The future of the category of race is uncertain. If there are no biological races, as scientists increasingly accept, what should we do with the concept? Should we revise it, defining race as a social category? Or should we reject race as an illusion: a failed scientific category that does not accurately describe human biological diversity, and which provides fodder for racists? If we endorse the former option, we may be able to keep using the term, putting ‘race’ in scare quotes to indicate that it does not refer to a biological kind. If we favour the latter option, we shouldn’t keep using the term ‘race’ as a descriptor, because race doesn’t exist. Those who argue that race does not exist, or that we should eliminate the category on normative grounds, face a dilemma. Racial classification has been used to justify some of the most heinous crimes of modernity, but it has also been embraced by groups that have been treated as inferior “races” as a way to assert and defend themselves collectively. A race-like category seems necessary for purposes of social justice. This symposium will explore issues surrounding ‘replacing race’. Should the category be replaced, and if so with what, and how?

**Program**

09.00 - 09.15: Arrival tea and coffee

09.15 - 09.20: Opening remarks

09.20 - 10.10: Alana Lentin (WSU), “Relationality and the Doing of Race”

10.10 - 10.40: Morning tea


11.30 - 12.20: Albert Atkin (MQ), "Pragmatic Pluralism about Race, and Social Justice Conservationism"

12.20 - 13.20: Lunch

13.20 - 14.35: **Keynote**: Lionel McPherson (Tufts), “Socioancestral, not Racial, Identities”

14.35 - 14.40: Closing remarks

14.40 - 15.00: Afternoon tea

**Symposium: Replacing Race**

Date: Thursday 17 August 2017

Venue: Unilever Amphitheatre 101, MGSM, Macquarie University

Time: 09:00 - 15:00
Abstracts

Alana Lentin (WSU), “Relationality and the Doing of Race”

David Goldberg (2009) argues that a relational approach to the study of race yields more than a comparativist one does because, mired in methodological nationalism, the latter misses the conjunctures and continuities across and between time and space that conjure race and keep it alive as something that does rather than is something. Comparativist approaches that train a discrete and particularising lens on racialized phenomena in a given location without connecting them to the longer and wider histories and contemporary performances of race often, also, mobilise a separation between race and racism. In my studies of ‘mainstream’ racism or migration studies (Lentin 2014, 2017) I noted the dislocation of what are thought of as individualised manifestations of racism in a ‘postracial’ age from accounts of what Weheliye (2014) calls ‘racializing assemblages’ that describe the production and reproduction of raced processes within the ongoing ‘racial-colonial’. A Eurocentric view of racism, that links it to individual behaviours and aberrant political arrangements, as the current era of Trump, Brexit and the return of the European far-right is largely being thought of, contributes to this compartmentalized view. This is to the detriment of more holistic accounts that would place race centrally in the sociohistorical account of modernity and, with regards to social struggle, would not subsume it under universalizing class-based analyses. In my paper, I discuss the role played by social scientists in eliding, neglecting or denying the salience of race. I suggest that a relational approach, such as that proposed by Goldberg and Weheliye, but which originates in the work of Black feminists such as the Combahee River Collective, the Black Power movement and contemporary decolonial antiracism initiatives such as the ‘Marche pour la dignité’ in France, critiques the sideling of race in academia and activism and propose urgently needed transformations for our disciplines.

Adam Hochman (MQ), “Racialisation: A Defence of the Concept”

This paper offers a defence of the concept of racialisation. As the concept has become increasingly popular, questions about its meaning and value have been raised, and a backlash against its use has occurred. I argue that when ‘racialisation’ is properly understood, criticisms of the idea are unsuccessful. I defend a definition of racialisation, and identify its companion concept, ‘racialised group.’ Racialisation is often used as a synonym for ‘racial formation.’ I argue that this is a mistake. Racial formation theory is committed to racial ontology, but racialisation is best understood as the process through which racialised—rather than racial—groups are
formed. ‘Racialisation’ plays a unique role in the conceptual landscape, and it is a key concept for race eliminativists and anti-realists about race.

Albert Atkin (MQ), "Pragmatic Pluralism about Race, and Social Justice Conservationism"

In this paper I argue that certain pragmatic considerations suggest a pluralist account of race. Further, I suggest that these pragmatic considerations in favour of pluralism also give us clear reasons for thinking that, contrary to common claims, our socio-political anti-racist projects do not need to retain the concept and language of race in order to be effective. Indeed, I argue that our socio-political anti-racist project would benefit from the proper rejection of race, and the careful adoption of more accurate and appropriate replacement terms and concepts.

Lionel McPherson (Tufts), “Socioancestral, not Racial, Identities”

The concept of socioancestry clarifies that common practices of identifying people as “black,” “white,” or “yellow” are rooted in visible continental ancestry and not, as widely believed, in the race idea. For example, the label “black” gets applied to Africa-identified persons, though many such persons have mixed African and non-African ancestry. Socioancestry is a function of color-conscious social dynamics that reflect some particular component, full or partial, of the continental ancestry of a group’s members. More specifically, Black Americans comprise a black—that is, Africa-identified—socioancestral subgroup whose membership mostly overlaps with the set of persons who have been regarded as racially black in the United States. But being Black American has become an elective identity: Americans with visible African ancestry no longer must count as black or Black. This hardly threatens Black American social identity and political solidarity, which continue to represent resistance to dishonor and mistreatment attaching to blackness in the United States.

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