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ON THE DANGERS OF DISCONNECTING RACE
AND RACISM

DAVID MASON

Abstract   The paper critically reviews some recent contributions to the debate
about the nature of race and racism. It questions the analytic and empirical divorce
between race and racism for which Floya Anthias and others have argued. It
suggests that disconnecting race and racism while insisting on the retention of a
concept of race could well give rise to a view that race is, after all, a valid scientific
concept denoting a real biological division of the human species. This paper argues,
instead, for a focus on race as a social relationship rather than a category of human
being. It suggests that race and racism are inextricably linked and that, moreover,
recently discovered new racisms depend for their power on the continued influence
of biologically determinist modes of conceptualising human difference.

Key words: race, racism, new racism, biological determinism.

Introduction

In recent papers Floya Anthias (1990, 1992) has sought to provide a
framework for analysing the relationship, *inter alia*, among race, ethnicity,
class and racism (see also Anthias and Yuval-Davis 1992). In particular, she
has sought to trace the connections between what she calls ' "race" and
ethnic phenomena' (1992). Anthias's arguments are well made and thought-
provoking. Among other things they seek to provide a rationale for retaining
the term racism for modes of inferiorisation which are not based on, or do
not appeal to, biological determinism. There is much in Anthias's discussions
with which it is possible to agree. Nevertheless, I do have a number of
reservations. In particular, it will be the purpose of this paper to question the
analytic and empirical divorce between race and racism for which Anthias
argues. This in turn has a number of implications for the way we utilise the
term racism.

Much has been written about the appropriate status of the concept of race
in sociological investigation. For most writers the starting point is to note the
effective demise of the biological concept of race in scientific circles and the
lack of scientific validity attaching to systems of racial typology (Banton 1967,
1977, 1987, 1988; Banton and Harwood 1975; Miles 1982; Montague 1964,
1974). Nevertheless, it has been common to argue that race is a legitimate
concept for sociological analysis because social actors treat it as a real basis
for social differentiation and organise their lives and exclusionary practices in
terms of it (cf. van den Berghe 1967).

In recent years this view has been increasingly challenged. Robert Miles (1982), for example, has argued that race is an ideological construct whose use for social scientific analysis serves only to reinforce its legitimacy. Miles has argued instead for a focus on the racialisation of class relationships and the concept of racialisation has been taken up by other writers (cf. Small 1991).

Despite this critique, the term race has not disappeared from sociological debate. The concept continues to be used: often in an untheorised and uncritical way. Some writers have acknowledged its contested character by placing the term in inverted commas (Jenkins 1986; Mason 1990; Ratcliffe 1991), while others have, from a variety of different standpoints, sought to justify its retention for social scientific purposes (Anthias 1990, 1992; Gilroy 1987; Omi and Winant 1986; Smith 1986).

Anthias's contribution to the debate is a particularly important one for the present discussion. In brief, she argues that race remains a pivotal concept in sociology, though one which is to be subsumed as a special case of a more general concept of ethnos.[2] However, despite this claim to centrality, she provides no sustained defence of her usage other than to argue, convincingly in my view, that the concept of racialisation implies a concept of race. She does, however, insist that race is to be distinguished analytically from racism on the ground that 'the separation of human populations according to a notion of human stock difference, the characteristic mark of the construct of race, need not posit a hierarchy of groups . . .'. It is racism which grafts onto race 'discourses and practices of inferiorisation' although racism is not confined to situations where such discourses and practices are linked to 'notions of biogenetic difference' (1990: 22).

There are, then, three interrelated propositions in Anthias's argument. The first is that it is necessary to retain a sociological concept of race. The second is that a notion of race, biologically defined, need not imply racism. The third is that racism may occur in situations where biological determinism is not invoked. These arguments deserve careful scrutiny since they have a bearing on the questions not only of how we are to use the concepts involved but also on the relationship of academic to popular and political discourse. In brief, I shall argue that Anthias is right to insist on the retention of a concept of race for analytic purposes. However, I shall argue against the disconnection of race and racism and I shall raise a number of difficulties about the extended concept of racism for which she argues.

Race and Racism

There are, I would argue, serious problems in disentangling race and racism while insisting on the retention of a concept of race. Indeed there is a danger that doing so could well give rise to a view that race is, after all, a

valid scientific concept denoting a real biological division of the human species. As Miles has argued, hierarchisation has historically been a feature of concepts of race (1989). If race exists as a construct it is because it is linked socially to racism and it is for this reason that Miles seeks to banish the term from social scientific analysis. However, one might equally argue that it is precisely this linkage which justifies its retention as a sociological concept, since it is the link which clearly establishes the *social* character of race. Retaining the concept of race, then, entails recognising that race and racism are mutually constitutive and being alive to the implications this has for our use of both concepts.

I would suggest that the most socially significant feature of the race concept, as it emerged in the race science of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, was not the claim to be able to divide the human species into categories on the basis of phenotypical characteristics. It was rather the linking of those categorisations to personal, social and cultural competences. It was this that justified the transformation of morphologies into hierarchies and enabled race science to be enlisted as a justification for differential treatment. However, it is important to note that the racialisation of political discourse and the popular imagination did not depend on scientific developments (cf. Fenton 1990). Lorimer (1978), for example, has shown the significance of the status insecurities of a burgeoning middle class for the growth of an aggressive popular racism in mid-nineteenth century Britain.[3] Others have drawn attention to the role of imperial expansion in producing a racially organised division of labour and political order (cf. Rex's discussion of the colonial estate (1970, 1981, 1986)). Thus, even in the heyday of race science, the social significance of race did not rest merely in the (scientific or other) justifications mobilised in support of conquest and exclusion. Rather race was itself part of social practices which, as writers as diverse as Rex (1970, 1981) and Fanon (1967) have shown, served to confirm and validate the way that these social relationships were conceptualised.

Race, then, was never simply a division of the human species claiming the authority of science. Rather it exemplified the ways in which structural positions and symbolic representations interact in giving rise to social actions which produce and reproduce exclusion, exploitation and resistance. The sociological concern with race, then, is with the ways in which people's access to resources is structured by social action organised by reference to (or justified in terms of) biologically determinist beliefs about the capacities and rights attaching to membership of categories distinguished by some actual or putative phenotypical or genotypical characteristic. There is more to this than simply the ideological justification of class exploitation and oppression as Miles implies (1989). It is a mistake to see the processes involved in purely material terms (aspects of the relations of economic production and exchange), with access to political and symbolic resources relegated to the status of mere adjuncts. It is no accident that a central feature of struggles and

debates in those areas of social life structured in terms of race and ethnicity
has frequently been a demand for the right to define oneself (Blauner 1972;
Carmichael and Hamilton 1968; Gilroy 1990; Modood 1988, 1990).

Looked at from this point of view, then, race does not refer to categories
of human beings (divisions of the human species) whether scientifically
validated or socially constructed as markers of difference. Writers such as
Miles are right to reject the reification which this involves. Rather race is a
social relationship. Like all other social relationships it cannot be understood
apart from the symbols in terms of which it is apprehended by its partici-
pants. These symbols do not have to be 'true' in any ultimate sense, nor do
they have to be uncontested, in order to be central to our understanding and
analysis. Indeed, the fact that so many social struggles are fought out at the
level of symbols may help to explain why explanations of human conduct
which are rooted solely in the realm of putative material interests have often
proved to have such poor predictive value. (Witness the consternation of
socialists when faced with the reactions of the European proletariat to the
events of 1914, or with the electoral behaviour of substantial sections of the
British working class since 1979.)

There are, then, no races but there is race.[4] However, this raises a further
question. If race is a social relationship, how are we to determine which social
actions and interactions are structured in terms of race? We cannot simply
read off an answer from, for example, the phenotypical characteristics of
the parties to the interaction; not least because biologically determinist
representations do not depend solely on the existence of physiognomic
differences (witness the case of Jews in Nazi Germany or the Irish in
nineteenth century Britain – though deterministic thinking has often led to
claims of the existence of such differences (cf. Curtis 1968)). We need to
know what symbolic productions are being mobilised. We are concerned,
then, with the question of whether racism is present.

Racism: New for Old?

I have argued that race as a social relationship is predicated on the
existence of racism. However, this is a concept which is subject to almost as
much ideological and academic contestation as race. It is used both as an
analytic concept and as a popular political epithet and it is widely employed,
in both contexts, in an untheorised and frequently sloppy way. For some
writers, it is to be restricted to the realm of ideas or ideologies, expressive of
a particular set of ideational representations of material social relations
(Banton 1970; Miles 1989). For others, it is a concept denoting both
ideational phenomena (attitudes, beliefs, ideologies), and social actions and
structural locations. The notion of institutional racism has often been invoked

to express this last idea (Carmichael and Hamilton 1968; Mason 1982a; Williams 1985).

Miles has referred to the expansion of the term in this way as conceptual inflation (1989), a phenomenon which is well represented in Anthias's recent contributions to the debate (1990, 1992). Anthias argues that racism can be both discursive and systemic and, moreover, is not confined to situations in which race (as she defines it) is present but extends to a range of situations in which broader categories of ethnic phenomena are in play. She defines racism in the following terms:

> Where practices of exclusion, that are the hallmark of all ethnic phenomena, are accompanied by discourses and practices of inferiorisation against any ethnically constituted difference, then we can talk about racism. Racist discourse involves the use of ethnic categorisations (which might be constructed around cultural, linguistic or territorial boundaries as well as supposed biological ones) as signifiers of an immutable and deterministic difference (1990:23).

There are, in my view, a number of problems with this usage. Since ethnicity is said to be marked by the 'social construction of an origin as a basis for community or collectivity' (1992: 422), it is difficult to see what situations, on this definition, can be said to be free of racism. Her problems with class are illustrative of the difficulty. Thus she argues:

> Of course, claims for exclusion, subordination and inferiorisation can also occur on the basis of class, gender, age, and so on. In the case of class discourse . . . the hierarchisation is often based on seeing class positioning as an expression of an *individual* human inequality, which is transmitted genetically (1990:23 – my emphasis).

In fact, it is not clear either that all class situations (conventionally defined) exhibit these highly individualised characteristics (consider, for example, notions of underclass and so-called cultures of poverty), or that these features are absent from all situations she would prefer to define as ethnic or racial: consider, for instance, claims that members of some racially or ethnically defined groups have superior (individual) entrepreneurial aptitudes.

One reason for seeking to extend or inflate the concept of racism may be a wish to recognise phenomenal similarities and historical continuities between patterns of interaction in which biological determinism is operative and those in which it is not. This concern has been central to attempts to identify a 'new racism' (Barker 1981; Balibar 1991).[5] It is appropriate at this point, therefore, to turn to a discussion of this issue since some of the difficulties highlighted by the concept of a 'new racism' throw further light on the relationship of race and racism. Two questions are particularly important. Is there a 'new racism', as opposed to a new rhetorical disguise, and to what extent is it really *new*?

Proponents of the idea that there is a 'new racism' typically refer to the ways in which political arguments in favour of the exclusion of migrants, or

the segregation of members of different population groups, appeal to notions of cultural incompatibility and to the allegedly mutually disruptive and negative consequences of forcing such cultures to mix (Balibar 1991: 21). These ideas can be found in, for example, the now famous utterances of Enoch Powell (Stacey 1970), more widely in sections of the Conservative Party (Barker 1981 (but see note 5), Tomlinson 1990: 27) and in arguments about so-called minority (or group) rights in South Africa. A number of questions are raised, however, by claims that such arguments reflect the increasing salience of a new racism. The first is: Do such utterances accurately reveal the reasoning and meanings that underlie them, or do they serve merely as a self-consciously erected smoke-screen behind which lurk older forms of determinism? The second question is: To what extent are they endorsed in their expressed form by the wider populations towards which such political appeals are directed? In other words, even if there is a new racism, how widely is it endorsed by, and to what extent does it serve to guide the actions of, the wider population.

A further question is that of to what extent this new racism is really new despite the language in which it is expressed. The social significance of the race concept, as I argued above, lay not in dividing the human population into phenotypically based categories but rather in linking those categories with social and cultural characteristics and competences. Similarly, the concerns of writers such as Gobineau with hybridisation were concerns about both physical deterioration and social and cultural decline (1970). Thus notions of cultural incompatibility have always been central to biologically rooted conceptions of race and are not new (as Balibar himself, in fact, concedes (1991:23)). What *may* be new is the demise of biological determinism as the expressed explanation for that incompatibility. The key issue, then, is whether such biologically determinist formulations have, indeed, disappeared.

Technically, the rise of modern genetics has rendered untenable the notions of immutability which were central to the old race science. However, this has not banished the link between the biological and the social and cultural. For example, such apparently dispassionate scientific pursuits as the measurement of gene frequencies, or blood group distributions, typically take as their starting point not patterns of distribution revealed by the analysis itself but pre-defined social and political categories, such as those associated with arbitrary national or geographical boundaries. Such analysis, then, has the effect of showing that these, socially defined, populations differ from one another in their genetic, i.e. biological, makeup. The point here is not that such scientific endeavour re-creates racial categories. It can, however, easily give rise to the interpretation that social and political divisions *reflect* genetic difference. This, in turn, helps to maintain and reinforce biologically determinist thinking in the population more generally. Sometimes culture and biology are more closely linked. In a recent newspaper article a consultant

psychiatrist claimed that the relative infrequency of a genetic trait facilitating the physiological processing of alcohol among members of the population of Japan could be held to explain the success of the Japanese economy, by giving rise to productively advantageous patterns of alcohol consumption (Brewer 1992). When such reasoning is linked more closely to social and political concerns, the implications for popular beliefs are dramatic (consider here the work of Jensen (1969) and Eysenck (1971)). The point about both of these examples is that they resonate easily with everyday perspectives on group difference which have little difficulty with biological determinism.

Of course, such genetic reasoning is not a simple replication of the immutable categorisations of old-style race science. Not only is the notion of ultimate fixity banished by modern scientific knowledge but the construction of arguments in terms of relative gene frequencies means that the deterministic link between the average characteristics of the group and the characteristics of any given individual member is broken. Whether these subtleties are apparent to members of the wider population is difficult to say but, even if they are, it is paradoxically possible that they might even facilitate the justification of discriminatory or exclusionary behaviour. This is because they could provide a basis for what Michael Banton has called statistical discrimination (1983), while making it easier to explain the exceptions in a way which did not involve an abandonment of the model.[6] Moreover, such reasoning can easily accommodate a *relative* fixity by invoking the inheritability of genetic traits and the relatively long time scales required for change.

We do not really know how far popular biological reasoning has kept up with advances in science. Nor do we know to what extent the so-called 'new racism' has supplanted the 'old' in popular conceptualisations. Impressionistic evidence would suggest that biological reasoning of various kinds, and of varying degrees of sophistication, is widespread in popular beliefs about race, ethnicity, nation and, more widely, about gender and class. Indeed, it is precisely the persistence of biologically deterministic modes of thinking which might be expected to give the 'new racism' its power. In other words, intentionally or not, 'new racist' utterances may appeal to a sub-text of biological determinism; to the idiom of race without invoking its substance. They can explicitly invoke apparently rational argument (and even scientific or social scientific research) while calling up the spirits of more deeply rooted deterministic beliefs and assumptions. Whether this is so or not must properly be the subject of empirical investigation. What we must certainly not do is to read off 'real' meanings and justifications from the phenotypical characteristics of the parties to the interaction. To do so would be to revalidate race as a category of difference, to deny that relationships between, say, black and white people could ever be anything other than 'racial' and to treat all utterances, motives and intentions (expressed or not) as simply functional equivalents of biologically deterministic racism.[7]

If this argument is correct, the implication is that the 'new' racism may not be so new after all. If it is wrong, then there remains a more fundamental problem. Why, if there is indeed a new conceptualisation of group difference based on putative cultural incompatibility, should we refer to it as racism? If a determinist biology is not invoked, that is, if race is not present, why refer to the symbolic representations of the relationships involved as racism? This is a problem not only for the idea of a 'new' racism but also for Anthias. If race is a sub-type of ethnos, as she insists, why should we not regard racism as a special case of ethnocentrism and reserve the term for those symbolic representations which invoke biologically determinist explanations of group difference (cf. Banton 1988)? Particularly if we conceive such determinism somewhat more broadly than that embodied in nineteenth century racial typologies, such a procedure would have the merit of distinguishing racism from those forms of ethnocentrism which appear to be a feature of almost all known societies.

It might be objected that to treat racism in this way is to see it as simply one form of a ubiquitous and primordial ethnocentrism and thus to ignore the distinctiveness and historical specificity of European racism (Anthias 1990, 1992; Miles 1982, 1989; Rex 1970, 1981, 1986; van den Berghe 1967). According to this view the distinctiveness of European racism lies in its origins variously in: the rise of the capitalist mode of production; the mass migrations entailed in European expansion; and imperial exploitation. A related claim is that European racism involves a unique capacity to impose. In other words, racism is intrinsically linked to power.

It could, of course, be argued that historical specificity cuts both ways. Thus, if we are to take it seriously we should, perhaps, follow Michael Banton in disaggregating and disentangling historically the different kinds of symbol systems attached to human differentiation (cf. 1987). Anthias specifically rejects such a view. Nevertheless, she does not wish to extend the concept of racism to include all instances of ethnocentrism. Indeed, she does not even wish to utilise the term to include all instances in which negatively evaluative symbols involving biogenetic criteria are mobilised. This is because she wishes to invoke power. It is this, above all else, which qualitatively distinguishes racism from more routine ethnocentrism. In other words, a condition for the existence of racism is the power to render the symbols of inferiorisation effective (1992: 432).

What this amounts to is a sophisticated restatement of the argument that 'racism equals prejudice plus power'. The problem with this view is that it involves a wholly unsociological view of power. Power is not a quantum which is subject to distribution in a zero-sum game. It is an aspect of social relationships in which individuals and groups relate to one another in the context of a variety of resources. This includes not merely the here and now structural distribution of material resources, such as access to the means of production, but also relative capacities to mobilise around a variety of

possible symbols of group unity. Such mobilisation (closure in Parkin's terms (1979)) entails attempts to maintain or alter the current pattern of resource distribution. It is the relative success of groups and individuals in these struggles that we designate as power. If this is so, then it follows that there are few, if any, situations in which people are wholly powerless. Indeed, history is replete with examples of the extraordinary resilience of the human spirit under the most oppressive of conditions. Consider for a moment the myriad forms of resistance mobilised by plantation slaves in the Deep South (Genovese 1975). Viewing power in this way avoids the danger that we relegate members of excluded or discriminated categories to the status of mere victims. It allows us, indeed forces us, to pay more attention to their claims for our attention to their demands and needs *as they define them*.

This linking of racism as a uniquely white phenomenon to the question of power defined in a zero-sum way gives rise to a number of highly problematic propositions. Thus we are forced to conclude that those unemployed and increasingly pauperised white denizens of Britain's council estates and inner cities, who express racist views, have power while successful entrepreneurial and professional members of, for example, Leicester's Gujerati community do not.[8] Leaving aside the fact that these categories are themselves fractured in various ways – they are, for example, gendered – the reality is that both are engaged in a variety of interactions in which diverse resources and patterns of mobilisation come into play. Negative stereotypes and evaluations of other groups represent one of the kinds of symbolic resources which can be mobilised and which affect the power chances of groups in particular circumstances. Power, then, is both relational and situational.

Related difficulties arise when the concept of racism is inflated to include patterns of systematic disadvantage and when we ask when such disadvantage is to count as racism. The answer, 'when it arises from racist practices' amounts to little more than the circular argument that racism causes racism. Yet Anthias's account suffers in the end from a circularity of this sort. Thus she argues that white racism is to be distinguished by its effectivity. The evidence for this effectivity, however, is what she calls systemic racism. In other words we know when racism is present because its effectiveness is marked by its capacity to give rise to racism. Since not all discursive expressions of ethnocentrism are to count as racism, and not all patterns of systematic disadvantage count as systemic racism, there can be no criteria for distinguishing racism which do not refer back to itself. This is less than helpful analytically.

Why should there be such pressure to inflate the concept in this way? The reason, I suspect, is that the recognition of historical continuities and phenomenal similarities between sets of beliefs and social practices, gives rise to an assumption that some *essentialist* identity is to be discovered. In addition there is an unspoken, and probably unrecognised, belief that if we

name something we have explained it and that, in the case of something as undesirable as racism, we have also condemned it and begun to exorcise it.

Proceeding in this way, however, gets us away from a sociological analysis and instead becomes primarily concerned with the correct assignment of labels. This undermines our capacity *as sociologists* to make a distinctive contribution to the understanding of the relationships in question or to their transformation. Indeed constructing an analysis on the basis of this highly extended (or inflated) concept of racism may actually undermine our sensitivity to self-chosen ethnic and/or religious identities and to patterns of response and resistance, while defining the terrain solely in terms of 'white', or more accurately dominant group, practices and discourses.

Faced with these various difficulties it is tempting to conclude, with Michael Banton, that the term racism is of limited analytic value and that we could probably do without it (1988: 25–6). If we are to retain it, it should in my view be reserved for those situations in which groups of people are hierarchically distinguished from one another on the basis of some notion of stock difference and where symbolic representations are mobilised which emphasise the social and cultural relevance of biologically rooted characteristics. This is effectively a similar definition to that advanced by Banton in 1970 (1970:18). It argues against a conceptual inflation which extends the term to social structures and practices, and it roots the concept in essentially biological explanations and representations. Where I think I differ from both Banton and proponents of the view that a 'new' racism is dominant is that I believe reports of the death of the 'old' one have been greatly exaggerated. Indeed, I suggested above that, to the extent that the new racism exists, it depends to some degree upon the continued power of the old. Moreover, there is a variety of modes of naming of self and other which have been said to characterise new racist discourses. This has led many writers to find it necessary to speak of racisms (see, for example, Anthias and Yuval-Davis 1992). If I am right about the importance of the sub-text and idiom of the old racism, what we may be dealing with here is a dialectic of continuity and transformation. The continuities are, I suggest, central to the effectiveness of the novel forms.

Conclusion

The central theme of the arguments presented above is that those phenomena which we designate with the term race are social relationships. They entail structural locations and resource distributions which are produced and reproduced in and through social interactions. Such interactions entail, *inter alia*, self-conscious mobilisation to defend or challenge prevailing patterns of distribution. Thus resources are both struggled over and contribute to the effectiveness of exclusionary or usurpationary strategies. The processes

involved have been variously designated by such concepts as: group form-ation (Mason 1982b, 1985); racial formation (Omi and Winant 1986); social closure (Parkin 1979); and boundary formation (Wallman 1986). A key feature is the way in which symbols of self and other are mobilised in the process of boundary formation. Of course, the power to define is not evenly distributed and it is precisely for this reason that such struggles often take place around the question of identity. It is also why symbol systems which can both tap common sense understanding and appear to appeal to the authority of science are so important: hence the significance of racism.

The power of racism as a symbol system makes it crucial that we try to understand it and its relationship to other modes of conceptualising group difference. In this paper, I have argued that the disconnection of race from racism, and the inflation of the concept of racism in the ways outlined, fail to advance our understanding and undermine our capacity as sociologists to make a contribution to the explanation of the phenomena of racial and ethnic inequality and conflict.

So far from banishing the concept of race, then, we have to sociologise it and to analyse sensitively and systematically its place in the construction and maintenance of social boundaries. This would enable us also to conceptualise racialisation as the process by which relationships become constructed as the social relation race. Racism is central to this process. Disconnecting race and racism entails either a revalidation of the notion that there are races or an abandonment of our capacity to explain the power of racism, new or old.

Notes

1. Earlier versions of the arguments in this article were developed in a paper presented to the conference, *Social Order in Post-Classical Sociology*, to mark the retirement of Professor Michael Banton, Bristol, September 8th–10th, 1992 (Mason 1992a) and in a University of Leicester Discussion Paper (1992b). They were also presented to a seminar in the Department of Sociological Studies at the University of Sheffield. I am grateful to participants in the Bristol con-ference and the Sheffield seminar for their comments.
2. Interestingly, part of her argument stems from a dissatisfaction with attempts (which she associates with the work of writers as diverse as Robert Miles and John Rex) to subsume racial domination and exploitation within a class problematic. This is a dissatisfaction commonly expressed in defending an emphasis on race as an independent variable.
3. The negative stereotypes mobilised in this period also had their sources in developments far removed from science – for example in the images of childlike helplessness mobilised by the anti-slavery movement (Lorimer 1978).
4. Looked at in this way, we can agree with Anthias's implied criticism of Miles that a concept of racialisation implies a concept of race without conceding the existence of races. We may further note that, from this perspective, the problem with the designation of the sociological study of the phenomena in question as 'race relations' is not, as Miles argues (1982: 22–43), the implicit acceptance of the existence of races. Rather the problem is that, if race is a social relationship, the notion of race relations is a tautology.

5. There is, in fact, a number of different formulations of the idea of a 'new racism'. Thus Barker is concerned with the development of sociobiological notions which stress the alleged naturalness of group exclusiveness. This usage of the concept has been well criticised by Miles (1989). Balibar, by contrast, emphasises notions of cultural incompatibility. I am more concerned here with the latter. Nevertheless, this diversity in usage of what is intended to be a sub-type of the generic concept of racism should alert us to a potential problem. The concept of new racism is discussed more fully below.

6. Thus, in one company in which colleagues and I have conducted research, the relatively high incidence of the sickle cell gene among persons of African descent was used as a justification for excluding all members of minority ethnic groups from work in conditions said to be likely to trigger sickle cell anaemia (Jewson et al. 1990: 116–7).

7. Something of this kind characterised John Rex's attempt to define what he called 'race relations situations' when he invoked the notion of non-deterministic theories which operated deterministically. This amounted in practice to a claim of functional equivalence (Rex 1970: 50–1).

8. The obverse of this view is that all white people, whatever their personal views, actions and involvements, are racist. Thus, for example, a document issued by the Leicestershire Race Awareness Consortium argues:

> Until racial justice is achieved every white person in Britain falls into one or other of these racist categories: (1) Racist; (2) Anti-racist racist. ... A white person who harbours no racial prejudices nor engages in any discriminatory behaviour is still racist. S/he is racist by virtue of being part of a system which showers upon white people benefits and privileges that are denied to black people. However, if s/he takes active steps to change that system, to remedy the situation, then s/he becomes 'anti-racist-racist'. It is only in the absence of such a system can (sic) any white person in Britain be described a 'non-racist' (Leicestershire Race Awareness Consortium, N.D.)

While this may, from some points of view, be a satisfactory, and satisfying, political statement, it is difficult to view it as very helpful analytically. Even if one accepts the argument, it merely relocates the burden of developing relevant and operational concepts for describing and analysing the structures, actions and beliefs which have been subsumed.

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