possibilities for an anti-foundational postracism. I

argue that postracialism with the aid of Butler's work on performativity (1993) and a postmodern ethics offers a compelling anti-foundationist and reflexive approach capable of deconstructing 'race'.

4.1.1 Narcissism & Racial Ventriloquism

Quakers countenanced moral parochialism – disregard of or aggression against outsiders - where narcissistic norms of conduct restricted full moral respect to their exclusivist community (Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001:181). Many 18th century Quakers while championing abolition and believing in a common nonracial humanity as accounted in the Bible paradoxically excluded freedmen from the Society. Discursively dismissed, 'race' still circumscribed the full extension of rights and privileges suggesting abolitionism was *not only* freedom for enslaved Africans *but also* a narcissistic exercise in community self-construction. Revolution against the sinfulness of 'race' appeared alongside a concentration on communal intellect that hardened Quaker self-identification. Sanctimoniousness and excessive self-referentialism formed a 'covert narcissism' cloaking a vulnerable and sensitive self-concept (Post, 1993). This nonracialism could not fully escape the centripetal forces and the ready-made solidarities and ontologies offered by 'race'. Postracialism (Hill, 2001) attempts to reject raciological thinking which issues individuals with symbolic commitments to fixed affiliations and promotes inward-looking modes of identification based on sameness.

Narcissism underscores the allure 'camp mentality' and its cathartic identities based on sameness have (Gilroy, 2000). The trap reduces the formation of political

alliances to negativity, those who do not belong. Quaker universalism exemplified the struggle to conceptualise identity and difference within a commitment to negotiated political affiliations that are ethically responsible. Simplistic lines of exclusion (who has/not converted) can circumvent the need for positions arrived at through political labour. The postracial signals an invitation to construct new non-reified marks of social identity that move beyond those naturalized forms of affiliation mobilised to shortcut political solidarity.

The rejection of 'race' was channelled by ecclesiastical organisation which confined discussion to the meeting house (Jordan, 1968: 272). Concern with 'race' occurred during a tribalistic preoccupation with the Quaker spiritual condition in a backdrop of anxiety about American self-definition (Jordan, 1968). Nonracialism was a moral refining with Africans as a means to a narcissistic end - securing a fragile moral community. In this relationship, the slave was used for self-cathexis. Narcissism reminds us how the escape from 'race' cannot be easily achieved and requires careful attention to how racialism can persist in camouflaged forms. Postracialism considers how we constitute identity and how we conceive of and live with 'difference' - affirmative questions taken up in the next chapter.

Not immune to self-conceptions as elite Westerners, Quakers projected fears onto the natives, reproducing the narcissistic complex (Borossa, 2007). Interaction was comparatively equitable - Quakers advocated reparations for victims of European expropriation. This colonial context was characterised by the imposition of *and* resistance to European norms with difference (the lesser native) imagined through

Western perceptual modes. This contradictory rejection of 'race' was perhaps more formalistic than categorical.

Racial ventriloquism condemned slavery while also reproducing the denial of the slaves' *right to* and *means of* speaking for themselves - a denial foundational to the structure of racialised slavery (Miller, 1996). Slave identity was to a significant degree constituted by this kind of racialised silence. The slave was always-already an object of some subject. Who spoke, who was spoken of/for, and who listened were a result, as well as an act, of racialised political struggle. The speaking practice positioned the Quaker as an authoritative subject and reduced the slave to an object to be championed. This contradictory effect reinforced racism, further silencing the slave's own ability to speak and be heard (Alcoff, 1992).

Racial ventriloquism facilitated Quaker self-invention - speaking as and for slaves created a public, discursive self and impacted the self experienced as interiority. Believing the parameters of faith and democracy to be questionable only by stepping outside them, Quakers 'went native' stepping into blackness to lose whiteness, reform Christianity and re-democratize American culture. Assuming the position of the slave in the moment of self-critique appears predicated on the myth of the vanishing African.

The 'Other' can no longer speak; she must be echoed by an alienated (hegemonic?) group mourning that which its 'own' society has destroyed. Alienation is expressed in racial terms - a cynical nostalgia for what one has oneself dehumanised (Vizenor, 1994). The 'Other' vanishes in the margins of self-introspection in this imperialist

self-critique. The Quaker attempt to recover histories of suffering and to re-inscribe Atlantic slavery as a universal event illustrates a central non/postracial problem. How can racialised histories of suffering be articulated sensitively so that they might resonate throughout humanity and not be reduced to narrow proprietary claims?

Quaker universalism is a courageous humanist move to replace racial exceptionalism with empathy and understanding. But Quakerism appropriates slave testimonies in an exclusionary solipsism that ruptures the humanistic imagination. Recovering these histories may be crucial to an ethically responsible humanism. But how might a cross-cultural approach to the history and literature of extreme situations be achieved without an ethical language and a particular political project (Gilroy, 2000)? Racial ventriloquism enacts a discursive erasure; racial meaning is assimilated but the racial provenance of this meaning persists beneath the surface. The 'Other' cannot speak because the Quaker has already spoken for her.

Under the guise of a discursive blackness, Quakers 'became' fictional slaves for demagoguery. In racial ventriloquism the white subject sheds the universal and embodies the particular by asserting a political difference from its racial self - a political agent effecting revolutionary change and redefining existing social relations. Racialised 'Others' are spectators to this history. The Quaker guarantees approval through a wilful self-production. She becomes the 'Other' - the source of approval and admiration (Emmons, 1987). The difficulties in developing a non/postracialism universalism combining individual particularity and general humanity should not diminish the extent to which colonial histories were shaped by a complex process of resistance *and* accommodation. At first glance the exercise of

colonial hegemony, the imposition of democracy, for example, is better understood as the requisition of institutions and discourses to strategic effects on the part of colonised.

Abolitionists committed to a division of labour in which white people agitated on behalf of passively suffering black people, understood their task as speaking the unspeakable (Nudelman, 1992). The 'sympathetic' scripting of slave experience illustrates how nonracialism can be complicit in racial objectification for racialised purposes or desires. The language and techniques of melodrama and sentimental literature serviced nonracialism. In the right narrative form, slave suffering was for a certain consumer, a source of pleasure. Racial ventriloquism 'resolved' the paradox of a sympathetic white audience that was at once eager for *and* unable to hear the slave speak (ibid). The deconstruction of racialism occurs in a field of racialised desires and socio-political relations. Rupturing racialism may require more than Quaker universalism – more precisely a willingness to ask imaginative questions about the (non)future of 'race'. What is the alternative to 'race'? How else can life be organised? What is glaringly lacking and perhaps desperately needed is the stipulation of an alternative or a coherent program for its dissolution.

Racial ventriloquism encapsulates the non/postracialism dilemma of speaking for others. Perhaps the lesson to be gleaned is the encouragement of receptive forms of listening on part of the discursively privileged and discouraging oppressive practices of speaking for the 'Other'. There is no easy resolution to this problematic.

Prohibition against *speaking for* would undermine political effectiveness or worse function as a disguised defence to avoid political work. It also presupposes that one

can make claims singularly based on her discrete location, disentangled from intersecting practices and networks.

Can speaking for the 'Other' ever be valid? History is replete with examples of privileged persons reinforcing the oppression of the group spoken for. The 'demand for the women's voice' privileged white women's voices as it disempowered women of colour by mystifying the differences in privilege within the category of women (Lugones & Spelman, 1986). This dilemma cannot be resolved by restricting the practice of 'speaking for' to groups of which one is a member since their speech will not necessarily be liberatory or reflective of their 'true interests' if such exists (Spivak, 1990). The dilemma postracialism identifies in identity politics intimates a rethinking of how we constitute politics. Can we dispense with identity politics and focus on the social, political and economic issues reproducing these subjectivities and retrenching inequalities?

An inherent problem arises. Racism always involves language as a social practice to signify self and 'Other'. The discourse of 'race', in other words, is inextricably tied to racism. Ending racism requires the end of racial signification. But how can non/postracialism escape this language loop when to seriously engage racism you need 'race'? Racial ventriloquism ambivalently disrupts 'race' (contesting racialised enslavement) *and* retrenches its force (enacting racialised silencing). Quaker nonracialism challenges racism but in the attempt to undo race from within, we learn, 'race has no outside' (Leonardo, 2009). Racial ventriloquism reflects the ubiquity of racial discourse and the difficulty of contesting it. Perhaps Quaker nonracialism was attempting (inadequately?) to ask new questions about the destiny

of ‘race’; to engage the, ‘opportunity to experiment, to re-imagine and to think outside the category of ‘race’’ (Nayak, 2006:427).

There is a further problem of political responsibility. Might silence represent an abandonment of political responsibility – incurred by privileged positioning - to speak out against oppression? Retreat from *speaking for* could stem from a narcissistic desire to establish a position beyond the postracial challenge of ethical reflection. Postracialism leaves us ‘without guarantees’ and with the daunting task of determining our ethical commitments and political aspirations, constructing alternative(s) to ‘race’. How can we forge dialogically negotiated and ethically defensible progressive political projects? What would postracial political solidarities and ethical commitments look like?

4.1.2 Anti-Identity Identity Politics

Locke intimated at a nonracial politics in his practice of Baha’I, a monotheistic religion emphasising spiritual unity. His commitment to ‘race amity’ gained expression through universal religious ideals; ‘any remedy seriously proposed must be fundamental and not superficial, and wide-scale or universal rather than local or provincial’¹⁴. In other words, global racial justice must address material and representational inequality. Might this panacea echo the dangers of grand narratives in appealing to the ‘fundamental’ and the ‘universal’?

¹⁴ Alain Locke Papers{ALP} 164-128 *Writings by Locke* Folder 25 ‘Unity through Diversity: A Baha’I Principle’

A 'revolution within the soul' would transform racial injustice into democracy. Locke's 'secularised' universalism appears a palimpsest with Christian strictures of a secure nonracial identity in residue form – an anti-identity identity politics. This is the recurring (intractable?) problem in projects of racial deconstruction that rely on social constructionist approaches. Postracialisms (Gilroy, 2000) stage a split with orthodoxy and an epistemological re-orientation against racial ontology. The constructionism in Baha'I nonracialism, conversely, necessitates the ontological security of a knowable object. This reliance highlights the high stakes ethical and political gamble waged in surrendering the symbolic and material gains secured on the unstable ground of 'race'.

Anticipating a rejection of his argument as political treachery against those whose democratic claims rest on identities and solidarities solidified in racial categories Gilroy cautions, 'The first task is to suggest that the demise of "race" is not something to be feared' (2000:12). If 'race' thinking is connected to racism - an essential means to an unethical end - it follows that we should abolish those racial categories which have divided humanity for centuries. Consciously setting aside the 'primordial feelings and mythic varieties of kinship' mistakenly believed to be elemental to modern political culture, how might we constitute collective identity (Gilroy, 2000:106)? How will we ensure that community and solidarity do not disappear from social life?

In an unpublished manuscript, Locke negotiated the perils of postrace:

That all nations shall become one in faith, and all men as brothers; that the bonds of affection and unity between the sons of men should be strengthened; that diversity of religion should cease, and differences of 'race' be annulled...These

strifes and this bloodshed and discord must cease, and all men be as one kindred and family.¹⁵

Locke affirms the interconnectedness of 'race' and nation hinting that nationalism and the mythic identities it (re)produces impair postracialism. He re-imagines supranational belonging through faith. Masculinist forms of kinship appear to replace the loss of a category that for some may equate with the obliteration of an identity and shared way of life. However tarnished, 'race' has been an important organising site for political mobilisations and social change.

Baha'I functions as a quasi-secularised set of moral rules to follow with implicit claims to objectivity. The claims of Baha'I are deemed to be egalitarian, bracketed off from rigorous critique. This is the non/postracialisms tendency to become post-politics. The epistemological and ontological scrutiny directed at 'race' is foreclosed (St Louis, 2002). Baha'I scrutinises some moral categories and racial terms while leaving others beyond scrutiny. There is an irresolvable contradiction in anti-identity identity politics – the irony that these political formations rarely investigate the foundations of their own guiding principles. In other words, they ignore the identitarian quality of their politics.

Baha'I swallows other religions into its own credos and fills the void with its own universal spokesman (Bauman, 1993). Unlike its rivals, its moral code rests in the nature of man. The universalisation of morality tends to smother the array of difference and eliminate 'wild' sources of moral judgment (Lyotard, 1998). This practical instability reveals the narcissistic paradox; reaching for self-affirmation and

¹⁵ ALP 164-128 *Writings by Locke* Folder 25 'Unity through Diversity: A Baha'I Principle'.

inclusion, destroys the very relationships needed for desired approval. Anti-identity identity politics may be caught in the impossible task of laying an unshakable foundation for a binding morality.

Montagu similarly disavowed 'race'; 'Man is born good. Devotion to human ideals, love, sympathy, understanding, justice, peace and the embodiment of these values in human relations is the true religion of man. Failure to practice this faith is the only real atheism.'¹⁶ Montagu's reverses human nature as rotten. Can such an abstract universal that streamlines individual choices be helpful? Montagu still attempts to offer guarantees but without 'race' and its nefarious baggage. In this anti-identity identity politics, the human is anchored by the 'proper objects' of love, and sympathy (Butler, 1994). Postracialism obviates the constructionist trap in its anti-foundationalist approach. Not given ontological security, 'race' is theorised as a practice with no solid basis outside the discursive, material, structural and embodied configurations through which it is repetitively enacted, performed and tenuously secured (Leonardo, 2009).

The absence of a solid basis for 'race' is ontologically and politically daunting. Small wonder, these non/postracialisms attempt to re-stabilise just as the racial foundation is eroded. Supplanting 'race' with another category perhaps misses the radical intervention to show how the racialised body is a highly uncertain zone upon which to anchor difference. As Blumenbach noted in the 18th century the body is a slippery surface for sustaining racial meaning. Deference to the ontology of social constructionism limits the project of interrogating the nature of the construction of

¹⁶ Ashley Montagu Papers Box 78 'Race', Science and Humanity Draft' undated

racialised difference and problematising the taken-for-granted assumption of the irreducibility of 'race' (Butler, 1993). Postracialism does not smuggle in a replacement rather it strives to illustrate the reality that our bodies are thoroughly unreliable sources of racial truth. In varying degrees Locke and Montagu expropriate the individual's right to independent moral judgment. Can a postracial ethics work if it is subjected to formalisation and universalization? I address this question in the next chapter.

Anti-identity identity politics attempts to organise the messy ambiguity of moral reality as if all problems were resolvable through systematic reasoning. The individual is expected to abide by specified standards and rules (Bauman 1993). Moral systems, once institutionalised, become limited in their ability to adapt at the pace of complex social problems. Moral foundations regularly come in the form of a self-authorized authority that makes binding pronouncements on persons and their acts (Bauman, 1993).

Postracialism is radical not in its rejection of modern moral concerns but in its rejection of typically modern ways of going about moral problems. It does not respond to moral challenges with coercive regulation and the search for absolutes. It is inordinately arduous because of an insistence that human reality is messy. Moral decisions are ambivalent. Without the modernist delusion that messiness is resolvable, postracialism enters a space of moral uncertainty. Gilroy's (2000) and Butler's (2003) postracial formulations advocate a Levinasian being for the 'Other' which contains no demand to be repaid. The radical ethical maturity of postracialism lies in its call for the readiness to sacrifice for the 'Other'. The command is not

universalizable (moral because it is not generalizable) (Bauman, 1993: 51). Being moral means, I am my brother's keeper, irrespective of my brother's views on me.

Reliance on a 'legislative' approach with a generalizable set of rules empties conflicts of their complexity and precludes reflexive strategies. The challenges presented by racism appear insufficiently answered with the coercive regulation of anti-identity identity politics. In an unpublished leaflet, Locke mirrored and refracted this approach: 'Only a widespread almost universal change of social heart, a new spirit of human attitudes, can achieve the social redemption that must eventually come.'¹⁷

'Social heart' highlights the affective dimension of 'race'. Combating racism involves structural *and* attitudinal transformations. Locke wrestled with this complexity envisaging that a spiritual component must be involved in, 'the social redemption that must eventually come' - a moral antiracism, not based on elusive and subjective predicates. But his anti-identity foundations emerge from Baha'I pronouncements carrying almost legal status. How can antiracist morality avoid becoming little more than proceduralism? Identitarian residues threaten to swallow discussion into a kind of 'collective monologue' (Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001). Postracialism provides a complex anti-foundational critique of identity stressing the impossibility of racial identity. But with the irrational and corporeal ground of 'race' still operating as a powerful force how useful and how meaningful is this critique (Ali, 2003)? I return to this question in chapter eight.

¹⁷ ALP 164-27 Writings by Locker Folder 2

Institutionalised religious discourse operating in the sacred register often shields itself from rational analysis and ethical scrutiny - deaf to arguments outside that referential universe. Anti-identity identity politics - without justification beyond its normative existence - abstains from determining through discussion its commitments and aspirations. Community appears pre-political, a short-circuited solidarity evading the dialogue necessary to build lasting cohesion. Such solidarities mimic the naturalness of 'race' falsely promising unity outside history. In postracialism moral consensus cannot be held. Insecurity is endemic and incurable. The postulated community, the only community that can be, must be always re-examined and refigured. Unlike contractual moralities, postracialism leaves us in perpetual moral anxiety. Although potentially exasperating this anxiety can operate as a substance, as the urge to do, not the knowledge of what is to be done (Bauman, 1993).

4.2 Mixed-'race' Rejection

To be raceless in contemporary society is, in effect, to be anti-race. Resisting bi-racial categories the racial authenticity of mixed raced could therefore be the racial position of anti-race (Zack, 1995: 305).

Unlike the totalising logics of universalisms, mixed-racialism deconstructs racialism by simultaneously extending *and* resisting existing racial categories. The field challenges commonsense assumptions including the taken-for-granted stability of racial classification and self-understanding (Ifekwunigwe, 1999). Broadly speaking mixed-racialism questions the adequacy of official taxonomies and disturbs the notion of 'pure' kinds (Parker & Song, 2001).

In this section, I examine postracialist mixed-racialism which works towards the transcendence of 'race'. I explore how the critique in addition to problematising 'race' *also* reproduces a narcissistic nonracialism through the balkanisation of a reified concept. Preserving the concept whose effects it seeks to erode, the transformative capacities of mixed-racialism encounter conceptual and political problems that paradoxically reify 'race' *and* create opportunities to rectify the political disengagement of postracialism. I also argue that mixed-racialism enacts a racial ventriloquism reproducing racialism as natural and forestalling radical postracial questions. Finally, I explore the contradictions of mixed-racial politics as an anti-identity identity politics that delegitimises 'race' with drastic and unintended consequences for racial justice.

4.2.1 Narcissism

Mixed-racialism erodes racialism through an appreciation of the complex and creolised nature of identity (Zack, 1993). Might residual loyalty to pure 'races' (re)empower racial decorum to over-determine the self? The valorisation of self-defining 'mixed-race' identity has led not only to the erection of seemingly insurmountable boundaries but has also denied its consequences for how we think about these communities.

As sociologists we do not merely reflect and analyze existing relations. We participate in the social construction of 'race' and its reproduction as a given category. Uncritical usage makes 'race' appear pre-discursive, masks the relations of power we are situated in, and contributes to the consolidation of racial categories.

Mixed-racialism empowers mixed-race people, valuing their experiences and developing an oppositional consciousness by turning scholarly work into political projects anchored in social situated-ness (Collins, 1989). The epistemological and methodological problems of racialism are addressed by beginning with mixed-race experiences, lives and activities. Zack writes:

The fact that many of the young scholars and researchers on the subject of mixed race are themselves of mixed race informs their work with motives and experiences in a way that is now recognised to be necessary for the advancement of a discussion within an emancipatory tradition (1995:xi).

Belief in a specialised knowledge produced by mixed-race people that clarifies a particular mixed-race standpoint can obscure the power relationships that constitute 'race'. These narcissistic claims rest upon 'experience' (assumed to be self-explanatory) as a theoretical foundation. At times 'experience' indexes the emotional and the personal and at other moments it is concretised to reflect structural factors economic and political contexts that shape the lives of mixed-race people (Lazreg, 1994).

Postracial critiques (Gilroy, 2000) recognise this oversimplified analysis. Does this mean we jettison experience altogether? Or might it be possible to widen our understanding by examining its socio-historical specificity through the, 'webs of social, political and cultural relations which are themselves organised on the axes of power and which act to constitute subjectivities and identities' (Lewis, 2000:173). Mixed-racialism centres self, identity and community. In this relationship between self and community, mixed-race writers on a practical as well as emotional level, strongly invest in the mixed-race identity as a rupture of the white/black binary.

Mixed-racialism though sometimes beset by reification, Ameri-centrism, and essentialism may provide the basis of a ‘new politics of resistance and critique’ (Hall, 1992: 251). Significantly mixed-racialism is rooted in the critical analysis of mixed-race lives and an understanding of experience as central to knowledge production. The narcissistic assumption that one experience is more valuable than another imposes constraining notions of authenticity and authority. The assumption *also* allows mixed-race people to conceive of themselves as active agents in their social worlds. In this way mixed-race writing (Zack, 1995) refutes the steady withdrawal of intellectual life from anti-racist politics which has rendered some expressions of racism invisible.

Contemporary postracial concerns with the ‘end of race’ (Gilroy, 1998) have witnessed an intellectual retreat from the sphere of macro-structural concerns and the material realities of discrimination – sites where mixed-racialism has been so successful (see Zack, 1995). This has led to the separation of theoretical and empirical labour and the disappearance of the traditional role of the ‘activist-intellectual’ (Alexander, 2002). Mixed-racialism operates outside the apolitical trends of the contemporary academy. Zack reminds us of the inseparability of theory, politics, ideas and their materiality in the formation and contestation of racial ideologies and practices. In spite of above limitations, mixed-racialism as a form of postracialism illumines an over-attentiveness in certain postracialisms (see Hill, 2001) to the question of whether ‘race’ is real or not.

This focus can be doubly disabling - (re)confirming charges of apoliticality and neglecting the question of how and why it can/might be used progressively. The re-

inscription of racial logics and the at best ambiguous (re)fixing of the premises of the racializing project seriously inhibit and perhaps condemn mixed-racialism's postracial potentiality. Nevertheless, there are a course of lessons here about political engagement and the need for greater empirical research as part of an integrated and grounded postracialism.

4.2.2 Racial Ontologies

Mixed-racialism's ambivalent rejection signals the psycho-social ramifications involved in the rejection of 'race'. Racial identity can be known through lived experience *and* experienced emotionally. Racial ontology liberates *and* imprisons. In an unpublished letter to Alain Locke, Jean Toomer wrote:

I am of no particular race. I am of the human race, a man at large in the human world, preparing a new 'race'. This is an accurate statement of my position as regards race. I am disassociating my name and self from racial classifications, as I believe that the real values of life necessitate it¹⁸.

Toomer responded to the limitations of racial being by refusing racial categorisation. He located himself in a forward-looking postracialism, an identification with a transcendent humanity. Toomer's life, characterised by self-imposed exile and outward exclusion, can be read as a cautionary tale; betray one's 'genuine' identity and drift into vacuous abstractions and psychic isolation (Posnock, 1998:32). Will identification as mixed-race carry with it psychic isolation and social stigma? Might mixed-race result in more exaggerated 'camps' practicing even harsher exclusion?

¹⁸ ALPP 164-90-12 Correspondence Undated Letter from Jean Toomer.

There is an incompleteness here attributable to a paradigmatic tension in the approach to 'race'. Perhaps for strategic purposes race is, on the one hand, theorised as socially constituted while, on the other hand, mixed-racialism continually imparts ontological value to it, resulting in reification. In Sara Ahmed's words:

We cannot do away with race, unless racism is 'done away with'...Thinking beyond race in a world that is deeply racist is at best a form of utopianism, at worse a form of neo-liberalism: it imagines we could get beyond race, supporting the illusion that social hierarchies are undone once we have 'seen through them'(2004a: 48).

Mixed-racialism does not fully appreciate that racial identity is an incomplete project forever in process. Racism cannot be denied but a postracial possibility beyond neoliberal accounts can exist – an imaginative re-writing of 'race'. There is serious danger where the ontological status of 'race' and its more powerful signifier phenotype are transformed into the authentic fixed coordinates around which such 'effects' can be mapped.

Passing and misrecognition show the tenuous ontological security of 'race'.

Extending Butler's insights we might suggest that there is no racial identity behind the expressions of 'race', no 'doer behind the deed' (Butler, 1990: 142). 'Race' is performatively constituted by the very expressions which are said to be its results.

'Race' and the establishment of norms of racial difference are produced in the repetition of discourses. Mixed-race enables more complexity but in racial terms.

Violation and transgression re-impose the black/white dichotomy as the standard of mixing. Postracialism enables a critical understanding of how we perform or 'do' 'race' which may yet inform strategies and techniques to 'unmake' it. If racial identities are not rooted in 'proper objects' there is hope for change and intervention.

Mixed-race writers deploy the term at the same time as they refute the limitations (even existence) of 'race'. The call for abolition (unwittingly?) bestows ontological security upon a stable, knowable racial identity. It stills hold to, 'the idea of race as some kind of ontological category, a real foundation for what one "is" and thus provides the basis for questions about equality and difference - and how they may be tied to a racial identity' (Ali, 2004:324). Postracialism eschews racial ontologies through an anti-foundationalist perspective. 'Race' is a fiction only ever given substance through the illusion of performance and utterance. Repetition creates the compelling illusion making 'race' appear as-if-real.

Mixed-racialism inadequately questions an assumed corporeal certainty of what mixed-race is. Racial identity is something we can assert but never accomplish. Mixed-race as a social process is conflated with a secure object 'mixed-race people'. Theoretical understandings of mixed-race as relational and socially constructed notwithstanding, mixed-racialism leaves us with the tangible irreducibility of 'race' (Nayak, 2006).

Could mixed-racialism reproduce the homogenising logics of 'race' by assuming the existence of a coherent identity? Is the creation of an mixed-race identity a social fiction considering self-understandings can be divergent and are grounded in varying biographies and cross-cutting cultural contexts (Rockquemore & Brunnsma, 2008)? Does the diversity of family structures, the variation in the experience of racial socialisation and the heterogeneity of communities contribute to the absence of a singular understanding of what mixed-race identity might be? This plurality can be overlooked where reified attitudes of racial being persist.

Ontological attachments to 'race' are connected to concerns about the political gains made through 'race' and the structural inequalities connected to the category. This duplicity about how sociologists conceptualise 'race' forms part of the postracial problematic. What Gilroy frames as the, 'pious ritual in which we always agree that "race" is invented but then are required to defer to its embeddedness in the world and to accept that the demand for justice nevertheless requires us to enter the political arenas that it helps mark out' (Gilroy, 1998: 842).

Mixed-racialism perhaps privileges the political 'demand for justice' without fully considering how that might operate as a fixed and inflexible category. Ontological preservation in the name of political expediency works as a riposte to the postracial critique. For racialised minorities postracialism may equate with the annihilation of an identity and shared ways of life that silence marked experiences and cultures (Nayak, 2006). Postracial dialogues represent an imaginative project of envisaging new spaces and forms of cultural identification that subvert 'race' and can enable other ways of being. Additionally, postracialism may be able to genuinely appreciate that race has no pre-discursive ontological grounding. It can only ever be arbitrary and ambiguous. The transformative possibilities of mixed-racialism remain limited by the very system it seeks liberation from. The rejection of 'undesirable' options is underpinned by what it means to 'be' of a particular 'race'. With the identity outcomes of racialism still intact, mixed-racialism cannot fully realise the liberation of identity from a constraining past that shapes the present and future and proscribes available life projects (Zack, 1992).

Mixed-racialism shows the inflexibility of racialism. Is mixed-race a largely interiorised identity accessible only to elites? Differential access to cultural and material capital demonstrate that the ‘right of exit’ from and voluntary affiliation with racial identity is more select privilege than universal access (Shelby, 2002). Does a latent elitism pervade mixed-racialism and place an excessive emphasis on the knowing individual’s right to assert ethnic identities? The right to choose an ethnic identity is an important part of a contemporary politics of citizenship which addresses issues of difference and belonging and the complex ways people participate in social life. But *who* exactly can freely select her identity? Mixed-racialism seems to lack a materialist sensibility concerning how access to non-traditional life-style practices are delimited by socio-economic stratification, educational attainment and access to welfare provisions

4.2.3 Racial Ventriloquism

Mixed-racialism stakes an agential claim, the power to self-define and to not be defined from without. Crucially self-identification does not include the refusal to identify oneself racially. Self-identification seems to presuppose that ‘race’ is a primary category of human classification. Postracialism’s anti-foundational rejection helps to show how the ‘freedom’ of racial self-classification in mixed-racialism is perhaps not a freedom at all but rather an outgrowth of a presumed naturalism.

Postracialism contests ‘race’ in order to end the category not perpetuate it.

The democratic freedom of self-naming is underpinned by the racial ventriloquism of an imposed identity. Racial ventriloquism is also enacted through the

bureaucratic-statistical requirements that enforce racialising imperatives for political purposes. Ventriloquism has a force where the numerical politics of racial naming and placing have a legislative mandate (Goldberg, 1995). The census, a flashpoint in the battle for mixed-race categorising, was about managing effective resource distribution and voting access.

Mixed-racialism pays insufficient attention to how a racial self is a fiction cohered through common history. Mixed-race people, Zack maintains, are alienated because they lack a recognised history. But if the ‘true’ racial self is a fiction cohered through common history, as postracial positions maintain (St Louis, 2002) than might its’ usage obscure the shifting divisions and vicissitudes of actual history? A mixed-race history could deny the normative condition of hybridity. The original critical intent could backfire reinforcing the racialist tenet of legitimacy as derived from claims to a prior ontology. The necessity of mixed-‘race’ is then justified *a priori* and is crucially not predicated on an ethico-political analysis of how the identity is situated within modalities of essence and difference.

Locke wrestled with these problems earlier in an unpublished exchange with Gunnar Myrdal:

The widespread notion of negro culture as separate and *sui generis* is very unscientific and contrary to fact. ...the color groups not only have certain differential by and large but this varies between north and south, urban and rural areas, and seems to me even to vary between the sexes.¹⁹

¹⁹ ALP 164-74-12 Correspondence Letter from Locke to Gunnar Myrdal 23rd Feb 1939

Representations of Black culture as discrete and original are contradicted by the historical record of their hybrid nature amounting to little more than racial essentialism. 'Race' is commensensically understood as an umbrella term consolidating internal diversity through a transcendent identity. Locke corrected this popular and academic misconception citing how class, geography and gender fracture racial homogeneity.

He points towards the internal diversity of Black as a collective social category while rejecting definitions which fail to acknowledge heterogeneity. His contestation of a singular African-American identity is noteworthy for postracialism because it disturbs the normative sense of distinctions *between groups* as forming the fundamental basis of racial particularity. By stressing *dissimilarities* within racialised groups (i.e. class), Locke placed the accepted notion of difference between 'races', taken as proof of coherent racial categories, under a great deal of analytical and practical stress (St Louis, 2005b). What becomes of collective racial identities when the assumption of its constitutive internal similarity and external differentiation melts?

This political manoeuvre of inhabiting racial identity in order to deconstruct it can be problematic. Harrison grappled with this when, discouraged by reductionist class politics, he advanced a 'race first' political agenda:

For the similarity of suffering has produced in all lands where whites rule colored races a certain similarity of sentiment viz: a racial revulsion of racial feeling. The people of those lands begin to feel and realise that they are so subjected because they are members of races condemned as 'inferior' by their

Caucasian overlords. The fact presented to their minds is one of race, and in terms of race do they react to it.²⁰

Harrison stressed how racism over-determined social life such that 'race' was reproduced by both oppressor and oppressed. He suggested 'race' is a reified concept and alluded to the work 'race' performs. I interpret the 'racial revulsion of racial feeling' as a reference to the ontology of 'race'. Racial identity exists in part because it is felt and not simply existent empirically or as a social effect. 'Race' is a situational and comparative construct not a primordial one.

The fight against racism, he hinted, remains mired in categories originally generated in racism. Over-determined from without and racially conscious from within, Harrison struggled with the ethics of racial identification. Racial identities remained problematic because they rearticulated hegemonic representations of inferiority into positive affirmations. Establishing identity through what one is not one remains, to an extent, within the prior ontological universe of what one (falsely) was (St Louis, 2005b). The passage silently asks postracial questions; is 'race' necessary to press for transformative democratic change? And if so, why considering unitary racial identities and their unifying political positions are unsustainable?

Mixed-racialism offers an oblique challenge to the prescribed racial self with its limiting ethical reflexivity (Gilroy, 2000). Essentialist premises of normative racial identity – that personal identity begins with 'race' – are not fundamentally challenged. What does mixed-racialism offer as compelling ethical justification? What ethical reasons for the continuance of a racialised value system can it support?

²⁰ Hubert Harrison Papers Box 13 'Two Negro Radicalisms' 4 October 1919: 4-5

Postracialisms negotiates this challenge by escaping the dangerous tautology of mixed-race identity refusing to refer to 'race' as a coherent even acceptable category despite people 'positioning' themselves racially (St Louis, 2009). As currently conceived, it is unclear how mixed-racialism will respond to this ethical and political maturity - a new responsibility that challenges us to develop social positions within ethical parameters beyond the false conditions of 'race'.

4.2.4 Anti-identity Identity Politics

The Association of MultiEthnic Americans (AMEA), established in 1998, is dedicated to advocacy and education on behalf of the 'multiracial community'. The organisation played a key role in the 2000 census decision to revise its standards for collecting racial data and allowed people to tick 'one or more races'. For AMEA racial self-description disrupts external ascription stretching the colour line to the point of making 'race' less relevant.

The 'tick all that apply' box aims to get racial identity correct in self-assignment and state-recognition. Rendering less relevant those racial categories historically linked to equal opportunity policy, rather paradoxically, releases the state from previous civil rights obligations namely equal access to employment, housing, education etc. What began as a progressive project of recognition and redistribution becomes a regressive anti-identity identity politics - swallowed into the neoliberal privatisation of social problems. This is a reminder for postracialism. Deconstruction will need to account for the organisation of power in a racialised economic and social system and

more specifically the significance of orthodox racial categories in the maintenance of racial equality.

Mixed-racialism unleashes multiplicity upon identity enabling a state endorsed postmodern identity formation. But anti-identity identity politics - the radical sanctioning of mixed-race to delegitimise 'race' – has a drastic unintended consequence. The state no longer needs to ensure equality. AMEA's emancipatory vision comes through the proliferation of racial difference such that racial justice disappears. How can racial inequality be identified, corrective solutions developed and remedies achieved without the categories that have been the organising concepts for stratification?

As the state makes more precise self-descriptive possibilities accessible, 'race' signifies itself into nonexistence. Mixed-racialism's hope for liberation from 'race' inadvertently aligns with a market liberalism. 'Tick all that apply' offers a wealth of identity options but comes with the withdrawal of any structural understanding of racial inequality. People simply belong to whatever they choose.²¹ How can *de facto* civil rights infringements be the objects of legal redress if racial distinctions proliferate to the point of their *de jure* disappearance (Hill, 2004: 42)? AMEA's work with its cohort of neo-conservative allies makes anti-essentialism a matter of state policy and with it state concern for civil rights obligations is dissolving. Postracialism cannot so quickly forget about 'race'. Mixed-racialism reminds us again of the important and challenging task of working with and against 'race' to be discussed more fully in chapter six.

²¹ <http://www.ameasite.org/census/>

AMEA's anti-identity identity discourse implies the acceptance of some specifically racial difference. Treated as real, or at least concretely apprehensible, 'race' is often uncritically accepted (Guillaumin, 1995). Confusingly 'race' comes to play a role as determining cause and concrete means. A recent newsletter trumpeted the success of the Topaz Club a 'social/support' club for biracial people for sharing personal narratives with, 'others who have had similar experiences'.²² While creating space for the positive affirmation of multiracial identities, the discourse reifies racial identity and seems to potentially ignore how identity is crosscut by other social categories.

Reification in this anti-identity identity politics makes 'race' - an effect of social relationships - into a cause. 'Race' appears a basic legal category alongside nationality. The social is regarded as natural (Miles & Brown, 2003). Antiracist hopes notwithstanding, AMEA revivifies the 'race' relations paradigm leaving out the element which contributes most to the perpetuation of the racial context: technical and economic power. With description and explanations solely in racial terms, AMEA at worst denies and at best disguises the real social relationships (re)producing 'race' and racial stratification.

Project RACE (Reclassify All Children Equally) is another American non-profit that campaigns nationally for a multiracial classification.²³ Executive Director Susan Graham recently opined that the organisation's goal is its own erasure; 'In a post-

²² Volume 1(3) pg. 7

²³ <http://www.project'race'.com/>

racial America, we would be able to close down Project RACE. We would no longer need to advocate for a multiracial classification or for rights for multiracial children and adults.²⁴ This is an anti-identity identity politics that makes ‘race’ everywhere significant and yet nowhere identifiable. Admitted with greater nuance, ‘race’ is evacuated of former political significance. Paradoxically, the full extension of civil rights discourse actually unmakes civil rights achievements (Hill, 2004).

At times Project RACE validates the characterisation of human groups in somatic terms unwittingly confirming the commonsensical belief that physical characteristics are the cause of social relationships.²⁵ Their website also tacitly accepts the basic postulate of racialism - biologically specific groups exist and are recognizable by measurable somatic and genetic criteria.²⁶ ‘Race’ becomes a given, natural category with all the intellectual and social authority of science. The relationships of power that constitute the foundational category appear natural and inevitable (Spencer, 1999). The un-problematized reliance upon categorical approaches to ‘race’ presents fundamental political and methodological dangers reifying ‘race’ as an entity that individuals are born into and inhabit rather than recognising ‘race’ as a dynamic and emergent processes of being and becoming. In addition, the conceptual fixing of mixed-race theorising limits analyses and reproduces wider forms of essentialism, stereotyping and racism.

4.3 White Abolitionism

²⁴http://www.project'race'.com/fromthedirector/archive/012009_obama_post_racial_america.php (accessed 25th May 2012)

²⁵http://www.project'race'.com/teenproject'race'/invisible_public_service_announcement_youth_ube.php (accessed 24th May 2012)

²⁶<http://www.project'race'.com/urgentmedicalconcern> (accessed 24th May 2012)

4.3.1 Narcissism

Emerging alongside mixed-racialism in the wake of the political and intellectual challenges offered by British anti-racism (Gilroy, 1992) and radical multiculturalism in the USA (Chicago Cultural Studies Group, 1992), white abolitionism, a prescriptive scholarly effort with the goal of creating a more humane society, called for the dismantling of whiteness. The historicisation of whiteness made white racism into an object of concern and reflection. This raised a degree of scepticism with fears that already limited attention to and resources for fighting racism might be diverted, ‘back to white people and their perspective’ in ‘a sneaky form of narcissism’ (Dyson cited in Talbot, 1997: 116). In this section, I argue that the narcissism of abolitionism offers a space for reflecting on and thinking through the postracial dilemma of how any discussion of ‘race’ risks reification, even essentialism. ‘Race’ cannot be so easily disentangled from its social materiality.

This narcissistic expression reflects the opening-up of a ‘new’ field, a reification now boasting material value in scholarly journals and edited collections.

Postracialism necessarily involves a re-examination of our professional interests and a re-examination of our degree of complicity in the reification of racial difference (Gilroy, 1998). This attempt to fully escape the force of ‘race’ raises an inherent dilemma. The envisaging of new spaces and forms of identification that can engender other non/postracial ways of being is often incomplete. Abolitionism, for example, features a pattern of self-focus with analysis and prescriptive proposals presented alongside personal anecdotes and ruminations often in the form of an introduction (see Roediger, 1994).

The advent of whiteness studies curiously coincided with the hard-fought institutionalisation of multicultural curricula in the academy. Whiteness became an academic vogue when white scholars started emphasizing European culture and history (see Allen, 1997). Abolitionism was received with enthusiasm *and* suspicion. Is it possible to escape, dismantle and challenge whiteness while avoiding inadvertently bolstering the logics of white supremacy which underwrite it? There is a narcissistic danger in the reduction of whiteness to a form of self-help for white people suffering an identity crisis. Whiteness without a clear programme for unpacking the ways in which it is used to maintain privileged power and to marginalise and disempower others (Projansky & Ono, 1999) risks complicity with white domination.

It is believed that once whiteness is rendered visible, racism - in the form of white privilege - can be reduced if not eliminated. This is consistent with the postracial ambition of going through 'race' reckoning with its destructive material and psycho-social consequences as opposed to a colourblind insistence that whiteness remain unmarked and invisible. The ubiquity of 'race' and its role as an inescapable predicate for the discussion of antiracist and postracial possibilities suggest going beyond whiteness will involve going through whiteness. The potential danger is that whiteness as a social process – fluid, contradictory and endlessly reconstituted – will be conflated with a secure white racial subject.

Abolitionism identifies not 'race' or 'racism' as the primary social problem but the 'white race':

The key to solving the social problems of our age is to abolish the white race. Until that task is performed there can be no universal reform, and even partial reform will prove elusive, because white influence permeates every issue in US society, whether domestic or foreign (Editorial, 1996:9).

Whiteness is *the* foundational source of oppression. Complexity in social description and explanation is lost in a reified whiteness. This is not an epistemic deficiency in abolitionism but an example of how discussing ‘race’ (even in postracial projects) risks continual reification and essentialism. Whiteness - an imaginary category - is invested with an illusory salience and explanatory capacity. Experimenting with postracial vocabularies could ameliorate the missed opportunity in reified whiteness to benefit from other discourses of struggle and perhaps to build a politics that lessens the political purchase of ‘race’.

Where whiteness oppresses all and must be abolished in order to free all, related struggles around other forms of domination are relegated to the margins. Narcissism threatens to insidiously re-inscribe subjugation and devaluation through the neglect of the lived experiences of those perceived as non-white. The narcissism of abolition stymies dialogue and coalition building across liberatory struggles. The resulting approach - without an analysis of concrete social and material conditions - can be more obscuring than clarifying, more damaging than ameliorating.

An explanatory over-reliance on whiteness comes close to portraying whiteness as a ubiquitous and unchanging trans-historical force rather than a shifting and contingent construction²⁷. Many authors who view whiteness as an independent category come close to reifying it and thereby lose sight of its contextual variations and perhaps

²⁷ Problems with explanatory over-reliance and reification can be found throughout whiteness studies see Jacobson, 1998; Lipsitz, 1998.

even undermine the very understanding of 'race' as socially constructed. Perhaps as Frankenburg (1993) suggests this is a symptom of working with whiteness which is itself real and unreal; ubiquitous and invisible. Might a subversive reification be necessary to dismantle whiteness? Reconfiguring 'race', in other words, requires its formal acknowledgement and not only its abolition. Could a 'weak constructionist' (St Louis, 2002) white racial identity provide the basis for a critical and ethically responsible usage of race? Might this retention offer greater descriptive and explanatory capacity and enable more accurate theories of the complexities of materially and symbolically significant racialised social structures, relations and interests? Or is whiteness irredeemable? Reckoning with whiteness frames the postracial conundrum; how can the fallacious idea of 'race' be disentangled from its social and political materiality? And what is at stake in such a move?

Abolitionists - in revealing how whiteness functions as a racial norm - have begun denaturalising whiteness and thereby robbing it of some of its power to order thought and practice (Ignatiev & Garvey, 1996). But questioning power from a position of power is not a straightforwardly progressive exercise. For Spivak (1990) it is an impossibility. The narcissism underwriting abolitionist zeal ultimately depends on white privilege for its articulation. The project re-centres whiteness by positioning white people as the ultimate agents of change. Uninterested in 'redeeming' whiteness, the symbolic death of whiteness becomes the potential for real identity. Whiteness becomes a twisted self-love, 'the whiteness we love to hate' (Moon and Flores, 2000: 101). Abolitionists hope to realise cross-'race' class struggle by opting out of whiteness (which can be chosen or rejected) disentangling it from histories of

white supremacy through public acts of social treason. But outside of a larger political movement what is the effect and meaning of this treason?

This analysis of racism is problematic because of its limited ability to help us think about how to overcome the connection to a racist past - beyond dangerously suggesting that 'whites' are not really connected to that past. The difficulties of Gilroy's (2000) postracial humanism are highlighted when a well-intentioned racial abolition quickly descends into a potentially sanitised and particular testimony appropriated by a Marxist solipsism that ruptures the postracial imagination. The self-conscious production of the postracial subject reconfirms a narcissistic logic. The recovery of American labour history enables the reclamation of the white subject who can then dis-identify with the political power of white skin (Wiegman, 1995: 2). Historical re-appraisal places agency centre stage recognising that the white supremacist order was historically produced in a construction beyond phenotypes.

4.3.2 Racial Ventriloquism

Abolitionism, in only targeting whiteness, seems to resurrect the essentialised and homogenised notion of blackness Hall (1996) attempted to lay to rest. In this section, I examine racial ventriloquism and explore how it enables a critical revisiting of the postracial dilemma of how reference to 'race' appears incapable of escaping its historical mobilisation for purposes of exclusion and domination. This incomplete deconstruction remains in the essentialised terrain of oppositional identity politics:

Once you enter the politics of the end of the essential black subject you are plunged headlong into the maelstrom of a continuously contingent, unguaranteed, political argument and debate... You can no longer conduct black politics through the strategy of a simple set of reversals, putting in the place of the bad old essential white subject, the new essentially good black subject (Hall, 1996: 28).

It is worth noting that deconstructionism, which only seizes upon the erasure of whiteness and the declaration of it as culturally empty, has fuelled a reactionary whiteness. In the backlash, white ethnic identity achieves victim status with white privilege understood as threatened by the injustices of multicultural programs and movements (Hewitt, 2005). In California during the 1990s a fierce white backlash saw a legislative assault on immigrant access to education and healthcare.

The notion of 'race' in abolitionism - reliant upon a fixed and eternal notion of difference - notably shares conceptual ground with racist arguments. The fixing of blackness seems to encourage the presupposing of the permanency of affiliation – a political racial ventriloquism. Acknowledging the multiplicity of different 'black' subjectivities or engaging with the positionalities of a variety of black masculinities becomes a challenging, if not impossible task (Mercer, 2001). Abolition remains caught in the postracial dilemma – reference to 'race' and its continued application only serves to reinforce its dangerous common-sense meanings that cannot escape its historical mobilisation for purposes of exclusion and domination (Gilroy, 2000).

Racial ventriloquism threatens to totalise discussions delimiting considerations of the multiple inflections of sexuality and gender in the structures of racism.

Such implicit reductionism is alarming because of the potential to oversimplify politics leading to the lazy equation of blackness with a radical political identity.

Might this well-intentioned essentialism and the re-appropriation of racialist

understandings of identity undermine much of the radical premises and promises of abolitionism? We might also reconsider this as signifying a perhaps insoluble tension in postracial projects. The tension captures a theoretical/practical impasse that resonates deeply in the schism between intellectualism and activism. Postracialism(s) - powerful and cogent in its identification of the ethical tensions and political problems with the concept - remain(s) in a sense impotent with the recognition of the utility of 'race' to antiracism (Lentin, 2000). I will discuss this dilemma at length in chapter six.

Without greater specification, the racial ventriloquism in abolitionism (re)turns to essentialism; just being black is good enough. The value of political allegiance to certain actions, strategies and ethical commitments dwindles. Abolitionism argues that 'good whiteness' is deeply problematic. At worst it implies racism stems from ignorance and that the solution lies in changing minds not confronting structures and interests while at best it accepts the legitimacy of racial identification which vitiates against the constructed nature of 'race'. There can be no 'good whiteness' that imagines nonracist ways of being and non-normative ways of being white (Frankenburg, 1993). Abolition instead involves the production of a new antiracist subject created through a ventriloqual retrieval of nonwhiteness. Such a thesis stands in direct opposition to an anti-humanist and post-foundationalist approach to understanding society and the social actor whereby both the social structure and the individual agent are deconstructed.

Recalling my earlier discussion, Foucauldian analysis looks for a way to understand how subjectivities of various kinds are formed within networks of power. A

Foucauldian genealogy could perhaps aid the development of an analysis capable of accounting for the constitution of the subject within a historical framework providing a form of history that can account for the constitution of knowledges and discourses of whiteness without having to make reference to the transcendental racial subject that ventriloquism inevitably returns to.

In abolitionism power is the possession of a subject who chooses when, where and how to use it, hence whites can *choose* to simply defect from the privileges of whiteness. Sovereign prohibition, in Foucauldian terms, seems to underwrite the conception of power in abolitionism and this may be too limiting as subjectivity is assumed to be necessarily prior to the exercise of power. For Foucault, certain subjectivities are *produced* in networks of power. Power is more than a subjectivity's capacity to prohibit an action; more than that which prevents people from doing something. Power - particularly in modern industrialised societies - can also operate non-subjectively. While this is not the space for the elaboration a Foucauldian genealogy of whiteness, it is worth noting that Foucault's insight could perhaps help to rethink the abolition of whiteness in non-subjective directions.

The approach to racism in abolitionism perhaps inadequately accounts for and insufficiently examines the institutionalised patterns of cultural value and social subordination which effectively (re)produce 'race' and inferiorise and exclude racialised minorities from social, political and economic equality (Fraser, 2003). Abolitionism argues that racism and racial inequality cannot be understood without grasping the formation and maintenance of white racial identity - reminding us that the denial of white privilege is the foundation of colorblind racism. But just what is

the effect and meaning of this treason? Racial ventriloquism seems to allow for a quick-and-easy disavowal of whiteness. Is it conceivable that the racial treason represented by a white family moving into a non-white racialised area could facilitate the gentrification of the neighborhood? Racial ventriloquism cannot resolve the social reality that in a racially stratified world the appearance of being white is likely to still confer privilege in numerous and significant ways irrespective if those privileges are wanted.

How then will abolitionism tackle the complex and institutionalised patterns of racism which regulate interaction according to parity impeding cultural norms? Abolishing whiteness will not immediately dismantle the juridified forms of racism expressed in codified law or other institutionalised practices emerging from governmental policies, administrative codes and professional practices. Without deconstructing and or contesting the informal patterns of social subordination such as associational patterns, longstanding customs or crystallised social practices the project remains seriously underdeveloped.

4.3.3 Anti-identity Identity Politics

Abolitionism re-oriented self-critiquing identity politics onto whiteness. After an examination of the social (re)production of whiteness and its role in the maintenance of racial hierarchy Ignatiev and Garvey (1996) made the leap towards abandonment. In this section, I examine abolitionism as an anti-identity identity politics arguing that this concept enables us to grasp the political difficulties of deconstructing ‘race’

and the allure of racial logics in deconstructive projects. Identity-based knowledges are generally founded on the construction of epistemic authority for marginalised subjects. White abolitionism, however, is oriented toward undoing the epistemological and geopolitical privilege that accrues to white subjects. It is an anti-identity politics - unmasking, critiquing and even dismantling the object it names. How can white privilege be deconstructed and challenged without inadvertently augmenting the supporting logics of white supremacy? Also, how can whiteness be volitionally rejected if the advantage conferred operates regardless of the subject's consent?

White abolitionists call for dismantling believing that studying whiteness will only glorify it further - the preference for re-articulation over erasure is a 'failure of political nerve' (Ignatiev, 1999:7). Roediger echoes; 'It is not merely that whiteness is oppressive and false, it is *nothing but* oppressive and false' (emphasis in original) (1994: 31). There is a postracial recognition here that any preservation of white identity is problematic as it re-inscribes white supremacy. This is a limited or singular postracial sentiment. It is not that 'race' is an essentially racist category – the product of racism and as such inevitably carries racist assumptions and structures. It is whiteness that is essentially, irredeemably racist.

White abolitionism is *not* racial abolitionism. Can abolitionism be partial if 'race' works as a comparative and relational identity reliant on a contrasting 'Other'? There seems to be a serious political problem in maintaining that 'race' is arbitrary and then contending that white racial identification is reprehensible but black racial identification is virtuous. Limiting abolition to whiteness misses the transformative

ethical potential of postracialism. In a testament to the powerful grip of racialism even on antiracism, blackness is treated as a prior identity justified in terms of its existence and difference instead of any anterior political principle and ethical criterion. Postracialism invites us to situate identities historically and subject them to political and ethical scrutiny. All racial identities ought to be interrogated as a 'position' justifiable on political and ethical terms (St Louis, 2009).

Whiteness according to Marxist labour history was a hegemonic wedge used to divide-and-conquer the proletariat, obfuscate the common materialist interests of working class whites and forestall the universal revolution (Roediger, 1994).

Whiteness is a form of false consciousness that impedes working class alliances.

This is an anti-identity identity politics vehemently against whiteness that longs to reinstall a 'postracial' working-class subjectivity to insure political unification and the success of class warfare. The assumption here is that cross-racial federations afford greater political representation and align more with the interest of the majority of 'whites'. Equally assumed is that without the wedge of whiteness, working class solidarity will be easily achieved if not already-existing as some state of nature.

This is a welcomed attempt to rethink a complex history of entanglement and racialisation. Although offering a historically compelling account of white supremacy, might this reduce white privilege into a bourgeois scam incapable of explaining a complicated reality? Could white racism have a greater complexity that cannot be singularly resolved through a class analysis? It would appear, for instance, inattentive to internal boundaries more precisely how whiteness is fractured by class, gender, sex, ethnicity, age and able-bodiedness.

The abolitionist call to relinquish power and unlearn privilege can potentially take the form of a white re-sentiment which has the effect of appropriating the moral and political authority of the disempowered - the very critical strength of the other.²⁸ Abolitionism calls for the dis-identification with the 'possessive investment in whiteness' and implicitly an identification with those political positions designated 'nonwhite' (Lipsitz, 1998). The mobility of the white subject stands in opposition to the implicit immobility of the essentialised 'nonwhite' subject. Despite humanist pretensions, it is the white subject who transcends the segregationist boundaries of knowledge and political affiliation while racialised 'Others' remain politically identified with the social margins. This reinforces racism by positioning whites as historical agents and political actors (Fields, 2001). Agency remains the preserve of the antiracist white subject who shapeshifts into blackness.

Political construction particularises whiteness crafting an antiracist class politics for economically disenfranchised whites. Whiteness as a political and if not racial identity can be undone, abolished even by unravelling the material and cultural forces that have produced it. An unconscious trace of liberal whiteness is infused in this reclamation. Whiteness is unwound and the contemporary white subject obtains a powerful narrative of discursively black ethnic origins (Wiegman, 1995:3). This reclaimed humanist subject can deflect white racial membership by way of a socialist political affiliation. The hesitancy to full racial abolition highlights while 'race' may have a negligible theoretical efficacy as a sociological concept it has a significant political and ethical purchase as a practical social formation.

²⁸ See the introduction to Lipsitz, 1998

The preservation of a 'prewhite' ethnicity (read blackness) illustrates a recurring tension in postracial projects - the dismantling of whiteness simultaneously reproduces an essentialised, pre-social notion of blackness. Blackness becomes the authentic and radically democratic social identity capable of enabling the formation of a socialist state. In *Race Traitor* blackness is a unitary political category (implicitly progressive), a reified social definition and a culturally valuable grouping seemingly impervious to ethico-political scrutiny. The African-American is the quintessential American:

The adoption of a white identity is the most serious barrier to becoming fully American...The United States is an Afro-American country...Above all the experience of people from Africa in the New World represents the distillation of the American experience (Garvey & Ignatiev, 1996: 18-19).

Postracialisms ask a more radical question; How might we conceptualise the deconstruction of whiteness - in the sense of people self-identifying as white - within the broader context of breaking down racial identifications in general? If race is virtually inseparable from the idea of a hierarchy among the 'races' can we challenge racialism by only challenging the desirability of one racial identification?

Why does the production of a minoritised whiteness become the seemingly necessary precondition for an antiracist project? How can we imagine a postracial future beyond whiteness? Postracialist positions contend that achieving such must involve 'an attack on the very notion of "race" and the obstinate resilience of racial identities' (Ware and Back, 2001:4) or an idealistic project of 'planetary humanism' designed to undue 'race' through the concept of a cosmopolitan 'strategic universalism' (Gilroy, 2004).

4.4 Conclusion

This chapter has argued that the three forms of non/postracial narcissism – Quaker, Baha’I and secular nonracialism, mixed-racialism and white abolitionism – offer a space for reflection on the challenge of escaping the ‘allure of race’ and the problems of how we constitute identity and live with difference. Postracialism offers a radical anti-foundationalist approach that responds to the inherent problems in constructionism namely the reliance on ontological security. Postracial interventions also raise interesting and dilemmatic tensions concerning modes of identification based on sameness. Explorations of narcissistic non/postracialism enabled an examination of the challenges in postracial projects particularly recovering histories of suffering and constituting an antiracist politics without ‘race’. The next chapter will continue to explore the insights and tensions of the postracial ambition through a critical survey and evaluation of the ethical critiques of ‘race’ since the inter-war period.

Chapter 5 The Ethical Critiques and Ethical Paradoxes of Postracialism

In this chapter I explore postracialist attempts to escape the centripetal forces of ‘race’ through ethical critiques. Methodologically this entails the use of Foucault’s *a priori*, which exhorts against the perils of presentism. We must be mindful in historical work that contemporary sensibilities about ‘race’ simply did not exist in past settings. The history I assemble demonstrates the reductionism of ‘homogenous, empty time’ and locates these thinkers in the contradictory lineage of postracialism (Anderson, 1983: 24). The analysis builds upon the Foucauldian ‘history of the present’ by problematising the present ‘truths’ of postracialism and through a wealth of unpublished material enables a re-examination of current debates. I assemble to such end multiple and incomplete paths of development from the archives. Archival data is analysed in relation to contemporary writing to explore the complexities and ambiguities of (proto)postracial projects.

The chapter is structured by nine sections exploring postracialist critiques and engaging conservationist dilemmas. Section 5.1 details the ethical critique according to the constituent components I have identified. Subsequent sections unpack these themes in specific conjunctures. Section 5.2 examines how the ethical error of ‘race’ was contested by (proto)postracialism through ‘genuine sympathy’ - a radical extension of compassion that made racial divisions irrelevant. Section 5.3 investigates the contradictory ethical implications of enacting postracialism particularly the risk of re-inscribing colourblindness and disregarding histories of

suffering and political struggle. Section 5.4 looks at how (proto)postracialist arguments disputed the given-ness of ‘race’ through constructionist arguments predicated on ethical sensibilities committed to antiracism. Section 5.5 re-examines Harrison through Marxist humanism and neo-Marxism to show the significance of ethics to Marxist critiques of ‘race’. Section 5.6 probes the question; can ‘race’ be a compelling ethical ideal and ultimately argues that it can *if* it is framed by postracial inspired ethical questions. Section 5.7 explores the ontological dilemma of ‘race’ – on one hand the psychic resources it provides and on the other the potential danger of remaining within the coordinates established by racism. Section 5.8 looks at the ethical challenges faced in grappling with ‘race’ in the affective register; can ‘race’ be kept without the axis of hierarchy upon which it has rested for centuries? Section 5.9 investigates how the embrace of a vocabulary of contingency opened up ‘race’ to evaluation as a moral and political category (not) worth having. Revisiting Harrison through Durkheim I suggest that ‘common zeal’ signals important lessons and asks crucial questions for postracialisms.

5.1 The Ethical Critique Sketched

Recall from chapter three how Herder, Buffon and Darwin varyingly integrated ethical critiques into their arguments. This chapter focuses on the inter-war conjuncture and beyond when a robust ethical argument took shape in response to Nazism and European imperialism. The critique, I argue, is comprised of the denial of dignity and the (re)production of destructive sentiments, the naturalisation of hierarchies, the imposition of racial scripts on individual identities and the ethical problems involved in using ‘race’ in political mobilisations.

Postracialism(s) object to how the construction of racial types of being inevitably carries moral consequences. Racism and the categories it generates violate basic moral norms of equality and the recognition of dignity (Haddon & Huxley, 1935). Du Bois remark that, 'The black man is the person who must ride Jim Crow in Georgia' (Du Bois, 1940:153) is an unambiguous account of the ethical stakes of racism. Racial assignment locates people in a hierarchy of worth and capacity and unevenly distributes social and material goods along those axes.

Inter-war critics rejected folk definitions chiefly how 'race' assumed a fixed and value-laden relationship between the physical and moral nature of human groups. Detractors were concerned with the violations flowing from folk understandings and the (re)production of attitudes that regarded others as inferior beings as well as social systems that denied dignity. Montagu (1997) inveighed against harmful racial stereotypes such as the savage nature of autochthonous Australians. Understood by postracialists (Gilroy, 2000) as the end result of racism, 'race', violates the central ethical idea of modernity: people should be treated the same unless there is a morally relevant difference between them.

The consequences of these practices were manifold and difficult to understate. Destructive sentiments - bigotry, hatred and malevolence - were justified in the name of 'race'. Colonialist racism extolled whiteness (implicitly male and propertied) while systematically denigrating racialised 'Others' (Stoler, 1995). Attitudes of contempt and scorn directed at those on the bottom of the racial hierarchy were morally permissible, if not normative. Racism equated non-white phenotypes with a

deeper deficiency (Frederickson, 1971). Racial supremacy rendered subjugation in the interest of expanding power and profits morally inconsequential because it deprived certain groups of full human status. Racist commonsense assumed an almost immutable status capable of explaining racially specific traits and offering a morally 'neutral' platform for rationalising unequal treatment.

Objections also examined how reference to 'race' seemed only to reinforce its pernicious meanings - overflowing with ideas of inherent behavioural and temperamental differences. These connotations may have recently weakened but remain historically enduring (Barzun, 1937). 'Race' seemed to forever involve phenotypical allusion. Age-old stereotypes of the Japanese as treacherous legitimated a state of exception mass internment during WWII (Irons, 1993).

Racial ideology naturalises social hierarchies making existing relations appear as if encoded in the nature of things. Sociological explanations become redundant in the tautology of racism. Disproportionate arrest and conviction rates of Latinos, the end product of racial profiling and over policing (Romero, 2006), become evidence *and* explanation of a racial predisposition. Racism creates a fundamentally unethical system disguising its (un)ethical assumptions by naturalising them in a hierarchy.

For some 'race', so conflated and inescapably evaluative, should be dropped altogether (Montagu, 1997). 'Race' cannot be re-signified without traces of degradation and subjugation (Appiah, 1996). The intertwined history of racism and 'race' is testament to how 'race' - at the core of doctrines of racial supremacy and manifest today in structural inequalities - is an essential means to an unethical end.

Fanon (1967) and Césaire (1955) have shown ‘race’ distorts the consciousness of the oppressor simultaneously brutalising victim and assailant. Postracialism attempts the restoration of a more humane consciousness to racist oppressors combating the deprivation of individuality and the alienation from species-life (Gilroy, 2004).

Ethical critiques consider two questions: (1) How has race operated historically? I have answered this question above and in chapter three. And (2) How might ‘race’ work in the future? This second question welcomes creative reflection. The interrogation of what ‘race’ does and what we would like it to do *or not do* informs current critiques to which I will now turn. Present critiques maintain racial identities impede individuality (Appiah, 1996). ‘Race’ encourages the individual to envision life plans in narrow ways and to think of herself, her prospects, relationships and personal styles in accordance with ready-made racial scripts. These scripts prohibit the ethical demand for self-realisation forestalling the basic task of existence (Hill, 2009). How can one create meaning for herself if her efforts are blocked by accumulated disadvantage or by pervasive doubts about her abilities? Postracialism rejects ‘race’ and the order it implements to produce and regulate individual subjects through preformed frames of interpretation (Gilroy, 2004:13). Some postracialists (Hill, 2001) aim to re-open the self and to transform being (racial) into a project of becoming (postracial self-invention).

Postracialisms attempt to imagine ontology without the prescriptions of who to associate with, how to speak, what job to pursue etc. Pre-programmed racial identities are incompatible with a self who chooses the best ethical system in pursuit of the good (Hill, 2000:103). Broadly speaking, postracial ontologies set out to

replace the (false) guarantees and short-circuits of 'race' with commitments and values forged in dialogue and above all ethical analysis. It is a project intending to make identity less about living in accordance with prescribed norms and more about self-constitutive critique.

Normative racial attitudes and values – not immune from scrutiny - are subjected to critical distancing. Cultures with oppressive value systems that denigrate the lives of Others would earn the ethical indictment of those outside and inside the community (Hill, 2000:58). Belief systems must supply ethical reasons for the continuance of such. Postracial critiques attempt to dismantle the circular reasoning of identity refusing to refer to 'race' as a coherent category despite people 'locating' themselves racially. Postracialisms challenge us to develop social positions within ethical parameters not limited to the illusory conditions of 'race'. This newfound freedom to reject unwanted values necessarily entails a responsibility for injudicious ethico-political commitments.

Examining how 'race' operates in political movements St Louis (2002) has argued that the unity held through the arbitrary category is inevitably unsustainable.

Techniques for managing this fragility can involve naturalistic claims intended to cohere social groups as racial collectivities. The 'natural' unanimity in racial categories is in actuality the result of strategic choices and evasions that privilege particular elements of the collective interest over others (St Louis, 2005b: 361).

Historians remind us, for example, that the appearance of an undifferentiated front in the Civil Rights Movement was underpinned by a classical sexism (Barnett, 1993).

Pseudo-solidarities demand an unthinking affiliation, bypass dialogue and take-for-granted the complicated endeavour of coalition building.

Unearned solidarity can also validate the unsustainable belief in forms of collective belonging that utilise coercive techniques to internally police 'authentic' decorum. Group difference can become inflated with commonsense ideas about group specificity and difference reinforced. Those commonsense ideas are themselves disciplinary and regulatory forms. Epithets of inauthentic racial subjectivity illustrate this point. Terms like 'Bounty' in the UK or 'Oreo' in the USA assert a normative ideal of group appropriate behaviour that encourages conformity and appears to possess an authoritative justification for reprimanding deviations. Accusations of inauthenticity entail psycho-social consequences such as self-doubt, and feelings of inferiority.

5.2 Genuine Sympathy & the Ethical Error of 'Race'

Racist thinking made 'race' *the* relevant factor when determining moral value and obligation. Harrison probed how racialism ranked humanity in a scale of moral worth. 'Isn't it high time to ask of what value is that kind of sympathy which is ready to be alienated as soon as Negroes cease to be 'niggers' and insist on being men?'²⁹ Racialism differentially ascribes worth using racial ascriptions in the rationalisation of oppression. 'Genuine sympathy' becomes an impossibility when racism sanctions an unethical disregard for people who belong (or are thought to

²⁹ HHP Section II MS1411 Box 4 Folder 9 'Arms and the Man'

belong) to a particular (inferior) 'race'³⁰. Disregard is the withholding of respect, concern, or care from members of a particular 'race' (Taylor, 2004).

Harrison's sobering consideration of our moral system presses us to imagine difference without the ranking of morphological otherness and to critically reconsider the ethical consequences of racialised sociality. He signals a move from the strategic emphasis on plausibility to the open question of preferability. Do we want 'race'? And considering the spurious beginnings of 'race' which Harrison was familiar with³¹, this point seems warranted *and* possible. Might genuine sympathy enable new modes of belonging beyond exclusive membership?

Genuine sympathy, a potentially potent political and moral language for resistance to racism, attempts to re-orient the human beyond imperialism's exclusionary codes. This is not a non/postracialist attempt to move quickly beyond the destructive delusions of racism. Insistence on ending dehumanising alienation suggests it is conceived as a response to the damage produced by racial thinking. Genuine sympathy reminds us of the importance of interrogating the conceptual status of 'race'³². Debating 'race' is worthwhile because as Harrison shows racism significantly depends on the persistence of the racialised mindset.

Genuine sympathy might prove limited in the potential neglect of racism. Racism cannot be reduced to a critique of the conceptual status of 'race'. Inauthentic

³⁰ *ibid*

³¹ HHP Series I Correspondence Box 2 Folder 3 Lecture Notes (12 November 1927)

³² HHP Lecture Notes Box 13 folder 3 'Seeking a way out' (31 May 1924)

sympathy alone does not subjugate 'Negroes'. Genuine sympathy may lack a focus on how systemic actions like labour discrimination corrupt a non/postracial humanism. In short, racism is more than just thinking about 'races'. It is also a materially coordinated set of institutions. Inadequate theorisation risks conflating the disappearance of racism with a transformation in how we conceptualise each other – as postracial. If we act on the world in a racial way with racial consequences, 'race' will remain relevant (Leonardo, 2009). Social practices and institutional arrangements (re)producing racial stratification remain crucial to the pursuit of postracialism.

Returning to the question of plausibility, genuine sympathy may seem an impossibility particularly where racism seems ubiquitous. Unconcerned with practical tactics, genuine sympathy is in this sense an opening up not a closing down of 'race'. The implicit nonracialism enables an enhanced self-awareness and criticality towards the precepts of racialism. Its radical force lies in how it allows new questions as products of intellectual and material development to surface. Harrison does not suggest that the postracial has arrived or that 'race' has somehow become irrelevant. Alive to the injuriousness of race, he seems to intimate at contemplating the question; what should the future of 'race' be?

Writing after the *Plessy* verdict supplied imprimatur to apartheid Harrison's was a historical conjuncture where racism circumscribed the domain in which political speech operated (Thomas, 1997). Racism was an integral force shaping the limits of the sayable. A network of interlocking legislation (Chinese Exclusion Act, Gentleman's Agreement, alien land laws) instituted racial hierarchy at the social,

political and economic level with deleterious moral consequences - degradation, persecution and suffering - for those not accorded full moral respect. In an era when speaking out could carry social, political and professional consequences Harrison asked how can we have an authentic sympathy with a category imbedded in moral error? Criticism could be identified with racial treachery or enemy status as in France during the Dreyfus affair (Cahm, 1996).

Not long after Harrison's reflections on genuine sympathy an international cohort of left-leaning scientists responded to Hitlerism by critiquing objectionable racial theories of difference. Leftist politics conflicted with racial theory - used to rationalise practices antithetical to socialism – and opposed racial thinking from ethico-political convictions namely hostility to class hierarchy and the British Empire (Schaffer, 2005).

With population genetics and the new evolutionary synthesis capable of lending credibility to a racist *or* an egalitarian view, political beliefs and their in-built ethical commitments often settled the direction and tone of analysis during this period (Barkan, 1996). 'The Germans have a right to rule others because they are a superior 'race', and the Jews must be expelled because they are inferior. The same sorts of theories are used by the British in India and by many of the whites in South Africa and the Southern States of the USA (Haldane, 1939:178).' Haldane's Marxism directed attention to class stratification, eschewed hierarchy and indicted racism.

Around this time, Harrison reflected on the dissonance between democratic promise and democratic practice:

Isn't it obvious that the Klan is a god-send to our perspiring country; Isn't America's great need at present a little sober realism that will dispose of all this silly talk about democracy and equality and such loose-ends of fallacies that flap in the face of the god-given right of the Anglo-Saxon Nordic to rule in this land which he has made.³³

Extremist violence exposed the contradictions of racialised democracy. Seeking resolution to a problem described as soluble only through, 'forces more complex than those of mere logic and argument',³⁴ Harrison advocated a solidarity premised on love and the expansion of consciousness; 'Every lynching-tree and Jim crow car is teaching us that we must stand by each other one for all and all for one in matters of money, mind, politics and religion'³⁵. Cognisant of empty antiracisms, Harrison did not attempt a quick fix. He called for a democracy without racialised inequalities intimating towards identification at the level of the human. This theme has been reawakened in contemporary discussions (Gilroy, 2004: xi).

The moral universe of colonialism continues, in new *and* old ways, in the War on Terror. In the War on Terror racism operationalises ideas of 'race' and nation to determine which bodies warrant moral consideration (Butler, 2003). Racism frames who is human and determines who is deserving of civil or political liberties. Obituaries memorialising 'Western' military deaths, for example, are sanctified in long narratives structured by nationalist and familial frames. Little, if any regard, is given to civilian deaths from drone attacks. Are these not the tragic consequences of

³³ HHP Series I Correspondence Box 2 Folder 22 *Letter to editor of the NY Times* 18th Jan 1923

³⁴ HHP Lecture Notes Box 13 Folder 3 *Seeking a Way Out* 31st May 1924)

³⁵ *ibid*

violence warranting ‘genuine sympathy’? A technical morality sanitises these deaths as the collateral damage of impressive military strikes (Butler, 2003:12).

US Army Staff Sergeant Calvin Gibbs, convicted of leading ‘kill squads’ against unarmed Afghan civilians, exemplifies the persistent dangers of ‘race’. Commanding the Fifth Stryker Brigade, Gibbs recruited soldiers to murder civilians he called ‘savages’.³⁶ Gibbs confessed to killing civilians for sport, to mutilating his victims by taking fingers as war trophies and to constructing fake combat situations by detonating grenades and/or planting ‘drop weapons’ to make the victims appear armed.³⁷ ‘In my mind, I was there to take the antlers off the deer. You have to come to terms with what you're doing. Shooting people is not an easy thing to do.’³⁸ Hunting metaphors suggests that some lives can be deemed less than human.

Pervasive cultures of racism and impunity in the military reinforce a disregard for civilians caught in battle zones. The differential allocation of which deaths warrant recognition maintains exclusionary conceptions of who is normatively human (Butler, 2003). Might, as Harrison implied, a discussion of racism give the faceless faces (in the Levansian sense), and disrupt the dehumanisation authorising carnage? Postracialism may need to have the dismantling of racism (not only ‘race’) at its core. This presents a challenge as the condemnation of racist violence will need to involve (begin?) with the experience of the violence suffered. Harrison’s humanist logics are developed in postracialism’s suggestion that critical and historical

³⁶ <http://articles.latimes.com/2011/nov/11/nation/la-na-gibbs-verdict-20111111> (accessed 10 January 2012)

³⁷ <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-us-canada-15529751> accessed November 2, 2011 (accessed 11 January 2012)

³⁸ <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/nov/10/trial-jury-calvin-gibbs-verdict> (accessed 18 January 2012)

resources are needed to imagine and practice another future. This future beyond the cycle of disregard is a theme discussed in chapter eight.

5.3 Ethics and the Problem of Engagement

The autumn of 2001, for some (Zizek, 2002), was an opportunity for that imagining, for rethinking global community. The conjuncture seemed over-determined by nationalist discourses, extended surveillance mechanisms, the suspension of constitutional rights and the development of explicit and implicit forms of censorship (Cox, Levine & Newman, 2009). The racialised configuration of power (the normalisation of the ‘state of exception’, detention and the curtailment of legal protection) for some activist-intellectuals raised the question: Where is the public intellectual and what is she to do?

Sociology and science can be redeployed as tools for exploring everyday moral problems. Proponents of this position hold the purpose of social science to be knowledge that *ought* to be used in and for interventions. Ethics is about action, inquiry and reflection; guided by the realisation in action(s) of the real and true goods attainable by humans and thus one’s participation in those goods. Ethics is about acting and living in a certain sort of way to realise the objective envisaged.

The debate on the purpose of social-scientific work intersects with the debate on ‘race’. In a parallel disagreement to Kant and Herder’s dispute on ‘race’, Herder argued that philosophy should be general and practical, devoted to serving the people politically and morally (Zammito, 2002:173). Kant, however, sought to attain public

stature as an expert in Anthropology (Zammito, 2002: 293). Buffon, Darwin, Haldane, Montagu, and Barzun were also devoted public intellectuals who addressed a general and educated audience and stressed the relevance of philosophy and science for human affairs. Each agreed that philosophical and scientific reasoning could clarify social issues and that it ought to be used to formulate and effect solutions to public problems. But in postracialism this translation becomes a dilemmatic project.

Dismantling 'race' is tantamount to interrogating the very existence of racial groups and so risks the identities central to ontologies and political solidarities. Moreover, the concept of 'race' and the utility of 'race' analysis have been the mainstay of social theory and critique for decades. Discussions of inequality can hardly be articulated without confronting 'the problem of race'. Postracialism interrogates how 'race' functions as a sort of academic commonsense strengthening antiracist intervention through an understanding of how the language of 'race' is problematic. Postracial critiques demonstrate how 'race' is rarely interrogated in the questioning of racism. The reality of 'race' is readily denied and in the next moment taken for granted.

The ethics of engagement presents two questions. (1) Postracialism for whom? In other words, are we talking to academics or are we also addressing a public audience. Posing this question is effectively answering it, since no one would argue for a secluded debate. And (2) postracialism for what? This question addresses the very mission of sociology. Should sociology be concerned with the ends of society

or only with the means to reach those ends (Burawoy, 2004)? Should intellectuals be an integral part of political life?

Translating an ethical critique of racialism into an ethics of action is full of difficulties and complexities. In the process postracialism begins to look like highbrow intellectualism, out of touch with the realities of racism. Even the director of a London antiracist organisation remarked in my interview:

I think *** has had a very clear focus as an organization. We wanted to get more people from African-Caribbean, South Asian and Asian origin into jobs. So we haven't taken a very theoretical analysis of that [race and racism]. We've just dealt with the realities - many people in these communities are not in work. So much of what we're about is: how do we work with communities, work with politicians and companies to address that problem. In that sense we don't embark on unpacking: What is race? And what is racism?

Even distinguishes antiracists working directly with social problems from researchers deconstructing abstract ideas. There is evidence to his suggestion that professionalization has contributed to the withdrawal of the intellectual from public life and her gradual disconnection from social movements (Evans, 2004). 'The official does not engage in politics but rather in impartial "administration"' (Weber 1919: 95). The increasing complexity of economic and political life foreshadowed a new stratification.

Bureaucratisation - grounded in the claim that its rationalism represented superior knowledge - brought a caste of academics into elite positions secured through specialised skills leading to an inflated sense of status and protectionism (Weber, 1919). Might postracialism represent an 'ethics on high' disconnected from Evan's merited reservations? His cautioning is a reminder that racism is the socio-political

force demanding an ethical response. While dismantling 'race' is important to contesting racism, it certainly will not end material inequalities (Oliver & Shapiro, 2006).

Postracial prescriptives can also have contradictory implications. Consider professionalization which established Ethnic and Racial Studies departments earnestly connected to progressive projects and political subjectivities. Can postracialism, in good conscience, advocate their dissolution knowing far-reaching impacts on employment and the academic 'market' of conferences and publishing will follow? The hard-fought 'victory' of socially reflective curricula could face an early demise. Postracialism begins to look not dissimilar to conservative multiculturalisms which construct a common culture through delegitimizing 'foreign' languages, persistently attacking non-standard English and undermining bilingual education (McLaren, 1995). An ethico-political program may be needed to insure that postracialisms will not descend into a colour-blind assimilationism where racial 'Others' are required to adopt a consensual view and learn to accept the essentially Euro-American patriarchal norms of the 'host' country.

Postracialism confronts similar contradictions with multicultural education, a significant achievement despite the at times naïve overemphasis on curricular change and under-emphasis of the impact of structural racism and wider power relations on students' lives. This under-emphasis has resulted in the failure to ameliorate let alone contest patterns of discrimination and disadvantage (Gillborn, 1995; Troyna, 1987). Critical multiculturalism challenges education's neo-imperial romance with a singular ethnicity grounded in a 'common' experience of 'America' as social

relations of uninterrupted accord (McLaren, 1995: 126). Through an exclusivist nationalism white identity politics has oppressed racialised minorities (see Lipsitz, 1998) by centring whiteness as unmarked but crucially generating norms and reference points.

With the concept of 'race' critical multiculturalism has demystified the workings of power and privilege and has contested forms of domination that disallow the affirmation of differences. 'Race' *has been* relevant to material and social history. It is because of such that the postracial project of making 'race' irrelevant must reckon with the destructive consequences that are mapped out in multiculturalism. American multicultural programs question historical givens, notions of a commonly held culture and the supposedly unified and consensual history underpinning it (May, 1999). White Anglophone backlash expressed in the ban on teaching ethnic studies in Arizona high schools represents a new cipher for culturalist racism underscoring the contribution of multiculturalism; how particular communal interests and values were represented *as if* held by all. The desperation to protect the privileged status of whiteness shows how multiculturalism contests the exclusionary whiteness of American nationhood and nationality. Multiculturalism rejects cosmopolitan alternatives (discussed in chapter eight) that deny people have deep bonds to historical and linguistic communities. It asks postracialism not to pre-emptively reject 'race' but to reconsider whether 'race' is 'good' or 'evil' on the ability and right of members to engage in self-critical distancing from their own cultural discourses, and hence also to recognise the potential validity of other discourses (May, 1999).

In the wake of postmodernism it has become almost *de rigueur* to dismiss any group-based identity as essentialist. While critiques of how racial collectivities can exclude and silence as much as they include and empower are significant, it may be a problematic jump to suggest that advocating for *any* recognition of group-based identity is indefensible. Compelling arguments for conservation come from critical multiculturalism. For example, a progressive education must risk the possibility of transcending the concept only by going through it and not over it. Failing to keep 'race' in some qualified form - constantly interrogated and under erasure - could lead to the colourblind disaster of *The No Child Left Behind Act* (Leonardo, 2009). In this legislation racial disparities were reduced to nonracial explanations – understood as the unfortunate outcomes of group competition, uneven social development, or stubborn cultural explanations of racial inferiority.

5.4 Ethics and Concept Formation

Ethical critiques also challenge scientism, a crucial analytical move and a powerful rhetorical strategy establishing the validity of its claims not as culturally contingent ideas but in terms of timelessly observable properties outside morality. Critiques pry open scientific certitudes 'the reality of human difference' through appeals to the damaging consequences of racialism.

Signification, the process which constructs and infuses 'race' with ethical significance, enabled alternative explanations. 'Racial antipathy' originated from chance reactions and was not an instinctive response to 'difference' (Royce, 1908) or the natural expression of innate dislike. Locke described 'race prejudice' as, 'the

most virulent form of culture prejudice, largely a by-product of the imperialistic era and definitely correlated with the rise of colonial expansion'³⁹. Locke linked racism to cultural prejudice and 'race' prejudice with colonialism. Racial prejudice was ethically problematic, embedded in a cultural value-hierarchy. Racism is contested not with competing truth claims but with ethical values where 'race' is part of a particular historical process not an inevitability.

Historical analysis shows deep connections between violence, suppression and 'race'. Locke went beyond issues of scientific falsity in centring the denial of respect and dignity to examine what 'race' does and how 'race' is used. Historicisation interrogates naturalist rhetoric showing that racism is not a universal feature of social relations. Certain somatic features (real and imagined) were *signified* as natural marks of difference, a difference that became known as racial difference (Locke, 1989:163-174). Critics disputed 'race' as a category with verifiable properties and so challenged the primary epistemological assumption of scientism⁴⁰. Given-ness provided a false sense of immutable interracial similarity/difference. Royce and Locke dislodged naturalness and the inescapability of racialised visions. They also dismantled the exaggerated differences and moral distances embedded in 'race' which discourage a common humanity. Demonstrably *not* a 'fundamental division of human kind', the mental and characterological traits expressed in 'race' could be morally suspect.

³⁹ ALP Writings By Locke 164-142 Folder 21 'Race in South and Central America'

⁴⁰ Ashley Montagu Professional Papers Box 60 'Anthropology, Religion and Racism' (undated)

Royce's 'concept formation' held objects in the external world were not given, but constructed out of our sense impressions. This was not a neutral perceptual scheme but rather emerged in accordance with one's evolving conceptual and interpretative frameworks (Royce, 1908). 'Race' was constructed through political and economic matrices and at most indirectly referred to the world experienced through sense impressions. The human sensorium had to be educated to the appreciation of racial differences (Gilroy, 2000). Acceptance of the constructed nature of 'race' was attentive to the dangers of its illusory objectivity. Barzun and Montagu argued that 'race' science was not motivated by a dispassionate striving to understand physiological difference. Projects were mired in prejudicial value judgments and fundamental fascinations with racial difference.

Locke and Harrison's socio-political explanations contested the racist meanings attached to pseudo-scientific definitions removing racism from the inviolability of 'the natural'. Harrison understood ideological effects as flowing from actors who give meaning to and structure activity. The active agent was not ideology but the actor(s) practicing it, heightening ethical accountability. History was not reduced to a progressive unfolding toward a specifiable future where the present is a scripted progression (Hall, 1996). Harrison recognised the volition involved in (re)producing racism highlighting economic racism in white-only trade unionism⁴¹. His analysis of whiteness raised awareness of how privilege - commensensically understood as natural - was the product of centuries of social engineering and institutional practices.

⁴¹ Hubert Harrison Papers Box 13 Folder 1 'Socialism and the Negro' *International Socialist Review* 13 July 1912 pp. 65-68.

Harrison examined how use of ‘race’ obscured the active construction of the social world by those who articulate racism:

And the fact that black, brown, and yellow also exploit each other brutally whenever capitalism has created the economic classes of plutocrat and proletarian should suffice to put purely economic subjection out of court as the prime cause of racial unrest... The people of those lands begin to feel and realise that they are so subjected because they are members of races condemned as ‘inferior’ by their Caucasian overlords. The fact presented to their minds is one of race, and in terms of race do they react to it.⁴²

Harrison refused simplistic Marxist explanations of racism as a ‘divide-and-conquer’ strategy to buttress bourgeois power by obscuring real interests through racial divisions. He negotiated ‘race’ by examining its significance to material inequality and oppression. Racism was not inherent in the white psyche. Racism was an ideology stressing fundamental difference and entrenching inequality in firm hierarchies and so *any* group could (re)produce racism.

Harrison intimated the intractable problem of essentialist racial subjectivities in his recognition of the moral odiousness of whatever racial prejudice one harbours. The power to harm others through racially prejudicial action is not limited to any racial group. His humanist orientation emboldened both oppressor and oppressed with an ethical maturity widening the ethical sensibility such that white supremacy became only one in a, ‘variety of depressing options in the unwholesome cornucopia of absolutist thinking about ‘race’ and ethnicity’ (Gilroy, 2004:36).

⁴² Hubert Harrison Professional Papers Series I Correspondence Box 2
Folder 60 Letter to Dr. Frank Laszlo (Sept 16, 1927)

This postracial sensibility encourages us to rework our conception of the political to reject non-negotiated political positions premised on 'race' and linked to mythic racial biology (Hall, 1996). Unitary racial identities and the political positions supposedly deeply ingrained within them are unsustainable fictions. Beyond the essentialised black subject is an imagined political actor, prepared to strategically employ 'race' for the expansion of equality. Harrison believed some form of racial solidarity could be a part of the project to work collectively to identify, correct and ultimately eliminate race-based injustices.

5.5 The Problem of (Post) 'Race' in Marxism

Marxist analyses suggest racism is the active determinant of disadvantage. It is not physical racial difference but the attribution of significance to certain patterns (imagined or otherwise) of difference to structure social relationships. 'Race'-centric approaches disguise the production of difference presenting it as somehow inherent in the reality of observable difference (Miles, 1989). Emphasis on social production moves the debate beyond the social/natural antagonism potentially reframing the debate through the ethical consequences of racism.

The ethical shielding supplied by scientism can be undone. Debating how racism assigned groups in ranked structural positions cannot be an ethically vacuous discussion. Weber – perhaps in response to the stubborn Marxist insistence on objectivity - argued that cultural (evaluative) interests give 'purely' scientific work its direction. The knowledge-motivated interest from which Marxists derive a desire to explain the socio-historical reality of racism involves the ethical. While the task of

social science is to research the reality and operation of meaning and its significance, there is no possibility of objective treatment for this task but merely a research selection by means of value ideas (Käsler, 1988). In other words, the value-ideas which govern the researcher and his epoch determine the object of investigation and how far this investigation stretches into the infinity of causal relationships.

Humanists working in the Marxist tradition (Fromm, 1961) disavowed the vulgar dismissal of ethics in orthodox Marxism. Fromm (1961) argued that Socialism did not seek to realise an ideal human that was well-fed and well-clad but ultimately soulless. Marx, in Fromm's analysis, sought liberation from the chains of economic determination *and* spiritual emancipation. Racism is in a way not too dissimilar to alienated labour preventing the realisation of the individual and inhibiting existential pursuits.

Harrison's desire to restore the agency and meaning stripped in racism compliments Marxist humanism's pursuit of the full realisation of individualism. 'Spiritual existentialism in secular language' involved liberation from the pressures of economic needs to overcome alienation and restore man's capacity to relate to himself fully (Fromm, 1961: 262). Harrison aimed to end the rationale and allure of palatable racisms by foregrounding the context and practices of racism. Similarly, humanist Marxisms present an active social conceptualisation connected with ethically responsible ends that stress universal proletarian uplift instead of pre-social divisions. They ground objective and materialist social conditions over the non-reflexive natural world.

An ethics of distributive justice informed this conception in, for example, how social processes distribute material and social goods. Theorising racism was not neutral analytical labour:

Therefore the race problem is the greatest problem of the world. It must be solved primarily and then the white proletariat can be freed. The European worker's movement cannot have any success before the colored races receive their freedom...Therefore the aim of all races is common: down with white imperialism.⁴³

Proletarian exploitation paled in comparison to the material and existential immobility of the racially subordinated. Harrison's ethical Marxism cannot be reduced purely to a concern with man's material interests and comforts. He is interested in the real economic and social life of man *and* of the influence of man's actual way of life on this thinking and feeling. The aim of socialism appears indistinguishable from the goal of dismantling racism - the development of the individual personality. Harrison implicitly asks how can genuine emancipation be realised – the transformation of alienated, meaningless labor into productive, free labor – if some remain sub-human, in Marx's terms crippled monstrosities (Marx, 1976/1867)). Harrison refigured Marxism with attention to the damaging consequences of racism. The meaning and role of labour and the restoration of human significance and worth could only begin once the dehumanization of racism ended. Racism like alienation causes the human to not experience herself as the acting agent.

⁴³ HHP Series I Correspondence Box 2 Folder 60 'Letter to Dr. Frank Laszlo' (16 Sept. 1927)

Division and degradation make racism *the* ethical issue warranting an inversion of the Marxist dictum that the dissolution of the class structure would end racial stratification. Harrison did not hesitate to bring explicit ethical concerns into his discussion of Marxism:

And thus the selfish and ignorant white workers' destiny is determined by the hundreds of millions of those whom he calls niggers. The strong too often think that they have a mortgage upon the weak; but in the domain of morals it is the other way.⁴⁴

Economistic analysis made 'race' an ideological effect disguising real economic relationships. Harrison broadened Marxism beyond determinism, locating proletarian emancipation as a secondary effect of the destruction of racism. He understood racial particularism to be needlessly divisive and ethically at odds with widely cherished ideas of utopian socialism, the affirmation of a shared and unalienated identity in a colour-blind society. Although he supported the strategic use of identity politics, Harrison expressed concerns with the dangers of essentialism and groupthink particularly how they might distract from pressing socioeconomic inequalities. His analysis is potentially consistent with the goal of bringing about a world where 'race' is no longer useful or appealing even to those historically disadvantaged by it.

He advanced a program for ending racial injustice by tackling racism, erasing the colour-line and ending the self-doubt, feelings of inferiority, and self-alienation brought on by racialism. Socialism remained unrealisable until the abolition of racism's deprecation of intellectual ability, moral character, and the undermining of one's sense of self worth. 'Race' was understood as a morally invidious and

⁴⁴ Huber Harrison Paper Series II Box 6 Folder 61 'The white war and the colored race'

repressive social distinction that should be repudiated. This placed the emancipatory project as part of the subject-matter of ethical inquiry and reflection. It is a politics refuting the meta-ethical claims of universal emancipation showing how racism confounds proletarian emancipation.

Miles (1993) represents a contemporary expression of Marxist postracialism. Miles sees any deconstructive strategy retaining 'race' as at best, misguided and at worst, committing the fundamental mistake of reification. His wilful failure to engage ethics stems from adherence to the Marxist emphasis on analytical reasoning and forms of rational measurement expressed as an overriding concern with the analytical and objective status of 'race' as a basis of action. Miles like Darder & Torres (2004) remains over-reliant on scientific knowledge demonstrating the futility of racial categorisation. 'Race', they argue, is nothing more than a commonsense idea, sustained by the unquestionable reality of somatic and cultural difference. Retained analytically to refer to the social reproduction and consequences of this belief, it necessarily carries the meaning of its use in the everyday world (ibid).

An insightful critique, Miles inadequately addresses the ethical implications of 'race' reducing 'race' to the phenomenal. Writing with and against Miles, Gilroy heralds the meaninglessness of 'race' in new scientific fields. Attentive to political and ontological issues, Gilroy seems to share faith that biology can finally resolve the 'race' question'. As chapter three demonstrates biology has never been the basis for the effectiveness of racism. In racist discourses biological difference was always arbitrary and could work just as easily with imagined as with real differences. An overreliance on scientific formalism misses the opportunity to illuminate the

commonsense foundations, analytical limitations and ethical evasions of racial biology discussed in chapter seven. The constructive curiosity of excavating the ethical problems of 'race' asks: If 'race' is constructed than why do we have the concept? And what do we need it for? This couplet is explored in the next section which asks; does 'race' represent a compelling ethical ideal?

5.6 Postracialism and the Utility (Necessity?) of Conservation

Postracialism(s) invite us to consider that 'race' does not refer to or frame histories, relations and experiences all of which are produced in specific historical sites within specific discursive formations and practices. Might we be better advised to discuss those directly instead of opaquely through the lens of 'race' (St Louis, 2009)? This is the invitation to cosmopolitan histories re-imagined beyond racial specificity and cultural ownership.

But there is a seemingly insoluble tension. The concept of 'race' is necessary for social-scientific analysis, social critique and the enforcement of civil rights laws especially considering past instances of racism still shape current social conditions. Hall (1996) reminds us that the resources of racial identity are not spontaneously generated they emerge from somewhere and out of something often movements dedicated to the collective fight for social justice. Weak forms of Black Nationalism, for instance, use a conception of black solidarity as a means to greater freedom and social equality *and* as an idiom to identify shared interests and a general will. Collective subjectivities in postracialisms, however, cannot be justified *a priori* but

must be predicated on an ethico-political analysis of how they are situated within the modalities of sameness and difference.

This is broadly consistent with Harrison's 'race-consciousness' a strategy to defend 'race' without validating the myth of primordial origins. Harrison stressed that Black self-determination must be compatible with respect for intragroup differences. He also seemed to suggest that a shared Black identity cannot be the lone foundation for solidarity. Responding to the St. Louis riots he described the common experience of oppression made possible by racial ascription and lives diminished by institutionalized racism as providing the source for an enduring solidarity.⁴⁵

Racial categories as fixed entities deriving legitimacy from claims to a prior ontology are ethically indefensible (Hill, 2001) and unnecessarily divisive. 'Race' is not a sound basis for a social identity and can even sustain incoherent forms of solidarity. The postracial marks a moral shift restoring a genuine empathy. The critique of false essentialism is compelling but notably without actionable plans. Perhaps postracialism - whose strength derives from an unapologetically utopian vision - is unconcerned with such. Charges of 'real world' disconnect are addressed in the next chapter.

The question, 'How would we opt out of racial categorisation when it is such an entrenched position on the social landscape?' requires answering even if the answer is a rejection of the question. To assume that we can jettison 'race' is to fall prey to a

⁴⁵ Hubert Harrison Papers Box 13 Folder 1 'Socialism and the Negro' & 'Two Negro Radicalisms' Oct. 1919

kind of social voluntarism regarding social structures and identities (Blum, 2002). The higher ethical calling of certain postracial projects (Hill, 2001) is difficult in a world defined through racism. Are postracialist ethics a luxury not everyone can afford? How will postracialism put the modes of intelligibility that we adopt (in some instances to survive) as self-interpreting beings, under erasure? What would the intermediary stage look like? If 'race-consciousness' is a protective response, as Harrison argued, then it would appear that the focus on the damaging consequences of 'race' for the individual may be a personalisation of the structural problem of racism. Without attending to these questions, postracialism(s) risks confirming accusations of an inattentiveness to racism.

Today the bonding agent for many identity based movements is not the claim to primordial origins or ancient homelands. Claims to spontaneous solidarity and instinctive unity certainly persist, but unification in the sense of shared political interests and commitments also comes through the fact of racial subordination and the collective resolve to triumph over it (Shelby, 2005). Racial solidarity even with all of its ethical and political problems remains a potent strategy for bringing about substantive equality and collective defence against oppression.

For conservationists (Taylor, 2004) 'race' - not biologically 'real' - could be retained provided that it was governed by certain ethico-political principles. Social objectivity and political utility rule out elimination. A 'weak constructionism' appreciates how 'race' is both real and unreal (Mills, 1989) and can be consistent with the goal of a genuinely antiracist postracialism. Locke's recognition that the racial self is an artifice obscuring the vicissitudes of history illustrates this (Hall, 1990). Not fixed

essences outside time, for Locke, racial categories were historical, political and cultural categories. 'Race' was liberated from biological determinism refashioned to be patently social, based on common interests. The deeply ethical project used artwork to contest stereotypes and to demand full human status and recognition. Black political unity was used to bring about a more just society for all.

5.7 Postracialism & the Ontological Dilemma

Becoming in certain postracialisms (Hill, 2000; Eze, 2001) is the foundation for forging values and beliefs beyond the parameters of 'race'. Re-imagined as a process, the self can scrutinise and reject undesirable values. Might the inaccessibility of institutional power to the racially subordinated make the surrender of racial identity particularly the mutual identification that constitutes a social 'we-ness' and the special concern for and loyalty to those within the group represent too great a surrender in a hostile world? Toomer pursued a space free from racial 'rules' denying critical reflexivity accepting that such a bargain entailed the assumption of responsibility for injudicious commitments. He required compelling ethical justification from racial frames of interpretation. In this sense he was alive to how cross-cutting political issues (i.e. heterosexism) disproportionately and directly affected certain segments of a marginal group.

The psychic, professional and social costs of renouncing racial identity discussed in chapter four highlight an ethical dilemma. Postracialism may represent an attack on a deep component of self-understanding and as such may be met with hostility and suspicion. Dismantling racial identities could be taken as an assault on hard-fought

commonalities that provide support, pride and solidarity in a stigmatising world (Blum, 2002). Usage of 'race' in forging political solidarities has functioned to restore some of the self-respect and self-reliance emptied in racist oppression. Is it ethically responsible to prescribe the jettisoning of racial identities when they serve as important psychological and political resources?

The damaging effects of racism can also be compounded by poverty which can have severe consequences for one's sense of self-worth. The complexity of racialised disadvantage - a multifaceted set of ideology, structural factors and unintended social consequences, not just racism - raises the question; Might we need to think about postracialism with the lens of structural disadvantage examining how wealth, opportunities and political power resultant from past discrimination shape(d) the landscape?

How can contemporary postracialism sensitively address the issues raised in Toomer's experience, especially how normative attitudes are accorded reverence? Also, how can the liberal individualist impulse underpinning this critique insure that it will not authorise a new violence, for example, sovereign actors whose personal interests may be fundamentally sexist? This is part of the problem in deconstructing collective identities; how do we theorise the individual without reducing her to a knowing and autonomous subject? While collective identities should not be immune from scrutiny, might liberal individualism be just a form of substitutionism?

Postracialism not only attempts to eradicate collective injustices but also places ethical obligations on individuated action such as sexism which may proceed

unchecked by the normative criteria constituting social existence. Organising a politics around 'race' could slide into the blind-spots inherent in one-dimensional politics. bell hooks' analysis of the OJ Simpson murder trial called attention to these dangers namely the preclusion of a complex accounting and understanding. Without a reflexive politics the risk of missing and or implicitly endorsing such injustices as domestic violence and patriarchy is a distinct possibility. Postracialism could be committing an error it is attempting to correct, the totalising effect of 'race' as a political category.

St Louis (2002) builds on these insights arguing that right now a 'nominalist constructionist' perspective is theoretically viable, ethically responsible and analytically necessary. 'Race' is irreducible to *either* an impermeable symbolic order *or* a set of autonomous social relations (St Louis, 2002). Following Locke and Harrison, he reopens the future of 'racial groups' to various developmental possibilities derived from a social route modifiable through political intervention.

But in failing to dismantle 'race', his work comes close to repeating the error of maintaining a category whose malignant effects he wishes to eradicate. Although socially alterable, what are the ethical consequences of remaining within racial categories? Might such an approach struggle to escape the (false) ontology created by racism? Might St Louis' developed activist intellectualism abandon utopianism too readily in favour of a pragmatic idealisation? What will insure that this 'recreational' variety will not succumb to the centripetal forces of essentialism? Also might this pragmatic approach represent a surreptitious racialism which re-inscribes 'race' through a conservation couched in the language of ethics?

In such an instance the deconstructive project could be stalled and 'race' reinforced. Perhaps St Louis' approach in seeking to preserve a version of 'race' does not adequately demonstrate how 'race' will be dismantled instead of retrenched through an ethical conservation. In short, a greater explication of the descriptive and explanatory capacity of this conception and its ability to theorise the complexities of materially and symbolically significant racialised social structures and relations is needed.

Racial ontology calls attention to another paradox the simultaneous impossibility and necessity of (racial) identity (Hall, 1996). Impossibility indexes how essentialised identities are no longer ethically defensible. Necessity describes identities as historical and social 'positions' strategically adopted as political and psychic resources (ibid). Hall's map shows only a crude postracialism could maintain that racial categories are worthless and illusory. Working with and against 'race' is working with complexity, appreciating how 'race' both imprisons *and* liberates, wrestling with the paradox of how it is both real *and* unreal.

This is thorny terrain considering the emergence of the modern discourse is implicitly connected to 19th century pseudo-scientific rationales for the existence of discrete 'races'. Can working within ascribed racial being fight racism if it remains within the categories produced to sustain racism? Does a responsible usage of 'race' within discrete ethical parameters still reproduce the category necessary for the perpetuation of racism? More precisely, what will this limited, constructionist usage

look like? St Louis' intervention while needing more clarity represents sustained engagement with the onto-political complexities of postracialism.

5.8 Postracialism and the Affective Register

At the heart of the above discussion is the question: Is it possible to preserve racial distinctions but to explode the axis of hierarchy on which they have rested for centuries? For Locke end-values were not mediated by a process of logical evaluation. They were conditioned by basic feelings, attitudes prior to intellectual evaluation. To locate them solely in the conscious act of evaluation overlooks how the affective supplies an unconscious dimension. Emphasis on the affective dimension of knowledge involves an appreciation that all data, all experiences, occur within a context that necessarily includes an elaborate network of concepts, and associations that are cultural and normative in function - that is pervaded by emotion. 'Race' has an affective register that enables racial identity to be emotionally felt.

For Locke, knowledge was undergirded by 'normative fiction' from its most practical to its most theoretical employment in daily life. Normative fictions may guide our reasoning by exposing their affective foundation. Locke did not deconstruct such fictions, instead he thought it necessary to demonstrate their functional value, even necessity; 'It should be possible to maintain some norms as functional and native to the process of experience, without justifying arbitrary absolutes, and to uphold some categoricals without calling down fire to heaven' (Locke, 1935:329). Racial categories while not logically verifiable can be justified by the services they perform.

We might draw an analogy here between ‘race’ and myths which offer false narratives that help constitute and explain distinctive social relations. The explanatory account provided by a myth is often logically incoherent and readily disproven by science. Literal falsity is not the most important feature. Myths serve the purpose of dramatising ethical precepts and encouraging attachment to customary practices. Racial cultures can be invaluable collective goods that individuals can identify with, take pride in, actively reproduce and creatively develop. Racial identity can be an important source of self-esteem and group pride offering common narratives for the construction of healthy individual identities.

Conservationists (Taylor, 2004) maintain ‘race’ should be kept in this mythic capacity in a manner similar to how an atheistic medical anthropologist might discuss the divine interventions of gods that she herself does not believe in. But how will conservation prevent slippage into the symbolic register which renders them resistant to rational analysis and ethical scrutiny? Postracialism also involves an audacious and imaginative move towards realising a future where identity myths as both psychic anchors and political resources are not needed. Although recognising that collective racial identity can create undue constraint on individual freedom and can be self-defeating, it is not convincing how an emancipatory racial solidarity can be disentangled from racial identity. It is this seemingly inescapable taint to which the postracial ambition responds with the imaginative move to racial abolition.

Royce’s ‘enlightened provincialism’ - inhabiting one’s immediate social context, ‘geographically and socially, sufficiently unified to have a true consciousness of its

own unity, to feel a pride in its own ideals and customs, and to possess a sense of its distinctions from other parts of the country' - sheds light on the problem of critical conservation (1908:61). Royce described his milieu as, 'more ways and places in which men find themselves in the presence of alien races with whom they have to live in the same social order' (Royce, 1908:4). In the context of immigration, public discourse was prefigured by white anxiety. Royce drafted this piece while President Theodore Roosevelt delivered his 'On American Motherhood' speech warning of white 'race suicide' if white families continued to reproduce at slower rates than other 'races'. In a conjuncture of reactionary politics, Royce's conservatism arguing for the legitimacy of racial sensibilities, rationalities and perspectives seems a response to widespread sentiment about the possible decline of global white supremacy. His defence draws on concerns about the homogenizing of cultural difference in the name of universal reason; an argument similar in structure to racial conservationists who contest Eurocentric metanarratives in an effort to make space for and revalorize the cultural and intellectual production of non-Europeans.

Royce's preservation of whiteness reminds us of some of the asymmetry with respect to the desirability of abolishing racial categories such that:

The social-constructedness of 'race' in the racist state has very different meanings for groups differently placed with respect to these categories. The ontological freedom of categorical reconstruction may be generic, but what is politically possible differs for those differentially positioned, and not all the political possibilities for every group are desirable (Frye, 1992: 129-130).

A central tenet of ethical critiques concerns the imposition of 'race' on the individual's life project. Royce asserted that the most vicious of all immoral acts is to deprive another human being of the opportunity to dedicate himself willingly and thoroughly to a suprapersonal cause. The man who seeks self-realisation in accord

with a particular racial ideal, for Royce, has not probed deeply enough into life to find its true meaning (Fontaine, 1968). Racial identity can go imperial (Appiah, 1996) limiting individual complexity, implying a moral distinction among those of different 'races' while also imposing a false commonality within. Scripted racial identities restrict individuality and detail the inability of 'race' to do anything other than reinforce embittered distinctions between racial groups (Appiah, 1996). Royce attempted to think through racial division by emphasising loyalty to a suprapersonal cause. But loyalty can be problematic even in liberatory struggles because it often requires that one refrain from deconstructing the group identity on which the community is based.

5.9 Common Zeal and the Non/Postracial Ambition

Scholars have scrutinised 'race'-based mobilisations and exposed the authoritarianism in group loyalty suggesting that 'race' is a morally suspect category (St Louis, 2003). A politics configured in terms of racial loyalty can become little more than the instrumentalist practice of securing a preconceived community (Hall, 1996). What modes of identity are endorsed and what modes of difference are excluded in a politics of loyalty? Conservationism can be problematic precisely because of the potential that can grow out of racial realism and naturalism.

Not wrestling with how 'race' is articulated with cross-cutting categories how racialised women can be caught in a political tug-of-war between the demands of racial loyalty and the desire for sexual autonomy can be problematic. The legacy of *La Malinche* in Chicana@ feminist writing is widely considered to be the symbol of

the female traitor (Alcala, 2001). Mythology defines her betrayal in sexual terms securing a legacy of unending suspicion on Chican@ sexuality. A commitment to political radicalism can be supplanted; sex remains the bottom line on which she proves her racial loyalty (ibid). Racial loyalty reproduced through sexual loyalty requires Chicanas not contest the heterosexist, patriarchal order. Heteronormative and misogynistic, loyalty is defined as female heterosexual fidelity to men. Any feminist critique becomes a betrayal of the 'race'.

Harrison approached this complexity through the vocabulary of contingency describing how social conditions create different states of mind. Among those was the 'protective reaction', or 'race-consciousness'⁴⁶. Neither inherently 'good' nor 'evil', any assessment of its utility must be according to usage. Harrison, for example, endorsed the Universal Negro Improvement Association's work to unite blacks in response to disenfranchisement and economic marginalisation (Cronon, 1966). Significantly Harrison represented 'race-consciousness' as a new ethical problem space of questions forcing us to think through *what is* and *is not* possible within racialism.

Harrison grasped his conjuncture by inquiring whether a new answer could be arrived at and whether in fact a new question had been contingently posed. The stirring of Black pride in Harlem explored what blackness and 'race' were in direct response to degradation, to social exclusion and the stripping away of human

⁴⁶ HHP Box 13 Folder 1 'Race Consciousness' *Boston Chronicle* 15 March 1924

dignity. If 'race' was to be kept despite its implication in racism, how would it be kept? What is/not a defensible 'race-consciousness'?

Answers came in May and July of 1917 during the East St. Louis riots. Thirty-nine African-Americans were murdered in a violent labour struggle. Harrison endorsed a racialised political militancy to 'demand justice' and to 'make our voices heard'⁴⁷. Five years later the Tulsa riots saw armed white looters, arsonists and even private aerial bombers attack an African-American community. Twenty-five were killed, six thousand placed under heavy guard in detention camps, forty city blocks looted and levelled, twenty-three churches and one thousand homes and businesses ruined (Brophy, 2002). Harrison urged Black people to develop 'race-consciousness' as a defensive measure, the only viable response to racist violence and the anti-black prejudice of the American Federation of Labour which condoned the pogroms.

For Harrison 'race' had an objective reality arising from particular social and political histories. What 'race' does becomes the operative ethical question, and in this case the violence would be best contested through an identity politics. Collective racial identity offered a way to organise against the violence, to create smaller associations within a largely hostile civil society for the purposes of survival and the preservation of some dignity and self-worth in the face of racism with impunity.

An ethically responsible 'race' consciousness would raise awareness of racial oppression and facilitate a collective response. Benighted by violence and *de jure*

⁴⁷ HHP section II Box 4 Folder 8 'American Spirit Speaks'

apartheid, Harrison did not inquire whether a new answer (postracialism) could be arrived at. Instead he argued the constructedness of 'race' entailed a new question, contingently posed by the New Negro. How can 'race' be used responsibly to advance democratic aims? To answer, Harrison interpreted his conjuncture not only in social-historical terms but also in moral-political ones. He asked: Is 'race' a category that is worth having morally and politically? Harrison wanted to preserve the category but his concern that preservation could possibly reinscribe a surreptitious metaphysics is indicative.

Harrison's socialism - not the securing a preconceived community of the good and true - involved a complex ethics, (Scott, 2005). Racial consciousness was to be earned and always in struggle, never simply derived. Harrison's ethics issued provisional claims and did not pursue the epistemological aim of converging on a final racial truth. Harrison may not have entirely undermined racialism because he *did* open a space for a reflexive politics that approached 'race' as a contextual, social and fundamentally negotiated resource.

Harrison's struggle to critique *and* preserve 'race' offers another interesting case study. Racism for him was strongly tied to the extraction of surplus value and so he placed analytical emphasis on exclusionary practices while also balancing concerns with reification. Hoping to avoid making 'race' into an active subject engendering consequences 'by itself', he recognised that economic, political and ideological relations must be understood in a specific, namely ethical sense. Racist housing practices such as restricted covenants - legal instruments that kept neighbourhoods

from renting and selling to non-whites - denied social dignity and entrenched inequality.

In 1917 Harrison covered several Chicago bombings targeting the offices of estate agents who had sold homes to African-Americans in white neighbourhoods (Spear, 1967). Racist violence highlighted a paradox. 'Race'-thinking was demonstrably dangerous and could all too easily reinforce racism. However, racial collectivities enabled the construction of political and social networks to shield the racially subordinated against the failures of the state, in this case fair access to housing. For Harrison, Black politics had a significant role to play as a form of collective action to correct unfair social disadvantage by altering the constellation of benefits, burden and power within housing.

Ethical critiques also demonstrate the serious dangers of positing the discovery of personal identity as equivalent to the forging of a political position that precludes negotiation (St Louis, 2002:656). Barzun, Montagu and Locke examined the ethical concerns of how 'race' dangerously afforded a pre-political solidarity while also raising the question of the 'right way to unity'. Harrison's sustained pursuit of unity as a worthy endeavour is noteworthy because of his concern with its misuse.

Authoritarian-like technologies often used to produce consensus were of particular concern; 'thoughts and ideas are unified only in the graveyard'⁴⁸. Political solidarity can emerge but first, 'hearts must be set ablaze with common zeal for a common object, equally desired and equally attained by all in common in every city and state

⁴⁸ HHP Series II Box 6 Folder 24 'The Right Way to Unity'

and nation' (ibid). 'Common zeal' involved proletarian uprising unified against white supremacy.

Common zeal is in many ways analogous to Durkheim's collective effervescence (1914) and particularly to its re-creative function. Durkheim defined it as, 'an assembly of participants where the level of excitement is intense, but where those gathered together feel a bond of community and unity and as a result the members feel morally strengthened' (cited in Pickering, 1984:385). Common zeal is a source of moral vitality, a strong communal experience providing the spring of an eternally fresh realisation of common, dearly-held moral principles and actions. It is the vehicle for the creation of new ideas and activities and for the re-creation and reaffirmation of moral life offering a model of social change and revitalisation (Pickering, 1984:388). Like collective effervescence, it is fundamentally collective giving rise to intense passions that bring those who share them into more intimate and dynamic relationships. Common zeal was an ethical enterprise capable of forging new ideas of morality (nonracial political solidarity) as well as new conceptions of society (a yet-to-be-realised society where 'race' did not have moral relevance).

Both concepts represent radical moments as new sentiments norms and ideals emerge from intense communal exaltation, animated by a utopian spirit and by an openness and awareness of infinite possibility (Durkheim, 1914:35). Understood in this manner, common zeal could potentially serve the utopian project of postracialism. Not only do new ideas and ideals emerge but in the moment people can believe that those new conceptions, those new ideals can be realised. The

breakdown of social barriers and structures is possible. In Durkheim's words:
'People live differently and more intensely than in normal times. The changes are not simply of nuance and degree; man himself becomes something other than he was'
(Durkheim, 1914:212).

5.10 Conclusion

In this chapter I have shown how 'race' is not biologically warranted but it is nevertheless socially real and is crucially a central part of self-conception and determinant of life chances. Mindful of this, the question of erasure cannot be reduced to the ontology of 'race' as real or not because moral concerns and moral positions are behind ontological ones. The very discussion of jettisoning 'race' must be grounded, as argued, in the history and contemporary manifestation of racisms. Indeed, the (hyper)focus on the ontological question could also divert much needed ethical attention away from pressing issues of racism and oppression. In the next chapter, I will turn to the issues of racism and oppression by examining postracialism in the context of antiracism.

Chapter 6 Postracial Futures: Imagining and Practicing Postracial Antiracism

According to its exponents (Gilroy, 2000; St Louis, 2009) postracialism presents an analytical matrix capable of understanding and explaining the power of the diverse racisms of today. Although postracial critiques have contributed significantly to theoretical discussions, they have been criticised for their limited practical and political content (Shelby, 2005). The paucity of affirmative positions has led detractors to ask; what is the political content of postracialism? And (how) can it be aligned to a radical, antiracist political agenda? No coherent prescriptive programme, as yet, has been developed. The lacuna only reinforces an already heavily theoretical orientation. Consequently the project seems incapable of rigorously engaging the profane world of antiracist politics and confronting the material realities of racism. This inadequate engagement, however, signifies more than a failed attempt at engaged theorisation. The ‘failure’ is situated and perhaps more usefully explored through the complexity of the postracial paradox.

Recall from the introduction that postracialism rejects racial concepts understanding them to support exclusionary practices such as the redlining of residential neighbourhoods. Paradoxically, the very racial concepts rejected under postracialism are needed in order to monitor the discriminatory lending and investment practices central to redlining. Longitudinal racial data is arguably entangled in reification and may reinforce the categories antiracism is attempting to challenge. Even so, racial data provides the necessary evidentiary basis for demonstrating patterned inequality

and crucially for developing corrective strategies and solutions. This is the foundational contradiction underscoring the apparent divorce between postracial and antiracist projects. The paradox notwithstanding, perhaps the disconnect can be remedied. Perhaps postracialism exceeds the province of theory. Can postracialist insights enhance the effectiveness of antiracism such that, ‘action against racial hierarchies can proceed more effectively when (it)...is purged of any lingering idea of “race”’ (Gilroy, 2000:13)?

This chapter rearticulates the objective expressed within Gilroy’s conviction as a question in an attempt to critically think through the possibilities of a postracial antiracism. The ambition is explored through data collated from a series of semi-structured interviews conducted with representatives from five different London-based ‘race’-equality organisations. All under the umbrella of ‘race’-equality, I interviewed three organisations working in social policy, one in direct activism and a think tank.⁴⁹ This body of interview data, which forms a substantial part of the source material for this chapter, is principally concerned with exploring the implicit suggestion that (if indeed possible) postracialism can be reformulated to enable a more efficacious antiracism. Interviews explored the theoretical and practical efficacy of ‘race’ and probed the possibility to encourage and make possible postracialist resistance to racism.⁵⁰ The chapter is organised around themes that emerged during the interviews: the continued significance of ‘race’, postracialism as impractical, racial ontology, and finally postracialism and its conservative others. The chapter begins with section 6.1 outlining antiracism and engaging some of its

⁴⁹ See appendix 1 for further description of interviewees

⁵⁰ See appendix 2 for Schedule of Questions

central dilemmas in relation to postracialism. 6.2 ‘the continued significance of “race”’ examines the postracial ambition in relation to racist violence and racial politics arguing that some form of ‘race’ is still needed. 6.3 explores the (im)practicality of postracialism in terms of its analytical capacity and the challenges of developing a postracial program. Section 6.4 investigates postracialism in the context of racial ontology exploring the limitations of racial being and the stumbling blocks in postracial ontology. Section 6.5 unpacks postracialism’s conservative others and distinguishes them from postracialism as theorised in this thesis. The chapter concludes with some remarks on the possibilities of the mutually beneficial dialogue between theory and praxis.

6.1 Antiracism

The prefix ‘anti’ would seem to define antiracism as a politics of negation that which is opposed to racist knowledges and practices. Racism, however, is not a singular, unitary combination of discriminatory doctrine and practice. Historically definitions focused on the centrality of biological characteristics - real or imagined - to the (re)production of ‘race’ and its role as a necessary condition for racism. But racial categorisations have been as much about culture as about nature and have always shifted between the two domains. Racist movements no longer rely on the commitment to biological difference. Some even dismiss racial biology as pseudoscience (Balibar, 1994). Specifying racism may address issues of conceptual inflation but it proves of limited value for conceptualising *and* addressing new and changing racisms such as culturalist racism where ‘race’ as a signifier is transmuted into a seemingly more acceptable discourse of cultural differences (Short &

Carrington, 1999). Culturalist racism cloaks essentialising discourses in the language of culture and achieves the effects of racialisation without specifically mentioning 'race' or racial criteria (Wetherell and Potter, 1992).

The Canadian Reform Party, since absorbed by the Conservative Party, espoused a 'differentialist' racism based on a conviction of the fixity of culture - a perspective paradoxically 'borrowed' from the relativism of antiracism (Hewitt, 2005:137). New racisms resemble 'progressive' relativist arguments in four ways: (1) maintaining that 'race' is scientifically invalid, (2) that cultural differences are *the* defining features (3) believing firmly in the respect for difference *and* (4) the equal status of all cultures. This conceptual trading (racism reformulated in the language of difference) confounds the identification and combating of new racisms. Unlike earlier incarnations these expressions shun violence and overt racism finding expression through the more subtle and invisible aspects of cultural stereotyping and discrimination. The borrowing also suggests antiracisms have been complicit in reproducing a conception of culture as bounded and fixed and a culturalist definition of 'race' (Gilroy, 1992). Antiracisms from this framework appear poorly equipped to raise issues of social justice and political and economic power in the struggle against racial subordination.

There are no political certitudes for what constitutes a 'progressive' antiracism when racists and antiracists adopt the same discourse of difference. Racism is a diffuse form. It is more pervasive and more insidious in its institutionalised expressions precisely because of its ability to elude certain antiracisms. Does the rise of new, less recognisable forms of racism portend the end of antiracism (Gilroy, 1992)? Can

antiracism be rethought in such a way to contest new forms of exclusion? Might the insights of postracialism help to reformulate antiracism such that it can better recognise and contest these new forms?

Discourses of cultural racism from France to Australia have taken up core antiracist principles - equal respect for all cultures and egalitarian appeals based on citizenship (Hewitt, 2005). Beyond opposition to racist discrimination, what exactly are the aims, ambitions and practices of antiracism? Is it able to offer recommendations or solutions to the problems it identifies? 'Anti' signifies that the definition of racism shapes how antiracism is constituted. This entanglement produces a morally complex and politically messy scenario irreducible to sentimental accounts of heroes versus villains or progressives versus reactionaries (Bonnet, 1993). We also cannot speak of a unitary antiracism much less a discrete or stable one. Antiracism is a malleable and polyvocal discourse and practice. It is enmeshed with dynamic and heterogeneous racisms. Antiracism has been both a popular movement and an intellectual discourse that contests the unequal treatment (private and public) of racial undesirables or immigrants (Bonnet, 2000). This definition may do little to clarify the content of antiracism nevertheless it underscores its' basic assumption; the ability to identify and to fight racism.

Antiracism's objection to racism, however identified, is commonly advanced in ethical terms as distorting and erasing people's identity or resulting in a socially and politically unjust society. It is not clear what antiracism means either conceptually or at the level of practice because it is used in such a variety of ways. Antiracism cannot be unwittingly equated with egalitarianism and tolerance. Such equation fails

to appreciate the ambivalent ways in which antiracism *and* racism are woven into the West's vision of equality and tolerance, a tradition of simultaneous inclusion and exclusion (Taguieff, 2001). Relativist antiracism *prima facie* presents a benign affirmation of cultural tolerance. Respect for difference, however, can quickly slide into the assertion of hierarchy and sustain cultural superiority where European values establish the norm and define the exotic. Contemporary expressions of xenophobia in the UK are consistent with the 'right to be different' discourse most often associated with antiracisms. The British National Party, for example, elevates difference to an absolute, fundamental trait and uses it as justification for non-mixing. The thesis of eternal foreignness which deploys biological and cultural arguments demands that 'foreigners go home' so the authentic British folk can be surrounded by their own kind and their own value systems.

Universalist antiracism asserts an all-encompassing humanity with the conviction that everyone should be accorded the same rights and opportunities towards the realisation of our fundamental sameness. But before we are enchanted by this universalist 'fixing' of the relativist dilemma, we need only recall that science is both the archetypal universal discourse *and* the origin of biological racism (Stepan, 1982). Revisionist attempts to locate biological racism as 'unreason' and/or to define 'real science' as patently antiracist, notwithstanding, universalism has had an ambiguous relationship with racial discrimination (Barkan, 1996).

Critics suggest that antiracisms and their discrete moral and political appeals have been outside the analytic gaze shielded from criticism by a monopoly on the critical function (Taguieff, 2001). Sustained critique took shape in response to the

recognition of antiracism's at best partial impact on established patterns of racial inequality and its' failure to stop the development of or even combat new patterns of exclusion and segregation. Critiques reveal contradictory elements such as a dictatorial predisposition which shores up a fragile solidarity through authoritarian practices. Postracialist arguments interrogate the narrow categories of operation which evade ethical consideration and proceed unquestioned despite dubious alliances and assertions (Gilroy, 2000). Finally, postracialism invites reflection on the complicity of certain antiracisms in reifying 'race' and reproducing identities and solidarities forged from the categories bestowed by oppressors. In an ambitious vein, it expands the fight against racisms to de-naturalise and de-ontologise 'race'. The sections that follow explore these postracialist insights in the context of antiracist praxis.

6.2 The Continued Significance of 'Race'

Throughout the interviews respondents expressed concern about the parallels between postracialism, the declining significance of 'race' discourse and colourblindness rhetoric. Interviewees recognised the postracial ambition as a worthy ethico-political endeavour but qualified the ambition. Distinguishing postracialism proper from its empty imposters by stressing the historical and continued significance of 'race' and racism Evan remarked:

I'm determined to get away from 'race' because I would like to be doing other things. But unfortunately that's not the reality. That doesn't take me anywhere, let's just stop talking about 'race'. If I could see these inequalities disappearing then I wouldn't wanna be running a charity that's trying to close the gap. But the gaps are growing in some respects and not narrowing.

6.2.1 Postrace Society through Racialised Positions

Ironically proponents of racial transcendence and the declaration of racism's overcoming ground their claims through the support of racialised public figures. Ward Connerly, the self-described 'black libertarian' and former University of California regent, has been integral to repealing affirmative action programs across the nation. Connerly authored Proposition 209 which amended the California constitution to bar affirmative action in education, employment, and contracting for all state institutions. He originated similar legislation in Washington (1998), Michigan (2006) and Nebraska (2008). In 2003 his organisation the American Civil Rights Institute secured Proposition 54 on the ballot. The failed proposition, termed the Racial Privacy Initiative, would have prohibited state and local governments from using 'race', to classify current or prospective students, contractors or employees in public education, contracting, or employment operations.⁵¹ Connerly's rhetoric appeals to the democratic ideal of a 'race'-less polity and an aspirational meritocracy:

If U.C.L.A. would simply accept the will of the people that 'race' should not be a factor, either explicitly or 'under the table,' abandon their foolish attempts to 'level the playing field' based on 'race', and establish their credibility with the public as a fair and 'race'-neutral entity, then they could admit whomever they want and carry the presumption of innocence about 'race' that needs to become the model of the future for pluralistic societies.⁵²

Connerly is part of a loose group of neo-conservative minorities including among others Bobby Jindal, the Indian-American Republican governor of Louisiana and Linda Chavez, the first Latina cabinet member who served as Secretary of Labour

⁵¹ <http://www.acri.org/> (accessed 18 February 2012)

⁵² <http://www.acri.org/chairman.html> (accessed 18 February 2012)

for George W. Bush. These racialised public spokespersons invoke similar rhetoric and appropriate Dr. Martin Luther King's ambition for an America where 'race' is morally irrelevant. Chavez, under the aegis of her organisation the Center for Equal Opportunity, argued that compensatory programs aimed at redressing racism only encourage dependence and undermine qualities of self-reliance and self-worth. In the UK Munira Mirza, arts and culture advisor to London mayor Boris Johnson and Tony Sewell, a former teacher and director of the charity Generating Genius, make parallel arguments about the declining significance of 'race'. These arguments are presented as incontrovertible analyses when articulated by racialised minorities. 'Race' becomes a cloak of legitimacy enveloping the speaker. The irony is glaring. The very usage of explicitly racialised spokespersons to substantiate the pronouncement of the defeat of racism exposes the emptiness of claims to an actually-existing postracial society. The obsessive concern with President Obama's 'true racial identity' as expressed in the so-called Birther movement makes the same point. How can a supposedly 'postracial' society be so concerned with the 'race' of its 'postracial' president?

At the logical core of this thinking is a supposition that certain mouths are credible witnesses epistemically privileged to issue honest judgments on racism. Impassioned and hortatory, colourblindness appears a desperate attempt to disavow the glaring reality that racism inflects nearly every dimension of socio-political life. Alice described the inherent dangers in this specious verdict with reference to the British ConDem coalition government Race Equality Minister Andrew Stunel:

Our government is almost in open hostility when it comes to 'race'. When we met with Andrew Stunel, whose minister for 'race' and his opening gambit is; "I've

adopted two mixed 'race' children. Therefore, I know everything I need to know about 'race'." And they won't talk about 'race' as a single issue.

Stunneel bases his antiracist credentials and implicit assertion of a postracial world on inter-racial adoption. His claim has a particular resonance in the UK where cross-'race' adoptions have been historically contentious (Gilroy, 1992). Stunneel's political manoeuvring assumes the leftist critique that the neat separation of groups is untenable and undesirable. His chosen, 'trans-racial' family shows the falsity of an idealised racial family form as a repository and transmitter of authentic racial culture. Same-'race' adoption is not needed because the already-existing postracial society means mixed-'race' children need not be raised by racially similar parents who can guarantee the transmission of the essential skills to survive in a racist world. Questions of how these mixed-'race' children arrived in foster care in the first instance are ignored. It also implies same-'race' adoptions are underwritten by a crude conception of 'race' and have perpetuated the conservation of racial identities and prevented the possibility of their transcendence (Gilroy, 1992).

6.2.2 Trivialisation of the Grave Realities of 'Race'

Respondents admonished postracial pronouncements espoused by Mirza and Sewell as insidious and empty rhetoric heightening the ethical stakes for postracialism. They pointed to the dishonesty of colourblindness and situated the magnitude of accepting such with grave examples - suggesting postracialism comes dangerously close to trivialising racism - fully revealed in racially motivated homicide. What does this proximity to trivialisation mean for postracialism? Respondents stressed that postracialism drifted towards a blindness to this suffering, risking apathy or still

worse denial. The racially motivated murders of Rolan Adams (1991), Rohit Duggal (1992) and Stephen Lawrence (1993) were mentioned as exemplifying the ethical myopia of postracialism and the serious social meaning of ‘race’. Alice remarked:

Stephen Lawrence was killed because of the colour of his skin. And you can’t get away from that. That is what happened.

Jindal, hailed as the ‘Republican Obama’⁵³ for his postracial appeal, also denies the significance of racism. But can he do so in good faith? In 2005 the fatal consequences of racism came into sharp focus in his own state. In the days following Hurricane Katrina, the Anglo-American Roland Bourgeois shot and injured three unarmed African-Americans who were walking toward a temporary evacuation centre. Bourgeois maintains that he was defending his New Orleans neighbourhood from ‘outsiders’ and ‘looters’ (Lee, 2010). The US Justice Department charged him with committing a federal hate crime for the racially motivated shooting (ibid). Racist violence in Algiers Point can be situated within the larger picture of state violence, namely the Danziger Bridge massacre. In the massacre six unarmed African-Americans faced an assault weapon fusillade killing 17-year-old James Brissette and 40-year-old Ronald Madison, a mentally disabled man who was shot six times in the back. Law enforcement officials involved in the killings have since been convicted on 25 counts of civil rights abuses (Robertson, 2011).

6.2.3 ‘Problematic, But Necessary’

⁵³ <http://www.cbsnews.com/video/watch/?id=4836972n> (accessed 22 February 2012)

Postracialism, to reiterate, advocates the elimination of 'race' from an ethical position maintaining that the commonsense idea of 'race' helps (re)produce 'natural' and hierarchical differences which function to both explain and validate racial stratification. Rob, the director of the think-tank Runnymede, explained this thorny problematic. He described how 'race' is not biologically real but is objective in how it informs ways of thinking about and acting towards racial 'Others'.

The categorisations don't work. They're not based on anything biological, on anything outside of social creation. But the fact that it is socially constructed still makes it pretty real. Just because it's socially constructed doesn't necessarily make it less real. It makes it less independently verifiable outside of human experience.

But to all intents and purposes people treat it as real, then it becomes real. It becomes real in terms of people's experience of it.

Overly materialist interpretations of 'race' as methodologically unreliable (what is 'race'?) and empirically insecure (not a real object) are criticised. Constructionist understandings which can similarly fail to appreciate the objectivity of social categories - the psychology of oppression (Fanon, 1967) and the subjective experience of racialisation - are also problematised. Guillaumin remarked starkly upon the paradoxical simultaneity of 'race'. "'Race' does not exist. But it does kill people (1995: 107)." Rob later outlined the contradictory status of 'race' and the challenges it presents for antiracist politics:

It's a difficult line to tread because you're trying to say 'race' doesn't exist but there are the outcomes that are racist. We need to take seriously these patterns which effect groups that are racialised in the way in which we imagine them to be. So as long as people still see 'race' as a driver for their decision-making then 'race' is real.

He continues:

We're just getting to an understanding of the data from that mixed categorisation and its driving all sorts of things which reify 'race'. Again we're talking about mixed 'race' and we're not okay with that. What do you mean? How do you mix them? It's massively problematic.

Rob gives us a sense that 'race' is problematic for postracialism because it complicates the development of a politics. The task is, 'a difficult line to tread'. How can you meaningfully talk about racism without reifying 'race'? How can sophisticated understandings of racism be communicated to policy makers, or local authorities? Rob *also* demonstrates that 'race' is problematic for racial conservatism. From this 'on the ground' view it appears liberation from raciology cannot easily escape such an entanglement. If 'race' remains a 'driver for decision making' which global events (the French government's expulsion/repatriation of the Roma community; the ongoing fixation on the burka and minaret construction throughout Europe) continue to testify to then the postracial ambition will remain problematic.

6.3 Postracialism As Impractical

Rethinking postracialism not as a utopian ambition but as a dilemma facing practical challenges refocuses the discussion. Postracialism - reconceived as the problematic project described by Alice and Rob - creates an ethico-political basis for reservations about the project. Interviewees described postracialism as impractical considering the prevalence of racism. A well-intentioned ideal, postracialism was ultimately out of touch with 'real world' concerns. As Alice states:

How little some of those organisations were equipped to do anything around 'race'. The fear to even talk issues of 'race'. If you have organisations that perceive the situation in that way - then how we can talk about a society in which 'race' is not even an issue anymore? When it patently is still an issue. To me that's top of the mountain stuff. If we get there, we can look out the scenery is lovely, we're all there. We can have our little picnic. But the reality is that the vast majority of individuals and the vast majority of organisations are not at the

top of that mountain. Some of them haven't even begun climbing, some are half way up.

The mountaineering metaphor shows the profound and perhaps insurmountable problems the postracial ambition faces. 'Race', 'patently is still an issue'. 'Race' is deeply embedded in the organisation of Western political and economic life. The question of (im)practicality centres on the possibility of realisation. Can postracialism ever be achieved if 'race' is so deeply socially embedded? Alice's circumspection cites progressive charities blinkered to racism. She testifies to postracialism as an impractical form of struggle because there is much work to be done in the way of dispelling the false truths of 'race' and in demonstrating the pervasiveness and damaging impact of racism.

6.3.1 Analytically Empty

Interviews also explored the postracialist critique of 'race' as analytically inadequate. 'Race' cannot work as a critical analytical concept. The, 'distorting prism implanted by the use of the idea of "race" as an analytical concept' prevents the interrogation of the origin and consequences of the different historical forms of racism' (Miles, 1993:21). Despite the intellectual labour to qualify 'race' as 'social', its conceptual significance continues to reify 'race', to treat it as a given and normative social formation. Analytical usage only reproduces the commonsense ideologies of the everyday world uncritically assuming the prior existence of 'race' (Darder and Torres, 2004).

Miles (1993) attempted to escape reification by advancing a revised version of racialisation, 'a process of categorisation, a representational process, of defining an Other (usually, but not exclusively) somatically' (21). Significantly, the approach moves away from employing 'race' as a determining empirical object in the production of racism. The research brought racism into the remit of Marxist theory enabling an exploration of political, class and ideological relationships in shaping understandings of racial conflicts (Solomos & Back, 1996). Miles - primarily concerned with the analytical and objective status of 'race' - identified a serious theoretical problem, the declining explanatory efficacy of 'race'. He instead encouraged sociologists to rethink inequality through the social processes constructing 'race' reproducing it materially and symbolically.

Abandonment of 'race' might be viewed as an epistemological and methodological effort to develop a more accurate description and analysis of social life. Perhaps racism and racialisation afford a better understanding of the discriminatory practices performed in the name of 'race'. Postracialist antiracism(s) might then offer a more robust sociological analysis precisely because it does not suffer the clouding effects of racial categories. Runnymede seemed to be struggling with making the impractical insights of postracialism 'practical'. The challenge in articulating the 'how' of implementation is worth quoting at length:

R- Which sounds sensible as long as you don't lose your ability to talk about racism by not talking of 'race'.

Me-How would you imagine that would happen?

R-Well I think we do it. I think we seek to say at all times that 'race' doesn't explain anything but racism does by saying it motivates. And I must admit when I'm out there speaking this gets people kind of scratching their head. Puzzled looks. Because it would be easier to say look racism exists and as a result of being black you're guilty. Well that doesn't allow you to talk about some issues of what it's attached to, to this kind of moving category of 'race'. We come at this from so

many different angles. As a 'race' equality think tank we've looked at concepts that allow people into the discussion a bit more easily and that don't reify 'race'. We talked about belonging, it just feels better than 'race' relations. It's horribly antiquated and reasserts 'race', and reifies it. We've done a project called *This is Where I live* to get people thinking and they talk about the racisms that they face as a function of their location. We're doing *Generation 3.0* looking at a generational discussion saying what have you told about the racism that you faced. Not necessarily what you passed on that might in a way kind of reify it. We're quite careful about our ways in I think, we want to elicit truth and not do position thinking.

Rob's descriptions suggest how postracialism might have a productive contribution to antiracism. But it is an ambivalent relationship presenting challenges and threatening to make antiracism into an exhaustingly reflexive enterprise with little in the way of affirmative statements. Developing a language that does not reify the category is a challenging task. It is, as argued in chapter three, part of the long history of opposition to racial thinking and categorisation. The struggle to denaturalise, historicise and problematise taken-for-granted assumptions about human difference and social inequality is indispensable to the postracial ambition. Runnymede is wrestling with how the notion of 'racial experience' could smuggle in an essentialist agenda in attempting to cement solidarity and identity. What Runnymede seems to suggest is that the proposal (and the process) to abolish 'race' as a critical concept need not be a denial of antiracism as necessary practice.

It also reminds us of the manifold problems encountered in the uncritical adoption of racialised terminology. Modood (1997) described how the ostensibly pan-ethnic project of 'political blackness' dominating 1980s British antiracism resulted in the exclusion of Muslims from the struggle. The primacy of 'race' - assumed as forming the fundamental basis of racial particularity and group membership - disturbs the normative sense of distinctions *between groups*. St Louis (2005b) examines a similar

situation in the US context where external and internal processes of racialisation operate such that racial sameness (African-American) is constituted through relational differences, in his example foreign-born blacks. The coherence of a racial group is placed under a great deal of stress then when the presupposition of its constitutive internal similarity and external differentiation breaks down.

6.3.2 Usefulness to Antiracist Politics

‘Race’ - despite its problematisation in St Louis’ example - is still useful to conducting antiracisms. From abolitionism to anti-apartheid, ‘race’ has been a potent political resource for resistance and change. Postracialisms raise fundamental questions about the nature of political action and highlight the ironic tension in ‘strategic essentialism’; antiracisms often pretend ‘race’ is in fact a fixed essence knowing full well that it is not. Miles (1993) frames the question as the degree to which racialised politics are really distillations of class conflict and concludes ‘race’-based mobilisations are destined for failure and ultimately incommensurate with any sustained political organisation around class.

This framework leads to a class reductionism and drastically limits the scope of theoretical work on conceptualising racism and racialised social relations (Solomos and Back, 1996). A more nuanced understanding of racial politics might attend to how the meaning of ‘race’ is struggled over. ‘Race’ in this sense becomes an open political construction, whose shifting political meanings are contested. This enables an understanding of how collective identities articulated through ‘race’ function as powerful means to coordinate action and engender solidarity (Gilroy, 1987).

Several respondents defended the ‘race’-based mobilisations following the murder of Stephen Lawrence as exemplifying how antiracism can create new conceptualisations of racism. The mobilisation spearheaded by the victim’s family eventually led to the Macpherson Report. The report produced the ruling for institutional racism and recommended a series of measures subjecting the police to greater public control, enshrining rights for victims of crime and extending the number of offences classified as racist.⁵⁴ The example shows how antiracism using racial categories can shape official government policies and positively impact how public institutions operate. Lila testified to how the Lawrence family engendered a comprehensive understanding of racism opening up the possibility of ameliorative strategies:

In the Stephen Lawrence inquiry public sector employees were asked; what processes and policies do you have in place around racial discrimination? And they said, Well we don’t have any policies around racial discrimination. We don’t have any racial discrimination. And when asked, How do you know you don’t? Well nobody’s ever complained about racial discrimination. What is the procedure to complain? Well we don’t have one.

Antiracism succeeded in challenging racism as pathological prejudice, aberration or ignorance demonstrating it to be an entrenched feature of state structures. It also extended the ethical impulse scrutinising educational and healthcare institutions and developed ways to expose inequality in arenas fundamental to the self-perception of western liberal-democracies (May, 2002). The mobilisation recently resulted in the protracted conviction of his murderers (Burns, 2012) and showed the critical futility of employing ‘race’ as a category and the concomitant realisation that, without these

⁵⁴ see <http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/1999/feb/24/lawrence.ukcrime12> (accessed 9 March 2012)

tried and tested concepts antiracism increasingly loses meaning (Lentin, 2000).

‘Race’ was used to productively combat racism by attacking it at its structural core.

Might a postracialist approach be incapable of grappling with the magnitude of racist murder? In such circumstances, the stand against ‘race’ would seem to fail to address a set of conditions of being or living. Although working within the orbit of ‘race’ the Lawrence campaign, ‘conjures a stand against an imposed condition...’ and insists that one not be reduced, at least not completely, to or by the implication marked by racial categorisation, by the devaluation and attendant humiliation (Goldberg, 2009:10).

6.3.3 Institutionalisation & Professionalization of Antiracism in State/Market

Just as antiracism springs from diverse philosophical orientations so too does it have an ambiguous relationship to the different sites of its emergence. Antiracist movements have developed in both public political culture and government with divergent ideological and political strategies to tackling racism. SOS Racism, a vocal antiracist group in France, for example relies on government funding. In French political culture state subsidised antiracism is understood to be part of the democratic project - changing the state ‘from the inside’ - stopping ethnic ghettoisation by upholding Republican values (Lentin, 2008:315). Conversely, the Irish campaigning group Residents Against Racism explicitly refuses government support for fear of being beholden to the state. The relative proximity to public political culture seems to correlate with a commitment to the belief in the power of state instruments to provide solutions to racism.

Discourses espousing democracy, the rule of law, equality and tolerance as means of overturning racism generally have a close relationship to public political culture.

Discourses of emancipation, empowerment, resistance and liberation seem to indicate distance from public political culture (Lentin, 2008). While this distinction can be useful we need to be wary of drawing value-laden binaries that can encourage the reification of organisations operating closely with public political culture as not overtly political or more disparagingly as ‘sell outs’. Such reductionism overlooks the complexity of these formations. In Britain during the late 1980s the notion of antiracism pressed by grass roots organisations became a symbol of wider debates about the role of policies initiated by radical left local authorities, trade unions, and other organisations to promote the idea that they were committed to a positive programme to tackle racialised inequalities (Ball and Solomos, 1990). Antiracist ideas emerging at the local level have historically played an important role in the development of policy agendas. The state/nonstate dichotomy is a narrow paradigm for understanding how antiracisms develop and interact within and across civil society.

Small antiracist organisations often require state funding in order to survive.

Reliance on government support can create parallel racial discourses. Interviewees described how an internal discourse had become a space for discussing ‘race’ critically and reflecting on the dangers of reification. However, in their formal work for the organisation they maintained a more neutral political stance in interest of funding retention. Yusef remarked:

For me, the significance is the depoliticisation. It’s definitely around the professionalization of the industry. And the way in which people communicate with one another. Individually we do have conversations and quite vehement and

interesting conversations about a lot of subjects that are quite political. But in that work environment, in that work space, there's something that happens there.

There's something that really does change the nature of the discussion and the argument and the way in which that goes. A telepathic recognition that now we're in the workplace this is how we act. This is how we act if we're having a personal conversation; this is how we act if we're having an organisational conversation.

Historically associated with anticolonial struggle and autonomous movements for change, antiracism has now been integrated by states in what is known pejoratively as the 'race-relations industry' (Solomos and Back, 1996:112). Since the 1980s in the UK there has been an expansion of an influential group of BME race-relations professionals whose careers depend on the state's continued commitment to its brand of antiracism. Kundnani (2007) contends that these self-styled leaders of minority ethnic communities have colluded with government to ensure a culturalist policy ultimately contributing to the weakening of autonomous antiracist action. Taken on as a state concern this antiracism was largely stripped of its 'race'/class analytic. Psychological and culturalist accounts of racism were favoured in professionalisation and the creation of state-endorsed antiracist activities.

Racism was represented as an exogenous force thus dodging the centrality of 'race' to British history and contemporary culture. Assimilation into the state immediately raises issues around the freedom of organisations in civil society to determine the antiracist agenda. State assimilation can also significantly impact on the tone and substance of antiracist policy. Interviewees stressed the reliance on the category for securing funding and indeed its importance to the funding priorities of benefactors. Several of the organisations I interviewed received a significant amount of their funding from the state. They occupy a contradictory place and stand to contest both state sanctioned racism and the state's antiracist posturing.

Interviewees maintained postracialism would be an impractical task because of the funding structure of charitable organisations. Benefactors want to see quantifiable results and empirical evidence does not work without categorical distinctions. Yusef described this quandary:

The way we've worked in policy and the attempts to influence policy by empirical data it's difficult to see how that language could go beyond 'race' because a lot of the points and arguments that are being made within the social policy realm they're very data specific things. And a lot of the policy itself in Britain is around the empirical study. There has been a trend to get away from political arguments and economic and anti-capitalist arguments to move into this place where we've got this dataset that shows clearly that group z is treated in this way and that's unfair...
There has to be a proxy and it has to be coded in some way.

He continued:

In the UK it's a very professionalised sector. When I was talking about playing the game - it's a business now. It's not activism. And it's not the same type of antiracism as you would get from Unite Against Fascism those more activist groups. The way that it works - there's always an argument and an influence to be made. And a lot of the influence, a lot of what they found useful in the past is that usage of the categories attached to statistics. So it's an interesting way where you attach statistics to groups and I don't know if a postracial argument could work with (chuckles) the approach taken in social policy.

Postracialism - in the environment Yusef describes - may struggle to gain traction or attract benefactors. There is a certain reliance on the gestural usage of 'race'.

Additionally postracialism faces the challenge of deconstructing an established and professionalised bureaucracy sustained by racial categorisation. Similar to the contradictory outcomes in education, the project is confronted with the erosion of employment for those often excluded from labour markets. If a postracialist antiracism is adverse to formal politics it may have to find anchorage in an alternative conception beyond 'the political' as legitimate if only conducted within official structures. A purposefully antistatist postracialism based in civil society with

limited or no links to formal government or party politics could be charged with being impractical and or irrelevant.

Another product of institutionalisation concerns the reinforcement of racialisation. Interviewees described how the incorporation of antiracism into government led to the inflation of 'race' and even encouraged reification. Minority groups, for example, self-racialised in order to gain recognition and or resources in the politically rewarding hierarchy of victimhood while the government also used racialisation to serve its own political and military ends. Rob remarked on this:

Me- How do you see this bureaucratisation trend connected to the discussion before about working with 'race' but trying to deconstruct it?

R-What it does is privilege categorisation. And so a series of groups try to get a categorisation believing that from that resources will follow. And just that process of fighting categorisation. The Arab categorisation in the 2011 census - now that wasn't driven by communities believing that. Clearly that was about security services who want to know something.

6.3.4 Challenges in a Postracial Programme

The high level of abstraction in postracialism places in question its relevance to material inequalities. The urgency of eliminating 'race' for ethico- political reasons is a developed argument (Hill, 2001). Precisely how such elimination is to be achieved remains unclear. The crisis of raciology and the withering of racial biology could be interpreted as part of the glacial erosion of 'race'. Most interviewees dispelled the idea of discrete biological units called 'races'. Perhaps an awareness of the indissoluble unity of all life at the genetic level can engender a postracial conception of humanity. But how can this gradualist process unfolding in the human sciences impact popular understandings of 'race'?

Racial mythologies have a stubborn durability in the popular consciousness.

Postracialism offers no indication of how this translation might be fostered. The UNESCO Statements and educational campaigns come closest to a postracialist program. The declarations - like second generation human rights legislation such as the International Covenant for the Elimination of all forms of Racist Discrimination requiring signatories to pursue policies to expunge racism - received little funding and limited support and circulation.

Lila asked directly, 'What does postracialism recommend for antiracism?' The question ruptured the interview and forced a recognition that in terms of arguments, policies and movements countering the influence of racism, postracialism has little to offer. In my discussion with Rob it seems that this struggle is being negotiated:

You have to say things that are surprising. You have to say things that are counter-intuitive. And there are ways of doing that which don't reify 'race'. It's interesting in the pop-up shop we just put a wall of facts up. One of the facts was most of the children in the UK living above the 4th floor are Black or Asian. Essentially to get the reactions with people cause that's what you want to do. It's to spark discussion. You don't want to say and therefore housing allocation is racist. That maybe isn't the case. But you want people to say, how many Black and Asian children are there in the country? And how does that happen that people end up in that situation? Some people are like great they're above the 4th floor that means they want to live above the 4th floor. But it's kind of how do you get that discussion motivated.

There are two constituent elements to this antiracism; (1) committed opposition to racist arguments and policies and (2) the invitation to new ways of thinking, recognising and living with cultural difference. Such a strategy remains limited to achieving strategic objectives, but the presence of the pop-up shop in a popular train station highlights the need for political debates about racism to come to terms with

wider debates about ‘differences’ and the consequences of developing conceptions of justices and equality which allow for the expression of cultural and religious identities (Connolly, 1991). It also takes on the key dilemma confronting antiracist politics; how to go beyond an oppositional political stance to the articulation of an alternative view of difference to those found in racist discourses. The development of a coherent strategy for mobilising against racist movements at the local or national level is no doubt challenging.

The challenge is no less imperative considering the growth since 2005 of support for racist movements across Europe. Far right parties have gained electoral positions in the UK (BNP), Denmark (Danish People's Party), Holland (Freedom Party), Hungary (Jobbik party), Austria (Austrian Freedom Party), Italy (Northern League) and Finland (‘True Finns’). This challenge is complicated by the conceptual confusion, discussed above, having seeped into the debate about how to develop practical strategies against racism. Postracialism seems to have a complex relationship to ‘race’ and in a certain sense requires some qualified notion to combat inequality. Postracialism - to understand the changing dynamics of racial ideologies and political mobilisations or the possibilities for defeating racist movements - will need to grapple with the role of antiracism in this historical moment.

6.3.5 Still relevant

Perhaps the most insidious claim in the British Con-Dem Coalition era is the contention that we have arrived at the postracial moment. Prime Minister David Cameron, for example, in February of 2013 defended his decision to not apologise for the Amritsar massacre - in which British colonial riflemen murdered 379 innocent Indians - because it was unnecessary to 'reach back into history'. The racist crimes of colonialism are neatly located in a bygone past that is not directly connected to the present (Watt, 2013). Racism has been acknowledged (adherents point to the Macpherson Report & the 'Race' Relations Amendment) and latterly overcome through legislative interventions. A wealth of empirical evidence demonstrates the persistent and continuing inequalities in housing (Beider, 2012), education (Gillborn, 2008) and healthcare (Nazroo, 2004). Taken collectively these material inequalities testify to the emptiness of claims to an authentically 'postracial society' or the 'end of racism' thesis showing the durability of racism and dispelling spurious claims to the achievement of social perfectibility.

This rhetoric portrays a social world where 'race' is irrelevant to life chances and opportunities. It is a nefarious untruth in contradiction of centuries of racism, the consequences of which are visible through a series of socioeconomic indicators such as representation within the criminal justice system and rates of educational attainment. These neoliberal fantasies sanitise history of the formative and continued role of racism in shaping unequal access to social and material goods. A colour-bound system is (re)presented as having been colourblind. Therefore, only colourblind remedies should solve 'race'-based problems. Redistributive justice and the antiracist goals to desegregate schools, neighbourhoods and workplaces become irrelevant. Even contested the claim that a postracial society has been realised:

We can't be complacent about 'race'. If we start to dismiss it and say it's not relevant, I think that's when it will come back and bite you. There are people out there who can use 'race' for political and economic ends and set us back giant strides which would be intolerable.

Alice made a similar point citing empirical research:

A concrete example is young Black people are more likely to be excluded from schools for incidents that their white counterparts won't be excluded for. That's racism. That has nothing to do with socioeconomics. That has to do with skin colour. The 'race' of that person is different to white, working class counterparts. There are issues that are going to be pertinent to 'race' and those are the issues that we try to draw out.

Both interviewees describe the centrality of 'race' in aiding a progressive politics to expand equalities and in enabling a form of statistical monitoring to track inequality and discrimination. This brings us full circle to the paradox sketched in the introduction of this chapter. Alice details the complexity of analysis in antiracism noting that not every instance was reducible to 'race'. An integrated and multiplex approach was needed. She and Evan both describe how neo-liberal postracialism actively conceals or worse still, denies the effects of racism.

The concealment of racism threatens to render redundant the redistributive agenda established to ameliorate injustices. Culturalist racism operates to conceal the racism manifest in the War on Terror enabling a racist and violent discourse to be understood as not contradicting claims to the already-existing postracial society. The War on Terror - couched in civilizational oppositions - is not predominantly associated with racism (Butler, 2009). This is a curious paradox considering that explanations for terrorism rely on naturalised assumptions about Muslims that function in precisely the same way as racialisation. Former President George W. Bush's explanation for the September 11th terrorist attacks presupposed Islam as

essentially antithetical to Western civilisation and violently envious of Western progress. ‘America was targeted for attack because we're the brightest beacon for freedom and opportunity in the world (Bush, 2001).’

6.4 Racial Ontology

Postracialist antiracism also faces pressing methodological issues. How might postracialism be pursued? Gunaratnam (2004) intimated a methodology inviting reflection on how research must address the specific relationships between analytical categories, subjective and social experience and material relations. For example, postracialist concerns with essentialism, if not attentive to the ontological realities of racialised being, might reduce racial identities to imposed ‘scripts’ creating methodological blindspots to the ‘situated voices’ of the everyday. Postracialism demonstrates that the conceptual fixing of ‘race’ remains untenable, only hampers analysis and reproduces stereotyping and racism. Postracialism illustrates the danger of categorical approaches showing how they reify ‘races’ as entities that individuals are born into and inhabit rather than recognising ‘races’ as dynamic and emergent processes of being and becoming (Gunaratnam, 2004). ‘Race’ is more than a dispassionate sociological category. ‘Race’ also involves the subjective attachment and investments of individuals. Racial categories are not confined to the discrete terrain of knowledge production. Racial categories impact our ontologies. The multi-dimensional nature of ‘race’ challenges the development of an analytical framework to also address the relations and situated nature of identity.

A postracialism which seeks to address the complexity of 'race' and racialised being may involve, as Gunaratnam (2004) suggests, a doubled approach - working with *and* against racial categories at the epistemological and methodological level. Rob spoke to the challenges and promises in this approach:

I can't think of a project that doesn't invoke 'race'. The question is how. The effort has to be not to reify it but then it needs to be reified. So we will for example work with a group of people, the work we did on retirement with older people of Indian heritage. We invoke 'race' as a kind of research method. But in that group we give people space to define what they might have in common with the other people in that room. What they perceive to be about their ethnic heritage. This language is slippery. And not to presuppose that because we've got 15 old people from Indian background in a room that certain things will follow. I hope that we don't fall into the trap of reinforcing stereotypes by working with particular groups of people.

'Race' is used but it is disrupted from imputing a fundamental, constitutive quality to something. Runnymede is attempting to negotiate how even naming and examining 'race' always runs the risk of reproducing 'race' as essentialised and deterministic potentially (re)constituting the very power relations being challenged. Of note in this approach is the ethical need for theoretical and intellectual projects to move outside of departmental territories to connect with local struggles and experiences.

6.4.1 Volitional Rejection

Only a disingenuous postracialism would suggest 'race' can be wilfully relinquished or readily abandoned. Such a reductive position overstates the significance of science and social agency. The assumption that because 'race' is without a biological referent it therefore lacks valid meaning is misleading. Chapter three demonstrated that the history of 'race' as a coherent scientific concept has always been beset by

crisis and an unending struggle of (dis)/proving its existence and/or significance.

This historical battle over the meaning of racial difference is significant though admittedly the struggle has not done much in the way of combating or preventing racism.

‘Race’ - in both the social and human sciences - is not real. It is generally accepted that it does not exist as an empirical object in nature (Graves, 2001). Biological unreality aside, ‘race’ remains a dominant normative idea. Believed to be real, acted upon as real, ‘race’ has practical effects and consequences. The history of predatory lending, blockbusting and urban renewal in American metropolises demonstrate the reality of ‘race’ and racism. Residential segregation and the construction of the racial ghetto are stark and undeniable realities (Lipsitz, 2011).

The volitional exit from ‘race’ fails to consider the specific nature of practices involved in (re)producing particular forms of social difference. As Omi and Winant (1994) argued racial projects have given ‘race’ a deep reality making it integral to the social, political and economic spheres of liberal Western nation-states. The absence of an evidenced existence does not alter or undo the social objectivity of ‘race’ which arises out of a particular history. The social objectivity of ‘race’ shows how it remains a significant ‘real object’ independent of individual perception.

‘Race’ may be the history of an untruth but it is an untruth that has *real* material and symbolic effects. The challenge, according to postracialism, is to generate from such a past and a present, a future where ‘race’ will have been put to rest forever.

'Race' is socially-produced, subject to historical vicissitudes but equally a real object that cannot be confined to the dustbin of history through individual rejection.

Prescriptive postracialist programs predicated on individual abdication can overlook 'race' as existing and functioning irrespective of subjective perception. Individualist rejections of the privileges of whiteness (Ignatiev and Garvey, 1996) or the essentialism of American blackness through daily acts of transgression are inadequate in the face of enduring social structures. The modern dream of becoming a free floating angel is little more than a fantasy (Hall, 1992). Liberal modernity's idea that we could survive without any notion of attachment at all is perhaps an illusion. Evan expressed concern with this identity voluntarism:

I've met people recently of African and Caribbean origin who don't want to be called Black. And these are educated young people at the LSE. I felt like I was in a time warp. What I considered to be normal, straightforward was to them anathema. They don't want to be categorised racially. So when I say how do you see yourself, they would say, I'm just me. And I find that, I respect that, it concerns me, because I feel well that's all well and good - almost having like a colourblind view of the world. But when you get into the workplace, you are probably going to find that there are issues around difference. Issues which may hinder your progression...At some point it's [race] going to be a factor.

Excessive deference to raciology can lead to complicity in the reproduction of its effects. Despite the many practical problems demonstrated in the interviews perhaps an engagement with postracialism might still have value. Reservations with and rejection of postracialist ideas as impractical still shifted the focus for the duration of the discussion to the postracial. The interview offered a moment, albeit short-lived to investigate the different set of questions raised in postracialism; Do we want 'race' as part of our social life and social identities? And if so, why? Might we want to pursue the postracial ambition?

6.4.2 Antiracism and the Experience of Racism

Antiracism not grounded in the experience of racism, critics (Lentin, 2011) suggest, can result in paternalism and tokenism. Antiracist leadership can become a vanguard of unelected representatives with unrealistic views of the risks they face. The British Anti-Nazi League exemplified this dilemma. The organization's high-profile demonstrations in areas with a large percentage of disadvantaged racialised minorities often left open to violent attack by the far-right or police (Gilroy, 1987). Interviewees articulated antiracism as grounded in the experience of racism refusing the reduction to communitarianism, and accusations of racialised leadership to the necessary exclusion of others. Locating the foundation of antiracism in the experiences of racism was seen as fundamental. Evan drew on his experience of racism in describing this relationship:

I got involved [in antiracist work] because my mother was a community development worker. I used to go along to some of the committee meetings and listen to the participants mainly from the Afro-Caribbean community. It was quite a small community; they had very few organisations. My mother helped to create the first one, the African-Caribbean youth council which was for young people. The issues back in the 1970s in my hometown were around police harassment, lack of educational opportunity, unemployment, housing, those kinds of issues.

Lila also located her activism in her direct experience of racism:

So when we talk about professional and or activist experience I think it would be easy for me to say I've been an activist all my life. I was born into a working class background. I passed an exam called the 11 plus and went to a girl's grammar school. I wouldn't necessarily say that was the first time I was faced with racism. But it certainly was in a very consistent way the first time I was faced with this idea that people were better than me. And that that was expressed through various experiences in the way some students behaved with me. And also the way teachers behaved with me. So you could say that certainly from then I became an activist because I resisted quite strongly.

In the neo-liberal era, the experience of racism is increasingly questioned and placed in competition with the experiences of other marginalised subjects. Tony Sewell, the former teacher and current social commentator, invokes this in describing how he was able to combat racism through resource restriction. ‘Suddenly, the boys found some inspiration and got down to work. There we have it: the trauma of 400 years of racism, slavery and oppression overcome by the desire for a soft centre (Sewell, 2010: 33).’ Shifting the focus from structural racism, Sewell argues that poor parenting, peer-group pressure and an inability to be responsible for their own behaviour are the chief problems; ‘They are not subjects of institutional racism. They have failed their GCSEs⁵⁵ because they did not do the homework, did not pay attention and were disrespectful of their teachers (Sewell, 2010: 33).’

6.4.3 Universalism and Postracialism

Perhaps underpinning the postracial critique of a politics based on the experience of racism is the assumption that it will/result(s) in narrow communitarianism or perhaps authoritarian practices designed to shore up political solidarity. Postmodernist undertones seem to position any movement connected in some way to a community as problematic. Communities not connected to the material forces of production are also understood as insufficiently radical (Miles, 1993). Interviewees held the postracialist critique of ‘race’-based mobilisations to be simplistic denying the analytical complexity of this work which cannot be homogenised or understood simply as an incomplete politics. Are these problems, inconsistencies and conflicts

⁵⁵ Standardized tests administered generally for students aged 14-16.

not the general and universally experienced difficulty of doing progressive politics in our historical conjuncture? Lila described this problem well:

This isn't a problem with 'race'. It's a problem with everybody else. I guess it's one of those ongoing things where people are saying, well is it 'race' or is it class. Well can't it be both? We're not saying that the racial explanation is the only explanation in the room. I suspect that people have different and competing explanations. But interestingly 'race' equality organisations get a much harder time for not being as inclusive as most other equality organisations. So I think for example, the SWP [Socialist Workers Party's] take on 'race' would be well I'm not sure how they would articulate it currently but it's important to know how it feels. It feels like yes we'll deal with 'race' after the revolution. And frankly that's not all that helpful.

Lila concedes that the postracial ambition is a noble idea but she expresses that it can lead to the exclusion of subordinate groups from decision making within antiracist organisation. It can also - when minorities themselves are involved – lead to a subordination of the specific interests of the racialised to universal principles such as 'universal liberation'. 'Universal liberation', as argued earlier, often fails to take account of the relationship between the idea of 'race' and these very principles. Balibar (1994) argues racism and universalism are imbricated because the project of defining universal 'man' cannot be carried out without at the same time the definition of non-man. This cannot be thought without reliance on 'race' as a concept developed in parallel with Enlightenment ideas (Balibar, 1994).

6.5 Postracialism and Its Conservative Others

Hall (1996) - concerned with the potential of racial categories to 'guarantee' the rightness or wrongness of a politics - encourages us to enter into a politics beyond the false certitudes of 'race'. His ethical reflexivity has been extended in the

postracialist project and has also in a moment of political sophistry been rhetorically appropriated by the 'postracial' agenda of Britain's ConDem coalition government. Multiculturalism appears to face a death-sentence following Prime Minister David Cameron's Munich speech in 2011. Cameron selectively appropriated the call for a heightened ethics positioning it as the progressive alternative to the unchecked relativism of pluralist multiculturalism. 'So when a white person holds objectionable views – racism, for example – we rightly condemn them. But when equally unacceptable views or practices have come from someone who isn't white, we've been too cautious, frankly even fearful, to stand up to them (cited in Wintour, 2011).'

Cameron's sophistry gestures toward an expanded reflexivity and a greater ethical accountability for those holding racist ideologies. Neo-liberal postracialism - despite such rhetorical flourish - is all the more insidious in that it understands structural racism and institutionalised inequalities to have been resolved in the teleological progression to social perfectibility. Racism, if and where it remains, is the atavistic irrationalism of fringe radical minorities or the parochial 'white working class' whose inability to adjust to the cosmopolitan global order is reflected in their racist views.

6.5.1 White Victimhood & the Generalisation of Racism

Interviewees also described the appropriation of the experience of racism itself. In such instances racism was generalised and thus made into a thing which can be owned (Lentin, 2011:160). This was feared as a consequence of a postracial agenda that relativises the experience of racism and consequently assists in perpetuating it.

Respondents discussed the deleterious ethical consequences through the silencing of racialised experience. Alice remarked:

We know that say young black boys *and* young working class white boys are not getting the education they need. They're getting discriminated against in school but actually the reasons behind it may well be very different for young white boys *than* for young black boys. And for young black boys there may be an issue around racism.

The rhetoric of and focus on diversity blurred the specificity of a variety of marginalised experiences compressing them under the amorphous label 'diverse'.

Alice points to the construction of white victimhood as exemplifying the dangers of relativising the experience of marginalisation.

Lila also described how the figure of the 'white working class' functions in the neo-liberal narrative. The concept enables a narrative in which formal racism has been eliminated from the nation but is still allowed to be spoken in response to concerns associated with this marginalised and demonised figure (Jones, 2011:100). The construction establishes the white working-class as a victimised and marginalised group whose racism is a reaction to their situation. The victim status is indignant as it possesses a deep-seated resentment of attention they are said to feel is given to every disadvantaged group but them (Bottero, 2009:7; Gillborn, 2009; Ware, 2008). The danger in this is how it conceals histories of antagonism and struggle. Variants of white working-class victimhood posit that 'real' racism is over and that the continued focus on the no-longer-oppressed minority comes at the neglect of other vulnerable subjects. Accordingly, antiracism needs to concede to charges of reverse racism and universalise the struggle against racism to adjust for this.

More reactionary versions contend that state multiculturalism has further neglected the white working-class already marginalised within capitalism. Enoch Powell (Solomos, 2003:61) graphically presented this argument but more recent attacks on equalities policy and antiracist education in the 1980s relied on similar logics (Hewitt, 2005:119). This multiculturalism-has-gone-too-far reasoning counters through an appeal to victimhood. ‘Working-class’ enables a claim to victimhood in economic terms while the descriptor ‘white’ thrusts blame upon government policies championing and rewarding ethnic minorities.

6.5.2 Managing Diversity

Another neoconservative variant concerns the construction of multiculturalism as segregationist, anti-cosmopolitan, imposed on an overly tolerant, guilt-ridden liberal society by illiberal, self-segregating minorities (Bruckner, 2010). Muscular liberalism (Prime Minister Cameron’s term) indicts passive antiracisms as providing cover for homophobia by facilitating the inherent illiberalism of unassailable minorities and abandoning the project of building a cohesive integrated society based on the respect for equal rights. The ConDem coalition has redefined the terms of the debate such that where/if racism continues it cannot be the failure of those who have openly declared themselves against it. Responsibility is laid at the feet of those who resist integration and engender disjointedness in our society. ‘Those who resist integration and engender disjointedness in our society’ is political code-speak for un-integrated racial ‘Others’. Alice remarked:

They [ConDem Coalition] talk about all these communities that can’t speak English. These communities that exclude themselves. And when the riots happened Cameron spoke of Britain as a broken society. The message is - and what it’s

sending out - is allowing a certain type of racism to re-emerge because they've got implicit instruction from this government because race is not on the agenda anymore.

'Too much diversity' is scapegoated for the breakdown of our societies (Goodhart, 2004). Multiculturalism is caricatured and held to be the rejection of common culture. The social democratic state purportedly cannot function without a vibrant common culture. Social cohesion remains impossible. Goodhart and his acolytes (Mirza *et al*, 2010) argue that the continued expansion of Britishness risks disintegration, a threat posed by the failure of 'immigrants' to adhere to national values or as Alice remarked 'to not learn English'. This formulation has at times been bolstered by the discourse of 'community cohesion'. It has - when aligned to the promotion of citizenship - often translated as the requirement for non-nationals to learn the British way of life or leave. Although the space for a robust discussion is not available here, it is worth noting that a politics of fear has in a certain sense turned racism into a depoliticised, dehistoricised and thus (assumed) almost naturalised fear of and incompatibility with the 'Other'. The emphasis on cultural incompatibility positions racism as an aberration. Antiracism is not needed and is of limited significance in comparison to the global threat of terrorism (Tagueiff, 2001).

Multiculturalism – accused of being permissive and soft - is held responsible for the tolerance of illiberal minorities unable or unwilling to integrate into their 'host societies' (May, 2002). Yusef described how the example of forced marriage implicitly contrasts the traditionalism of immigrants to an emancipated Britain. Forced marriage, as a cultural practice and a coded term, works as a cipher for 'race' constructing and essentialising specific groups. It also functions as an 'index' of changing racialised discourses that reflect shifting government attitudes to

community and national belonging. It is useful in thinking about changing racialised discourses to recall Solomos' work which has shown how policies, 'construct definitions of the problem to be tackled which exclude certain issues from serious consideration' (1988:142). With the problem defined in and through the incorrigibly backward belief systems of immigrants and/or the 'white working class' other racisms are discredited. Structural issues of inclusion, access to education and labour markets are off the agenda.

What does the ConDem government's 'crisis' discourse on multiculturalism mean for antiracism and antiracist policy? Alice described the situation:

We've got a government that talks about feral communities, parents not knowing where their children are. They lay the blame squarely on those communities. They are not taking any responsibility on what they can do to insure that those communities don't feel like that. It's absolving themselves of responsibility. When I can go to the 'Breaking the Cycle' launch which is about the whole shifting of the criminal justice system, prisons and probation service and I can say excuse me there's a disproportionate amount of BAME communities within the criminal justice system. And the response is 'yeah we know but we don't know what to do about it'. That is the response that we get from government. This current government doesn't really hold a lot of confidence in their understanding, knowledge or awareness of race. Race is dismissed. They just washed their hands of it. So how is that going to eliminate the disproportionate levels of BAME communities within the criminal justice system? If you're not seeing policy and practice tackling some of these issues then not only are we going to see the issue continue but it will continue to grow.

Interviewees consistently suggested that antiracism must continue to be anti-postracism and must combat the persistence of racism as anachronistic. The anti-'race' discourse of the Con-Dem Coalition government - racism has been overcome and no longer needs redress - has confounded antiracism. Equally the reconstitution of antiracism through state directed culturalist forms has enabled alternatives to be described as too politicised. For example, activists are caricatured as intent upon

‘racing’ the world in order to secure resources. The ConDem coalition’s refusal to engage with ‘race’, underpinned by the assumption that racism is aberrant to ‘our societies’, denies the very basis for doing an antiracism that is critical of the historical and current relationship between ‘race’ and state. The growing ‘consensus’ that Western societies are postrac(e)ism delegitimizes the critique of racism as inaccurate, alienating and counter-productive to the achievement of social cohesion. The role of racism in the constitution of modern Britain is all but lost.

Lentin (2008) has argued that the replacement of ‘race’ and class-based analysis with culturalist understandings has been actively promoted by state and supranational bodies such as the European Commission. The recalibration of problems once specified as racism such as Alice’s noting of racism in the criminal justice system are now located under the generalised label of ‘discrimination’. In the UK the dissolution of the Commission for Racial Equality and its absorption into the Equality and Human Rights Commission is consistent with such reasoning. The joined up approach may enable an intersectional analysis but it can often result in the erasure of the histories of how these categories are constructed. Without those histories the prospect of tackling racial inequality is very challenging. It is worth noting that collapsing ‘race’ into a more generalised discriminatory framework has not resulted in more fruitful collective action to redress the shared experiences of inequality.

In an age of austerity the culturalist agenda of diversity promotion is of course a more straightforward and, in resources terms, less taxing approach than tackling structural racism. Evan described this:

Yes let's value diversity but let's recognize that there's substantial inequality as well. I want to talk about equality. But many people were happy to buy into diversity because it didn't offend people. Everyone was different and everyone was equal in diversity. But for me that was very limiting and that did move away from racial inequality and race. So in the corporate world it may sound palatable and easy to talk about because you can talk about diversity and not talk about race at all.

Opposition to racism requires that the objective status of 'race' be debunked. This pluralist conception of diversity, however, subverts this deconstruction. It pursues a postracial programme because of racism's irrelevance not its centrality. Racism as a specifiable and qualitatively different form of discrimination comes under suspicion. The struggle against racism, worse still, is re-framed such that programs of redress are equated with reverse racism (Goldberg, 2002). Only a human rights-based universalism can *truly* be antiracist because of the belief in the generalisability of racism. The belief that systematic discrimination can be surmounted by an increased level of intercultural knowledge is at best dangerously simplistic and at worst racism coated in empty rhetoric. Racism is not understood as structuring the political culture of the western nation-state. Refusing the language of 'race' does not avoid the production of racialised inequalities. 'Race' is rejected or seen instead as a source of further division.

Nearly all of my interviewees in describing how their organisations defined racism contrasted their definition with this understanding of racism as on the political fringes or as the unwanted blemish of the far right. Through a relational definition they stressed how racism has been and continues to be significant to social, political and economic life. Moreover, in rejecting racism as the preserve of a 'fundamentalist' minority they were able to centre issues of social justice and

political and economic power. They were also keen to situate racism in an intersectional analytic connecting racism to other political antagonisms, such as capitalism and sexism. In a sense eliminating the concept and category of 'race' is the wrong focus. The pressing concern ought *not* to be 'race' but its effects, primarily racism. Lila spoke to the problems in reductive definitions of racism:

I think there's different ways of looking at racism. You can look at far right racists groups who believe if you're white you are superior to those who are not white and therefore you can subjugate those people and exploit those people systematically. And some people will look at race and think well I'm not racist because I'm not on the streets attacking Asians and Jews physically. I just treat everyone the same.

The ConDem coalition government in keeping a revised multiculturalism on the agenda (focused on ethnoreligious difference, integration, gender etc.) is able to assert its own antiracist credentials. This hollowed out multiculturalism enables the politicians to stake a claim to cosmopolitan inclusion in multicultural Britain and its, 'shared national identity open to everyone' (Solomos, 2003: 213-4). This professed commitment to racial equality acts as a means of shutting down antiracist critique.

6.6 Conclusion

This chapter has critically evaluated the possibility of a postracialist antiracism through Gilroy's formulation of an antiracism purged of any lingering idea of 'race'. Through interview material I have explored several key dimensions of the postracial problematic. I would argue - in spite of the practical problems and warranted hesitation expressed - that this dialogue and indeed the extension of postracial insights into activist work has been a productive engagement. Postracialism invites

antiracism to consider a different set of questions beyond contesting racist discrimination. And in so doing it disturbs the commonsense footing of 'race'. But the dialogue is most certainly mutually beneficial. Interviewees clarified in explicit terms the pressing problems that postracialism is confronted with, especially the lack of a coherent political program and an examination of its conditions of possibility. The next chapter will critically survey and evaluate postracial bioscience, another site of the deconstruction of 'race'.

Chapter 7 The Actual Existing 'Postracial'? : Postracial BioScience and the Beginning of the End of 'Race'

'Race' is simply a poor proxy for the environmental and genetic causes of disease or drug response...Pooling people in 'race' silos is akin to zoologists grouping raccoons, tigers and okapis on the basis that they are all stripey (Kahn, 2006: 903).

Science is about knowledge and power. In our time natural science defines the human being's place in nature and history and provides the instruments of domination of the body and the community. By constructing the category nature, natural science imposes limits on history and self-formation. So science is part of the struggle over the nature of our lives (Haraway 1997:145).

7.1 Introduction

'Race' – as we saw in the previous chapter - has a certain political utility in spite of problems with reification. Postracialism advances a compelling argument for putting the category under erasure but, as argued, ethical and political considerations re-frame erasure as a gradualist process of working with *and* against 'race'. In this chapter, I will critically survey another arena where postracialism is 'practiced' or 'experimented'. Adherence to sets of rigid dichotomies between science and society, facts and values, and the biological and the social has been a continuing theme in the ongoing debate on the biological status of 'race'. The history of 'race' as a natural category used in service of racist oppression through the appeal to biological differences, however, means that the intersections of the biological and the social in racialised categories are unlikely to be innocuous. This chapter explores postracial

bioscience defined by St Louis (forthcoming) as a robust scientific approach which without the hesitancy and contradiction of earlier critiques consistently deconstructs 'race'. I argue that postracial bioscience provides the affirmative basis for the ethical and political critiques examined earlier, extends beyond the empiricist assumptions of positivist paradigms and ultimately enriches epistemological, methodological and ethical understandings.

The chapter begins with section 7.2 which is a 'history of the present' of postracial bioscience. The section with the aid of archival data traces some key moments in postracial bioscience. I do not attempt a comprehensive understanding of the historical record nor do I attempt a linear mapping of how the present has emerged from the past. This 'history of the present' is part of my methodological intervention to use history as a way of diagnosing the present. Section 7.3 'actually-existing biological difference' argues that postracial bioscience offers a scientifically informed and ethically compelling account of human biodiversity. Section 7.4 'postracial causality' refutes racialised understandings of disease aetiology contending that social-scientific explanations offer rigorous explanations of disparities. Section 7.5 'postracial medicine' shows how therapeutics and diagnostics rebut racialised frameworks and outlines the improved understandings and enhanced treatments made possible by postracial medicine and biomedical research. Section 7.6 'the conclusion' examines some problems in the project of postracial bioscience arguing that the ethical imperative to stop using 'race' is not so straightforward. Postracial bioscience is indeed haunted by the postracial paradox. Overall the chapter argues that postracialism must make science into an evaluative

enterprise as the question of human biodiversity is not one to be authoritatively answered by scientific discovery.

7.1.1 What's at Stake in Racial Biology?

Moral and political climates have lessened inhibitions about using notions of racial difference in the decades following Nazism particularly when such statements are heavily qualified. Recent research in genetics asserts the scientific existence of 'race' bringing a 'halo of legitimacy' to racist stereotypes where with increasing frequency purely genetic arguments account for behaviours resulting from a complex combination of factors (Bourdieu, 2003: xi). Research purporting to demonstrate that genetic disorders are distributed differentially according to racial groups threatens to render social-scientific theorizing about the (in)significance of 'race' obsolete. The research arguably bestows an independent reality to racial categorisation simultaneously refuelling the age old logic of, 'if genetic disorders are differentially distributed by 'race' and ethnicity, why aren't other human traits and characteristics (ibid).' 'Race', as a natural, timeless concept outside of human intervention, stands as one of the most persistent residues of racism.

Social problems - educational underachievement, poverty and violence - in a climate of genetic explanation are increasingly attributed to 'deficient' or 'problematic' genes rather than to the social conditions in which people live (McCann-Mortimer, Augoustinos & Le Courteur, 2004). The mere existence of health disparities is often uncritically interpreted by biomedical researchers as proof-positive of innate differences (Outram & Ellison, 2010). Simplistic fallacies like those using 'race' to

infer genetic causality displace sociological arguments. The examination of structural, socioeconomic, political and cultural issues underpinning health disparities is redundant if social ills originate in our genes. Biological factors in disease aetiology and health outcomes are frequently overemphasised relative to social and environmental determinants causing a distortion in the perception of why disparities exist (the social relations of power) and often extending blame to victims (racial determinism) (Ahmad and Bradby, 2007).

The uncritical acceptance of intrinsically significant qualities exhibits a foundational fascination with and belief in the profundity of phenotypical appearances and racial essences. Postracial bioscience is a holistic approach that pursues the unravelling of the precise relationship between racism and health with particular attention to the role of structural factors in generating, exacerbating or sustaining the impact of genetic variation on health. The undying fascination with naturalised racial propensities and racial heredity is pregnant with ethical implications. The assumption of deep physiological (read internal) characteristics that match external phenotypical differences is significant *because* of the social and cultural meanings attached to it. In the age of biology where popular interest in genetic science is at heightened pitch the real ethical question is not what race is, but what race does.

Despite a large body of scientific evidence, political claims and moral hopes to the contrary the biological notion of 'race' has traction in certain quarters. Its persistence cannot be reduced to the stubborn survival of intuitive racism and ignorant curiosity. Contemporary racial biology weaves acceptable and formal scientific hypotheses in conjunction with commonsensical racial myths. It may be possible to engage the

problems and questions that arise from ethical evasions by unpacking this fusion of myth, fact and intuition.

7.2 Postracial Beginnings

7.2.1 Boas and Debunking Racial Determinism

Boas presented an early example of a positivist epistemology whose systematic approach to human biological diversity stressed ‘specificity and accuracy’ and rebutted ideas of racial value.⁵⁶ His statistical approach, later paradigmatic in American cultural anthropology, used measurement and integrated environmental variables such as nutrition which he posited might impact the distribution of traits (Stocking, 1982:168). The study of immigrant morphology demonstrated the plasticity of types giving intellectual ground to contemporary postracial approaches that examine the role of lifestyle, diet, health and disease in comparative populations. Phren and colleagues (1999) contest determinist arguments about racial predispositions to certain diseases. Their research shows that breast cancer incidence rates are three times higher in American-Japanese women than in Japanese women living in Japan. Some discrepancy is attributable to differential detection rates but echoing Boas the study stresses that social and structural differences likely explain incidence rate differentials.

Boas was well aware of the problems of accurately measuring and representing the

⁵⁶ Franz Boas Papers, American Philosophical Society (FBP, APS) Lectures ‘The Races of Man’ 1896.

limitless variability of humanity; 'For instance, if we study the biological problem of a race, then we are of course investigating phenomena which are determined partly by heredity and partly by environmental influences.'⁵⁷ Boas debunked racial essences and problematised the usefulness of the concept. He also recognised the interactive role between biology and the external environment - a key pillar of postracial bioscience. Today geneticists stress the individual not the group and like Boas contend disease risk is the result of the complex interplay between an unknown constellation of genetic variants, environmental factors, and lifestyle (Rotimi, 2004).

Boas - confronted with ever-changing racial boundaries - pragmatically constituted what 'race' was not (culture) and what it was (morphology). This definition was part of the professionalization of a 'value-free' anthropology and the introduction of scientific methods to the study of culture (Hyatt, 1990). It satisfied the practical need of cataloguing physical difference *and* enabled the ethico-political contestation of 'race' hierarchy. Boas professionalised cultural anthropology in part by relegating racial taxonomy to physical anthropology. His scepticism enabled future reflection; Why do we have the concept? What do we need it for?

The effort to expunge 'race' from social-science by assigning it an established place in the biological sciences had the unintended consequence of legitimating the scientific study of 'race'. Scientific formalism stripped 'race' of its historical content and (re)located it in a dispassionate taxonomy. But the question, 'Where in nature do we fit?' could not be answered in sanitised biological terms. Connotations of unequal value and capacity and of inherent behavioural and temperamental differences

⁵⁷ FBP, APS Lectures # XX May 15, 1917

persisted. Cho and Sankar (2004) - alive to these histories - argue that the innumerable destructive episodes in the history of genetic research make it crucial to consider the ethical and social implications of researching human genetic variation. Several problems Boas identified inform postracial science: the lack of genetically distinct populations (spectrum of variability), the reification of fluid and relational categories into biological/stable ones (nutrition affects morphology) and the stigmatisation and preclusion of attention to the social causes of disparities (social-constructivist critique).

7.2.2 Proto-Postracial Bioscience

Boas' contemporary Alain Locke radically re-theorised 'race' as a cultural formation defined in various ways as a social group that shared a common history and occupied a geographical region (Locke, 1992). Locke - rather than only scrutinise the pernicious conclusions of racism - analysed raciology's first principle; the claim 'race' *existed* as a scientific category. The analysis gave way to a more complex concept threading cultural, political and economic explanations.

Beyond Boas' objective taxonomies, Locke's proto-postracialism could not be discussed without reference to racism: 'When the consciousness of science is fully integrated with the consciousness of human value, the greatest dualism which now weighs humanity down, the split between the material, the mechanical and scientific and the moral and ideal will be destroyed.'⁵⁸ This ethically informed corrective

⁵⁸ Alain Locke Papers - Writings By Locke: 'Notes' Box 164-142 Folder 23 *Notes from Europe 1923*

forms a foundation for imagining a postracial bioscience. It is epistemologically and methodologically precise ('race' lacks taxonomic significance) as well as ethically compelling ('race' is destructive to social relations).

Locke foregrounds the discriminatory practices performed in the name of 'race' without the obfuscating effects of epiphenomenal racial categories. Locke - not only concerned with factual provenance (non/existence of 'races'), acknowledges how racism contributes to the (re)production of the concept. A year after the lecture series entitled *Lectures of the Theory and Practice of Race* the Russian revolution refigured the American social landscape with hysteria and backlash. The Red Scare, the Palmer raids, the execution of Sacco and Vanzetti, a wave of urban 'race' riots including those in Washington DC (Locke's base) and xenophobic immigration restrictions formed a context of fear that quieted Locke's critique of 'race' and his analysis of American racism.

Proto-postracial reappraisal contributed to the development of critical theories that gathered force and depth during the 1930s as the biological veracity debates expanded. Jim Crow racism and the rise of Nazism stimulated proto-postracialist works like Haddon and Huxley's *We Europeans: A Survey of Racial Problems* (1935) and Barzun's *'Race': A Study in Modern Superstition* (1937). *Man's Most Dangerous Myth: The Fallacy of 'Race'* (Montagu, 1942) forcefully stated that 'race' was empirically unsecure, methodologically unreliable and its continued usage ethically dangerous. Hitler's Germany made 'race' deeply problematic. Through scientific categorisation the category came to represent a visible physical characteristic held to signify the abilities, character and histories of people.

Pernicious applications in the Third Reich motivated Haddon, Huxley and Montagu to call for the discontinuation of racial terminology within scientific discourse advocating ethnicity be used in its place. 'Race' was over-determined by lethal meanings and no longer capable of rehabilitation.

The long history of 'race' in genocidal projects has been articulated in contemporary postracialism by Gilroy (2004) who argues that raciology prefigures the discourses in which it circulates. Dangerous meanings appear unavoidably lodged in the category. 'Race' cannot be easily re-signified. Ethnicity - a collective social group grounded not in determinist biology but on shared social characteristics including cultural traditions and languages - was proposed as an alternative. Ethnicity often collapsed into 'race' with the confusing of physical differences with cultural, intellectual and moral differences.

The conceptual and linguistic shift signalled in ethnicity represents an important chapter in an explanatory struggle. Ethnicity expanded the scientific imaginary to examine social, political and economic factors and paved the way for the contestation of the narrow focus on racial biology. In 2009, for example, the Institute of Medicine, an authoritative adviser on issues of health and medicine under the auspices of the US National Academies, published *'Race', Ethnicity, and Language Data: Standardization for Health Care Quality Improvement*. The extensive report notes the limitations and dangers of 'race' (limited reliability and external validity) and recommends ethnicity to capture 'real' cultural differences that can impact differences in care and have clinical significance at both patient and system-levels.

Ethnicity, however, suffers from vagueness and it is often difficult to specify which differences it captures. Are wealth and income or citizenship status more significant than language or political allegiances? Slippage and confusion complicates the process of developing a critical account of ethnicity as an idea. And without that, developing a sociological account of racism is difficult. Determining which differences matter and in what circumstances is problematic (Carter, 2000). Proto-postracial bioscience, taken collectively, asserted the common origin of humanity and denounced the notion of any inherent inequalities between racial groups. Proto-postracial bioscience though replete with hesitancy and inconsistency still formed the groundwork for the UNESCO refutation.

7.2.3 The UNESCO Rejection

In the aftermath of the Final Solution UNESCO published a landmark statement refuting 'race' science. The rebuttal teamed a range of experts together in an effort to critically examine the 'race' concept, marking the beginning of the decline of the biological concept (Reardon, 2004:12). Post-war liberal optimism structured by the belief in the power of internationalism and indeed science itself to prevent death and destruction was at the ideological core of the project. The task was the moment for 'breaking the bioscientific tie of race, blood and culture' which had enabled extermination camps and now threatened to destabilise a fragile post-war harmony (Stepan, 2003: 331). The reclamation of an authentically inclusive humanity to safeguard against future atrocity and to discredit the Nazi calculus of racial identification was indispensable to this postracial bioscience. Peace was best secured through the affirmation of a common species being which formed the backbone of

the international human rights legislation and for many was the hope for a new world.

UNESCO's effort to disseminate scientific facts and remove racial prejudice was beleaguered by transnational scientific and political controversies, and perhaps predictably, fell short of its ambitions. The conclusion that 'races' could be accurately understood as dynamic 'breeding groups' and that a clear distinction needed to be drawn between 'race' as a 'biological fact' and 'race' as a 'myth' left open the possibility of preservation in specialist usage (UNESCO, 1950).

The incomplete character of the rejection was quickly seized upon. A cohort of reactionary life scientists claiming to respond to the ideological character of the *Statement* pressured for a second panel. Truculent disputes revealed how little consensus (beyond disapproval of the Holocaust) existed in the scientific establishment and resulted in a failed rejection. Within the year the physical anthropologists and geneticists had dismissed the *Statement* as polemical and reawakened the categories, premises, empirical records and authority of an older, supposedly discredited body of work once dedicated to measuring difference (Brattaain, 2007). The historical inertia of 'race' continues today to generate a self-perpetuating system of racialised evidence.

The second panel also scrutinized constructivist arguments suggesting that the *Statement* precluded biological scientists whose unbiased, expert research would have refrained from clouded analysis and empty idealism. Scientism remains a rhetorical strategy for racial realists who claim blind commitments to political

correctness or naïve claims to equality impede the recognition of real biological differences such as those related to intelligence(see Watson, 2007) and athletic ability (see Entine, 2000). The life scientists' *Statement on the Nature of Race and Race Differences* rejected social-scientific explanations in its unwillingness to interrogate the validity of 'race' as a natural category and in the affirmation of older scientific traditions by differentiating between 'non-literate' and 'more civilized' people on intelligence tests (UNESCO, 1951). Resuscitation of these evaluative descriptors reinforces Cavalli-Sforza's (2000) contention that the reliance on essentialist notion of 'race' (fixed biologically rooted differences) is often the *sine qua non* of racism.

'Race' even with the memory of the Holocaust still immediate could not be laid to rest. A significant historical moment for delegitimizing the political and scientific force of 'race' remained un(der)realised. The refutation *did* create an ethico-political space where anti-'race' and antiracism could be legitimate intellectual positions. The first *Statement*, to be sure, received positive press coverage globally with hundreds of stories, editorial and radio features, as well as prominent features in American newsreels, public symposia and television programs (Brattain, 2007:1398). This public education campaign was a key part of the postracial endeavour to dismantle 'race' and to develop an affirmative humanistic project through the widespread confirmation of our common humanity.

The 1967 Statement on 'race', issued at the apex of the US Civil Rights Movement went further proclaiming, 'The schools should ensure that their curricula contain

scientific understandings about ‘race’ and human unity, and that invidious distinctions about peoples are not made in texts and classrooms’ (cited in Montagu 1972: 161). Primary education is a space where we might expect to see concerted effort to communicate contemporary scientific perspectives on the nonexistence of racial difference. University education in particular provides an arena for the transmission of scientific knowledge because it reaches students at a formative period, exposes them directly to the teaching of highly-credentialed scientists, and it does so through the face-to-face exchange that Rogers (1995) considered most effective in swaying firmly-held convictions. UNESCO postracialism relied on the assumption that racism was corrigible and that scientific facts were effective artillery in combating racism. The struggle over the ethical and scientific status of ‘race’ raises instructive questions for the development of a postracial programme; is education an effective antiracist tool? Can rational argument change a phenomenon seemingly moored in irrationality? UNESCO’s postracial experiment also faced the familiar ‘translation challenge’.

The anthropologist Wilton Krogman circulated the *Statement* to his university-educated neighbours. Krogman reported that although, ‘cogently written at a high level of scientific understanding’ his educated sample, ‘did not get it’⁵⁹. As the rejection of racial biology is the bedrock for postracialism’s ethical and political projects, this warrants attention. Why didn’t they ‘get it’? Was the problem scientific comprehension? Or was it the unsettling of firmly held convictions about racial mythology? Labour and management relations leaders also warned Montagu that an

⁵⁹ <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0007/000733/073351eo.pdf> (accessed 25 April 2012)

average worker would not get past the first paragraph, despite the text being written for a reasonably educated lay audience (cited in Brattain, 2007: 1406). These episodes are potential sites for reflection about a future project of re-launching a public education campaign.

7.3 Actually-Existing Biological Differences

7.3.1 Rethinking Difference

Irresolvable contradictions, ambiguities and even postracial intervention have not presaged the death of ‘race’. Theodosius Dobzhansky, the evolutionary biologist and signatory to the 1950 Statement, in light of genetic evidence modified ‘race’ while preserving folkloric commonsense. He defined ‘race’ as, ‘a reproductive community of sexual and cross-fertilizing individuals which share in a common gene pool’ (1950:405). Uncritically importing language from the phenomenal world set a damaging inheritance upon genetic research. Crude usage of ‘race’ as a proxy for difference inevitably limits the utility of information obtained through the study of the real genetic variation that exists among populations with ancestry from all parts of the world (Soo-Jin *et al.*, 2001). Postracial bioscience develops a more precise conceptual scheme with the analytical rigour to accurately explain and understand actually-existing genetic differences and to ultimately move beyond the obfuscating language of ‘racial populations’. In this section I outline several postracial approaches which offer more sophisticated and accurate accounts of biological

difference and direct focus on richer sociological accounts of the causal variables involved in (re)producing racialised disparities.

Why, despite all the conceptual disorder and methodological inconsistency, do researchers insist 'race' exists? Can such a fuzzy category be a serviceable concept? Conservationists defended preservation amidst a crisis shortly after the defeat of Nazism illustrating some of the classic problems with conceptualisation. Racial theory regarded 'race' as an explanatory principle *sui generis*, which can itself explain various dimensions of human action and human inequality. Seepage into scientific research coupled with the social objectivity of 'race' made it difficult to break that intellectual inheritance - to constitute 'race' as an object of analysis, something to be explained with reference to other modes of human action. The elision between common-sense thinking and social-scientific thinking that seems endemic to 'race' makes the understanding and explanation of certain structural, objective and ontologically real features of social reality difficult to apprehend.

The racial population represented a conceptual break with the physiological 'dividing lines' of modernity. Genetics displaced the historical overemphasis on the visible and reworked difference through a threshold of visibility beyond phenotypes. The molecular lens undermines 'race' reducing it to something of an afterimage (Gilroy, 2000). Continued developments in biochemistry and population genetics have enabled a rigorous assessment of biological diversity which discredits the coherence of 'race'. The distinctive attributes of populations often termed 'races' have no proven biological significance (Marshall, 1993:117).

Skin colour is in actuality a poor proxy for shared genetic heritage (Parra *et al*, 2003). The social-scientific conclusion that ‘race’ is socially, political and legally constructed was confirmed by the Human Genome Project, the successful mapping of the chemical base pairs constituting our DNA. The identification of humanity’s genes showed high levels of genetic similarity and the impossibility of any sharply demarcated groupings (Bolnick, 2008:72). Postracial bioscience consistently confirms that there are no genetically pure populations, that variation in phenotypic traits cannot be assumed to reflect variation in genotypic traits and that using racialised categories as if they were genetic variables tends to reify these categories as immutable entities rather than recognising these to be context-specific and fluid forms of socio-cultural identification (Outram, & Ellison, 2010).

7.3.2 Postracial Alternatives: Difference Without ‘Race’

The contention that external phenotypic traits do not possess greater validity in classification in comparison to internal ones created a quandary rendering formal racial taxonomy impossible (Reardon, 2004: 22). Postracial bioscience charts a methodological course out of this quandary. Wilson (2001) and his research team compared the relative effectiveness of two methods of identifying clusters of people who have distinct patterns of drug-metabolizing enzyme Single Nucleotide Polymorphisms (SNPs). SNPs are a type of genetic variation in a DNA sequence that occurs when a single nucleotide in a genome is altered. For example, Adenine (A) in the first sequence (ACGA) is substituted for Cytosine (C) in the otherwise identical sequence (CCGA). The research demonstrated that clusters identified by genotyping using microsatellite DNA (repeating sequences of 2-6 base pairs of DNA) are far

more robust than geographic and racial labels. Microsatellite DNA enabled an accurate technique for identifying clustering that has significant implications for the future of research in pharmacogenomics - where racial labels are 'both insufficient and inaccurate representations' of different genetic patterns (Wilson, 2001: 258).

Wilson and his research associates showed how 'race' cannot work with the fluidity and multiple affiliations of population genetics. The research - in terms of advancing scientific understanding of how populations respond differently to drugs - also introduces empirical methods for assessing population structure and for mapping real differences. Crucially, it addresses valid methodological concerns without investing self-identified 'race' with biological significance building a scientific imagination oriented towards improving human health by reimagining biodiversity beyond the exclusionary codes of 'race'.

Postracial findings have not ended the dispute about whether 'race' can be justified genetically or by accrued health benefits to racialised groups, but it has made significant impacts. Reference to 'race' within health and biosciences has become seriously qualified. Kennedy (2001) describes it as a 'probabilistic marker' while Nei and Roychoudhury (1982: 41) remark that it is 'generally highly statistically significant'. Its analytical force is significantly limited, if not invalidated, by qualification. Keeping 'race' in such qualified terms raises epistemological and methodological questions; can such a vague object be of use in addressing the root causes of health disparities? If genetic populations are changeable and subject to shifting migratory patterns that make them indefinable in absolute (racial) terms is it

dangerous to retain the language of 'race' implicitly suggesting a causal relationship or meaningful probabilistic correlation between genetic clusters?

Postracial bioscience answers in ways portending new frameworks. Livingstone, argued that, 'There are no races, there are only clines' (1962:279). A cline is a geographic gradation of a species wherein, 'the frequencies of some genes...change gradually in various geographical directions, so that the differences between populations are proportional to the distances between the localities which they inhabit' (Boyd, 1950:204). A species may consist of different variations but these variations fade into one another and there are not sharp distinguishing lines.

Geographically comprehensive samples confirm that human genetic variation is characterised by spatial gradients of allele frequency rather than categorical variation. Genetic patterns (described as isolation by distance) vary for the historical reasons of drift, selection and demographic history (Cavalli-Sforza & Bodmer, 1998: 518). In short, genetic differences between populations are roughly proportional to the geographic distance between them. Clinal patterns do not imply that spatial transitions are completely smooth, or that there cannot be culturally or demographically induced differences even among very local groups. The observed quasi-continuous spatial pattern of human variation can be attributed to how new variation arises by mutation and how new alleles are geographically localised. New alleles spread through the slow process of positive selection and are suspect to stochastic aspects of birth, death and populational movement. Clines provide a non-essentialist language for grasping the complex and constantly shifting nature of

human variation. Clines also show selective pressures and not 'race' to be the most important factor in the analysis of human variation.

Not long after Livingstone, Lewontin discovered that human biodiversity is greatest within so-called racial groups suggesting racial groups were epistemologically vacuous. 'Racial classification' Lewontin wrote, 'is now seen to be of virtually no genetic or taxonomic significance either (and, therefore) no justification can be offered for its continuance (1972: 396).' Population studies reproduced his findings showing genetic variation is essentially continuous through space and that genetically distinct and internally homogenous groups are fictions. Outside of evolutionary biology, craniometric (Relethford, 1994) and DNA evidence (Barbujani *et al* 1997; Jorde *et al*, 2000) show differences between members of the same population account for about 85% of overall genetic diversity. 'Race' introduces a quantitative distinction within a species despite genetic variability not being restricted to such discrete and consistent packages (Cooper & Freeman, 1999). This research becomes a space for the humanist affirmation of the indissoluble unity of all life at the genetic level leading to a stronger sense of the particularity of our species (Gilroy, 2000).

This science imaginatively rethinks relatedness not in terms of what best to preserve in a museum (Human Genome Diversity Project) or what has commercial application (racialised pharmaceuticals) but in terms of human health and human well-being. Characterising genetic variation without recourse to 'race' helps biomedical research to better understand differential susceptibility to disease,

differential response to pharmacological agents and the complex interaction of genetic and environmental factors in producing phenotypes.

Bhopal and Donaldson (1998) argue for the discontinuance of the 'race' concept amongst the scientific community. Such action, they maintain, will allow science to break free from a nomenclature developed for non-scientific purposes and to participate in conceptualising the actual basis of racial disparities. The scientific usage of social categories can be interpreted as an endorsement of their validity. The avoidance of loose terminology for these health-care professionals might influence everyday language and counter the predominance of 'race' in the everyday – a sort of gradualist program of dissolution.

Nature does not authoritatively answer the question; what is the best way to represent human genome diversity? Postracial arguments without an epistemically guaranteed explanation are faced with the prospect of moving beyond the norms and assumptions of racial thinking. The privileging of certain theoretical interests, practical aims and value preferences over others is not to be dismissed as 'subjective'. Following Latour this is actually what enables the staking of a knowledge claim (Latour, 1999). It is crucial for postracialism to ask, what choices are available? What are the wider social, political and ethical ramifications? The project of developing nonracial conceptual frameworks for making sense of the wide array of biological diversity will be an inherently political and ethical one.

7.4.1 Racial Commonsense & Psycho-social Postracialisms

‘The physical anthropologist and the man in the street’, wrote the second UNESCO panel, ‘both know that races exist the former from the scientifically recognizable and measured congeries of traits which he uses in classifying the varieties of man; the latter from the immediate evidence of his senses...’ (UNESCO, 1951). The conflation of anthropological knowledge with the intuitive perception of the ‘man on the street’ seems to suggest that phenotype reveals something significant about one’s biological inheritance. The equivalence of social objectivity and scientific confirmation show the close relationship between racial ideology and the scientific agenda. Lila made a similar linkage between the social facticity of ‘race’ and antiracist understandings of difference:

I think that if one asks an academic, if one asks a scientist or if one asks the mum on the street, and used that term race we would somehow accept that what we’re talking about is one’s colour.

The panel and Lila concede ‘race’ has a literal ‘recognisability’ in the social world. They are appeals that suggest its epistemological coherence is admittedly lacking. Suturing racial commonsense to scientific objectivity seems to form an invincible racial realism. It is the irrationality of ‘race’ that has enabled it to endure rational scrutiny. The invidious work ‘race’ performs is enabled by these confused premises and ‘experiential’ claims which allow for objective scientists and ‘race’-equality practitioners to advance arguments based on anecdotal evidence as if it were so true as to be axiomatic. The circularity of racial realism prevents careful reflection on how the concept was used in their own thinking carrying forward a standing

assumption that innate racial differences actually existed. But why might science want to eliminate 'race'?

Montagu's answer speaks to virulent scientific racisms which employed racial differences to argue against integration and equal social, political and economic rights:

It (racism) declares that mankind is naturally divisible into 'races' which have originated independently of each other, and that these 'races' are each characterised by the possession of inborn physical and mental traits which together serve to distinguish them from one another. These groups are always inferior.⁶⁰

Montagu shows racism is a causal process (re)producing 'race' as a primary ascriptive marker of individual and group characteristics. 'Race' can serve to validate discrimination and incite violence. Focus on the social process of racism moves beyond scientific objectivism - narrowly confined to understanding properties and characteristics of racial knowledge - transcending the beliefs and consciousness of the individuals that develop and apply them.

Psychosocial approaches (Clark *et al*, 1999), some of which group under postracial bioscience, also eschew scientific objectivism by focusing on the experiences and consequences of institutional and interpersonal racism. Research argues 'race' remains a potent social category with real consequences including unemployment, limited educational attainment and limited access to resources that would support the attainment of better health status. Intense residential segregation in the USA (Lipsitz, 2011) relegates many racialised minorities to places without markets that stock fresh

⁶⁰ Ashley Montagu Professional Papers Box 78 'Racism, Religion and Anthropology' draft, 1947

fruits and vegetables and neighbourhoods that are not safe to walk in. The unavailability of quality produce and the impossibility of physical exercise results in nutritionally impoverished diets and sedentary lifestyles - a disastrous combination for health.

Stress as a negative consequence of the experience of racial discrimination or harassment can take the form of depression and anxiety - both associated with adverse health outcomes. Oths *et al* (2001) accounted for low birth weights by investigating how entry level service jobs in fast-food restaurants and factories placed workers under high demands and provided them with little autonomy in, for example, being able to take a break. Examination of the social realities of racism enables the explanation and description of racialised inequalities without relying on 'race' showing how racisms have direct physical consequences and how such oppression can become internalised, damaging self-esteem and potentially compromising available social support (Krieger & Sidney, 1996). Focus on the damaging consequences of racism (for oppressed and oppressor) can enable the development of cosmopolitan ethical obligations that self-consciously set aside claims to racial particularity in favour of authentically inclusive pursuits (Hill, 2009).

Research also documents the relationship of stress to lowered health outcomes. A recent study experimentally demonstrated a mechanism by which emotional stress (women giving care to chronically ill children) could actually cause cellular damage (Epel *et al*, 2004). Individuals experiencing racialised stress have shown similar cellular damage and have been connected to increased probability of pre-term and low birth weight delivery. Stress brought on by the experience of racism has also

been shown to negatively affect the mental health of preschool children (Caughy *et al.*, 2004).

The research I am consolidating under postracial bioscience demonstrates that biology cannot be reduced to a sequence of DNA molecules. The psychosocial dimensions of physical health are clear reminders that genes are only one component of our complex biology. Psychosocial research also show that the regulation and expression of genes is subject to extensive modulation by other genes as well as by non-genetic internal and external factors. The usefulness of 'race' as a tool for understanding diseases is limited precisely because of the complexity of the disease process. Conversely, psychosocial models focusing on racism can offer insightful clues about the causal forces involved in unequal health outcomes. We may be more equipped to develop effective prevention and intervention strategies in understanding causality in more sophisticated terms.

In this way the psychosocial approach to racial discrimination represents a theoretical advance over racial-genetic models. The paradigm integrates what is unique about the experience of racism and examines how that experience generates a particular configuration of stressors associated with health and disease. The approach - using 'race' as a social construct with objective consequences - enables an analysis of racial discrimination and the cognitive and emotional efforts to cope with that stressor. The model may, sociologically speaking, over-emphasise the individual deflecting attention away from the broader social and cultural field (institutionalised racism in employment and education) that generates inequalities in the first instance.

Social-constructivist approaches reject genetic determinism and attempt to remedy the individualism in psychosocial models.

7.4.2 Social-Constructivism and Postracial Bioscience

The use of ‘race’ in epidemiological research has been described as the practice of ‘black box epidemiology’ (Anand, 1999). Stated differently, the exact causal mechanism behind the association remains hidden (black) but the inference is that the causal mechanism may be found within the association (box). Black box epidemiology restricts all explanation to the biological. In this explanatory haze ‘race’ operates as a ‘sponge variable’ capturing a host of unmeasured factors that impact health but do not provide the information needed to address health disparities. It would appear that there is an ethical obligation to attempt to identify, measure and address these factors directly. Structural approaches undertake this task. Nutrition, occupation, unemployment, substandard housing and racism all have physiological effects. And in many instances researchers have not figured out how to accurately and effectively capture or measure these factors (Pappas *et al*, 1993).

Postracial approaches (hoping to inform prevention and intervention strategies) examine structural forces in order to investigate and identify the exact causal mechanisms reproducing inequalities. ‘Race’ is more than a proxy for some unspecified combination of environmental, behavioural and genetic factors. The American Center for Disease Control reports that the difference in the percentage of white and black children who suffer from asthma is one percent. Hospitalisation and death from asthma, however, is three times higher for black

children. In the predominantly Black borough of East Harlem New York the rate of hospitalisation is two hundred and twenty three per ten thousand as compared to the forty six per ten thousand in largely white areas of Manhattan (Luz *et al*, 2006).

Residential segregation is a leading cause for this difference which is of an entirely different magnitude from those associated with potential genetic differences.

Research suggests that aetiologies related to disparities in asthma are attributable to environmental differences of toxic exposure, housing quality and access to health care (Noah, 1998). Reintroducing social-scientific reasoning into disease aetiology and treatment shows differences in health status have little to do with genetics but rather derive from differences in culture, diet, socioeconomic status, access to healthcare, education, marginalisation, and stress (Collins, 2004).

Hundreds perhaps even thousands of disorders including cancer are misleadingly categorised as genetic (Duster, 2003:55). A renewed genetic determinism ultimately diverts both public opinion and research dollars from examining structural factors that account for patterns of disease variation. The diversion of money away from research on disease susceptibility, occurrence, aetiology, and treatment response is well documented (Krieger and Fee, 1994; Ossorio and Duster, 2005; Fausto-Sterling, 2008). Spina bifida, for example, is a disorder with a genetic *and* environmental component. How the condition is defined has important implications for the development of screening and treatment programs. Spina bifida could be accurately categorized as an industrial-environmental disorder which would shift policy from carrier screening to cleaning up toxicity and most importantly controlling and stopping the production of toxins (Duster, 2003:56). Genetic characterisation instead directs policy to gene screening and other high-tech forms of handling the ‘genetic’

problem when in reality an extra dose of multi-vitamins could cure it and other neural tube defects (Duster, 2003:58).

In 1997 the American National Institute of Health broke with the long-lasting racial logic associating cystic fibrosis with Western Europeans publishing a landmark document recognising the risk to *all* populations. The state of California following the publication passed what might be described as postracial bioscience legislation which legally required all providers who deliver obstetric care to offer maternal serum alphafetoprotein (MSAFP) screening to pregnant women. The primary purpose of MSAFP screening is to detect foetuses with neural tube defects. It can also be used for detecting chromosomal abnormalities like Down's-syndrome. The institutionalisation of prenatal diagnostic testing to *all* helps to insure a healthy birth, enables selective abortion of foetal anomalies and disrupts the powerful association of 'race' and disease.

Genetic screening approaches, however, can compound racial stratification. Limited financial resources, for instance, may preclude access to testing and/or the ability to carry out any measures indicated by test results. Genetic testing, where obtained, still involves the risk of societal stigmatisation of the disabled. Furthermore, classifying spina bifida as a 'racial condition' is reification *par excellence*. If science can establish racially specific conditions then biologically discrete 'races' exist prior to their social formation. The continued assignment of environmental conditions to the genetic highlights the challenge of multi-factoral causality. Genes and the environment are in continuous interaction with environmental factors being able to alter genetic expression. Despite the absence of identifiable genes, more genetic

(read racialised) emphasis is generally placed on heart disease, cancer and a host of other diseases where environmental factors may contribute to initiation and progression (Duster, 2003:97).

The enthusiasm for genomic solutions reflects the optimism generated by the rapid rate of progress made in molecular genetics *and* corresponding beliefs about the failures (and suggested futility) of social programs and social solutions.

Significantly, the belief that genetic causes are more tractable than environmental ones finds reinforcement in neoliberalism. Framing racialised disparities in social-structural terms would equally frame ameliorative strategies. Neoliberalism rejects addressing social inequalities through redistribution and the expansion of social welfare programs which could potentially realign present socioeconomic structures (Harvey, 2005).

In societies polarised by wealth distribution overall levels of population health are correspondingly lower for the simple reason that those at the bottom of the income distribution will have lost more health than those at the top have gained (Lynch & Kaplan, 1997). Inequitable income distribution may also be associated with a set of social processes and policies that systematically under-invest in human physical health and social infrastructure. This underinvestment may have health consequences. Nations that tolerate high levels of income inequality, for instance, often have fewer initiatives in public health, education about smoking, diet and exercise. Also, such countries tend to have less strict environmental pollution standards, provide less support for cultural festivals, civic performance and art shows and have higher concentrations of cigarette and alcohol advertising (Kawachi, 1997).

Such widespread disinvestment has serious implications for the health of the population. Wilkinson (1996) has collated a large body of evidence to support the hypothesis that the extent of income inequality in society determines its average health status: the greater the gap between the incomes of the rich and poor, the worse the health status of citizens. In a cross-sectional examination of nine member countries of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) he reported a strong correlation ($r = 0.86$) between life expectancy and income inequality as measured by the proportion of aggregate income earned by the least well-off seventy percent of the population.

Biological interventions offer alternatives consistent with current Euro-American neoliberal policies. Neoliberalism in general terms seeks to reduce government deficits while avoiding tax increases by such measures as the attenuation and elimination of social programs and the relaxation of standards that regulate industrial hazards, while tolerating an ever-increasing polarisation of wealth (Gannet, 1997:409). Genetic interventions are *perceived* as more easily managed now that scientists have the technological capability to manipulate the genome - certainly more easily managed than less readily yielding social entities such as institutional racism and economic stratification. It would appear there is an urgent moment for postracial bioscience to stake a claim against the neoliberal denial of racism.

Challenging neoliberal denial may require a critique of capitalist reproduction. In the US where healthcare is heavily privatised it seems impossible to engage health inequalities without examining the economic forces shaping and making healthcare a marketplace commodity.

Postracial bioscience shifts focus from 'race' and biology to racism and sociotypursuing studies and treatments directed toward mitigating behaviours and environmental causes of disease that offer substantial and proven benefits. In the UK, Karlsen and Nazroo (2002) using National Survey of Ethnic Minorities data in multivariate models have shown a strong independent relationship exists between health and the experience of racism, perceived racial discrimination and class. Racism is a key structural determinant of inequalities in health causing negative physical and psychological consequences. Institutional racism (*not 'race'*) leads to the identification of racial groups, their reification as biologically and culturally discrete and the consequent exclusion and social and economic disadvantage. In cases of complex behaviour and health patterns such as depression, high blood pressure, diabetes and asthma data suggests that racial differences are best explained by institutional racism primarily attributable to large racial disparities in family wealth (Oliver and Shapiro, 2006; Conley, 1999).

'Race' is a deeply flawed concept and its persistent usage prolongs the delay in seeking real causes, lending more scientific validity to the 'race'/health connection than is warranted. Reliance on naturalised concepts also erects a conceptual barrier to developing a research programme exploring the complex ways in which social inequality and experiences of racial discrimination interact with human biology to influence patterns of disease (Braun, 2002). Consequently, racial categories are inscribed with biological meaning, thereby obscuring cultural, social and environmental factors also affecting health and behaviour. Postracial bioscience is not interested in an imperfect surrogate for ancestral geographic origin which is in

turn a surrogate for genetic variation across an individual's genome. It extends beyond weak and imperfect proxy relations to the root causes of health and disease.

7.4.3 Racism as Cause

Some postracial bioscience has issued calls for an alternative analysis examining the potential biological mechanism through which life experience can affect health (Braun, 2002). In general terms these approaches study the dynamic nature of the relationship between humans and their social and physical environment and the effects of this interaction on the expression of genes. The sophisticated approach departs from ascribing an exaggerated biological meaning to a string of nucleotides. The analysis has immense potential to provide cogent explanations for differences in the prevalence of disease or disease-related mortality. Aetiological explanations would examine the disease experience of individuals in the context of, not separate from, their social and physical environment. Examples include looking at how low-fat diets or diets rich in a variety of nutrients might influence health in complex ways modulating levels of hormones or other biologically significant proteins which in turn could regulate gene expression (Rose, 1987).

Dr. Dean Ornish and his colleagues at the University of California have conducted a series of studies showing how changes in diet and lifestyle can powerfully influence our well-being (heart disease, prostate cancer, depression, diabetes) how quickly these changes may occur, and how dynamic these mechanisms can be (1992). Dr. Neil Barnard has similarly shown the power of nutrition (particularly vegan and

vegetarian diets) in treating and managing type II diabetes (Barnard *et al*, 2009 & Barnard *et al*, 2006). It becomes quickly evident that a range of life experiences including the experience of racism compromise health through physiological mechanisms that are not heritable.

A study using national vital statistics to obtain mortality rates for major groups in the largest US cities recognised that hypertension is the primary pathway leading to higher cardiovascular disease risk among African-Americans. Using residential segregation - for Lipsitz (2011) the principal mechanism through which racism is enforced - as an indicator measure, ecological analyses of American metropolitan areas demonstrated that both racism and economic inequality are consistently associated in variation in risk of cardiovascular disease. Group level analysis showed social inequality and racism to be *bona fide* causes and even advocated that they be named in prevention strategies (Rodgers, 2000). Just as the identification of smoking as a cause for lung cancer reduces the need to obtain exhaustive information about mechanism, knowing that social processes are potentially modifiable components of a pathway to disease should warrant their designation as a cause and an opportunity for intervention (Kaplan, 2000). The postracialist emphasis on racism (*not* 'race') demonstrates how underlying exposure leading to group differences can be conceptualised as a social process. Causality is located in historically contingent, economic and cultural patterns like wage inequality and racism, not a gene, trait or a choice that can be assigned to an individual.

Conservationists in biomedical research reiterate that 'race' is a good predictor of health outcomes while conceding it to be only a 'rough proxy'. In order to

understand why 'race' functions as a rough proxy we must look beyond the surface. We must look at 'race' *in the context of racism*. Racism is the social force which governs the distribution of risks and opportunities in our society. It is expressed in differential access to goods, services and opportunity and structurally codified in institutions of practice and law. It is manifest in material conditions and in (in)access to power, quality education, sound housing, gainful employment, appropriate medical facilities and a clean environment. Institutionalised racism impacts health through both socioeconomic status and access to healthcare as well as disparate treatment within the care system.

The Social Determinants of Health and Equity housed in the Center for Disease Control and Prevention has also undertaken research to explore how racism is the root cause of inequality. Racism is useful for epidemiologists and other public health practitioners for generating hypotheses about the basis of 'race'-associated differences in health outcomes, as well as for designing interventions to eliminate those differences (Jones, 2001).

It has been argued that it is necessary to disaggregate racial populations in order to more directly assess disparities, to target effective interventions and to alleviate them (Ver Ploeg & Perrin, 2004). The overreliance on 'race' produces research lacking a sufficiently nuanced measure of socioeconomic status (SES); impeding understanding of the complex relationships among 'race', poverty and health disparities. The development of widely used measures of discrimination that can directly capture the impact of racial discrimination on health rather than rely on a proxy could dramatically improve the specificity of future research. An analysis of

18 different area-based socioeconomic measures to determine the best measures for monitoring socioeconomic inequalities in health has shown some promise toward a ‘postracial’ metric of inequality (ibid). The usage of census tract poverty levels powerfully detected expected socioeconomic gradients in health, allowed maximal geocoding and linkage to other area-based data and was feasible to implement within state health departments.

Adjusting for this one measure substantially reduced excess risk observed in African-American and Hispanic populations relative to white populations and for half the outcomes more than fifty percent of cases would have been averted if everyone’s risk were equivalent to those in the least impoverished census tract. This could allow powerful area-level measures of SES to be included in genetic studies with little additional expense and enable a fuller elucidation of the role of social location in the aetiology of disease. Empirically driven approaches to population stratification are methodologically superior and far less harmful than using a ‘rough proxy’.

7.5 Postracial Medicine: Promises, Problems & Contradictions

7.5.1 The Personal Is Postracial

Postracial bioscientific approaches ask: is ‘race’ useful in interpreting, treating and diagnosing patients? Investigations (Outram and Ellison, 2010) have shown that when used to inform diagnostic and treatment decisions ‘race’ offers little in the way

of evidentiary assessment. The amount of information gained by using 'race' in deciding who should be diagnosed is minimal with any benefit being offset by the tendency to exaggerate the association. Additionally 'race' has the tendency to decontextualise difference and to obfuscate power dynamics that create inequalities.

Certain postracial biosciences have attempted to do away with the category and to improve the precision of genetic categories with subtler distinctions based on ancestry or genetic markers to increase the utility of the resulting data (Whitmarsh & Jones, 2010). Geneticists have successfully constructed technologies for finding disease-related genetic markers without employing the notion of 'race' accounting for population differences due to different 'ancestries' rather than assessing differences among racial groups (Fujimura *et al*, 2010). Genome wide association (GWA) studies provide alternative means to conduct searches for genetic markers associated with complex diseases without relying on the muddling category. GWA studies specify populations not based on 'race' but rather on genetic ancestry which produces a finer resolution of the actual-existing population than would socio-cultural categories.

While 'race' does not provide useful information concerning disease aetiology, knowing the unique genetic profile of an individual - a profile unquestionably influenced by ancestry - will assist a physician in streamlining the search for the right diagnosis for a set of symptoms (Patrinos, 2004). The belief that human genetic diversity can be accounted for through simple static partitions has limited our understanding of diversity and hindered efforts of developing effective programs of individualised medicine. Postracial positions, for instance, suggest continued usage

has unduly narrowed the range of diagnoses and potential treatments applied to individual patients. Witzig (1996) describes the case of an eight year-old boy phenotypically European who presented with acute abdominal pain and anaemia. His body temperature was only 37.9 centigrade and so surgery was considered. Moments before surgery, a hospital technician found red corpuscles with haemolytic characteristics on a smear. The scheduled surgery was cancelled, and the boy was treated for sickle-cell anaemia. Using 'race' in the medical context can lead to essentialism encouraging clinicians to ignore multiple lines of descent as in for example testing a patient for sickle-cell but not cystic fibrosis. How 'race' structures the medical gaze highlighting *certain* conditions for *certain* racial subjects to the exclusion of conditions associated with *other* racial groups is an obvious formula for racial misdiagnosis.

Beyond racial medicine is pharmacogenomics - a new era of personalised medicine where pharmaceuticals would be specifically designed to work with the unique genetic makeup of individuals. Pharmacogenomics introduces a new approach to drug development capable of reducing the cost and increasing the safety and efficacy of new therapies (Kahn, 2007). Its promise (and ambition) rests in its implementation as postracial individualised medicine given the likelihood that variation in drug responses will vary more within racial groups than among them. Individualised medicine identifies individual risk factors and treats the specific aetiology of the individual (Tishkoff & Kidd, 2004). These diagnostic tools can be used to individualise and optimise drug therapy yielding new insights into the pathogenesis of human disease and revealing new strategies for their prevention and treatment.

In the context of global capitalism it is important to situate the drivers of the search for medically salient racial variations fuelled as they are by the pursuit of profits and lucrative intellectual patents. It would be remiss to not note the commercial aspirations of the pharmaceutical companies and the biomedical industry where genomic approaches to diagnosis, drug development and marketing have attracted a flood of venture capital. In a profit-driven economy difference *not* sameness drives advances in drug discovery and development in pharmacogenomics research (Rothstein and Epps, 2001).

The notorious BiDil, a drug ‘developed’ for African-Americans experiencing heart failure, is a case in point. Developers - initially rejected by government regulators in the 1980s - retrospectively dredged the data (49 samples) to secure a patent for BiDil as a racially specific drug (Kahn, 2005). The racialised label extended NitroMed’s patent protection for another 13 years without competition. Company stock skyrocketed on the news, more than tripling in value in the following days. Projected annual revenue streams are around \$2 billion and expected to rise with a massive marketing campaign to third party payers, individual doctors and the public at large (Kahn, 2004). The patented drug costs about six times as much as the readily available generic equivalents. BiDil was reinvented as an ‘ethnic drug’ with legal and commercial forces displacing biomedical concerns.

7.5.2 Postracialism and Institutionalisation

The marketing and advertising of pharmaceutical companies is particularly meaningful in the US because it is one of a handful of countries where the direct marketing of prescription drugs to patients is lawful. Social categories in such an environment become indispensable to the marketing strategies and research agendas of the pharmaceutical industry. Will the patenting and licensing of 'racial drugs' likely protect patients and advance their health in a country where access to adequate healthcare is starkly racialised (Dressler, Oths, & Gravlee, 2005)? And are clinicians and patients likely to be served well by the advertising and profit priorities of pharmaceutical corporations? It is perhaps too economistic to suggest that the sole motivation is the capture of a 'racial consumer market', but reflection on the economic imperatives of the pharmaceutical companies is most certainly warranted.

The 'free market' is not the only space where racial categories are embedded. Since 1997 all subsidised biomedical research in the USA is legally required to use racial categorisations in clinical trials (Rose, 2007). Conceptual uncertainty and contradictory evidence aside, racial classifications are embedded in the routine collection and classification of data from genetics to sociology. In 2003 the US Food and Drug Administration recommended that American racial categories be 'harmonised' in other words globalised - the designation African-American changed to African (Schultz, 2003). The embeddedness of 'race' in research as a welcomed form of proxy assistance in delimiting groups which differ statistically in their genetic composition raises the question; is the creation of an authentically postracial science a practical, possible and perhaps more contentiously desirable pursuit?

The humanist project at the core of certain postracialisms would seem to suggest that postracial bioscience has a deep commitment to and concern for the optimisation of patient care. A worthy pursuit, the optimisation of patient care is threatened by the lucrative investment potential of pharmacogenomics which could direct funding away from prevention programs, health promotion work and screening programs - the backbone of the prevention agenda. The use of 'race' even with all the qualifications in biomedical research and medicine remains dangerous. The potential for a mere tool to very soon end up as a theoretical paradigm is well documented (Gigerenzer, 1991). And as Hacking (1983) has argued hypothetical entities have an insidious tendency to become real when they are used to investigate something else. Classifications that are arbitrary and contingent social constructs are made real in the very process of using them within the investigation and/or analysis. This process of reification prevents the development of accurate explanations and descriptions of phenomenon, in this case human biological diversity and its relationship to disease and therapeutics. Barzun presciently warned of this in 1937; 'One of the penalties of toying with the 'race'-notion is that even a strong mind trying to repudiate it will find himself making assumptions and passing judgment on the basis of the theory he declaims' (1937:44).

Local and national grass roots advocacy is also driving the entrenching of 'race' and raising a multitude of complex ethical dilemmas. Under the auspices of the American Diabetes Association, *Awakening the Spirit: Pathways to Diabetes Prevention and Control* advocates nationally for diabetes education programs in tribal communities. The campaign invokes a homogenising imagined past with implicit reference to the noble savage whose vigorous labours prevented 'diseases of

civilisation’; ‘Years ago, Native Americans did not have diabetes. Elders can recall times when people hunted and gathered food for simple meals. People walked a lot. Now, in some Native communities, one in two adults has diabetes.’⁶¹

Awakening the Spirit intertwines social *and* biological registers of difference. ‘Race’ remains an independent risk factor but it is no longer *the* explanation. Sociological explanations (socioeconomic status, access to healthcare etc.) are incorporated into the paradigm. Does the move away from genetic determinism portend an analysis capable of enhancing our understanding of diabetes? Or might this multi-factoral framework represent a more insidious form of racism - obfuscating a biological notion of ‘race’ through the language of population genetics and camouflaging it further through social context?

In *Awakening the Spirit* Native American identity is imaginatively reconstituted as a biosociality (Rabinow, 1992). Disease susceptibility becomes part of the collectivity’s identity and a framework for making claims about the group. Hybrid articulations of ‘race’ forged through identity politics thoroughly blur the lines between objective and subjective knowledge. The problem is no longer the imposition of categories and practices of objectification. *Awakening the Spirit* shows how racialised groups use techno-scientific knowledge and language originally created in the service of subjugation for the purposes of attaining corrective resources and giving autonomous accounts of collective identity. What becomes of an antiracist postracial bioscience when the categories it is combating are being

⁶¹<http://www.diabetes.org/in-my-community/programs/native-american-programs/awakening-the-spirit.html> (accessed 23 March 2012)

successfully utilised as important symbolic and material resources to promote the health of underserved social groups and ultimately to save lives? Is the autonomous organising and construction of a space where Native Americans can make their own decisions about participation and campaigning to be put under erasure because of its complicity in the reproduction of 'race'?

Perhaps this usage of 'race' and genetics represents a politically and ethically defensible means for reinterpreting existing political identities and creating new ones, for forming communities and participating in civic life. Racial identities, this example reminds us, are more than positions in a social structure. They also represent agential identities. *Awakening the Spirit* encapsulates that agency as a mobilisation against the negative physical and psychological consequences of racial discrimination. It is this complexity of 'race' as more than a dispassionate scientific category which raises very challenging, perhaps intractable problems, for the postracial project.

Awakening the Spirit also conscripts essentialising and neoliberal discourses in pursuing a cure. 'On a spiritual level, Native people understand we are responsible for taking care of our bodies first. Positive lifestyle choices can help our families, our communities, and ourselves.'⁶² This cosmological argument has some logical parallels to what Rose (2007) has called 'biological citizenship'. Native Americans when (re)constituted as biological citizens are not just passive recipients of social rights but are obliged to take individual responsibility for social problems. Being a good biological citizen means exercising biological prudence for one's own sake,

⁶² <http://www.diabetes.org/in-my-community/programs/native-american-programs/awakening-the-spirit.html> (accessed 23 March 2011)

that of their families, and that of their own lineage. Can such an individuated solution which uses 'race' pragmatically within certain ethical and political coordinates be amenable to postracialism or is it irreconcilable with the recovery of 'the human'? More importantly can it help to close the widening health disparities gap?

The postracial paradox returns to haunt mobilisations like *Awakening the Spirit* but it also looms over healthcare outcomes. Usage of 'race' it has been argued is, 'morally urgent and indispensable' (Krieger, 2010) in understanding preterm deliveries which can only be theorised by collecting data on both people's self-reported experience of discrimination (implicit/explicit) and on racial disparities in health outcomes and harmful environmental exposures. Postracial bioscience cannot simply 'go postracial'. 'Race' is crucial in racialised societies for any analysis of disparities in health or for identifying, exploring and addressing the consequences of injustice based on notions of racial groups as genetically distinct. Researchers *must* employ the socially created category to determine how racism harms health and in order to distinguish between and compare the health status of populations likely to be harmed by or to benefit from racial injustice. Examining racism involves the postracial paradox - using 'race' as a social category reflecting social relations namely the impact of racism on health while struggling not to reify and essentialise it (Kaplan and Bennet, 2003; Mays *et al*, 2003; Braun *et al*, 2007). This is the complex duality of working with *and* against race.

It is worth reiterating that while socio-political constructs may be appropriate for monitoring health disparities, they are certainly not appropriate for use in genetic

studies investigating the aetiology of complex diseases. Racial categories do not allow researchers to measure and monitor racial disparities in health status, access to quality of care and outcome - the health consequences of systemic disadvantage - and do not provide sufficient nuance to inform efforts to address them. The use of scientifically imprecise variables in genetic studies as a stand-in for measurement of genetic heterogeneity or differential exposure to measurable environmental or social exposure is methodologically unacceptable.

Monitoring the impact of racial discrimination and structural inequalities on health is a crucial social responsibility but it is not useful in aetiological studies of human disease focused on disentangling complex gene-environment interactions. Insofar as genetics research considers social and environmental influences and their complex interactions with key genetic variants, the field may actually have the potential to help biomedical and public health research break out of the 'race' conundrum and provide valuable information that could actually prove useful in addressing racial disparities in health identified by public monitoring efforts. We might in this sense think of postracial bioscience as capable of addressing the postracial paradox outlined earlier.

7.6 Conclusion

The scientific field cannot be left uncontested given the social authority of science and how naturalised notions of 'race' have rationalised the gross abuses carried out in its name. Restating the evidence disproving the biological 'race' concept as well as illuminating its conceptual imprecision is vital to postracial bioscience. Postracial

bioscience deconstructs 'race' opening up space for an integrated science which examines structural inequalities and social processes like class stratification and racism.

History is replete with examples of the harm that can be done to people associated with biologized categories in research, clinical practice and the market. The role of racism in structuring wealth distribution and access to adequate healthcare reminds us that some are already disproportionately bearing the risks of biologization. Simply moving beyond the scientific concept is not at all equivalent to eradicating the symbolic effectiveness of 'race'. Throughout this chapter, I have argued that ethical questions need to be raised in the conceptualisation of scientific research. Postracial bioscience is in part a space for meditation on how the scientific community understands and uses 'race' in designing research and in presenting findings. The way science is designed and carried out fundamentally affects how it can be used. Although far from achieving a consensus, the wide range of critical and prescriptive insights I have discussed as 'postracial bioscience' (St Louis forthcoming) have succeeded in stimulating debate on the usefulness of 'race' in epistemological, methodological and ethical terms.

Postracial bioscience shows that keeping racial categories does not serve the purpose of reducing health disparities in the context of genetic research. Reducing disparities requires understanding the social and structural forces of racism and inequality in addition to the complex gene-gene and gene-environment interactions that together comprise disease risk severity. Self-identified racial membership *will*

not offer understanding of why racial disparities in health exist and how to remedy them.

The postracial paradox however, means that postracial bioscience must simultaneously work *with and against* 'race'. Perhaps a postracial bioscience could be imagined as a critical investigation in, for example, the basis of observed 'race'-associated differences in health outcomes. 'Race'-associated differences function not as causal explanations but as important indicators to be mined. The overreliance on 'race' impedes the advance of scientific knowledge, limits efforts at primary prevention and contributes to ideas of biological determinism. Postracialism focuses not on screening and treating racially targeted populations but rather understanding and preventing the onset of disease by addressing root causes. With all the clinical and genetic heterogeneity it is crucial to not lose sight of the fact that the major objective is to treat, cure and prevent disease. The fundamental goal of medicine is to relieve pain and suffering which most often take the form of common complex diseases such as heart disease, cancer stroke and diabetes. For the past fifty years these diseases have been the leading causes of death in the USA and the UK. These conditions unite human beings and render racial categorisation meaningless at both the scientific and social level precisely because they are not specific to any one group (Roses, 2000).

Chapter 8 Beyond Racial Difference: Postracial Cosmopolitanism

The previous chapter showed how scientific critiques investigated the epistemological disorder and methodological inconsistency of 'race' evaluating how 'race' often leads to spurious racial 'sentiments' and how it was used in deadly political projects. Following WWII the scientific community gradually expanded to include historically precluded groups, that is to say women and racialised minorities. The transformation in the composition of the community marked a shift in the content of discourses on 'race'. During this period empirically evidenced arguments were marshalled to rebut claims of group 'inferiority' on egalitarian principles (Barkan, 1996). This chapter extends the previous discussion through an examination of the critique of 'race' based on egalitarian principles. I explore 'postracial cosmopolitanism' through both theoretical literature and qualitative data arguing that in spite of limitations it offers an ethically laudable re-imagination of living with difference.

This chapter - theoretically informed and empirically engaged - critically reflects on postracial cosmopolitanisms through a discussion organised around eight sections based data-generated themes. 8.1 outlines and explains how I am using postracial cosmopolitanism. 8.2 investigates cosmopolitanism as a critique of racial communitarianism showing the under-examined assumptions in such a politics. 8.3 explores cosmopolitan contradictions in relation to lived racial experience. 8.4 looks at the fetishisation of agency in postracial cosmopolitanism showing how the

agential focus misses the opportunity to examine the social production of subjectivity and the collective labour of movement building. 8.5 surveys the neglect of ‘race’ in cosmopolitan politics. 8.6 probes how the recovery of the human inadequately attends to existing power relations. 8.7 outlines the imaginative visions of postracial cosmopolitanisms and explores their contribution to theory and praxis. 8.8 considers the practical hurdles involved in practicing postracial cosmopolitanism. The chapter concludes with a statement of the value of postracial cosmopolitanism.

8.1 Postracial Cosmopolitanism Sketched

Cosmopolitanism(s) is marked by considerable conceptual and theoretical diversity. It is variously conceived as a socio-cultural condition (Vertovec and Cohen, 2002), a vision of global democracy and world citizenship (Brown, 2000), and also refers to socio-cultural processes or values manifesting a capacity to engage cultural multiplicity. For my purposes cosmopolitanism is an anti-communitarian philosophical position urging us to live in a world governed by overarching principles of rights and justice (Beck, 2002). At the core of cosmopolitan thinking is the firm belief that moral principles and obligations are not to be based in specific groups and contexts. Cosmopolitanism is then a project of creating a worldwide human community committed to common values.

Cosmopolitanism has witnessed a recent revival as a ‘new’ leftist politics (Held, 2000). Historical circumstances behind the recovery include the rise of anti-globalisation movements, a growing awareness of common risks like climate change, the atrocities reached by essentialist identity politics in, for example, the former

Yugoslavia and the ethical impasses of a strictly negative critique of the Enlightenment. Generally speaking, cosmopolitanisms combine the critique of partial Enlightenment universals with the pursuit of the emancipatory ideals of traditional universalism (Anderson, 1998).

The postracial cosmopolitanisms in this chapter might be thought of as attempting to constitute a post-identity politics of overlapping interests and heterogeneous publics that challenge conventional notions of belonging and identity (Vertovec and Cohen, 2002). Postracial cosmopolitanism strategically calls upon a global commonality ('the world as a single place') to dismantle racialism (Robertson, 1992:132). The postracial and cosmopolitan converge in the shared goal of enabling the individual to not have her life scripted by any one community (racial or national) enabling her to draw selectively on a variety of discursive meanings.

Postracial cosmopolitanism challenges the basic assumption of the 'race' concept that the individual exists insofar as she forms the sum of the racial group. Gilroy (2004), for example, defines 'race' as a, 'discursive arrangement, the brutal result of the raciological ordering of the world, not its cause' (37). Raciological ordering subsumes the individual into discrete collective identities impeding autonomous life projects and creating racialised ethical systems. Hill (2009) similarly develops the moral cosmopolitan who, 'refuse(s) blood identity [read 'race'] because it shuts people outside the domain of the ethical and *a fortiori*, the human community (3).' Appiah (1996) too criticises collective identities not to deny their legitimacy but rather to expose their threat to individual freedom and community. Zack's future-leaning identity of 'racelessness' (1995) also rejects 'race' as 'an oppressive cultural

invention and convention' (1992: 10) pursuing an 'identity found on freedom and resistance to oppression rather than acceptance of tradition' (1993:164).

Strong individualist elements - detachment from shared identities and emphasis on affiliation as voluntary – thematically connect the positions consolidated under postracial cosmopolitanism.

Appiah also argues for an 'ethical universal' that transcends social fragmentation and bridges across racial categorisation (2006). The ethical universal endeavours to exceed the exhausted nation-state model (how flows of goods, capital, people, information, ideas, and risk across borders alongside the emergence of social networks and political institutions problematise the nation-state) while also mediating actions and ideals oriented both globally and locally. Germany's regulation of the toxins causing acid rain exemplifies this. The acid rain devastating the Black Forest is obviously not tethered to a territorial jurisdiction, although at the moment it is most often regional than properly global. Appiah suggests the ethical universal can represent variously complex repertoires of allegiance and identity. Striking examples can be found in popular music as in K'Naan's 'Take a Minute' (2009) where borrowing, cross-referencing and influences pass between Africa, North America, Great Britain and the Caribbean.

'Race' involves a logic of 'naturalness' that denies the condition of hybridity in an idealisation of racial homogeneity. 'Race', for postracial cosmopolitanism, does not have the complexity to grasp the diversity of subject positions and social experiences that it compresses into unitary categories. Postracial cosmopolitanism recovers

Enlightenment universalism by holding Europe(ans) accountable for its/their ethical and political failings through deconstructive critiques of national and racial categories. Postracialism becomes the ambition because of how ‘race’ betrayed the idea of a common humanity in its usage to justify terror and exclusion and to assert Europe’s self-appointed position as the civilising influence on the world.

This inclusive neo-universalism is uninterested in a return to fixed identities and/or to a pure past. It is an embrace of the already available postracial and postnational cultural possibilities. Richard Wright and Fanon’s oeuvres are examples of a ‘distinctive cosmopolitan culture’ (Gilroy, 2000: 288). Wright and Fanon as Black outsiders to the West relentlessly questioned nationalism. Their adamant opposition to racism everywhere resisted raciology. Postracial cosmopolitanism recognises the importance of attachments as historical and social positions strategically adopted as political and psychic resources (Hall, 1992). It insists that what is *also* needed is a variety and multiplicity of attachments. In other words, people need access to variegated cultural meanings in order to live meaningful lives (Hall, 2002).

Cosmopolitanism involves the ability to stand outside those cultural meanings and identities; to reflect on and to dispense with them when they are no longer necessary. Critical reflexivity is indispensable in our globalised world where societies are increasingly multiple in their nature. The capacity to reflect on, dispense with and take on value systems is critical for living in a world composed of communities with different origins, drawing on different traditions, obliged to make a life together within the confines of a fixed territory (Hall, 2002).

8.2 Beyond Communitarianism?

Postracial cosmopolitanisms reflect on how belonging might be expressed in a world of constant movement, forced and free (Hall, 2002). Postracial cosmopolitanism understood dialectically is a response to communitarianism - a reflexive distancing from one's cultural affiliations, the cultivation of a broad understanding of other cultures and a belief in universal humanity (Robbins, 1998). Alice reminds us that communitarianism is not confined by the fault lines of power. It permeates hegemonic *and* subjugated groups:

A classic example, I was at a conference doing a presentation on a project about girls and women that are gang associated. A lot of Afro-Caribbean and African women were presenting. The woman that went up before me from a large organisation was talking about, 'This is how black women should present ourselves. We shouldn't look like we're angry we shouldn't move our hands around.' It was almost like saying we have to modify our behaviour in order to fit in the society and the organisation we work in.

Alice describes how racial identities are imposed from without *and* actively (re)made from within by the racialised themselves. Normative behaviour prescribes black women *should not* look angry but *should* typify professionalism. Identity becomes a referential sign of a fixed set of practices and shared traits (Scott, 1995). The conception of Black women as a unitary and stable community sharing certain experiences and allegiances reifies and essentialises identity. The fixing of an identity originally constructed as a site of resistance that then becomes the foundation for asserting political truths incurs the problems entailed by the essentialist subject. Individual differences are denied. Identity cannot be recognised as fluid and constructed. 'Members' are policed internally by the enforcement of an idealised identity and externally by the state in the presentation of a falsely

homogeneous front (Brown, 1995). The possession of particular identity functions as a pre-requisite for political participation.

Rooted identities - antithetical to nonessentialist cosmopolitan self-creation - are untenable because they rely on a notion of an innate self. Identity becomes an already accomplished historical fact denying how identity is never complete and always in process (Hall, 1990). The ability to register the multiplicity of issues, processes and problems that bind people together irrespective of what 'race' they belong to is also limited. Postracial cosmopolitanism encourages the recognition of the interconnectedness of political communities in diverse domains and the development of political imaginations capable of identifying and understanding collective problems that require solutions locally, regionally and globally.

Climate change, for example, signifies an issue of justice on a global scale because; 'Nearly all human societies and activities are sensitive to climate in some way or other. This is because in large measure where people live and how they generate a livelihood and wealth is influenced by the ambient climate' (Adger *et al*, 2003: 181). Species-wide vulnerability to the catastrophic consequences of global warming offers incitements for reconsidering questions of human difference. Climate change can be thought of in these terms as an invitation to a planetary politics that transcends the particularity of 'race' (Gilroy, 2000). This, however, is an open-ended possibility. Climate change *could also* reinscribe existing racialised patterns of global inequality and risk exposure. The harshest effects of a warming planet (extreme weather events, destruction of ecosystems and the ensuing economic and military fallouts) will likely devastate Sub-Saharan Africa. The World Bank has

already forewarned such in its description of the region as ‘particularly vulnerable’ because of its, ‘dependence on natural resources, high levels of poverty and weak infrastructure’.⁶³

Another cosmopolitanism lurks in Alice’s conference narrative. It is a double consciousness that allows social agents to reason from the point of view of others. This ‘mutant cosmopolitanism’ (the imagined or real need to conduct a feminine blackness) is the result of political culture’s failure to guarantee the freedoms of *all* citizens. Racial communitarianism, is, in other words, partly consequent from racism(s). Communitarianism calls attention to the myth of a neutral state abstracted from cultural values. Cosmopolitanism’s commitment in political culture to state neutrality with respect to the particularity of any culture appears to make it assimilationist (Hall, 2002).

Assumed neutrality smuggles with it the autonomous and disembodied Enlightenment subject who signals a reductive understanding of culture. Cosmopolitanism envisions ‘the self’ not as dialogically constituted by the existence of the ‘Other’ but simply related in cultural meanings. Mutant cosmopolitanism, in contrast, introduces the relational subject constituted by the social influences of her milieu. ‘Mutant’ identities cannot be accommodated by liberalism because they combine illegitimate elements (i.e. gender) which violate the tenets of the liberal polity. Mutant cosmopolitanism suggests postracial cosmopolitanism demands racialised subjects surrender their racial identities and adopt subject positions they

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<http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/COUNTRIES/AFRICAEXT/0,,contentMDK:21772010~pagePK:146736~piPK:146830~theSitePK:258644,00.html> (accessed 23 February 2013)

know to be impossible. But must the subject experience herself as a coherent self in a discourse?

Perhaps cosmopolitanism does not appreciate traditions as something more than authoritative imposition. Traditions - not of necessity doctrinal - can provide a framework within which argument and exploration can take place (Hall, 2002).

Could this communitarianism be a strategic response to the new circumstances (evolving racisms) in which it is embedded? Could it be capable of revising itself in light of those conditions? The communitarian model can neutralise critical evaluation because it is a critique of the exclusionary history of liberalism whose 'universal' subject was shown to be the propertied white male of liberalism.

Ironically, mutant cosmopolitanism reveals why it is *not* the solution to the problems it identifies. Mutant cosmopolitanism reveals that for liberalism identity is central to politics and that conforming to a particular identity is a requirement for political participation. Mutant cosmopolitanism responds by reworking this requirement by radically redefining the citizen through an array of identities that participants could assume (Hekman, 2000). But like the liberal tradition, it makes a particular identity a prerequisite for political participation.

Under this banner strict rules govern what collective identity is to be. Rigid behaviour guidelines and the silencing of dissent threaten the very community it attempts to bring into being. Cultivating a collective racial identity for the purposes of forging bonds creates undue constraint on individual freedom and is likely self-defeating (Appiah, 1996). The well-intentioned Project RACE examined earlier

inadvertently redraws the very configurations (racialism) and effects of power ('race') that they seek to vanquish (Brown, 1995). Project RACE does not transform the organisation of the activity (racism) through which the suffering is produced and without addressing the subject constitution ('race') that domination effects.

Project RACE remains tangled in an identitarian political imagination failing to query whether legal 'protection' for 'race' discursively entrenches the identity it denounces. Might protection (achieved through racial reclassification) codify the very powerlessness it aims to redress? Might it discursively collude with the conversion of a *historical effect of power* into a presumed *cause of victimization*? Postracial cosmopolitanism instead boldly asks us to generate futures beyond racial particularity rather than to merely navigate or survive them.

8.3 Cosmopolitan Contradictions: Emotions, Ontology and 'Race'

Generating those futures begins with a critique of authenticity as foreclosing self construction (Hill, 2001). Liberal individualism (the rights-bearing subject who devises her own aims, directs and is accountable for her own actions) argues the individual is unmade by racial communalism. Charles Taylor - breaking with overdetermination - writes: 'We are creatures of ultimately contingent connections; we have formed certain habits. But we can break from them and re-form them...[R]adical disengagement opens the prospect of self-remaking (1989: 170).'

Does 'radical disengagement' adequately address the complexities presented by racial subjectivity? Can it adequately make sense of how knowledge claims are made and justified?

‘Radical disengagement’ stresses a cognitive agency masking the variability of the practices from which knowledge is constructed. Thinking about the connection between (types of) knowledge(s) and power may usefully inform how the place of knowledge in ethical judgments is understood in postracial cosmopolitanism. Feminists (Code, 1993) remind us that the cosmopolitan ambition involves more than the exercise of reason to transcend particularity. The complex interplay between emotion and reason can be lost in detached cosmopolitanisms with the connections between power and knowledge obscured. ‘Race’-based movements are frequently sites where participants (re)produce identities invested with moral significance (Srivastava, 2005).

This is significant because one’s sense of oneself as a good person may depend on whether she thinks her actions align with that identity. Distinct discourses of conflict resolution and shared values about raising public awareness of profiling have produced moral identities in the ongoing ‘I am Trayvon Martin’ campaign struggling for justice for the murdered African-American teenager.⁶⁴ Historically, the emotional aspects of solidarity have been vital. Fraternity, for example, has an emotional content connecting concepts of kinship, friendship and love (Hobsbawm, 1975). Abstract principles of justice inattentive to the emotional dimensions of politics may be insufficient to motivate people to contribute the time and resources necessary for meaningful social change. Often the shared experience of racial injustice creates the strongest motivation to act and the most enduring bonds opening up possibilities for empathy and understanding.

⁶⁴ <http://justicetm.org/about/> (accessed 25 February 2013)

Recognition of common vulnerability to racist violence following the 1982 murder of a Chinese-American mistakenly assumed to be Japanese – then scapegoated by the United Auto Workers for the loss of American jobs – sparked Asian-American pan-ethnic identification (Espiritu, 1992). The mobilisations bridged a multilingual, multicultural community with different world views *and* produced moral identities providing the basis for mutual identification, engendering a sense of special concern, reinforcing a commitment to common values and creating stronger social bonds to overcome barriers to collective action. This emotional/ethical nexus complicates a cosmopolitanism predicated on rational scrutiny and the inviolate sovereignty of the knowing subject. A strictly cognitive cosmopolitanism could potentially contravene its own humanist sensibilities and undue progressive expressions of collective solidarity.

Conservationists articulate ‘race’ as an ‘interpretative horizon’, a situation from which the self comes to know, understand and reason about the world (Alcoff, 2006:100). ‘Race’, for conservationists, captures collections of experience that while varied are also similar within and distinctive to racial groups. Transcendence of ‘race’ is undesirable *and* impractical because racial identities strongly affect our interaction with the world. Does postracialism(s) seriously consider the embodied experience of beings marked by race? Others’ interpretations of our visible markers impact our subjectivity (Alcoff, 2006: 92). Alice describes how ‘race’ is sustained within an affective order:

I’ve become very conscious if I walk into an area where I’m the only Asian person because I have faced racism. It’s something that I constantly have to think about regardless of whether I’m going to face it or not. Because it’s not going to go away. People don’t have racist written across

their forehead. You don't know when you might have to face it. You are not in a society where you can forget who you are very easily. You are in a society which has shaped and designed how you feel. It may not have wanted to have done that but it has done that.

Postracial mandates for racial abandonment could cause a damaging psychological discord. Alice reminds us that the lived experience of oppression involves political relationships and demands sensitive ethical engagement. Identities are significant not only as identities but in terms of the social issues and politics that they represent and promote. Racial identities have been transmuted from pejorative objects into sites of self-affirmation. The creative agency exercised in those transformations has been an effective antidote to the alienation engendered by racism (Shelby, 2005). While eliminating 'race' may open up cosmopolitan pathways, it may also undermine indispensable sources of hope and strength.

Eradicating a resource that restabilises individual and collective subjectivities would seem inconsistent with the ethics of cosmopolitanism. Can racism be fought without racial ontologies? If they are necessary fictions can they be lived under erasure and within defensible boundaries? These are searching questions to understand how 'race' is present in social experience as well as its effect on how subjects know the world. Theories of racial embodiment identify the larger social relations structuring racialisation and attempt to make sense of how 'race' is constitutive of bodily experience and epistemic relationships (Alcoff, 2001:271). Alcoff sets out to 'make visible the practices of visibility' in order to understand the context that knowledge of ourselves and others emerges from (2006:194). This phenomenology, however, is an inverse formulation.

Visible difference is constituted by the ascription of meaning instead of existing prior to that process. Taking 'race' for granted assumes what is the consequence of social relations as natural. 'Race' becomes a determinate force, requiring social relations to be organised in a specific form. Such conservatism cannot appreciate the historicity of this process and freezes it with the idea that the naturalness of somatic difference ineluctably constitutes eternal collectivities. Racialism is not a universal feature of social relations. Postracialism asks; Why do we have a concept of 'race'? And, what do we need it for?

Postracial cosmopolitanism refuses any practice to be *a priori* indemnified against critical inspection. How might this work against Alice's practical consciousness? Absolutist standpoints reifying subject positions and defending their politics as part of an inviolate identity are ethically untenable. But how might, as St Louis (2009) suggests, we open up a postracial space requiring subjects to think through and justify her ethico-political commitments? Democratically negotiated commitments are an admirable answer to racial determinism but offer little to those navigating a world where 'race' is phenomenally real. Where is this space? What is its relationship to personal experiences? Lila described this paradox:

Me- Postracialists suggest that 'race' disables the experience of a common humanity by falsely maintaining racial divisions...

L- Okay, stop there. It's not falsely maintaining racial divisions. There are racial divisions. That almost seems to be based on a premise that racial divisions are falsely maintained. But they're not falsely maintained. They're real. And that's the lived experience. They are real divisions and in people's real lives on a daily basis they experience those divisions.

Lila reminds us of the psychic constitution of social reality and the significance of subjective identification. 'Race' may be empirically slippery, analytical imprecise

and perhaps not the best political resource but this is inconsequential in the everyday lived reality of 'race'. Without a way out of this impasse, postracialism asks; If the prevailing socio-political conditions (re)produce the seeming necessity of 'race', might it be worthwhile to identify and contest the practices giving 'race' the appearance of necessity?

There's a dangerous tautology to 'race'. Because people 'position' themselves racially does not mean that we can, or should, refer to racial identity as something coherent (St Louis, 2005). Many people believe in, refer to, and live by racial categories, however tendentious their provenance,. Postracial cosmopolitanism considers to what extent they are useful concepts and categories. How might they (re)produce invidious distinctions? Cosmopolitanisms emphasise voluntary affiliation along with a desired detachment from 'unreflexive' shared identities. The renunciation of 'race' may represent, 'the only ethical response to the conspicuous wrongs that racilogies continue to solicit and sanction' (Gilroy, 2000:40) but cosmopolitanism's individualism raises a set of ethical questions Lila described:

And what tends to get lost in all of this [debate on eliminating/conserving 'race'] is the experience of discrimination itself. So while we're busy debating, arguing and discussing 'race' and whether it's helpful or not, racism is still going on. People are experiencing that discrimination and that's not being addressed or tackled in that whole narrative around 'race'.

Postracialism can represent a project unsympathetic towards the existential dimensions of racialised life. Its abstract jargon appears irrelevant to the experiences forged in life worlds in part constituted by racial self-understandings however scientifically inadequate or ontologically problematic (Outlaw, 1990). An awkward

elitism situates universalism in relation to the intellectual who can have a politically disastrous form of detachment from important affiliations. Might postracialism be blind to the wider meaning of racial categories? Common histories of oppression have formed the basis for group solidarity without relying on thick racial identities that assert claims about what racial identity *is* and *ought* to be.

Perhaps this is a pitfall of the varying degrees of detachment/engagement in cosmopolitanisms. The self-conscious articulation in the context of intercultural contact and exchange risks blindness to more immediate social realities like environmental racism. Racialised identities cannot adequately anchor politics but figure significantly as conduits for political concerns represented in the identity (Harding, 1993). Postracialism asks; how and why does 'race' constitute experience? The approach incorporates standpoint theory's concern with subjectivity and extends the epistemological investigation to merge with moral-political inquiry into racism.

'Race' becomes a site for asking causal and critical questions about the social order and for informing a new humanism not deluded with the 'god-trick' of abstraction (Haraway, 1989). No work can be done without a radical refusal of essentialism at the theoretical *and* political level. The focus is not where the boundaries are or what consequences they have. The very existence of the boundaries *must* be challenged. Racial experience (situations from which the self comes to understand and reason about the world) has an upside-down causality. The concrete reality of 'race' makes it a permanent component of social reality. 'Race' - conceptually speaking - is highly naturalized grounded in what appears an incontestable (in)visible biological truth.

The most disconcerting paradox of 'race' is that although it does not exist, it still *feels* like it is natural, essential. Crucially, it is not because something is experienced that it exists (Ang, 2000). It is not because discrimination is based on skin colour that 'race' is real. Refusing racial thinking is necessary if we are to contest the effects *and* consequences of racism. Racial inequalities can be redefined in terms of an oppressive political and economic structure and the structure of oppression brought into full view. The focus on racism may better illuminate how cultural and economic power is preserved. Racial identities may also be opened to critical and transformational analysis.

8.4 Fetishisation of Agency

What does a postracial self look like? Hill writes:

He is now free, like a solitary snake, to seek new territories. There he may expand his omnivorous identity, there he will infuse it with his own peculiar vision, moral sensibilities and commitments...Raising his head above the plains of the community, he catches sight of the larger world ahead and charts a course straight ahead (2001:36).

The postracial self is predicated on individual freedom attained through rational choice and the moral rejection of racial being. The postracial self is contrasted to the racial community, a reified identity based on a unitary plural subject (Zack, 1993). The recovery of the agency of marginalised subjects is valorised in such a way that even if these cosmopolitanisms do not essentialise agency, they seem to idealise it, abstracting from the actual lived experience and generalising from normatively approved ones.

Agency, however, cannot be established without a cultural vocabulary. The concept is always culturally situated. Agency cannot be understood either prior to or apart from the community life each person is born into and whose rules and descriptions she lives by and shares with others (Crittenden, 1992). The abstraction in postracial cosmopolitanism loses sight of agency as a social product formed in the matrix of community. The disengaged self is without a horizon of evaluation, thus without both identity and boundary. Personal autonomy (the ability to stand back reflectively from communal values) seems to allow the cosmopolitan to stand so far back as to step into some abstract awareness, some position-less position.

Cosmopolitanism dismantles the 'big picture' that provided coherence to grand philosophical systems. On the other hand, it seems to install an exceptional individualism complete with a human unconstrained by any social bonds and free to choose from a limitless supply of roles, values and attachments. She ceases to be a self at all when separate from all particularity. Stated differently, social relationships are the very conditions for securing personality, social cohesion and moral coherence. Postracialism shows cohesion in racial form often leads to essentialism – people can be categorized into groups whose intrinsic differences mark off the boundaries between them.

The social forms the horizon from which we reflect and evaluate as persons. In this sense, fetishized agency can result in a dual alienation. Exaggerated agency can alienate us from society by defining ourselves independent of and without obligations to it. We deprive ourselves in that definition of the capacity to know or

interpret ourselves in our richest sense (Crittenden, 1992). The fetishisation of agency misses the postracial opportunity to examine how larger social forces and economic systems may make racial identities strategically necessary. If identities are fluid, can there be a stable basis for their creation? Could their supposed psychic necessity be (re)produced by political or economic conditions? In short, the fetishisation of agency inhibits the crucial task of examining the social production of subjectivity.

This insufficient examination of the social production of subjectivity coupled with the over-emphasis on agency exposes another dilemma. Conservationists (Mills, 1998) resist postracialism in part because of the recognition that 'race' is (re)produced through widespread and long-standing social structures. 'Race' is ontologically subjective but nevertheless (re)produced in political structures, (re)made in routinised sociopolitical practices. All of which exist as social facts independent of individual action.

'Race' in spite of the aim of autonomous moral re-creation cannot be dismissed through individual rejection or unilaterally altered. Postracial cosmopolitanism (Hill 2001) risks becoming an atomised project of deconstructionism where cosmopolitans are privileged decision-makers electing for transnational identity. The Race Traitors discussed earlier relied on a similar investment in an exceptional individualism capable of rejecting the privileges of whiteness and dismantling hierarchy through individual acts. Postracial cosmopolitanisms based on a liberal individual rejection of racial belonging appear tenuous and perhaps futile endeavours when confronted with enduring structures of exclusion.

Conservationism (Stubblefield, 2005) risks reification and naturalisation in arguing ‘race’ reflects the natural tendency of humans to classify according to appearance and reflects cultural differences between members of groups we call ‘races’. The political value of racial solidarity challenges agential individualism. Social relations and social contexts are deeply relevant to ‘the what’ and ‘how’ of the social agent’s knowing. If interpersonal experience is fundamental to the development and possession of beliefs and knowledge, where does this leave the epistemological individualism of the cosmopolitan?

Feminist scholarship can help us think through this problematic in its illumination of how historically specific socio-political relationships and situations - including gender and political advocacy - have actually *made* certain feminist knowledges possible (Harding, 1993). The crucial point is that *communities* construct and acquire knowledge. The knowing we do as individuals is dependent on some ‘we’, on shared knowledge, standards and practices. To avoid solipsism, how might the appeal to the atomised forms of labour so central to the cosmopolitan vision(s) be connected to the demanding political work of movement-building? Racial solidarity can risk downplaying internal diversity. However, racial categories do offer a useful resource for building a mobilisation committed to improving the material life prospects of those racialised as inferior. ‘Race’, in part, continues to offer a site for constructing social identity and collective solidarity in spite of its severe analytical and ethical limitations because no effective alternatives have been advanced (Gunaratnam, 2004).

Claims that 'race' is a mere illusion are condescending and fail to capture the impact of social identities in our lives and their import to the organisation of our social worlds. Reducing 'race' to myth ignores its political significance. 'Race' despite essentialism and reification has long been a locus for justice campaigns. African-American identification, for example, played an important role in the social movement groups, community organizations and arts activists advocating on behalf of those displaced by Hurricane Katrina and neglected by federal, state and municipal governments in the recovery and future planning of the city. Students at The Center, for example, generated forms of community knowledge and involved young African-Americans in community-based art making and art-based community making (Lipsitz, 2011: 235).

Rob described the biological futility of 'race' *and* its simultaneous necessity to achieving equality:

Well given the proviso that racism exists which is beneath all the work, we are then in a situation where we're looking at some stop and search research showing that the black man is 7 times more likely to be stopped and searched than the white man. Now if you were to only hold the position that 'race' is a social construct; that 'race' isn't real because there's no biologically verifiable basis for it, then it would be quite difficult to look at some of the impacts of discrimination based upon 'race' and racism.

'Race' lacks analytical and explanatory value. Rob also expressed concern that 'race' is not a sound basis for social identities or for membership in political movements.

Some postracialists (St Louis, 2003) argue that racial identities and the forms of solidarity they sustain are incoherent even morally problematic. Racial particularism is widely held to be needlessly divisive and at odds with commonly cherished liberal

ideas of integration and the affirmation of a nonracial shared identity. The reality of racism and its damaging effects bring out the tension Rob describes. In this conjuncture racism makes ‘race’ (in some form) necessary for social-scientific analysis, the enforcement of civil rights and perhaps also as a basis for political solidarity and group self-realisation (Taylor, 2004).

The multiplicity of lived experiences is a recurrent dilemma in coalitional politics. For centuries universal emancipation(s) have theorised class to be the *only* vehicle for understanding social organisation, social struggle and political subjectivity. The analytical and theoretical privileging of the means of production made ‘race’, when not reduced to the ideological, always-already secondary to class conflict. Aimé Césaire described the aporia in Marxism:

What I want is that Marxism and Communism be placed in the service of black peoples, and not black peoples in the service of Marxism and Communism. That the doctrine and the movement would be made to fit men, not men to fit the doctrine or the movement...I would say that no doctrine is worthwhile unless rethought by us, rethought for us, converted to us (1957: 111).

Césaire imagined liberation not from an abstract universal space but from concrete realities specifically the philosophy understanding the colonised as sharing the same ‘universal’ ontology as their rulers but remaining trapped in anachronistic development, not yet capable of realising the true possibilities of autonomous humanity (Hall, 1996). Fanon (1967) described this as the amputation of full humanity because colonialism forcibly created a space in which bodies were recognised as almost, but not quite, human. What it meant to be fully human, and the claims to autonomy and dignity it accorded, was seen to be missing imprisoning the colonized in ‘infrahumanity’ (Gilroy, 2004).

The cosmopolitan individual liberated from the tribalism of 'race' has implications for antiracism. Stubblefield (2005) underscores the stakes: 'If we are going to progress toward the elimination of white supremacy, we cannot afford to get hung up on the ontological question. Moral concerns are behind ontological ones (11).'

Stubblefield eschews cosmopolitan impartiality (treat others regardless of those properties that do not refer to actions or choices they have made and regardless of our relation to them). She argues 'race' *should* inform our moral obligations to others and to ourselves. The normative anchor of universalism is insufficient because it deliberately excludes aspects such as 'race'.

Conservationism advocates a moral critique of 'race' (white supremacy) *and* a moral defence of 'race' (non-white racial identities) suggesting some notions of 'race' are good and some are bad. The language of binary oppositions may limit the development of an ethically reflexive politics and the total dismantling of racialism. The diversity of social experiences and cultural identities composing racial identities shows 'guarantees' can be ethically perilous. As argued earlier, postracialism understands racial categories as the result of racisms. The defence of black identity is, in a way, the incomplete rejection of white supremacy, a powerful force in the creation of the former.

Postracialism seeks an antiracism that does not prompt identification with categories fundamental to racist discourses. Postracialisms - recognising the dissonances in the moral critique/defence of 'race' - attempt to rethink resistance not only as breaking with practices of oppression but crucially opposing the language of racism, including the racial categories in which resistance is expressed. Incomplete deconstruction can

reinforce the belief that humanity is constituted by different 'races'. The conditions for the reproduction of racism are sustained within the practices of anti-racism with the reification of 'race' incorporated into antiracism. The Forum Against Islamophobia and Racism has, for example, pressured the British government to incorporate Muslim identity into the Race Relations Act.⁶⁵ The incorporation of a politically and morally problematic concept into political systems may naturalise it further strengthening its grip on our social relationships.

Stubblefield suggests through the metaphor of 'race'-as-family that we can enrich our understanding of obligations and enhance our understanding of how to overthrow white supremacy. It is a shift from what 'race' is/isn't to how 'race' should be defined with an aim to capturing the role it plays in social life and pressing this in the service of emancipation. Making 'race' the foundation of moral reasoning risks reifying difference further and misunderstanding 'race' as an explanatory concept. Notably, Stubblefield offers little in explaining how granting 'race' moral priority can be justified in 'socially responsible ways' (2005:158). Black feminists (Hill-Collins, 1986) caution racial moralities were historically underpinned by ideas of strong families that re-inscribed patriarchal power relations. The Chicano movement was often stabilised by a cultural nationalism that relied on patriarchal gender roles (Moya, 2001). The intersections of 'race' and power and the ethico-political dangerousness of 'race' create intractable dilemmas for conservatism.

Will deconstruction weaken the fight for justice by eroding categories which have been organisational sites for creating greater freedom and equality? Postracialism has

⁶⁵ <http://www.fairuk.org/news.htm> (accessed 15 February 2013)

a profound ambivalence. Without 'race' building negotiated democratic coalitions is perhaps more possible. On the other hand, the renunciation of certain ontological assumptions about the nature of 'race' as a category (often reducing solidarity to an automatic thing arising spontaneously) leaves antiracists with the daunting task of forging a solidarity that cannot simply be found.

Racial solidarity as a resistance strategy has been successful. The American Indian Movement used 'race' to raise awareness of discrimination, to demand self-determination, and to press for access to clean water, healthcare and mineral/oil rights on reservations. The movement resulted in the *Indian Self-Determination and Education Act of 1975* which ended state-sponsored 'assimilation' programs, granted educational autonomy and 'improved' reservation life (Nagel, 1995). But what model of political solidarity do these movements presuppose? What models of community and belonging do they work with? What sort of aspiration for democracy are 'we' working for?

Jettisoning an important collective identity might also erase significant political histories. Can postracial histories be sensitively written without denigration? Postracialisms seem to threaten the intra-racial obligations forged in hard-fought battles - obligations that continue to be important in ongoing struggles. Lila described how experiences of oppression can (trans)form communities:

You are actually denied service, or you're denied a job or access to education or healthcare because of race. Race comes into the fore. If you're getting denied because of your race because it's not happening to you as an individual, because it's happening to you as a collective group of people then there is a potential there for a collective voice to come together to say well this is racism. Because you can see a very clear reason as to why you were denied a particular treatment or service or education because of your 'race'.

In some ways it also defines your 'race'. You might not have thought of your 'race' or yourself in that way.

Racism makes 'race' into a generalising concept preventing the recognition of the individual. Lila foregrounds how this prefigures, to an extent, the response - racial solidarity as a basis for eliminating inequalities. Lila appreciates the limitations of identity politics but discrimination makes 'race' a vital emancipatory tool. Her focus on exclusion articulates solidarity as predicated on the experience of and joint commitment to resisting racial oppression.

Her analysis presses the question; what are the complex forces that constitute racism? Might an oppression-centred conception of solidarity, attentive to the unreality of racial biology and aware of the perils of identity politics be consistent with a gradualist postracialism? The focus on oppression seems consistent with the rejection of the abstract 'human' view outside historical contingencies.

8.6 Recovering 'the human'

Postracial cosmopolitanism may lack a political program but the questions it raises force antiracisms into ethico-political self-scrutiny. Can racial solidarity exist without racism? Can racial identification be kept positive and non-discriminatory? Can 'race' be kept without the seemingly inevitable polarisation of racial groups and the ensuing conflicts? Alice expressed qualified agreement with postracialism recognising that internal heterogeneity destabilises racial categories and perhaps also the very notion of 'race':

Postracial that means actually looking at the individual rather than looking at that particular group. I always remember when I did my psychology degree what was interesting was when they looked at the difference between men and women there was more diversity within the groups of men and women than between men and women. The difference *between* the two sexes was smaller than the differences *within* the sexes. And I think of 'race' in terms of that. There's more difference within racial groups than there's between racial groups. And that's how I view it within the work that I do. That actually is the diversity that we're talking about.

Alice dissolves a key element of how 'race' is constituted socially as a comparative construct. Internal complexity counters the over-determination of group identity paralleling Lewontin's genetic rejection examined earlier. Difference is theorised in order to not reduce complex social and political processes to an abstracted communitarian identity. The problematisation of stable racial identifications is remarkable because it unsettles the normative sense of distinctions *between groups* as forming the fundamental basis of racial particularity. What happens to collective racial identity when as Alice notes, 'There's more difference within racial groups than there is between racial groups'? What happens when the premise of internal similarity and external differentiation dissolves? Alice points to the weakening of the concept and meaning of 'race' and the potential to open up postracial social analysis and political engagement. Her example signals that our thinking of 'race' could shift from existing taken-for-granted approaches to assessments of the work 'race' performs, how its more dogmatic character frames our expectations and imaginings of the future.

Postracialism (Gilroy, 2000) understands 'race' to be inextricably part of the hierarchical division of humankind. This position refigures the purpose and the value of sociological knowledge shifting from the epistemological towards placing

sociological knowledge in the service of humanistic concerns. Placing sociological knowledge in the service of humanistic concerns is to be achieved through the recovery of humanism alongside a critique of the inherent exclusivity of earlier Euro-centric formulations (Butler, 2000; Gilroy, 2004). It attempts to imagine ways to construct new non-reified marks of social identity and belonging; to (re)construct a 'human' predicated on species life combining individual particularity and general humanity through the development of a strategic universalism (Gilroy, 2000). The recovery of histories of suffering that resonate throughout humanity is central. Tragedy is refigured not as cultural property but as a universal human event. Replacing exceptionalism with empathy and understanding is a brave humanist move.

Fanon and Césaire also critiqued colonialism not only as unique historical experiences but also as moments for (re)imagining universalisms. In *A Season in the Congo*, Césaire's character of Patrice Lumumba described anti-colonialism as, 'The battle we are fighting isn't for ourselves, nor even for Africa, but for all Mankind' (Césaire, 1968: 79). Césaire and Fanon combined the critique of the partial universals of the Enlightenment with the pursuit of those emancipatory ideals associated with traditional universalism. Both offered critical *and* constructive engagements insisting on the necessity of asserting a humanism in opposition to the duplicitous exclusions of those imposed by the 'West'.

Recognition of our universal bodily vulnerability, it is argued, opens up the possibility of securing broader solidarities beyond 'race'. These arguments interrogate humanism while also appealing to a renewed universalism as a necessary

and urgent response to a world where racism still draws the lines of (infra)human and still alienates us from ourselves and our fellows. These are powerful statements for authentic universalisms, good faith invitations to a radical solidarity. Cynical responses characterise the (re)turn to the universal as edicts delivered from high in a world where cross-cutting social cleavages create differential experiences. Lila spoke to this tension:

That wasn't the injustice that the community brought on themselves that was the injustice that was enforced on them. Some of the choices are limiting but they are not limited by the group themselves they're limited by external factors. We're talking about situations in which people have very little choices about some of the boxes they're placed in.

Postracial cosmopolitanisms perhaps inadequately understand the relations between social identity and political agency. For that is, in an important sense, not merely a theoretical problem. Racial identities often rearticulate hegemonic representations of inferiority; moral deficiencies become venerable traits. Lila describes how identity is structured in a field of power relations such that racialised 'Others' are only able to establish their identity negatively. Defining the self through what one *is not* remains, to a degree, within the prior and imposed definition of what one (wrongly) was. Her description of 'situations in which people have very little choice' is testimony to how being is structured by external circumstance and indicative of how oppositional identities become political tools and ontological resources.

8.7 Reimagining Living with Difference

The deeper you get into it, the faster you can reproduce that logic. Just in the sense of essentialising those identities when identities as we know are quite fluid especially across history and across space and time. It's a little

coup de grace dance that you do in trying not to essentialise but sometimes having to do that (Yusef).

Cosmopolitanisms do not herald the once-and-for-all cure for racism but rather articulate a radical re-imagining of living with difference in opposition to fixed identities and absolutist cultures. Cosmopolitan identities are fluid, existing only within and through geographical, cultural and social crossings. It is identity understood as a noun of process (Gilroy, 2000:253). Diasporic identities do not remain tied to 'race' or nation. They are able to disrupt essentialism, maintain individual freedom and provide a robust alternative to the fixed identities of the contemporary world.

The eminently modern diaspora the Black Atlantic illustrates the possibility of abandoning essentialism altogether (Gilroy, 1993). Postracial cosmopolitanisms convincingly demonstrate that nationalist paradigms cannot theorise cultural history when confronted by intercultural and transnational formations. The Black Atlantic is an explicitly transnational and intercultural perspective challenging how cultural and political histories are thought about. Its 'complex circuits' escape any simple formulation cohering a, 'webbed network constituted through multiple points of intersection' (2000:131). Diasporic identities, unlike sameness are not ready-made. In a cosmopolitan third way, they enable a creative dialectic between collective and individual identity. The recognition of the uniqueness of each individual juxtaposed with the solidarity produced by collective identity is an imaginative approach to the enduring pluralist dilemma.

Diasporic identity is something to struggle for not only because of the harmful character of racial thinking but also for the sake of humanity. The real ethical force of cosmopolitanism (Appiah, 2009; Hill, 2001) is how essentialism is not only problematic conceptually but *crucially* how dangerous it is in the social sphere. Essentialist narratives can be readily resurrected and strategically deployed to explain complex socio-economic problems. Essentialists notions of Latinos as undeserving and promiscuous, for example, have been used to construct them as undeserving recipients of government aid. For the cosmopolitan it is a moral duty and political responsibility to refuse essentialism under any of its guises (Gilroy, 2000: 277). Diasporic identities are a viable alternative to essentialised identities and culture with the displacement allowing for the recognition of the fundamentally hybrid nature of modern identities. Politically it also allows a radical struggle against the essentialism ingrained in 'race' and nationalism.

Postracial cosmopolitanism shows how the world is made of the interaction between ideas, social action and social structure. 'Race' - in this re-imagined difference - does not disappear behind its concrete consequences (i.e. Winant) nor is it discarded as an ideology (i.e. Miles). It is an imagined world where individuals would perceive physical appearance in a non-racial manner. Physical difference would mean simply diversity in appearance. The fundamental distinction between fixed and diasporic identities is how diasporic identity allows for the recognition of difference without binding the individual to it. The two are paradoxical but nonetheless characteristic features of modernity. The former functions as closure while the latter provides individual freedom. Hall articulates this anti-essentialist position: 'A recognition that we all speak from a particular place, out a particular history, out of a particular

experience, a particular culture, without being contained by that position (Hall, 1996: 447).’

Could the ‘rootless cosmopolitan of the Black Atlantic’ become fixed in its very lack of fixity (Gilroy, 2000:115)? No matter how negotiable or transformable, the concept of the ‘Black experience’ remains. St Louis (2001) has noted Gilroy’s cosmopolitan histories remain within the orbit of ‘race’. Black intellectual figures and cultural fields are centred. Are these histories distinctively or singularly ‘Black’? Is the Black Atlantic part of a universal process? However answered, the ‘Black subject’ still exists. It would appear that sameness remains, in some form, at the heart of ‘diasporic identities’ (Anthias, 1998). Does the assumption of a commonality of experience between certain individuals that cannot be shared by others on the basis of historicity represent a problem?

The commonality of individuals confronted by the same history, of course, cannot be denied. However, claiming the existence of a collective experience shared by all comes close to denying that some *might not* share it. There are unasked and unanswered questions here. What *is* experience? Can there be ‘shared experience’ between human beings? It may well be the case that the real essentialism is not in the descriptor ‘Black’ but in the fact that an ‘experience’ is assumed to be shared by people who have been through the same process.

Cosmopolitanism welcomes a counter-history which reckons with ‘race’ and its destructive consequences for the promises of modernity (Gilroy, 2000).

Transcending the particularistic traditions of ‘race’ ultimately requires cultivating

broad and international perspectives with which to dismantle the historical implications of 'race' (Eze, 2001:194). Postracial cosmopolitanisms represent ethically informed responses to the sufferings wrought by raciology. It is a perspective derived from a principled, global approach to the history of extreme situations (Gilroy, 2004:156). Postracialisms informed by these histories develop genuinely inclusive human identities which speak to the universality of our vulnerability to the wrongs we visit upon each other. Uncovering histories of suffering breaks with practices of colonial denial and historical amnesia, and according to Gilroy, equips us with the resources to furnish the peaceful accommodation of otherness in relation to this fundamental commonality. Cosmopolitan histories locate the origins of old xenophobic impulses in imperial history and detail their contemporary recycling in absolutist cultural rhetoric.

8.8 Translating Cosmopolitanism: The Problems of a Political Program

This is an audacious move to recentre a history complicit in the denial of dignity to colonial populations. The vision insists on the necessity of an inclusive humanism in opposition to the hypocrisy of earlier humanisms. It is a radical reappropriation of the terms of modernity by those who have been excluded from those terms. It is a project of challenging 'race' in terms not set by 'race' but rather in universalistic human terms (Butler 2000:40). This project is compelling in its attentiveness to racism and its refusal to allow past corruptions to have exclusive control over defining the parameters of the universal within politics.

Can these ambitions be translated into a politics? Without a discernible politics it seems an overly theoretical project (naïvely utopian?) gesturing towards but not confronting the materiality of racisms. Rob responded to the project of historical recovery in terms of how colonial histories might be negotiated within an effective antiracist praxis:

I'm not sure how good a tactic it [discussing colonial histories] is currently. We think about what's going to have the most political mileage in the current policy debate. It's probably not a reminder of that history. Looking back at our first film which was 1971, it was a lot about empire a lot about slavery, in order to also address issues about what contemporary racism was. It's a 15 minute film and the first 7 minutes talk about empire. I wouldn't start that now. Politically there's not much mileage in it. For most activists you work with what arguments work right now. There are so many reasons why racism is wrong so we shouldn't just be bound to one argument.

Rob suggests imperial histories lack political traction. Rob's discussion of 'tactic' suggests strategically shifting to fit the here-and-now with a wariness towards potential political backlash. Runnymede is certainly aware of how public discussion of colonialism might reawaken white resentment. A pragmatic antiracism is, of course, not without its own problems. Postracial cosmopolitanism after all depends on good faith and auto-critique. 'Race' was integral to the cultural formation of modernity, the gradual elaboration of 'the West and the rest' (Hall, 2000).

How then might such antiracism defend the failure to engage such a significant 'regime of truth'? Traces of this structuring discourse in the formation of modernity persist today (Gilroy, 2000:53)? Is Runnymede in not engaging these discourses complicit in the concealment of the histories of identities? Might such a strategy obscure crucial moral and political questions? Methodological pragmatism also risks confining the political imagination within the boundaries of the state. Antiracism

misses an opportunity to reassert democracy with debate determined by the political imperatives of a particular conjuncture. Revisiting modernity's histories and acknowledging how exclusionary forces compromised universal promises could be productive for revitalizing the ethical sensibilities of antiracism.

Lila and Yusef both suggested how challenging that discussion would be with the current government:

Listen to this government and some of the public speeches that have been made. You won't hear 'race'. This government doesn't even use the term. I would actually go further than that and say not only has it disappeared but that there is a perception, which I hold to by the way, that it is, somehow discouraged (Lila).

It has become more difficult to talk about 'race' and consequently more difficult to talk about and address racism. It becomes more difficult to even develop and enact solutions to it because we're not talking about it; almost not accepting that it's there. (Yusef)

The ConDem coalition discourse bypassing or denying 'race' as a way of making sense of discrimination poses difficulties. Postracialism may need to differentiate itself from its insidious Others. This task involves a sophisticated conversation about 'race' and a clear explanation of the ethico-political stakes of racism. Additionally, antiracism wrestles with a discourse of obsolescence which locates racial discrimination as a thing of the past even claiming racial minorities now have the upper hand (see Hewitt, 2005). Antiracism itself is under threat.

Postracial cosmopolitanism recognises how 'race' became an organising concept employed to exclude certain groups from humanity and to pervert the principles of modern democracy (Eze, 2001:134). Acknowledging how the political codes of

modernity integrated a deadly force is a central task of these histories (Gilroy, 2004:63). Cosmopolitanism is sensitive to histories of suffering and rebellion refusing to exalt victimage or to reinforce a hierarchy for ranking world-historic injustices. But how can that careful detailing take place? Alice reflected on this point:

Terms have a history. 'Race' has a history. Racism has a history. Slavery has a history. And yes they come value-laden. But that is part of human history in some ways and there's no getting away from that. Maybe it's having a more sophisticated dialogue as to how that happened. And how much of that can be a burden and how much of it can we acknowledge and talk about slavery and talk about colonialism, whilst leaving some of it behind. Or leaving some of the damage of it behind in a different way. I don't know how or even if, that's possible.

Alice asks what does authentic humanism look like? What is the place of empathy in it? And similar to Rob's point; is there something like a moral statute of limitations on these wrongs? Postracial cosmopolitanisms avoid essentialising victims.

Victimage, as argued earlier, cannot guarantee a richer more ethically and politically informed consciousness. Cosmopolitan histories aim for productive results; re-definitions of what liberalism was and reflection on what cosmopolitan democracy should be (Gilroy, 2004:20). Postracialism embraces a perspective which draws on trans-national histories to furnish resources for informing new modes of belonging.

Great ethico-political gains are to be had including the development of ethical obligations that set aside nationality in favour of universalist pursuits shifting from Euro-centric to cosmopolitan ways of thinking (Gilroy, 2004:98). Postracial cosmopolitan critiques of modernity's provincial ethics are distinguished by a genuinely global vision not simply another imperialistic particularism dressed in

universalist cloth. They introduce a creative view of humanity appreciating identities that stress experiential plurality and negotiated political associations.

The utopian ambition is a welcomed alternative in a climate of renewed cultural essentialism (see Huntington, 2002). Postracialism - a worthy ambition – still appears to suffer charges of impracticality. Lila described this well:

We don't often go into these academic debates about 'race' itself. And that tells a lot about where we are. Maybe it's an assumption that we're on instead of a plan. Or it's an assumption that as I started off saying we have to take we take certain things for granted and move forward. That's the approach that we take and the categories that we use.

Lila's hints at the inadequacy of not dialoguing about 'race' and suggest this carries consequences (reification etc.) - which cannot be examined because of the imperative to 'move forward'. Institutional structures and funding priorities forestall important debates and shape the contours of antiracism. Deference to historical inertia is hardly justifiable in ethico-political terms and only gives force to the utopian spirit of postracialism. How liberatory is an antiracism that lacks an alternative vision of 'how things could be' and fails to thoroughly reflect on imagining and bringing into being another non-racist egalitarian world?

The decision to not unpack 'race' is rationalised. There is seemingly no time for 'academic debates' - characterised as frivolous discussions (accurately?) - in antiracism. Lila implicitly asks; might this laudable ambition be a fanciful pursuit considering racism is entrenched in social, economic and political structures?

Postracial cosmopolitanism appears apolitical without confronting material racisms. Without an examination of key concepts, without a struggle over meanings, what is

there beyond a political inertia to continue working with existing concepts and tried-and-tested methods?

Cosmopolitanism points to the withering of 'race' (Hill, 2001) and to its declining significance to identity formation and political affiliation. Lila's political realism, however, casts doubt on that withering process. How does cosmopolitanism engender withering? Is cosmopolitanism a spectator to an organic process of decline, the causes of which are multifarious and largely unknown? Rob described the significance of this gradualist deconstruction, admittedly difficult to measure:

We constantly have discussions on how to do work on racial inequality which doesn't make 'race' real. And I'm not sure we're having that much success at having answers, but actually even raising that as a potential issue has big knock on effects in spheres we are connected to.

Postracial cosmopolitanism in creating a space for critical questioning and utopian imagining offers the opportunity for discussion and disagreement, for the ethical labour of working out our political commitments and ideas. Rob described the need for this discussion in relation to the dearth of affirmative antiracist claim:

It's interesting we had a meeting with seven of the eight largest race equality organisations in London and the opposition bench race equality minister. And he asked what three things would you like me to support. We were like uhhhhh, we'd kind of like you all to be nicer. I think as a movement we've got to start to articulate what those demands are. What *is* better? What *would* progress be? And *how* do we want government to account for it?

Postracialism offers a sketch for imagining 'what is better' and 'what progress would be'. Still in need of more precise political articulation, it nevertheless represents an important contribution to the ongoing debate about the ethical and political status of 'race'. In my conversation with Alice it was clear that postracialism's pressing

questions had opened up a dialogue on a purportedly settled topic. She described her ‘internal debate’ ignited by postracialist questions:

It’s an internal debate I have with myself whether that means we are colluding, by focusing on ‘race’, I don’t know. That’s a bigger question I constantly struggle with. Should different organisations be coming together and saying actually the issue isn’t ‘race’, it’s socio-economic power, it’s poverty, it’s deprivation. Those are the issues that we need to be addressing. We attempt to do some of that work in other areas. We are members of equality and diversity forum starting to look at some of the common issues across equality sectors. We do talk about poverty as kind of equality sector rather than just ‘race’. It’s a constant tension for me on an individual level cause I just think actually are we, is the platform that we are using colluding with maintaining the system? Rather than saying actually let’s forget about ‘race’ it’s about poverty, let’s focus on poverty. I don’t know, it’s a tension I constantly feel.

8.9 Conclusion

Alice’s uncertainty about ‘colluding with the system’ is a useful place to conclude this chapter. Her circumspection towards ‘race’ and her imaginative work on how to address racism without ‘race’ encapsulates a key component of postracial cosmopolitanism. As Rob remarked the answers are not forthcoming but in raising questions and reflecting on the status and meaning(s) of ‘race’ these interventions are enabling a radical rethinking of antiracist politics and boldly addressing what Hall called the problem of the 21st century, ‘living with difference’. Postracial humanism is not without its shortcomings – examined in this chapter as potential condescension toward racial experience, the fetishisation of agency and the thwarting of successful identity politics.

Postracial cosmopolitanism's principled estrangement from one's own culture and history appears to be well equipped to engage the complex dilemmas and opportunities of contemporary life. For its proponents, estrangement presents a rare opportunity to know the world better and to experience it in more complex and satisfying forms through a critical self knowledge (Appiah, 2006:47). Postracial cosmopolitanisms seek to imagine and work to build a multicultural society without the phobia of strangers or otherness and the paranoid notion of ontological jeopardy. In distinct ways they attempt to theorise conceptions of humanity that allow for the presumption of equal value and move beyond the parochialism of tolerance into a more active engagement with the irreducible values of diversity within sameness (Hill, 2001:76).

Chapter 9 Conclusion: The Stakes and Futures of Postracialism

9.1 Racism and Postracialism an Overview: The Postracial Paradox

Taken as a collective set of critical discussions, postracialism represents a thorough and persuasive critique of the scientific, political and ethical problems with ‘race’. This thesis with the aid of archival material and interview data has critically surveyed and analysed crucial points of consideration showing how postracial projects have transformed discussions around ‘race’. My empirically driven and theoretically informed assessment of whether ‘race’ is a necessary, contingent, or dispensable category examined the scientific, political and ethical basis and stakes of getting rid of the category as it consistently returned to the postracial paradox. Discussions of antiracist organising, postracial bioscience and cosmopolitanism showed how the paradox complicates unreflexive or extreme formulations of postracialism which can only align with reactionary politics. Postracialism - to navigate the Scylla of colourblindness and the Charybdis of the ‘declining significance of race’ may need to centre the postracial paradox and grapple with the utility (necessity?) of ‘race’ (in some form) for antiracist struggle, progressive medical practice and ethically responsible cosmopolitanism. Postracialism may be productively conceptualised as raising a set of dilemmas and attempting to begin the work of struggling with and against ‘race’ in political, policy, and everyday spheres.

Throughout the US and Europe racial discrimination and racist violence are constant events resurgent in everyday life and political life. A 2009 US Department of Homeland Security report explicitly warned of the mounting threat of far-right violence. The foretold bloodshed manifest in July of 2012 when Wade Michael Page, a known white supremacist, murdered six Sikhs gathered at a temple to prepare a community meal in Oak Creek, Wisconsin (Goodwin, 2012). The murderous rampage of Anders Breivik in Norway, David Copeland's nail bombings in the UK, the violent crimes of the National Socialist Underground, (a neo-Nazi cell in Germany) along with the rise of the neo-fascist Golden Dawn Party in Greece constitute an expanding network of violent extremism in Europe.

The rise of racist violence and the increase of neo-Nazi networks globally take place together with more coded culturalist racisms in mainstream political discourses on immigration. The significance of racial difference is evident in encrypted racist agendas on asylum seekers. In the UK, for example, asylum seekers and immigrants (particularly Romanian and Bulgarian for whom EU travel restrictions will shortly be lifted) are constructed as threats to national law and order and as potentially parasitic toward ever-shrinking state welfare benefits (Smith, 2013). A 2010 Institute for Race Relations' report showed that between 2006-2010 seventy-seven asylum seekers and migrants have died as a result of, 'direct racism or indirect racism stemming from asylum and immigration policies'.⁶⁶ Paradoxically, this proliferation of racism in public life coexists with the state's trumpeting of a certain 'postracialism' – the celebration of a properly managed racial diversity. In the opening ceremony of the 2012 London Olympics the representations of and tributes

⁶⁶ http://www.irr.org.uk/pdf2/DtDM_2006_2010.pdf (last accessed 17 February 2013)

to the Empire Windrush and the Notting Hill Carnival arguably aligned with the forging of a national consensus around a symbolic retreat from discussions of persistent racism suggesting that the ‘racial past’ (discrimination and inequality) has been *and* should be transcended in a celebration of a harmonious multiethnic Britain.

In the US this discourse grows out of the uncritical celebration of the re-election of Barack Obama as signalling *the* postracial moment. Obama becomes the personification of the Civil Rights mantra, ‘We shall overcome’. He embodies the realisation of the triumph over material and symbolic racism. The discourse obscures the centrality of racism in American society encapsulated by the persistent racialised wealth gap (Oliver & Shapiro, 2006). It also gives ‘progressive’ affirmation to an ideology first articulated in white backlash – why do we still need compensatory programs for historically marginalised groups if ‘race’ is politically and materially irrelevant? This is *not* just the multicultural rhetoric of naive journalism. Legislation and court rulings – including a 2007 US Supreme Court decision that ruled school integration plans should generally not consider ‘race’ to integrate schools - are also informed by these discourses. Chief Justice John Roberts’ majority opinion suggested, ‘The way to stop discrimination on the basis of race is to stop discriminating on the basis of race’.⁶⁷ Roberts’ colourblind casuistry renders progressive and responsible uses of ‘race’ - for example widening access to higher education to correct historic and persistent inequalities - problematic.

Progressive race-based solutions using ‘race’ as a part of a corrective program are equated with committing the same error as white supremacist usages. This postracial

⁶⁷ <http://www.law.cornell.edu/supct/html/05-908.ZO.html> (accessed 25 February 2012)

impostor disavows in absolute terms any reference to or application of racial categories and with it wholly dismisses the macro-analysis of racism in political and economic structures. It advertises the arrival of a post-racist egalitarianism through the formal equalities established by civil rights legislation and tokenistic disruptions to inequality and exclusion such as the presence of ‘saris and samosas’ on British high streets.

9.2 Chapter Summaries

The postracialism I introduced in chapter one challenged this modernist narrative of universal progress and the bogus claim to the realisation of a postracial utopia. These narratives attribute enduring racialised inequalities, when acknowledge at all, to nonracial factors. Racialised stratification is interpreted as the effect of market relations, personal choice, naturally occurring phenomena and imputed cultural limitations. The preceding chapters sharply criticised colourblindness for hiding structural racism behind a mask of assumed meritocracy. Chapter one made a robust case for another postracial perspective that emerges from an ethico-political concern with the political implications and ethical failures of current theorisations of ‘race’ and the reification of essentialised and homogenised racial difference.

This postracialism presents a developed analytical paradigm capable of understanding and explaining the evolving racisms of today. It also imagines and attempts to bring into being a postracial political landscape that enables democratic postracial projects. Further, it promises a view of humanity with the conceptual complexity for theorising the fluidity of identities that stress experiential plurality,

manifold affinities and voluntary political associations. Finally, it makes the ethical turn as it encourages the individual to become self-critical and self-reflexive in both her political allegiances and affiliations. This last dimension is connected to a feeling of impotence in and futility with academic theory when confronted with the resurgent manifestations of 21st century racism (Alexander, 2002).

The partitioning of theory and practice has led to an increasing separation of academic from activist life. I responded to and explored this separation methodologically through interviews with London based antiracist organisations. The professionalization of the intellect in academia has restricted political engagement and public dialogue. Intellectual production has been corralled into commodified spheres of specialised and de-radicalised thought very much distanced, if not alienated from activism (Jacoby, 1987). The disappearance of the activist-intellectual and the growing gulf between theory and praxis resonates in the lack of work on racism in postracial discussions (St Louis, 2002). The ‘success’ of postracial critiques and deconstructions may have backfired with unintended consequences. ‘Race’ has come under intense scrutiny with the unreality of ‘race’ firmly established in social-scientific and biological quarters. *Racism* meanwhile has been mystified or worse still dropped off the critical agenda.

The postracial overemphasis on ‘the end of race’ (see Hill, 2001) has been accompanied by a withdrawal of scholarly life from structural concerns and material inequalities. A corresponding trend in postracial debates has been the intensification of the separation of theoretical work from empirical labour. Postracial arguments circulate in overwhelmingly theoretical and abstract realms (see Gilroy, 2000). These

discussions avoid the rather messier, incommensurable realities such as the ontology of 'race' or the utility of 'race' to forging antiracist coalitions that identify and address the injustice experienced as racial - whether imagined or not. As noted in chapter two, the privileging of theory over empirical research and the separation of concepts ('race') from context (racism) was a site for my methodological intervention into postracial discussions. This thesis (re)turns to the empirical labours that established the sociological discipline with an orientation embedded in historical sociology and informed by archival and interview data. Archival research and qualitative interviewing - overlooked in the bulk of library-based postracial debates - have methodological merit. The rich empirical data explored in this thesis makes a humble contribution to enriching postracial discussions by addressing those messier realities of 'lived experience', practical politics, and racialised health disparities.

In chapter three I constructed an intellectual lineage to postracialism and its forerunner nonracialism by surveying the seminal thinkers and critiques of those histories. The chapter (re)constructed the historical fragments of nonracialism as it explored the long history of critique and disquiet on 'race' showing how nonracialism presented a counter-hegemonic paradigm that laid the foundation for postracialism. The chapter traced the conjunctures of non/postracialism, assembled a non-linear history of postracial discussions and illustrated how the main critiques and rejoinders to racialism have developed and been applied in their historical contexts. I organised the diffuse literatures into three historical periods to map the paradigmatic shifts in the central concerns and extensiveness of the critiques; (1) the (pre)history of 'race' before the 18th century ending at the start of the 20th, (2) the 20th century and stretches through to the 1980s and (3) the 1980s to today. The first

two discussions allowed me to further narrow my own project by focusing on what I defined as postracialism which involved the scientific, political and ethical critique of ‘race’.

Chapter four engaged qualitative data through an investigation of non/postracial universalisms attempting to (re)signify the human in ways that refute the ethnocentric histories of modernity. The chapter unpacked how these attempts to escape the strong orbit of ‘race’ frequently involved contradictory features. It explored the significance, for example, of how critiques of racial exclusion coexisted with a fidelity to existing racist conceptions while also critically assessing the implications of this paradoxical simultaneity for postracialism. The chapter developed the concepts of narcissism, racial ventriloquism and anti-identity identity politics as framing devices for considering what I argued represented three forms of narcissistic non/postracialism: religious universalisms, mixed-racialism and white abolitionism.

Ultimately the chapter contended that these forms of non/postracial narcissism – Quaker, Baha’I and secular nonracialism, mixed-racialism and white abolitionism – functioned as invitations for consideration of the challenges of escaping the ‘allure of race’ and the problems of how we constitute identity and live with difference. The chapter contended that postracialism offers a radical anti-foundationalist approach that responds to and in some sense resolves the inherent problems in constructionism namely the reliance on ontological security. The exploration of archival data, however, raised interesting and dilemmatic tensions concerning modes of identification based on sameness. Ultimately the data and the discussion illuminated

how narcissistic non/postracialism face intractable challenges particularly recovering histories of suffering and constituting an antiracist politics without ‘race’.

Chapter five critically interrogated postracialist attempts to escape the centripetal forces of ‘race’ through ethical critiques. The discussion drew upon the methodological arc of the thesis through the use of Foucault’s *a priori*, which exhorts against the perils of presentism. The analysis drew upon the Foucauldian ‘history of the present’ by problematising the present ‘truths’ of postracialism. The analysis placed a wealth of unpublished archival material in conversation with current debates in order to re-examine and think through some of the stuck places, complexities and ambiguities of (proto) postracial projects.

The chapter ultimately argued that although ‘race’ is not biologically ‘real’ it is nevertheless socially real and is crucially a central part of self-conception and determinant of life chances. Archival data enabled a rethinking of the postracial ambition. The question of erasure cannot be reduced to the ontology of ‘race’ as real or not because, moral concerns and moral positions are behind ontological ones. The chapter contended that the very discussion of jettisoning ‘race’ must be grounded in the history and contemporary manifestation of racisms. Archival materials served as powerful reminders that the (hyper)focus on the ontological question could also divert much needed ethical attention away from pressing issues of discrimination and oppression.

Chapter six attempted to tackle those pressing issues through an engagement with the widening gulf between postracial discussions and antiracist practice. In the

chapter I attempted to bring theory and praxis into a conversation that resisted empirical lip service and theoretical abstraction. The chapter critically investigated the possibilities of a postracial antiracism by rearticulating the objective expressed within Gilroy's conviction as a question; can action against racial hierarchies proceed more effectively when (it)...is purged of any lingering idea of 'race' (Gilroy, 2000:13)?

I explored the postracial ambition through data collated from a series of semi-structured interviews conducted with representatives from London-based 'race'-equality organisations.⁶⁸ The source material for the chapter was principally concerned with exploring the implicit suggestion that (if indeed possible) postracialism can be reformulated to enable a more efficacious antiracism. Interviews explored the theoretical and practical efficacy of 'race' and probed the possibility to encourage and make possible postracialist resistance to racism.⁶⁹

The chapter argued that in spite of the practical problems and warranted hesitation expressed in the interview material the theory/praxis dialogue and the extension of postracial insights into activist work was a productive engagement. Postracialism invited antiracism to consider a different set of questions beyond contesting racist discrimination. And in so doing it disturbed the commonsense footing of 'race'. The dialogue was most certainly mutually beneficial. Interviewees clarified in explicit terms the pressing problems confronting postracialism, particularly the lack of a coherent political program and an examination of its conditions of possibility.

⁶⁸ See Appendix 1 for the description of interviewees

⁶⁹ See Appendix 2 for the Schedule of Questions

Chapter seven explored postracial bioscience defined by St Louis (forthcoming) as a robust scientific approach which without the hesitancy and contradiction of earlier critiques consistently deconstructs 'race'. I argued that postracial bioscience provides the affirmative basis for the ethical and political critiques examined earlier, extends beyond the empiricist assumptions of positivistic paradigms and ultimately enriches epistemological, methodological and ethical understandings.

The chapter also maintained that the scientific field cannot be left uncontested given the social authority of science and how naturalised notions of 'race' have rationalised gross abuses. Restating the evidence disproving the biological 'race' concept as well as illuminating its conceptual imprecision is vital to postracial bioscience. Postracial bioscience deconstructs 'race' opening up space for an integrated science which examines structural inequalities and social processes like class stratification and racism. Although far from achieving a consensus, its wide range of critical and prescriptive insights have succeeded in stimulating debate on the usefulness of 'race' in epistemological, methodological and ethical terms.

The chapter contended that postracial bioscience shows that keeping racial categories does not serve the purpose of reducing health disparities in the context of genetic research. Reducing disparities requires understanding the social and structural forces of racism and inequality in addition to the complex gene-gene and gene-environment interactions that together comprise disease risk. The chapter made a case for postracial biomedicine as (re)focusing the major objectives of medical research and practice to the treating, curing and preventing disease particularly those

which make racial categorisation meaningless at both the scientific and social level precisely because they are not specific to any one group (Roses, 2000).

Chapter eight extended that discussion through an examination of the critique of 'race' based on egalitarian principles. The chapter explored postracial cosmopolitanism through both theoretical literature and qualitative data arguing that in spite of limitations it offers an ethically laudable re-imagination of living with difference. The answers are not forthcoming but in raising questions and reflecting on the status and meaning(s) of 'race' postracial cosmopolitan interventions are enabling a radical rethinking of antiracist politics and intrepidly addressing what Hall called the problem of the 21st century, 'living with difference'. The chapter also unpacked some of the shortcomings of postracial humanism including potential condescension toward racial experience, the fetishisation of agency and the thwarting of successful identity politics.

The chapter argued that postracial cosmopolitanism's principled estrangement from one's own culture and history, in spite of its limitations, appears to be well equipped to engage the complex dilemmas and opportunities of contemporary life. The chapter concluded that postracial cosmopolitanisms makes crucial intimations towards reimagining and living with difference by imagining and working to build a multicultural society without the phobia of strangers or otherness and the paranoid notion of ontological jeopardy.

9.3 Postracialism: The Paradox *and* the Promise

In its critical engagement with postracial discussions this thesis has argued that 'race' cannot simply be jettisoned. Historical investigation, archival data, interview material and theoretical discussions show 'race' to be at once empirically and analytically slippery *and* ontologically and practically sticky. The real effects of 'race' are not only witnessed in racial identities which, as argued above, can be critiqued from a variety of ethical and political positions. The limited engagement with racism in postracial discussions has resulted in an incomplete discussion of lived experience. This omission may have strengthened the application of postracial theory providing it with a tidier and more convincing account. This thesis has demonstrated through the use of interview data how the failure to engage racism has resulted in insubstantial accounts of the problems and issues confronting racialised communities specifically school exclusions and racial profiling.

On the one hand, 'race' is contested in theoretical discussions, policy discourses and indeed in the everyday. On the other hand, 'race' has very real, very salient meanings in the continued and widespread racisms across the globe. The instability of 'race' as a concept and category coexists with tenacious forms of racism. I have referred to this central dilemma in the postracial ambition as the postracial paradox. Postracialism disavows racial concepts maintaining they provide support to discriminatory practices such as racist admissions policies and practices in universities. However, it is the very concepts rejected in postracialism that are absolutely essential for identifying the discriminatory practices involved in preferential acceptance in higher education. Comparative racial data mapping historical admissions trends is debatably entwined in reification and may even strengthen the harmful categories antiracism is attempting to contest. All the same, it

is this longitudinal data that offers the indispensable proof of systemic inequality. Racial data is essential for the development of ameliorative strategies and solutions.

Postracialism must remain vigilant so as not to descend into a neo-conservative colourblindness or an apolitical 'racelessness' whereupon older political gains and structural inequalities are overlooked. It appears 'race' will have to be kept in some de-essentialised form as part of that strategy. Postracialism brings with it the methodological challenge of working with *and* against 'race' (Gunaratnam, 2004). This doubled approach of working with and against 'race' represents a distancing from more extreme postracial perspectives fixed on the unreality of 'race' and its ethical and political dangers and/or its biological falsity. Postracialism cannot confine itself to the narrow discussion of whether 'race' is real or not. It must continue to ask imaginative questions directed at combating racism and racial stratification.

Postracialism has a significant contribution to make. It potentially holds the promise of opening up other ways of being and opening up 'race' to epistemological and ontological scrutiny. Ontological critiques have, for instance, shown how 'race' is a contributing but crucially *not* a determining or primary existential dimension of human existence (St Louis, 2002). In discussion with Rob from Runnymede chapter six explored how 'race' might be used in pursuit of progressive antiracist strategies. In other words, how can we put postracial theory into postracial practice? Can we devise a post-identity politics? Is it possible to work against as opposed to through identity politics? These are important questions for postracialism to continue to

wrestle with and to critically explore through empirically informed and theoretically engaged discussions.

Postracialism is not only explicitly a utopian project but it is also willing to resist theoretical dogma. Postracialism, as I argued in my literature review, has a long history of being willing to stand back from current academic debates, to reflect and to ask questions of the proffered truths about 'race'. The discussions I examined above aimed to unsettle - sometimes only momentarily - the certainties of bounded difference. Of course, there is no shortage of intractable problems and dilemmas in postracialism. The historical example of Jean Toomer and the postracial intimations of Runnymede, however, suggest there are already initial, tentative imaginings and attempts to de-reify 'race' and to cohere a polity around a category not trapped by absolute and essentialist predicates. It must be emphasized that 'race' remains a primary descriptive marker of individual and group characteristics. The explicit racism in Breivik's manifesto, for example, exemplifies how at times 'race' is used as a validation of intolerance and a stimulus to violence. Alongside these violent reminders of the salience of 'race', Runnymede's project and the postracial bioscience discussed above are creative subversions and utopian ambitions aiming to place the category under erasure. In these examples we might begin to both imagine and practice how we might liberate ourselves from the reified and hegemonic discourses of 'race'.

Without the neat guarantees of 'race' we encounter a tremendous scientific, political and ethical project of confronting social injustice without the racialised forms of social description, explanation and justification that have guided science, politics and

ontology for centuries. Postracialism is an ethico-political invitation for us as sociologists committed to progressive antiracism to develop more compelling arguments that are not reliant on naturalizing categories. If the project is to have any ethical or political force it is that in moving beyond 'race' we might more effectively combat racisms. The postracial ambition might be understood as a laudable ambition which takes bold and imaginative steps towards an authentically democratic and utopian politics aimed at dismantling racism.

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Appendix 1: Interviewee List

All interviewees excepting Rob Berkeley have been made anonymous

‘Alice’ – Research Officer at Social Policy Institute 1

‘Evan’ – Director of an antiracist organisation working in Social Policy Institute 2

‘Lila’ - Director of an activist organisation

Rob Berkeley – Director of the Runnymede Trust, the UK’s leading antiracist think-tank.

‘Yusef’ – Research Officer working in Social Policy Institute 3

Appendix 2: Schedule of Questions

1. Could you begin by introducing yourself, telling me a bit about who you are, a bit about your professional and/or activist experience(s) and what type of work you are involved in now?
2. Could you talk a bit about how your organization understands race?
3. Could you talk about how your organization defines racism?
4. How do you understand the relationship between race and racism? For example, is race necessary for racism?
5. Race is *not* a *biological category*. But still, academics and activists continue to use it. Why do you think that this is?
6. Some people, concerned with how race seems to make *social* relationships appear *natural*, advocate for abolishing the category. They understand race as a product of **racism, which unlike race explains racial inequality**. What would it mean for antiracist work if race wasn't used to explain inequality?
7. These critics are also point to the usage of race in creating a hierarchy of humanity and justifying practices such as slavery. They suggest race cannot escape this history. That race implicitly carries judgments of worth and capacity. Is this critique meaningful to antiracist work?
8. Critics also argue that fighting against race is an important part of the struggle against racism. Race is understood as a category created by racists to rank people and justify oppression. Is this argument of significance for antiracism? How might it impact antiracism?
9. These critics shift the focus off of race and onto racism. And how *racism recreates race* and distributes social and material goods accordingly. *Without* using race, this antiracism would focus on the social and economic *invention of race* and the unequal distribution of social and material goods. Might this have any relevance to your current work?
10. Critics argue that race discourages the experience of a common humanity through racial divisions. Divisions which degrade and persecute many. Is this critique of significance to your work or antiracist work?
11. Critics argue that racial commonality is a false one. They suggest it simplifies individuality and assumes shared political views, values, and experiences. This assumed commonality is based on a false biological sameness. What if any are the implications of this analysis of race as morally dangerous for activist work on race?

12. Critics also criticize 'race' for complicating struggles for justice by dividing coalitions against pressing concerns such as poverty. They maintain that a racial framework ignores the complexity of issues faced. For example sexism or homophobia. How might this critique of 'race' as a political wedge causing division be applicable?

13. These critics recognize that to get beyond 'race', means more than just no longer using it or more dangerously pretending it is irrelevant to life chances and opportunities. Race has become so significant to politics, economics, identity, welfare provision etc, that it will not simply vanish. Any approach hoping to move beyond race must address racism. This project, hopes to work *both with and against* race? What might it mean for antiracist work to adopt such a strategy?