

Ethnic Relations: A Perspective from Critical Rationalism

Preliminary memorandum for the stream plenary debate at the BSA annual conference,
April 2012

Michael Banton

In its application to the study of race and ethnicity, the philosophy of critical rationalism expounded by Karl Popper has four prime characteristics. Firstly, it sees scholarly activity as a process leading to the growth of objective knowledge. Secondly, it maintains that this activity starts from the recognition of, and the attempt to solve, intellectual problems. Thirdly, it distinguishes two worlds of knowledge with their accompanying conceptual vocabularies. Fourthly, in its methodology critical rationalism is nominalist rather than essentialist. These four characteristics can be considered in turn.

Objective knowledge

We judge the work of our colleagues and students to decide whether it makes an original contribution to knowledge. That is the academic gold standard. To decide whether a book, article, or dissertation constitutes an original contribution to knowledge requires an assessment of the previously prevailing knowledge. Those who take the decision ask: to what field might this be a contribution? This can be problematical because important new contributions often do not fit easily into prevailing conceptions of fields and of the boundaries between them. These conceptions change, for both internal and external reasons. The internal reasons spring from the desire to make a body of knowledge coherent. The external ones stem from the availability of funds for research, the academic power structure and the social climate.

Some contributions to knowledge extend existing understandings. Others subvert them. A research worker may find that existing theories, explanations or research results are in some respect unsatisfactory. The falsification of a theory can be a valuable contribution to knowledge.

How has it come about that the study of race and ethnicity is widely regarded as a field of knowledge, something to which original contributions can be made?

The word *race* came into use in various European languages from the fifteenth century, with both vertical and horizontal dimensions of meaning. There is a vertical dimension inherent in the sense of descent, as in any reference to 'the race of Adam'. There is a horizontal dimension embodied in the differentiation of that race from other races. To begin with, the word was used in ways that drew upon the vertical dimension. Then, from the end of the eighteenth century, the word *race* was increasingly used in ways that emphasised its horizontal dimension of meaning, notably as a classificatory category or *taxon* (see Banton 2010). The horizontal dimension has been the source of much

confusion because the Linnean taxonomy of *genus*, *species*, and *variety* (or *sub-species*) was sufficient for scientific purposes. Nevertheless, some anthropological writers wanted to fit a concept of *racial type* into the scheme somewhere. In the shadow of Darwin's discovery of the theory of natural selection, they speculated about the significance of racial differences in human affairs. They assumed that the species was the unit of selection, and that the social categories identified as races corresponded to species; this was the origin of what came to be called Social Darwinism. It was exemplified in Ludwik Gumplowicz' *Der Rassenkampf* of 1883, Georges Vacher de Lapouge's *Les Selections Sociales* of 1896 and James Bryce's 1902 lecture on *The Relations of the Advanced and Backward Races of Mankind*.

With the rediscovery of the work of Mendel the mode of inheritance was identified; this led to the establishment of genetics as new branch of biology. In 1930 R. A. Fisher demonstrated, in *The Genetical Theory of Natural Selection*, that it was the gene, and not the species, that was the unit of selection. That in turn led to new constructs, such as DNA, RDA and the genetic code. The new modes of explanation could solve problems in both botany and zoology, so the map of learning was rearranged.

In the meantime, sociologists in the USA had constructed a field of knowledge under the name 'race relations'. After World War I, Robert E. Park tried to use the ordinary language meaning to develop a sociological explanation of why inter-racial relations differed from intra-racial relations. In pioneering a new field of study it is sometimes helpful to draw analogies with reasoning in other fields. Thus it was that Park borrowed concepts from the studies of ecology undertaken by biologists, using them in a metaphorical sense. It may be noted that in their 1921 textbook, *Introduction to the Science of Sociology*, Park and Ernest W. Burgess included four extracts from Darwin's writing. Those who followed Park elaborated and amended his approach: W. Lloyd Warner, by showing that black-white relations composed elements of caste and of class, and Oliver Cromwell Cox by his contention that the ordinary language conception of race served white class interests by rationalising the political subordination of blacks.

Scholars who came to the study of ethnic relations from other academic traditions brought new perspectives. The economist Gary Becker in 1957 opened up research into the prices that people placed on their racial preferences. The anthropologist Fredrik Barth in 1969 upset the focus on ethnic *groups* by shifting it to the study of ethnic *boundaries*, and to the ways in which individuals might cross those boundaries. This was an advance internal to a field of study. It was aided by external pushes, some of which came from the increase in international migration towards economically successful countries. Others came from academic interest in the analysis of relations in Europe, South and East Asia, and Latin America. If the books and articles published now are compared with those published at the beginning of the twentieth century, it is apparent that there has been a considerable growth in sociological knowledge in this field. One example of this is the recognition that so-called 'race relations' are social relations in which use is made of biological markers, and that they resemble the relations between persons considered culturally rather than biologically distinctive. This means that while the expression

`ethnic relations' may be an alternative name for the field of study, that field is only part of a wider one (Banton 2011).

A PhD candidate is unlikely to make an original contribution if he or she does not know what has been done already, so candidates are often required to `review the literature'. They and others are helped if, every now and again, a scholar synthesises and evaluates existing knowledge in the field, or in a part of it.

Problem-finding and problem-solving

The second characteristic of the critical rationalist perspective holds that the social scientist, like the natural scientist, starts from an intellectual problem, not from a concept. His or her attention is caught by an observation, or by a finding, that does not fit comfortably into the existing body of knowledge. It is an *explanandum* that calls for an *explanans* in order to produce an explanation. Popper (1963: 67) observed that `We are not students of some subject matter but students of problems' by which he meant, or should have meant, intellectual problems.

In some of his later essays Popper failed to take account of the differences between intellectual problems and practical problems (Banton 2005: 474-475). Practical problems are often of a socio-political character and may include an important moral component. I shall contend that the solution of an intellectual problem requires the use of analytical concepts, a specialised vocabulary. Moreover, we may be able, as scholars, to solve intellectual problems. Our work in cleaning up the language used in everyday life may clarify the moral problems, but it cannot solve them.

It can be very difficult to find a good research problem. An experienced adviser may be able to suggest a potentially worthwhile matter to investigate, or a graduate student may identify one for himself or herself. It may take time to define the problem with sufficient clarity. Many a doctoral candidate has said that `it was only when I finalised my dissertation that I understood the nature of the problem I was trying to solve'. If the solution to a problem illuminates the analysis of other problems also, by revealing inter-connections, then this shows that it was indeed a good problem to study.

Two worlds of knowledge

The third characteristic requires a longer discussion. Popper (1972: 153-161) wrote of three worlds, the first world of physical states, the second world of mental states, and the third world of objective knowledge. The second world mediates between the other two; it is in this world that people undertake research in search of knowledge. For present purposes it is sufficient to distinguish just two worlds: the world of practice, which uses the folk constructs of ordinary language, and the world of theory that is built from analytical constructs, or technical language.

Life in the world of daily practice depends upon the shared understandings that constitute culture and are embodied in what is called ordinary language. In this language the meanings of words are decided by their daily use in many different kinds of situation and in changing circumstances. The words used may therefore have many different shades of meaning. To discover which usage is considered correct or appropriate, the inquirer consults a dictionary.

In the world of theory, as exemplified in scientific writing, the meanings of words are also decided by their use, but that use is strictly controlled. The conduct of an experiment, or the attempt to replicate someone else's findings, depends upon replication, and upon employing standard definitions. Language in this world therefore has its own character; it strives to be context-free, to be addressed to-whom-it-may-concern. To do so, it has to develop culture-free constructs, valid in different world regions and different time periods.

In the contemporary social sciences, notably economics, psychology and sociology, scholars sometimes address policy issues and employ the ordinary language of politicians, administrators and voters. At other times they seek to develop a technical vocabulary that will help them to identify underlying causes. For this purpose they need a technical language.

This distinction has been recognised by many writers, though they have given different names to the two kinds of language. Marx wrote of 'phenomenal form' and 'essential relations'. Max Weber (1972: 9-10) maintained that in contrast to historical writing (which must use concepts with multiple meanings), sociology must seek univocal concepts, each with but one meaning, and therefore *eindeutig*.

In this culture-free language the definition of words important to an explanation is decided not by the dictionary but by the specialized mode of practice. The definition that makes possible the more powerful explanation has to be preferred, and no one can say in advance which this will be. This aspiration to new knowledge was noted by Durkheim (1897/1962: 310) when he wrote that 'If there is such a science as sociology, it can only be the study of a world hitherto unknown', i.e., of a world of culture-free constructs distinct from those of popular consciousness. The known may have to be explained by the as yet unknown.

Where, as in the social sciences, the two main forms of knowledge are mixed together, ways are needed of identifying which words or concepts belong in which forms. They have been contrasted as folk and analytical concepts, but a simpler distinction is that drawn by American anthropologists between *emic* and *etic* constructs. An everyday example of the difference is that when a patient goes to a doctor for treatment, he or she reports his or her symptoms in ordinary language and using *emic* constructs. The doctor makes a diagnosis, drawing upon technical knowledge expressed in *etic* constructs. In one formulation, *emic* constructs are accounts expressed in categories meaningful to members of the community under study, whereas *etic* constructs are accounts expressed in categories meaningful to the community of scientific observers (Lett 1996).

The *emic/etic* distinction identifies two kinds of vocabulary. *Emic* constructs like 'multiculturalism', both 'racism' in the singular and 'racisms' in the plural, anti-Semitism, Islamophobia, and so on, are useful in designating the kinds of social relations people wish to promote or the attitudes they wish to deprecate. Such words are used with many different meanings; their significance changes over time. While this flexibility is necessary to political discourse, it is out of place in a technical vocabulary; that is most effective when its constituent words retain the same meaning in all places and at all times. Taking a further step, it should be noted that the existence in ordinary language of a word that appears to be a name for something (e.g. 'angel'), does not mean that there must be a thing that corresponds to the word. That in the dictionary there are entries for 'race' and 'ethnicity' does not mean there are corresponding realities; to qualify for a place in a technical vocabulary, such a word must have a single meaning and the word must be necessary to the explanation of an observation.

The two vocabularies overlap in that technical words may be used in ordinary speech and may displace earlier words of less exact meaning. Other words to which technical meanings were once ascribed may later be found wanting, but still survive in ordinary speech. Though there can be no strict division between the two vocabularies, the contrast can still illuminate a possible source of confusion.

The distinction between the two vocabularies brings together the first three characteristics of the critical rationalist perspective. A researcher is more likely to make an important contribution if her or she starts from an observation or a finding that does not fit comfortably into the existing body of knowledge. The best research starts from the identification of an intellectual problem, and not from interest in an *emic* construct like 'multiculturalism' or 'racism', useful as such words may be in political discussion.

Nominalism

The analytical concepts that are the building blocks of objective knowledge can employ either nominalist or essentialist definitions. Nominalism has been conveniently described in the *Collins Dictionary of Sociology* (1991) as the doctrine that 'universal' concepts that define general classes of things (e.g. redness, roundness) cannot be conceived of as having 'real existence' in the way that individual things exist. Knowledge is provisional. Nominalism is contrasted with essentialism, the view that philosophy or science is able to reach and represent absolute truths. The example often used in the classroom is that whereas essentialists would define *Homo sapiens* as a rational animal, nominalists would define *Homo sapiens* as a featherless biped. The nominalist definition seeks only to distinguish the thing in question from other things with which it might be confused. Therefore a nominalist definition is more likely to embody a single, culture-free, conception of that which it defines.

When describing the contrast, Popper (1957: 26-34) referred to the argument of Heraclitus that no one can step twice into the same river; this implied that changing

things defy rational description. Some recent writers have presented racism as resembling that river, as something that assumes different forms but remains identical with itself, its essence. The transformations that the thing undergoes bring to light its different sides or aspects or possibilities, and therefore its essence. The thing can be known only through its forms. While recognising that such conceptions have a place in ordinary speech, critical rationalists contend that they impede the search for new knowledge.

Sociological knowledge

The key quality for deciding what counts as sociological knowledge is cogency. The examiner of a PhD dissertation can testify that a candidate has made an original contribution to knowledge without necessarily agreeing with the candidate's explanation of the problem addressed. There is a parallel with court proceedings, in that a dissatisfied litigant may be allowed to appeal a decision if he or she has advanced an arguable case; it may or may not succeed, but it deserves consideration. The quality of the argument is what matters. It is cogent if it is forcefully persuasive. Allowing an appeal is a step in a process that leads to a decision. For how long that decision will stand, can never be known in advance.

Sociological knowledge grew in the twentieth century with the recognition that a reported finding was not cogent if the sociologist in question did not allow for the possibility that his or her conclusion might be distorted by his or her status, social background or personal opinions. Studies of so-called 'race relations' furnish many examples of such distortion.

The author who did more than anyone else to establish the study of racial and ethnic relations as a branch of sociology was Robert E. Park of Chicago. In an introduction to a book written by one of his pupils (Doyle 1937: xxi), Park wrote of the USA:

'Generally speaking, there was no such thing as a race problem before the Civil War and there was at that time very little of what we ordinarily call race prejudice, except in the case of the free Negro. The free Negro was the source and origin of whatever race problems there were.'

Within the slave system there was no place for the free Negro. He was an anomaly, feared and reviled by those who identified blackness with the slave status. For Park, the 'problem' before 1865 was one of slavery. It became a problem of 'race' only when the white supremacists defended their claims by reference to racial ideology instead of quoting the Bible to justify slavery, or referring to the laws that authorised it.

Though Park's observation was not particularly new in 1937, it can be seen as a contribution to knowledge, or a useful reformulation of existing knowledge, because it warned readers, such as university student readers, that the whites dominant in the South in the mid-nineteenth century did not reason in the terms current among educated people eighty years later. On the other hand, Park's references to a 'race problem' lacked cogency because, without intending to do so, they reflected a purely white perspective. The problem, many blacks might have said, was not one of race, but of the inability of the

USA to make a social reality of the Fourteenth Amendment that was supposed to guarantee equal protection to all citizens. By the middle of the twentieth century no sociological argument was cogent if its author had not countered any sources of unconscious bias. Any author was expected to show consciousness of self, or reflexivity.

The passage quoted from Park illustrates the case for the critical rationalist perspective in some other ways. Park appears to assume that 'the problem' is the social or political problem in the mind of the white public. He did not identify the intellectual problems posed by the change in the vocabulary favoured by Southern whites, and the relation between their vocabulary and their socio-economic interest. The identification of new intellectual problems requires imagination and a critical perspective upon what passes as knowledge. It is a central component in the logic of scientific discovery. Though Park showed great imagination in other ways, he did not explore the value of distinguishing between the folk concepts of ordinary language and technical concepts that are not limited to a particular region and period of time. There were continuities in the outlook of Southern whites from the pre- to the post-Civil War eras; their examination required use of analytical concepts.

Park's observation is also interesting for comparative studies. It should be acknowledged that some US authors writing before the Civil War had argued that the black/white difference was one between permanent racial types. It should also be noted that, after the Civil War, there were court cases in which the status of Native Americans and other minorities was decided by reference to the legal conception of 'race'. Nevertheless, after the Civil War race and blackness were associated more strongly than they had been in earlier times, and this association was further strengthened in the twentieth century. It is my personal impression that, even today, when Americans think of race, they think first of black-white differences.

In this connection it should be recalled that the word *race* is a second order abstraction. No one ever saw another person's *race*. People perceive phenotypical differences of colour, hair form, underlying bone structure, and so on. Phenotypical differences are a first order abstraction. *Race* is a concept used to classify phenotypical variations, so it is a second order abstraction.

In Britain, the word *race* was never associated with black-white difference so closely as in the USA. If it was employed, it more often echoed what has earlier been identified as the vertical dimension of meaning. Instead of referring to a major social division in the home society, it was applied both to the very varied populations in the colonial empire, and to the ethnic differences in Europe. The author who established the study of 'race relations' in Britain was Kenneth Little; he was appointed an 'Assistant Lecturer in Anthropology with special Reference to Race Relations' at the London School of Economics in 1947. Little had conducted an exercise in comparative morphology in Cardiff, measuring the physical characteristics of what he called 'the Anglo-Negroid Cross'. By *race* he meant 'the physical characteristics which distinguish, or supposedly distinguish one group of people from other groups in society', but he had already

abandoned this initial interest in order to write about the social significance of differences in skin colour.

As a word, *race* came into more general use in Britain in the early 1950s, partly in reaction to the use the Nazis had made of racial doctrine. Then when, in the 1960s, the word came to be used as an abbreviated indicator of the controversy over New Commonwealth immigration, it related to immigration from South Asia as well as from the Caribbean. So the second order abstraction in the UK differed from that in the USA. During the 1950s and 1960s, the academic study of 'race relations' was based on three main components: the concept of prejudice, as a psychological disposition; the concept of discrimination, as a form of behaviour; and the concept of racism, as an ideology of inherited differences. Impelled by the Civil Rights movement in the USA, this changed. *Racism* was used to denote all three. Among sociologists in Britain attention focused on one use of the word *race*, namely its use to designate non-Europeans as inferior. Then a further step was taken. It was maintained that the same function could be served by doctrines that made no mention of *race*. The concept of *racism* was inflated to comprehend other kinds of statement and belief. Some sociologists re-defined the field as the study of racism.

This re-definition did not address the central weakness in the conception of 'race relations'. The expression was a carry-over from a pre-Darwinian conception of race as a category resembling a species. If blacks and whites were distinctive *taxa*, then all social relations between black persons and white persons were 'racial'. This was manifestly untrue. Lloyd Warner and Oliver Cox had shown that even in the Deep South some interactions between blacks and whites were defined as 'business' relations to which other norms applied. Social relations are multi-dimensional. There can be a racial dimension alongside dimensions of class, gender, religion, ethnic origin, and so on. These were later explored in terms of 'inter-sectionality'.

Linguistic usage in the USA has influenced British conceptions of what is to be accounted 'ethnic' as well as what is 'racial'. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the expression 'ethnic group' entered the English language in 1935 when Huxley and Haddon recommended it as a substitute for one of the senses of the word *race*. Reporting on Massachusetts in 1945, Warner and Srole employed 'ethnic' to differentiate Irish-Americans from Italian-Americans and White Anglo-Saxon Protestants. Then in 1953 David Riesman went one step further when he wrote of 'The groups who, by reason of rural or small-town location, ethnicity, or other parochialism, feel threatened by the better educated upper-middle-class people'.

The sociological approach underwent a dramatic change following upon publication of the book *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries*, to which reference has already been made. In it, Barth shifted investigation to the ethnic boundary that defines the group, instead of focusing on 'the cultural stuff that it encloses'. Having found a good problem, Barth (1969: 9, 15) inspired others to study the processes by which ethnic groups were created and maintained (even 'despite a flow of personnel' across their boundaries), and the processes by which they were sometimes dissolved. He identified interesting new

explananda; he did not furnish new *explanantia*. It should also be noted that Barth employed the adjective *ethnic*; he did not employ the noun *ethnicity*.

The noun was more used in sociology after publication of the volume *Ethnicity. Theory and Experience*, edited by Glazer and Moynihan (1975). In preparation for a conference, the editors had 'asked several individuals to prepare short papers that might serve as a basis of discussion'. Later, they solicited further contributions. Their intention was to assemble theoretical and empirical studies of 'situations in which ethnic groups distinguish themselves'. The chief thrust, however, appears to have been the editors' concern with the *emic* construct of 'ethnicity' as an *explanandum*. They wrote: 'We are suggesting that a new word reflects a new reality and a new usage reflects a change in that reality. The new word is "ethnicity"' (1975: 5). Many of the contributors provided analyses of particular situations that could be explicated by reference only to ethnic groups and ethnic boundaries, and at least one concluded that the 'term 'ethnicity' is clearly a confusing one' (1975: 156). Nevertheless, the editors' held to their assumption that 'ethnicity' was 'a new reality'; they used the word as the title for the book, while their encouragement of the view that the appearance on the political stage of 'ethnicity' was to be explained as the product of either primordialism or circumstantialism caught the attention of their readers.

At the time, the Glazer and Moynihan argument appeared to be a significant and original contribution to sociological knowledge. In retrospect it appears that their influence was, at least in part, negative. Their word reflected, not a new reality, but, so far as the US was concerned, a new turn in a social process with a history of at least a century. The Warner and Srole sense of 'ethnic' might, in English, date from 1945; in German it went back to the publication in 1921 of a note written by Max Weber ten years earlier. On his visit to the USA in 1904, Weber had noted that 'return to the homeland' would, for most German-Americans, be 'intolerable'. European immigrants to that country had initially associated with their co-nationals. Later, when they realized that they would not return to live in their countries of origin, their co-nationals became their co-ethnics. The nature of the bond between the settlers had changed. To write, as Glazer and Moynihan did, of 'ethnicity', was to represent ethnicity as a thing, to reify it. 'Ethnicity' is now freely used in popular speech, but from the standpoint of sociological knowledge it is a spurious word; when used as a noun, it is a failed concept that should be discarded. Its acceptability in ordinary language usage has deceived some subsequent researchers who, as a result, have not defined their problems with sufficient precision.

Alternative perspectives on ethnic relations

Kenneth Little had started from the study of interpersonal relations, attempting to develop a bottom-up analysis. I followed a similar strategy. Others developed a top-down analysis, sometimes starting from a concept of a world system. Reviewing the controversies of the 1970s, John Rex (1986: xii, 64) concluded that despite the 'feuds and conflicts of a quite theological intensity' a common objective underlay the formulations of the various theorists. We were all concerned with the differential incorporation of

racial and ethnic groups into states. He maintained that these groups engaged with each other as classes. Rex searched for a middle way between the bottom-up and the top-down.

In the early 1980s Robert Miles challenged both of us. He agreed with me over the priority to be accorded to the growth of knowledge, but would have had in mind a different kind of knowledge. His knowledge would have been that constructed by historical materialism; he might have called mine positive or positivistic knowledge. From this encounter I concluded that the key issue was the philosophy of knowledge on which theories of race and ethnic relations rested. In the 1986 book *Theories of Racial and Ethnic Relations*, edited by Rex & Mason, I differentiated two: the Kant-inspired and the Hegel-inspired. It seemed to me then that the choice had to be between these two.

Miles' reliance on historical materialism explained why his definition of racism was so abstract: 'I use the concept of racism to refer to a particular form of (evaluative) representation which is a specific instance of a wider (descriptive) process of racialization' (Miles 1989: 84). It was a definition of racism that did not depend upon any conception of race, and it had to be abstract if it was to be fitted into the philosophy. Historical materialism told him that class interests structured and stratified the labour market. The processes by which they did so had to be identified. So he maintained that when biological differences were given social significance, this initiated a process of racialization. Correspondingly, when cultural characteristics led to group formation and reproduction, the process was one of ethnicization (Miles & Brown 2003: 98-99). Miles and I also agreed that it was necessary to distinguish between the words of ordinary language (folk concepts) and those from which the new knowledge was built (analytical concepts). Miles presented this as exemplifying Marx's distinction between 'phenomenal form' and 'essential relations'.

In the later 1980s a third perspective came to the fore. Initially it was associated with the publications of the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies in the University of Birmingham, and the writings of its then director, Stuart Hall. It was presented as an elaboration of Gramsci's interpretation of Marxism; later it broadened out and became Cultural Studies. Malešević (2004) classifies its philosophy as a form of Anti-Foundationalism.

This third perspective rejects the priority that Critical Rationalism accords to the growth of knowledge. For example, Claire Alexander (2004: 147) stated that her chapter on the ethnographic approach to 'writing race' was written 'to challenge any residual claims to "Knowledge" and "Truth" in race research in Britain'. There are, of course, different kinds of knowledge (Worsley 1997), but what passes as 'knowledge' in an academic field should always be subject to criticism so that its inadequacies can be rectified. To reject any aspiration to rectification must be academically unacceptable.

The rejection of Critical Rationalism's first principle goes hand in hand with the rejection of its second: the importance of problem-finding and problem-solving. A discussion of 'writing race' assumes that 'race' is the *explanandum* and excludes any consideration of

whether it is a failed *explanans*. It starts from an idea rather than from a sociological problem. The approach from Cultural Studies prioritises the reporting of personal experience and accords over-much respect to the folk categories within which those reports are formulated. In some statements its objective is not explanation but understanding. The problems it addresses are political rather than sociological. Thus Brett St Louis asks how and why 'race' 'might be reified in the pursuit of progressive political strategies'. He asserts that 'we confront an intellectual question located within an inescapably political register' (St Louis 2002: 654).

Because this approach starts not from a critical examination of existing knowledge, but from subjective experience and from political objectives, ordinary language suffices for its purposes. Therefore it rejects critical rationalism's argument for the construction of a technical language built from words with more exact meanings than those employed in ordinary language. However, those who favour the third perspective would probably agree with critical rationalists that 'a considerable part of Sociology consists of cleaning up the language in which common people talk of social and moral problems' (Hughes & Hughes 1952: 131). In the famous phrase of John Locke, this is the role of the under-labourer. Those who want to clean up the language have to provide replacements for obsolete words and expressions. The vocabulary has to be updated, and brought into conformity with contemporary knowledge.

The word *race* has a place in the ordinary language vocabulary, so sociologists can be expected to employ it when they write on matters of social or political policy. If they try to use it as an analytical concept they depart from the fourth characteristic of the critical rationalist perspective in favour of an essentialist methodology.

The issues can be exemplified by reference to a book written with great aplomb for a general readership, Ali Rattansi's *Racism: A Very Short Introduction* (2007). Early on, the author maintains that before the Nazi era Jews were not generally regarded as a distinct race. He discusses the ways in which Jews and other people have been differentiated, summarising brilliantly the main advances of recent scholarship. Then, in a chapter titled 'New racisms?' - with its question mark - he subtly changes course. After noting that the drawing of cultural distinctions can serve the same function as the drawing of racial distinctions, he remarks that these forms 'might more properly be subsumed under the ideas of *ethnicism* or *ethnocentrism*' (2004: 104). Rather than addressing the general public, he has changed gear in order to argue with fellow sociologists.

Thus Rattansi acknowledges that while talk of 'cultural racism' may be acceptable in popular usage, the sociologist must consider it an essentialist notion based on an assumption that an unchanging essence underlies 'the superficial differences of historical time and place'. Similarly, Rattansi accepts that the idea of institutional racism has been politically effective. Yet he avers that, because it does not track the source of the discrimination, 'its use now confuses more than it clarifies' (2007: 136). Alert to the weaknesses of other components of the conventional vocabulary, he observes that 'ethnicity too is a problematic concept' (2007: 88). Notably, he does not consider whether the same may be true of the notion of 'racism' itself. By the end of his book,

Rattansi has abandoned any claim that the word has explanatory power (which is my concern), though he retains it as an epithet for use in moral condemnations. He is back in the public realm in which he began.

Is the question of explanatory power clarified by Malešević's proposal that the third perspective exemplifies Anti-foundationalism? This philosophy is defined in Wikipedia (accessed 2011-10-11) as rejecting any proposition that posits some fundamental belief or principle as the basic ground or foundation of enquiry and knowledge. Though in the field of ethnic and racial studies this perspective has contributed to the deconstruction of the noun 'ethnicity', this does not differentiate it from that of critical rationalism. Whether or not it is Anti-foundationalist seems to turn upon what is counted as a fundamental belief or principle.

Looking ahead

When comparing the merits of alternative perspectives on the study of racial and ethnic relations, consideration should be given to their potential for future research. How might adoption of the critical rationalist perspective promote a growth of knowledge in the future?

If there is objective knowledge in a field of study, it is possible to trace the steps by which that knowledge has grown, the new ideas, the new techniques, and, of course, the upsets when one line of explanation turns out to have been mistaken. It can be instructive to identify mistakes in reasoning. This encourages reflection upon the lessons that can be drawn from past experience. It fosters a critical attitude towards what is currently accepted as knowledge.

I advance three main criticisms of the existing knowledge in this field. Firstly, that it is excessively collectivist. In this I echo a complaint voiced by Max Weber just before his death (Bruun 1972: 38). It is understandable that, in the process of establishing a field, attention should have focused on the macro differences between racial and ethnic populations, and on the processes of collective action. Less attention has been paid to observations suggesting that two individuals who identify strongly with one another in a situation they define as racial or ethnic may oppose one another equally strongly in some other kind of situation. Just as Barth, by writing of ethnic boundaries, drew attention to new research problems, so I suggest that there are promising possibilities in the examination of preferences for ethnic association.

Secondly, while acknowledging that almost all sociologists complain that the word *race* is unsatisfactory for analytical purposes, we have not diagnosed the source of the trouble. I contend that there has been a failure to appreciate that the word is a second order abstraction, as explained at page 7 above. The meaning given to it varies with place, time, and circumstance. This variation undermined the search for constants, in Park's case with respect to racial consciousness, in my case with respect to its use as a role sign, and, at one stage removed, in Rex's differentiation of race relations situations. Sociologists

should go back to the first order abstraction, to what people actually see when they encounter others. They should not ignore the variability at the inter-individual level.

Thirdly, I maintain that too much of our work has started from ideas, instead of from observations of what people actually do. If, in particular circumstances, there is a distinctive dimension to a social relation that is associated with phenotypical difference, its significance has to be compared with that of other dimensions.

If a research worker asks questions about an interviewee's experiences of relations with blacks, or whites, or Indians, or Muslims, he or she frames the question in a way that evokes a particular kind of answer. There is no check on whether the subject has categorised the other person in any of these ways. A shop assistant at the till collecting payments for purchases may pay little attention to a customer's social attributes. Social categorisation varies with circumstances. It may also vary over time. In situations of immigration and settlement, characteristics suggesting that a person is a newcomer may be socially important in the early years but later be treated as of little significance.

The process of categorisation can be studied empirically. Researchers in Kampala, Uganda, found that when subjects were shown photographs and asked to identify the persons by ethnic origin, 'individuals make errors with great frequency'. These errors were not random, for 'Ethnic groups from the same region are especially likely to be confused with each other'; so that 'sometimes regional origin was more important than benchmark origin'. The authors added 'It is possible that by using census categories, we are coding identification success using a taxonomy that poorly reflects the identities that are salient in the communities in which we are working' (Habyarimana et al 2009:64-67). There may be miscognition.

If categorisation has been established, one question may be: what difference does it make to a social relation if one party to it regards the other as being of a particular ethnic origin? If A regards B as sharing a common ethnic origin, this may, in certain circumstances (that have to be identified) be a basis for additional reciprocity (i.e., 'solidarity'). In some circumstances, A may wish to be associated with a B assigned to an ethnic category of high social status; in other circumstances A may wish to dissociate from a B assigned to an ethnic category of lower social status. The relation will almost certainly have other social dimensions: is B of same or different gender? age? phenotype? language? and so on. Underlying all these dimensions there may be common factors. How can they be uncovered?

These questions serve to make a vital point. If research workers have a conception of a current field of knowledge they should be able to spot gaps in it. They can say 'we do not know enough about the difference it makes if, in a particular encounter, one person regards another as being of a particular ethnic origin. Next, they can ask 'how can we find out more about it?'

The interviewing of members of the public is the commonest research method in sociology. If subjects are asked to comment on how people like them would act in

hypothetical situations, this makes simple experiments possible. Key factors predicted to influence behaviour can be isolated and permuted. A very simple example was provided when a sample of persons in a suburb of Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, was asked to predict how they thought others would decide in certain situations. In one situation they were told that Husin Ali, a representative Malay Malaysian, bought his groceries from Ahmad's shop. Nothing in the interview said that Husin Ali was of Malay origin, or Ah Kow of Chinese origin. Those interviewed will have made this inference. In research elsewhere, the names, or photographs, of representative persons can be varied to discover more about the processes of social cognition.

The interviewee was told that a new grocery shop was being opened by Ah Kow. There was a common belief that Chinese origin shopkeepers sold groceries more cheaply. Would Husin Ali continue to shop with his co-ethnic (Ahmad), or would he buy where prices were lower (Ah Kow)? If he continued to patronise Ahmad this was taken as an expression of social alignment based upon a preference for association with a co-ethnic (Banton 2000). The strength of such a preference can be measured, for example, by finding whether Husin Ali is predicted to continue shopping with Ahmad, if, other things being equal, his prices are 2, 4, 6, or 8 per cent higher. In a shopping situation, some individuals will have a preference for association with a co-ethnic of zero; others may have a higher preference, depending perhaps upon their personalities, their financial circumstances, or the social pressures they experience.

Two ways of measuring preferences are to be distinguished. One is to treat behaviour as the expression of a revealed preference. The other is to ascertain positive preferences by measuring the expression of preference independent of any study of actual behaviour. A prediction that Husin Ali will continue to shop with his co-ethnic can be seen as reflecting his individual likes and dislikes, or as reflecting his solidarity with the co-ethnics who have made him the person he is. This latter aspect was measured in the research by asking respondents how they thought Husin Ali's mother would wish him to act in the situations studied.

The strength of any preference for association with a co-ethnic will vary from one kind of situation to another, particularly according to the degree of social distance. The preference for a co-ethnic as a teammate at work may be stronger than any sentiment about the employment of non-co-ethnics elsewhere in the workplace; the preference for a co-ethnic as a neighbour higher still, and highest for a relative by marriage. In social psychology, it was noted long ago that measures of social distance conflate of two kinds of concern: one is ego's concern about being identified with an out-group by his or her peers (i.e., members of ego's in-group); the other is ego's concern about 'exposure' to someone who may not share ego's expectations about the conduct of social relations. Experimental research design can separate these variables.

Just as many individuals will have a preference, in given situations, for association with a co-ethnic, so they may have preferences for association with someone of the same national origin, the same religion, the same gender, the same social class, or a speaker of the same language. Such preferences comprise one element in the calculation of the

amenity of a residential neighbourhood and doubtless in other social situations in which there are choices to be made. There are likely to be common factors that underlie all such expressions of preference and they may explain the relative strength of different preferences. An explanation that can account for both, say, national and class preferences, will be more powerful than explanations that account for such preferences separately.

The study of social distance could be revitalised by posing more sophisticated questions than those hitherto employed, and by permuting the factors that give rise to the expression of distance. For example a researcher might purchase from a photo agency a set of 20 standardised portraits of 20 persons of differing shades of skin colour as follows:

Pale	Ruddy	Fair	Coffee	Dark
4	4	4	4	4

Each set of four should consist of portraits of one male and one female of apparently high socio-economic status, and one male and one female of apparently low socio-economic status as judged by costume, etc.

Step 1: Draw a sample of subjects of varying ethnic origin and phenotype

Step 2: Ask them to sort the photos, picking 'which ones look most like me?'

Step 3: Discuss with subjects the reasons for their choices and classify them accordingly. It cannot be assumed in advance that they will show any particular classification.

Then ask subjects to pick portraits in answer to a question like 'if I had to vote for one of these this persons to represent me in in an election, this one looks best'. Such a question has been found viable in other studies; utilised in this context, it might elicit answers of interest. The task is to devise questions that would measure the likely observance of social distance while varying different sorts of situation and different components of socio-economic status. I offer this only as an example of an approach designed to get behind the sorts of replies that are given in answer to opinion polls.

Conclusion: a plea for experimental method

Experimental methods are not alien to sociology, even if their history has been forgotten (Oakley 1998). My suggestion is that in research into ethnic and racial relations we have reached a stage in which more use might be made of interviews in which subjects are asked to predict how their peers would respond when presented with imaginary situations balancing a preference for association with a co-ethnic relative to something else that might be important to them. There are many variables to be tapped. Underlying them there may be common factors, such as a concern for reciprocity. Much might be uncovered.

I cite these examples in support of my claim that the critical rationalist perspective can point to potentially rewarding lines of research and, I would hope, lead to a growth in knowledge about what are conventionally considered ethnic and racial relations.

References

Alexander, Clare 2002 'Beyond black: re-thinking the colour/culture divide', *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 25(4): 552-551

- 2004a *The Asian Gang. Ethnicity, Identity, Masculinity*. Oxford: Berg.

- 2004b 'Writing race: ethnography and the imagination of *The Asian Gang*' pp. 134-149 in *Researching Race and Racism*, Martin Bulmer & John Solomos (eds.). London: Routledge

Banton, Michael 1998 *Racial Theories*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- 2000 'Ethnic Conflict', *Sociology* 34(3): 481-498.

- 2005a 'Finding, and correcting, my mistakes', *Sociology* 39(3): 463-79.

- 2005b 'Three current issues in ethnic and racial studies' *British Journal of Sociology*, 56(4): 621-633.

- 2007 'Max Weber on 'ethnic communities': a critique', *Nations and Nationalism* 13(1): 19-35.

- 2010 'The Vertical and Horizontal Dimensions of the Word Race', *Ethnicities* 10(1): 127-140 & 148-149.

- 2011 'A Theory of Social Categories' *Sociology* 45(2): 187-201.

Barth, Fredrik, ed. 1969 *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries. The Social Organization of Culture Differences*. Bergen-Oslo: Universitets Forlaget

Bruun, H. H. 1972 *Science, Values and Politics in Max Weber's Methodology*. Copenhagen: Munksgaard.

Doyle, Bertram Wilbur, 1937 *The Etiquette of Race Relations in the South*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Durkheim, Emile 1897 *Suicide. A Study in Sociology*. English translation 1962 London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

Elster, Jon 2007 *Explaining Social Behavior. More Nuts and Bolts for the Social Sciences*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Habyarimana, James, Macartan Humphreys, Daniel N. Posner & Jeremy M. Weinstein (2009) *Coethnicity. Diversity and the Dilemmas of Collective Action*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.

Hughes, Everett C. & Hughes, Helen M. 1952 *Where Peoples Meet. Racial and Ethnic Frontiers*. Glencoe, Ill.: Free Press

Johnson, Barclay 1965 'Durkheim's One Cause of Suicide' *American Sociological Review* 30(6): 875-886.

Lett, James W. 1996. 'Emic/Etic Distinctions' pp. 382-83 in *Encyclopedia of Cultural Anthropology*. New York: Holt, vol.2: 382-83
(alternatively, <http://faculty.ircc.edu/faculty/jlett/>).

Malešević, Siniša 2004 *The Sociology of Ethnicity*. London: Sage

Miles, Robert 1989 *Racism*. London: Routledge
- 1993 *Racism after 'race relations'*. London: Routledge
and Malcolm Brown 2003 *Racism*. 2nd. ed. London: Routledge

Oakley, Ann 1998 'Experiment an social innovation: a forgotten but important history', *British Medical Journal* October 31: 317(7167): 1239-1242

Popper, Karl R. 1957 *The Poverty of Historicism*. London: Routledge
1963 *Conjectures and Refutations. The Growth of Scientific Knowledge*. London: Routledge
1972 *Objective Knowledge. An Evolutionary Approach*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Rattansi, Ali 2007 *Racism: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press

Rex, John 1986 'The role of class analysis in the study of race relations – a Weberian perspective', pp. 64-83 in Rex, John, & David Mason, *Theories of Race and Ethnic Relations*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

St Louis, Brett 2002 'Post-race/post politics? Activist-intellectualism and the reification of race', *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 25(4): 652-675

Weber, Max 1972 *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft. Grundriss der verstehende Soziologie*, 5th edn. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck.

Worsley, Peter 1997 *Knowledges. What different Peoples make of the World*. London: Profile

2011-11-22
8,226 words

Virdee, Satnam

Racism, class and the dialectics of social transformation

Virdee, Satnam (2010) Racism, class and the dialectics of social transformation. The SAGE handbook of race and ethnic studies / edited by John Solomos, Patricia Hill-Collins, pp. 135-165 (Sage)

Staff and students of the University of Glasgow are reminded that copyright subsists in this extract and the work from which it was taken. This digital copy has been made under the terms of a CLA licence which allows you to:

- Access and download a copy;
- Print out a copy;

Please note that this material is for use ONLY by students registered on the course of study as stated below. All other staff and students are only entitled to browse the material and should not download and/or print out a copy.

This digital copy and any digital or printed copy supplied to or made by you under the terms of this licence are for use in connection with this Course of Study. You may retain such copies after the end of this course, but strictly for your own personal use.

All copies (including electronic copies) shall include this copyright notice and shall be destroyed and/or deleted if and when required by the university (University of Glasgow).

Except as provided for by copyright law, no further copying, storage or distribution (including by e-mail) is permitted without the consent of the copyright holder.

The author (which term includes artists and other visual creators) has moral rights in the work and neither staff nor students may cause, or permit, the distortion, mutilation, or other modification of the work, or any other derogatory treatment of it, which would be prejudicial to the honour or reputation of the author.

This is a digital version of copyright material made under the licence from the rightsholder, and its accuracy cannot be guaranteed. Please refer to the original published edition

Licensed for use for the course: “Racism and Modernity”

Digitisation authorised by Online Course Materials Service
ISBN: 9780761942207

Racism, Class and the Dialectics of Social Transformation

Satnam Virdee

We cannot go forward unless we know our yesterdays.

Alfred Rosmer

Marxism is a revolutionary worldview that must always struggle for new revelations. Marxism must abhor nothing so much as the possibility that it becomes congealed in its current form.

Rosa Luxemburg

Since the 1960s, successive waves of sociologists have referred to the inherently debunking character of their discipline (Berger, 1963) whose task it is to demystify social relations (Rex, 1973). Most recently, Michael Burawoy, in his presidential address to the American Sociological Association in 2004 called on his colleagues to rediscover their radical edge and return to the early promise of sociology as the 'angel of history' that seeks to 'salvage the promise of progress' (Burawoy, 2005: 5). While Burawoy's call is laudable enough, it rests on a highly questionable assumption that the founding figures of sociology ever performed such a progressive role. Indeed, when it comes to offering an assessment of the knowledge produced by prominent US sociologists like William Graham Sumner, Lester Ward and Edward Ross regarding race, it would be more accurate to contend that their social Darwinian, cultural evolutionary and eugenicist perspectives added further layers of obfuscation that served to rationalise the discriminatory practices employed against African Americans and other so-called 'inferior races' (Frazier, 1949; Hofstadter, 1967).

Of course, there were individuals who rejected such racist perspectives and wanted as Reed (1997: 44) argues 'to rectify racial misconceptions by means of enlightenment'. Foremost amongst them was W. E. B. Du Bois and it was Du Bois' monumental *The Philadelphia Negro* published in 1899 that first challenged the dominant racist consensus in the academy by systematically

demonstrating that the black ghetto was the result of poverty and racism rather than innate inferiority and the allegedly criminal tendencies of African Americans. While Burawoy (2005) clearly has Du Bois in mind when calling on contemporary sociologists to renew their commitment to the radical sociology of their predecessors, what he fails to reveal is the shoddy treatment meted out to Du Bois by *fin de siècle* American sociologists who weren't ready to take on board the intellectual insights and understandings of his early Fabian-inspired work (Reed, 1997).

It was another African American scholar, Oliver Cromwell Cox (1970) – from a later generation than Du Bois – who first advanced in a systematic fashion a Marxist-class analysis of racism and grounded its evolution in the development of the capitalist system, and Atlantic slavery in particular. For Cox, racism or what he refers to as 'race prejudice' was an ideology formulated by ruling elites to justify the exploitation of non-European labour. Racism is 'a social attitude propagated amongst the public by an exploiting class for the purpose of stigmatising some group as inferior so that the exploitation of either the group itself or its resources may be justified' (Cox 1970: 393). Cox contended that racism served the additional purpose of keeping workers divided and thereby blunted any 'inter-racial' challenge to elite domination by perpetuating amongst the white working class 'an attitude of distance and estrangement mingled with repugnance, which seeks to conceptualise as brutes the human objects of exploitation ... race prejudice is the socio-attitudinal concomitant of the racial exploitative practices of a ruling class in a capitalistic society' (Cox, 1970: 475).

Cox's careful spatial and temporal embedding of racism in the formation of capitalist modernity contrasts favourably with the analysis produced by some of his more renowned contemporaries in the Chicago School such as Robert Park who, working under the narrower philosophical remit 'of how social science could be used to realise liberal values and goals in modern American society' (Smith, 1988: 5) could only offer in response that racism had existed since the 'immemorial periods of human association' (Park, 1950).

Despite the production of *Caste, Class and Race* and an additional three-volume work on world capitalism that preceded Wallerstein's world-systems approach by two decades, Cox, like Du Bois before him, found himself ostracised and marginalised by the predominantly white sociological community of the 1950s and early 1960s – in his case largely because of the 'anti-leftist imperatives of the time' (Reed, 2000). Concerns about Macarthyite witchhunts constituted sufficient reason for many leading sociologists to steer clear of Cox's impressive body of work and thereby silence it through non-engagement. Howard Becker, for example, refused to write an introduction to *Caste, Class and Race* because of its 'communist leanings' (Hier, 2001). As Hier notes,

Cox had introduced a text which was highly critical of capitalism into a postwar social-political climate, characterised by relative affluence and harmony. The economic prosperity brought on by the end of the war left Americans optimistic where their future was concerned, and sociological theory reflected this optimism in a functionalist mirror.

Consequently, this kind of Marxist-inspired analysis that Cox had penned, centred on class conflict and racial exploitation, was met with utter hostility or outright rejection. (2001: 71)

It was only in the 1970s, in the slipstream of the world revolution of 1968 (Wallerstein, 2004) which undermined the racist liberal geoculture that had held the world-system together for so long that Du Bois and Cox were rediscovered by activists and academics alike.

In Britain and the United States, heated debates took place between liberal supporters of Martin Luther King advocating integrationist strategies and revolutionary black nationalists like Malcolm X who questioned the legitimacy of the 'white power structure' and advanced the right to 'black autonomy'. These debates took an even sharper turn in the United States with the formation of the Black Panther Party who, in their 10-Point Plan, demanded 'an end to the robbery by the capitalists of our black and oppressed communities' and the Detroit Revolutionary Union Movement (DRUM) who explicitly linked black liberation with the abolition of capitalism (Geschwender, 1977).

Sociologists, or at least some of them, couldn't help but be inspired by such powerful resistance and it was this dramatic wave of emancipatory politics that first sparked academic interest in questions relating to the origins and reproduction of racism in capitalist society (see e.g. Hall, 2002: 451). Participants active in emancipatory struggles against racism brought into sharp focus questions that had hitherto remained masked by the intellectual veneer provided by the sociology of race relations (e.g., Park, 1950; Banton, 1967) such as how was racism reproduced in a post-holocaust world? In what ways was racism related to class relations and the workings of capitalism, and, significantly, due to the politically engaged character of much of the work, it inevitably raised questions about how racism could be most effectively countered?

In this chapter, I outline and critically evaluate the contributions made to racism studies by a number of key intellectuals including Michael Reich, Edna Bonacich, Stuart Hall, Paul Gilroy, Robert Miles and David Roediger. While the work of Reich (1972, 1978, 1981) and Bonacich (1972, 1976, 1980) sought to embed explanations of contemporary racism in segmented or split labour markets, it was Hall (1980, 1996), Gilroy (1982) and Miles (1982, 1989, 1993) through their productive engagement with the structuralist Marxism of Althusser and Poulantzas that forced class analyses of racism beyond the world of work to assess the significance of culture, ideology and politics. The chapter also maps and interprets the retreat from class analyses of racism through a consideration of the later work of Gilroy (1987, 2000) and Omi and Winant (1994) and suggests ways in which historical materialism could be renewed through a critical engagement with this and other poststructuralist work.

Much of the academic writing informed by the materialist conception of history since the 1940s comes under the rubric of what Perry Anderson (1976) refers to as 'western Marxism'. A key characteristic of this otherwise impressive body of work has been its relative detachment from any form of emancipatory

political project. From the miserable Marxism of the Frankfurt School's Theodor Adorno and his claims of working-class incorporation through the culture industry through to the structuralist Marxism of Louis Althusser and his termination of the emancipatory subject via the ideological state apparatus, this body of work has expressed a deep pessimism about the possibility of progressive social change in late capitalism. In this sense, it contrasts sharply with the classical Marxism or praxis philosophy (Habermas, 1987) of Luxemburg, Gramsci and Marx himself, who conceived the materialist method as not only providing the means of understanding history, but also of making it through political interventions (Hook, 2002). This essay is informed by a commitment to developing a non-dogmatic, critical historical materialism that views the production of critical, scholarly knowledge as indivisible from the struggles for progressive social change.

'BLACK AND WHITE, UNITE AND FIGHT': MICHAEL REICH AND THE THEORY OF LABOUR MARKET SEGMENTATION

Observing the durable, empirical facts of labour-force fragmentation and the disproportionate representation of racialised minorities (and women) in secondary labour markets, Reich (1973, 1981) and his colleagues (Reich et al., 1973) developed one of the first systematic accounts of how racism was reproduced in late capitalist society. Grounded in a theory of labour market segmentation defined as 'the division of the labour market into separate submarkets or segments, distinguished by different labour market characteristics and behavioural rules' (Reich 1973: 359), Reich offered a complex historical account mapping how the processes associated with early-twentieth-century US capitalism produced a homogenous and proletarian class that was increasingly conscious of its material class interests and significantly, was pursuing them in ways that threatened to undermine capitalist hegemony. Faced with this threat of worker militancy and growing support for revolutionary socialist political parties like the IWW and the SP, Reich (1973: 361) contends that the US political and economic elites consciously fostered labour market segmentation as a way of dividing the working class and thereby regaining social control over a precarious political situation.

Significantly, racism was one of the key mechanisms by which this process of labour market segmentation was effected. Employing African Americans as strikebreakers and cheap labour in predominantly white worker plants, the resultant activation of racist sentiment amongst this latter group was sufficient to divert its anger away from the white elites and towards black workers, thus ensuring the continued maintenance of capitalist-class rule. For Reich et al. (1973: 364), this type of labour market segmentation 'arose and is perpetuated because it is *functional* – that is, it facilitates the operation of capitalist institutions. Segmentation is functional primarily because it helps reproduce capitalist hegemony'. According to Reich and his colleagues, the *only* beneficiary of racism is

the capitalist elite; who retain power by virtue of working class divisions resulting from the process of racist labour market segmentation.

Additionally, while African Americans lost most as the victims of racist labour market segmentation, Reich (1972, 1983) is careful in making clear that white workers also failed to derive material benefits through their embrace and articulation of racist sentiment '...the divisiveness of racism weakens workers strength when bargaining with employers; the economic consequences of racism are not only lower incomes for blacks but also higher incomes for the capitalist class and lower incomes for white workers' (Reich, 1972: 316-317). Indeed, it has been demonstrated by others (e.g., Perlo, 1976; Symanski, 1976; Leiman, 1993) that there was a positive correlation between the degree of working class unity and the wages of black and white workers such that the incomes of both groups tended to rise significantly when they engaged in united action.

If racism didn't result in economic gains for white workers, then one is immediately confronted with the question of why racism had such purchase among white workers? Unlike Oliver Cox (1970) who argued that white workers suffered from false consciousness because they had been duped by ideologies propagated by the ruling elites, Reich contended that working class racism represented a form of nihilistic, psychological outlet for white workers frustrated by the problems caused by the division of labour under capitalism. This racism '... provides some psychological benefits to poor and working class whites. For example, the opportunity to participate in another's oppression compensates for one's own misery ... In general, blacks provide a convenient scapegoat for problems that actually derive from the institutions of capitalism' (Reich, 1972: 319-320).

Rather than attempt to integrate this potentially significant motivating factor into his explanation for racism, Reich unnecessarily closes down this line of inquiry by classifying such motivation as irrational, rationality having been defined narrowly in economic terms. In large part, this was due to Reich's theoretical framework, which showed little interest in understanding the white working class as a social actor. The resultant consequences for political practice emanating from this theoretical standpoint are disappointing with the struggle against racism, and therefore capitalism, narrowly conceptualised within the workplace and an abstract call for black and white solidarity accompanied by union growth.

'DIVIDED WE FALL': EDNA BONACICH AND THE THEORY OF SPLIT LABOUR MARKETS

A clear difficulty with Reich's theory was his contention that the white working class had no material interest in perpetuating racism. This left him vulnerable to the charge that the white working class were either cultural dopes suffering from false consciousness (e.g., Cox, 1970) or that they were economically irrational

actors; either way, for someone attempting to advance a historical materialist understanding, it was not a particularly encouraging description of a key segment of the primary agent of radical social transformation.

Edna Bonacich, on the other hand, avoids such a damaging charge when formulating her explanation for the reproduction of racism in late capitalist society. Like Reich, Bonacich 'stresses the role of a certain kind of economic competition in the development of ethnic antagonism' (Bonacich, 1972: 548). However, unlike Reich, Bonacich contends that the white working class were not only the primary perpetrators of racism but actually had a material interest in reproducing racism as well.

In Bonacich's model, the labour market is characterised by conflict between three classes: capitalists who want the cheapest labour, regardless of ethnicity so that they can reduce their labour costs to a minimum; higher priced labour which is fearful of this employer strategy and use their strength to exclude the third class of cheaper labour, often deploying racism as an ideological rationale for such action. As Bonacich (1972: 553) argues:

This class is very threatened by the introduction of cheaper labour into the market ... If the labour market splits ethnically, the class antagonism takes the form of ethnic antagonism. It is my contention ... that, while much rhetoric of ethnic antagonism concentrates on ethnicity and race, it really is in large measure (though probably not entirely) an expression of this class conflict.

Hence, in Bonacich's model, the primary class responsible for reproducing racism in late capitalist society was the white working class fearful of being replaced or undercut by cheaper black or immigrant labour that capitalists wished to employ to maximise their surplus value. While clearly an impressive theoretical model that firmly located the reproduction of racism in economic competition generated by split labour markets, there are some challenging questions that can be posed of this theoretical frame.

First, Bonacich's approach gives the impression that elites played little part in perpetuating racism in contemporary capitalist society. Such a position is directly contradicted by the evidence provided by Reich (1973) (see above). Perhaps even more damaging however, is the failure to account for the part played by the elites in the historical formation of ethnically split labour markets. This invites a whole set of questions about the role of Western capitalist elites in the uneven development of the capitalist world economy since the sixteenth century, and in particular, the significance of Atlantic slavery, colonialism, imperialism and labour migration to the 'core countries' in the postcolonial world. In a much neglected but important essay, Bonacich (1980) has sought to embed the ethnically split labour market thesis firmly within a world-systems approach (Wallerstein, 1974) as a way of theoretically negotiating the concerns raised above, particularly those relating to the origins of racism and the part played by the elites in perpetuating it.

However, by the early 1980s, it would be fair to surmise that the debate between segmentation and split labour market theorists had reached an impasse.

However, it has recently been revived, most significantly by the work of Phillip Cohen (e.g., 2001). Employing sophisticated quantitative analysis, Cohen demonstrates conclusively, contra the early Bonacich, that white capitalist elites derive economic benefits from racism. And contra Reich, he shows that white workers also benefit economically from racism such that it represents a 'purposive reaction in defense of a privileged status' (Cohen, 2001: 148):

In the process of creating divisions within the working class, racism may also play a unifying role for white workers, who can apply pressure to protect job boundaries. Therefore, even if racism retards the development of unions, contributes to stagnated overall wages, or fuels public policy that favours capital over labour, there may be a simultaneous tendency to widen the gap between black and white workers. (Cohen 2001: 148)

Cohen also goes onto problematise abstract appeals for black and white solidarity that Reich and others invoked as a way of transforming capitalism and therefore racism. For Cohen, the white working class have rather more to lose than their chains, and, if socialists are to realise their goal of black/white solidarity, they need to acknowledge the unequal distribution of economic capital between the two groups and that the white working class would have to give up some of the material advantage they have accrued directly from racism and discriminatory practices:

Paying white workers more and black workers less may be a means of dividing workers, but it is not done at an equal cost to black and white workers....The white working class may be able to improve its class position by uniting with black workers, but those who would promote such efforts should recognize that in so doing they threaten their racial advantage. (Cohen 2001: 164)

While Cohen's insights help to shift the debate beyond the zero-sum thinking of elite gain/ working class loss characteristic of the 1970s, it nevertheless remains the case that the explanations for racism considered thus far have remained narrowly grounded within the organisation of work and labour market inequalities. Hence, they remain open to the charge of economic reductionism, that is, the tendency to reduce the distinctively racialised character of certain social divisions to economic processes and questions of class inequality. It was Stuart Hall (1980, 1996) writing from the early 1980s, who first redressed this major weakness in class analysis by giving greater consideration to the political, ideological and cultural dimensions structuring and manufacturing racialised social divisions.

THE TWO SOULS OF STUART HALL: A STRUCTURALIST-HUMANIST PERSPECTIVE ON RACISM

Some influential scholars like David Theo Goldberg (1993: 93) have claimed that Marxism is inherently reductionist. It's certainly not difficult, superficially at least, to substantiate such a claim as the following excerpt from a letter by

Engels testifies: 'Though the economic factor is not the "sole determining factor," ... the production and reproduction of real life constitutes in the *last instance* the determining factor in history' (Letter to Joseph Bloch, September 21, 1890 cited in Wilson, 1972: 219). Significantly, these economic and reductionist tendencies were strengthened further as a result of the mechanical Marxism institutionalised within the 2nd International under the auspices of the 'Pope of Marxism', Karl Kautsky, and then, within the Third International under the deadening hand of Stalinism.

Nevertheless, I want to resist arguments like Goldberg's that point to Marxism's inherent reductionism. Indeed, Goldberg fails to acknowledge that the founders of Marxism were more than aware of the economic misinterpretation of the materialist method already underway in their own time, as well as their attempts at combating such problematic readings. Hence, Engels acknowledges that whilst Marx and he were:

... partly responsible for the fact that at times our disciples have laid more weight upon the economic factor than belongs to it. We were compelled to emphasize its central character in opposition to our opponents who denied it, and there wasn't always time, place and occasion to do justice to the other factors in the reciprocal interactions of the historical process. (cited in Wilson, 1972: 214)

Despite this important corrective, it is nevertheless the case that due to the ossification of Marxist theory under the 2nd and 3rd Internationals, the versions of Marxism that most academics were likely to encounter in western Europe and the United States in the 1970s were those that stressed the primacy of the 'economic' and not the 'reciprocal interactions of the historical process'.

It is against this background that a critical assessment of Stuart Hall's (1980, 1996) important contribution to the study of race and racism must be undertaken. The publication of his hugely influential essay 'Race, Articulation and Societies Structured in Dominance' in 1980 moved the epicentre of the race/class debate firmly across the Atlantic to Britain. In this essay, Hall transformed the existing debate on questions of race and class by advancing a set of highly influential, yet programmatic arguments that effectively shifted it beyond the labour market and the site of economic relations, to consider the role of the state and the importance of politics and ideology/culture.

Hall, at least in the 1970s and early 1980s, was unwilling to write off historical materialism as a method for analysing and capturing the specificity of racialised relations in different national societies. Instead, he proposed that through an engagement with the structuralist-Marxism of Althusser and the Marxist-humanism of Gramsci (Hall, 1980), a more intellectually fruitful and non-dogmatic Marxist approach to understanding racism could be developed which was: '...capable of dealing with both the economic and the superstructural features of such societies, while at the same time giving a historically-concrete and sociologically-specific account of its distinctive racial aspects' (Hall, 1980: 336).

Recalling Marx's own repudiation ('je ne suis pas Marxiste') of those individuals and organisations who claimed allegiance to Marxism but had failed to

grasp its materialist and dialectical underpinnings, Hall's aim was nothing short of intellectually 'saving' Marxist theory from the ills associated with orthodox Marxism:

What I have tried to do...is to document the emergence of a new theoretical paradigm, which takes its fundamental orientation from the problematic of Marx's, but which seeks, by various theoretical means, to overcome certain of the limitations – economism, reductionism, 'a priorism', a lack of historical specificity – which have beset certain traditional appropriations of Marxism, which still disfigure the contributions to this field by otherwise distinguished writers, and which have left Marxism vulnerable and exposed to effective criticism by many different variants of economic monism and sociological pluralism. (Hall, 1980: 336)

From Althusser, Hall borrowed the key concept of articulation which allowed him, among other things, to heuristically conceive of society as a complex structured totality (made up of the economy, politics, ideology–culture) 'each with a degree of "relative autonomy" from one another – yet linked into a (contradictory) unity' (Hall, 1980: 326). In this theoretical model, no part of society was reducible to another or corresponded to another; rather the focus was on studying how the different parts of society operated on the 'terrain of articulation' to 'provide the conditions of existence of any conjuncture or event' (Hall, 2002: 450). By deploying articulation as a middle-range conceptual tool to analytically distinguish and capture the specific linkages between different parts of society, Hall was successfully able to avoid falling prey to the traditional Achilles heel of orthodox Marxist theory of reducing or privileging one part of society over another.

The implications of this structuralist approach were profound and contributed to a genuine paradigm shift in understanding the causes of racism (see CCCS, 1982; Gilroy, 1987; Solomos, 1988). In particular, it was clear that race could no longer be seen as an epiphenomenon, a mere phenomenological expression of the underlying social reality of class but rather was relatively autonomous and needed to be given its own specificity. Relatedly, a key implication of race not being reducible to the economic sphere, was that Hall helped to turn our sociological gaze towards the study of how racism 'worked' at the political and ideological–cultural levels of society. Hence, one of the key conclusions to be derived from Hall's Althusserian-inflected approach was that there were additional layers of explanation that required excavation if one was to fully account for the reproduction of racism in contemporary society.

To equip himself with the conceptual tools necessary to accomplish such a task, Hall turned to the work of the Italian Marxist, Antonio Gramsci (Hall, 1980, 1996) who was especially useful in generating 'new concepts, ideas and paradigms pertaining to the analysis of political and ideological aspects of social formations ... the much neglected dimensions of the analysis of social formations in classical marxism' (Hall, 1996: 415). In particular, Hall, borrowed the concept of hegemony, defined as a 'state of total social authority' (Hall, 1980: 331–332), to analytically capture how in modern societies, elites secured their

right to rule primarily through the manufacture of consent rather than coercively. Relatedly, Hall followed Gramsci in understanding that such hegemony was exercised over the whole of society, including over the working class, and:

...not only at the economic level, but also at the level of political and ideological leadership, in civil, intellectual and moral life as well as the material level: and over the terrain of civil society as well as in and through the condensed relations of the State. (Hall, 1980: 331)

Finally, hegemony is: '... not a given *a priori* but a specific historical moment ... a state of play in the class struggle which has, therefore, to be continually worked on and reconstructed in order to be maintained, and which remains a contradictory conjuncture' (Hall, 1980: 332).

This 'reading' of Gramsci proved immensely productive for Hall and enabled him to offer a number of invaluable insights about understanding the reproduction of racism in late capitalist societies. First, there could no longer be a general theory of racism along the lines offered by Cox (1970), only historically specific racisms:

One must start, then, from the concrete historical 'work' which racism accomplishes under specific historical conditions – as a set of economic, political and ideological practices, of a distinctive kind, concretely articulated with other practices in a social formation...In short, they are practices which secure the hegemony of a dominant group over a series of subordinate ones, in such a way as to dominate the whole social formation in a form favourable to the long-term development of the economic productive base. (Hall, 1980: 338)

Second, a key factor that helped explain why ruling elites were so successful in securing hegemony was their effectiveness in fragmenting the working class in the political and ideological-cultural spheres. One manifestation of this was how the working class tended to reconstitute itself as belonging to separate races such that:

... the class relations which ascribe it, function as race relations. Race is thus, also, the modality in which class is 'lived', the medium through which class relations are experienced, the form in which it is appropriated and 'fought through'. This has consequences for the whole class not specifically for its 'racially defined' segment. (Hall, 1980: 341)

In this formulation, Hall offers us a productive and non-reductionist way out of the disabling impasse of the orthodox race versus class debate where both Marxists (e.g., Miles, 1982) and Weberians (e.g., Rex, 1970) treat race and class as discrete and dichotomous variables. Instead, Hall suggests that at the level of politics and ideology, race works through class such that it would be more appropriate to re-conceive this relationship as the racialisation of class and the classification of race.

The dangers of interpellation for Hall's 'Marxism without guarantees'

Hall's work in this period represents a genuine *tour de force* which helped to re-shape thinking within the discipline of sociology and beyond. Specifically, it represented the intellectual high point of scholarly work that was sparked by

the mass protest movements of the 1960s and 1970s. However, I want to draw attention to possible flaws in Hall's project of attempting to renew Marxism as a non-dogmatic method of analysis and action – a 'Marxism without guarantees' – because ultimately they have serious implications for his analysis of race and racism using the materialist conception of history.

The source of the problems lies in Hall's attempt to introduce human agency into his theoretical frame. Hall was acutely aware of E. P. Thompson's (1978) polemical attack on Althusser's attempt to square structuralism with Marxism, and especially, his charge that it had resulted in the construction of a flawed theoretical apparatus – an 'orrery of errors' – which had banished the idea of human subjectivity from Marxism. Indeed Hall, because he engaged with Althusser's work seriously, was the object of Thompson's ire in a now (in)famous debate held at Ruskin College Oxford in December 1979 (Samuel, 1981: 375–408). Hall, while rejecting many of Thompson's substantive criticisms, nevertheless had independently begun to turn to Gramsci as a way of re-introducing the 'historically concrete' and human subjectivity into his theoretical frame. As he retrospectively acknowledged: 'Gramsci is where I stopped in the headlong rush into structuralism and theoreticism. At a certain point, I stumbled over Gramsci, and I said, "Here and no further!"' (Hall, 1988: 69).

The additional analytic purchase Hall achieved by introducing a notion of subjectivity that had hitherto been missing from his work enabled him to demonstrate how the ascription of racist identities could also be appropriated by the racialised and infused with a new ideology of resistance to counter racism and discrimination:

The racist interpellations can become themselves the sites and stake in the ideological struggle, occupied and redefined to become elementary forms of an oppositional formation – as where 'white racism' is vigorously contested through the symbolic inversions of 'black power'. The ideologies of racism remain contradictory structures, which can function both as vehicles for the imposition of dominant ideologies, and as the elementary forms for the cultures of resistance. Any attempt to delineate politics and ideologies of racism which omit these continuing features of struggle and contradiction win an apparent adequacy of explanation only by operating a disabling reductionism. (Hall, 1980: 342)

However, his attempt to bring the subject back into history through the work of Gramsci is flawed because Gramsci is read through a structuralist-Marxist lens. In particular, the root of the problem lies in Hall's use of interpellation, a concept derived from Althusser and Laclau, and employed to denote the process by which individuals are constituted by ideologies, and so become subjects of ideology (Hall, 1996). Two corollaries of this understanding are that interpellated individuals believe that such subjectivities or identities are self-generated and so freely accept, even embrace their subjection, thereby contributing to the continuation of the capitalist system, and second, even when subjects do resist, they remain interpellated individuals.

Consequently, in Hall's conceptual framework, because the working class are always interpellated, the prospect of this class reaching 'beyond ideology' or

piercing the veil of ideology, and moving towards a higher form of (class) consciousness in explicit recognition of their objective, material interests is lost. Such an understanding of subjectivity and human agency is at odds with Gramsci's (and Marx's) theory of working class self-emancipation and the understanding that the working class could, under definite social conditions, break free from such ideologies of domination. The outcome is that despite his well-intentioned attempt at rethinking Marxism, Hall ends up offering a portraiture of the white working class that, like the Utopian Socialists before him (Marx and Engels, 1977; Draper, 1978), reduces this class to mere victims of the degradations inflicted by the capitalist system, a class with little capacity to resist the power of ideology in fragmenting and dissipating resistance to elite rule.

This is not to claim that Hall's approach, demonstrating the power of ideology in integrating the working class, and thereby, fragmenting opposition to the capitalist state, is wholly inconsistent with Marx's approach and the emphasis he placed on ideologies shaping working class conceptions of the world. After all, it was Marx and Engels (1987: 45) in *The German Ideology* who claimed famously that:

The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas, i.e. the class which is the ruling *material* force of society, is at the same time its ruling *intellectual* force. The class which has the means of material production at its disposal, has control at the same time over the means of mental production, so that thereby, generally speaking, the ideas of those who lack the means of mental production are subject to it.

Significantly, however, Marx – unlike Hall – explicitly juxtaposed such an understanding of ideology and its impact on working class consciousness with a conception of this same class as the eventual 'gravedigger of capitalism' (Marx and Engels, 1977). Indeed, it could be contended that what distinguished Marx's Marxism from other philosophical and theoretical traditions was not its emphasis on socially produced inequalities or political economy, nor even its focus on class struggle and capitalism, but instead, its conception that the working class was *the* universal class – the class whose own particularist interests, under given historical conditions, would synchronise with the transformation needed by society as a whole. It was in this sense, that Marx, 'nominated the proletariat as the universal class ... [and] hence, the agent of revolution' (Draper, 1978: 71).

Marx himself was acutely aware of the theoretical and practical dilemmas posed by what others have rather lazily interpreted as this 'contradiction' in his work. How then did Marx set about resolving the dilemma of a class that, on the one hand, was so thoroughly dehumanised in capitalist society and politically divided on the grounds of nationalism, racism, sexism and other ideologies of domination, with, on the other hand, a simultaneous conception that it was *only* this class that had the capacity to transform capitalist social relations and so release the full potential of humanity? Or as the young Sidney Hook (2002: 157) succinctly puts it, 'how is it possible for human beings

conditioned by their cultural education and environment to succeed in changing that environment?’

Marx solved this dilemma by introducing the concept of class struggle, broadly understood as encompassing forms of collective working class resistance to the multifarious forms of capitalist exploitation and oppression. For Marx, it was only through struggle that the working class could change politically and reject what he memorably termed the ‘old crap’ and thereby become fit to rule. That is, it was only through struggle that attachments to deeply held ideological positions would become unsettled and open up a political as well as ideological space from within which those articulating an internationalist working class standpoint could attract an audience and begin the process of manufacturing the necessary preconditions for the socialist transformation of society. Thus, for Marx, it was in the course of struggles against capitalist exploitation and oppression that the working class would begin to loosen their attachments to long-held reactionary sentiments and thereby begin the process of self-transformation.

Both for the production on a mass scale of this communist consciousness, and for the success of the cause itself, an alteration of men on a mass scale is necessary, an alteration which can only take place in a practical movement, a revolution; the revolution is necessary, therefore, not only because the ruling class cannot be overthrown in any other way, but also because the class overthrowing it can only in a revolution succeed in ridding itself of the ‘old crap’ and become fitted to found society anew. (Marx cited in Draper, 1978: 74)

This dialectically informed solution to the question of how those who are dehumanised by capitalist society are simultaneously the ones who are also most likely to transform it that Marx brings to bear on the question of social change is absent in the body of work produced by Hall. The outcome is while Hall very successfully takes us beyond the economic and reductionist Marxism of the 2nd and 3rd Internationals, it is at the cost of expunging the beating heart of Marxism – the conception of the working class subject as the gravedigger of capitalist society. In doing so, Hall abandons, albeit unwittingly, the revolutionary standpoint that was central to Marx’s life and thought.

In contrast, for Marx, class struggle was the central concept by which he understood history and its major transitions; it was the motor of history, and its intensification (across all levels of society) was the key mechanism by which changes in consciousness took place. The absence of the concept of class struggle in Hall’s schema means that he is unable to analyse societal developments in their totality. The implications for his theoretical frame are deeply problematic because he is simply unable to capture analytically, how the class struggle, especially its intensification, *may* contribute to the destabilisation of well-entrenched interpellated racialised subjectivities. Hence, while he usefully analyses how state racism ‘works’ in 1970s Britain, especially in relation to the issue of mugging (Hall et al., 1978), and identifies the growth of anti-racist protest around the identity ‘black’ (Hall, 1980), there is little analytical space to capture anti-racism amongst

the white working class who are largely seen as individuals increasingly adopting racist interpellated identities.

FROM MARXISM TO POSTMODERNISM: PAUL GILROY AND THE RETREAT FROM CLASS

Stuart Hall's development of a non-reductive Marxist approach to the study of racism proved intellectually fruitful and attracted a great deal of attention, both within British academia and beyond (Nelson and Grossberg, 1988). In particular, Hall's conception of race being relatively autonomous from class, and other valuable theoretical and conceptual insights inspired a generation of former students to carry out historically concrete studies assessing the role of racism in the cultural and political life of postcolonial Britain (e.g., CCCS, 1982; Gilroy, 1987; Solomos, 1988). In the course of these studies, Gilroy, Solomos and others helped to further refine and develop the original insights giving rise to what can retrospectively be termed the CCCS school.

Briefly, these studies showed how the relationship between race and nation was re-configured with the arrival of migrant labour from the Caribbean and Indian sub-continent in the 1950s and 1960s giving rise to an explicit indigenous racism that viewed a previously external presence as threatening the imagined British way of life from within. This new racism emerged onto the national political scene most significantly during the late 1960s and 1970s when, as part of the New Right project, it was employed by parts of the State to re-assert its authority amidst the organic crisis of British capitalism (Solomos et al., 1982). According to Gilroy (1987: 55-56), a key outcome of this new racism was that blackness and Britishness were reproduced as mutually exclusive categories, as neatly captured in the title of his influential book *There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack*. As a result, a more critical and multi-dimensional materialist analysis of the phenomenon was developed during the 1980s that demonstrated conclusively that racism was not just the result of class inequalities in the 'economic' sphere of society but also the product of state actions and nationalist ideologies.

For the purposes of this chapter, I want to focus critically on the important contribution made by Paul Gilroy (1982, 1987), one of the key individuals who helped shape and develop a neo-Marxian understanding of racism, but yet someone who subsequently went onto make an explicit break with a materialist conception of history.

There is a sense in which Gilroy's work represents both an organic continuation of Hall's impressive oeuvre and an innovative departure. The continuities can be seen in how Gilroy, through a study of the cultural politics of race and nation, is able to demonstrate convincingly how nationalism in postcolonial Britain became intimately entwined with racism such that the white working

class' allegiance to a racist nationalism overrode any attachment to fellow class members subjected to racism:

It may be that the benefits of imperialism have determined that 'the people' will always tend towards 'the race' in this country, at any rate 'The British Nation' and 'The Island Race' have historically failed to, and cannot at present, incorporate black people. Indeed their alienness and externality to all things British and beautiful make it hard to imagine any such discourse which could accommodate their presence in a positive manner and retain its popular character. The popular discourse of the nation operates across the formal lines of class, and has been constructed *against* blacks. (Gilroy, 1982: 278)

According to Gilroy (1982: 305–306), central to the construction and maintenance of this racist division within the working class were the institutions of the working class who have:

... failed to represent the interests of black workers abroad and at home, where black rank-and-file organization has challenged local and national union bureaucracy since the day the 'Empire Windrush' docked. We are disinclined to the pretence that these institutions represent the class as a *class* at all

For Gilroy, such historical and contemporary developments undermined those political strategies advocated by Stalinists and Eurocommunists alike in 1970s Britain that premised anti-racist interventions on the idea of an already existent unified class subjectivity. It is here, concerning questions of how political practice is organically derived from theoretical understanding that Gilroy's differences with Hall become most marked with his innovative attempt to rethink Marxism in such a way as to re-encompass questions of class subjectivity. Thus, for Gilroy, the pressing analytic (and strategic) question becomes that of establishing the processes by which racism can be challenged and the working class unified around a class subjectivity: 'Our premise is the problem of relating "race" to class, ... for socialist politics' (Gilroy, 1982: 276).

The key concept that Gilroy employs to analytically grasp this dynamic process of social change is class struggle, defined in such a way as to include 'the relentless processes by which classes are constituted – organised and disorganised – in politics, as well as the struggles between them once formed' (Gilroy, 1982: 284). Here, Gilroy opens up a theoretical and political space by which to re-conceive autonomous black struggles against racism, in the community as well as within the workplace, as forms of class struggle. The theoretical implications of such a position are clear; if black struggles are class struggles, then these struggles contribute to a process of class formation within which a consciousness of class becomes synchronised with a consciousness of race.

Though for the social analyst 'race' and class are necessarily abstractions at different levels, black consciousness of race and class cannot be empirically separated. The class character of black struggles is not the result of the fact that blacks are predominantly proletarian, though this is true. It is established in the fact that their struggles for civil rights, freedom from state harassment, or as waged workers, are instances of the process by which the class is constituted politically, organized in politics. (Gilroy, 1982: 302)

By locating the analysis of racism at the heart of processes of class reformation (and dissolution), the black working class, far from being peripheral to working class politics was now brought centrestage and imputed with a vanguard role that Marx had attributed to the working class as a whole:

In our view of class formation, the racist ideologies and practices of the white working class and the consequent differentiation of 'the blacks' are ways in which the class as a whole is disorganized. The struggles of black people to refuse and transform their subjugation are no simple antidote to class segmentation, but they are processes which attempt to constitute the class politically across racial divisions – 'that is which represent it against capitalism, against racism' ... these struggles do not derive their meaning from the political failures of the classically conceived, white, male working class ... it appears that autonomous organization has enabled blacks ... to 'leap-frog' over their fellow workers into direct confrontations with the state in the interest of the class as a whole. (Gilroy, 1982: 304)

Remarkably, however, these influential statements on the workings of contemporary racism and emancipatory politics, rather than representing a key moment in the historical renewal of the materialist method, actually marked Gilroy's departure to more postmodern forms of social thought. Hence, just five years after the publication of the collectively authored *The Empire Strikes Back* (1982) where he began the intellectually fruitful task of rethinking the relationship between race and class, Gilroy published *There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack* (1987) which saw him effecting a divorce between race and class. Hence, the reconception of black struggles as class struggles, constituting one moment in the historical unification of the working class was now rejected with such struggles disengaged from any type of class analysis:

If these struggles (some of which are conducted in and through 'race') are to be called class struggles, then class analysis must itself be thoroughly overhauled. I am not sure whether the labour involved in doing so makes it either a possible or desirable task. (Gilroy, 1987: 245)

Instead, drawing on social movement theory emerging out of western Europe (during a period of working class defeat), Gilroy moved to settle his account with Marxism by reconceiving black struggles against racism (or what remained of them by the late 1980s) as one of the burgeoning social movements alongside those of the feminist, ecology and youth movements. This breach with his previous Marxist approach was made explicit with his conclusion that:

The Proletariat of yesterday, classically conceived or otherwise, now has rather more to lose than its chains. The real gains which it has made have been achieved at the cost of a deep-seated accommodation with capital and the political institutions of corporatism. It's will, as Calhoun has also pointed out 'is apt to be a reformist will'. (Gilroy, 1987: 246)

Principally, there are two factors that help to understand the remarkable turn-around in Gilroy's theoretical and political position. First, were the decisive defeats suffered by antisystemic movements that had their origins in the world revolution of 1968. In particular, the political exhaustion of the militant workers movement in western Europe and the antiwar, anti-racist and feminist movements in Europe and the US, coupled with the fall of the Stalinist bloc of

eastern Europe (including the Soviet Union itself in 1991), effectively extinguished the utopian sentiments that had been sparked in the late 1960s. Against this unfavourable political backdrop, Marxist approaches to racism and other phenomena, with their concern for making history as well as understanding it, found themselves marginalised in the academy for the more esoteric concerns of postmodernism and poststructuralism. It is clear that academics, even those as intellectually impressive as Gilroy, could not fail to be affected by such developments.

Second, however, such an intellectual shift away from a materialist conception of history was made easier because of some of the weaknesses associated with Gilroy's theoretical framework, in particular, his failure to conceptualise the concept of class struggle in its totality. Gilroy used it only to reconceptualise the struggles of black workers as class struggles but not as an overarching concept that could help to uncover and interpret the struggles of white workers and their dialectical relationship with those of the racially demarcated black class fraction (see Virdee, 2000). The resultant abstraction of racist and anti-racist struggles from the historical rhythms of the class struggle and a historically concrete assessment of their impact in shaping and changing white working class consciousness and identities is entirely missing from his work. The outcome is that whilst Gilroy produces a dynamic analysis of anti-racist politics and black culture and its racialisation, the portraiture of the white working class is static, ahistorical and generally shorn of any subjectivity across time and space.

The implications of reconnecting the racialised class struggles of black workers to the class struggles of white workers and analysing their significance in their totality are disastrous for Gilroy's theory of race and class as Virdee (2000, 2002) demonstrates with respect to 1970s Britain – the period that Gilroy uses to formulate his theoretical standpoint. Rather than the white working class being defined as a racist class fraction devoid of any subjectivity across time and space, we actually find that under conditions of militant class struggle and major political and industrial unrest, the attachment to racist and nationalist identities became unsettled, creating a space for the emergence of a stronger class identity amongst parts of the organised working class which lead to the formation of a fragile but real class solidarity across 'racial' lines at a specific historical conjuncture. This was evidenced most clearly in the mass support provided by white workers in the dispute involving Asian women at the Grunwick film processing plant in north London but also entailed significant working class involvement in the mass anti-racist movements of Rock Against Racism, the Anti-Nazi League and the trade unions.

The most visible manifestation of rank and file 'inter-racial' working class solidarity and the rejection of racist ideologies took place between 1976 and 1978 during the Grunwick dispute when thousands of white (and black) workers, including miners, dockers and transport workers heeded the call for secondary picketing in support of the South Asian women on strike (Rogaly, 1977; Sivanandan, 1982; Ramdin, 1987). Additionally, local post office workers stopped

the delivery of mail coming in or out of Grunwick against the wishes of their union leadership in the Union of Post Office Workers (UPW) whilst contracted TGWU drivers, working for the police on picket duty at Grunwick refused to drive them into the premises of the firm (Rogaly, 1977; Ramdin, 1987). Ramdin (1987: 292) describes how the local people of the London Borough of Brent also responded with 'donations from the Millner Park Ward, the Rolls Royce Works Committee, Express Dairies, Associated Automation (GEC), the TGWU and the UPW Cricklewood Office Branch'. Particularly significant was the solidarity action of the London dockers who, in 1968, had marched to the Houses of Parliament in support of Enoch Powell's racist 'rivers of blood' speech and the end of black immigration (Sivanandan, 1982; Miles and Phizacklea, 1984). Only one docker, Terry Barrett, a member of the Leninist International Socialists (IS), had publicly opposed the march then (Socialist Review, April 1998: 31). However, less than a decade later, on 11 July 1977, there was a marked change in the attitudes of these same dockers towards racialised minorities as evidenced by the 'Royal Docks Shop Stewards banner heading a mass picket of 5,000 overwhelmingly white trade unionists in support of the predominantly Asian workforce' (Callinicos, 1993: 61).

There is a tendency in much of Marxist writing, including that by Marx himself (see the discussion above) to view struggle as somehow inevitably leading to the formation of a progressive (class) consciousness. Hook (2002: 212) also claims that a 'class is not always critically conscious of what it really is fighting for. It is the shock and consequence of the struggle which brings it to self-consciousness'. However, this teleological outlook ignores the possibility, especially in our post-Holocaust epoch, that other more reactionary, nihilistic ideas might fill the vacuum left by the disintegration of capitalist hegemony. It was Walter Benjamin (2006) who first warned Marxists of the dangers of assuming the inevitable victory of socialism with his pertinent observation that 'Nothing has corrupted the German working class so much as the notion that it is moving with the current'. Of course, Benjamin was attuned to the dangers of teleology and fatalism because he tragically witnessed firsthand the political capitulation of the Stalinised German Communist Party (KPD) to the Nazis so potently captured by their defeatist political slogan 'After Hitler, Us'.

Virdee's (2000, 2002, forthcoming) work demonstrates that movement towards progressive, anti-racist solidarities was not inevitable as both Marx and Hook claimed; instead, returning to 1970s Britain, he demonstrates concretely how anti-racist internationalists and racist nationalists competed politically for the soul and support of the white working class. Critical to the formation of united working class action was direct human intervention that transcended the racist colour line in the form of black workers engaged in independent anti-racist action and black and white socialist activists who recognised that racism served to divide the working class, something the working class could ill afford while trying to defend their class interests against employer and state attacks. Hence, key fractions of the working class were ideologically won to anti-racist ideas

because black and socialist activists from a multiplicity of political parties were able to successfully synchronise the struggle against racism with the struggle against employer attacks on the working class.

A hegemonic bloc, involving parts of organised white labour and the black population, around the programme of militant resistance to working class exploitation and racism was constructed in the 1970s which was only defeated in the early 1980s by the counter hegemony manufactured around the 'authoritarian populist' agenda of Thatcherism involving a different component of the working class. This 'historically concrete' re-reading of events is important because it allows us to derive one further point about the relationship between race and class from the critical historical materialist perspective advanced by Virdee (2000, 2002).

Under conditions of intensifying class struggle, the possibility arises by which particularist identities around race and nation can be unsettled and mutate into a more universalist identity of class. Yet, because of his problematic conception of the relationship of race to class at the level of theory, Gilroy misses out entirely on analytically capturing these important changes in the consciousness of white workers, including towards racism. Having written off the trade unions as irretrievably racist, he is unable to analyse the important process of anti-racist racialised black formation in trade unions throughout the 1980s and 1990s (see Virdee and Grint, 1994) which has led some to predict that when we witness the 'fire next time' and the resulting intensification of the class struggle, black workers will be an indispensable component of the struggle of organised labour against capitalist exploitation and that trade unions by virtue of the leading presence of black workers will play a crucial part in combating racism.

Gilroy's neglect of the class struggles of white organised labour and the implications for consciousness and the presumption of their unchanging racism across time and place, helps us to understand his attribution of a vanguard role to the black proletariat and the subsequent reconception of it as one movement among many social movements. However, with the decline of black politics from the mid-1980s, Gilroy loses even this diminished conception of human agency and is reduced to making an abstract appeal for a liberal planetary humanism to counter the growing array of racist absolutisms in the global era (Gilroy, 2000) – a demand almost wholly devoid of any systematic understanding of the inequalities produced by contemporary capitalist social relations.

ROBERT MILES, THE RACE CONCEPT AND THE MISSING HUMAN AGENT

Unlike Gilroy, and eventually Hall too (e.g., 1989), there was one individual – Robert Miles (1982, 1989, 1993) – who resisted the allure of poststructuralist and postmodern forms of social thought in the late 1980s and early 1990s and continued to vigorously defend and also elaborate further on his original

and explicitly Marxist informed account of racism. Writing against the dominant currents of the day, especially from the mid-1980s, Miles found himself engaged in an often heated and highly contentious debate with individuals working within both the liberal (e.g., Rex, 1970) and radical (e.g., Gilroy, 1982, 1987) sociology of race relations paradigms.

Miles' starting point was his wholesale rejection of the liberal sociology of race relations paradigm and especially its use of race as an analytical and descriptive concept (Miles, 1982). For Miles, the subject of study was not race or race relations but how and why parts of the human population came to be constructed and defined as members of different races with different levels of cultural endowment. By employing a conceptual distinction between essential and phenomenal relations characteristic of Marxist approaches, he attempted to sideline the 'race versus class' debate by claiming that race and class occupied different analytical spaces. In particular, race was employed to refer to a social and historical construction, an effect of ideology masking real social relations based on class.

Also, since Miles was keen to distance himself intellectually and politically from the concept of race, he analytically captured the process of race-making using the concept of racialisation defined as referring to 'those instances where social relations between people have been structured by the signification of certain human biological characteristics in such a way as to define and construct differentiated social collectivities (Miles, 1989: 75). For Miles, such a process of racialisation was almost always followed by that of racism defined as an 'ideology which signifies some real or alleged biological characteristic as a criterion of other group membership and which also attributes that group with other, negatively evaluated characteristics' (Miles, 1993: 60).

Substantively, Miles (1982, 1989, 1993) claimed that the genesis of race-making was intimately entwined with the projects of Atlantic slavery, colonialism and nationalism. Through these large-scale social processes, large parts of Africa, Asia and South America came to be economically underdeveloped at the expense of the economic development of the European nation-states of Western Europe and later North America. It was against this backdrop that ideas about race began to have some analytic purchase as a way of ideologically rationalising the rule of Western capitalist elites, and, thereby, the process of capitalist accumulation.

While slavery and colonial regimes were politically overthrown in a wave of nationalist-inspired revolutions (Nairn, 1977), racism continued to be reproduced because of the continuing economic dominance exercised by the departing powers. Specifically, the continuing uneven development of the capitalist world economy meant that international labour migration to the former colonial powers became an essential element of the postcolonial world-system such that when the demand for labour couldn't be met within the confines of the national state, individual employers and the state secured labour from beyond its national boundaries. It was at this historical moment that racism came to be replenished, with international migration being politically refracted by the State through the historical and ideological lens of racism (and nationalism).

Employing a structuralist-Marxist conceptualisation derived from Nicos Poulantzas, Miles concluded that the effect of such racism and the exclusionary practices arising thereof, were felt across 'all three levels of a social formation: economic, political and ideological. These effects can, in combination, cohere to lead to the formation of fractions within classes' (Miles, 1982: 157).

This summary of Miles' key theoretical and substantive insights allows us to draw several conclusions about how he moved the debate about racism forward in the social sciences. First, any theory about the historical formation of racism and its reproduction, had to be grounded in a theory of the capitalist world-system. Second, by also embedding his account of racism in a theory of nationalism he opened up the scholarly debate to conceiving of racism not only as a colour-coded problem relating to non-European others but also as one that encompassed the racialisation of the European interior. Third, through his rejection of the dubious concept of race, Miles provided subsequent generations of scholars – both Marxist and non-Marxist – with an alternative vocabulary by which to understand and analytically capture the phenomenon of racism which didn't contribute to the further racialisation of social relations.

However, it was precisely one of the strengths of Miles' framework – his objection to the employment of the concept of race in either description or analysis – that was, simultaneously the cause of the most serious weakness in his work. While conceding that individuals may be forced to organise against racism independently around racialised identities due to the racism of the white working class, Miles remained unwilling to accommodate such anti-racism within his Marxian frame because of his concern that the continued use of race only served to sustain the conditions for the reproduction of racism within society:

... as a result of reification and the interplay between academic and common sense discourses, the "use" of race as an analytical concept can incorporate into the discourse of anti-racism a notion which has been central to the evolution of racism. As a result, anti-racist activities then promote the idea that 'races' really exist as biological categories of people. Thus, while challenging the legitimacy of unequal treatment and stereotyping implicit and explicit in racism, the reproduction within anti-racist campaigns of the idea that there are real biological differences creating groups of human beings sustains in the public consciousness a notion which constitutes an ideological precondition for stereotyping and unequal treatment. (Miles and Torres, 1999: 26)

While entirely consistent with his theoretical position, Miles' failure to accommodate anti-racist action constructed around the racialised identity of black in 1970s Britain within his theoretical perspective created immense problems relating to political practice. In particular, in the context of the state racism unleashed against Britain's racialised minority populations in the 1970s and 1980s (see CCCS, 1982; Solomos, 1988), Miles was left advocating support for an idealised and unified class subjectivity which he hoped would evolve out of a shared class position in the process of production providing a 'material and political basis for the development of anti-racist practice within the working class'. Such an abstract political and theoretical standpoint appears to be wholly

at odds with the understanding of historical materialism outlined in this essay which conceives of the materialist method of history as one that helps to inform the making of history as well as understanding it. The undialectical and potentially reactionary nature of this position was made explicit by Gilroy (1987: 23) in no uncertain terms when he contended that:

This position effectively articulates a theoretical statement of the 'black and white unite variety'. The consciousness of groups which define themselves in, or organize around, what becomes racial discourses is rendered illegitimate because of its roots in ideology. It is consistently counterposed to the apparently unlimited potential of an ideal category of workers. This group, the repository of legitimate and authentic class feeling, is able to transcend racial particularity in political practice uncontaminated by non-class subjectivity.

Miles' later collaborative work (e.g., Miles and Torres, 1999) did eventually concede the power of such a critique: 'the strongest case made in favour of the retention of the notion of "race" as an analytical concept arises from the fact that it has been used by the victims of racism to fashion a strategy and practice of resistance to their subordination' (Miles and Torres, 1999: 3). However, his belated attempt to incorporate anti-racist mobilisations around a racialised identity into his theoretical framework as examples of what he termed racialised formation (Miles and Torres, 1999: 30) only led to further conceptual difficulties and the unravelling of his theoretical and political perspective.

Miles quite rightly notes that the process of racialization is a dialectical process such that by racialising an individual or group as the 'other', one is also simultaneously racialising the 'self'. Both these dimensions of racialization can be treated as examples of racialised formation. The problem in Miles' later work is that he has no intellectual strategy to analytically distinguish between projects of racialised formation that are motivated by racism and those that are motivated by anti-racism. Hence, the implications for his theoretical framework are, for example, that both white supremacists demonstrating against the arrival of Hispanic migrants in the United States and Hispanic Americans countering such mobilisations constitute instances of racialised formation. This fundamental failure to accommodate anti-racism around a racialised identity means that the theoretical promise of Miles' original intellectual framework remains only partially fulfilled.

It could be contended that this is not an isolated failing but integral to his problematic conception of historical materialism which over-emphasised the structural forces shaping the lives of racialised minorities whilst at the same time underestimated the creative self-activity of racialised minorities in reshaping the adverse circumstances they found themselves in. This type of historical materialist approach which became hegemonic in Western academic circles in the 1970s and 1980s was, as has already been shown in this essay, heavily informed by the work of French theorists like Althusser and Poulantzas. Through their 'reading' of Marx, they came to advance an understanding of human development which allowed little room for human agency and where the abstract 'laws of society' were impervious to human will and action (Althusser, 1994).

In Miles' structuralist theoretical schema, this manifested itself in how capital and capitalist elites were conceived as omnipotent whilst migrant labour, emptied of any capacity for agency, was reduced to a mere object, a compliant cog in the wheel of capitalism moved from one nation to another by the all-powerful and anonymous 'law of capital accumulation'. While not wishing to deny the undoubted strengths of this approach, especially the way in which it highlighted the importance of labour migration to the capitalist world economy, the neglect of human agency made it impossible for Miles to envisage a scenario where racialised minorities might actually counter and *successfully* resist the allegedly omnipotent interests of capitalist elites and thereby re-shape their lives under capitalism. This leads to the conclusion that whilst Miles's migrant labour approach is useful in identifying the initial mechanisms triggering racism, namely, the uneven development of the capitalist world economy and international migration, it loses much of its analytic and explanatory purchase when the focus turns to post-migration developments, especially those relating to anti-racism, subjectivity and identity formation.

Critically integrating concepts developed within poststructuralist racial formation theory offers the most productive way of theorising anti-racist subjectivities within a revised historical materialist frame. Its founders, Michael Omi and Howard Winant (1994: 55), deploy the concept of racial formation to refer to the 'sociohistorical process by which racial categories are created, inhabited, transformed, and destroyed'. Crucial to this formulation is the treatment of race as a central axis of social relations which cannot be subsumed or reduced to some other category like class. Against the neo-Marxists who sought to abolish the race concept from the sociological lexicon, Winant (2000: 184) contends:

... this fails to recognise that at the level of experience, of everyday life, race is a relatively impermeable part of our identities: US society is so thoroughly racialized that to be without racial identity is to be in danger of having no identity. To be raceless is akin to being genderless. Indeed, when one cannot identify another's race, a microsociological crisis of interpretation results

This conception of race is therefore underpinned by an understanding that it is rooted neither in biology as scientific racists claim, nor, is it a fiction as many Marxists contend; rather race is a 'concept which signifies and symbolises social conflicts and interests by referring to different types of human bodies' (Omi and Winant 1994: 55). This understanding of race has clear similarities to the position advanced by the CCCS school of Hall and Gilroy outlined earlier in this essay. However, Omi and Winant's theory of racial formation takes us beyond the debate in Britain; indeed, it may even help to resolve this sometimes heated and contentious debate because unlike the CCCS school, Omi and Winant go on to offer a way of analytically distinguishing between racist and anti-racist usages of the race concept.

Omi and Winant (1994: 56) define a racial project as involving 'simultaneously an interpretation, representation, or explanation of racial dynamics, and an

effort to reorganise and redistribute resources along particular racial lines' and go on to claim that it can only be understood to be racist 'if and only if it creates or reproduces structures of domination based on essentialist categories of race' (Omi and Winant 1994: 71). This approach offers a strategy of analytically capturing and distinguishing between racist and anti-racist movements that are underpinned by the idea of race in ways that overcome the conceptual difficulties associated with structuralist Marxist perspectives such as that of Miles.

If we take the examples of the 1960s US Civil Rights movement and the black anti-racist movement of 1970s Britain – both cases would be understood by Miles to be 'problematic' because they attempted to combat racism using ideological categories of thought invented by racists. However, following Omi and Winant, such movements can now be understood as cases of anti-racist racialised projects since they were not seeking to replace white supremacy with black supremacy but trying to challenge white supremacy by invoking demands for citizenship and equal rights.

Further, racial formation theory draws out into the open, the previously neglected study of white racist identities or whiteness by allowing us to study racist racial formation projects. Both the race relations and the racism problematics tended to focus on the processes by which subordinated racialised minority groups were subject to racism. However, Omi and Winant direct our sociological gaze towards how black and white races are produced and reproduced in changing political and historical circumstances. Finally, racial formation theory makes the valuable point that there are some racial projects, especially at the level of micro-social relations that cannot be understood with reference to macro-sociological theories. A class approach to race and racism they claim 'hardly begins to inquire into the sources and contours of racial dynamics' (Omi and Winant, 1994: 35) associated with what labour historians have termed the 'social equality' question.

However, whilst clearly advocating a critical engagement with poststructuralist racial formation theory as a way of renewing and also circumventing some of the conceptual difficulties associated with existing historical materialist approaches towards racism, racial formation theory in and of itself is clearly a partial and sometimes problematic way of understanding the material bases of racism. In particular, attempts by their founders to actualise a divorce between the study of racial formation processes and capitalist modernity and reduce class to race are deeply problematic (e.g., Omi and Winant, 1994: 34–35). The adoption of racialised identities also brings with it the danger of such labels becoming the basis for suppressing claims to alternative political strategies within the group. And finally, the perspective has a tendency to fall into the trap of objectifying race and thereby reinforcing the belief that race is real such as when Winant (2000) claims 'To be raceless is akin to being genderless' and that 'when one cannot identify another's race, a microsociological crisis of interpretation results'. A historical materialist perspective in contrast is predicated on achieving the deracialisation of social relations as an essential precondition to the realisation

of the full potential of each human being, and thereby, has no interest in institutionalising race-thinking in society from an anti-racist perspective.

'RACE TRAITORS': DAVID ROEDIGER, NOEL IGNATIEV AND WHITENESS STUDIES

By the late 1980s, the intransigence of structuralist Marxist accounts of racism in addressing questions of subjectivity and identity formation raised by poststructuralist critiques coupled with the political exhaustion of the social forces associated with the world revolution of 1968, contributed to a decisive retreat away from class analyses of racism. By the 1990s, Marxist theories of racism and their focus on questions of class, inequality and the politics of redistribution had been largely replaced by a growing concern about questions relating to identity, culture and the politics of recognition. Amidst this general retreat, it was mainly in history, and more specifically, the new labour history, that groundbreaking, historical materialist accounts of racism continued to be developed by individuals like David Roediger (1991, 1994), Theodore Allen (1994a, 1994b), and Noel Ignatiev (1995, 1996).

From the landing of Englishmen at Plymouth Rock in the early seventeenth century to the mass migration of Italians and Jews in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, these authors demonstrated how racism was intimately entwined with processes of class formation in the United States. Whilst it is beyond the scope of this essay to undertake a thorough review of this prolific and intellectually rich body of work, by focusing on the work of Roediger and Ignatiev, I hope to draw attention to the key theoretical points made by the new labour historians.

The primary questions explored by Roediger (1991, 1994) were how and why did white workers come to view their whiteness as meaningful, or to put it another way, why did they settle for being white. For Roediger (1991), the processes of working class formation and development of whiteness were inextricably entwined in the US. Yet, Marxism has been unable to analytically capture this linkage because of its tendency to naturalise whiteness and oversimplify race such that 'Race disappears into the "reality" of class' (Roediger, 1991:8). To avoid this perennial problem of reductionism, and, echoing the work of Stuart Hall outlined earlier in this essay, Roediger (1991), treats race as relatively autonomous from class in his account. A second problem facing Marxists like Cox (1970) was their focus 'on the ruling class's role in perpetuating racial oppression, and to cast white workers as dupes ... The workers, in this view, largely receive and occasionally resist racist ideas and practices but have no role in *creating* those practices' (Roediger, 1991: 9). Rejecting this capitalist conspiracy/working class false consciousness dualism and injecting a much-needed element of human agency into his theoretical frame, Roediger (1991: 9) contends that white workers are 'historical actors who make (constrained) choices and create their own cultural forms'.

While these critical insights may in and of themselves be considered fairly modest, and perhaps merely echo the conclusions drawn by Hall and others a decade earlier, it is how Roediger synthesises them with the theoretical insights drawn from the psychoanalytical frame of Fanon and Kovel and the critical sociology of W. E. B. Du Bois on whiteness, especially the latter's most radical work, *Black Reconstruction* (1978), that makes Roediger's theoretical perspective original. In particular, Du Bois's focus on whiteness as a status category enabled him to demonstrate how whiteness functioned as a wage for white workers; a compensatory 'public and psychological wage' that benefited Southern white workers and made them forget their 'practically identical interests' with the black poor and accept stunted lives for themselves and for those who are more oppressed than themselves' (cited in Roediger, 1991: 13).

In a series of essays tracing the evolution and outcome of that wage in nineteenth century America, Roediger (1991) demonstrates conclusively how whiteness was the product of the white working class's attempts to come to terms with the traumatic process of proletarianisation. It was this that led them to place on African Americans, the mantle of the racialised other, 'as embodying the preindustrial, erotic, careless style of life the white worker hated and longed for' (Roediger, 1991: 14).

Ignatiev (1995) demonstrates how this racist logic proved particularly attractive for the Irish worker, newly arrived in the United States. After an initial period of co-operation, Ignatiev maps how the Irish worker through institutions as diverse as the trade unions, the Democratic Party and the Catholic Church, as well as racist riots, distanced themselves from the black population, and, thereby convinced the ruling elites of their worthiness to become white Americans.

While these arguments are illuminating and original in understanding the history of racism and the formation of a racist, white working class subjectivity, I want to focus briefly on the implications of their assessment for political practice. Ignatiev (1996: 10) contends that:

The key to solving the social problems of our age is to abolish the white race ... The existence of the white race depends on the willingness of those assigned to it to place their racial interests above class, gender or any other interests they hold. The defection of enough of its members to make it unreliable as a determinant of behaviour will set off tremors that will lead to its collapse.

Hence, his advice to whites is to 'dissolve the club' because 'treason to whiteness is loyalty to humanity' (Ignatiev, 1996: 10). Whilst such a proposal appears to be radical, even revolutionary in its intention, it is in actual fact, hugely problematic, because it lends weight to the argument that racism could be abolished simply through a rejection of whiteness. Such an idealist standpoint ignores entirely the structures that produce and re-produce everyday racism in capitalist society. Even, if the majority of white individuals were to reject their whiteness, they would still psychologically and materially derive enormous benefits from being

white simply because such a white abolitionist project had left untouched the racism and inequality wired into the project of capitalist modernity for half a millennia (Frankenberg, 1993).

Historically, as the work of authors like Kelley (1990) and Virdee (2000) unequivocally demonstrate, an alternative and more effective strategy to challenging racism has been that of racialised 'black' formation where African Americans in the United States and South Asians and Caribbeans in Britain engaged in autonomous action. Indeed, history confirms, at least in Britain, that such independent self-organisation was a precursor to the formation of a fragile but meaningful class solidarity involving parts of white organised labour who subsumed (at least temporarily) their attachment to a long-held white racial identity for a deracialised working class identity (Virdee, 2000).

CONCLUSION

This essay set out to critically evaluate the contribution made by Marxist class analyses to our understanding of racism. Collectively, this body of work produced since the 1970s has provided a complex and multi-layered account of the economic, political and cultural forces that drive the production and reproduction of racism in the social system referred to as capitalist modernity. However, it is only when this body of work is contrasted to what preceded it, both in European and North American sociology, that one can truly grasp the immense intellectual achievement of these scholars. With social Darwinian and interactionist perspectives merely serving to reproduce everyday understandings of race for much of the twentieth century, it was only with the arrival of Marxist scholars in the academy – in the slipstream of the 1968 world revolution – that such conceptions were banished from the sociological vocabulary (at least for a time) and the material foundations of racism explained.

This essay has not just engaged in an academic exercise of evaluating the relative merits of competing theories of racism but has tried consistently to understand and map under what historical and political conditions such sociological knowledge was produced. It is this understanding of the relationship between social science and politics that helps to explain how and why the intellectual dominance of Marxist accounts of racism was eventually undermined. First, was the political exhaustion of the social forces unleashed by the 1968 world revolution which manifested itself politically in the defeat of the workers movement throughout Europe, and the defeat, but also partial accommodation with the State of the anti-racist and antisexist movements of both the United States and Europe. Against this backdrop of political retreat and defeat, Marxist intellectuals lost their key public or social base – the exploited and oppressed striving for human emancipation. Second, however, were the internal theoretical and conceptual contradictions within the accounts of racism produced by scholars working

within the structuralist Marxist tradition, especially their failings in addressing questions of identity formation and subjectivity. By the late 1980s, this process of intellectual and political fragmentation was complete such that most Marxist intellectuals had moved decisively in the direction of poststructuralist, post-modern accounts of racism (e.g., Gilroy, 1987, 2000).

Yet, as with earlier generations of sociologists who attempted to settle their accounts with Marxism (e.g., Weber, 1993; Dahrendorf, 1959; Giddens, 1981), historical materialism has proved difficult to silence. Despite the dark days of the 1990s, there appears to be a growing interest in historical materialist accounts of society as evidenced by the establishment of not only a number of new journals like *Cultural Logic* and *Historical Materialism* but also the publication of original works focusing on Marxist theory (e.g., Wood, 1995; Nimitz, 2000; Lih, 2005). More substantively, this essay and other works (e.g., Virdee, 2000; Meyerson, 2001, Dardar and Torres, 2004) demonstrate that there is a process of intellectual renewal of historical materialist accounts of racism underway in the early twenty-first century. Through a critical engagement with sociological and postcolonial theory, concerns about identity formation, subjectivity and human agency are being addressed by drawing on the intellectual resources of hegelian-inflected Marxism, as well as realism (see Carter, 2000).

However, significant themes like that of gender oppression and its relationship to race and class remain relatively unexplored by historical materialists and post-structuralists alike. A useful starting point would be to engage more systematically with intersectionality theory (e.g., Crenshaw, 1994; Hill Collins, 1998) whose proponents claim that it 'may shed light on the mutually constructing nature of systems of oppression, as well as social locations created by such mutual constructions' (Hill Collins, 1998: 153).

Underpinning this essay philosophically has been the understanding that intellectual renewal is bound up with the process of political renewal. Influential and politically engaged intellectuals such as Immanuel Wallerstein (2004: 77) have recently warned of the final, impending crisis of the capitalist world-economy, even going so far as to predict its demise sometime in the middle of the twenty-first century. Yet, the articulation and support for emancipatory projects that seek to transform our existing social relations and free us from exploitation and oppression remain marginal, especially in the West, leading one to recall Gramsci's pertinent observation that whilst 'The old order is dying ... the new is powerless to be born, and in this interregnum arises a great morbidity of symptoms' – including manifestations of racist absolutism. The importance of developing an agent-centred materialist account of racism (and anti-racism) has never been more important and remains integral to any universalist project for human emancipation. As Rosa Luxemburg remarked at the start of the twentieth century, human beings are faced with a political choice – to accept a descent into barbarism or to take up the challenge of creating a democratic socialist society free of exploitation and oppression. To avoid the horrors of the former, we must renew our commitment to the latter.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I thank my colleagues Stephen Ashe, Bob Carter, Bridget Fowler, Robert Gibb, Patricia Hill Collins, Andy Smith, John Solomos, Rodolfo D. Torres, Matthew Waites and Erik Olin Wright for their critical comments and discussions of earlier drafts.

REFERENCES

- Allen, T.W. (1994a) *The Invention of the White Race*. Volume 1. London: Verso.
- Allen, T.W. (1994b) *The Invention of the White Race*. Volume 2. London: Verso.
- Althusser, L. (1994) *The Future Lasts a Long Time*. London: Vintage.
- Anderson, P. (1976) *Considerations on Western Marxism*. London: Verso.
- Banton, M. (1967) *Race Relations*. London: Tavistock Publications.
- Benjamin, W. (2006) 'On the Concept of History' in H. Eiland and M. W. Jennings (eds) *Selected Writings of Walter Benjamin* Vol. 4. Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press. pp. 389–400.
- Berger, P.L. (1963) *Invitation to Sociology*. New York: Anchor Books.
- Bonacich, E. (1972) 'A Theory of Ethnic Antagonism: The Split Labour Market', *American Sociological Review*, 37 (5): 547–559.
- Bonacich, E. (1976) 'Advanced Capitalism and Black/White Race Relations in the United States: A Split Labour Market Interpretation', *American Sociological Review*, 41 (1): 34–51.
- Bonacich, E. (1980) 'Class approaches to Ethnicity and Race', *The Insurgent Sociologist*, 10 (2): 9–23.
- Burawoy, M. (2005) 'For Public Sociology', *American Sociological Review*, 70 (1): 4–28.
- Callinicos, A. (1993) *Race and Class*. London: Bookmarks.
- Carter, B. (2000) *Realism and Racism*. London: Routledge.
- Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) (1982) *The Empire Strikes Back*. London: Hutchinson.
- Cohen, P. N. (2001) 'Race, Class and Labor Markets: The White Working Class and Racial Composition of U.S. Metropolitan Areas', *Social Science Research*, 30 (1): 146–169.
- Cox, O.C. (1970) *Caste, Class and Race*. New York: Monthly Review Press.
- Crenshaw, K.W. (1994) 'Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics and Violence Against Women of Colour' in M. Fineman and R. Mykitiuk, (eds) *The Public Nature of Private Violence*. New York: Routledge. pp. 93–118.
- Dahrendorf, R. (1959) *Class and Class Conflict in an Industrial Society*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Darder, A. and Torres, R.D. (2004) *After Race: Racism after Multiculturalism*. New York: New York University Press.
- Draper, H. (1978) *Karl Marx's Theory of Revolution*. Vol. II. New York: Monthly Review Press.
- Du Bois, W.E.B. (1899 [1967]) *The Philadelphia Negro*. New York: Schocken.
- Du Bois, W.E.B. (1978) *Black Reconstruction in America 1860–1880*. New York: Free Press.
- Frankenberg, R. (1993) *White Women, Race Matters: The Social Construction of Whiteness*. Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press.
- Frazier, E.F. (1949) 'Race Contacts and the Social Structure', *American Sociological Review*, 14 (1): 1–11.
- Geschwender, J. (1977) *Class, Race and Worker Insurgency*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Giddens, A. (1981) *A Contemporary Critique of Historical Materialism*. Vol. 1. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Gilroy, P. (1982) 'Steppin' out of Babylon: Race, Class and Autonomy' in CCCS (ed.) *The Empire Strikes Back*. London: Hutchinson. pp. 276–314.

- Gilroy, P. (1987) *There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack*. London: Hutchinson.
- Gilroy, P. (2000) *Between Camps*. London: Allen Lane.
- Goldberg, D. T. (1993) *Racist Culture*. Malden, Massachusetts: Blackwell.
- Habermas, J. (1987) *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*. Cambridge MA: MIT Press.
- Hall, S. (1980) 'Race, Articulation and Societies Structured in Dominance' in UNESCO (ed.) *Sociological Theories: Race and Colonialism*. Paris: UNESCO. pp. 305–345.
- Hall, S. (1988) 'The Toad in the Garden: Thatcherism amongst the Theorists' and 'Discussion' in C. Nelson and L. Grossberg, (ed.) *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press. pp. 35–73.
- Hall, S. (1989) 'New Ethnicities' in Mercer, K. (ed.) *Black Film, British Cinema*. London: Institute of Contemporary Arts.
- Hall, S. (1996) 'Gramsci's Relevance for the Study of Race and Ethnicity' in D. Morley and K. Chen (eds) *Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies*. London: Routledge. pp. 411–440.
- Hall, S. (2002) 'Reflections on "Race, Articulation and Societies Structured in Dominance"' in D.T. Goldberg and P. Essed (eds) *Race Critical Theories*. Malden, MA: Blackwell. pp. 449–454.
- Hall, S., Critcher, C., Jefferson, T., Clarke, J. and Roberts, B. (1978) *Policing the Crisis*. London: Hutchinson.
- Hier, S. (2001) 'The Forgotten Architect: Cox, Wallerstein and World-System Theory', *Race and Class*, 42 (3): 69–86.
- Hill Collins, P. (1998) *Fighting Words: Black Women and the Search for Justice*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Hofstadter, R. (1967) *Social Darwinism in American Thought*. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Hook, S. (2002) *Towards the Understanding of Karl Marx*. New York: Prometheus.
- Ignatiev, N. (1995) *How the Irish Became White*. New York: Routledge.
- Ignatiev, N. (1996) 'Abolish the White Race' in N. Ignatiev and J. Garvey (ed.) *Race Traitor*. New York: Routledge.
- Kelley, R. (1990) *Hammer and Hoe*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.
- Leiman, M. (1993) *The Political Economy of Racism*. London: Pluto Press.
- Lih, L.T. (2005) *Lenin Rediscovered: What Is to Be Done? In Context*. Leiden: Brill Publishers.
- Marx, K. and Engels, F. (1977) *The Communist Manifesto*. Beijing: Foreign Languages Press.
- Marx, K. and Engels, F. (1987) 'The German Ideology' in *Marx, Engels, Lenin on Historical Materialism*. Moscow: Progress Publishers.
- Meyerson, G. (2001) 'Rethinking Black Marxism', *Cultural Logic*, 3 (2). <http://clogic.eserver.org/3-1&2/meyerson.html> (date accessed 8/10/09)
- Miles, R. (1982) *Racism and Migrant Labour*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Miles, R. (1989) *Racism*. London: Routledge.
- Miles, R. (1993). *Racism after 'Race Relations'*. London: Routledge.
- Miles, R. and Phizacklea, A. (1984) *White Man's Country*. London: Pluto Press.
- Miles, R. and Torres, R. D. (1999) 'Does "Race" Matter: Transatlantic Perspectives on Racism after "Race Relations"' in R.D. Torres, L.F Miron and J.X. Inda, (eds) *Race, Identity and Citizenship*. Malden, Massachusetts: Blackwell. pp. 19–38.
- Nairn, T. (1977) *The Break-up of Britain*. London: New Left Books.
- Nelson, C. and Grossberg, L. (1988) *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.
- Nimtz, A. (2000) *Marx and Engels: Their Contribution to the Democratic Breakthrough*. New York: State University of New York.
- Omi, M. and Winant, H. (1994) *Racial Formation in the United States*. New York: Routledge.
- Park, R. (1950) *Race and Culture*. C. Everett-Hughes (ed.). New York: Free Press.
- Perlo, V. (1976) *Economics of Racism USA*. New York: International Publishers.
- Ramdin, R. (1987) *The Making of the Black Working Class in Britain*. Aldershot: Gower.
- Reed, A. (1997) *W.E.B. Du Bois and American Political Thought*. New York: Oxford University Press.

- Reed, A. (2000) 'Introduction' in O. C. Cox (ed.) *Race: A Study in Social Dynamics*. New York: Monthly Review Press. pp. ix–xvii.
- Reich, M. (1972) 'The Economics of Racism' in R.C. Edwards, M. Reich and T.E. Weisskopf, (eds) *The Capitalist System*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall. pp. 314–321.
- Reich, M. (1978) 'Who Benefits from Racism? The Distribution among Whites of Gains and Losses from Racial Inequality', *Journal of Human Resources*, 13 (4): 524–544.
- Reich, M. (1981) *Racial Inequality: A Political-Economic Analysis*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Reich, M., Gordon, D.M. and Edwards, R.C. (1973) 'A Theory of Labour Market Segmentation', *The American Economic Review*, 63 (2): 359–365.
- Rex, J. (1970) *Race Relations in Sociological Theory*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Rex, J. (1973) *Sociology and the Demystification of the Modern World*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Roediger, D. (1991) *The Wages of Whiteness*. London: Verso.
- Roediger, D. (1994) *Towards the Abolition of Whiteness*. London: Verso.
- Rogaly, J. (1977) *Grunwick*. London: Penguin.
- Samuel, R. (1981) *People's History and Socialist Theory*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Sivanandan, A. (1982) *A Different Hunger*. London: Pluto Press.
- Smith, D. (1988) *The Chicago School: A Liberal Critique of Capitalism*. Basingstoke: Macmillan.
- Solomos, J. (1988) *Black Youth, Racism and the State*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Solomos, J., Findlay, B., Jones, S. and Gilroy, P. (1982) 'The Organic Crisis of British Capitalism and Race' in CCCS *The Empire Strikes Back*. London: Hutchinson. pp. 9–46.
- Szymanski, A. (1976) 'Racial Discrimination and White Gain', *American Sociological Review*, 41 (3): 403–414.
- Thompson, E.P. (1978) *The Poverty of Theory and Other Essays*. London: Merlin.
- Virdee, S. (2000) 'A Marxist Critique of Black Radical Theories of Trade-Union Racism', *Sociology*, 34 (3): 545–565.
- Virdee, S. (2002) 'Gewerkschaften und Antirassismus in England: eine replik auf Paul Gilroy and Ambalavaner Sivanandan', 1999: *Zeitschrift für Sozialgeschichte des 20. und 21. Jahrhunderts*, 17 (1): 153–186.
- Virdee, S. (forthcoming) *Racism, Resistance and Radicalism*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Virdee, S. and Grint, K. (1994) 'Black Self-Organisation in Trade Unions', *Sociological Review*, 42 (2): 202–226.
- Wallerstein, I. (1974) *The Modern World-System*. New York: Academic Press.
- Wallerstein, I. (2004) *World-Systems Analysis*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Weber, M. (1993) *From Max Weber*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Wilson, E. (1972) *To the Finland Station: A Study in the Writing and Acting of History*. London: Penguin Books.
- Winant, H. (2000) 'The Theoretical Status of the Concept of Race' in L. Back and J. Solomos (eds.) *Theories of Race and Racism*. London: Routledge. pp. 181–190.
- Wood, E.M. (1995) *Democracy against Capitalism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

6

Racism, 'Race' and Difference

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46

Learning objectives

- To plot the emergence of the idea of 'race'.
- To show how human beings were educated through science and philosophy to see race.
- To examine the relationship between race, chattel slavery and colonialism.
- To discuss the relationship between race, the state and modernity.
- To examine contemporary challenges for understanding racism today.

Introduction

African-American writer and activist W.E.B. Du Bois saw at the dawn of the last century racism's bloody climax, the culmination of a 200-year history in which Europeans ordered and ranked humankind through the mechanism of 'race' (see Du Bois 1989: xxvi). The idea of 'race' had been created over two centuries within science and philosophy to justify the supremacy of white Europeans. For Du Bois, the problem of the colour line not only included the experience of African-Americans who had been enslaved as chattel property and segregated by Jim Crow laws; it also included European forms of colonial domination and dispossession. Furthermore, it provided the mechanism through which to persecute Jews and gypsies – Europe's internal 'others' – and a means to justify the Third Reich's Final Solution. As George Fredrickson (2002) has pointed out, the twentieth century saw the emergence of 'overtly racist regimes' where racist ideas were codified into laws and forms of public policy in the American South, Nazi Germany and Apartheid South Africa (2002: 100). It also witnessed the fall of these regimes and a whole range of

1 political movements that challenged racism in the law, in workplaces, on the streets, and
2 in classrooms and universities.

3 With the election in 2008 of Barack Obama, American's first black president, many
4 hoped that the problem of the colour line had at last been resolved, and that racism was
5 in retreat. The world Du Bois knew had been transformed profoundly by the end of the
6 twentieth century: Europe's colonies had won independence; Apartheid had ended in
7 South Africa; and the civil rights movements in the United States had produced a situation
8 where a black man could be president. Ideas of racial difference which developed in the
9 eighteenth and nineteenth centuries had by now been largely discredited. However,
10 racism has far from disappeared. In the twenty-first century, the human population
11 is more mobile than at any other point, bringing the people of the world into more
12 frequent and intense forms of contact. Xenophobia and anti-immigrant sentiment is on
13 the rise in Europe, and in the European settler cultures of North America and Australia.
14 Some 90 years after Du Bois' famous pronouncement on the colour line, the renowned
15 writer and postcolonial critic Stuart Hall remarked – mindful of Du Bois, I am sure –
16 that: 'Diversity is, increasingly, the fate of the modern world . . . The capacity to live
17 with difference is, in my view, the coming question of the twenty-first century' (Hall
18 1993: 361). The central argument of this chapter is that, in order to understand racism
19 sociologically, we need to appreciate not only its history but also its ability to adapt to
20 new circumstances.

21 The focus of the chapter is the emergence of ideas about racial difference and the
22 ordering of humanity in Europe. This is not to say that racism is a uniquely European
23 phenomenon. Racism is a form of power that reduces human beings to biological or
24 cultural types, which in turn reduce human diversity to essential categories (black/white,
25 Jew/Gentile), while at the same time justifying inequalities between them. Using such a
26 definition, non-Western forms of prejudice and hatred might also apply. In particular,
27 consider the forms of essentialist ideas about difference in Rwanda and Burundi that
28 distinguished Tutsi herdsmen from agricultural Hutus, and that predated encounters
29 with Europeans and German colonization (Lemarchand 1996). Equally, the relationship
30 between racial thought in Japan and its envy of European modern nationalism and
31 imperial power might also be characterized as racism (Arimoto 2010). However, it is
32 argued by scholars that European forms of racism have had the greatest impact on
33 world history (Fredrickson 2002: 11). It was in Europe that the logic of racism was fully
34 worked out at the very same time that European nations claimed to be the bastions of
35 civilization. Bearing this in mind, we will now turn to the emergence of racial ideas
36 in Europe.

37 38 39 **The idea of race, slavery and European expansion**

40
41 Racial **difference** is not a product of nature but one of history. Part of the enduring
42 power of the idea of **race** is that it seems natural and self-evident that human beings are
43 different. Human beings have been educated to see race and organize the infinite range
44 of human diversity into racial types. As the anti-colonial writer Franz Fanon points out,
45 the idea of 'race' has moulded human difference through a process he called 'sociogeny'
46 (Fanon 1986: 13). This, Paul Gilroy suggests, 'directs us to the costs, for both victim and

1 perpetrators' of the racial straitjackets that inhibit the social and political environment
2 'where any common humanity is "amputated" and authentic interaction between people
3 becomes almost impossible' (Gilroy 2010: 157). Gilroy's point is that the concepts of race
4 and **racism** not only divide and discriminate between human beings, but also limit
5 human potential and our capacity to relate to one another. Historians have shown that
6 this was not always the case.

7 There is no equivalent to the idea of race in the ancient world. In his book *Before Color*
8 *Prejudice*, Frank Snowden (1983) argues that there is no evidence of what we understand
9 as racism among the Greeks, Romans and early Christians. It is important to suspend
10 presumptions that race as we have come to understand it has existed throughout history.
11 However, it would be wrong to suggest that antiquity was the equivalent of some kind of
12 non-racist Eden. Historian George M. Fredrickson (2002) has argued that *supernaturalist*
13 *racism* couched in religious terms emerged from antiquity into the medieval period.
14 Fredrickson points to series of key religious themes that shaped these early forms of
15 proto-racism. The first is the idea that Jews were cursed by a collective responsibility for
16 Christ's crucifixion. In the eyes of medieval Christians, the culpability of Jews as a group
17 in this ultimate crime made them both 'less than human' and children of the Devil.
18 Second, the idea of the 'curse of Ham' provided religious justification in the fourteen
19 and early fifteenth centuries for the association between blackness and slavery that
20 anticipated anti-black racism, which later would be justified in scientific terms. Drawing
21 on an ambiguous passage from the Book of Genesis, it claimed that sub-Saharan Africans
22 were descendents of Ham and condemned to eternal bondage. Like the anti-Semitic guilt
23 of Jews for Christ's crucifixion, Ham's descendants are doomed to servitude because he
24 mistreated his father, Noah. Each of these forms of religious racism links a heinous crime
25 with the origin and cause of, and justification for, a racial fate – be it enslavement or
26 violent pogroms.

27 The emergence of discourses about race and the development of racist ideologies
28 both need to be contextualized within the particular intellectual and philosophical en-
29 vironment of European societies during this period. Since the early Middle Ages, the
30 practice of holding 'whites' as slaves had been in gradual decline. There were African
31 slave merchants and rulers who were implicated in trading human beings (Thornton
32 1992). As European economic expansion and political domination took hold over large
33 parts of the globe, the language of race took on another kind of meaning. The catego-
34 rization of human beings into 'races' linked up to the development of new patterns of
35 economic and social exploitation (Curtin 1964; Jordan 1968; Todorov 1984). This form
36 of racism was an ideological response to *economic necessity*, providing a means to justify
37 and legitimate servitude and economic exploitation. Eric Williams's (1964) book on
38 *Capitalism and Slavery*, originally published in 1944, argues that slavery was essentially
39 an economic phenomenon that arose because of the need to exploit labour through
40 coercion. Similarly, Oliver Cox's (1970) classic *Caste, Class and Race*, which was origi-
41 nally published in 1948, locates the origins of 'race prejudice' in the period of European
42 economic expansion at the end of the fifteenth and beginning of the sixteenth century.
43 For Cox, 'race prejudice' justified the exploitation of the labour power: 'a social attitude
44 propagated among the public by an exploiting class for the purpose of stigmatising some
45 group as inferior in that the exploitation of either the group itself or its resources or
46 both may be justified' (Cox 1970: 393). What Cox and Williams both argue is that it is

1 a mistake to make race the key element of the explanation, because for them it conceals
2 the underlying economic forms of exploitation at the core of the way capitalism works
3 as an economic system.

4 Two fundamental criticisms of this perspective have been made: first, it has been
5 argued that it is far too simple to see slavery as an economic phenomenon; and second,
6 Williams and Cox have been attacked for viewing the development of racist ideologies in
7 purely functionalist terms – that is, as serving simply as a justification for the exploitation
8 of labour power. These criticisms have been backed up by historical research, which tends
9 to question the usefulness of viewing either slavery or racist ideologies from a purely
10 economic perspective. The point here is that racism takes on another kind of life beyond
11 providing a kind of justification by the powerful for exploitation. Rather, it becomes a
12 form of power that is not tied to either the economic base of the society or a specific
13 historical moment, a point to which we will return later. The broader lesson in these
14 controversies is the importance of historically contextualizing our understanding, and
15 appreciating that racism itself is a form of power with many dimensions (economic,
16 ideological and cultural) that changes and evolves over time.

17 Winthrop Jordan's (1968) classic study *White Over Black* showed that the white ideas
18 about Africans evolved and hardened with the emergence of plantation slavery. In the
19 sixteenth century Jordan documented that Europeans had complex and ambiguous views
20 of Africans. These were transformed quite fundamentally by the experience of slavery
21 and economic domination and European expansion. Slavery in its various historical
22 forms, and specifically the Atlantic slave trade, did not have a purely economic rationale;
23 rather it produced political structures as well as social representations of humanity that
24 were ordered and ranked (Patterson 1982). These images did not remain fixed and
25 unchanging across time and space, but during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries
26 the development of the slave trade was a defining moment in the formation of racial
27 ideas. The legacy of this period endures today because it shaped the development of
28 European images of Africans and other peoples.

29 Black slaves were treated as mere articles of commerce – as commodities – that were
30 sub-human like animals that could be traded or disposed of with impunity. This was
31 illustrated in 1781 by the notorious case of the slave ship *Zong* whose captain threw 131
32 slaves into the sea to their deaths because the ship had run out of water. On returning
33 to port the captain entered an insurance claim for the loss of his 'cargo'. At the trial, the
34 issue was not about murder but whether the throwing overboard of the 131 slaves was a
35 true act of jettison for which the insurance company would have to pay or a case of fraud.
36 According to the Solicitor-General, John Lee, who defended the owners of the slaves,
37 it would have been 'nothing less than madness' to have brought a murder charge since
38 the slaves thrown overboard 'were property' (Walvin 1992: 16–21). Another example of
39 the intertwining of the imagery of slavery and race during the late eighteenth and early
40 nineteenth centuries can be found in the work of absentee Jamaican planter Edward
41 Long. Long wrote his much-quoted *History of Jamaica* in 1774 and in it he defended not
42 only the slave trade but the argument that Europeans and blacks belonged to different
43 species. For Long, the slave trade was nothing but the 'healthy culling process' of an
44 increasing African population. He saw the black slaves as not only lazy, but as lying,
45 profligate, promiscuous, cowardly, savage, debased, ugly and demonstrably inferior to
46 'whites'. Plantation slavery in the Americas and the rest of the New World was held

1 together and reproduced over time by vicious police laws designed to ensure the rights
2 of those who dominated at every level of society.

3 It was not simply that these ideas provided a form of popular justification for enslave-
4 ment or racial servitude. The late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries also witnessed
5 the proliferation of scientific and pseudo-scientific theories of race. It is possible to date
6 the emergence of race thinking through key figure like Swedish naturalist Carl Linnaeus,
7 who in 1735 claimed that sub-varieties existed within humankind. Johann Friedrich
8 Blumenbach claimed in his study *On the Natural Variety of Mankind*, published in
9 1776 – the year of the American Revolution – that human beings could be separated
10 into five divisions: Caucasians, Mongolians, Ethiopians, Americans and Malays. Racial
11 theories were to reach their high point in the nineteenth century; however, it is important
12 to note that, in different forms, the use of scientific discourses in discussions about race
13 continued to influence thinking about this issue well into the twentieth century and is
14 being revived today in some areas of genetic science (Harding 1993; Reardon, Dunklee
15 and Wentworth 2006).

16 By the early nineteenth century, an idea of 'race' had emerged which asserted first
17 that physical appearance and the behaviour of individuals were expressions of a discrete
18 biological type that was fixed in nature. These biological types could explain human
19 patterns of culture and also conflicts between races/nations because of mutual incom-
20 patibility. These racial ideas espoused that some 'races' were inherently superior while
21 others were inherently inferior. These arguments drew upon and developed the popular
22 concept of the Great Chain of Being, which was to infuse the arguments of monogenists,
23 polygenists and later social Darwinists alike (Lovejoy 1964). The concept was based on
24 the metaphorical ladder from God to the lowest form of creation. Each 'race' represented
25 a rung in the vertical construction, with black people somewhere near the bottom and
26 whites somewhere near the top.

27 Comte Arthur de Gobineau's *Essay on the Inequality of the Human Races* was originally
28 published in 1853. Although de Gobineau's work attracted little attention at the time,
29 it is commonly seen as one of the classic texts of racist thought, and played a role in
30 racial thinking well into the twentieth century. In practice, de Gobineau was essentially
31 a synthesizer of ideas that were current in a broader social and political context (Biddiss
32 1970). He conceived of humanity as divided into three races – white, yellow and black –
33 and began by stating that 'the race question dominates all other problems of history'. His
34 analysis became famous in latter times because of both the way he saw the Aryan race
35 as the creators of civilization and his view about the inevitability of racial degeneration
36 through miscegenation. Such ideas were to prove an integral element of later racial
37 thinking in a number of countries, including France and Germany. They also provided
38 the basis of some key elements of the racial philosophy of the Nazis, though not always
39 in ways he would have envisaged.

40 In the second half of the nineteenth century, the work of Charles Darwin began to
41 play an important role in the development of thinking about race. This was evident,
42 for example, in the popularity of social Darwinism and eugenics during this period
43 (Mosse 1985). Arguments about 'natural selection' and the 'survival of the fittest' were
44 simplified and adopted as part of racist thinking, and indeed they became an important
45 theme in writings about race throughout this period (Stocking 1968; Jones 1980). Some
46 cited Darwin's work as proof that Africans were doomed eventually to disappear in

1 favour of the 'stronger' European 'race'. In other words, Darwin's notion of struggle for
2 existence was reworked as a confrontation between so-called 'races' and natural selection
3 was wedded to existing ideas about racial types. This was perhaps not surprising in the
4 wider context of colonial expansion and imperial domination that characterized the late
5 nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

6 In summary, the emergence of race and racism in Europe was tied closely to internal
7 differentiations that defined racial others within Europe (Jews, slaves, gypsies) and
8 justification for external economic and political exploits and the expansion of Europe's
9 imperial involvements. During this period, theological and scientific elements could be
10 combined in the process of making racial categories and educating the human senses to
11 see race and normalize white supremacy.

12 13 14 **Imperialism, modernity and genocide** 15

16 These emerging racial ideas also played a key role in justifying Europe's colonial exploits
17 in South America, Africa and the Middle East. However, the interplay between racism,
18 imperialism and colonialism is not straightforward. George Mosse (1985: x) argues that
19 'Imperialism and racism . . . were never identical; their interrelationship was dependant
20 upon time and place'. Images of the 'other' played a key role in the justification of colonial
21 rule and the 'white man's burden'. Sander Gilman argues that:

22
23 In the nineteenth century, in the age of expanding European colonies, the black became the
24 primitive *per se*, a primitivism mirrored in the stultifying quality of his or her dominant
25 sense, touch, as well as the absence of any aesthetic sensibility.

26 (Gilman 1991: 20)
27

28 From this perspective, the linkage of colonized peoples with images of the 'primitive'
29 took different forms in specific colonial situations. A case in point is the impact of the
30 'scramble for Africa' on images of the peoples of the 'dark continent', and the circulation of
31 these images in metropolitan societies. However, Africa also became a place of exoticism
32 and danger that was alluring, producing a form of Negrophilia.

33 In the British context, it seems clear that in the Victorian era the experience of colo-
34 nialism and imperial expansion played an important role in shaping ideas about race,
35 in relation to both Africa and India (Solomos and Back 1996). The linkages between
36 colonialism and racism became evident throughout the late nineteenth and early twen-
37 tieth centuries, in the form of the articulation between nationalism and patriotism in
38 the construction of the definition of 'Englishness' and 'Britishness'. It would, however,
39 be a mistake to see such racial images in isolation from the social and economic divisions
40 and inequalities within capitalist societies. There are similarities during the nineteenth
41 century between discourses about race and those about social class. This was evident in
42 both Britain and the rest of the Empire. Douglas Lorimer's (1978) study of racial attitudes
43 in Victorian society distinguishes the parallels between colour and the class prejudice of
44 middle-class Victorians very clearly. He notes the similarities between the attitudes of
45 those middle-class travellers whose tourism took them to India, Egypt and the East End
46 of London, in order to view the strange, primitive and exotic creatures of the world.

1 However, it was in the twentieth century that racism saw its ultimate flowering into
2 official policy, enshrined in overtly racist regimes. Racism became institutionalized,
3 legalized and a matter of state policy. In the southern states of America between 1890 and
4 1950, **Jim Crow laws** enshrined the colour bar and segregation in law. The 'American
5 dilemma', as Gunnar Myrdal (1944) calls it, was manifest in constitutional claims to
6 freedom and equality, and at the same time the legal inequality that denied black people
7 civil rights. From 1910, South Africa constructed a racist state in the form of the apartheid
8 regime that came to fruition in 1948 and systematically denied the equality of black
9 Africans. In the midst of this emerged European fascism, the experience of the Holocaust
10 and the genocidal policies of the Nazi state.

11 The term 'anti-Semitism' came into popular usage at the end of the nineteenth century,
12 but it is widely accepted that it captures a long history of resentment and hatred of Jews.
13 Anti-Semitism thus can be seen as referring to the conception of Jews as an alien, hostile
14 and undesirable group, and the practices that derive from and support such a conception.
15 As has already been suggested, the history of anti-Semitism is much more complex and of
16 longer historical origin than the racial theories of the Nazis (Gilman and Katz 1991). In
17 the British context, for example, there is evidence of anti-Semitism at different historical
18 moments. But it is perhaps in the late nineteenth century that the arrival of sizeable
19 numbers of Jewish migrants from Eastern Europe became a focus of political debate,
20 leading to the development of a political anti-Semitism in particular localities. The
21 political influence of anti-Semitism in France towards the end of the nineteenth century
22 can also be seen as related to the changing political and social relations in French society
23 at the time, which were dramatically brought to life in what came to be known as
24 the Dreyfus affair. Captain Alfred Dreyfus, a young French artillery officer of Alsatian
25 Jewish descent, was convicted of treason for allegedly passing French military secrets
26 to the German Embassy in Paris. The Dreyfus affair brought French anti-Semitism out
27 into public view, but notable intellectuals like Émile Zola and Émile Durkheim publicly
28 opposed Dreyfus's public vilification (Wilson 1982).

29 The main focus of research on political anti-Semitism has been on the history of
30 Germany. Although the history of anti-Semitism in Germany is by no means unique, it
31 is certainly the case that in the aftermath of the Holocaust the German experience has
32 been the focus of research and the key problem (Gilman 1991). The focus on the German
33 experience has preoccupied scholars but it is important to stress that anti-Semitic ideas
34 had currency throughout Europe. However, what the German case shows is how a
35 political movement made racist ideas a matter of state policy but also the compatibility
36 of racism with modernity itself.

37 Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer's (1986) *Dialectic of Enlightenment* provides a
38 valuable early account of the role that anti-Semitism played in the politics of fascism. On
39 the one hand, Adorno and Horkheimer sought to situate anti-Semitism in the broader
40 context of class and political struggles in German society, and on the other to underline its
41 specific and unique characteristics. Although they located anti-Semitism in the broader
42 framework of capitalist society, they also highlighted the murderous consequences of the
43 fascist construction of the Jews as a 'degenerate race': 'The fascists do not view the Jews
44 as a minority but as an opposing race, the embodiment of the negative principle. They
45 must be exterminated to secure the happiness of the world' (Adorno and Horkheimer
46 1986: 168). The use of racial theories by the Nazis thus provided not only a basis for the

1 articulation of anti-Semitism but a means of justifying the 'final solution to the Jewish
2 question' and the inevitable outcome of a 'race war'. Nazi theories made the maintenance
3 of racial purity the paramount goal. Preserving the German race licensed genocide and
4 provided the justifications for the extermination of Jews.

5 George Mosse's (1964) study *The Crisis of German Ideology* perhaps provides the best
6 insight into the variety of factors that led to the emergence of anti-Semitism and racism
7 in the period from the second half of the nineteenth century to the rise of Adolf Hitler. He
8 also shows how latent anti-Semitism became institutionalized and accentuated through
9 educational institutions, youth organizations and political parties. Mosse's rich account
10 of Volkish thought during the nineteenth century provides a powerful insight into the
11 social and political roots of German anti-Semitism. He highlights the contrast between
12 German images of 'the uprootedness of the Jew' with those of the 'rootedness of the
13 Volk' (Mosse 1964: 27–8). What we see here is the combination of racial mysticism with
14 modern political techniques and bureaucracies. He also provides a detailed analysis of
15 the linkages between the growth of anti-Semitism and the rise of national socialism as a
16 mass political movement:

17
18 That the Volkish ideology, wedded as it was to anti-modernity, could be absorbed by the
19 modern mass movement techniques of National Socialism led to its final realisation. To be
20 sure, if it had not been for very real grievances and frustrations, both on a personal level
21 and on the national level, Germany's development in modern times might have taken a
22 different turn. But the most important question is: Why did millions of people respond to
23 the Volkish call?

24 (Mosse 1964: 317)

25
26 The fact that the Nazis used racial anti-Semitism as a key plank of their platform is a vital
27 part of the answer to Mosse's question. Race here provided a profoundly modern way to
28 define who was a German, but also to establish those in the midst of the Volk who were
29 not only other but also less than human.

30 In *Modernity and the Holocaust*, Zygmunt Bauman (1989) seeks to connect the
31 Holocaust with some of the key aspects of modern culture and life. One of the ironies he
32 notes is that anti-Semitism in Germany at the beginning of this century was weaker than
33 it was in many other European countries. He points out that there were many more Jewish
34 professionals and academics in Germany than in Britain, France and the United States.
35 He also shows evidence that popular anti-Semitism was not very widespread in Germany,
36 although it grew rapidly in the aftermath of World War I. Perhaps most controversially,
37 Bauman contends that the Holocaust was not an aberration, but an integral feature
38 of modernity:

39
40 The Holocaust was born and executed in our modern society, at the high stage of our
41 civilisation and at the peak of human cultural achievement, and for this reason it is a
42 problem of that society, civilisation and culture.

43 (Bauman 1989: 13)

44
45 From this perspective, he argues that a key feature of Nazism was its view of the need
46 for 'social engineering' through its racial policies. Genocide for the Nazis was a means

1 to the construct the 'perfect society' (Bauman 1989: 91). In this sense, Bauman is
2 agreeing with the arguments made by historians such as Mosse. The Nazi attempt to
3 construct a 'racially pure' society, and to use state power to help bring this about,
4 had a major influence on discussions about race and racism in the post-1945 period.
5 In particular, it helped to emphasize and warn against the destructive and genocidal
6 consequences of racist theorizing and political mobilization. By the end of the twentieth
7 century, the terrible success of overtly racist regimes had both undermined racism's social
8 legitimacy and cast a shadow over Europe's self-image as modern and civilized. In the
9 form of the Nazi regime, Jim Crow racism and apartheid's 'racial state' (Goldberg 2002),
10 racism had reached what George Fredrickson (2002: 99) called a 'horrendous climax'.
11 Fredrickson commented:

12
13 The Holocaust and decolonisation may have permanently discredited what I have called
14 'overtly racist regimes', but this good news should not be inflated into a belief that racism
15 itself is dead or even dying.

(Fredrickson 2002: 141)

16
17
18 In summary, there are a number of key issues illustrated within this literature with regard
19 to the complexities of racism. First, the filtered perceptions produced within cultures of
20 racism result in more than simply hatred. They can produce a complex web of exoticism,
21 in which the 'other' can be attractive and alluring because of their difference. In this sense,
22 through racism otherness is not merely repellent but can also be invested with a sense
23 of desire that may be forbidden. This dimension of racist cultures can simply reproduce
24 stereotypes; however, it can also form a basis for non-racist mobilizations and alliance
25 to take hold – for example, the anti-colonial or anti-fascist movements. In addition,
26 the regimes discussed in this section show how racism can take on an institutionalized
27 form enshrined in both legislation and policy. Finally, what these regimes show is that
28 racism is intrinsically tied to European modernity. Walter Benjamin, who was a refugee
29 from Nazism, wrote: 'There is no document of civilization that is not at the same time a
30 document of barbarism' (Benjamin 1999: 248).

From the colour line to the immigration line

31
32
33
34
35 At the start of the second decade of the twenty-first century, the human population is
36 more mobile than it has been at any point in history. The United Nations estimates
37 that the 'global stock' of migrants – that is, people living outside the country of their
38 birth – is 200 million (see Vargas-Silva 2011). This is a conservative estimate, for it
39 excludes temporary, irregular and undocumented migrants. During the colonial period,
40 international mobility was largely channelled by colonial relationships. For example,
41 West Indians came to Britain after World War II as citizen migrants, as subjects of British
42 empire – although the racial discrimination they experienced denied them equal rights.
43 The same is true of the relationship between France and Algeria, and we can see how
44 colonial relations ordered the migration of Europeans to Australia, first through forced
45 migration as convicts and then as white settlers and economic migrants. By the end
46 of the twentieth century, those colonial relationships that provided the channels for

1 international migration no longer existed. The new patterns of population mobility are
2 more chaotic and unstable. As Jayati Ghosh (2009) points out, in the ‘developed world’
3 (excluding the former Soviet Union), the share of migrants in the total population more
4 than doubled between 1960 and 2005.

5 In this context, racism has functioned as a means to create scapegoats – asylum
6 seekers, refugees and ‘illegal immigrants’ – whose unwanted presence could both explain
7 the source of social and political crisis and at the same time carry the blame for it.
8 Here, racism provides a means to establish social solidarity through identifying enemies
9 within and outside. The result is what Ghassan Hage (1998), in the context of Australia,
10 calls a form of *paranoid nationalism*. In the aftermath of 9/11 and the ensuing ‘war on
11 terror’, new dimensions have been added, which in Europe have led to concerns that
12 multiculturalism had proved a historic mistake. The discourse of crisis is linked to what
13 commentators on the left and right have referred to as the ‘death of multiculturalism’, in
14 large part linked to the London transport system bombings of 7 July 2005.

15 The ‘death of multiculturalism’ does not relate to a situation that can be argued about
16 or disproved empirically or factually. In the United Kingdom, Finney and Simpson (2009)
17 lay bare the statistical myths at the base of allegations of ‘sleepwalking to segregation’ and
18 ‘too many migrants’, and may help persuade some that social solidarity and ‘diversity’
19 are compatible. It is no longer ‘tolerance’ that mediates these patterns of differential
20 inclusion; rather, it is fear and insecurity that give the racism of today its affective
21 energy and force. As Benjamin Barber (2003: 215) comments, ‘fear’s empire colonises
22 the imagination’. The insecurity that results is not only a personal state but also a battle to
23 secure and defend society itself. The immigrant presence, acts of terrorism and the threat
24 of multiculturalism require, so the argument goes, authoritarian monitoring and the
25 policing of forms of diversity that are ‘out of control’. Echoing Stuart Hall and colleagues’
26 (1978) famous analysis of twentieth-century British racism, the ‘crisis’ is used to justify
27 subjecting visible minorities to Draconian forms of policing and scrutiny, including the
28 suspension of their rights through such policies as detention without trial, promoting
29 an atmosphere of perpetual emergency and panic.

30 Scholars argue that in this new situation the old language of race is recoded in cultural
31 terms. This has been referred to as the new **cultural racism** (Barker 1981; Gilroy 1987;
32 Solomos and Back 1996), which was in fact identified by Franz Fanon in 1956 (Fanon
33 1980: 32). The central feature of these processes is that the qualities of social groups
34 are fixed, made natural and confined within a pseudo-biologically defined culturalism.
35 The ‘immigrant’ becomes the key figure and bearer of a cultural difference that is either
36 incompatible or simply ‘out of place’.

37 As has already been shown, the preoccupation with the ‘immigrant’ and the ‘diversity’
38 immigrants bring has distracted attention from the exclusive modes of national and
39 European belonging that predate their arrival (Gilroy 2004). In this key sense, migrants
40 do not produce or precipitate hatred; rather, they become the figure of its expression. Du
41 Bois’ ‘colour line’, mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, is no longer adequate when
42 it comes to understanding the complexities of our current situation. It might be more
43 accurate to say that the problem of the twenty-first century will involve the ‘immigration
44 line.’ The immigration line is just as vexed politically, conceptually and practically as
45 the line of colour or race. Indeed, it is deeply implicated in the legacy of racisms past
46 and present, and in the foundational principles of citizenship and state-formation. The

1 challenge relates to the way in which lines are drawn – the difference that makes a
2 difference – and in which such lines mark the distinction between ‘us and ‘them’. This is
3 not about the ethnic or cultural qualities of so-called ‘immigrants’; rather, it is concerned
4 with the ways in which the immigrant serves as a limiting figure in political life. The
5 immigration line demarcates those lives that are endowed with the gift of citizenship
6 and those that are cut short – often in transit, and with silent impunity. The life that
7 is licensed by the work of the state is linked and implicated in the diminished lives of
8 people caught – often fatally – at the border.

9 In order to meet the challenges of the present, it is necessary to include ‘colour-
10 coded’ racism in a broader context of xenophobia that ranks and orders the relationship
11 between European insiders and outsiders. Some analysts prefer the idea of ‘xenoracism’
12 or ‘xenology’ to address the limitations of the existing paradigms (Fekete 2009; Bhatt
13 2004, 2006). This shift opens attention to exclusions that operate through ideas of ethnic
14 or cultural differences, which can be applied to the white strangers as well as the dark
15 ones. From this point of view, it is possible to hold the plight of reviled Russians in
16 Estonia who became ‘immigrants’ in 1991 after independence when the Soviet border
17 receded in the same horizon of exclusion as the Muslim student in London who is seen
18 as a potential terrorist and a dangerous ‘enemy next door’.

19 In his essay ‘Reflections on racism’, Cornelius Castoriadis comments that hatred is
20 best understood as having two sides. The first of these he calls the ‘flipside of self-love’
21 (Castoriadis 1992: 8). European power resulted in an inflation of self-worth and an arro-
22 gant sense of being in the possession of superior moral values and civilization: affirming
23 the value of white Europeans meant also affirming the non-value of non-white Euro-
24 peans. The other side of this sense of superiority is what Castoriadis calls ‘un-conscious
25 self hatred’. The presence of the other becomes a cipher for self-doubt and ontological
26 insecurity. Castoriadis (1992: 9) writes that ‘in the deepest recesses of one’s egocentric
27 fortress a voice softly but tirelessly repeats “our walls are made of plastic, our acropolis
28 of papier-mâché”’. The twentieth century saw not only decolonization in Latin America,
29 Africa and the Indian sub-continent, and the collapse of the Soviet Empire, but also
30 de-industrialization and the shift eastwards of productive power. The rise of xenophobia
31 projects on to the body of the unwanted stranger the welter of other insecurities about the
32 loss of power. Paul Gilroy (2004) refers to this as an inability to mourn the loss of empire
33 that results in a kind of melancholia that is at once phobic and euphoric. The rising tide of
34 anti-immigrant sentiment and the rise in the electoral success of the extremist in Europe
35 today are part of this emerging situation. Increasingly elaborate forms of immigration
36 control and border management are emerging as European governments strive to limit
37 migration. In Australia between 2001 and 2007, the government’s policy of transporting
38 asylum seekers to detention camps on small island nations in the Pacific Ocean was
39 referred to chillingly as the ‘Pacific Solution’. The policy aimed to block migrants from
40 reaching the Australian mainland.

41 For Paul Gilroy (2004: 165), ‘the figure of the immigrant’ provides a key political
42 and intellectual mechanism through which our thinking is held hostage. Such categories
43 of person become culpable in the creation of hierarchies of mobility through the im-
44 migration structure. Colonial citizen migrants who came to Britain after World War II
45 were transformed from ‘citizens’ into ‘immigrants’ on their arrival. From 1962, migra-
46 tion from the Commonwealth was subject to increasing immigration control because

1 of the assumption that ‘immigrants’ were very difficult to assimilate, or later ‘integrate’,
2 and required limitation due to dangers of over-population and over-consumption of
3 resources (Anthias and Yuval-Davies 1993). White migration from the old Common-
4 wealth countries of Australia, Canada, New Zealand and South Africa was not policed,
5 and both US and intra-European Union migration were not seen as problematic. In this
6 sense, ‘immigrants’ are created through racially scripted forms of personhood that come
7 to life at a particular conjuncture. While we argue that the ‘immigrant’ is imbued with
8 racialized associations, the long history of Irish migration to Britain and the forms of
9 racism experienced by such migrants further complicates the picture (Cohen and Bains
10 1988; Hickman *et al.* 2005). Some white migrants are invisible while others are marked
11 out for distinction and differentiation. Who counts as an ‘immigrant’ is an effect of
12 racism rather than the quality and history of patterns of population flows.

13 In summary, the nature of contemporary racism is shifting constantly. Racism no
14 longer needs to have an ideology of race in order to continue to be socially active. To
15 some degree, racism is able to endure in an epoch when the scientific value of ‘race’
16 as a way of describing human diversity has been discredited – that is, in post-racial
17 times (Nayak 2006). This can work as a particular race moves into the cultural terrain,
18 and essentialist ideas about fixed cultural or religious traditions that are defined as
19 incompatible with the ‘host culture’ can do the work that the idea of race once did. The
20 shadow cast by the overtly racist regimes of the twentieth century means that racists today
21 have to develop a greater degree of sophistication and cultural competence. The racist
22 movements of today, from the British National Party to white supremacists in the United
23 States, often profess that they do not hate anyone, but simply love their own people
24 and their own identities. Even among extremist groups, there is an acknowledgement
25 that any expression of open hatred is socially inappropriate. In everyday contexts, the
26 predominant view of the social inappropriateness of racist talk results in unspoken forms
27 of what Joel Kovel (1970: 31–2) calls ‘aversive racism’. This takes the form of the social
28 avoidance of difference or coded forms of racism that work through what appear to
29 be non-racialized notions of ‘immigrants’, ‘asylum seekers’, ‘welfare moms’, ‘gangsters’,
30 ‘muggers’, ‘fanatics’, ‘terrorists’, and so on. Yet while race is coded now, it is not necessarily
31 dead as an idea. Despite the long tradition of work that has questioned the biological
32 veracity of racial differences, genomics has made ‘race . . . new again’ (Reardon *et al.*
33 2006: 1). There is considerable scientific discussion over the appropriate use of racial
34 terminology (Cooper, Kaufman and Ward 2003; Collins 2004), and the language of race
35 as a way of describing human populations is reappearing at the dawn of the genome era,
36 particularly in relation to medicine and congenital illness but also in claims that racial
37 difference has a genetic underpinning.

Conclusion

38
39
40
41
42 The century that produced the first black president is different from the world that
43 W.E.B. Du Bois knew. Racism has not disappeared; rather, it has changed, shifted and
44 taken on new plural forms while adapting previous elements. In this sense, racism is
45 a scavenger ideology that gains its power from its ability to pick out and utilize ideas
46

1 and values from other sets of ideas and beliefs in specific sociohistorical contexts. A
2 cultural sociology of racisms requires being attentive to the specificities of the current
3 situation but also historical linkages through time. Race is a historically produced way of
4 organizing our understanding of human diversity into categories that educate our senses
5 to see race. Over time, racism has served very different purposes, but in all cases its role
6 is to mystify and very often to justify discrimination, inequality and exploitation. In the
7 case of slavery, racial ideas warranted the most extreme forms of human exploitation; in
8 the imperial age, it legitimized theft, colonial rule and domination; in the era of Nazism,
9 it justified the genocide of those defined as less than human; and in the age of migration,
10 racism confers automatic rights and freedom to dominant white groups while denying
11 civil and political rights to racial minorities.

12 Walter Benn Michaels (2007), reflecting on the historic election of President Barack
13 Obama, comments that it would be correct to view his success as an indication that the
14 United States is a less racist society than it was at the dawn of the twentieth century.
15 However, it does not follow from this that the United States is a more equal society.
16 Rather, American society is more unequal than it was in the days of institutionalized
17 'overt racism'. In 1969, the top 20 per cent of American wage-earners made 43 per cent
18 of all the money earned in the United States while the bottom 20 per cent or quintile
19 made just 4.1 per cent. Compared with the situation in 2007, the gap had actually
20 widened, with the top quintile earning almost half of the total wages earned in the
21 United States, and the bottom quintile just 3.4 per cent. Black Americans are under-
22 represented in the top two quintiles and over-represented in the bottom two quintiles.
23 Benn Michaels concludes:

24

25 A society in which white people are proportionally represented in the bottom quintile (and
26 black people proportionally represented in the top quintile) would not be more equal; it
27 would be exactly as unequal. It would not be more just; it would be proportionally unjust.

28

(Benn Michaels 2009: 12)

29

30 Having a black president does not change the plight of the black poor, and this brings
31 us back to the importance linking the issue of race to the broader structure of social and
32 economic life chances. In our time, racism is not needed to justify coercive economic
33 relations as it did in the time of chattel slavery; nor are racist ideas about white superiority
34 needed to justify colonial ambitions and expansion. Paul Gilroy (2000) points out that
35 race thinking today is not only reproduced through ideas of racial inferiority or infra-
36 humanity, but also through the image of super-human black athletes like Michael Jordan
37 or Kobe Bryant. What links these extremes is the idea that the athletic multimillionaire
38 superstar and the violent gangster are both a race apart.

39 Racism orders and ranks humankind into hierarchies, but it also limits and regulates
40 our understanding of human culture and human difference. This is because racism
41 reduces human diversity to essential types and uniform categories, defined in biological
42 or cultural terms. Fundamentally, this has resulted in the infinite variety of humankind
43 being reduced to a set of violent simplifications – blacks, whites, Orientals, Asians. A
44 world without racism would not be one without human differences; rather, it would
45 allow human difference to matter differently and not feature as a means to violate and
46

1 regulate humanity itself. As Franz Fanon and Paul Gilroy argue, racism amputates our
2 humanity and inhibits the realization of a truly global sense of humankind.
3

4
5 **Review questions**
6

- 7 **6.1** In what sense is race a product of history?
8 **6.2** Can racism be understood in economic terms?
9 **6.3** Does having a black president in the White House mean that America is less racist?
10

11
12 **Further reading**
13

- 14
15 Anderson, E. (1990) *Streetwise. Race, Class and Change in an Urban Community*, University of
16 Chicago Press, Chicago.
17 Back, L. and Solomos, J. (2009) *Theories of Race and Racism: A Reader*, Routledge, London.
18 Fredrickson, G.M. (2002) *Racism: A Short History*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ.
19 Lentin, A. (2008) *Racism: A Beginner's Guide*, Oneworld, Oxford.
20

21 **Acknowledgement**
22

23 This chapter was developed out of a joint project between John Solomos and Les Back
24 (Solomos and Back 1996). The authors would like to thank John Solomos for allowing
25 us to reproduce some of his work and for his characteristic scholarly generosity.
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46

Debate: Introduction

To qualify for a PhD, or to get an article published in a good journal, you have to make an original contribution to knowledge. You have to find something in existing knowledge that you think you may be able to prove unsatisfactory. This is the first characteristic of the approach from critical rationalism.

¹⁺³
The second tenet is that knowledge grows when researchers find, and in some degree solve, intellectual problems. Thus in 1967 John Rex and Robert Moore spotted that accounts of race relations in British cities did not allow sufficiently for the outcomes of differential positions in the housing market. Their analysis of housing classes stimulated others to demonstrate how the housing preferences of South Asian settlers differed from those of local whites, and why they differed. This led next to research into how housing markets operated.

You start from problems, not from concepts. You judge concepts by how good they are at helping you solve problems.

You have to contribute to *sociological* knowledge. Therefore you have to use sociological language. I remember a time I went to my dentist and said 'I have a pain my tooth = that one, there'. After looking at my teeth, the dentist said 'That's what *you* think!' He explained that pain is an impulse coming along a nerve and that when it reaches a ganglion it may jump tracks and convey a false report. I had described my symptoms in ordinary language. He used some technical words that expressed technical knowledge.

For us, one model is Durkheim's study of variations in rates of suicide. He developed a new kind of knowledge and vocabulary, and explained these variations by reference to relationships of which the people themselves were not conscious.

So the third characteristic of the critical rationalist perspective is the distinction between different kinds of knowledge and the use of different kinds of concept. Marxists distinguish phenomenal form and essential relations. Others distinguish folk and analytical concepts, or *emic* and *etic* constructs.

Words like *racism*, *anti-Semitism*, *Islamophobia* and *multiculturalism* are ordinary language words, with multiple meanings, that are important in political discourse and everyday speech. For the purposes of sociology we need concepts with single and stable meanings. So critical rationalism's fourth characteristic is its commitment to methodological nominalism as opposed to essentialism.

In my paper I show why other perspectives contribute less to the growth of sociological knowledge in this field. This is no abstract dispute. I argue that a conscious adoption of the critical rationalist perspective should promote better research, such as in the study of preferences for association with co-ethnics. *extend*

MB

We set out to win new sociological knowledge. Critical rationalism tells us the best way to do it.

5 minutes





“For six months L/Cpl Paul Knight had survived some of the most intense and costly urban fighting of the Iraq campaign, but on his first night safe home in the UK, driving to his girlfriend’s to celebrate his homecoming, he was killed in a traffic accident”

Lietenant Colonel Patrick Saunders



Search bar

Browse | TV Shows | Movies | Upload | Create Account | Sign In

My Tram Experience {Racist woman on tram}

Fausic + Subscribe 2 videos



Like Add to Share

231,010

BUSINESS
Dell
Dell Vostro Notebook 3550 Shi
Excluding 17.5% VAT and delivery.
This advertisement has been tailored to you personally as a result of previous visits to the Dell website. If you would like to find out more information about this or opt out from such messages in the future [click here](#).

EDL - Tommy Robinson gets slapped in his
by round8ere
153,212 views

Welcome to London
by OptimesssPrime
439,719 views

