Race and reflexivity

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Abstract

It is widely recognized that our understanding of the racial order will remain forever unsatisfactory so long as we fail to turn our analytic gaze back upon ourselves, the analysts of racial domination, and inquire critically into the hidden presuppositions that shape our thought. However, for reflexivity to be employed widely in the interest of scientific truth, analysts must acknowledge that reflexive thinking entails much more than observing how one's social position (racial identity or class background, for example) affects one's scientific analyses. In this paper, we deepen the meaning of scholarly reflexivity, discussing how it can be directed at three levels of hidden presuppositions: the social, the disciplinary, and the scholastic.

If more than a century of American race scholarship – including work in sociology, cultural studies, ethnic studies, and a whole host of related scholarly areas – has taught us anything, it is the unique importance of critical and reflexive thought. We have come to see, if only belatedly, that our understanding of the racial order will forever remain unsatisfactory so long as we fail to turn our analytic gaze back upon ourselves, the analysts of racial domination, and inquire critically into the hidden presuppositions that shape our thought.

Pragmatists and sociologists of the classical generation were well aware of the importance of reflexivity. Pragmatist thinkers always stressed that perspectives on social life are grounded in social practices, particularly those, as Locke (1992 [1916], p. 23) put it, of the 'dominant or ruling groups.' Dewey, while not highly attentive to the significance of racial presuppositions, did stress, in a line of argument partly anticipating our own, the class character of scholastic modes of reasoning. In *The*

Quest for Certainty (1988 [1929], p. 32), he spoke at length of the age-old tendency to see thought as outside of and superior to experience, a view he traced back to the ancient Greek division between a higher realm of being and an inferior realm of changing and uncertain things. In his view, this division was promulgated by a 'class having leisure and in a large degree protected against the more serious perils which afflict the mass of humanity.' Far removed from material necessity, the leisured class promoted ideas that in turn served to 'glorify [its] own office.' Du Bois highlighted much more forcefully the racial presuppositions shaping social inquiry. In a famous passage in *Black Reconstruction in America* (1965 [1935], p. 725), he lamented that his literature review was 'of sheer necessity an arraignment of [white] American historians and an indictment of their ideals.' Elsewhere, he spoke in more general terms of the hidden assumptions pervading white scholarship: 'It is so easy for a man who has already formed his conclusions to receive any and all testimony in their favor without carefully weighing and testing it, that we sometimes find in serious scientific studies very curious proof of broad conclusions' (Du Bois 1978 [1898], p. 78). Du Bois (1978 [1904], p. 57) held that we must gain reflexive control over such assumptions and deliberately form new ones: 'Some assumptions are necessary. [But] they must be held tentatively ever subject to change and revision.'

As for the classical sociologists, the idea of effecting a sharp epistemological break (in Bachelard's [2002 (1938)] evocative phrase) with the common sense of social and intellectual milieux was fundamental to the work of Marx, who broke, of course, with the taken-for-granted assumptions of bourgeois society and classical political economy; perhaps to a lesser degree, it also animated the work of Weber. But it was in the sociology of Durkheim that this doctrine was given its most explicit and programmatic expression. In *The Rules of Sociological Method* (1982 [1895], p. 62), he spoke of 'prenotions' that, 'resembling ghost-like creatures, distort the true appearance of things, but which we nevertheless mistake for the things themselves.' These prenotions long pre-dated the rise of modern social science; social actors had always held deep-seated, commonsense beliefs regarding the various aspects of social life, from morality to law, politics, and family life. In developing a rigorous scientific approach, Durkheim believed, one must discard all such preconceptions and proceed from systematically developed categories, not ones plucked haphazardly from the undisciplined discourse of the public realm. 'The sociologist,' he advised, 'either when he decides upon the object of his research or in the course of his investigations, must resolutely deny himself the use of those concepts formed outside science and for needs entirely unscientific. He must free himself from those fallacious notions which hold sway over the mind of the ordinary person, shaking off, once and for all, the yoke of those empirical categories that long habit often makes

tyrannical' (Durkheim 1982 [1895], pp. 72–3).[1] Sociology, then, was to constitute itself against the presuppositions governing everyday life. It was to break methodically with taken-for-granted truths and unquestioned assumptions.

The classical generation of pragmatists and sociologists, in sum, certainly understood the importance of questioning the hidden preconceptions that orient social thought. The great figures of that generation went far toward placing reflexivity at the centre of social inquiry. Adding new dimensions to this awareness, a critical sociology of knowledge, influenced by Mannheim (1936 [1929]), blossomed around mid-century, as did the evolving traditions of Western Marxism (e.g., Gramsci 1971) and the Chicago School (e.g., Park 1950; Hughes 1971, Part II). However, the theme of reflexivity was to receive its most definitive treatment only in a later body of work: the writings of Bourdieu, which held that reflexivity is necessary for gaining limited but real control over inclinations and dispositions (including in our thought and perception) and for transforming us from the agents of action into something more like the true subjects of action. 'The Stoics used to say,' Bourdieu noted approvingly, 'that "what depends on us is not the first move but only the second one"' (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, p. 136). Reflexivity would lead to an expansion of vistas – an 'opening up of inquiry,' to invoke a favourite Deweyan formulation (1988 [1925], p. 124) – and the enlargement, at least to some modest degree, of our freedom from determination. In what follows, we pursue the implications of Bourdieu's ideas – insights that challenge, deepen, and enrich current standards of reflexivity – right into the heart of race studies, a terrain he himself left relatively unexamined.[2]

Despite our focus on problems that repeatedly come up in race scholarship, our investigation into race and reflexivity is meant here to serve as a response also to challenges arising more generally, whether in respect to race itself or any other principle of division, such as gender, class, religion, or sexuality. The difficulties encountered in these terrains – and the possible ways of overcoming them – are all very similar. Our aim is to shed light on theoretical issues encountered all across the social sciences, even as we devote attention most closely to substantive problems in the racial field.[3]

As we proceed, we do not present a blanket critique or undiscriminating rejection of critical race scholarship or advances in reflexive thought. On the contrary, we attempt to build upon earlier efforts by deepening the very meaning of scholarly reflexivity itself. Impressive strides have been made toward genuine reflexivity. Especially in the last forty years, with the ascendency of postmodern and

poststructuralist critiques, standpoint epistemologies, queer theory, feminism, and critical race theory, not to mention the proliferation of 'diversity consultation' in academic and corporate settings, many sociologists, anthropologists, historians, literary critics, philosophers, and others have acknowledged that their taken-for-granted assumptions about the social world often do affect intellectual inquiry. Of course, one hesitates to pronounce prematurely the triumph of reflexive thinking within the social sciences (see Twine 2000). Despite the elevated position that Durkheim and Bourdieu occupy in the discipline, the weight they placed on the importance of reflexivity has yet to be fully felt in mainstream sociology. And one must bear in mind, too, that certain disciplines and subdisciplines actually have proven resistant to calls for rigorous and systematic self-analysis. Indeed, the social-scientific disciplines flourishing most today – economics and political science – seem among the least oriented toward critical reflexivity (Fourcade 2009; Lamont 2009). Nevertheless, many scholars in the present day do seek to become aware of how their positions in overlapping social hierarchies condition their outlooks as social scientists.

But therein, too, lies a problem. By and large, reflexivity often has been conceived in too narrow and underdeveloped a fashion: what the vast majority of thinkers typically have understood as reflexivity has been the exercise of recognizing how aspects of one's identity or social location can affect one's vision of the social world. Such a view of reflexivity is necessary but insufficient; it also is an increasingly threatened perspective, for as identity politics falls out of fashion, eclipsed by calls for cosmopolitanism or, more directly, by injunctions to move 'beyond identity' (Brubaker and Cooper 2000), reflexivity itself approaches a crisis-point, with many scholars stymied and unsure as to how to push forward their fields of inquiry. As a result, even in those areas of research that have witnessed the widest popularization of reflexivity – or, at least, of a *specific variant* of it having to do with scholars' personal identities – ideas about self-objectification appear to have run their course, burning hot and fast in the beginning with works like White's *Metahistory* (1975) and Clifford and Marcus' *Writing Culture* (1986) but now, like a roman candle brushing the crest of its arc, producing only a few new sparks. For reflexive thinking to survive and, what is more, to be employed widely in the interest of scientific truth, analysts must produce works that *challenge, deepen, and further* its current standards, for what constitutes reflexive thinking, we argue, entails much more than observing how one's social position affects scientific analyses or the political imagination.

In what follows, we develop a three-tiered typology of racial reflexivity and analyse the epistemological presuppositions of each tier. We take our cues from a suggestive set of observations by Bourdieu. In *Pascalian Meditations* (2000 [1997], p. 10), he argues that our common sense assumptions preconstruct the objects of our inquiry at several distinct levels, each more deeply hidden than the last and requiring a more searching and penetrating mode of reflexivity. The first concerns 'occupation of a position in social space and the particular trajectory that has led to it.' Bourdieu characterizes this first level, perhaps surprisingly, as 'the most superficial', since its presuppositions are 'unlikely to escape from the self-interested criticism of those who are driven by other prejudices or convictions.' The second concerns positioning in fields of cultural production, such as disciplinary fields. Each of the latter have their own internal logic and dynamics, which can profoundly shape what investigators see and fail to see. The third level is that of the 'invisible determinations inherent in the intellectual posture itself, in the scholarly gaze that [one] casts upon the social world' (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, p. 69). Echoing Dewey here, Bourdieu (2000 [1997], p. 10) speaks of 'presuppositions constituting the *doxa* generically associated with... *skholè*, leisure, which is the condition of existence of all scholarly fields.' We show how, at each of these three levels, reflexivity helps to initiate the epistemological breaks enjoined by Bourdieu. We survey the obstacles distinctive to each level and the ways in which reflexive thinking can – and, at least in some race scholarship, has – overcome these obstacles. We also discuss many positive examples, as well as some of the ways in which the exercise of reflexivity has not quite gone far enough.

The social unconscious

The starting-point of our inquiry is the principle that scientific endeavours, including those addressing the topic of race, are far-reaching and probing only to the extent that they apply, in reflexive fashion, their own powers of objectivation to the subjects of objectivation themselves. One must recognize that race scholars' location in (and trajectories across) the racial order deeply affect their presuppositions in respect to it.[4] Hardly free-floating or socially disembedded, students of race are deeply shaped, privileged, or disadvantaged by a society in which racial domination is prevalent, and their social experiences condition the very perspectives they assume upon the racial world. Typically, the processes whereby such determination occurs are largely unacknowledged by the social thinkers themselves. Deep correspondences between the objective structures of their social world and their own subjective structures of

understanding lead them to a 'doxic experience' (to borrow a phrase of Husserl's) in which all the fundamental divisions of that world, all the arbitrary fictions (such as race) that define and constitute it, are apprehended as natural and self-evident – and thereby legitimized. The workings of these mechanisms of legitimation, the biographical preconditions of which are long-term processes of socialization and internalization, serve as a hidden roadblock to scientific progress. They do so, at least, for so long – and only for so long – as they fail to be submitted to rigorous and disciplined scrutiny.

Racial principles, then, impose themselves as part of the very order of things because they are deeply inscribed in the *objective structures of racial domination*, which some race analysts take for granted because they largely are formed within them.[5] Since at least Du Bois, critics have underscored the dubious impact upon social thought of these racial disparities. Their key insight has been that whiteness often functions as a standard against which all other categories are (implicitly) compared – the consummate 'reference category', in the parlance of regression analysis.[6] This occurs in the common and uncritical use of concepts such as 'mainstream culture' and 'middle-class values' – supposedly commonplace categories, widely recognized, unquestionably stable, and internally consistent – as plumblines against which all other (nonwhite, non-middle-class) communities can be measured. It also occurs, as Pattillo (2005, p. 322) has observed, in studies that assume blacks' preeminent goal should be residential integration with whites; in the innumerable studies that hope to explain black crime, (nonwhite) Hispanic poverty, and Asian success, as if white crime, poverty, and success were themselves deracialized phenomena (Anderson [2003] has advanced a similar critique); and in statements such as this one, by a well-known whiteness scholar: 'Few Americans have ever considered the idea that African Americans are extremely knowledgeable about whites and whiteness' (Roediger 1998, p. 44). Whiteness often informs the types of questions sociologists pursue and the audiences they address. Needless to say, behind each sociological question inevitably stands a whole host of background assumptions.[7] When sociologists attempt, without questioning their own questions, to address such issues, they implicitly affirm the legitimacy of these threads of inquiry.

For many who are not white, of course, whiteness is very much a visible reality: 'Of them,' wrote Du Bois (1999 [1920], p. 17), 'I am singularly clairvoyant.' In Frankenberg's (1993, pp. 228–9) words, 'Whiteness, as a set of normative cultural practices, is visible most clearly to those it definitively excludes and those to whom it does violence.' Since the times of slavery and Jim Crow, in fact, many African Americans have intently studied white folks – both from curiosity and from a need for survival (hooks 1997). This does not

mean, however, that as a general rule whiteness has not established itself as the unspoken norm of the racial order. Indeed, it influences all minds. The *nomos* of social relations, it has become the *nomos* of social science itself, which is why whites and nonwhites alike often find themselves similarly influenced by racialized modes of thought. 'It must be remembered,' wrote James Baldwin (1955, p. 15), 'that the oppressed and the oppressor are bound together within the same society; they accept the same criteria, they share the same beliefs, they both alike depend on the same reality.'

If Du Bois laid the foundations of whiteness theory – not only in *Black Reconstruction* but also, among other writings, in his 1920 essay, 'The souls of white folk' (1999 [1920]) – Baldwin became its next seminal analyst. In a late essay, 'On being white ... and other lies' (1984, p. 84), he argued that, while deep-seated and even unconscious, whiteness nevertheless is 'a moral choice.' 'There *are* no white people,' he noted, for 'America became white – the people who, as they claim, "settled" the country became white – because of the necessity of denying the Black presence, and justifying the Black subjugation.' During the past quarter-century, whiteness theory has become an established field of inquiry in race studies, at least partly answering Bourdieu's (2004 [2001], p. 91) call for a 'generalizing of the imperative of reflexivity and the spreading of the indispensable [theoretical] instruments for complying with it': an institutionalization of episte-mological vigilance (for a review of whiteness studies, see Twine and Gallagher 2008; for critiques, see Arnesen 2001; Blum 2008). In intellectual and social history, scholars (e.g., Roediger 1991, 2005; Ignatiev 1996; Guglielmo 2004) have opened up important new avenues of research into the making of white America. In legal studies, critical race theory has firmly established itself as one of the most exciting and productive bodies of scholarship on whiteness and racial domination (Crenshaw et al. 1996; Delgado and Stefancic 2000). In cultural studies, Morrison (1992; see also Fine et al. 1997) has explored how, if centuries of racial domination have infused whiteness with an essence of the positive, this essence could only exist through its negation, an essence of the negative attached to non-whiteness. (As Patterson [1982] further has shown, in the shadows of even the most objectively neutral, universal, race-free concepts – 'enlightenment', 'freedom', 'rationality' – crouches a black slave.) In sociology, too, Frankenberg (1993), Hartigan (1999), and Lewis (2003), among others, have supplemented such historical work with a more present-centred ethnographic perspective. And reflexive critiques have gained further specificity through the development of intersectional analyses, as in works by Moraga and Anzaldúa (1983 [1981]), Hull, Scott, and Smith (1982), Collins (1991), and Mohanty (1991). Through such contributions, scholars have explored the impact on social thought not

only of racial position and trajectory – i.e., whiteness – but also of gender, education, class, religion, and sexuality, demonstrating as well the importance of *multiple* identities.

Critical reflection of this sort has done much to enrich the study of race relations. One would have good cause, indeed, to discuss at length its many positive outgrowths. However, in the interest of provoking a more careful and thoughtful assessment, we submit as well that the insights it has generated often have failed to shake race analysts free of the prenotions that fill up their scholarly unconscious. After centuries of studying without being studied, of examining without being examined (or so they thought), white scholars have found themselves face-to-face with an other that stares back at them, writes back, and analyzes back, and perhaps they have felt, as Sartre (1988, p. 291) felt, 'the shock of being seen.' Accordingly, many have conflated reflexivity with self-effacing self-disclosure, the ritualistic quality of which often serves more to establish legitimacy than genuinely to advance social science.[8] 'When an agent vocalizes or imputes motives,' noted the pragmatist sociologist C. Wright Mills (1940, p. 937), 'he is not trying to *describe* his experienced social action. He is not merely stating "reasons." He is influencing others – and himself.' Such persuasion is possible because fellow scholars, through a tacit agreement grounded in scholastic custom, often mistake brief instances of self-evaluation with authentic practices of reflexivity. Thankfully, a few recent critiques of the whiteness literature (Arnesen 2001; Andersen 2003; Frankenberg 2003) have exhibited a keen awareness of these limitations and exemplified how a more searching and critical reflection might be undertaken.

In still other instances, however, critical insights into the importance of social position have resulted in more questionable epistemological claims. These include, prominently, the 'insider doctrine' so memorably analysed by Merton (1972, p. 15), a perspective that deems only members of particular groups to have access, or at least privileged access, to the truth regarding them: '[T]he Outsider has a structurally imposed incapacity to comprehend alien groups, statuses, cultures, and societies.' Modern incarnations of this doctrine can be found in claims that disadvantaged groups are best represented in the political field by members of those same groups (e.g., Mansbridge 1999); in calls for 'racial matching' in social science (Blauner and Wellman 1973; for a review and critique, see Twine 2000, p. 6–14); and in some works informed by standpoint epistemology (e.g., Deloria 1988; Rhodes 1994; Allen 1996).

We agree that one's position in the racial order conditions one's perceptions and that, quite often, persons of colour evince a remarkable knowledgeability in respect to white culture and psychology. However, we disagree that an insider's vantage point *in and of*

itself leads to scientific discoveries unavailable to the outsider. 'No human culture,' writes Gates (1991, p. 26), 'is inaccessible to someone who makes the effort to understand, to learn to inhabit another world.' Scientific insight comes by way of rigorous reflexivity and is not the inevitable result of one's position in social space. The notion that white scholars, strictly because of their whiteness, are blind to certain dimensions of racial domination, while nonwhite scholars, strictly because of their nonwhiteness, are keen to these dimensions, is too simplistic a proposition, and it carries with it the danger of white scholars ceding expertise to nonwhite scholars (as if, when it comes to race studies, people of colour were the real experts) or of nonwhite scholars absolving themselves of genuinely reflexive practices.[9]

The disciplinary unconscious

Critical reflection on one's own (or others') social location has not succeeded in freeing race analysts of the prenotions that fill up their scholarly unconscious. While one cannot doubt that location in the racial order, either considered alone or in some combination with gender, class, sexuality, and so forth, is salient for the positions one takes in respect to racial issues, one also must bear in mind that the impact of whiteness, or of any other such determination, always is transmitted 'through the specific mediation of the specific forms and forces' of more delimited fields – in our case, the specialized fields of intellectual or scholarly production (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, p. 105; see also Wacquant 1997). The structures and dynamics of a scholarly field profoundly affect how larger societal (racial) influences come to be expressed within it. And the national particularities of each academic tradition shape those influences as well. If one denies to less encompassing spaces this capacity for mediation of broader influences, then one runs the risk of committing what Bourdieu (1996 [1992], p. 248) liked to call the 'short-circuit fallacy' – one of 'passing directly from what is produced in the social world to what is produced in the [more specific] field.'

It is not enough to inquire reflexively into 'who one is' or where one is positioned in the social space as a whole to understand one's position-takings. One also must inquire into the objective position occupied by subjects of objectivation within an academic discipline – and the location in turn of that discipline within the larger universe of the social sciences. Even more to the point, one must try to understand and map out the common sense, or *doxa*, of each intellectual context, 'each discipline having its own traditions and national particularities, its obligatory problematics, its habits of thought, its shared beliefs and self-evidences, its rituals and consecrations, its constraints as regards [to] publication of findings, its specific forms of censorship, not to

mention [a] whole set of presuppositions inscribed in the collective history of the specialty (the academic unconscious)' (Bourdieu 2004 [2001], p. 94). This means that one has to devote attention simultaneously to at least two mutually constitutive components of a disciplinary (or larger social-scientific) field: its social-organizational dimension (in our case, the social relations underlying the production of racial knowledge); and the different intellectual or scholarly currents (position-takings) prevailing, often in mutual antagonism, within that space.

Moreover, constraints and opportunities must be mapped out and explored not only from the vantage-point of the social-scientific observer but also, perhaps more importantly, from that of the race scholar herself. From the latter's point of view, the space of position-takings in race scholarship is apprehended (in Bourdieu's phrase) as a 'space of possibles', a realm of viable opportunities, lines of thought to accept or reject, scholastic positions to be colonized, or battle lines to be drawn (see Bourdieu 1996 [1992], p. 235). This space of possibles appears to the race scholar as a set of openings or windows of opportunity for innovative scholarship. It also appears, by the same token, as a space of im-possibles or constraints on scholarly innovation, sharply delimiting what can conceivably be attempted or accomplished. (Nowhere is this more readily apparent than in the various disagreements and controversies that serve to organize race scholarship in constricting and bipolar terms.)[10] Not only do race scholars occupy different positions in the racial order and in various academic fields; they also engage in very different ways with the intellectual and scholarly possibles (and im-possibles) before them, resulting in turn in sometimes very significant differences in the kinds of work they produce.

If one wished to analyse the refractive effects of academic fields on the production of race scholarship, it would be necessary to examine how the space of (intellectual or scholarly) possibles has presented itself to students of race at given junctures, always bearing in mind the differential location of these scholars in analytically demarcated structures of constraint and opportunity, as well as the different schemes of perception and thought they bring with them to the situation. If one's object were race relations in America, such an analysis would likely begin by focusing on the disciplinary context of American sociology. The analysis would by no means be confined to that discipline or national context alone, however; it also would be necessary to situate it within the field of the social sciences more broadly – and, one might add, within the field of the humanities as well, including history and cultural studies – and to place these, in turn, within a global academic context. It also would be important to place any given configuration of (race-analytic) possibles against a

wide historical canvas, temporal contextualization being every bit as important as spatial. For example, if one wished to understand the current state of race studies in the United States, including the different frameworks of thought (position-takings) available to race scholars and how those frameworks constrain and enable racial analyses, it would be necessary to see where such frameworks originated as well as the earlier configurations against which they were constructed, each framework bearing within itself, after all, a long and contentious history which it is crucial to unpack.[11]

In this context, it is important to note not only the trajectory of dominant paradigms but also the career of ideas now treated as foils, hypotheses rendered in the collective memory of the discipline as harmful inventions or as primitive tools that must now be replaced by more refined instruments. These ideas or hypotheses wield enormous power over the space of intellectual possibles and im-possibles and are usually presented as signposts along a supposedly linear line of scientific advance. Often one defines one's intellectual position through a negation of these commonplace foils or through full-out assault on ideas that long have been denounced; often those foils themselves, however, have not been adequately understood. For example, far too many scholars, familiar with the initiation rites of their discipline, take to criticizing traditional assimilation theories without ever having engaged seriously with Gordon (1964); or to railing against the likes of Lewis or Moynihan without having picked up *La Vida* (1966) or *The Negro Family* (1965); or to dismissing the 'oppositional culture' hypothesis without having read *Minority Education and Caste* (Ogbu 1978). Conversely, much as we should pay heed to ideas that have been demonized – evaluating them on their own terms, documenting the processes of defamation, and evaluating the extent to which these processes have benefited or injured critical thought – it also is important to look critically upon scholars who have assumed a kind of sainthood in the field. We should treat sceptically those who are almost universally held in positive regard, those whose ideas, far from being given serious treatment, often are evoked as a marker associating one's own work with the heroic: 'If Du Bois is with me, then who can be against me?'

It also is important that we regard one other feature of disciplinary life with deep scepticism, namely, academic tendencies toward parochialism and overspecialization. Long established in intellectual life, such tendencies have had visible and unfortunate consequences. Scholars specializing in racial stratification are able to go about their research often with only superficial knowledge of the race scholarship of specialists in other approaches – and vice versa. Even more troubling, race scholars often relegate themselves to the study of one single racial group (or to certain classed or gendered groups *within*

racial groups) and thereby propagate a distorted view of the social world wherein (reified) racial groups exist in relative isolation from one another. Thus, the sociologist who specializes in the black-white education gap can ignore the rich literature on Hispanics in the American educational system, while the historian who concentrates on Asian immigration to America can wave off the sprawling literature on Eastern European migratory patterns (not to mention Asian immigration to other countries). As sociologists of the Chicago School, most notably Zorbaugh (1929), not to mention historians studying the emergence of racial categories (e.g., Gossett 1965; see also Hannaford 1996), have observed, we cannot hope to understand the dynamics of the social world by apprehending racial groups merely as individual cases with semi-autonomous histories and lifestyles; the true object of analysis is the space of interracial conflict itself. In short, we must avoid what Brubaker (2006, p. 45) and his colleagues have termed the fallacy of 'analytical groupism', 'the tendency to take discrete, sharply differentiated, internally homogeneous, and externally bounded groups as basic constituents of social life, chief protagonists of social conflicts, and fundamental units of social analysis. [If] ethnic groups, races, and nations continue to be treated as things-in-the-world, as real, substantial entities with their own cultures, their own identities, and their own interests', then we shall perforce wind up with a picture of the social world that resembles, misleadingly, 'a multichrome mosaic of monochrome racial, ethnic, or cultural blocs.'

The scholastic unconscious

Not even all these considerations together exhaust the full range of critical reflection required to rid scholarship of its hidden and unexamined prenotions. There remains one final level at which epistemological vigilance must be exercised: the level of scholastic life itself, with its characteristic attitude of pure, disinterested thought, of detached intellectuality, unconstrained by social and economic necessity and drawn to a playful, 'as-if' mode of engagement with the world and its problems. If there is anything this mode of engagement finds difficult to objectify and place at a critical and reflexive distance, it is its own distance from necessity and the habits of thought to which that conduces. The disposition of *skholè* – that is, of scholastic freedom from constraint – is shared by all those who, regardless of the disciplinary or other particularities that divide them, have in common the capacity and privilege 'to withdraw from the world so as to think it', a freedom to engage in cultural production under conditions well insulated from practical urgencies and concerns. Most race analysts enjoy something approaching that privilege.[12] By Durkheim and Mauss's (1963 [1903]) thesis of the correspondence of social and

mental structures, they may be expected to share in its accompanying scholastic disposition as well. While many race scholars reflect on their positions in social hierarchies and some also examine how they are positioned in disciplines, virtually all, like fish in water, remain less than fully aware of how their thinking *as scholars* carries with it unexplored assumptions that distort their perceptions of the racial order. 'There are many intellectuals who call the world into question, but very few who call the intellectual world into question' (Bourdieu 2008, p. 23).

Bourdieu's (2000 [1997], p. 49) most important insight into the scholastic condition is that it conduces to a 'systematic principle of error' operative across three separate realms of social thought: the cognitive, moral, and aesthetic. The unrecognized presuppositions of the scholastic perspective bear upon the theoretical, practical, and expressive domains alike, distorting reasoning in all three areas in distinct but interrelated ways. In particular, the scholastic disposition leads to prenotions about race that, in the *cognitive* realm, neutralize the specificities of its practical logic, replacing its dispositional bases, if not with varying forms of determinism, then with intentionalist constructions (racial action as rational choice) grounded in the same sense of volitional freedom that race scholars themselves experience. In the *moral* realm, the scholastic disposition leads to taken-for-granted assumptions that stipulate, in Kantian fashion, an abstract moral universalism (colour-blindness, in Justice John Marshall Harlan's well-known term) that merely attributes to the larger world the peculiar sense of universality that academics enjoy. In the *aesthetic* realm, the scholastic disposition results in a kind of populist expressivism (a tendency to exalt racialized cultures) that accomplishes only a false inversion – not an overcoming – of cultural hierarchies plainly still existing in concrete practice.

The first form, which Bourdieu (e.g., 2000 [1997], p. 50) liked to call 'intellectualism' or 'theoreticism' (he spoke as well of 'scholastic epistemocentrism'), involves an elision of practical knowledge, that 'primary understanding of the world that is linked to experience of inclusion in this world', in favour of theoretical knowledge, which, like the 'Reason' of which Dewey spoke, contemplates the world from above, as it were, and retrospectively. (It is precisely here, as mentioned above, that Bourdieu's arguments dovetail most closely with those of Dewey.) In this latter way of thinking, the researcher proceeds by attributing to those actors whom she studies the same attitude or disposition of theoretical thinking which she herself possesses. Objects of study are credited with the same theoreticist orientation – complete with analytical constructs, models, and other instruments of objectification – which the researcher herself uses when seeking to make sense of their actions. Typically, intellectualism or theoreticism leads to

understandings of the world that are marked, if not by various forms of mechanistic objectivism, in which actions are seen as the automatic effect of external 'causes' (as in structuralist analyses), then by intentionalist subjectivism, in which actions are explained in terms of the 'reasons' that produce them (as in logocentric or purposive-action models). In race scholarship, this involves, correspondingly, theoretical perspectives either that minimize the agency of racial actors, especially that of people of colour, stressing instead the determinations imposed by racial structures, or that depict racial actors, both dominant and dominated, as deliberate and strategic: one thinks here of Banton's (1983) 'rational choice theory of racial and ethnic relations', or of the substantive studies (e.g., Williams 1989) that attempt to rationalize the ostensibly irrational behaviour of marginalized groups, such as drug dealers or street hustlers, or of overtly racist groups, such as white supremacists or neo-Nazis, by suggesting that, were we in their shoes, we would have done the very same. Both theoretical perspectives entail a certain epistemic erasure. In both, the specific logic of practice, 'the socially constituted practical sense of the agent', is overlooked or forgotten (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, p. 123). Modes of practical action that, grounded in dispositions, escape this Procrustean bed tend to be absent from such approaches.[13]

The second form of the scholastic fallacy is moral universalism; it involves a similarly false universalization of the view of the world associated with freedom from necessity, although in this case the reasoning in question is moral and political in nature (see Goldberg 1993). This mode of scholastic thought attributes to public life a fictitious and abstract universalism, one that 'grant[s] humanity to all, but in a purely formal way' (Bourdieu 2000 [1997], p. 65), leaving out of account entirely the inequalities still existing in conditions of access to the universal. Such a perspective, the paradigm of which is to be found in Kantian moral philosophy (most recently, in Rawls' *A Theory of Justice* [1971]), has the effect of excluding from the Kingdom of Ends, 'under an appearance of humanism, all those deprived of the means of realizing it.' In American racial discourse today, this universalism generally assumes the form of colour-blindness, a notion according to which, after the gains achieved by the Civil Rights Movement, race has ceased to be a basic principle of division in US society.[14] For some, including both white conservatives (Glazer 1975; Thernstrom and Thernstrom 1997) and African-American conservatives (Steele 1990; Carter 1991), colour-blindness is a matter of explicit doctrine, one typically serving to justify critiques of affirmative action.[15] In a more liberal version (Gitlin 1995; Sleeper 1997), colour-blindness combines with a call for a more class-based and progressive politics, in opposition to the putative

divisiveness of identity politics today. And in still other versions, a colour-blindness that dares not speak its name (often associated with the radical left), this scholastic perspective is found in works that seek to move 'beyond reification.' Such works encapsulate race in quotation marks (but rarely other equally fictitious social categories, such as nationality or gender) and eschew the 'rigidities' of racial classification and labelling in favour of a more fluid approach – for example, that of postmodern 'identity politics' or a 'politics of difference' (e.g., Young 1990).[16]

The final form of the scholastic fallacy is aesthetic universalism. This way of thinking takes pure disinterested pleasure as the norm of all possible cultural experience (Bourdieu 2000 [1997], p. 75). It erects a hierarchy between those privileged with access to rare experiences of high culture and to the conditions in which the modes of perception and appreciation of such culture are cultivated and those others who lack that privilege; this hierarchy often is tacitly accepted by the latter as well as the former in ways that lead to feelings, in the one case, of entitlement, and in the other, of inadequacy. Aesthetic universalism also sometimes eventuates, unexpectedly, in a false inversion of this very hierarchy, a revaluation in the spirit of the Beatitudes ('the last shall be first'), where what is exalted is brought low and what is lowly is exalted. In race studies, these alternatives assume the guise, respectively, of condescension toward the putatively inferior 'popular culture' of stigmatized minorities, and, inversely, of cult-like celebration or affirmation of the 'authenticity' of those same racial groups. Between tendencies to denigrate and to rehabilitate oppressed cultures, respectively, a hidden affinity often lurks. Indeed, not only Afrocentric and Indian manifestos, but all forms of racial romanticism or assertions of 'epistemic privilege', starting with Du Bois' 'The conservation of the races' (1995 [1897]), perpetuate a mode of thinking in which marginalized groups are depicted as 'paragons of virtue, delightful in their manners – better, in fact, than is common for human creatures to be' (Hughes 1971, p. 216). Such a perspective not only confers legitimacy on illegitimate racial divisions, exaggerating racial or ethnic differences, but it also can promote within dominated groups a code of silence – 'quiet as it's kept' – whereby those who speak out against, say, alcoholism on American Indian reservations, the domination of Arab-American women, black-on-black crime, or other internecine acts of violence are seen as 'race traitors.'[17] Populist appeals to 'the people' provide, in Bourdieu's (2000 [1997], p. 76) words, 'all the profits of a show of subversive, paradoxical generosity, while leavings things as they are, with one side in possession of its truly cultivated culture (or language), ... and the other with its culture or

language devoid of any social value and subject to abrupt devaluations.' There are two ways to dehumanize: the first is to strip people of all virtue; the second is to cleanse them of all sin.

Conclusion

Ever since its inception, race scholarship has paid too little heed to the cardinal principle of reflexivity. Critical surveys (Banton 1977; Omi and Winant 1994 [1986]) have shown that, even when driven by the enlightened ideal of a fair and just society, some race studies have fallen short in examining and acknowledging their own guiding presuppositions, leading to work that reveals as much about those who produced it – and their distinctive perspectives on the racial order – as it does about the putative objects of racial analysis itself. Race studies, in other words, are often just as valuable for providing an unwitting phenomenology of the social experience of those engaged in them – that is, a vantage point onto the positions they occupy in different social worlds and the modes of perception associated with those positions – as they are for the light they shed on the actual structures and dynamics of racial domination. This is as true of classical writings on race of the mid-twentieth century, writings that stressed assimilation, cultural pluralism, and the surmounting of prejudice and discrimination, as it is of the biologistic and often white supremacist paradigm they replaced. And it is every bit as true of perspectives in the post-Civil Rights period as it is of black nationalist and other such approaches from the standpoint of the racially oppressed, many of which approaches came to the fore during the Civil Rights Era.

Although far too much work today fails to incorporate a rigorous stance of reflexivity into its analyses of the American racial order, advances in reflexive thought have made impressive strides in the last forty years, especially in the sociology of race and ethnicity. We have sought to further these advances by constructing a three-tiered typology made up of reflexive modes of thought corresponding to the social, disciplinary, and scholastic unconscious. We have aimed to refashion the meaning of scholarly reflexivity itself, extending it beyond conventional views that confine self-objectifying exercises primarily to introspective considerations having to do with one's position in and trajectory across the social landscape (and the racial field, in particular). Indeed, we have argued that presuppositions residing in the disciplinary and scholastic unconscious also lead students of race to elide rigorous scrutiny and, in so doing, exert a deleterious influence on sociological design and research. In response to these challenges, we have developed a basic set of distinctions and insights that one can employ in elucidating and

perhaps disavowing oneself of unfounded assumptions and intellectual habits that encumber scientific thought. We hope the structure and logic of our argument will help to impose some order on what is otherwise a sprawling and relatively disordered, if crucially important, terrain.

The potential benefits of critical and reflexive thought in race studies, as we have conceived of them here, are considerable; we can summarize them as threefold.[18] First, in the realm of knowledge, reflexivity holds out the promise of a sounder understanding of racial structures and practices. The more that race scholars uncover the hidden assumptions in their own scientific unconscious, the more they can strive to undo their effects, thereby making it possible to develop ever-deeper insights into the workings of the racial order. Reflexive analysis is to be considered not a goal to pursue for its own sake but an ineliminable means of scientific advance. Second, in the realm of ethics (or law and politics), reflexivity can make possible the elaboration of more compelling ways to think about – and actively to address – racial injustice. Since the very categories of normative assessment one deploys when formulating judgements about the racial order are profoundly shaped by one's location and experiences in different orders of domination (social, academic, scholastic), one can more effectively evaluate racial situations when one undertakes the difficult work of critically objectifying those categories. Third, in the realm of aesthetics (and cultural inquiry), reflexivity can lead to more thoughtful ways of appreciating racial differences in taste, distinction, and culture, as opposed to the false choices one so often encounters between universalism and particularism or between condescension and populist self-assertion, none of those conducing to a genuinely critical race scholarship or activism. Race scholars (and their efforts to address racial problems) are influenced far more by expressivist considerations than they may at first realize.

If these are some of the potential gains of reflexive analysis, then how is epistemological vigilance to be carried out? One important lesson here is that reflexivity is not a task for the contemplative individual alone; it is not a narcissistic or introspective endeavour.[19] The knowing subject cannot be expected, through wholly private and solitary reflection, to think what is self-evident and therefore unthinkable. 'Only the illusion of the omnipotence of thought could lead one to believe that the most radical doubt is capable of suspending... presuppositions' (Bourdieu 2000 [1997], p. 9). A search party of one has little hope of finding anything. 'Marking who one is' – a convention for the prefaces of race monographs (*as a gay black man; as a white Christian woman; as a Chicana feminist, I...*) – illustrates, as discussed earlier, the limits of such heroic reflection, as do all attempts at introspective confessionalism, including when, as in

the anthropological tradition, shameful supplicants (e.g., Lévi-Strauss in *Tristes Tropiques* [1973 (1955)]; Briggs in *Never in Anger* [1970]) receive the discipline's highest consecration and praise.

Reflexivity must be conceived and practiced as an eminently collective undertaking, one to be engaged in on an ongoing basis by the scientific field as a whole. It is a process that, in principle, is never complete; it builds continually and necessarily on the accomplishments of past reflexivity.[20] That is, it becomes effective only when part of a dynamic of mutual critique, one woven into the very practices of race studies as a whole. It requires not merely the subjective conversion of the race scholar but an objective transformation of the social organization of race scholarship, a restructuring of the enterprise, such that there come to be real sanctions – e.g., loss of scientific prestige, difficulty in publishing, public critique of one's arguments – when one fails to take into account advances in reflexivity already accomplished by others. It also requires the establishment of regularized practices of vigilance over concepts adopted ('ghetto' or 'slum'?), coding schemes deployed, and research operations carried out. Finally, it requires a culture of reflexive wisdom wherein race analysts pass on to one another their accumulated practical knowledge regarding the multifarious ways in which the academic unconscious shapes seemingly even innocuous 'choices' such as the selection of research questions or the crafting of objects of study. It is only when scholars keep one another honest in this way, not as a matter of personal integrity alone but in accordance with a relentless logic of academic contestation and 'regulated struggle' (Bourdieu 2004 [2001], p. 62) – Ricoeur's (1970) 'hermeneutics of suspicion' institutionalized – that the sway of critical and reflexive thought is likely to expand. Only then, in Bourdieu's (2004 [2001], p. 89) words, can sociologists succeed in 'convert[ing] reflexivity into a disposition constitutive of their scientific habitus, a *reflexivity reflex*.'

Nor can reflexivity be pursued through the method of *Verstehen*, or empathetic understanding, alone. Its proper object is not individual subjects as pregiven entities but the institutions that shape them. That is, reflexivity is a matter not of plumbing the subjective depths and reconstructing intimate lived experience – narrating, for example, one's own or others' life-histories – but of engaging in *rigorous institutional analyses* of the social and historical structures that condition one's thinking and inner experience. Individuals do not come into the world endowed with prenotions; they are the products – as Durkheim and other classical sociologists often noted – of institutions. Primary and secondary schooling, for example, help to pass on to individuals their presuppositions about the social and racial order (e.g., those of whiteness), while higher education forms the disciplinary and scholastic prenotions that in turn affect race scholarship. Delving

reflexively into inner subjectivity should give way to sociological analyses of the institutional settings in which race scholars are formed, the structures and processes whereby their hidden assumptions about the world are forged. Such inquiry must have available to it the most advanced and sophisticated instruments of scientific objectivation. Instruments of this sort can help to make sense of how institutions work, where the individuals in question are located in them, and the sometimes opaque ways in which people's innermost assumptions are acquired. Institutional analyses are indispensable, more specifically, for uncovering the full ensemble of forces that preconstruct race scholars' very problems, categories of thought, and modes of inquiry.

Our arguments in respect to all these points have been presented in preliminary fashion only. Nonetheless, they have been a *necessary* preliminary, for racial analyses are stillborn when not accompanied by a careful and deliberate questioning of lay and academic wisdom. Analysts who fail to cast a critical eye back upon their own presuppositions, taking up research projects without systematically questioning the epistemological foundations upon which they rest, as well as scholars who approach reflexivity in a monochromatic fashion – directing attention to the social unconscious while neglecting the disciplinary and scholastic unconscious – severely limit their own possibilities for advancing inquiry. It is in the interests of scientific progress, we believe, that the meaning of reflexivity must be broadened to incorporate all three levels of presuppositions outlined in this essay. For if it is true that 'there is no science but of the hidden', as Bachelard (1975 [1949], p. 38) once noted, then it is equally true that the hidden can disastrously impair one's hopes of ever producing scientific and warranted knowledge.

Notes

1.   Whether or not Durkheim satisfactorily followed his own guidelines is a different matter. Certainly, he failed to scrutinize how the anthropology of 'primitive societies', a tradition of research on which he relied heavily in *Elementary Forms* (1995 [1912]), was (mis)informed by its colonial project and by white supremacist modes of classification. Like other thinkers of the classical generation, he championed the benefits of reflexive thought while remaining less than unambiguously reflexive when it came to matters of racial inequality and cultural difference.

2.   Durkheim insisted that the starting point of scientific inquiry must be a rigorous delineation of the problem at hand, rather than an uncritical acceptance of definitions already provided by folk wisdom or academic culture. To this end, we present herewith our own definition of 'race': *race is a symbolic category, based on phenotype or ancestry and constructed according to specific social and historical contexts, that is misrecognized as a natural category.* We have unpacked this definition elsewhere (Desmond and Emirbayer 2009).

3.   We do not contend that the influence of one's racial identity on one's thinking somehow requires more vigilance than the influence of, say, one's family background or sexuality. In

fact, the widespread habit of applying reflexivity narrowly to the 'holy trinity' of race, class, and gender is a limiting practice itself in need of reflexive consideration. Can it be doubted that, for some intellectual pursuits, religion (or religious aversion to religion), cosmopolitanism (or lack thereof), age, or politics hold considerably more sway than racial identity, gender, or class? If we have chosen here to apply our ideas about reflexivity exclusively to race scholarship, it is because, first, many recent contributions to reflexivity have been advanced by race scholars and, second, we see in this area of study a particularly pressing need to reconsider the most basic imperatives of reflexivity, given the eclipse of identity politics in scholarly writing (if not in the political sphere).

4.   Of course, as philosophers of race (e.g., Appiah 1990, 2006; Shelby 2005) have observed, the putatively simple act of identifying one's location, of knowing 'who one is', is in actuality often exceedingly complex, contentious, and unceasing.

5.   Although the ensuing paragraphs focus on white privilege in American scholarship about race, the ideas presented therein can be generalized to other national and intellectual contexts.

6.   For reflexive critiques of how racialized presuppositions have influenced modern philosophy, see Goldberg (1993) and Mills (1999).

7.   Additionally, social-scientific questions and intellectual interests often are influenced by forces beyond the scientific field, especially those emanating from the political field. In some instances, questions follow the money, as lines of inquiry – even entire subfields – are built up or abandoned in accordance with federal funding priorities. (Thus, Haveman [1987] shows how grants distributed after the War on Poverty helped to create and legitimatize the field of poverty research.) In other cases, scientific questions are molded by the zeitgeist of the times. Gould (1996, p. 28) has demonstrated as much in observing that '[r]esurgences of biological determinism correlate with periods of political retrenchment and destruction of social generosity.'

8.   One white scholar reflects on his earlier work this way: '[W]hile many scholars of color have valued this article, and while I continue to think it is a valuable contribution, at the same time, I now consider it an example of white racism. By myself – as a white scholar – I assumed that I could represent well the racial "other." Given the deadly history of the representation of people of color by white scholars and given the fact that I too continue to embody white racism, acting alone as a white scholar like this is much too dangerous' (Scheurich 2002, p. 17).

9.   The 'insider doctrine' is also (at least indirectly) responsible for the rise of whiteness studies. The doctrine became so established with the rise of 'identity politics' that white analysts who wished to study race and ethnicity felt they had to emulate their nonwhite peers by 'studying their own community.' (In many cases, they were instructed to do so in so many words by nonwhite thinkers.) Because the insider doctrine permits one to speak on behalf of a group only on condition that one actually belongs to that group, white scholars were forced to establish whites as a legitimate racial group that could be analysed. This is part of the reason why virtually all whiteness scholars are themselves white.

10.   Recent examples include Bonilla-Silva (1999) vs. Loveman (1999); Steinberg (1997) vs. Wilson (1978); Alba and Nee (1997) vs. Zhou (1997); Wacquant (2002) vs. Anderson (2002), Duneier (2002), and Newman (2002); Mincy (2006) vs. Patterson (2006); and Small, Harding, and Lamont (2010) vs. Steinberg (2011).

11.   Examples of such frameworks include structuralism (Bonilla-Silva 1997); cognitivist approaches (Brubaker, Stamov and Loveman 2004); theories of group position and threat (Blumer 1958; Bobo and Hutchings 1996); Marxism (Cox 1948; Bonacich 1972); racial formation approaches (Omi and Winant 1994 [1986]; see also Winant 2000); and ethnomethodology (Moerman 1974).

12.   Of course, if the point of this discussion is to warn against false universalization, then one also must bear in mind the danger that, in highlighting it, Bourdieu himself falsely universalizes what is, in fact, a privileged condition enjoyed only by a few. Even in the US, many academics do not produce under circumstances of leisure; for instance, critical race

theory was in considerable part the creation of legal scholars of colour whose everyday racial realities stood in sharp tension with the exigencies of their professional and academic lives. Bourdieu's ideas about *skholè* thus tell us more, arguably, about his own situation – and that of other (white) elites in the academy – than, as a true descriptive statement, about the conditions of work of many knowledge producers. However, it might also be pointed out that many of the knowledge producers whose ideas have most deeply influenced and shaped race scholarship – and hence have come under our purview – do work (and have worked) in scholastic contexts precisely of the sort described by Bourdieu.

13.   On the other side of the ledger, authors such as Hays (2003) and Edin and Kefalas (2005) have sought to think through the political implications of different ways of portraying disadvantaged actors, stressing how these approaches have shaped their academic writing.

14.   According to Gutmann (1996), colour-blindness is pervasive in American thought not because it is a just response to racial injustice but because it is 'the ideal morality for an ideal society.' Through an abracadabric act that transforms ethics into ontology (a way to live into how life is), colour-blindness demands an instant good society, one without history, where things are right and nothing is in need of restoration (see Desmond and Emirbayer 2011).

15.   In a later work, Glazer (1997) partially renounced his earlier views on affirmative action.

16.   Several thinkers have harvested the low-hanging fruit of decrying racial classification; sorely needed, however, are rigorous empirical investigations of the genesis, development, and dynamics of racial taxonomies, investigations such as Jung's (2003) review of Hawaii's shifting racial boundaries or Brubaker et al.'s (2006) analysis of 'everyday ethnicity' in Transylvania.

17.   Of course, oftentimes members of disadvantaged groups hesitate to draw attention to internecine problems, not out of a kind of ethnic chauvinism or adulation, but because they are aware that doing so may result in a wide array of consequences: the group may be denigrated by members of dominant groups; the documentation of internecine problems may be employed as evidence of harmful public policies (e.g., harsher sentencing); and initiatives designed to alleviate the problems may have the opposite effect (see Crenshaw 1991).

18.   We use these categories in a slightly different way here than above, where they were deployed to discuss the three distinctive forms of the scholastic fallacy. Here, they summarize some of the key implications of our analysis as a whole.

19.   Others (Shelby 2002; Blum 2007) have pointed out the philosophic shortcomings of viewing racism as an individual moral vice, as a matter 'of the heart' (e.g., Garcia 1996).

20.   Thus, it is a mistake to conceive of reflexivity as a kind of sudden conversion experience. Rather, it is best understood as a sustained process – and a thoroughly collective one at that. Similarly, it is erroneous to divide (in legalistic fashion) social scientists into two camps – the 'reflexive' and the 'unreflexive' – just as it is erroneous to separate the general population into 'racists' and 'non-racists' (see Wacquant 1997).

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The Dark Matter

Howard Winant

The field of sociology has always had an uncomfortable relationship with the subject of race. The term 'sociology' was first used in the USA by George Fitzhugh in his *Sociology for the South: The Failure of Free Society* (1854), a romantic defence of the slavery system and denunciation of the dawning industrial capitalism in the USA. Since then, the sociology of race has been linked to every major trend in the discipline, notably social Darwinism, Chicago School pragmatism, structural-functionalism, neoconservatism, and the Marxist left, both old and new. This is hardly surprising, since there is nothing more constitutive of American society than the theme of race.[1] Still these 'schools' have all made a hash of race studies to various extents, often because they looked at the subject from one or another lofty ivory tower. William Du Bois's pioneering work on race was dismissed by the sociological mainstream for nearly a century before he was belatedly canonized in the 1990s. Other early pioneers are still waiting for recognition: Monroe Work, Kelly Miller, William Monroe Trotter and Alain Locke among them.

There are other reasons as well for the field's difficulties with race. Like all (yes, *all*) social sciences disciplines and much of the humanities, sociology was imbued with racism from its early days. If Fitzhugh alone does not make that clear, perhaps such other founding fathers as William Graham Sumner or Edward Alsworth Ross can pitch in and help. And looking at our fellow social scientific disciplines, we need only invoke psychology's early interest in the racial dimensions of intelligence, political science's tense encounters with racial exclusion and disenfranchisement (Taylor 1996; Smith 2003), anthropology before Boas, the economics of empire,[2] and so on – the list is a long one.

So, while I am grateful for the opportunity to comment on Emirbayer and Desmond's *Race and Reflexivity* (2012), I want to point out that the paper's principal purpose is to *reframe the discipline of sociology*, not to provide a new sociology of race. The problem of

race of course receives significant attention here, but that attention is more shaped by the authors' commitment to the vindication of the Bourdieuian sociological perspective than it is by the requirements of an effective account of race.

I have been following this project for some time and have seen previous drafts. Although I have some criticism, I admire this essay in many ways. It flows very directly from Emirbayer's earlier work on reflexivity in sociology and from his engagement with Durkheim and pragmatism.

What is reflexivity? How does this concept apply to race? At the heart of Emirbayer and Desmond's paper is the effort to answer that question *as sociologists*, rather than as political subjects. An extensive series of injunctions is offered, all of them useful for social scientists. Without trying to be comprehensive, here are some of these: be conscious and explicit in your assumptions; recognize your own position and motives (socially, as a scholar, etc.); understand that there is no 'pure' position, as a researcher, as a racially identified subject, or in any other way; grasp the disciplinary context in which you are situated (and its historical context as well);[3] avoid parochialism etc. While many of these guidelines are drawn from Bourdieu, we do not need to accept his elaborate system, his rules of sociological method, to agree with much of this.

Bourdieu was a heroic figure, perhaps the last of the great theoretical holists, an intellectual who engaged in popular struggle in a way that only a French *maître penseur* can. The volume of his work, and his penchant for systematization and scientism, in my view undercut the claims Emirbayer and Desmond make for him as a quasi-pragmatist.[4] By Bourdieu's 'scientism' I mean his insistence on a firm differentiation between 'folk' or 'everyday' knowledge and social scientific understanding. This paradox or perhaps contradiction is visible everywhere in his work: in *Distinction*, in his work on reproduction, and in his theoretical/political essays too (notably *The Weight of the World*). Although fiercely aware of the despotic dimensions of everyday life, he is also quite sceptical about the ability of ordinary folk even to comprehend, much less to act effectively, against their oppression. From what I can tell, much of his political pessimism derives from his experience in the crucible of the Algerian revolution and its ultimate failures (Calhoun 2006; Connell 2007), but whatever its provenance, this orientation has crept into Emirbayer and Desmond's article in a problematic way, as a challenge to the 'politics of identity' or the 'politicization of the social'. 'Identity politics,' they assert (p. 577), 'falls out of fashion, eclipsed by calls for cosmopolitanism or, more directly, by injunctions to move "beyond identity".'

These claims are highlighted in work by Rogers Brubaker, Fred Cooper, Loic Wacquant and others.[5] Those authors in turn take their theoretical inspiration from Bourdieu.

Although space is not available here to engage these positions fully, Emirbayer and Desmond should avoid employing their concept of 'reflexivity' to reject group identity *tout court*. They seem on the verge of doing this by elevating reflexivity to an all-encompassing framework, a sort of universal solvent of all identity, all particularity. I am not certain of their position here: have they adopted the view that reflexive approaches to ethnicity, race and nationality can be more effectively conceived as matters of social psychology than as epistemes of political praxis? Perhaps their treatment of reflexivity as a core component in the sociology of race results from some sort of social scientific frustration that not only racial but also ethnic and national identities are necessarily and permanently contingent and therefore resist definitive specification. That recognition is central to my work with Omi on racial formation (Omi and Winant 1994); we stress the flexibility and instability of race, and look to political conflict as the means through which racial identities and racialized social structures are made and remade over time. This may be a point of disagreement between these authors and me.

To repudiate race (and ethnicity, and nationality) under the derogatory label of 'groupism' is in my view to engage in a form of sociological 'colour-blindness' that undermines the possibility of collective action. Racial, ethnic or national identities are thereby reduced to quite subjective processes: how one (or many) interpret their social location, their differences or similarities with others, and so on. This has the consequence of diminishing the political dimensions of these themes, as well as relegating lived experience, not to mention world historical events and widely distributed beliefs, to little more than commonly held illusions. While the signification of race and the assignment of racial identity is of course central to racial practices, both social scientific and quotidian, it is also always linked to social structures: the distribution of resources, organization, community, and so on. Omi and I developed the concept of *racial projects* as a basic component of racial formation, precisely to emphasize this point (Omi and Winant 1994). We argued that there is no racial identity that is not relational, no racial discourse outside social structure. The converse is equally true: racial policies, laws and practices all must articulate the meaning of race. They must signify upon race; they must represent it. Discrimination along racial lines, lynching, 'profiling', among many racial projects that could be listed, always have racial reasoning at hand, as does 'affirmative action' policy or Dr King's 'beloved community' in its practice of *satyagraha*.

I now leave Bourdieu to discuss pressing issues in racial theory. I mean no disrespect here, but I do not think that Bourdieu provides the tools we need for dealing with race anyway. The radical democratic potentialities in Dewey's work serve us far better – and Dewey was not much of a racial theorist either. In fact I would paraphrase Richard Rorty (who famously said this about Foucault, so maybe we are dealing with a French phenomenon): Dewey is waiting at the end of the road Bourdieu was travelling down. Dewey enables us to understand that everyday people are not fundamentally doing anything different from what scholars are doing. The agency of ordinary folk, what C. L. R. James called 'self-activity', is every bit as reflexive as the agency of sociologists. That 'radical' pragmatism allows us both to understand much better, and to respect much more, the 'modes of practical action' that Bourdieu would dismiss – begging the question in my view – as 'grounded in dispositions'. For more on radical pragmatism, see Du Bois, critical race theory, subaltern studies (James Scott and Robin Kelley in particular), and yes, racial formation theory too.[6]

What are the pressing issues in racial theory? Here I would include: identity politics; 'colour-blindness' and other forms of putative post-racialism; the status of the racialized body and the resurgence of a new racial biologism (mainly via genomics); shifting racial demographics in many nations, and also globally across both the North–South and West–East axes; and the crisis of neoliberalism and its enactment in various regimes that deploy 'states of exception', state violence and exclusionary politics. I have not the space here to address all this, so I shall confine myself to the subjects Emirbayer and Desmond take up, and conclude with a brief note on racial politics today.

To be sure, turning the reflexivity lens in the direction of racial theory enables a serious interrogation of the politics of identity, something quite valuable and visible thoughout Emirbayer and Desmond's discussion, for example in their account of black people's expertise on 'the souls of white folk' (p. 581, following Roediger, Baldwin, and indeed Du Bois). We need to go much deeper here, taking note of the 'politicization of the social' that resulted chiefly (although not only) from the tremendous racial upheavals that swept the entire planet from World War II to the fall of apartheid in 1994 (Winant 2001). We can usefully situate the racial reflexivity of Emirbayer and Desmond within the vast expansion of the political terrain that accompanied the mass mobilization and population movements, the upsurge of emancipatory aspirations, and the legitimation crises that engulfed many nations and empires during this period: think civil rights, national liberation, women's rights, sexual citizenship, even political ecology. While these democratizing

impulses remain far from fulfilled, they have hardly been contained either; the genie of the politicized social is not returning to its bottle.

This brings me to the theme of 'colour-blindness' and its equivalents ('racial differentialism', 'post-' and 'non-racialism'), which I regard as failed attempts on the part of various states to reassert racial hegemony.[7] Here a bit *more* reflexivity might well be in order. While I accept Emirbayer and Desmond's general critique (pp. 587–588), a series of deeper points should be made: the 'colour-blind' claim[8] is that one should not 'notice' race, correct? For if one 'sees' race, one would not be 'blind' to it, after all. But what happens to race-consciousness under the pressure (now rather intense in the USA, anyway) to be 'colour-blind'? Quite clearly, racial awareness does not dry up like a raisin in the sun. 'Colour-blind' ideologies of race today serve to *occlude* the recognition of racial difference or racial inequality based on claims that race is an archaic concept, that racial inclusion is already an accomplished fact, and so on. Just so, persistent race-consciousness *highlights* racial differences and particularities. 'Colour-blindness' and race-consciousness are both politically 'open'. They can each cut two ways. 'Noticing' race can be linked to despotic or democratic motives, framed either in defence of coercion, privilege and undeserved advantage, or invoked to support inclusion, human rights and social justice.

Although there has been ferocious and brilliant criticism of the 'colour-blind' racial project (Brown *et al.* 2003; Carbado and Harris 2008), arguing for the necessity of an ongoing race-consciousness exhibits certain contradictions as well. The significance of race in a given practical setting can be misunderstood; racial identity can be misconstrued or flat-out mistaken. And when does race actually *matter*, by the way? Always, or sometimes? If the answer is 'sometimes', then what about those situations when race 'doesn't matter'? In such situations, should we not notice race? How exactly is that accomplished in practice? ('Don't think of an elephant', as the famous tease goes.)

Racial identity is often ambiguous and contradictory. For example, what is the political importance of race for solidarity and alliance across group boundaries (those same ones that Brubaker *et al.* dismiss as 'merely' cognitive artifacts)? What is the personal significance of race for friendship, or indeed love, across those sociocultural frontiers? Of course, these are venerable problems; no matter how 'old school' they seem though, they still retain their transgressive and unsettling dimensions, even as they become more familiar, more 'normal', more recognizable in practical, everyday life. So come on, reflexivity people! Tell us if trust and solidarity can operate across racial lines? Help us understand whether, both in individual and in collective (you know, 'groupist') social practice, we can 'get beyond' race? What exactly

would it mean to do that? How definitive is racial identity and what are its implications for democracy, humanism and anti-racism (Gilroy 1999, 2002)?

To conclude: race remains the *dark matter*, the often invisible substance that in many ways structures the universe of modernity. In contrast to earlier epochs when claims about its permanence and immutability were taken for granted, the very existence of race is often denied today. These denials are in large part the effects of the great – albeit partial and contradictory – waves of racial reform that swept the planet in the late twentieth century. Vast political mobilizations, untold amounts of blood, sweat and tears, were expended by millions of everyday people during those years in the effort to achieve civil rights, inclusion and recognition. In shabby return for those exertions, race is now disallowed and disavowed, both as a proper political theme and as a social scientific category. But despite the best efforts of both political authorities and astronomers (I mean, politicians and social scientists) to render it invisible, it keeps exerting a tremendous gravitational force: on political economy, globalization, enlightenment, identity, subject/object, and social theory itself! Where does it stop?

Well, it does not stop. The same state that now declares itself 'colour-blind' cannot dispense with racial practices in its efforts to rule: consider electoral manouevres, jurisprudence, resource distribution, the making of census categories, collective consumption, criminal 'justice', military interventionism, and so on. The same people who recently confronted the police dogs and fire hoses, who crossed the mountains and deserts to reach Phoenix or Los Angeles (or traversed the Mediterranean to reach Madrid or Lisbon or Paris), the same people who resist military occupation in Jenin, these same people are still there, without rights, *sans papieres*, 'driving while black'. Their bodies are still racialized, their labour is still required, their identities still confound the state, their rights are still restricted. They still exert an immense gravitational pull.

Notes

1. Race is also constitutive of modernity on a global scale. See Winant 2001. For reasons of space I emphasize US reference points here.
2. To cite but one example, in his extremely well-known article, 'Economic development with unlimited supplies of labor' W. Arthur Lewis (1954) did not trouble himself to inquire by what means these unlimited supplies became available.
3. Note my disparaging remarks about sociology above. From the perspective of Emirbayer and Desmond, such comments are insufficiently reflexive. In this I may claim some affinity with Durkheim who, as the authors note, 'championed the benefits of reflexive thought while remaining less than unambiguously reflexive when it came to matters of racial

inequality and cultural difference' (p. 45). Indeed I am certain that if pressed, Emirbayer and Desmond would admit to some lapses of reflexivity themselves.

4.   Dewey and his social thought largely disappear from the piece after the introductory pages, although some race-oriented pragmatists (Tommie Shelby, Iris Young) are cited.

5.   See Brubaker 2004; Brubaker, Loveman and Stamatov 2004.

6.   As far as I can tell the term 'self-activity' was introduced into the political lexicon in *Facing Reality*, a theoretical text by C. L. R. James *et al.* that appeared in the 1950s. Because 'self-activity' cannot be delegated to others, it embodies radical democracy. James *et al.* (2006, p. 58) writes:

> The end toward which mankind is inexorably developing by the constant overcoming of internal antagonisms is not the enjoyment, ownership, or use of goods, but self-realization, creativity based upon the incorporation into the individual personality of the whole previous development of humanity. Freedom is creative universality, not utility.

The radical pragmatist (and arguably Deweyan) framework here is quite palpable. See also George Rawick (1969). Lee (later Grace Lee Boggs), still active today at age ninety-five, remains a leading anti-racist radical activist and author. She received her PhD in 1940 with a dissertation on George Herbert Mead and has written on Dewey as well.

7.   Elsewhere this theme takes other forms: racial differentialism (Taguieff 2001[1988]); multiculturalism (Lentin and Titley 2011); and post-racialism (Durrheim, Mtose and Brown 2011), among others.

8.   'Colour-blindness' is a horrible term, a neologism twice-over. First and most obviously it is rooted in an opthalmic condition that has no relevance to race, unless we understand race as being 'about' skin colour, a deep reductionism in the term's meaning. Second, the term appears in the dissent of Justice John Marshall Harlan in the 1896 *Plessy* case, where the Justice's insistence that 'Our Constitution is colorblind' coexists blissfully with a range of support claims for eternal white superiority and supremacy (see Gotanda 1995).

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Two cheers for race and reflexivity

Stephen Steinberg

I commend Mustafa Emirbayer and Matthew Desmond for their clarion call for reflexivity on race (Emirbayer and Desmond 2012). Without doubt, there is a dire need for reflexivity in all fields of sociological inquiry, and particularly in race research where subjectivities, conscious and unconscious biases, and subterranean ideologies so easily come into play and distort knowledge production. Not only that, but as Kuhn (1962, p. 78) observed in *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, entrenched paradigms tend to be immune to change because, even when scientists are confronted with discrepant facts and alternative explanations, 'they will devise numerous articulations and *ad hoc* modifications of their theory in order to eliminate any possible conflict'. To make matters worse, critics of the prevailing paradigm are ignored or marginalized. So two cheers to Emirbayer and Desmond for resurrecting the notion of reflexivity and exhorting sociologists 'to turn our analytic gaze back upon ourselves' (p. 574).

I withhold my third cheer, not because I disagree with Emirbayer and Desmond, but because they do not go far enough. Their paper is an exercise in formal theory. They present an incisive explication of the concept of reflexivity, they slice and dice three 'levels of reflexivity', and they make a case for its application to the sociological canon on race. Indeed, they assert that critical and reflexive thought might throw into question the epistemological foundations of race knowledge. Except for some scattered observations, however, they do not put forward their own critical analysis of race knowledge or, for that matter, engage the competing reflexivities in the race canon. My purpose is to *apply* the principles they have enunciated in order to put flesh on the bones of abstraction.

It is one thing to issue a call to 'inquire critically into the hidden presuppositions that shape our thought' (p. 574), a bald abstraction on

which everybody can agree. But it is another thing entirely to write, as Marx and Engels (1966, p. 39) did in *The German Ideology*, '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.' Here is a potent dose of reflexivity! In one epigrammatic sentence, Marx lays bare the instrumental role that ideas play in providing intellectual legitimacy for the ruling class, which controls the machinery for the production and distribution of knowledge.

If Marx's precept is applied to race, as has been done by generations of lonely scholars in the Marxist tradition, then the argument becomes as follows: sociologists have inadvertently practised a wholly tendentious scholarship – 'a white sociology' – that reflects the interests, experiences, and viewpoint of whites in general and white elites in particular, including those who control the machinery of knowledge production. This was the explosive claim of Ladner's (1973) anthology, *The Death of White Sociology*.[1]

Instead of the pontifical gaze of scholars with elite credentials spewing knowledge about an oppressed minority, we heard from a new cadre of black and white sociologists, reflecting the perspective and politics of grassroots insurgency – both the Civil Rights movement and its successor, the Black Power movement. However, like grapes on a vine, critical reflexivity withered with the defeat of the movements that spawned it.

Ladner's bold pronouncement was sadly premature, precisely for the reason that Kuhn stated: scholars responded to critics by dressing old theories in new rhetorical garb. For example, notions of cultural deprivation that had currency in the 1950s evolved into culture of poverty theory in the 1960s and 1970s, which morphed into the underclass discourse of the 1980s and 1990s, only to emerge more recently as social capital theory (Steinberg 2011). The single constant is that blame for racial inequalities is deflected away from the state and its major institutions, and placed upon one or another of a litany of putative deficiencies, disabilities, or dysfunctions of blacks themselves. To paraphrase Fanon, the products of oppression are used to explain oppression.

In their discussion of 'the scholastic unconscious', Emirbayer and Desmond note that like fish in water, scholars 'remain less than fully aware of how their thinking *as scholars* carries with it unexplored assumptions that distort their perceptions of the racial order' (p. 586). This is an astute observation, but let me put some flesh on the metaphoric bones. The problem begins with the term 'race relations', which derives from the Chicago School of Race Relations and even today is the standard nomenclature for courses on 'Race Relations' or 'Race and Ethnic Relations'. In the scholastic conscious, 'race

relations' is value-free, but on closer examination, it is saturated with ideology. Consider the difference between 'race relations' and 'racial oppression' (the latter term derives from Marxist discourse and entered the sociological lexicon with Blauner's 1972 book, *Racial Oppression in America*). In *Race Relations: A Critique* (2007, p. 17), I sought to unpack the antithetical assumptions and ideological tenets embedded in these two terms:

> 'Race relations' obscures the nature of the relationship between the constituent groups in a cloud of ambiguity. In contrast, 'racial oppression' conveys a clear sense of the nature, magnitude, and sources of the problem. Whereas the race relations model assumes that racial prejudice arises out of a natural antipathy between groups on the basis of difference, 'racial oppression' locates the source of the problem within the structure of society. Whereas 'race relations' elides the issue of power, reducing racism down to the level of attitudes, 'racial oppression' makes clear from the outset that we are dealing with a system of domination, one that implicates major political and economic institutions, including the state itself. Whereas 'race relations' implies mutuality, 'racial oppression' clearly distinguishes between the oppressor and the oppressed. Whereas 'race relations' rivets attention on superficial aspects of the racial dyad, 'racial oppression' explores the underlying factors that engender racial division and discord. Whereas the sociologist of 'race relations' is reduced to the social equivalent of a marriage counselor, exploring ways to repair these fractured relationships, the sociologist of 'racial oppression' is potentially an agent of social transformation, forging a praxis for remedying racial inequities. Yet we have a profession that rejects 'racial oppression' as tendentious, and pretends that 'race relations' is innocent of ideology, merely because it is allied with the racial status quo.

You know a field is in trouble when its very name is an artful obfuscation!

As Connell (1997, p. 1519) has shown, 'sociology was formed within the culture of imperialism and embodied a cultural response to the colonized world'. Here is a jolt to 'the scholastic unconscious' and a third cheer for reflexivity. Through Connell's theoretical lens, it becomes clear that Park's famed assimilation model, far from being value-free, embodies the logic of imperialism. Its core assumption is that colonialism (including internal colonialism) is part of a global teleology whereby peoples at a lower plane of civilization are incorporated into the culture and institutions of groups that have an evolutionary superiority over the peoples they dominate. According to Lyman (1993), this evolutionary optimism helps to explain why

sociology failed to apprehend, much less champion, civil rights until forced to do so by the rise of black insurgency in the South. 'Since the time for teleological redemption is ever long', Lyman wrote sardonically, 'blacks might consign their civic and egalitarian future to faith in the ultimate fulfillment of the inclusion cycles promise' (1993, p. 394). In the meantime, our only palliative is to 'educate the primitive', which has been the mission of agents of racial progress from Booker T. Washington's Tuskegee to Geoffrey Canada's Harlem Children's Zone.

In *The Racial Contract*, Charles Mills provides another jolt to 'the scholastic unconscious' with a blanket indictment of race knowledge, suggesting that it is predicated on 'an epistemology of ignorance' whose chief purpose is to obscure rather than to illuminate. To quote Mills (1997, p. 19, emphasis in original): 'One could say then, as a general rule, that *white misunderstanding, misrepresentation, evasion, and self-deception on matters related to race* are among the most pervasive mental phenomena of the past few hundred years, a cognitive and moral economy psychically required for conquest, colonization, and enslavement.' The ironic outcome, as Mills says, is that 'whites will in general be unable to understand the world they themselves have made'.

Note that reflexivity and its revelations did not arise because sociologists decided to turn the analytical gaze upon themselves. It was not until the black protest movement, in both its non-violent and violent forms, threw the entire society into crisis, and cities were burning, that sociology made the shift from 'race relations' to 'racial oppression', and opened its canon to the radical and minority voices that had long been ignored or marginalized. Indeed, the founders of the Chicago School of Race Relations deliberately cast scientific sociology as a respectable alternative to Marxism, and generations of critics with a Marxist orientation have advanced an epistemology of oppression as a rival to the race relations paradigm (Feagin, 2010; Steinberg 2007). However, its exponents have been relegated to the margins of socio-logical discourse, except for the hiatus during the 1960s and 1970s when race relations dogma was thrown on the defensive (Schwendinger and Schwendinger 1974, p. 564). By the 1980s the race relations paradigm was restored to hegemony, together with reconfigured articulations of the victim-blaming discourses that prevailed before the civil rights revolution.

This raises the paramount question: how do we explain intellectual hegemony and the process by which certain ideas achieve hegemonic status? As Emirbayer and Desmond write, more is involved in reflexivity than 'the exercise of recognizing how aspects of one's identity or social location can affect one's vision of the social world' (p. 577). Also to be considered are the 'structures and dynamics of a

scholarly field' (p. 582). Indeed, this is a most important and untrampled path of inquiry. We need to examine the *machinery of hegemony*, the precise mechanisms through which ideas become ensconced and canons are formed.

This requires that we subject the sociological enterprise to the critical eye that C. Wright Mills brought to *The Power Elite*. This begins with elite universities whose imprimatur alone launches careers, opens up doors to prestigious publishing houses and the op-ed pages of leading newspapers, and helps secure grants from foundations and government agencies. Grants, in turn, allow these entrepreneurs to form 'schools' and 'dream teams' that propagate their pet theories to fledgling scholars. It is an open secret that the academic wheel is greased with money, which means that the people and interests who control the purse strings are the engineers of knowledge production. The referee system for grants, like the referee system for journals, functions to enforce ideological conformity by rejecting submissions that go too far in challenging the prevailing wisdom. Then there are the professional associations that often resemble fraternal associations, replete with a 'rewardtocracy' that dispenses honorific titles, awards, and sinecures that invest hegemony with an indispensable aura of legitimacy. Speaking of reflexivity, it is a very long time since anybody has asked Alfred McClung Lee's (1976) question, 'Sociology for whom?'

To be sure, dissident viewpoints are tolerated in the academy, if only because they sustain the myth of the liberal university as a bastion of freedom that thrives on diversity and dissent. I do not deny the existence or vitality of diversity and dissent. The key issue pertains to power in its various dimensions. Which viewpoints prevail? Which receive material support? Which are canonized? Above all, which are influential in terms of politics and public policy? In the final analysis, the challenge of critical reflexivity, and the ultimate test of its efficacy, is not scoring debating points but rather advancing the cause of racial justice. And a social science that lives up to its emancipatory promise.

Note

1.   In her brief introduction to the second edition, Ladner (1998) reveals that her original title was *An Introduction to a Black Perspective in Sociology*, but a friend who was an editor with a major publisher suggested this more 'stimulating' title. Ladner adds: 'I knew that the book's contents did not signal the end to mainstream (White) sociology as we knew it', but only sought to 'capture some of the debate and protest over the ways that traditional sociology (and some of the other social sciences) has stigmatized African Americans'.

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Reflexivity, power, and systemic racism

Wendy Leo Moore

Mustafa Emirbayer and Matthew Desmond's call for reflexivity in race scholarship represents a critically important intervention in the project of creating social knowledge about race and racial inequality (Emirbayer and Desmond 2012). Yet, while they develop important points about the levels of reflexivity necessary to this project, they simultaneously fall into the all too common trap of failing to identify the racial dynamics of power that make this need for reflexivity so important. Emirbayer and Desmond's articulation of the elements of reflexivity, while sometimes attentive to white normativity and white privilege, at other times seems to disregard the totalizing nature of systemic racism – e.g. the dynamics of white supremacy that characterize and organize social practices, interactions, institutions and structures (see e.g. Bonilla-Silva 1997; Feagin 2006; Bonilla-Silva 2010; Feagin 2010). This failure to centre their discussion of reflexivity within the context of systemic racism (Feagin 2006) leads the authors to miss important aspects of the racial dynamics of power within academia and the production of social knowledge–exactly the project that they advocate. To illustrate my point, I discuss examples from each of the three tiers of reflexivity that they identify.

To begin their call for reflexivity, Emirbayer and Desmond suggest that we consider the level of the social unconscious, a process by which as researchers we interrogate our own presuppositions vis-à-vis the racial order and the normativity of whiteness in society and in scholarly knowledge. The authors note that calls for this, the most commonly acknowledged aspect of reflexivity, come out of research paradigms like post-modernism and standpoint epistemologies (see e.g. Collins 2001); but they suggest that the consequence has been a tendency for scholars to merely delineate their social identities in mechanistic fashion, almost as self-deprivation, and then to proceed with relatively uncritical analyses of empirical and theoretical data. The authors warn that this practice has received negative attention in

academia – threatening the notion of reflexivity altogether. They say, '[this is] an increasingly threatened perspective, for as identity politics falls out of fashion, eclipsed by cosmopolitanism, or more directly, by injunctions to move "beyond identity", reflexivity itself approaches a crisis point' (p. 577). What they fail to consider is that, on the one hand, Collins' (2001) development of standpoint epistemology called for a much more nuanced and thoughtful reflexivity than is being deployed by the majority of social researchers, and on the other, the very attack on 'identity politics' they identify originates from a location of white normativity in reaction to a potential threat to white dominion over knowledge production.

Standpoint epistemologies developed out of the work of Patricia Hill Collins (2001), who articulated the need for researchers to interrogate their positionality in the field of research. Collins called for a nuanced (and reflexive) examination, by those of us engaged in the process of knowledge production, of our identities in relationship to social hierarchies (what she termed the matrix of domination), the processes by which those identities (in relationship to social hierarchies) shape our connection to and relationships with the people and topics we study, and the manner in which all of these factors converge in the social knowledge we produce. The reflexive process involved in this complex and ongoing standpoint epistemological method is remarkably similar to what Emirbayer and Desmond call for in their discussion of the social unconscious. The fact that the nuance of these epistemological propositions was lost when, in practice, many researchers reduced the process to a recital of identity characteristics has less to do with the theoretical propositions than with the difficulty of the reflexivity process itself. As Emirbayer and Desmond point out, race is deeply embedded in all social institutions, and white normativity is often un-interrogated and therefore tacit. As such, racial reflexivity is a complex process that takes a commitment to self-reflexivity and critical engagement with data and theory. Moreover, this process of self-reflection and the identification of one's positionality in relationship to both the social structure and the field of social research, is not necessarily valued in the mainstream social sciences. In fact, the notion that this form of reflexivity has fallen 'out of fashion', is disingenuous, in the sense that standpoint epistemologies and similar forms of reflexivity have been challenged and marginalized in the social sciences since their introduction because they challenge fundamental assumptions in dominant positivistic research paradigms concerning objectivity and validity (see Zuberi and Bonilla-Silva 2008). Hence the very term 'identity politics', which gets deployed as a pejorative, ends up taking power away from those, mainly people of

colour, who would suggest that their social identities are relevant (although, of course not solely so) to the process of knowledge production, particularly because they have been excluded historically (see Delgado 1989).

This brings me to the second tier of reflexivity called for by Emirbayer and Desmond, reflexivity at the disciplinary level. Once again I applaud the authors for noting that as scholars engaged in a process of knowledge production concerning race and inequality we must be vigilant about identifying the presuppositions within our disciplinary frames that tend to reproduce white normativity. Moreover, I agree with the authors that part of this process must be a rejection of increasingly narrow fields of study and expertise that fail to facilitate engagement with a broad range of theoretical and empirical ideas concerning race. However, as part of that project I must critique the authors' failure to consider the depth of white normativity in social science research, and the way in which engaging such white frames of knowledge can divert scholarship away from more productive and racially equitable research. The authors note, for example (p. 584):

> far too many scholars . . . take to criticizing traditional assimilation theories without ever having engaged seriously with Gordon (1964); or to railing against the likes of Lewis or Moynihan without having picked up *La Vida* (1966) or *The Negro Family* (1965); or to dismissing the "oppositional culture" hypothesis without having read *Minority Education and Caste* (Ogbu 1978) . . . we should pay heed to ideas that have been demonized – evaluating them on their own terms, documenting the processes of defamation . . . .

To be sure, scholastic rigour dictates that when we critique the scholarship of others we must have read and understood that work. And yet, in my experience working with sociology graduate students (and other faculty, for that matter) I have found many more who are familiar with, and have read (in at least some part) the works of Gordon, Lewis, Moynihan and Ogbu than have read the work of Frederick Douglas, or W. E. B. DuBois, or Gloria Anzaldua, or Angela Davis, or Derrick Bell.

As we determine the projects in which we want to engage ourselves and our students, we must remember that like US society, academia has historically been an Imperial project (Delgado 1995; Zuberi and Bonilla-Silva 2008). For most of the long history of American academia, people of colour have been deliberately excluded from knowledge production, resulting in both scholarly frames that embed white ideologies and frames that have dehumanized and objectified people of colour. Certainly the goal of engaging the scholarship

created in that process, and 'documenting the processes of defamation', as Emirbayer and Desmond call for, is a worthy goal. Yet we must also acknowledge the costs associated with asking scholars to engage in that process – the time it takes to document the many ways in which white social sciences have dehumanized and objectified people of colour takes time away from progressive social science agendas; ones that affirm and humanize communities of colour, as well as ones that identify and condemn contemporary processes that function to reproduce racist outcomes. Moreover, we should be mindful of the words of Patricia Williams (1991) when she discussed the consequences for students of colour who are asked to take law exams in which they must evaluate legal questions with deeply embedded racist stereotyping and imagery. Williams said (p. 89):

> Students are required to take the perspective of "everybody"; for black students this requires their taking a stance in which they objectify themselves with reference to the interrogatories . . . I use the word "objectify" in the literal, grammatical sense of the subject-verb-object: the removing of oneself from the subject position of power, control, and direction over the verb-action. "We," blacks become "them."

In our efforts to remain reflexive, it is critical that we consider the consequences, particularly for scholars of colour, in continuing to legitimize, through continued use and affirmation, scholarship that pathologizes and dehumanizes communities of colour. Engaging those works takes time away from works that can de-centre these racist framings, as well as placing students and scholars of colour in a position of self-alienation and objectification in the knowledge production process.

I suggest, then, that a central element of a true reflexivity in race scholarship requires a *de-centreing* of white knowledge frames. This brings me to Emirbayer and Desmond's third tier of reflexivity – the level of the scholastic unconscious. Again I note that the authors raise a crucial point in asserting that we must assess our distance, as academics with the leisure to study social interaction and organization, from the very subjects we study – the people living that interaction and organization. However, we must also consider the extent to which this is more or less true for differently situated scholars. As Emirbayer and Desmond point out in their footnote 12, this distance is not equally shared by all academics. In fact, critical race theory, a scholarly frame that implements a great deal of the reflexivity that these authors call for, is born out of a movement by scholars of colour who demanded a new epistemological lens for race scholarship precisely because their own lived experiences were

distorted and defamed by traditional mainstream epistemologies in the legal academy (see Crenshaw *et al.* 1995). Although relegated to a footnote in Emirbayer and Desmond's article, this fact seems a powerful indication that reflexivity in race scholarship must include, at every level, an analysis of racial dynamics of power historically and today, with attention to how white systems of power influence institutional arrangements and the people who must negotiate those institutional arrangements.

Consideration of institutionalized racial power dynamics in academia might also have led Emirbayer and Desmond to a more nuanced conclusion concerning the racial aesthetic in the realm of academia. Here the authors note that in race studies one finds either a 'condescension toward the putatively inferior "culture of poverty" of stigmatized minorities [or], inversely [a] cult-like celebration or affirmation of the "popular culture" or "authenticity" of these same racial groups' (p. 588). If we consider this asserted problematic through a lens attentive to systemic racism, setting these two perspectives up as equally weighted opposites becomes impossible. The notion of pathological and problematic communities of colour, and even the very notion of 'stigmatized minorities', comes out of a mainstream social science academic frame that is normatively white, and at best paternalistic, at worst explicitly racist (Delgado 1995; Bonilla-Silva 2010). Given this as the case, a scholarly reaction that affirms the cultural elements of communities of colour seems a normal human reaction to denigration, as opposed to, as the authors suggest, a purely uncritical glamorization of even those activities (such as alcoholism, which the authors note) that cause pain and suffering in those communities. Because while the authors note that '[t]here are two ways to dehumanize: the first is to strip people of all virtue, the second is to cleanse them of all sin', what they fail to note is that one of these processes has occurred and become embedded in mainstream academic scholarship about people of colour, the other has not.

I believe that not only is there much merit in the arguments made by Emirbayer and Desmond, but also that their call for reflexivity is essential for social research on race and racial inequality. Moreover, their three-tiered approach has much to offer in helping us unpack the levels of white normativity and racial presupposition that influence our scholarship. However, as I have illustrated, reflexivity must include an assessment of racial dynamics of power at each level, and must recognize the context of systemic racism that characterizes the USA and the academy. As discussed above, this kind of reflexivity is difficult and challenging, particularly because we are immersed within the very context we wish to critically assess. But, if we want to pursue a project of developing social knowledge that transcends racist presuppositions

and leads to more equitable knowledge outcomes, we must continue to challenge ourselves to engage in this deep reflexivity.

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The tension between abstraction and specificity in enacting reflexivity in race scholarship

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Emirbayer and Desmond (2012; hereafter ED) intend for their exposition on race and reflexivity to be prescriptive. Moreover, they propose quite high stakes, 'such that there come to be real sanctions – e.g., loss of scientific prestige, difficulty in publishing, public critique of one's arguments – when one fails to take into account advances in reflexivity already accomplished by others' (ED, p. 591). Given that I am sympathetic to their general points, I would not want to be found guilty of being insufficiently reflexive. Yet, I find that there are internal inconsistencies that make it difficult to comply with the logic of reflexivity that they put forth. Below, I briefly review ED's primary contributions, and then I present alternative analyses of data from one of my current research projects in order to highlight one particular inconsistency that stumps me.

ED argue that reflexivity in race studies has made important and robust first steps in exploring the social locations and identities of individual researchers in order to unmask 'hidden presuppositions that shape our thought' (ED, p. 574), but that this is only a small part of the task. The distance we have yet to travel regards (1) interrogating our disciplinary assumptions, positions, and constructions of what is possible to study, and (2) critically accounting for the detached leisure that is the scholarly life. These conditions of academic labour have affected the content and contours of race scholarship, from the complete censoring of anyone who dares to find something redeeming in Moynihan's arguments about the black family (or to even use the word 'pathology' in anything having to do with black people), to a tendency toward aesthetic celebration of racialized subaltern cultures that 'confers legitimacy on illegitimate racial divisions' (ED, p. 588). I generally comprehend this argumentation, and I generally agree. Yet

in exploring the details (and going back to Wacquant and Bourdieu 1992, which ED cite frequently), I am challenged by various logical traps. The following conundrum regarding the tension between 'theoreticism' in race studies and 'the specificities of [race's] practical logic' is but one illustration.

One of the presuppositions that lies in our scholarly unconscious is the notion that knowledge is the product of our contemplation of 'the world from above, as it were, and retrospectively' (ED, p. 586). This assumption obscures the epistemologies that result from everyday experience and immersion in a social world, which is the condition of most people not formed by a scholarly habitus – that is, the condition of most of the people we study. Perhaps Rosa Wakefield, a black woman domestic worker, says it best:

> If you eats these dinners and don't cook 'em, if you wears these clothes and don't buy or iron them, then you might start thinking that the good fairy or some spirit did all that.... Blackfolks don't have no time to be thinking like that.... But when you don't have anything else to do, you can think like that. It's bad for your mind, though. (Cited in Collins 1989, p. 748)

ED employ Bourdieu's terminology and name our tendency to project our 'scholarly' processes for generalizing and explaining the social world onto the people whom we study as 'theoreticism'. Theoreticism acutely contradicts a true reflexive practice, which instead recognizes the socially constituted logic of practice that is grounded in the 'lived experience of agents' and their 'categories of perception and appreciation' (Wacquant and Bourdieu 1992, p. 11).

However, if we foreground the practical sense of the people we study, using their categories and experiences, then we run afoul of Durkheim, whom ED approvingly cite as also giving important instructions for reflexivity. 'The sociologist... must free himself from those fallacious notions which hold sway over the mind of the ordinary person', writes Durkheim, 'shaking off, once and for all, the yoke of those empirical categories that long habit often makes tyrannical' (ED, p. 576). So what are we to do? On the one hand, if we 'pluck' vocabulary and symbols 'haphazardly from the undisciplined discourse of the public realm', we are unreflexive, according to Durkheim. Yet, on the other hand, if we attempt to abstract from the experiences of those we study various 'analytical constructs, models, and other instruments of objectification' (ED, p. 587), or (worse yet) attempt to show that *they themselves* make such abstractions, we are being equally unreflexive according to Bourdieu. How are these two poles reconciled?

To illustrate my quandary, I submit a concrete example from my current research on public education in the city of Chicago, where black–white segregation is extremely high (Logan 2011), and where just under half of all African American students drop out of high school (Chicago Public Schools 2011). To address these racial and other inequities, contemporary educational reform emphasizes the importance of 'choice'. This model gives parents (and children) the option of choosing from an array of school types with unequal records of success, and relies on their personal initiative and capacity to do so. I interviewed over seventy African American parents who lived in an all-black neighbourhood in Chicago and who had just gone through the process of learning about their options and deciding on a high school for their children. One of the starkest findings was that nearly half of the parents who had kids attending 'Neighborhood High', a very low-performing high school with open enrolment for students in the local attendance area, said they were assigned to the school, rather than having chosen it. One mother, Ms Carter, said:

> I didn't hear from Neighborhood High until the last minute. I didn't know [my daughter] was going to be sent to Neighborhood High. Now who made that decision? And why we didn't hear from Clarion High School? Why we didn't hear from the other schools that she put down? Nothing. Because we were waiting in the mail for a decision to say that I accept the child or I didn't accept the child, you know what I'm saying? Only thing we heard from was Neighborhood High, and we didn't choose that school. [Long pause] So, what? They send black kids where they want to send them? . . .
> But after the orientation, like I say, I was impressed, you know, that they was strict with the kids, and I like that. Neighborhood High have different curriculums. And she always wanted that culinary arts because she said she want to cook so, you know, she liked that about Neighborhood. And then I look at the distance from the house. It wasn't too far. So I just said we'll just give it a try. I say, because if something happen then I can go right away. Like I said, I didn't choose Neighborhood but now that we're there we'll just make the best of it. That's all we can do.

My first pass at interpreting this piece of interview data would go as follows: Ms Carter recognizes the structural power wielded by the Chicago Public Schools system through their ability to assign her child to a school that she did not prefer and that she had actively rejected by not applying. Moreover, she experiences her daughter as having a black racial identity, amongst a collectivity of others with the same

identity ('black kids'). That identity is particularly consequential in the field of public education in Chicago. Next, she construes power as racialized by invoking a 'they' who target black children like her own ('They send black kids where they want to send them?'), with the insinuation (although, this is as much my insinuation as hers) that such racial control is strategic, organized, and produces negative outcomes for black children (e.g. she frequently mentioned worries about Neighborhood High being unsafe and said that she had 'never heard any good stuff about Neighborhood High'). Finally, despite her frustration, and seeing no other option, she looks on the bright side and commits to making the best of a system she otherwise sees as plotting against her black child. Done. But now let me show how ED's guide to reflexivity raises competing interpretive demands.

On the one hand, in order to enact a Bourdieuian reflexivity that avoids 'theoreticisms', I might sit with the 'socially constituted practical sense of the agent' – in this case, Ms Carter – which presents as a foregone conclusion and not in need of any further explication both the black identity of her daughter and the singling out of Blackness as a category marked for particular (negative) treatment. I would avoid a 'mechanistic objectivism' that would characterize her resignation to sending her daughter to Neighborhood High as the inevitable result of the omnipotence of 'structure', and I would also avoid interpreting her appreciation for the strictness, culinary arts curriculum, and proximity of Neighborhood High as 'deliberate and strategic' rational calculations for why Neighborhood High is an acceptable outcome after all. In this mode of avoiding theoreticism – that is, assuming that Ms Carter thinks as we social scientists do – my aim would be to coherently present the complexity of Ms Carter's emotions and to privilege the practical logic that is the sum of her observations as a mother of a black child who has been assigned to a school against her will, but who is nonetheless determined to make it work. 'The peculiar difficulty of sociology, then, is to produce a precise science of an imprecise, fuzzy, wooly reality' (Wacquant and Bourdieu 1992, p. 23).

On the other hand, following ED's Durkheimian side, I should 'deny [myself] the use of those concepts formed outside science and for needs entirely unscientific' (ED, p. 576). Surely, the Blackness to which Ms Carter refers is such an entirely unscientific category. Its problematic usage is captured in the unspecified and opposing 'they' that Ms Carter invokes. Many of the high-ranking school bureaucrats in Chicago who are encompassed in this 'they' also claim Blackness. Yet if her black child is targeted for negative treatment, then surely 'their' black children would also be so targeted. And so the faulty edifice of Blackness as bodily identity crumbles.

In order to escape the illogic of black bureaucrats plotting to disadvantage black kids (who could be their own kids), one might employ a very different notion of Blackness, one that is not tied to bodies that are seen as the containers of racial essences, but is instead defined as one extremity in a system of modern relations of power. In a theory of race on which I myself am not even completely sold, Hesse (2007, p. 646) argues that 'the classifications and taxonomies of race though apparently framed as physical entities, are profoundly implicated in relationality'. That is, Hesse objects to ED's definition of race as a 'symbolic category, based on phenotype or ancestry and constructed according to specific social and historical contexts, that is misrecognized as a natural category' (ED, p. 593, footnote 2), because that definition still claims that race refers to skin, blood, hair, height, and all other things corporeal. Instead, Hesse argues, race is a category of colonial domination 'in excess of the corporeal, having multiple references of association (e.g. territory, climate, history, culture, history [*sic*], religion), suggesting that the body [is] less the ubiquitous metaphor of "race" than its privileged metonym' (Hesse 2007, p. 653). Hence, we might argue that Ms Carter purposefully ignores (or leaves unstated) the supposed racial identity of 'they' who 'send black kids where they want to send them' precisely in order to more forcefully highlight the relationality of racial domination. It does not matter who is exerting the power. Instead, what is important is that she emphasize the Blackness of her own child because it is *the signifier* that marks the disadvantaged side of a (neo)colonial relationship that maintains power and resources in the hands of a powerful few.

Ms Carter probably would not see it this way, and would probably not recognize her use of 'black kids' in this analysis. And I'm not even sure that I myself see it this way. Yet, this perplexity may be a true hallmark of reflexivity, a sign that this analysis 'effect[s] a sharp epistemological break ... with the common sense of social and intellectual milieux' (p. 575). Perhaps a little bewilderment is normal when we look beyond the *doxa* of our disciplines, test our presuppositions about what race means, and scoff off our socialization as scholars in institutions set up to maintain unequal power relations. I'm not sure.

In any case, can both of these 'hands' go together? Can we avoid theoreticism by representing and respecting the practical logics of actors (*à la* Bourdieu) while simultaneously shunning popular categories (*à la* Durkheim)? Are the notions of 'race as colonial relation' or 'race as symbolic category misrecognized as natural' – to take the examples put forth here – helpful, or even relevant, if Ms Carter, or our undergraduates, or we ourselves, cannot understand them? Should our quest be to find the perfect balance between

abstraction and specificity? And who evaluates, and by what criteria, if we have struck the right balance?

Bourdieu and other philosophers caution us against writing 'words about words', and the 'splitting of Concepts and their endless rearrangement' (Wacquant and Bourdieu 1992, p. 30). And so I will stop doing so, and leave us with Ms Carter's reality: 'I don't think I would've chose [Neighborhood High], just up and chose that school, no. Because, like I said, it was chosen.' For me, our goal, plain and simple, has to be to represent, to understand, to explain, and, for some of us, to fight against the institutionalized racism that created the wrong that Ms Carter experienced. To do that we must recognize our own locations and power – that is, we must be reflexive – and I commend ED for pushing us to think about what, exactly, that might entail.

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The tenure system, disciplinary boundaries and reflexivity

Kimberly McClain DaCosta

Mustafa Emirbayer and Matthew Desmond (2012) map out the terrain upon which race scholars ought to travel if we are to create more reflexive scholarship. To do this, they argue, we have to do much more than investigate the ways in which our own social location shapes our work. We must also critically analyse the ways that the social organization of academic work and the scholarly pursuit itself shapes – and perhaps distorts – our understanding of the racial order. Their article, a focused distillation of Bourdieu's oeuvre applied to race scholarship, can be read as a broad research agenda for creating more reflexive scholarship, one that requires 'not merely subjective conversion of the race scholar, but an objective transformation of the social organization of race scholarship' (p. 26).

   Emirbayer and Desmond (2012) rightly argue that a genuinely reflexive scholarship must investigate the very institutional settings where race analysts are formed. They sketch the ways in which the academic field shapes race scholars and, in turn, the scholarship they produce, but say relatively little about what their analysis implies about *how* the social organization of race scholarship ought to change if we are to create the conditions through which more reflexive scholarship might be generated. In my comments, I would like to elaborate on some aspects of what such a transformation might entail. Specifically, I am interested in thinking about how two signal features of the North American academic field – the tenure system and the division of academic labour along disciplinary lines – constrain the development of reflexive race scholarship. As I see it, many of the problems Emirbayer and Desmond observe in contemporary race scholarship – the framing of debates in bipolar terms, parochialism, over-specialization and the tendency to reify racial groups – are directly related to these institutional structures.

Reputation and the tenure system

Few institutional structures shape scholars and the work they produce more directly than the tenure system. The tenure system encapsulates a set of compelling incentives (job security and prestige) and guidelines (criteria for evaluation and distinction) for achieving those ends. Because the journey to tenure is time-limited (up or out in about five or six years), newer scholars must direct their energies to those aspects of academic life that are most likely to be rewarded (publishing at research universities and, increasingly so, at schools that also expect high-quality teaching). To do otherwise is to risk denial of tenure and, if not exit from the profession, then relegation to the insecure, itinerant academic employment that is increasingly common in academic life (Trower 2009).

While the criteria for receiving tenure may be clearly described in an institution's procedures for promotion and tenure, the path to attaining tenure is never that straightforward. This is because the criteria by which candidates are evaluated are not simply based on objective criteria (e.g. the quantity of work produced), but on evaluative assessments of *reputation*. Determinations of the 'quality' of a candidate's scholarship (and the candidate him/herself) are based on assessments of the perceived prestige and selectivity of the outlets in which he/she publishes, of the scholars whose work he/she engages, of those who engage the candidate's work, of the institutions in which he/she is located and of the people attesting to the candidate's competence.

The importance of reputation in assessing a scholar's work is manifest in the widespread use of citation rankings in academia. Citation rankings quantify and systematize assessments of 'quality' and reputation. They combine measures of quantity (how much one has published) with indices of prestige, granting higher numerical values to publications in the 'best' journals. They are used to evaluate not only individual scholars (e.g. as a metric of a scholar's 'influence' in his or her field), but also the departments and schools of which the scholar is a part (Meho and Rogers 2008).

Citation rankings are but one of several ways in which scholars and institutions establish and assert rank and prestige, both to themselves and to their competitors. In my former department, for example, citation rankings of faculty members were distributed each year, highlighting the position of faculty members relative to each other and making visible how many of 'our' members were in the top ranks relative to other departments. This ritual was intended to reinforce the group's image of itself as 'the best'. These rankings are also used to direct material resources, such as faculty pay rises, or to justify departmental requests for additional institutional resources.

Whether utilized as a means to distribute or garner resources, or as part of a ritual of consecration, the use of citation rankings takes for granted their legitimacy and so reinforces their use as a legitimate measure of scientific value as opposed to what they most directly reflect: a feedback loop in which scholars cite work they know others value and produce work on subjects likely to be cited, which is only tangentially related to whether the work represents a scientific advance. Moreover, they signal to new scholars *the importance of establishing a reputation* in these terms.

These rituals of consecration and norms of evaluation discipline newer, less powerful, entrants into the professional realm of scholars to orient their labours in the same way. To become one of those deemed worthy of being a member of the group, un-tenured professors must adopt – or at least acquiesce to – the norms of evaluation imposed upon them: to produce work that engages known figures in the field and to publish work in recognized journals that impose particular criteria for what constitutes valuable scholarship. In the current climate in which demands for publication have increased over time and across a range of institutions, it is not difficult to see the ways in which these pressures lend themselves to the parochialism and over-specialization that Emirbayer and Desmond identify. Candidates must produce work that is recognizable to their evaluators (framed in problematics they understand and find meaningful, published in venues they find valuable) and they must produce more of that work in a compressed period of time. In this way, the tenure system encourages scholarly production even as it constrains inquiry.

The reliance on reputational criteria is not limited to the tenure process, of course, nor to the evaluation of publications. It is a generalized feature of the scholarly enterprise in which the whole range of academic practices – publishing, grants received, placement of graduate students, honour and awards, etc. – are measured and ranked. The rewards for successfully competing in these struggles are not only symbolic but also material, and extend far beyond tenure. For the individual scholar, becoming known and recognized leads to more opportunities for publication, citation and public speaking, which are convertible into money (e.g. speaking fees, book sales, raises), which begets more opportunity to accrue symbolic and economic capital – all of which make it even more likely that one will be able to shape the debate in one's field. Perhaps this helps to explain the development of contentious bipolar debates in race scholarship, as these battles are a *particularly* effective means of 'making a name for oneself'.

While the tenure system tends to constrain inquiry, it also tends to produce homogeneity in the pool of race scholars. Because evaluations of tenure rely so heavily on reputational assessments, candidates' chances of prevailing have everything to do with the extent to which

they have cultivated social networks with powerful actors who will advocate on their behalf. The ability to do so, however, is not universally distributed (Trower 2010). Performing the hidden social work required to cultivate advocates, find mentors and learn the tricks of the trade, is more easily accomplished when one shares important social characteristics with those potential advocates and mentors.

While African Americans with doctoral degrees in sociology are the most likely ethno-racial group to attain a tenure track job, for example, there is a major decline in the proportion of African Americans who attain the rank of full professor (Erskine and Spalter-Roth 2007). Somewhere along the line a substantial number of black scholars exit the faculty ranks, in part, I suspect, due to inadequate mentorship (Bleak and Trower 2004). The 'leaky pipeline' for women is also related to their relative disadvantage in job-related social networking and also to the time structure of the system. The make-or-break years of the tenure system coincide with peak child-bearing years. Because women still bear a disproportionate burden of childcare and housework compared to their married male counter-parts with children, they are most negatively impacted by these arrangements (Mason and Ekman 2007).

Disciplinary boundaries

The structure of the tenure system, the norms of evaluation it imposes and the rituals of consecration it enacts, contribute to shaping scholarship in ways that resist reflexive analysis, both at the level of the scholarship and the scholars it produces. The social organization of academic labour along disciplinary boundaries tends to limit reflexive analysis as well. The parochialism and over-specialization that Emir-bayer and Desmond find in race scholarship today is fostered by these disciplinary boundaries in which scholars are encouraged to write and publish 'in their fields' – which means investigating racial domination in ways that editors and other scholars writing in these fields recognize as the meaningful problematics of the discipline.

One possible remedy for this problem is the production of work that is deeply interdisciplinary; that is, work that draws from the proble-matics and techniques of various disciplines to generate new questions and ways of approaching them, rather than reproducing the familiar problematics of a single discipline. This interdisciplinarity should extend beyond the social sciences (e.g. political scientists talking to sociologists talking to anthropologists) to include humanists and scholars in the 'hard' sciences (especially given the reinvigoration of biologistical explanations of racial inequality in the wake of the mapping of the human genome (Fullwiley 2008; Morning 2011; Roberts 2011).

The organization of the academy into disciplines, however, sharply curtails the possibilities of generating deeply interdisciplinary work. Because the route to tenure is typically granted through disciplinary departments, newer scholars are not incentivized to write or publish across disciplinary boundaries. It is not surprising, then, that those who do work in interdisciplinary modes report higher rates of feeling stressed regarding publication and promotion than those who do not work in interdisciplinary contexts (Higher Education Research Institute 2005).

Even in interdisciplinary contexts where many scholars of race in the USA are employed (e.g. departments of African American Studies or Asian American Studies), too often disciplinary silos are fully operative. Graduate students in these departments, while trained in a variety of disciplinary perspectives, are encouraged to develop disciplinary specialties in order to find not only coveted tenure track positions, but academic employment of any kind. Moreover, for faculty in these departments, the route to full professor status is still largely measured by one's reputation in a discipline.

The organization of departments along ethnic lines, even if nominally interdisciplinary, encourages work that is group centred, rather than problem oriented (Wacquant 1997). This reflects and contributes to an even deeper obstacle to reflexive analysis: the taken-for-granted assumption that racial groups exist, rather than the far more reflexive and valuable approach that asks how the ethnic group itself is constituted.

The difficulties of resisting this model of scholarly organization are exemplified in the recent emergence of 'mixed race studies'. The topic of 'mixed race' would seem to lend itself to reflexive analysis, as it seems to engage the 'space of interracial conflict itself', which Emirbayer and Desmond (2012) rightly identify as the 'true object of [reflexive] analysis' (p. 585). Instead, its designation as a 'field' announces that mixed race studies is developing along an ethnic studies model demarcated along group lines and so is in danger of reproducing some of the same problems of group-centred analyses. Designating mixed race studies as such takes the group for granted (a self-evident outcome of the increase in intermarriage and interracial births) rather than demonstrating how the group is (or is not) constituted, and fails to account for the ways that scholars of mixed race bring into being that which they purport to merely describe.

Conclusion

Emirbayer and Desmond argue that a more reflexive race scholarship will not develop until scholars experience 'real sanctions' when they fail to meet the standards of advanced reflexivity, including the 'loss of

scientific prestige, difficulty in publishing, [and] public critique of one's arguments'. While that is certainly true, because so many of the obstacles to generating reflexive scholarship lie at the institutional level, we need to consider how we might change our institutions in ways that foster the production of more, rather than less, reflexive analysis.

I have suggested that the tenure system and disciplinary boundaries work against the creation of reflexive scholarship. In so far as the critiques I have made about the tenure system involve the norms and practices of evaluation that promote quantity, conformity and competitiveness, I would advocate structures and practices that promote quality, originality and collaboration. 'Quality' here refers to the kinds of reflexive analysis that Emirbayer and Desmond describe. We should create the conditions that encourage interdisciplinary scholarship and reward its successful execution. In part this requires the development of institutions that support problem-centred (rather than group-focused) work.

We should consider the task of producing a more reflexive scholarship as a *collaborative* undertaking, not simply in the sense of the cumulative impact of many scholars' individual contributions, but in terms of collaborative projects conceived, produced and carried out by multiple researchers. Creating this form of research goes against the logic of the academy in which intellectual achievement is primarily understood as belonging to the individual, obscuring the collective wisdom upon which those achievements rest. Rewarding collaborative work as much as solo-authored projects will be necessary to encourage this kind of scholarship.

Finally, we should make the tenure system itself more flexible so that the professoriate comprises scholars of varied social origins and dispositions, not because this will necessarily generate greater epistemic reflexivity in race scholarship, but because a community of scholars interested in studying a major axis of social inequality should be willing to change the structures of its own institutions that contribute to it.

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A Race to reflexivity

Sudhir Venkatesh

'Race and reflexivity' (Emirbayer and Desmond 2012) offers a much-need clarification of the dynamics of social science thinking on race. It is a well-written account of a problem that remains at the heart of our labours, namely the need to link the institutional production of social science and the social science of race. The article currently files at roughly 12,000 words. My primary criticism is that the authors should have written 24,000. I hope they return at a later date.

I make this supplication because the article makes two bold promises, and the reader is left waiting at the altar at the end. Emirbayer and Desmond write, 'We attempt to build upon earlier efforts [in critical race scholarship] by deepening the very meaning of scholarly reflexivity'. Second, the authors 'develop a three-tiered typology of racial reflexivity...survey the obstacles distinctive to each level and the ways in which reflexive thinking can overcome these obstacles' (p. 577).

Concerning the former, the authors succeed admirably. For too long, scholars studying race have conflated a reflexive analysis with a form of intellectual narcissism. 'By and large, reflexivity often has been conceived in too narrow and underdeveloped a fashion: what the vast majority of thinkers typically have understood as reflexivity has been the exercise of recognizing how aspects of one's identity or social location can affect one's vision of the social world' (p. 577) In other words, if I explain my subject position, then I am being reflexive; if I tell you that I am white, male and so on, then I can avert many of the potential criticisms that might be cast my way for analysing those who are non-white. If I tell you that I'm South Asian, male...then, I might be able to call upon certain epistemological privileges – 'authenticity', to cite one – to deflect other forms of critique.

The authors smartly point out that reflexivity requires not only understanding one's own social location – as an individual writer/ analyst – but also attentiveness to one's field, one's discipline and the

entire apparatus of scholastic production that sets standards for peer review, constructive dialogue, etc. Following Bourdieu, they state that 'positioning in fields of cultural production' (p. 578), which includes disciplinary conventions as well as general academic mores, is a critical element of the scaffolding that we must consider. They draw on a brief historical discussion of various literatures – 'whiteness', 'critical race theory', 'intersectionality' – to demonstrate that scholastic thought requires more than simply navel gazing.

At this point, not surprisingly, the authors call for more. Clarion calls for more careful analysis, more appropriate understanding of the structure of academic thought . . . more reflexivity. Alas, at this point, the calls grow a bit murky. For example, a continuous challenge in reading the article is discerning the actual target of their criticism. Cautious argumentation turns into late-night *kvetching* in statements like 'After centuries of studying without being studied, of examining without being examined, white scholars have found themselves face-to-face with an Other that stares back at them, writes back, and analyzes back, and perhaps they have felt, as Sartre felt, "the shock of being seen" (p. 581).' Later, the authors argue that scholars critique texts without having ever read them. Who exactly are the culprits of this insensitive, outlandish behaviour? Who is reading Wikipedia instead of the original text? We never find out and perhaps that is a good thing, because I was tempted to visit the perpetrators of this egregious crime late at night.

Jokes aside, the need for specificity is critical in the article because the purpose is to deepen our understanding of extant trends in race scholarship. Attributions of analytic improprieties or malfeasance of intention are serious, and deserve to be grounded in concrete exegesis. Exactitude is a must, alas, if the authors are promising to help us navigate these turbulent waters with greater security and insight.

The remainder of the article builds nicely on a central insight of Bourdieu, namely that 'there are many intellectuals who call the world into question, but very few who call the intellectual world into question' (p. 586). Emirbayer and Desmond are at their finest in discussing the contours of the so-called 'scholastic unconscious'. They draw out their overall point regarding the need to consider conditions of scholastic production – the very patterns, assumptions, folk sociologies, dispositions, etc., that create the possibilities for the reproduction of dominant framings of race.

Nearing the end of their inquiry, the authors ask, 'How is epistemological vigilance [in scholarship on race] to be carried out? (p. 590)' With respect to this second promise of the article, the authors are not as clear, although there are some provocative recommendations. They write:

> Reflexivity must be conceived and practiced as an eminently collective undertaking, one to be engaged in by the scientific field as a whole . . . . It requires not merely the subjective conversion of the race scholar, but an objective transformation of the social organization of race scholarship, a restructuring of the enterprise, *such that there come to be real sanctions – e.g., loss of scientific prestige, difficulty in publishing, public critiques of one's arguments – when one fails to take into account advances in reflexivity already accomplished by others.* (emphasis added) (p. 591)

The passive-aggressive part of my soul likes this idea of vengeance bureaucratically implemented, but I am not sure exactly how one would institutionalize this sort of policing.

I mean, I can see it taking place, in the abstract, but I would love to know which journals should be subject to a *coup d'état*, what prizes for 'true reflexivity' can be developed and what academics should be boycotted.

In fact, is the situation they are critiquing not the result of earlier attempts to enact this kind of scholarly surveillance? The narcissism they decry was itself a product of impassioned critiques that succeeded in requiring that scholars account for their own subject position. How do we know that, by following Emirbayer and Desmond, we avoid the 'eternal recurrence'?

Reflexivity is a matter of 'engaging in rigorous institutional analyses of the social and historical structures that condition one's thinking and inner experience. Individuals do not come into the world endowed with prenotions; they are the products of institutions' (p. 591). True. But, to avoid a strawman argument, it would have been helpful to point to analyses that have actually taken institutions into account to enliven our understanding of the ways that race-talk happens. And there are many from which to choose: Stuart Hall's and Paul Gilroy's respective analyses of the role of the state in racializing the discourse on crime; Aaron Cicourel's and John Kitsuse's ethnomethodological studies of school tracking and juvenile justice; Douglas Foley's studies of youth socialization in Texas schools. Though their overall claim has merit, one is left uncertain as to the kind of institutional analyses that matter for Emirbayer and Desmond. A few examples would suffice to deflect the criticism that they are unaware of the many examples that currently exist.

Overall, this article offers a pithy tour of race scholarship and marshals Bourdieu's key insights into academic scholasticism in order to point out some deficiencies in current race scholarship. One must applaud the authors for this achievement. Had they continued onward, by giving us a sense of what a more appropriate scholastic posture would have looked like – with respect to concrete analysis of

social phenomena – it would have been easier to digest the pill. Without this guidance, some of their distress calls are left to echo in the dark night. Hopefully, they will return to their typewriter soon.

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Return of the reflexed: film-making and the aesthetics of social science

John L. Jackson, Jr.

I remember watching Marlon Riggs dying. It was 1994, and I was in graduate school – quite literally so: scrutinizing his image in a classroom in Schermerhorn, a building on the campus of Columbia University.

The dying, the death, was no less real for its televisuality, for its off-screen finale, for my experiencing some small portion of it by way of a rolled-out video console's totemic stacking of TV monitor atop VHS player, audio/video wires and power cords dangling carelessly off to the sides.

In a form of filmic reflexivity far more rigorous than anything I had seen before, Riggs, a controversial documentarian who had already been denounced as a pervert undeserving of government funding on the floor of the United States Congress for his previous film, *Tongues Untied* (Riggs 1989), a meditation on black gay manhood, had decided to use his final documentary, *Black Is, Black Ain't* (Riggs 1994) (a film on the *openness*, though not the *emptiness*, of blackness as a signifier) to chronicle his own end, his own death, his body more and more emaciated from the AIDS virus with every passing scene.

Black Is, Black Ain't, anthropological in its luscious holism, flags and chronicles all the erstwhile and over-determined markers (even clichés) of purported blacknesses: hair textures, bone structures, skin tones, striding gaits, musical genres, political histories, vernacular assumptions, existential anxieties, stereotyped burdens, sexist acculturations – everything, including, literally, shots of kitchen sinks, the preparation of gumbo being its central metaphor of African American eclecticism.

By the end of the film, however, a couple of images haunt most: (1) out-of-focus shots of a bony Riggs, naked and alone, jogging, as

Routledge
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best his sickly body could, through sunlit woods (in what I have always assumed to be some Southern landscape somewhere); and (2) a bed-ridden and hospitalized Riggs, explaining with effort how he wants his film to end, an ending that he, himself, would most certainly not witness. Riggs's narration, by the final few scenes of the film, was almost reducible to the unyielding enumeration of plunging T-cell counts and the details of lost body weight, a hot-pad on his bloated and non-digesting stomach, all a nod to the finality of mortal life and soul-filled embodiment, what Ralph Waldo Emerson once called 'the irresistible democracy' of physical decomposition itself, of all earth going back to earth (Emerson 1878, p. 430).

I have always considered *Black Is, Black Ain't* a somewhat illicit and uncanny piece of courageous strangeness, especially with its mesmeric ability to cast its viewers in the role of unrepentant and willing voyeurs. It is the kind of hyper-reflexive 'ethnographic film' that pricks and prods at the soul, offering an early trip to one would-be field site from which a portion of my own anthropological subconscious has never returned.

Several years later, I would get my first chance to see Barbara Myerhoff's filmic depiction of her own demise, the 1985 film *In Her Own Time*, released about a year before the publication of the influential anthology *Writing Culture*, which helped to foreground disciplinary reflexivity as one of anthropology's central interventions – and producing the field's main flank for cross-disciplinary ridicule: its supposed solipsism, a disciplinary reflexivity purportedly taken to unhealthy and relativist extremes. This was reflexivity as art, not science, recognition of the inescapable aesthetics of anthropological storytelling, anthropology being a social science (like all others) co-produced through rhetorical flourishes as much as positivist empiricisms.

Anna Grimshaw (2011) describes the difference between an oft-disparaged *aesthetics* and the aspirational objectivity of a truly social *science* as one of the foundational fault lines that has long disqualified filmic offerings from a rightful place in the academy. It might conjure images, for some, of Clifford Geertz (1973) chastising those research-ers prone to 'intuitionism and alchemy' or mere 'sociological aestheticism'(p. 30). Such concerns/critiques would help explain, Grimshaw argues, why even though anthropologists have used film and then video technology in ethnographic endeavours since the early twentieth century, the American Anthropological Association would still need to put out a statement some 100 years hence imploring academic institutions to take films into account at all when assessing scholars for tenure and promotion. It is one of the reasons ethnographic films are not nearly given the same weighty significance as books or articles in most academic contexts. The filmic, she might

say, is always thought to bend towards the aesthetic, the emotive. According to many, it also appears to be much more art than science.

John Durham Peters (1999) argues that new media technologies, since the nineteenth century, from telegraphy to the telephone, radio to television, photography to film, have always been predicated on an attempt to beat back death, to transcend our own mortality (indeed, he would add, even our own humanity) in search of ways to finally communicate like (and to) angels or gods – unmediated, without the tawdry materiality of signifiers, smashing our way through the walled-in interiors that ostensibly separate and alienate us from one another. All media communication is, in a sense, communication with the dead, he says, which is one interpretation of what Roland Barthes (1981) claims in *Camera Lucida* about photographs: that they are all really spirit photographs, glimpses of our own pending death. Might all ethnographic films be read in a similar way, whether or not they explicitly depict death/dying?

Emirbayer and Desmond's insightful article proffers a tripartite schema that would seem to debunk arguably romanticizing logics that might link race and reflexivity to such mystical invocations of eschatology. For them, along with the likes of anthropologist Jay Ruby (2000) and other ethnographic filmmakers, reflexivity need not careen towards the aesthetic or wallow in inescapable subjectivity. Rather, it might be more productively thought of as one of the first rules of a truly scientific method that attempts to systematically control for preconceived biases. And reflexive thinking, Emirbayer and Desmond argue, 'entails much more than observing how one's social position affects scientific analyses or the political imagination', another arguably mystical endpoint for some conceptualizations of reflexivity in academic discussions of racial analysis. Drawing on the work of Bourdieu, Emirbayer and Desmond articulate a tripartite schema (the social, the disciplinary and the scholarly) for expanding our definition of 'reflexivity' far beyond any simple disclosure of a researcher's social identity.

In my book *Real Black*, I discuss 'rigorous reflexivity' with respect to the work of Ruth Behar and Mary Pattillo, among others, arguing that what makes reflexivity valuable outstrips the sometimes trivial games of identity politics – or the pernicious assumptions that members of a certain group have a privileged perspective on that group's sociocultural reality, another concern highlighted in Emirbayer and Desmond's article. Citing Behar's admittedly psychoanalytic modelling of reflexive intensity in *The Vulnerable Observer*, I argue that other ethnographers should think of her as one compelling model for a more careful and expansive form of reflexive research:

> Reflexivity for Behar is not reducible to easy sociological classifica-
> tions in its final instant; instead, true reflexivity troubles the very
> categories themselves. In this context, marking oneself as black and
> a researcher doesn't simply make one native in the context of urban
> Afro-America; it merely provides some phenomenological pretext
> for the fraught social interactions one will necessarily experience in
> the field. (Jackson 2005, p. 163)

Emirbayer and Desmond point out that race analysts still have
'prenotions that fill up their scholarly unconscious' even after they
have revealed their identities. Such pre-notions, they contend, are
formed and internalized not just through socially recognizable identity
categories, but also by the rigour of scholarly training. For one, our
particular disciplines teach us to see by subtly focusing our attention
on certain things and not others, showing us how to see by blinding us
from certain would-be distractions, the classic example of Kierke-
gaardian claims about revelation's inextricable and constitutive con-
cealments. This 'disciplinary unconscious', Emirbayer and Desmond
maintain, demands a kind of rigorous interdisciplinarity, an attempt to
see both as a member of a social scientific discipline and as a cross-
disciplinary scholar in substantive conversation with other thinkers
from varied fields.

But even reading and speaking across disciplines within the
academy is not necessarily enough, Emirbayer and Desmond argue.
Seeing how one's specific disciplinary training over-determines one's
intellectual vision is insufficient if the academy is allowed to serve as
the beginning and end of the context/container we use for positing
epistemological limits. Even interdisciplinarity creates blind spots if
a larger scholarly subject position is not also critically interrogated.
So, people who do not read or cite or think beyond their own
disciplinary upbringing have a problem. But so do scholars who
privilege 'theoreticism'/'scholastic epistemocentrism' (a 'scientific
unconscious') over larger pragmatic concerns – or proponents of
'aesthetic universalism' who legitimize 'illegitimate racial divisions,
exaggerating racial and ethnic divisions' and producing reactionary
discourse about race traitors who supposedly air their group's dirty
laundry.

All three levels of reflexivity need to be carefully thematized and
analysed, Emirbayer and Desmond maintain, if we are going to come
up with forms of racial scholarship that do not simply dehumanize.
Also, they definitely want to highlight the fact that such work is quite
decidedly not about individual introspection alone. It means, instead,
'the establishment of regularized practices of vigilance over concepts
adopted ("ghetto" or "slum"?), coding schemes deployed, and
research operations carried out.' Quoting Bourdieu to make their

point, they propose all of their suggestions as ways for scholars, in collaboration with one another, to think seriously about new ways of 'convert[ing] reflexivity into a disposition constitutive of their scientific habitus, *a reflexivity reflex*'.

I agree with Emirbayer and Desmond on the larger framework necessary for true discussions of reflexivity's import, but I also worry that such expanded framing is far more difficult to pull off than their engaging arguments might be read (by some) to imply. For one thing, it seems to me that the pecking order of disciplinary authority within the social sciences (from economics through political science down to sociology and anthropology) pivots on this question of reflexivity quite provocatively, which seems to merit some discussion not just about how sociologists might rethink their notions of reflexivity but also about how the three versions/levels of reflexivity delineated in this analytically nuanced article might get taken up differently (toward divergent social and intellectual ends) across the social sciences. If thinking across social scientific disciplines is key, we should also ask ourselves why certain disciplinary dividing lines feel much more porous and negotiable than others in scholarship organized around questions of race.

Riggs muses about his film *Black Is, Black Ain't*, allowing him a certain transcendence of death while invoking the caresses of loved ones as what might finally allow him to die in peace. His is a filmic form of racial scholarship, I would argue, that feels a little orthogonal to the project laid out in this interesting and provocative (even if only 'preliminary') piece. Indeed, the ways in which Riggs deploys his film camera seem predicated on aesthetics and effect over and against science and systematicity, which leads me to ponder what kind of mandate (even manifesto) Emirbrayer and Desmond's project might become (as if they would even want such a label) were Riggs's iteration of an ostensible 'outside' to academic conversations about reflexivity (an outside flagged within academia just a bit in the aforementioned discussion about film being dismissed as art and not science) given some space to further enlarge the telling of reflexivity's links to race. If nothing else, Riggs's positioning might instantiate just one more challenge to the 'scientific unconscious' and its totalizing visions. That is, might it be useful to develop more of a critical conversation at the nexus between scientific and seemingly anti-scientific mobilizations of reflexivity, even as some might rightfully push back against that very dichotomization? This latter question possibly maps back onto the issue of intradisciplinary and interdisciplinary blinders that might make social science fields differently amenable to considering the three domains that this piece aptly flags for interrogation in ongoing discussions about how reflexivity matters in (and to) the contemporary study of race and racism.

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