

Rethinking Race and Racism

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Abstract: In this paper, I argue that race is a classification of human beings, the classification exercise *itself* being a ‘social construct.’ I maintain, however, that the basis of such a classification isn’t a ‘social construct’. It’s biological. The argument that such a biological/scientific basis of race breaks down at a DNA or genetic level is a misuse of scientific reductionism. At a genome level, an untrained eye can’t tell the difference between a goat, a lemur and a human being. And for racism, I define it as *pride in one’s race*. The historical evils, stereotypes, and subtle assumptions like micro-aggressions, which we assume inhere in racism, are therefore interpreted in this paper as human instrumentalization of *racial pride* not factors inherent in racism. The historical legacy of race, which is unequivocally morally questionable, rather than its semantics, is therefore interpreted in this paper to be the main problem in race and racism discourse as shown by Heer (2015) and Sen & Wasow (2014). This moral questionability has, unfortunately, engendered some confusion between the biological and genetic reality of race as related to intelligence and superiority (which have no scientific basis), and the biological and genetic basis of race as related to physical differences (which have a scientific basis).

Keywords: Racial Pride, Instrumentalization, Classification, Race, Racism

Introduction

The race is unequivocally controversial; and it has infamous historical, social and political connotations and implications. That much is clear and defensible. However, this historical legacy of race (Heer 2015; Sen & Wasow 2014), rather than what ‘race’ actually means is, I argue here, the main problem in race and racism discourse. This unfortunate history and its scholarly critique, have engendered some confusion between the biological and genetic reality of race as related to intelligence and superiority (which have *no* scientific basis), and the biological and genetic basis of race as related to physical differences (which have an obvious scientific basis). Race’s appalling legacy, therefore, makes some scholars dismiss race as meaningless or as an illusion; and instead, prefer ‘ethnicity’ (Banton 1969, 26; Beaglehole 1951). In spite of that history, some scholars still, on a more pragmatic sense, settle on its classificatory necessity based on various observable and undeniable features (Isajiw 1999, 21; DuBois 2011). Darwin, in *The Origin of Species* ([1859]2009), noted this human reality, arguing that people usually have little interest in what is internal, but what strikes them virtually with awful wonder. W. D. Jordan (1974), in what is relevant to this paper, shows the reality of observable features in his analysis of Europeans’ first encounters with Africans. And indeed, *classifications* are based on external not internal qualities.

In this paper, I argue that race is a *classification* of human beings, the classification exercise *itself* being a ‘social construct.’ However, the *basis* of this *everyday classificatory reality* isn’t a ‘social construct’. It’s biological. That a person is dark, tall, smooth-skinned and nappy-haired isn’t a social construction. These are natural occurrences. The criticism that such a biological/scientific basis of race is superficial and that it breaks down at DNA or genetic level is a misuse of scientific reductionism. Obviously, at a genome level, an untrained eye can’t tell the difference between a goat, a palm tree, and a human being. Genetic analysis isn’t necessary for the social or ethnic classification of Han Chinese and Jiëëng (Dinka) of South Sudan. Their differences are clearly manifest in their physical appearances and require no scholarly expertise.

Since one can’t talk about race without problematizing racism, I define it [racism] as *pride in one’s race*. This might sound morally concerning or problematic to some readers; but that’s only at face-value. In defense, I argue that the historical ills, racial and ethnic stereotypes and subtle assumptions like micro-aggressions, which we assume inhere in racism (Daileader 2005, 6), are human instrumentalization of *racial pride*, not factors inherent in racism.

I will first explain our contemporary understanding of race and racism, its primordial association and historiography. Of essence also is racism’s relation to other discriminatory practices, and the contemporary reason why race is despised or dismissed as a ‘myth’ or as an ‘illusion’ (Appiah 1993). The paper concludes with an extensive exposition of a new theoretical understanding of racism. This new theoretical configuration, I presume, will help in postmodernist anti-racism discourse. Essentially, it’s a dialectical exposition that will be, to some readers, a ‘displeasing truth’ (Gordon 1995, 29; Leeuwen 2008). The theory is simple but solution-wise crucial despite the manner in which it might, at face-value, appear to come readers. It would also make the Bell’s (1992) painful claim that racism is ‘permanent’ both right and wrong.

Definitions

Race

UNESCO (Beaglehole 1951) defined race as “a group or population characterized by some concentrations, relative as to frequency and distribution, of *hereditary* particles (genes) or <http://jrdsjournal.wixsite.com/humanities-cultural>

physical characters, which appear, fluctuate, and often disappear in the course of time because of geographic and or cultural isolation." This definition clearly acknowledges race scientific basis. Sharma and Sharma (1997, 62) defined race as a "Group that differs from other classes or human groups by some *physiological characteristics* that are found uniformly within that group, the cause of this difference being *hereditary*." And this, again, acknowledges scientific basis of race. I will simply define race in this paper as a classification of people based on observable physical characteristics. I will intentionally avoid genetic complexification of race given the fact that genetic realities aren't relevant in classification exercise even when they are relevant in some medical cases with racial dimensions. So when we move from macro to micro levels then we are no longer talking about race because the observable physical differences not only narrow or disappear among different races, they also narrow or disappear between animals and plants. Clearly, we don't need science to know that a Han Chinese is markedly different from a Nuer of South Sudan or a German man. Du Bois ([1897] 2011, 135-138) and Abizadeh (2001) acknowledged, in a pragmatist sense, this 'on-our-faces' reality of physical difference (race). Science is, however, relevant (or required) when people assume superiority or human intelligence as their phenomenological facticity or prerogative. The jury is still out when it comes to racial superiority. Essentially, racial superiority is an assumed sense of self; or rather, an ethnically or racially inspired self-elevation. This racial falsehood, which inspires our contemporary aversion to race as a classificatory parameter, dominated 18th, 19th and 20th centuries' naturalized understanding of human physical variations. In this case, Europeans features were essentialized and rationalized as superior physiological and mental essentialism (Omi & Winant 1986).

Racism

Global Issue (2010) defines racism as "the belief that characteristics and abilities can be attributed to people simply by their race and that some racial groups are superior to others." Historian G. M Fredrickson (2003) defines racism as 'hostile or negative feelings of one ethnic group or 'people' toward another and the actions resulting from such attitudes" (1). Others define racism as the attitude of powerful 'white men' and others simply as 'white supremacy' (Welsing 2004). Contrarily, but still related to the above definitions as it will be clear later, I will define racism as a 'pride (excessive or not) in one's race'. This 'redefinition' is an abstraction meant to distinguish what race *is* and what race *does*. Holocaust, Jim Crow and temporary hatred related to race, are some of the social ills racism inspired.

That X group claims to be superior to Y group is a natural, universal feeling. And this proposition isn't bad *per se*. The application of this proposition can, however, be potentially bad. Unfortunately, available scholarly definitions of racism put emphasis on the attitude that assumes *permanency* of racial differences and the assumed hereditary superiority of the Europeans (Isaac 2004; Fredrickson 2003; Steinberg 1989). I say 'unfortunately' because it's not the attitude *in-itself* that's bad but what this attitude leads to or does. Besides, it's not everyone with a superior attitude which acts on it in a harmful way. It would be equally erroneous to assume that people who don't *show* 'superior' attitudes don't have them. There are those who externalize (Garang 2015) their superior feelings unequivocally. Margaret Cannon (1995) finds out in her research the same perception that 'white' European Christians are superior to the rest of the world; the same attitude Andrew Fraser (2011) adopts in WASP.¹

¹ WASP stands for White Anglo-Saxon Protestant
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While all these definitions differ in some respects, they are (with the exception of this paper's definition) related to Europeans' affective introspection on the *European essentialist self*, and the resultant attitude towards non-Europeans. This includes the causal aftermaths of such attitudinal intentionality: morally (Killen & Rizzo 2013) and in Husserlian sense² (Husserl 1980; Isajiw 1999; Heidegger 1962). Here, 'moral intentionality' should be understood emotively as a 'put-down' directed towards a non-European personhood (Fujitani 2001). A few examples of this 'moral intentionality' will help. In the 18th century, Thomas Jefferson (1781-1785) dismissed Ignatius Sancho's writings as "irrational and tasteless" and Wheatley's work as 'below the dignity of criticism.' For the 20th and 21st centuries, respectively, Heather Mac Donald (2014) dismissed *critical race theory* as "an intellectually vacuous import from law school," and Mary Lefkowitz (1996) referred to the works of Afrocentric writers as "fantasies" (20). This daring, scholarly 'put down' of the African personhood is still a contemporary institutional reality experienced quotidian (Kupenda 2014; Cornileus 2012). However, these 'put-downs' shouldn't affect race as a classification of people. What's required is the falsification of the attitude that assumes superiority. The fact that this attitude is based on 'race' as a determining parameter seemingly gives credence to the scholarly attitude that dismisses race as an illusion. The difference between a Han Chinese and an Oromo of Ethiopia is neither an 'illusion' nor was it 'constructed.'

Prejudice and Discrimination

Before proceeding, it is important to present discrimination and prejudice and how they relate to racism. It's apparent that *every* society believes in the importance of its people (Bernal 2003; Isaac 2004); socially and historically understood as primordialism (Spencer 2006). And this sense of societal self-praise is not a European prerogative. Romans, Greeks and Egyptians (Isaac 2004) believed in the centrality of their geographical locations. Such beliefs assumed cosmic centrality and were, consequently, rationalized as conferring superiority. Assumptions like these are generic and relate to our primordial, animal instincts (Spencer 2006; Einstein 1982). However, Greeks and other ancient peoples manifested prejudice and stereotypes differently (Snowden 1984; Isaac 2004). There was unequivocal, systemic, institutional prejudice against foreigners with different physical appearances (Appiah 2007; Snowden 1984; Isaac 2004). But this was assumed to be a natural reality not an imposition.³ While the ancients identified people by their ethnicities, the idea of 'race' was not a prominently problematized differential. Merit and social status were more important than ethnicity or skin color (Snowden 1984; Fredrickson 2003; Smedley 2005). In pluralistic or multi-tribal societies, tribe-based sense of importance plays a greater role in the exercise of atavistic prejudice.

In Africa, for instance, wars, political favoritism, and economic cronyism are driven by 'in-group bias effect' (Otten et al 2009, 23) based on tribe. *Race* divides and kills in the *West* as tribe kills and divides between Africa. Prominent world examples of fatal tribal prejudice are the 1994 Rwandan genocide, failure in Somali statehood, and 2013 civil war in South Sudan (Katongole 2011). Culturally, we see the world, positively or negatively, through our egotistic, ancestral

² As an attitude directed towards an object.

³ The hierarchical nature of the Grecian society was seen as the natural being of things not imposed superiority. Contemporary claim to superiority, however, is known to be false but institutionalized and systemically imposed.

lenses (De Anca 2012, 170; Katongole 2011). Internal wrongs are excused and external wrongs exaggerated for the interest of *in-group* members. This sense of self-centredness has a universal, transitive, extensive domino-effect relationship:

*Self ('I') → family → relatives → Ethno-linguistic community (tribe) → race.*⁴

As in every society, inter-ethnic, aristocratic discriminations and feuds have always existed in Europe with conflicts between *change* and *continuity* (Arnstein 1976), *peasantries* and *aristocracies* (Jenkins 2011; FullBrook 2004). Whether it was inter-Saxon master-slave uprising (Goldberg 1995), Vikings and Norseman plundering England, or Germanic tribes against Slavs (Arnstein 1976), the sense of proud ethnic identity, which Europe now frowns upon, existed profoundly. Beside Anglo-saxons' ethnocentrism and discrimination against Eastern and Southern Europeans in North America between 18th and 20th centuries (Smedley & Smedley 2005), the above Europeans' ethnic conflicts are a manifest testimony of ethno-political, ethno-linguistic, and sociohistorical changes. Admittedly, Europe, even now, is composed of various ethno-linguistic nationalities or sub-nationalities: French, Italian, German, Greek, English, Scottish, Irish, Finnish, Portuguese, Norwegian, Serbian, Albanian etc. Unfortunately, this salient ethno-linguistic dynamic is downplayed as insignificant even when it's an 'index of differentiation.' In essence, technology, economic development and relative political stability and precociousness, make Europe assume (without argument or external questioning) internal homogeneity.

What's the point I am making here? Here's the point. Discrimination is a universal phenomenon. What differs from society to society are *the factors* we use to discriminate (Banton 1969, 27). These "indices of differentiation" (Gilroy 1993, 35) in medieval Europe and Asia, included language, religion, tribe, and aristocracy (FullBrook 2004; Jenkins 2011; Pruthi 2004; Brown & Schirokauer 2013; Samson 1958; Smedley & Smedley 2005). A paradigm Asian example is the Indian *Jati* or 'caste system' (Pruthi 2004). Stereotypes, like some elements of the '*Jati*' 'untouchables,' and the Europeans racial caricatures of Africans (Isaac 2004), are constructed and learned but socially inevitable universal phenomena (Brookfield 2014; DeAngelis 2009; Mac Donald 2014).

Race, invented by Europe, is just another index of differentiation. However, prejudice based on color as understood in European historicity, has been elevated over other forms of prejudice as Banton has shown (27). A special status (presumed scholarly critique) given to this Europeans' prejudice not only stems from atrocities committed in racial collegiality, but it also comes from the Europeans' hegemonic place in the world. Race isn't dismissed because it's meaningless. It's dismissed either because it's unnecessary, or it has caused (and continue to cause) unspeakable suffering. If that's the case, then why would we say race is an illusion and that tribe or ethnicity isn't? Essentially, all classificatory parameters are *social constructs*, some of which have undoubtedly let to horrendous human rights abuses or genocides.

Race and Racism in Modernist Era

⁴ First 'I' look after my well-being, then that of my family followed by that of my relatives, my community (tribe) and then my race. This is the natural progression that we misuse in different prejudices.

Enlightenment gave Europe new socio-intellectual lenses for internal respect and external adventure (Fredrickson 2002; Gilroy 1993). For the success of this adventure, Europe presented herself as a superior entity in order to suppress and subjugate conquered peoples. As argued above, discrimination is universal and racism is a form of discrimination based on one of Europe's social constructs. So the claim by Isaac (2004) that the ancient Greeks inspired Europeans' discriminatory, racial attitudes becomes intellectually indefensible. You can't inspire an attitude that's universal. Besides, the Grecian and Roman nature and level of prejudice was neither universalized nor was it strictly institutionalized in a manner comparable to contemporary ones. They are merely based their discrimination on observable features (or social status)⁵ Without exaggeration which we witness from Enlightenment onward.

Essentially, Europeans took their discriminatory consciousness toward non-Europeans to a brutal level not before witnessed in any civilization (Cesaire 2000; Fredrickson 2002). With no doubt, racism is given a special place in sociological discrimination discourse. Why is this the case? This is due to material and ideological forces that make racial discrimination effective. These socio-institutional forces were Christianity, politics, scientific and other scholarly works. They were used to authenticate lofty claims about European superiority as imminent scholars like Hume, Kant, Hegel, Jefferson, Bauer, Heidegger, Voltaire and others argued (Kelley 2002, 1-4; Forbes 2002). Europeans assumed these claims to be *natural* truths. With these imminent scholars joining hands in support of Europe's superiority claim, the ontology of Europeans as superior people became a respectable discourse in Europeans' socio-intellectual consciousness. It was accepted as Truth. Some of these thinkers believed in the naturalness of European superiority. Others knew it was a fallacy but used it to elevate Europeans' place in the world.

So Europeans not only saw themselves as superior to non-Europeans, but they also made sure their *constructed* superiority was systematically enforced through economic, political and religious hegemony (Kelley 2002; Said 1979; Fredrickson 2002) at a universal scale. Having projected themselves as the logical, natural continuation of the Greek civilization (Kelley, 47), Europeans then took it upon themselves to conquer the world politically and intellectually. This conquest was neither truthful nor was it moral; it was executed as a natural necessity—moral and truthful. Jews were indicted of 'deicide' as killers of Jesus (Fredrickson 2002), the pillar of Christianity. Colonization, slavery and segregation under the banner of *the civilizing* mission (Forbes 2012) were tools used to socially perpetuate, institutionalize and intellectualize European sense of racial superiority and supremacy (Banton 1969: 17; Hiernaux 1969). In the process, Europeans' superiority was not only perceived as conceptual; but it was also presumably a fact-based, natural discursive institutionalism (Cesaire 2000; Jefferson 1781⁶). "Political superiority," Nietzsche wrote, "always resolves itself into the ideal physiological superiority" (2003, 14). This naturalized institutional exclusion-for-oppression is well illustrated by Banton (1969), Césaire's (2000, 37), Fredrickson (2002)⁷, W. E. B. DuBois ([1903]1965), Booker T. Washington ([1901]2008), Omi and Winant (1986), and John Griffin (1996).

So human beings were not only classified into what was called 'race', but they were also placed into existential and instrumentalize hierarchies (Song 2004; Isajiw 1999). Enslavement of Africans not only projected Africans as lesser humanity, but it also afforded Europeans an

⁵ Some slaves of people with lowly social classes had the same skin color as the discriminating class.

⁶ "Notes on the State of Virginia"

⁷ Fredrickson illustrates this in what he calls 'overly racist regimes': Jim Crow America, Nazi Germany and Apartheid South Africa.

avenue to commoditize or expropriate Africans into productive economic tools in a classic Marxian sense without compunction or moral consideration. While many people believe that discrimination is caused by ignorance as manifest in Emmanuel Kant's youthful, naive works (Palter 1996, 372-373), and also through earlier Europeans' pseudoscientific writings on Africa and Africans (Winthrop 1974; Livingstone 1961), I have to say, nonetheless, that discrimination is more about how one feels about *oneself* and the nature of facts that inform such sense of self. People were not necessarily stupid when they thought the world was *flat*. What they believed was the information, which knowledge 'authorities' availed to knowledge seekers, or what authorities *forced* them to believe. Also, discrimination usually occurs among *equals* or when one's sense of self or pride is infringed upon. Denying equality is basically 'bad faith' (Sartre 1965; Gordon 1995; Leeuwen 2008) as no one usually bothers about one's inferiors until (or unless) there is a perceived sense of equal capacity, or when there's a fight for the same opportunities and resources.

So enlightenment or modernist scientists and philosophers believed in the superiority of Europeans (Isaac 2004; Kelley 2002; Bernal 2003) either because of the epistemological zeitgeist, or out of Sartrean 'bad faith'. While it's reasonable to question their race science then, it's also prudent to interpret it as their 'flat-earth effect'; that is, a deduction of truth premised on available 'facts.' It's, of course, possible that modernist philosophers and scientists might have "used reason" and science "as a calculating mechanism called on to serve the individual's vital needs and interests" or they used reason as "meaning-assigned basis of activity" (Guseinov, 13). Whatever the case, their works helped Europe's conquest of the world.

Given Europe's industrial, technological, scientific and intellectual advancement between the 19th and 20th centuries about Africans, Asians and American Natives, it would be uncharitable not to excuse a European who concluded that those advancements proved Europeans' superiority. This is not to concede the superiority claim as scientifically or empirically true. It is rather an admission of logical validity given available facts rather than the soundness of their arguments. Even Steve Biko (2002) wondered, given these facts, if Africans are inferior.

Not only did Europeans invent 'race' as an index of separation, they produced works (scientific, literary and political) that presented their racial class as biologically superior. Whether it was Conrad in *the heart of Darkness*, Darwin in *The Origin of Species*, or Thomas Jefferson in *Notes on the State of Virginia*, they all believed Africans were 'savages.' While some liberal Europeans believed Africans were not savages (Tiedemann 1836; Herder as quoted by Palter 1996, 373), some liberals still dismissed the equality of Europeans and Africans (Lincoln 1858).

This epistemic conceptualization of race as a biological reality, and the superiority of the European as natural, political and institutionalized fact, meant that Europeans' actions were seen as deontological truths. Racism was therefore exercised without any moral qualm because the projection of others as naturally inferior was perceived as the natural state of being of things. Colonization of the world was, therefore, a political and religious duty to spread 'light' and 'civilization.' Slavery, as the general episteme of the time dictated, was regarded as biblical truth sanctioned by God against Africans (Fredrickson 2003; Isaac 2004). African bondage was, therefore, the only natural, logical connection between Africans and Europeans as Hegel and Locke reasoned (Gilroy 1993). This sense of superiority motivated Europeans to say or write anything they wanted against non-Europeans (Fujitani 2001; West 2001). It was, regrettably, a period of unbridled European hegemony; a period when Europe was accountable only to *itself* in an asymmetrically beneficial modernity (Gilroy 1993).

Some Conscionable Modernist Responses to Race and Racism

When the inhumanity of slavery and colonization started to haunt the European conscience, the institutionalized 'scientific' superiority of Europeans became questionable. Abolitionist movements became the *grand* start of the awakened European conscience. While this was a right turn of events in the European consciousness, it by no means eliminated the perception of the European sense of superiority. It nonetheless gave a voice to a few clean consciences and that necessitated internal European self-criticism. Essentially, race-centered prejudice (racism) continued until Europe acknowledged her *grand* moral low in the Jewish holocaust by the Nazis in Germany (Fredrickson 2002). The Holocaust generated an unprecedented negative reaction against the very idea of *race* and all the social ills it generated. As modernity matures, social consciousness started to change with human advances in *real* scientific knowledge (Tiedemann 1836) and as exploration and geopolitical interests intensified. Even by the 1800s, the scientific reality of racial superiority was questioned by the likes of Franz Boaz (Omi & Winant 1986; Craven 2010). Boaz subjected nativist, eugenicist, hierarchical and essentialist ideas to robust scholarly and scientific scrutiny. The impetus of this scrutiny stemmed from a critical look at questionable *instruments* based on race and the integrity of science. The inhumanity of colonialism, slavery and anti-Semitism (which is assumed to be the precursor of racism: Isaac 2004; Frederickson 2003) aroused the conscience of the good-hearted European to relatively accept plurality in the West. Consequently, Race, which was accepted in the mainstream scholarship as a scientific and natural classification of people, became suspect. It would only be accepted as a social formation or a 'social construct' in the Marxian sense: societal, sociohistorical transformation (Spencer 2006). These seminal modernist works would become crucial to critical postmodernist race discourse.

Racism in Postmodernism

With postmodern and post-structural assessment of learning, power and society, racism wasn't spared the pangs of skepticism, deconstructionism and critical theory. Heidegger, Derrida, Foucault, Lyotard, Jameson and the Frankfurt school's 'Critical Theory' helped scholars in the postmodern era subject ideas, language, society, politics and grand theories to intellectual skepticism (Bottomore 2002). While racism still exists, it exists in subdued form whether covertly as an 'invisible empire' (Cannon 1995), or overtly as professor Barry Spur of University of Sydney exemplified in his derogatory remarks against Australian Aboriginals, calling their writings 'human rubbish tips' (BBC 2014). Abolition of slavery, the end of colonialism, the civil rights movement, the end of Nazi Germany and Apartheid, were the last nails in the coffin of overtly legalized and institutionalized prejudice based on race. Racism, in all its manifestations, which Europeans were proud to exercise in the past is now, to a large extent, an abomination in public spheres. It still manifests itself in capitalism as an 'invisible empire' (Cannon 1995) of 'bourgeoisie whiteness' (Babe 2012). Such hidden manifestations have been transformed into functional but subtle utilities. Professor Drew Fraser's fight to make Australia and Anglo-Saxon nations exclusive 'white' homelands (Fraser 2011; Dick 2005) is a contemporary example of racism hidden in academic 'freedom of speech'.

However, there is no consensus on our contemporary understanding of racism. There are as many definitions of racism as there is racism instigating factors (Hanlon 2015). Societally and in

the intellectual circles, racism features prominently as the *attitude* of the Europeans or people of European descent toward Non-Europeans manifested “in the practices, institutions, and structures that a sense of deep difference justifies or validates” (Fredrickson 2013:6). While Fredrickson makes a good case regarding the areas in which racism expresses itself, it’s important to note that it’s the same attitudes and beliefs (about self and towards others) that are utilized prejudicially in daily practices and institutional settings. Given the fact that the mostly powerful, wealthy people are ‘white,’ others like Dr. Frances Welsing equate racism with what she calls ‘White Supremacy’. Both Welsing and Fredrickson see racism not only as a problem through its instrumentalization, but also as a problem in *itself* (Daileader 2005).

So whatever attitude Europeans (whites) adopt towards ‘non-whites’ whether benign or fatal, whether intentional or inadvertent, is regarded racist (DeAngelis 2009; Mac Donald 2015). Minorities see any biases—usually called *micro-aggressions*—by ‘white people’ towards ‘non-white’ as racist. In 2009, an Asian-American psychologist, Derald Sue, and his African-American colleague, were moved to the back of the plane by a European-American attendant to balance the weight. The attendant didn’t move European-American men so Sue and his colleague interpreted the action as ‘racist micro-aggression’ whether or not it was intentional (DeAngelis 2009).

However, ‘non-whites’, it’s claimed, can’t be ‘racist’ because of power and wealth differentials (Gates 1997; McLaren & Farahmandpur 2005). This assumption means that racism ranges from simple, begrudging attitudes of *all* ‘whites’, to global, hierarchical and hegemonic institutionalism tied to powerful, wealthy ‘white’ men. While powerless and poor ‘whites’ aren’t completely excluded from the charge of racism should they insinuate any sense of superiority, micro-aggression or hostile attitude, their political and economic impotence makes them less destructive to groups affected by alterity. This proletarianizes the victims and bourgeoisifies racists.

Now, anything ‘white’ people say or do, anything that insinuates their sense of superiority or self-importance, generates negative reactions. Whether it’s police officers killing African-American men, ‘White Supremacist’ groups denigrating African-Americans, football spectators in Europe chanting ‘monkey sounds’ during matches, a scientist or scholar questioning the intelligence of the African Person (St. Fleur 2014; Moore 2014), a store clerk telling Oprah Winfrey she [Oprah] can’t afford a 40,000-dollar purse, or an old ‘white’ lady moving her purse away from a ‘black’ man in an elevator, all are classified *racist*. This seems to support Pat Godwin’s claims:

The word ‘racist’ is, like I say so many times, is like beauty; beauty is in the eye...the eyes of the beholder. Well, if someone is defining racist or racism, it all depends on who’s defining it, because it’s their opinion (Hanlon 2015).

Whether in scholarly circles or our on-the-streets understanding of racism, confusion still clouds our discourse on racism. In spite of this confusion, racism occupies a distinct place in discrimination and prejudice discourse as long as differences are regarded permanent (Fredrickson 2003:5, 8; Isaac 2004: 22; Jordan 1974). As a result of this confusion, I present below a different theoretical understanding of race and racism. While the concepts themselves aren’t new, the *reconceptualization* is new in theoretical context as far as our understanding of race and racism are concerned.

Race as Human Classification

Before I present the new theoretical reconceptualization of racism, it would be crucial first to present the case for *race* as an inevitable classificatory tool. There is a consensus among scholars that race is not scientific or biological in the manner in which it was understood in the 18th or 19th century: it's a mere 'social construct' (Kelley 2002; Keita et al 2004; Smedley 2005). In the ideas of W. E. B Du Bois, a 'sociohistorical' concept (Appiah 1993; Solomos 1995). A corpus of scholarly research has been conducted on whether or not 'race' has any scientific basis. Others have gone to the extent of dismissing race as either nonexistent or unnecessary. Appiah (1993) terms Du Bois' discussion of human race classifications as an 'illusion' (Also see Omi & Winant 1986, 246). This leaves one wondering: why this scholarly obsession with race? Why does it matter whether or not race has any scientific bases? Why does the existence or usage of race offend people? The answer lies not in the term 'race' itself, but in the immoral *instruments* Europe and America midwived from it. Any time the word *race* is invoked, slavery, colonization, Holocaust, lynching in the American South, Jim Crow, apartheid, and all other questionable historical events, come to mind. To dismiss race is to, therefore, dissociate oneself from the past historical immorality and 'racial terror' (Gilroy 1993). This is understandable historically speaking. No one would bother about race were it not for the unbridled immorality Europe meted out on the rest of the world, especially Africans and Jews (Fredrickson 2003; Isaac 2004).

While I understand that European historical immoralities deserve condemnation, I think it's superfluous and unnecessary to dwell on whether or not race is a social construct, biological or an illusion as Omi & Winant (1986) and Appiah (1993) maintain. Human classification (or the European attitude in the classical, modernist sense) will not just disappear simply because race has been removed from mainstream lexicon and scholarship. Because every single human society has parameters for internal compartmentalization, it's prudent to keep in mind that other classificatory methods will always arise—ones that are not related overtly to race. Israel will continue its heavy-handedness against Palestinian civilians with American support whether or not there is such a thing as race. Hamas will continue to fire rockets into Israeli cities with millions of civilians if no peace materializes. And Europeans will continue to strengthen their solidarity regardless of 'race' ontology. As we very well know, the Rwandan genocide transpired under a different classificatory parameter; Somalis continue to kill themselves whether or not there is race, and Islamic extremist groups such as ISIS, Taleban and Boko Haram, will continue their murderous vanities with non-racial parameters or "indices of differentiation" as instigators. So human societies have always categorized and will continue to categorize and compartmentalize themselves mentally and physically. What scholars should focus on are not only the parameters used but also the motives that inform such classifications, and whether or not such classifications have any ulterior motives that give them questionable moral implications. As Omi and Winant (1986) have argued in our daily inter-racial interactions, the word *race* is still in use whether or not it is a social construct or natural. The race is not the problem but what it has been used for.

Unfortunately, race theorists present it as a 'social construct' with no biological bases when in fact human physical appearances are biological (Isajiw 1999; Kieta et al 2004) and hereditary (Beaglehole, 1951). The Ontario Human Rights Commission (2005/2009) argues unconvincingly that racial *difference is* socially constructed. This is to reason away the reasonable. Undoubtedly,

this rationalization is fear informed by historical effects of race. It is not what racial difference *is*. In a way, something that has scientific basis seems to automatically gain acceptability. This is why race is rejected as unscientific. As Isajiw (1999) writes, “the popular usage of the word [ethnicity] often communicates a pejorative meaning, a put-down, and hence a bias. It is thus not a scientific usage of the term.” Isajiw continues, saying that “a scientific, scholarly, meaning is closer to the first sense of Greek word and signifies a community of people” (17). This is exactly the manner in which race is understood: “it’s bad so let’s dismiss it as unscientific.” However, it is inconceivable that a Jieeng (Dinka) child would be born with Greek or Chinese physical appearance. Classification, the placement of people into various races, is indeed a social construct. However, there is an underlying biological or scientific basis of such a classification. It is prudent to acknowledge the superficiality of such biological reality of physical differences. Nonetheless, the differences between, Deng, a Jieeng (Dinka) man from South Sudan and, Xi, a Han man from China aren’t social constructs. Besides, their appearances are genetically transmitted to their offspring. Their appearances were not ‘constructed.’ Let’s see this example. A greyhound is very different from a Bichon Frise but they are all dogs. They are classified based on their physical appearances and their differences have a biological basis. However, their classification into different breeds isn’t controversial because it has no moral implications. Humans, like dogs, are classified on the same basis. However, human classification is controversial given its historical problems. And UNESCO (1951) acknowledged these facts in its definition of race; however, it added that such *difference* while hereditary, can be lost with time.

It is, therefore, reasonable to say that race, regardless of its historical baggage, is a classification of human beings just like any classification. The differences between Deng and Xi will always be there. They might, of course, diminish with intermarriage; however, intermarriage creates new ‘indices of differentiation.’ To dismiss the existence of race for what it does rather than what it means is both unnecessary and unscientific. It is understandable that classifications of human beings into races are not a clear cut delineation and that they are vulnerable to bad use. There are indeed various loopholes that undermine some racial categories (Du Bois [1897] 2011). For instance, that President Obama is placed in the same race with the president of South Sudan and not with his own mother’s race is both childish and ridiculous. However, it does make sense that Obama is physically different from his mother and anyone calling for classification of Obama in a different group (race or otherwise) with his mother has an argument to make. The argument might be flawed because putting Obama with his father and not his mother is irrational; however, the virtual reality is undeniably inevitable. What has *no* scientific or biology basis as far as we know now, is superiority based on race (Isajiw 1999; Tidemann 1836) contrary to Watson’s claim (St. Fleur 2014).

Reconceptualising Racism

Reconceptualization: This new reconceptualization defines racism as a ‘pride in one’s race.’ All other abhorrent things Europeans executed in the name of race are simply the negative instrumentalization of this ‘racial pride.’ Biases and exclusive factors are informed by this *pride*.

I argued above that race is a classification of people based on their appearances. And DuBois ([1897] 2011), Isajiw (1999) and Abizadeh (2001) don’t want to think this reality away. With this understanding, Du Bois writes that “it is certain that all human striving must recognize the

hard limits of natural law, and that any striving, no matter how intense and earnest, which is against the constitution of the world, is vain” (Du Bois [1897] 2011, 134). I will, therefore, reconceptualise racism in a theoretically simple, pragmatic, but helpful configuration because any anti-racism discourse that disregards world’s existential and social realities is indeed a vain discourse. To attempt to ignore the physical differences between Xi, Deng, Osama and Adriane is to encourage vanity in the name of equality. Thus, I reconceptualised racism.

In summary, the Ontario Human Rights Commission (OHRC) captures our confused contemporary understanding of racism very well:

Racism is an ideology that either directly or indirectly asserts that one group is inherently superior to others. It can be openly displayed in racial jokes and slurs or hate crimes but it can be more deeply rooted in attitudes, values and stereotypical beliefs. In some cases, these are unconsciously held and have become deeply embedded in systems and institutions that have evolved over time. Racism operates at some levels, in particular, individual, systemic and societal. (OHRC website)

Now, if one replaces ‘racism’ with ‘tribalism’ or ‘sexism’ the meaning of the above passage would convey a general discriminatory attitude. A good example of a tribal society would be Rwanda until 1994. Tutsis believed they were superior to Hutus and subjugated them to their rule with the help of Belgians (Mamdani 2001). The attitudes and all the discriminatory practices based on race are *only* different from other attitudes and discriminatory practices because of Europeans’ global influence and the scale of atrocities based on race. Were it not for Europeans’ conquest of the world, racism as an invention of the West (Fredrickson 2003) would not have had the special place scholars have given it. All forms of discrimination stem from ‘in-group bias effect’, such as the one which Andrew Fraser (2011) advocates for Anglo-Saxons. The differences between various forms of discriminations are the plug-in factors used for in-group bias in discriminatory environments. Since Europeans have assumed a fundamentally influential status in the world, scholarly literature on racism makes it appear as though Europeans’ attitude is so extraordinarily special so much so that their discriminatory attitude deserves a special place in scholarship on discrimination. To say that a law prohibiting intermarriage between Germans and Slavs is not *racist* because it has no ideology or world view to justify the practice (Fredrickson 2002, 24) is to give racists some superiority. Steinberg (1989) makes the same mistake in differentiating *racism* and *ethnocentrism*.⁸

In Quebec, French is used to discriminate against Anglophone and Allophones.⁹ In the ‘West’ indices of differentiation are numerous: religion, national origin, race, gender, class, color, sexual orientation, etc. Whether racism is an institutionalized ideology or an intentional or unintentional attitude, it is important to note that racism is how one feels about one self and the people of one’s in-group. Fraser and Godwin, which I mentioned earlier, are good examples of this propensity for in-group bias. The uncritical assumption that racism is bad in *itself* (Fredrickson 2002; Daileader 2005, 6) is misleading and unhelpful in anti-racism discourse. Racist centres her or himself as the only being with ‘presence’ (Gordon 2008), not regarding ‘bad/good’ being as Leeuwen (2008) would maintain. Racism *in itself* isn’t the problem. The problem is its negative

⁸ “Ethnicity was recognized as plastic and transmissible, but race conveyed the notion of differences that could not be transcended” (Smedley & Smedley 2005, 19).

⁹ Canadians whose neither English nor French is the first language.

application. We are all entitled to exalt our kind without harming others. But racists have unaddressed concerns (fears, begrudged, pride) and assumptions (the 'other' is bad) that are usually dismissed with uncritical awe. This leads to bottled-up feelings that portend hostility. There's nothing naturally wrong with a German or English man speaking out proudly about his German or English people and what they've done for humanity. The list of German and English philosophers, scientists, artists, writers, and inventors is staggering. It would be unnatural to assume that a German or English man can't take pride in the achievement of his people (Solomos & Back 1995). Whether or not the German people speak or brandish excessive pride in their achievements, we have to accept that every human being has a sense of self-praise, spoken or not. If a German person brags to an Indian man or a South Sudanese man regarding Germans' achievements, our contemporary understanding of racism would *brand* him as a 'bad person'. However, that charge of badness wouldn't be applied if a Ghanaian brags to a Nigerian regarding the achievements of Ghanaian people. It's bizarre that some human beings can show pride but others are simply forbidden.¹⁰ This is unnatural if not unscientific. If South Sudanese have nothing to brag about then they shouldn't take it out on the English man who has a lot to brag about.

Racism is, as pointed out above, nothing but pride in one's race, excessive or not. What makes racism questionable or even evil is its expropriation. Ideally, racism doesn't prey on ideology and the Europeans' global reach. The truth is the another way around. Racism, like religion and capitalism, is used as a conduit of hateful ideologies. A German man has a natural right to brag to a Ghanaian about German achievements. Our interest should be in what he does with that sense of pride. Simply saying Germans are superior to Ghanaians should not be the problem. The German is going to feel so whether or not he is allowed to say it out loud. And more importantly, German achievements are not some false ideologies or an attitude. They are empirical realities we can all bear witness to now.

If the German fellow uses German achievements to exclude Ghanaians from jobs they qualify for, or sets them up for death or suffering, then we know he's using his racial pride in a harmful manner. Note that it's not racism *per se* that is bad. It is its usage. There are those with excessive pride in their race but they beautifully internalize their pride. It makes them feel good to be who they are and that is enough for them. However, there are people whose internalized pride in one's race isn't enough. They have to show others how proud they are. These people have the tendency to externalize their pride in an unpalatable way. The latter group is the one whose sense of racial pride can potentially engender the undesirability and evils assumed inherent in racism (Garang 2015).

A 'white' university professor, a 'white' Medical doctor or a 'white' businessman might feel a sense of achievement and see no need to show others how proud they are to be who they are: 'white and superior' (Kupenda 2014; Reyes 2014). However, a 'white' high school dropout, who works in a warehouse, might feel inadequate when he sees an African lawyer, doctor, professor, nurse etc. He would feel the need to assume Europeans' past glory by invoking racial superiority. However, like the German man above, our interest should be how he uses his feeling of superiority.

There is of course the issue of the slippery slope; that is, when do you regard this racial pride as benign and when is it fatal? A good example is a way Hitler talked about German purity and

¹⁰ We want to make race less important, but when it comes to pride across racial lines, we make it important. This inconsistency undermines anti-racism discourse.

his eventual execution of Jews. That is, of course, a genuine concern. However, the remedial key is sound epistemology to correct ill-informed education rather than what people feel. Such corrective measures should show people that being proud of who you are is natural and acceptable. However, the use of such pride to harm others is not acceptable, and it stems from doubts one has in the assumed sense of superiority (De La Bruyere 2013). There are university professors, doctors, pastors, and business people who, of course, use their positions to discriminate against their racialized colleagues (Kupenda 2014). It is human nature to discriminate when one feels that one's sense of self or racial pride is infringed upon intentionally or unintentionally. That African-Americans are professionally toe-to-toe with European-Americans makes some people jittery (Reyes 2014). However, there are those who transcend racial jitteriness through helpful familiarity. A high school dropout, with extensive, voluntary interaction with children from different races and cultures is most likely to be tolerant. Meaningful familiarity reduces fear and ignorant assumptions. Differences become superficial as humanity and personality take centre stage over physical appearances as shown by Griffin (1995) and King (1992). While racial pride remains, the temptation to use it negatively is reduced with familiarity with racial others' personality and humanity.

One of the prominent issues in race and racism discourse is wealth, power and privilege matrix. Since 'whites' control much of the world's wealth and power, some scholars and writers equate racism with wealth, power and 'whiteness'. James Baldwin argues that 'blacks' cannot be racist by definition (Gates 1997), and Dr. F. C. Welsing (2004) argues, in a somewhat conspiracist manner, that Racism is 'White Supremacy'; an attempt by 'white people' to ensure their survival across the board globally through structured, systemic dominance. It's understandable why Welsing equates racism with 'White Power' given the nature of European and American socioeconomic and sociopolitical system. Admittedly, 'whites' (Europeans and Americans) control the world so it's very difficult to separate their attitude and actions towards non-Europeans and the prejudice based on race. The impact race-based prejudice has had on humanity has made us clothe racism in unnecessary materials. Welsing's understanding of racism is hegemony. However, hegemony can make use of race as a determinant of inclusion or exclusion. To determine who is to include or exclude in the benefit of 'White Supremacy', a supremacist uses racist sentimentalism. Sociopolitical and socioeconomic impotence of the rest of the world about Europe and North America has given us the tendency to see everything they do as exceptionally bad or good. This dualistic view of the world assumes Marxian conflict theory and the capitalists' world subjugation. The Capitalists and racists become the bourgeoisie, and the non-Europeans and workers become the proletariat

No scholar would admit that some human beings aren't allowed to express pride in their achievements, or the sense of pride they have in their physical appearance, their aesthetic sensibilities, their intellectualism, and their industrial enterprises. Yet 'white' pride is frowned upon. Calling a 'White Supremacist' group rally 'hateful' and destructive is either to treat them as nonhumans who shouldn't have any sense of self pride, or as super humans who are beyond the human capacity to feel. But are these group racist? Definitely yes. Are they bad, hateful? Not necessarily! An expression of 'white pride' shouldn't necessarily make them bad people. Godwin and Drew aren't *evil* because they take pride in 'whiteness' and want it protected, nor are they bad because they want it institutionally elevated over and above other racial identities. Indeed, the mere fact that they express pride in their 'white power', beauty, and the aesthetic nature of their kind make them racist. However, saying that their sense of pride makes them *hateful bigots* is a problem itself. Expression of pride is a nature-given, human prerogative

crucial for one's mental health. What would make them people of questionable characters, like other morally misleading scholars, would be the possible negative usage of that sense of pride; for instance, advocating for job exclusivity, neighborhood segregation, killings of 'nonwhites' and other evil things. To further illustrate the point, democracy itself isn't bad but we can appropriate it to oppressive use. Communism itself isn't bad but Lenin, Pol Pot and Stalin put it to evil use. The same thing applies to Capitalism, which capitalists use selfishly and oppressively to enrich themselves (see Chomsky 2004, 2014; Klein 2007; Perkins 2006).

What is appalling is the assumption that a 'white' person can't castigate a 'black' person without the charge of 'hate' (racism). That's the unintelligible issue of microaggression. But when is it possible for a 'white' person to relate to a 'black' person human-to-human regarding character and behavior without race rearing its head into the mix? (Mac Donald 2014). In our contemporary understanding of racism, such a relationship based purely on character across racial boundaries is impossible. If John (who is 'white') rebukes James (who is 'black') that he [James] is a bad parent, James would easily invoke racism even when John's rebuke was based purely on the character. Our contemporary understanding of racism has made human-to-human natural interaction across racial lines uneasy or impossible.

Nonetheless, our scholars are writing day and night on race and anti-racism in a manner that gives instrumentalized racism a pedestal of importance. Racism has been equated with power, privilege and sense of importance so to be a 'racist' for some people is to be superior. However, if everyone understands that to be racist is to be simply proud of your race, we would approach other racial groups with respectful sensitivities instead of absolute dismissiveness. Racism doesn't give power to people who don't have it. A racist convenience store owner in Alabama, who calls President Obama a monkey, is not going to get power and privilege by simply having such an attitude towards Obama. His feelings are insignificant and will not affect Obama; however, his saying so gives him a feeling of self-importance however misguided. He needs correcting, not uncritical dismissal and branding.

Conclusion

I have tried to show the universality of discrimination and its relations to racism. It is clear in this paper, I hope, that our traditional understanding of both race and racism are based on what race and racism have done as a function of Europeans' attitude toward non-Europeans not on what race and racism mean *per se*. While classification of people into the race is based on color and physical features, both of which biological, scholars have dismissed race as a social construct without any biological basis. This is both erroneous and condescending. Europeans use this dismissive conceptualization of race to distance themselves from past mistakes and to appease the historically oppressed races. It is safe to say, however, that racial classification of human beings is unnecessary, but it's erroneous to dismiss the *basis* of human classification as unscientific. Skin pigmentation and physical features aren't social constructs. We can indeed question the 18th and 19th centuries' 'scientific' claim of Europeans' superiority and inferiority of Africans; however, race still has a biological basis, however superficial. I have therefore argued that dismissing race is unnecessary and unscholarly. What we should try to avoid are historical ills that were based on race and learn from them to avoid future reoccurrences.

I have also argued that racism is pride in one's race and that it is by no means bad *per se*. No human being can be deprived of his/her sense of pride however morally reprehensible such a person is. However, we can always critique the questionable ways in which people utilize race.

Race creates a sense of collegiality, an in-group sense of solidarity or favoritism (Federico et al 2013; Reyes 2014, 235) that is prone to misuse. We turn to be biased for our family and friends. In the same vein, people are biased for people from their race and this is not something we can wish away with good will or intentions in a noble discourse. What should concern us is not this sense of biasness *simpliciter* because this bias will be there whether we desire it or not. What is reprehensible is our potentially questionable use of it. Hitler is not a monster merely because he thought the Aryan race was a super-human race. Indeed, that's baseless. He was a monster because he used the assumption of superior Aryanness, his race, to kill Jews and other people he deemed unworthy of the insignia of Germanness or Aryanness.

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