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Humanising racialisation: Social psychology in a time of unexpected transformational conjunctions

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Abstract

The unexpected transformations produced by the conjunction of COVID-19, the murder of George Floyd and the resurgence of Black Lives Matter, highlight the importance of social psychological understandings and the need for a step change in theorisation of the social. This paper focuses on racialisation. It considers issues that social psychology needs to address in order to reduce inequalities and promote social justice. It draws on theoretical resources of intersectionality and hauntology to illuminate the ways in which social psychological research frequently makes black people visible in ways that exclude them from normative constructions. The final main part of the paper presents an analysis of an interview with the racing driver Lewis Hamilton to illuminate ways in which it is possible to humanise racialisation by giving recognition to the multiplicity and historical location of racialised positioning. The paper argues that, while social psychology has made vital contributions to the understanding of group processes and of racisms, there remains a need to humanize racialization by conducting holistic analyses of black people's (and others') intersectional identities.

Humanising racialisation: Social psychology in a time of unexpected transformational conjunctions

This paper calls for the humanising of racialised subjectivity in social psychology through engagement with processes of racialisation. It argues that social psychology needs to move beyond recognition that people's experiences are racialised to analysing the relational impacts of racism, both historically and in the present. The paper discusses the theoretical concepts of racialisation, racism, intersectionality and hauntology as central to a social psychology that promotes social equality. It argues that the unexpected conjunctions of the COVID-19 pandemic and the resurgence of Black Lives Matter have increased public understanding of the utility of social psychology and provoked new ways of thinking about racisms and racialisation. They, therefore, have the possibility to be positively transformational.

The paper first considers the ways in which the COVID-19 pandemic has illuminated social psychological contributions to addressing social problems. There has not yet, however, been a sustained social psychology contribution to considering racisms and racialisation in the wake of George Floyd's 2020 murder in the US and the resurgence of Black Lives Matter in many countries. The second section introduces the concepts of intersectionality, racialisation and hauntology, which inform the paper before the third section considers current social psychological approaches to racialisation. The fourth section draws on Sylvia Wynter's interrogation of what it is to be human and how an engagement with those who have been cast out of the category as colonized and worthless can provide new understandings. The final main section analyses an example from a major UK newspaper to illustrate the ways in which intersectionality, racialization and hauntology are simultaneously central to the humanising of racialised subjectivities. The paper argues that social psychology needs to retheorize the social, to encompass intersectional complexity and to recognise that personal and social histories are part of the everyday and of imagined futures if it is to make a step change towards transforming racialisation and racisms for the better.

COVID-19 and social psychological contributions

During the COVID-19 pandemic, social psychology entered the popular imagination in new ways. In many countries, the media asked social psychologists to explain how people's behaviour can be influenced, and the impact of policy decisions and leadership on adherence to COVID-19 rules (van Bavel et al., 2020; Jetten et al., 2020; Lalot et al., 2021). Various social psychologists worked to inform public debate and show the utility of behavioural science for ameliorating the pandemic. This increased visibility of social psychology is facilitated by three main issues. First, long-established bodies of work on social identities and group processes (Drury and Reicher, 2020), communication and language (Hill et al., 2020; Independent Sage, 2020; Stokoe, 2020) and health and community (Michie and West, 2021) were available to be mobilised and made accessible to the media. Second, many social psychologists are committed to making a positive difference to their societies (Ellemers, 2021). Third, the conditions created by, and reactions to, COVID-19 afforded possibilities of collaboration, including across areas of social and health psychology that are sometimes critical of each other (Haslam et al., 2020; Reicher and Drury, 2021; Rosenfeld et al., 2021; Williams et al., 2021). Kazak (2020) suggests that "psychology as a hub science can partner with others to provide scientifically based information about human behavior and the biopsychosocial concomitants of COVID-19." COVID-19 also facilitated media interviews and speedy publishing of preprints and texts in recognition that COVID-19 is a turning point for social psychology as well as for global populations.

It quickly became apparent that the pandemic exposed and exacerbated global and national inequalities linked with racialisation, ethnicization, social class, gender, nation, whether or not occupations involve dealing with the public and housing (Bowleg, 2020, Maestripieri, 2021, Platt & Warwick, 2020). Dramatic and traumatic as it is, COVID-19 does not stand alone as a globally transformational event. Smith et al., (2019) document several events that have produced rapid societal change. They argue that these require the conceptualisation of how societal-level, macro events are related to more proximal (micro) psychological processes. As they show, social psychology research frequently focuses on the micro or meso level, without considering the macro level. The insight that all levels operate simultaneously and that there are innovative methods for studying them, is central to the discussion below.

Theoretical underpinning: Racialisation, intersectionality and hauntology

Racialisation is a term coined by Frantz Fanon (1952) but made popular by Omi & Winant (1986) and Miles (1989). It illuminates the ways in which 'race', which many people think of as simply black, white, and Asian, for example, is not fixed, but changes over time and is different in different situations. It is made socially significant and meaningful rather than being fixed or natural. It is a socially constructed, relational process in which everybody has a racialized, and an ethnicised position. It involves exclusions and inclusions, in that people who are less powerful are often excluded from participation in meaningful processes in society. It is also a socially constructed process of subjectification in which people come to understand themselves as positioned in society and having particular identities (Murji & Solomos, 2005).

Intersectionality, a term coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989) has gained popularity partly because it allows an engagement with the complexity and multi-layered nature of everyday life and social categories (Lutz et al., 2011; McCall, 2005; Yuval-Davis, 2006). Its central point is that people are always simultaneously positioned in many social categories so that there is no essence to any category. A focus on any one social category can, therefore, only be understood in the context of other categories and of differences, as well as commonalities, within groups and between them. Gender and sexuality, for example, are also class-based and racialised social relations (Collins, 2019). Any social category is, therefore, always decentred by other social categories and stands in power relations to other categories. Collins & Bilge (2016) and Collins (2019) suggest that it is a critical social theory with six core ideas of intersectionality on which methodological strategies for decolonizing knowledge has been built: social inequality, epistemic power relations, relationality, the significance of historical and social contexts, complexity, and social justice. From an intersectional

perspective, the understanding of which categories are being evoked in any social situation and how social locations, emotional attachments, positioning in relation to nations and power relations (Anthias, 2020; Collins, 2019; Yuval-Davis, 2011) make a difference is not necessarily self-evident. Nor can it be assumed that racialised relations are only playing a part in interactions when identified as such.

Intersectionality is thus a heuristic reminder that all categories are associated with power relations and cannot be neutral (Brah and Phoenix, 2004; Collins, 1998). It is an onto-epistemological theory in that it is predicated on the notion of knowledge as situated and so differentiated since people occupy different social positions that change over time and across circumstances. At the same time, the nature of being is that people are multiple, constructed through difference, complex, nonessentialist and subject to change. Notions, of knowledge as partial, dynamic, and situated and people as multiple, complex and in process are central to intersectionality and fit with many current ways of theorising identities and social positions. It is particularly valuable to thinking about the humanising of racialisation in that it allows a focus on hierarchical and horizontal power relations and contradictions within social relations as well as considerations of embodied materiality. As intersectionality has burgeoned, it has been drawn on in many disciplines, including psychology (Warner, 2008). However, Settles et al., (2020) suggest that it has systematically been 'epistemically excluded' in psychology.

The third theoretical concept employed in this paper is Derrida's (1993) concept of 'hauntology'. This explains that history remains part of the present. Colin Davis (2005: 373) suggests that "undisclosed traumas of previous generations …disturb the lives of their descendants even and especially if they know nothing about their distant causes." A contemporary indication of how this may happen relates to a recent BBC documentary on Caribbean origin children, many of whom were, in the 1960s and 70s, misclassified as educationally subnormal by British educational psychologists and put into schools for the 'educationally subnormal'. The day after that program aired, the Division of Educational and Child Psychology in the UK apologised for this epistemically violent history (DECP, 2021), which has been marked by repeated attempts to prove that black people are less intelligent than white people (Richards, 2012). In terms of the haunting of undisclosed histories, some of those children, now adult, spoke for the first time about the trauma that had led them to keep that aspect of their histories secret and how they had compensated for it by, for example, spending long periods as students and, in consequence, having less time to spend with their children than they otherwise would. Their history, therefore, affected their children in this, and probably many other implicit ways. This exemplifies the ways in which "collective histories inform our current individual modes of being and the traces of the past create the contours of present life, and constrain our imaginative future projections" (Bradbury, 2020: 5). Although such hauntings are frequently disquieting, they can be spurs to consciousness and calls for future political action. (Lincoln and Lincoln, 2015).

The UK sociologist Paul Gilroy (2005) suggests that 'postcolonial melancholia' characterises postslavery nations and results from the denial of the impact of slavery and the losses that would be entailed by acknowledging them. Similarly, the US political scientist and psychoanalyst, Jane Flax (2010: 3), similarly suggests that denial of the impact of slavery leads to 'sometimes paralyzing wishes to magically erase the living past rather than engage in the arduous processes of realistically facing its effects and constructing practices to ameliorate them'. Once hauntings, absences and erasures make their ghostly appearance, repression no longer works, and something must be done

The relatively new social psychological notion of collective victimhood chimes to some extent with the conceptualisation of hauntology. It refers to the psychological experience and consequences of the harm that arises from victimisation and includes affect, behaviours and cognitions that produce collective identities and intergroup relations (Noor, et al., 2017). The theorisation of collective victimhood constructs it as complex, multi-layered, and impactful experiences. However, hauntology does not make victimhood central, focusing instead on the continued presence of history in the present.

The section below considers current social psychological approaches to racialisation.

Current social psychological approaches to racialisation

Social Identity Theory, which underpinned much behavioural science response to COVID-19, was developed from a desire to understand how the Holocaust could happen. Yet, Tajfel, who was central to its inception preferred to approach racism and its relationship with identities only indirectly (Billig, 1996), an approach that continues to be common (Reimer et al., 2020). Partly as a result, much social psychological work has not kept pace with current understandings of social categories and processes of racialisation. Given social psychology's tradition of considering one social category at a time and doing so from outsider, researcher perspectives, it is not well placed for understanding the complexity of social inequalities. Some psychologists are, however, now arguing for engaging with complex social inequalities by taking intersectional approaches to psychological science (Grzanka, et al., 2020).

Social psychology itself is a multifaceted enterprise that is neither neutral nor necessarily committed to social justice. As members of society, social psychologists are differentiated by whether they take for granted implicit social norms that perpetuate, rather than challenge, social inequities. Gergen (1973), challenged the presumptions that social psychology is a cumulative or progressive science; that it is value neutral and that social psychologists are objectively distanced from the research participants they observe. Equally, in the landmark text, *Changing the Subject* (Henriques et al., 1984), showed how social psychological concepts and research frequently served to maintain the political status quo and already-existing power relations. Reicher (2004), however, argues that criticisms of Social Identity Theory frequently traduce it by failing to recognise its focus on the importance of context or on the multiplicity of the social categories to which everyone belongs. Critiques such as these inspired generations of social psychologists to do social psychology differently and to put time and effort into demonstrating personal commitments to social justice. More recently, two areas of work illustrate ways in which interpretations of social psychological findings on difference, including racialisation, continue to be contested. First is the long-established area examining whether, and if so how, contact between groups reduces prejudice (the contact hypothesis). While work in this area has produced sophisticated methodology and many insights, as Dixon et al., (2020) point out, it repeatedly binarises the social psychology of intergroup relations as about 'us' and 'them', where 'us' in studies of racialisation are white people and the focus is on how white people think and feel about black people. As they argue, it is important to move beyond such binary thinking. In addition, the taken-for-grantedness of insiderness as white, perpetuates the outsiderness and exclusion of black people. In itself, therefore, contact cannot be the panacea for racism and leaves power relations and racialised hierarchies unaddressed in, for example, (lack of) contact between Protestants and Catholics in Northern Ireland (Dixon et al., 2020).

The second example concerns the drawing into psychology of the concept of 'microaggressions' to study the everyday, apparently minor ways in which racism is perpetuated in interactions. This area is one that focuses on the microinsults, microinvalidations, and micro assaults to which people from minoritised groups are routinely subjected (Sue, 2010). This area has the potential to 'humanise' people from minoritised groups, taking seriously their experiences, viewpoints and feelings and refusing the routine normalising of majority group practices. Freeman and Stewart (2021), however, suggest that many accounts of microaggressions are 'act-based' rather than 'harms-based' and that the focus needs to be shifted from those who are the micro aggressors, to the harms done to those who are aggressed. This is a hotly resisted area both outside, and within, psychology with some commentators eschewing the existence of microaggressions. Syed (2021) suggests that disagreements arise because diametrically opposed conceptualisations of society are at stake, one that views society as racist and the other that assumes it is equitable. Syed suggests that, until this is openly discussed, these positions cannot be reconciled. It is, however, questionable whether debate would lead to reconciliation, since debates are not neutral, but motivated by epistemological, ontological, and axiological commitments.

Social psychologists have been at the forefront of opposition to publications that explicitly reproduce racism by suggesting that there are inherent black-white differences that prove black people's inferiority (e.g., Tizard, 1974; letters from 40 psychologists from four departments, 1991, and Marks,

2020, in response to the publication of an article on 'race' differences by a psychologist who since 2020, has had papers on this theme retracted for racism and poor scholarship by various publications). That personal commitment characterises many psychologists, although others have complained that psychology is becoming too political in being avowedly anti-racist, (see, for example, the response to a complaint about this by the then editor of the UK *Psychologist*, Jon Sutton, 2020). Personal commitment does not, however, necessarily translate into theory and professional and research practices that promote social justice. This is evidenced by two apologies in 2021 from psychological bodies: the UK Division of Educational and Child Psychology (discussed above) and the American Psychological Association resolution adopted by their Council of Representatives, evocatively titled 'Apology to People of Color for APA's Role in Promoting, Perpetuating, and Failing to Challenge Racism, Racial Discrimination, and Human Hierarchy in U.S'.

The global eruptions that followed the murder of George Floyd and the surprise this engendered in many quarters, illuminated the fact that psychology has had little to say about what it means to be black in many societies. A major reason for this is the lack of explicit recognition that black people's positioning in societies is inextricably linked with histories of racism and colonialism. Thus, while since George Floyd's murder, there has been increasing acknowledgement that many Minority World societies are affluent because of their histories of enslavement and colonialism, blackness remains an outsider position in a discipline disproportionally populated by white psychologists. Since many white social psychologists (some of whom are themselves subject to anti-Semitism), see themselves as implacably opposed to racism, it is difficult for them to conceive that they may fail to see how social psychology perpetuates the 'normalised absence' and 'pathologised presence' of black people in social psychology, as in society (Phoenix, 1987). The African American sociologist W.E.B. Dubois's (1903) asked, 'How does it feel to be a problem'? which is consonant with a 'pathologised presence' approach.

The fact that there are consequences to leaving blackness and black people invisible was illuminated after the resurgence of Black Lives Matter, when various UK institutions, including universities, "sympathised with their BAME (Black and Minority Ethnic) staff" and were surprised by angry reactions from black staff who pointed out that this was either a gross failure to recognise, or denial of, the specificities of antiblack racism and the experiences and feelings of black people about these.

The conjunction of the visibility of the murder of George Floyd occurring and statistical evidence that black people were more likely than white people to die of COVID-19 (Platt and Warwick, 2020) led to an outpouring of testimonies about the pervasiveness and painfulness of experiences of racism. These gained traction as white young people joined demonstrations and various media published first person accounts. As a result, some people learned for the first time that multiple forms of racism are routine in the everyday lives of many black people but are generally left silent in the expectation of either not being believed or of having to deal with rebuttals or the explaining away of their experiences. The ubiquity of such testimonies led many people to argue that it is now no longer possible to deny the pervasiveness of racism. This, however, is questionable, since many studies find that racism is routinely denied (Andreouli, Greenland, & Howarth,2016) and race and racism are routinely avoided in interactions. As Sambaraju & McVittie (2021) suggest, "acknowledging that racism organizes much of our social lives… may raise various levels of discomfort" so there continues to be a dilemma for social psychologists between the visibility of race and the studied invisibility of racism. For social psychologists to address that dilemma requires a rethinking of ontology and epistemology, the nature of society, racialised social relations and intersectional social differences.

It has long been recognised in social constructionist and poststructuralist work as well as positioning theory, that we are all socially located and that this makes a difference to worldviews and experiences. Some social psychologists, particularly taking feminist perspectives also reflexively situate themselves in their research. This, however, is frequently superficial, with simply naming select social categories being treated as equivalent to analysing positioning and often being essentialised. To some extent this results from the space that would be taken up with discussion of the researcher in relatively short research papers in what sometimes seems to be self-indulgent ways. Yet, just as we recognise that our participants' positioning impacts on their lives and the

experiences they report, so it is equally important to consider how researchers' histories impact on the analytic insights they produce. Methodologically, there is a need for methods that recognize that psychologists are temporally, geographically, and institutionally located in institutions and nations that have particular ways of constructing people.

Humanising blackness

Following the Los Angeles riots in 1992, the African Caribbean novelist, dramatist and philosopher Sylvia Wynter wrote an open letter to her colleagues at Stanford University (where she was professor of Afro-American studies). In "No Humans Involved: An Open Letter to My Colleagues", she argued that academia discursively ignores, implicitly legitimates, and sustains social hierarchies where humanness and north Americanness are white and middle class.

> *Yet where did this system of classification come from? One that was held both by the officers involved in this specific case of the routine "nigger breaking" of Black males, as well as by the mainly white, middle-class suburban Simi Valley jurors? Most of all, and this is the point of my letter to you, why should the classifying acronym NHI [No Humans Involved], with its reflex anti-Black male behaviour-prescriptions, have been so actively held and deployed by the judicial officers of Los Angeles, and therefore by "the brightest and the best" graduates of both the professional and non-professional schools of the university system of the United States? By those whom we ourselves would have educated?*
>
> *How did they come to conceive of what it means to be both human and North American in the kinds of terms (i.e. to be White, of Euroamerican culture and descent, middle-class, college-educated and suburban) within whose logic the jobless and usually school dropout/push-out category of young Black males can be perceived, and therefore behaved towards, only as the Lack of the human, the Conceptual Other to being North American? The same way, as Zygmunt Bauman has pointed out, that all Germans of Jewish descent were made into and behaved towards as the Conceptual Other to German identity in its then PanAryan and Nazi form.*
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> *If, as Ralph Ellison alerted us to in his The Invisible Man, we see each other only through the "inner eyes" with which we look with our physical eyes upon reality, the question we must confront in the wake of the Rodney King Event becomes: What is our responsibility for the making of those "inner eyes?"* (Wynter, 2016).

Thirty years after Wynter's open letter to her colleagues, the reactions to the murder of George Floyd indicate that academia has not systematically risen to Wynter's challenge. There is a failure to recognise the implications of the ways in which racialisation and racisms continue to permeate everyday life in ways that construct black people as 'less than human'. Wynter, (2001) draws on Frantz Fanon's notion of sociogenesis to recognise that it is not produced in the body, but in the 'social imaginary grounded on colonial differences... I am who I am in relation to the other who sees me as such; and, in a society structured upon racial hierarchies, becoming black is bound up with being perceived as black by a white person' (Mignolo, 2015: 116). According to this formulation, selfunderstanding is always permeated and fractured by colonial histories of racialisation and the denial that conceptualisations of humanness is inextricably linked with such racial logics. The title of this paper, 'Humanising racialisation' draws attention to the ways in which social psychological attention to racialisation continues the twin processes of ignoring and/or including black people in ways that implicitly construct them as outside humanity.

The point that racialisation is both about the nature of being (what it is to be human in Wynter's terms) and about unequal, racialised, but unacknowledged social constructions of people finds some support in different areas of social psychological literature. The literature on unconscious, or implicit bias, built on research in Social Identity Theory, Self-Categorization Approach, entitativity and other social psychological work focuses on those who perpetuate discrimination and is designed to give insights into how to eradicate it. .This is not easy to do in that, as West and Eaton (2019) found in two studies on racism, participants can overestimate their levels of racial and gender-based egalitarianism, particularly those rated as most prejudiced These processes fit with Wetherell and

Potter's (1992) findings from discursive psychology research, that everyday racialised categories are complex and contradictory and are constructed in ways that routinely mask the hierarchies they (re)produce.

Wynter's sociogenic formulation raises three further issues relevant to the future of social psychology. First, Wynter addresses the question what it means to be human by recognising the simultaneity of race, class, gender, amongst other categories. This underlines the issue of intersectionality and its place in researching racism and racialised identities in social psychology. Second, is the question of how historical legacies are represented and recognised in thinking about group processes and social identities. Michael Billig (1996) reminds us that although Henri Tajfel, whose collaborative work produced Social Identity Theory was an experimental social psychologist, he

> "insisted upon the historical nature of social psychological phenomena. In general terms, rather than in specific detail, his arguments about the importance of historical understanding resemble those of Kenneth Gergen (1973 and 1994). Also, as will be seen, Tajfel insisted on the limitation of social psychology. In his view, social psychology on its own was insufficient for understanding important social phenomena; nor could social psychology ever hope to produce complete explanations." (Billig, 1996: 338)

This is a salutary reminder that while the experiments that produced general understandings of intergroup relations can be criticised for reducing the content of intergroup conflict to relatively trivial differences and implying that intergroup conflict is inevitable (Henriques, 1984), Tajfel having himself survived the Holocaust, did not consider that Social identity Theory could provide a full explanation of the racist mass slaughter of the Holocaust. Equally, while as we have seen above, current work on group processes grounded in Social Identity Theory has been invaluable to addressing the issues raised by the COVID-19 pandemic, they are not designed to address the sociogenic issues Wynter and Fanon raised (Smith et al., 2019).

The importance of an intersectional approach is illustrated by the recent testimonies and analyses of Tajfel's repeated sexual harassment of women over whom he had power, which is only being made public almost forty years after his death (Young and Hegarty, 2020). This demonstrates how people who make valuable contributions to social justice in one way can use their power to oppress other groups in unacknowledged ways. While Tajfel was solely responsible for his harassing behaviour, the general point for this paper is that it is frequently difficult to see the ways in which we ourselves are privileged and perpetuate the oppression of others (Rothenberg, 2000). In relation to social class, Valerie Walkerdine (2017) brings together intersectional sensibilities and histories to suggest that "We must understand the complex affective histories and entanglements as they relate to lives across the class divide—urban, rural, middle and working class, black and white, gay and straight, other possibilities and sexualities."

The third issue relevant to the future of social psychology concerns the question of how to analyse lived experience. The plethora of testimonies on experiences of racisms of different kinds are of course important. However, the telling of stories of experience is historically contingent and sociogenically produced. Yet, current testimonies are frequently individualised and transformed from being simultaneously about psychological and social issues to decontextualised stories to be consumed for edification, marvelled at, and pitied without any commitment to political change or to shifting disciplinary understandings. Paradoxically, this reinforces the disempowerment of those telling the stories since their understanding of their experiences ceases to be within their control and can be treated as tokenist. Perhaps even worse, it may be that such testimonies first elicit responses of care and then 'moves us into indifference' (Deanne Bell interviewed by Annie Brookman-Byrne, 2020). This is far removed from Fanon's and Wynter's focus on lived experience in order to theorise the imbrication of the personal and sociogenic (Lentin, 2020). This problem was much written about during the period when Racism Awareness Training was common in the UK and USA (Luthra and Oakley, 1991).

Since it is in the everyday that understandings of lived experience are (re)produced, we need to analyse everyday complexities. In a now classic, and highly influential publication, Michael Billig (1995) coined the phrase, 'banal nationalism' to show the power of everyday, endemic nationalism that is largely unexamined and unremarked, but buttresses more extreme, dangerous forms of nationalisms. In a parallel way, we need to think about the banality of racism and its everyday manifestations and invisibilities. Cheryan & Monin (2015) draw on self-categorization theory in bringing together nation and racism by considering the mundane question to visible minorities in many countries (in this case, Asian Americans), 'Where are you really from?' This denies them belonging to the nation, constitutes identity denial and impels Asian Americans to react by showing that they have national cultural knowledge and participate in practices generally considered American. From the viewpoint of universities, Osbourne, Barnett & Blackwood (2021) researched the experiences of seventeen black students (who are in a small minority in prestigious universities in the UK, as in many other countries). They point out that the hypervisibility of black students in those contexts enables their white colleagues to (re)produce cultures of exclusion that are cognitively and emotionally salient for black students. They conclude that, in seeking to increase diversity, universities need to think about the attitudes, knowledge and experience that white students bring to university with them since these impact on black students. As Kelly et al., (2020) point out in relation to professional psychologists, white people are significantly less likely than black people to perceive individual and systemic racism, partly because of their relative ignorance of historical racism. Equally, the ways in which teaching is done in universities also matters for the disruption or reproduction of everyday racism. Adams et al., (2008) showed in an experimental study, that 'standard pedagogy' may reproduce a modern form of scientific racism by understating the significance of racist oppression.

Just as the conjunctions of COVID-19, Black Lives Matter and climate change have exacerbated already-existing inequalities and fuelled action for social justice, so they have intensified alreadyexisting attempts to rethink epistemology, ontology, and methodology. This unforeseen conjunction of events and protests therefore has the potential to produce transformative re-imaginings of society and of political possibilities. In this process, there is clearly a new appetite, across racialised and ethnicised divides, to listen and to try to understand the nature of everyday racism and its insidious, damaging effects, recognising that this is not comprehensible without historicising it.

Writing from South Africa, and a feminist psychological perspective, Boonzaier & van Niekerk (2019) argued that psychology has to be decolonised.

> In South Africa in particular… there has been longstanding recognition of the role of psychology in enabling and justifying institutionalised racism through apartheid... Given this history, as well as the contemporary ways in which knowledge production within psychology continues to pathologise those with long histories of suffering…, there is little argument against the idea that psychology must indeed be decolonized.

Many social psychologists acknowledge that social psychology requires an infusion of new thinking that includes engagement with histories, interdisciplinary insights and disciplinary (not just personal) commitment to a social justice axiology (Smith et al., 2021). As is clear from social psychological work on group processes, however, groups are socially produced in different ways, and everybody is intersectionally positioned in several groups at once, so that in any context, some group memberships are given recognition and/or make a difference and others do not. The ways in which groups are brought into being in local contexts are themselves materially produced and sociohistorically constructed. The final main section below discusses concepts that facilitate the taking serious of the historical in the everyday and the ways in which people are always simultaneously positioned in multiple groups. It suggests the sorts of questions these theoretical perspectives might enable social psychology to answer in humanising racialisation within social psychology.

“This stuff came up that I’d suppressed over all these years”

The example below comes not from a research interview, but from a journalistic interview that elicits testimony from a well-known mixed-parentage racing driver, Lewis Hamilton, interviewed by the journalist and professor of Sociology, Gary Younge. His narrative illuminates the everyday relevance of the humanising of racialisation for social psychology. It is intended to provide an indication of how narratives may illuminate the issues central to the humanising of racialisation, rather than as a template or ideal type.

> “But in the past year, off the track Hamilton has started to find a voice about his racial identity. He has been taking a knee; raising a clenched fist. Long dormant concerns about racism and discrimination have been rudely awakened following the Black Lives Matter uprisings. In the process, Hamilton has transformed the way he sees himself: from a compliant go-with-the-flow character to a change agent who is determined to make waves. He has shaped the way others see him too, going from an inoffensive, if gaffe-prone, socialite focused only on his sport, to a politically aware role model conscious of his wider cultural significance. Now, he is about to take on the sport that brought him fortune and fame, ...
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> “It’s been a long journey for Hamilton, and there have been bumps along the road. “I’d be in Newcastle and people would shout, ‘Go back to your country,’” he says. “Or in Spain, in 2008, when people painted themselves black and put on wigs, and were really mocking my family. And I remember the sport not saying anything about it.”/…/
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> “Last year, that attitude changed. Before the Austrian Grand Prix, just a month after George Floyd’s murder, Formula One’s only ever Black driver donned a Black Lives Matter Tshirt and took the knee. When some drivers refused to follow his lead, he warned them that “silence is complicit”. In the end, they all wore End Racism T-shirts and 14 drivers joined him in the gesture, while six stood behind. /…/ At the same race, Formula One, which controls the cameras broadcasting the event, cut away from the moment some of the drivers took the knee, to instead show Red Bull skydivers dropping from the sky.
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> It was as though a dam broke. “This wrath of emotions came up and I couldn’t contain myself,” he says, recalling this profoundly emotional moment in a matter-of-fact way. “I was in tears. And this stuff came up that I’d suppressed over all these years. And it was so powerful and sad and also releasing. And I thought, ‘I can’t stay quiet. I need to speak out because there are people experiencing what I’m experiencing, or 10 times worse. Or 100 times worse. And they need me right now.’ And so when I did speak out, that was me letting the Black community know: ‘I hear you and I stand with you”.

There are numerous points of analytic interest in Hamilton’s account in terms of humanizing racialisation. Five of these are immediately apparent. First, his narrative identifies a key trigger that acts as a turning point, Black Lives Matter. He claims agency in transforming himself from someone who recognised that he was subject to racism but made no public response to actively symbolising Black Lives Matter by ‘taking the knee’. Many testimonies following George Floyd’s murder discuss it as a turning point (e.g., Phoenix et al., 2020). Winters (2020: 2) coined the term ‘black fatigue’ to explain George Floyd’s murder as a ‘tipping point’ because ‘it is physically, mentally, and emotionally draining to continue to experience inequities and even atrocities day after day when justice, equity, and fairness are purportedly legislated rights of all citizens of these United States of America.’ This shift, reported by Hamilton, alerts us to differences between people who are apparently in the same racialised categories and disrupts essentialist notions that, for example, black people all have the same perspective on racism or are the group most subjected to racism. As Brah (2022) suggests, there are multiple formations of power embedded in the intersections between gender, race, class, ethnicity, and sexuality. As in demonstrations for Black Lives Matter, politics of connectivity are, according to Brah, produced in and through struggles over ‘difference’. These can impel change.

Second, the racism Hamilton mentions is both geographically specific (blacking up and wearing wigs is unlikely to happen in 21st century UK), and evokes histories of exclusion. It is noteworthy that,

while Hamilton is of mixed parentage, having a white mother, he identifies as black in this account. His account is recognizable because it is intertextual with common forms of racism. Third, Hamilton's racialised positioning intersects with his socioeconomic status, success, fame, power relations, and (more implicitly), gender. This enables him to demand concerted action from the other Formula One drivers, persuading them to take a stand against racism and is able to set up his own Commission because he has the wealth and inclination and is buttressed by Black Lives Matter. The other Formula One drivers constitute one of the many groups to which he belongs, despite their differences of racialisation.

Fourth Hamilton evocatively invokes the political power of the affective: 'a wrath of emotions… couldn't contain myself… all this stuff came up that I had suppressed…' While he does not say so, those emotions are made legible because of the politically mobilising anger and upset that became manifest following George Floyd's murder. Fifth, he makes common cause with 'the Black community' and wants them to know that he does , despite being more protected by his positioning than many. His relationality here is also narrated as intergenerational and personal in that he goes on to speak about his hopes for his nephew and niece.

Overall, the context Hamilton evokes is one in which personal and historical relations haunt social relations. The recent publication of 'Why public schoolboys like me and Boris Johnson aren't fit to run our country' also indicates how the positioning of the mainly white sons of some of the most affluent people in the UK (and beyond) includes taken for granted intersectional histories of privilege and othering.

> We laughed at anyone not like us, and the repertoire on repeat included gags about slaves and nuns and women hurdlers. One September, after a boy came back from a holiday in Australia, we had jokes about Aborigines. We internalised this poison like a vaccine, later making us insensitive as witnesses to all but the most vicious instances of discrimination. Everyone who was not us, a boy at a private boarding school from the late 70s to the early 80s, was beneath us. Obviously, we too were a minority, but of all the minorities we were the most important. Of course we were. We'd end up running the country. (Beard, 2021)

Beard's autobiographical writing argues that the emotional culture of boarding school produced a sense of entitlement, privilege, and untouchability. It gives insights into how racialisation is intersectional (with whiteness, gender, able bodiedness and social class), taken for granted and passed down the generations.

In conclusion

The unexpected transformations produced by the conjunction of COVID-19, the murder of George Floyd and the resurgence of Black Lives Matter, highlight the importance of social psychological understandings and the need for a step change in theorisation of the social. This paper argues that, while social psychology has made vital contributions to the understanding of group processes and of racisms, there remains a need to humanize racialization by producing holistic analyses of black people's (and others') intersectional identities (cf. Wynter, 2001, 2003). This requires analysis of how personal and historical understandings are sedimented into, and haunt, contemporary life in ways that frequently exclude black people from the characteristics that constitute humanness. It suggests that personal histories are linked with longer histories of, for example, enslavement and colonialism. Social psychologists, therefore, need to understand how events that become historically significant affect everyday practices and permeate social relations, constraining and/or facilitating possible futures. It is not, therefore, possible to understand the impact of histories on any one person without knowing the constellation of relations and effects that have been passed down the generations and sedimented into everyday practices.

Research done on the intergenerational transmission of different forms of trauma, provides a good starting point for humanising racialised subjectivities (Khazan, 2018; Lev-Wiesel, 2007; WilliamsWashington and Mills, 2018). Equally important, we need to know more about how racism and racialised positioning is part of the present and the affects and relationality they enable. There

are some creative psychosocial attempts to conduct such intergenerational analyses (Walkerdine, Olsvold and Rudberg, 2013; Walkerdine, 2016). A media interview is not designed to address particular research questions. However, the interview with Lewis Hamilton allows the analysis of one of the many public testimonies produced following the murder of George Floyd by black people and others subjected to racisms. It contributes to understanding of the conditions that produce group identifications and political action. It contributes to answering Wynter's (2001) question 'What is it to be human?'

The paper argues that an intersectional approach is crucial to the project of humanizing racialisation and normalising black people's visibility. Taking an intersectional approach to Hamilton's newspaper interview allows us to examine his processes of meaning making. It shows the importance of recognising the contradictory nature of power relations and the contingent nature of the groups to which Hamilton belongs. His narrative contradicts notions that political action is only possible on the basis of a simplistic and reductionist identity politics (Mbembe, 2018) since it is possible to see different groups with whom he identifies at different times and some of the identities that he does not refer to are clearly taken for granted in their intersections with racialisation. Hamilton's account confirms the plethora of social psychological work that shows that identities and the meanings people make from them are important to what they do (Wetherell and Mohanty, 2010).

Hamilton's narrative illuminates processes by which crisis can accelerate change (Rosa, 2013), forcing recognition of inequalities and fuelling: personal testimony, recognition of intersectional commonalities/differences and claims to humanity through resistance and political action. Hamilton constructs a process of change away from silence about racism to a politics of refusal of racism, renunciation of complicity with it and visible resistance to racism. George Floyd's murder and the resulting resurgence of Black Lives Matter demonstrates how old racialised relations haunt the present. In enabling a complex view of Hamilton and his actions, intersectional analyses facilitate the humanising of racialisation. It provides theoretical resources to make holistic sense of everyday events and the processes involved in identity change and the narrative construction of identities as well as claims to a different, liveable, future. All these issues are important to future social psychology research designed to promote social justice.

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The COVID-19 pandemic has led to collaborations and publications that have rejuvenated social psychology and highlighted the creative productivity of collaboration . Equally, the multiethnic protests, critical engagement and testimonies impelled by George Floyd's murder and the resurgence of Black Lives Matter have revitalised thinking about social psychological work and hopes for society. These developments, together with the explosion of creative new methods and foci in multiple disciplines, are helping to produce new ways of understanding racialisation. I am deeply indebted to the numerous people who have illuminated this landscape. Thanks to the editors, Stephen Gibson and Laura Smith, who were exemplary in being forbearing, encouraging and incisive. I am particularly grateful to Jill Bradbury and Nick Hopkins for their careful and detailed comments on the first draft of this paper. The final version is much better for their generous inputs.

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