Perspectives on Racism

Jenny Hutt

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Apparently, it's common. Tyres explode when you drive in high temperatures out on this big country. My colleague Kerry and I are on the road from Broome to Fitzroy Crossing when ours blows. As we inspect the shredded remains, help arrives in the form of a young couple, in a large vehicle, baby on board, boat in tow, on their way home 1000 kms away. Soon the heavy tyre is off the roof and our blow-out is replaced. Its over 40 degrees and I can feel the back of my neck beginning to burn. They give us chilled water from their on-board fridge. I am touched as we thank them and I say with feeling, 'I'm very grateful we live in a country where people help each other out!'. The young man who works for the Roads Board is used to helping people out like this. He says, 'It's not true for everyone. I've come across Blackfellas who didn't have all the tools they needed to replace a tyre, who'd been sitting there all day, because no one would stop to help them'.

Introduction

This article is about racism. My interest was prompted by a study group to focus on the history of the relationship between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and other Australians, which I wrote about in this Journal (Hutt, 2018). This work made apparent to me the racism embedded in our history. I wanted to learn more about racism: where it comes from, why it is still prevalent today and how it can be transformed. I began with a search of literature on contemporary social research and anti-racism practice, and along the way discovered the contribution to this field of J.L. Moreno, the founder of psychodrama, and some of his influential contemporaries. This article presents my findings.

There are several reasons why getting a greater grasp on racism matters to me. It's relevant to my personal and work relationships. It's essential professional development for me as a diversity educator and facilitator. It's also relevant to me as a sociodramatist, psychodrama trainer and member of AANZPA. For a number of years, now, AANZPA colleagues, trainees and

practitioners, have explored their experiences and shared their wisdom in this area. This has included participation by some in sociodrama training workshops and conference sessions conducted by my colleague Bev Hosking and myself about working interculturally, and grappling with identity, belonging and racism. I notice that some matters surface and get dealt with in these workshops which might not otherwise arise. 'Nga mihi nui' to Bev, and to Chris Hill, Astrid Mbani and Helen Phelan who recently shared their experiences in response to an early version of this article in an online conference session. I feel deep appreciation for your companionship as we have been exploring this terrain together.

Engaging in conversations about racism can seem daunting. Some people report that it is becoming more challenging to discuss racism, rather than less (Bernard, 2021). Harvard social psychologist, Robert Livingston, sees a need to increase our confidence, competence and commitment to be able to engage in racial dialogue. 'If we want to make profound and sustainable racial progress in organisations and society, then we have to reach people on a deeper intellectual, emotional and moral level… Nothing will change until we begin to have honest and informed conversations about race and decide as a community to do something about it' (Livingston, 2021, pp. xiii-xiv). I hope that this article will be a resource for those warming up to and participating in such conversations within AANZPA and beyond.

How we understand racism affects whether we recognise it and if we think we can do anything about it. Philosopher Kwame Anthony Appiah says racism is not the only social inequality or motive for discrimination which matters: 'ask Christians in Indonesia or Pakistan, Muslims in Europe, or LGBT people in Uganda. Ask women everywhere. But when it comes to racial inequality, even as much has changed, much remains the same' (Appiah, 2015, p. 2).

Origins

A broad historical perspective on racism reveals how recent it is in human affairs and some of its key characteristics. Estimations of how long it has been with us range between 170 and 400 years (Allport, 1954; Kandola, 2018; Appiah, 2018). The human tendency to identify in ingroups and outgroups and to create social hierarchies has been around a lot longer. Social hierarchies are thought to have started when human groups began farming and settled in larger population groups (Harari, 2011). These hierarchies often included servants and slaves. Kwame Anthony Appiah (2018) observes that until several hundred years ago 'the colour of your skin wasn't even seen as fixed: it simply showed what part of the world you came from. The key dividing lines were religion and language not appearance'. Racial or colour prejudice as we know it today didn't exist

during the Egyptian, Greek and Roman empires: in fact, as Kandola (2018) states, several Roman Emperors were African.

Solvability

As several contemporary writers observe, the recency of racism in human societies is significant. Importantly, it tells us that racism is not an inevitable aspect of human nature about which nothing can be done (Kandola, 2018; Kendi 2019; Livingston, 2021). Livingston reminds us that racial equity is achievable. 'That's not just my opinion — logic, data, and scientific evidence all speak to the solvability of racism'. It's achievable, desirable and recognised in the USA by an overwhelming majority of citizens as critical in moving forward (Livingston, 2021).

Categorisation

Racist ideas came to the fore during the Enlightenment, an intellectual and philosophical movement that dominated the world of ideas in Europe in the 17th and 18th centuries (Soutphommasane, 2015, p. 16). European scientists started categorising everything in the natural world and turned their attention to human beings. Science writer, Angela Saini (2019, p. 47), tells us 'Categorising humans became a never-ending business. Every gentleman and scholar (and they were almost exclusively men) drew up his own dividing lines, some going with as few as a couple of races, others with dozens or more. Many never saw the people they were describing, instead relying on second-hand accounts from travellers, or just hearsay'.

Hierarchies

Contemporary genetic research confirms that race is not a biological reality: humans share more than 99% of our genetic makeup (Soutphommasane, 2015). But during the Enlightenment the fascination of these early scientists with creating categories was problematic. As Angela Saini observes, 'However the lines were drawn, once defined, these 'races' rapidly became slotted into hierarchies based on the politics of the time, character conflated with appearance, political circumstance becoming biological fact. Linnaeus, for example, described Indigenous Americans (his 'red' race) as having straight black hair and wide nostrils, but also as subjugated, as though subjugation were in their nature' (Saini, 2009, pp. 47-48). Differences in physical appearance customs and language were seen as reflections of a deeper, innate otherness (King, 2019, p. 6).

Essentialism

A racist world view attributes to groups of people innate qualities that are not only visible at the surface of their skins but are intrinsic to their physical and mental capacities. These innate qualities are seen as belonging to everyone in

the group, and as inherited and unchanging. They are seen as the reason for our success and failure — as individuals, groups, societies, nations. (Saini, 2019, p.7) Furthermore, inferiorities and superiorities of racial groups have been used to explain current racial inequalities in society (Kendi, 2019, p. 20). The poor are seen to be poor because of their own inadequacies.

Superiority and inferiority

A historical perspective on race generates a broader systemic perspective. The race 'science' of the Enlightenment fuelled and was used to justify the European slave trade and colonisation. By 1910, 85% of the globe had been colonised by the powers of Europe. Former Australian Race Discrimination Commissioner, Tim Soutphommasane, notes that race quickly became a characteristic that helped to explain why civilised humanity was something only Europeans could supposedly achieve. To be white and European was the very meaning of being civilised. In the case of Australia, British colonialism treated the First Nations as people too low in the scale of social organisation to be acknowledged as possessing rights and interests in land (Soutphommasane, 2015, pp. 16-17).

White supremacy

The historical development of the Australian state followed a similar trajectory to those of other white settler states such as the United States, Canada, New Zealand, Rhodesia and South Africa. The pattern was similar: territory was taken from inhabitants, indigenous populations were displaced, the colonial enterprise caused many deaths, all regarded as inevitable features of colonial progress. 'Within this colonial world there emerged a transnational European polity, in which colour bars separated Europeans from others. For the white European, there was secure knowledge of one's membership of a superior race, and tranquil consciousness that one's skin amounted to special admittance into the ranks of civilisation' (Soutphommasane, 2015, p. 18). Today this is called 'white supremacy' and the inherited privilege that flows thereafter 'white privilege'. Cultural critic and feminist writer bell hooks reminds us that these white supremacist ways of thinking and acting are expressed by people of all skin colours (hooks, 2013). From this perspective, racism is not only prejudice against people of colour, but is about whiteness, discrimination in favour of white people. White supremacy is the view that white equals better, superior, more worthy, more credible, more deserving, and more valuable (Saad, 2020), and is deeply embedded in the socius or wider culture. White people, says racial justice consultant Robin Di Angelo (2018), have to learn to see themselves not just as individuals, but as part of a group, to get to know what white supremacy affords them.

Australia

There are distinctive aspects of Australia's colonial history which impact experiences of racism today. One is the absence of a founding treaty between the British and the First Nations people living on their ancestral lands. Having initially assumed Eastern Australia was largely uninhabited and that locals would quickly abandon their country to newcomers, the colonial experience of the British in Australia soon proved otherwise. First Nations peoples strongly contested the encroachment on their traditional lands, stood their ground and resisted the invasion with every means available to them (Reynolds, 2021, p. 34). The British decision to abandon the policy of treaty making in Australia had disastrous consequences for First Nations people, condemning hundreds to violent deaths. Once planted in Australia, racial violence became habitual, expected and normalised (Reynolds, 2021, p. 22). The violent conflict in Tasmania between 1827 and 1831 drew attention to the impact of proceeding with colonisation without treaties. 'Colonial officials called for the negotiation of treaties and the imperial government made the significant decision to negotiate with the Maori at the very start of the settlement of New Zealand in 1840' (Reynolds 2021, p. 47).

Another distinctive feature of Australian history relates to the constitution. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples were excluded from the development of the Australian Constitution which came into effect in 1901. Racist clauses in this document ensured Aboriginal people were not counted as citizens and gave the state the power to discriminate on the basis of race. This immediately enabled legislation to establish the White Australia policy which restricted immigration on the basis of race between 1901 and 1958. While a 1967 referendum finally allowed First Nations peoples to be counted in the census and the Commonwealth to become involved in Aboriginal Affairs, it removed mention of Aboriginal peoples in the constitution (Torres Strait Islanders were never mentioned) and retained the race powers installed in 1901. This is notoriously difficult to change (most referendums fail) and so Australia's founding document perpetuates a racist world view deep in the heart of the state machinery. The *Uluru Statement from the Heart,* which is written to the Australian people, not to the government, seeks constitutional reforms to empower First Nations peoples to take a rightful place in their own country. It calls for the establishment of a First Nations Voice enshrined in the Constitution (Davis & Williams, 2021).

Legalised racism

Professor Larissa Behrendt (2012) writes that since colonisation, the neglect, cruelty, and intrusion of the state into the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples has been profound, constraining many basic rights — where people could live, travel, who they could associate with, who they could

marry, whether they could own property and whether they received their wages. Further dispossession from reserve lands between the two World Wars left families with no savings, few employment opportunities and no money for rent with little option but to build makeshift dwellings on the edge of towns. Without decent housing and no water or sewage systems authorities found it easy to claim that children were not properly cared for. After World War II, protection boards kept a strict control over First Nations peoples' lives and the removal of their children increased (Behrendt, 2012, pp. 162-3). Tim Soutphommasane (2015, p. 54) describes this as legalised racism.

These intrusive incursions in the name of protection were strongly resisted and objected to. Indigenous people began building their own political organisations that specifically advocated for citizenship rights, land rights and rights to political participation such as voting and being represented in parliament (Behrendt, 2012, pp. 162-3). Amongst these voices were William Ferguson and John Patten who wrote in 1938, 'that 26 January… is not a day of rejoicing for Australia's Aborigines; it is a day of mourning.' They continued, 'we ask you to change your whole attitude towards us to a more enlightened one. Your present official attitude is one of prejudice and misunderstanding. We ask you to be proud of the Australian Aboriginal, and to take his hand in friendship... We ask you to be proud of the Australian Aborigines, and not to mislead any longer by the superstition that we are a naturally backward and low race. This is a scientific lie, which has helped to push our people down and down into the mire. At worst, we are no more dirty, lazy, stupid, criminal, or immoral than yourselves. Also, your slanders against our race are a moral lie, told to throw all the blame for your troubles onto us. You, who originally conquered us by guns against our spears, now rely on superiority of numbers to support your false claims of moral and intellectual superiority… After 150 years, we ask you to review the situation and give us a fair deal — a New Deal for Aborigines. The cards have been stacked against us, and we now ask you to play the game like decent Australians. Remember, we do not ask for charity, we ask for justice' (Patten & Ferguson, 1938, in Heiss & Minter, 2008).

United States

Racism is a global phenomena. Around the time Jack Patten and William Ferguson were calling for a new deal for Aborigines, J.L. Moreno had been applying sociometry to race relations in the USA, work which is described in the next pages along with that of his influential contemporaries. The first of these was Franz Boas.

Franz Boas

Boas, a German-born migrant to the US in 1890 was the founder of cultural anthropology. He developed a new paradigm called cultural relativism

which countered the 'race science' which had divided humanity into vastly different categories. Boas had an epiphany as he studied the migration of Inuit people on Baffin Island in the Canadian artic. He had originally seen the Inuit as objects of research, not quite as people. As he lived among the Inuit and got to know them as individuals with personal histories and coherent customs, he concluded that Europeans had no right to look down on them. The key message of Boas and his students at Columbia University (who included anthropologists Alfred Kroeber, Ruth Benedict, Zora Neale Hurston, Margaret Mead1) was that, in order to live intelligently in the world, we should view the lives of others through an empathic lens, suspending judgement about the way they see social reality until we understand it, and in turn we should look at our own society with the same dispassion and scepticism with which we study other societies (King, 2019, p. 9). They taught that no society is the endpoint of human social evolution (p. 13). Boas saw ideas about race themselves as a product of history, 'a rationalisation for something a group of people desperately want to believe: that they are higher, better, and more advanced than some other group. Race was how Europeans explained to themselves their own sense of privilege and achievement' (p. 106).

J.L. Moreno

As a European Jew migrating to the USA from Vienna in 1925 Moreno arrived at a particularly xenophobic period in American history. After substantial migration between 1890 and 1910 increased the proportion of overseas born Americans to 15%, some 13.5 million people, U.S. immigration policy changed dramatically. The new approach was designed to reduce the future populations of Jews, Italians, Poles and Slovaks, effectively banning others including Asians, and revoking the citizenship of American women who married foreign men ineligible for citizenship because of their race or national origin. This immigration policy dominated the next four decades, until its reversal in 1965. Along with it, universities began to limit the places for 'race-alien' and 'foreign–born' individuals (King, 2019).

During this period a racist ideology was firmly embedded in US society. At the end of the American Civil War in 1865, former Confederate generals and officeholders were pardoned and returned to positions of power in Congress and the federal government. They launched a new wave of race-oriented legislation. 'Legally enforced segregation, prohibitions on interracial marriage, voting restrictions, and other policies introduced from the 1890s forward created a race-based system of politics and social relations — the authoritarian apartheid scheme eventually known as Jim Crow'

1 Jonathan Moreno recalls Mead was a regular visitor at the Moreno household.

(King, 2019). Eleven million southern Blacks[2] moved to northern cities in two great waves between 1910 and 1940 (Moreno, 2014; Eberhardt, 2019). 'White Americans in Northern cities and towns resented and felt threatened by the influx…The racism encountered by Black Americans was in some ways as harsh as, if more subtle than, that they had experienced for generations in the south' (Moreno, 2014, p. 129).

As J.L. Moreno developed psychodrama, including the disciplines of sociometry and sociodrama, he had a keen eye on the racism of his time. Moreno's sociometric research included a focus on intergroup relations between ethnic groups and nationalities. He observed that as children developed sociometric links they showed no spontaneous aversion for children of other races and nationalities. Younger children showed no preference for children from one racial and ethnic group over another, however, as they got older they gradually developed a preference for others from their own group. He could see no evidence that parental influence was the exclusive cause of racial prejudice: the influences of peer group norms and standards, and of key individuals in crystallising those norms were also significant. Sociometric research of the time noted that social divisions manifested as a) one group withdrawing from the other, or b) both groups withdrawing from one another, both termed 'cleavage' or as c) open friction, termed 'hostility and aggression' (Moreno, 1934).

J.L. Moreno and the sociologist Helen Jennings collaborated to conduct long-term sociometric research at the New York State Training School for Girls, a reformatory school for teenage girls in Hudson NY. Jonathan Moreno notes that his father and those he worked with were among the first social scientists to be sensitive to race issues and to attempt to ameliorate racial tensions, using the State Training School as a laboratory (Moreno, 2014, p. 129). He says J.L. made a special effort to show with sociograms that the Black and white residents could live and work together rather than being segregated. At Hudson, sociodrama was developed to build on the sociometric explorations used. 'Sociometric reorganisation of the girls' cottages and work groups were only one form of intervention. While Moreno believed that people should be able to choose with whom they wanted to associate, that any good society would enable its actual social structures to comport with the tele[3] of its members for one another, he also recognised that prejudices could create false and dangerous divisions. Simply allowing people to organise into groups

2 There are a variety of terms used in this paper to describe Black Americans or African Americans, depending on who I am quoting. When quoting J.L Moreno the term Negro, which was current at the time, is used. I am guided by Robin DiAngelo who in her latest book *Nice Racism* (2021) decided to capitalise Black but not capitalise white as the latter is used by white supremacists.

3 Tele is a sociometric term denoting the flow of feeling towards another (which may be positive, negative or neutral) and the flow of feeling from another (which may be positive, negative or neutral).

without establishing genuine tele relationships might only reinforce racial, ethnic or tribal conflicts. These conflicts or potential conflicts had to be dealt with in sociodramas, especially in role reversals, so that people could understand one another from the different points of view' (pp. 120-130).

Moreno joined an influential group of social scientists engaging with the challenges of racism. His working relationship with Helen Jennings helped put him in touch with her mentor Gardner Murphy at Columbia University and through him Moreno came into relationship with the major social scientists in the US. By the mid 1930s his publications on sociometry, along with public support from key figures, made him well known in the social sciences. By the late 1930s he could count among those who were involved in his works a long list of American social scientists and psychologists, including Frans Boas, Kurt Lewin and Gordon Allport. These people were keenly interested in race relations, social conflict and intercultural training.

Sociodrama

Moreno's description of his own work addressing racism in *Psychodrama: Volume 1* shows how active and experimental his approach was. (Moreno, 1946, pp. 367-383). His aim for sociodrama was to teach about social truth, truth about social structures and conflicts, by means of dramatic methods (Moreno, 1948). When he engaged Richard and Margaret Cowley[4] in a sociodrama on 'black-white' relations in 1945, his record shows daring and sensitivity by all three and offers a vivid picture of the racism experienced in their social context. The setting is an intercultural education workshop being held in an auditorium at a large university in one of the western states of the USA. 130 people are present, 6 of them African American, 124 of them white. Most participants have attended such an open session before. Selections from this record are described below.

Margaret and Richard are an African American couple, both graduate students, whom Moreno invites to the stage, asking them to set out where they live. During the university year Richard and Margaret live in one room, a living space they had considerable difficulty securing. However, it's their apartment in a black neighbourhood back in North Carolina they chose to show the audience. Moreno encourages them to sit with each other and converse about their experiences of the university. He suggests they may have felt isolated and asks if the well-educated whites treated them better than other white people.

Margaret encourages Richard to recount a recent conversation he had with Evan[5], a white intercultural studies student. Evan has made wide-

4 Fictitious names

5 This man is unnamed in the sociodrama. I have invented a fictitious name for ease of telling.

ranging comments on race including an account of a friend with biased opinions who has refused to hear a Black American speaker on amalgamation and inter-marriage, saying 'the Negroes were making a mistake to approach it that way'. Margaret asks why Richard didn't say much in response: he says he didn't know Evan, so he just listened. Evan has also commented on the 92nd Infantry Division an Black American infantry division of the United States Army, which didn't hold the line during the war in Italy. An investigator's report published in Time, concluded that the division didn't do so well in terms of fighting the war: 'After all they were primitive people. They were unable to handle the technical instruments of war. It was going to take some time to come up to that'. Evan concluded this must be a blow to all Black American families implying that they had let the side down. In response, Richard expressed concern for the soldiers themselves telling Evan there were contrasting perspectives in the Black American press. The young men were illiterate, insufficiently trained and there were morale problems — they resented that the top officers in their division, who were white, were not kindly disposed to them. In response Evan warned Richard, 'It's a white man's country. Don't you go around telling that story here!'.

Later in the session it is clarified that Richard and Margaret did not expect to be on the stage that evening. Richard describes it as a wonderful thing to be able to feel and live this thing that's not acting. In an extended interview we discover Richard works for the state department of welfare supervising the schools of North Carolina and Margaret teaches library science at one of the North Carolina colleges for African Americans. We discover who they voted for; what newspapers and books they read; and their projections of life in 12 years time: the end of Jim Crow and what that will mean for them and their children.

In his analysis afterwards Moreno speaks about the tendency to see members of a particular group as a singular identical collective, commenting that while such social identities have no organic reality, they are continuously projected and believed in. His conclusion? His analysis shows that the audience needs to become better acquainted with the true life role of a 'Negro' family not only intellectually, not only as neighbours, but in a psychodramatic sense, 'living and working it out together' on the stage. I read this to mean, white people not just knowing *about* people of ethnic or cultural groups different from their own, but *being with* others; not only *engaging*, but *reversing roles* with others and *seeing the world through their eyes*. This includes seeing themselves through the eyes of others, as an intrinsic part of the situation, part of the problem and part of the solution. To me, the spirit of this assessment by Moreno is still salient today.

Kurt Lewin

Moreno formed a strong relationship with Kurt Lewin who established the Centre for Group Dynamics at MIT and whose students studied with Moreno and went on to establish the National Training Laboratories in Bethel, Maine. Lewin invented 'sensitivity training' first as a response to racial conflict. Like Moreno he was interested not just in academic concepts but in an experimental approach: action research. Lewin was a European Jew whose mother had been murdered by the Nazi regime. He and Moreno shared a passion for democracy, and in Lewin's case this was applied to organisational life. Lewin became a founding figure in the field of organisational development before his early death in 1947. One aspect of racism which Lewin explored in his collected papers, published posthumously in 1967, was self-hatred among Jews, focussed on the self but also on other Jews. Today this is recognised as 'internalised racism' and the resulting conflict between people of the same ethnic or cultural group as 'lateral racism'.

Gordon Allport

Psychologist Gordon Allport, another of Moreno's contemporaries, became a highly regarded expert on racism. His landmark text, *The nature of prejudice*, published in 1954 is still referred to in current social science literature. It focused primarily on the prejudices of Protestant whites against African Americans, Jews and Roman Catholics. In this comprehensive review Allport examined prejudgement, the formation of ingroups and outgroups, the acquisition of prejudice, the dynamics of prejudice, prejudiced and tolerant personalities, and approaches to overcome prejudice. He examined prejudice at an individual, group, social and political level.

Allport defined ethnic prejudice as 'an antipathy based upon a faulty and inflexible generalisation'. This antipathy could be expressed or simply felt. It had thinking, feeling and action elements, some expressed, others not. It could be directed toward a whole group of people, or toward an individual because they belong to that group (Allport, 1954, p. 9). He concluded that prejudices incorporate beliefs, such as stereotypes, which can be challenged; and attitudes, which are much more difficult to change. He distinguished between what people believed, *prejudice*, and behaviour based on that belief, *discrimination*. Allport contrasted discriminatory behaviours based on how energetic they were: from expressing antagonism with like-minded friends or occasionally to strangers; avoiding members of the disliked group; taking steps to exclude all members of the group from employment, housing, political rights, educational or recreational opportunities, churches, hospitals or some other social privileges; through to acts of violence or semi violence, lynching, pogroms, massacres and programs of genocide (pp. 14-15).

Allport's examination of the effect of contact between groups, since labelled 'contact theory' is perhaps his best-known legacy. In his recent book *Humankind: a hopeful history* Bregman (2020, p. 354) highlights Allport's visit to South Africa in 1956 to argue the case that apartheid wasn't the solution to the nation's problem, but the cause.

While Allport refers very briefly to Moreno's sociometric research, it is the use of psychodrama in overcoming prejudice to which he gives greater attention. He recommends the following ways of reducing intergroup tensions: legislation, educational programs, contact and acquaintance programs, group retraining, exhortation, individual therapy and catharsis. He identifies discussion, sociodrama and group retraining as small group processes used successfully in educative programs. Of group retraining he says, 'one of the boldest advances of modern social science comes from the invention of role-playing and other techniques that lead to a kind of forced empathy.' He notes, the individual who submits him or herself to a re-training program is in it up to their eyes, 'being required to act out the roles of other people and learning through such 'psychodrama' what it feels like to be in another's shoes'. They gain insight regarding their own motives, anxieties, and projections. Sometimes such training programs are supplemented by private sessions with a counsellor who helps with further self-examination. 'As perspective grows, a deeper understanding of the feelings and thoughts of others develops. Along with such personal involvement comes better conceptualisation of the principles of human relations' (Allport, 1954, pp. 479-499).

Allport (p. 493) observes that many people interested to improve their human relations skills and techniques of democratic leadership 'may soon learn that it is their own attitudes and biases that are blocking their effectiveness as team leaders, teachers and executives'. He describes others gaining from directly practicing ways to respond to racist comments (not dissimilar to workshops some of us run today). He suggests that school children, too, may easily be led into role-playing. 'By playing the part of a child in an out-group the juvenile actor may learn through his own organic sensations something of the discomfort and defensiveness engendered by discrimination' (pp. 484-493).

Progress

In 1948, the United Nations adopted the International Declaration of Human Rights. Civil rights campaigns in many countries finally saw legislation adopted to deal with racial discrimination and recognise human rights. In Aotearoa New Zealand and Australia such legislation was introduced between 1975 and 1986. Subsequently, equal employment opportunities to dismantle discrimination, and workplace diversity initiatives to foster more inclusive, equitable organisations with greater capacity to recognise and

value differences, have been put in place. There is now much greater contact between people of different ethnic groups in the workplace and in sporting settings, for example, and there has been a gradual shift towards more progressive social values. Human rights legislation has been further developed since and in 2007 the United Nations adopted the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Steven Pinker (2018) observes that in the last 70 years racial and ethnic prejudice has been declining world-wide. While in 1950 nearly half the countries of the world had laws that discriminated against ethnic or racial minorities, by 2003, fewer than a fifth did. A huge 2008 survey by World Public Opinion Poll of 21 developed or developing nations found that, in every one, large majorities of respondents (averaging 90%) said that it is important for people of different races, ethnicities and religions to be treated equally. Pinker cites research on emancipative values, also called liberal values, which see people prioritise freedom over security, diversity over uniformity, autonomy over authority, creativity over discipline and individuality over conformity. He notes the values of Western countries have been getting steadily more liberal and results from 95 countries in the World Values Survey show that 'in every part of the world people have become more liberal. A lot more liberal' (Pinker, 2018, pp. 222-225).

Socialisation

Given this progress, we might wonder why racist ideas still persist. The answer seems to be that they are conserved in our culture. We absorb them in our environment, not just from our parents, leaders or peer group, but in the representations, absences, tropes and memes of popular culture which imbue our lives. For any of us who think we are above racism — that it simply doesn't apply to us — Robin Di Angelo (2018), author of *White fragility*, asks that we wake up to our socialisation. Getting more aware of the impact of our socialisation is an important key to interrupting it.

An illustration of the way we absorb racist ideas is given by Jennifer Eberhardt, a Professor of Social Psychology who has spent the past twenty years pioneering research into racial bias which she uses in her work with US police departments to transform racist outcomes. The research she presents in her book *Biased: the new science of race and inequality* is fascinating and compelling, and her personal anecdotes affecting. An example is the following interaction with her son:

Some years ago, Eberhardt was with her five-year old son Everett on a plane, he was wide-eyed, taking it all in. He looked around and saw a Black passenger. He said, 'Hey that guy looks like Daddy.' She looked at the man who did not look anything like Daddy, not in any way. She checked to see if Everett saw someone else, but the guy was the only Black man on the plane. She thought it ironic that as a race researcher she was going to have to

explain to her Black child that not all Black people look alike. She looked again thinking that maybe as a child Everett was seeing something different than adults might. The guy was shorter, had no similar features, different skin colour and hair. This man had dreadlocks flowing down his back, while Everett's father is bald. As she gathered her thoughts preparing to lecture her son in the way that she might inform an observant student in her class, he looked up at her and said, 'I hope that man doesn't rob the plane'.

''What did you say?' I asked him, wishing I had not heard what I heard. And he said it again, as innocently and sweetly as you can imagine from a bright-eyed boy trying to understand the world: 'I hope he doesn't rob the plane.' I was on the brink of being upset. 'Why would you say that?' I asked as gently as I could. 'You know Daddy wouldn't rob a plane.' 'Yes' he said 'I know.' 'Well, why did you say that?' This time my voice dropped an octave and turned sharp. Everett looked at me with a really sad face and said very solemnly 'I don't know why I said that. I don't know why I was *thinking* that?'.

Eberhardt describes telling this story to members of a highly defensive police department which had found itself under the spotlight. 'Just telling that story reminded me of how much that moment hurt. I took a deep breath, and when I looked back out at the crowd in the auditorium, I saw that the expressions had changed. Their eyes had softened. They were no longer uniformed police officers, and I was no longer a university researcher. We were parents, unable to protect our children from a world that is often bewildering and frightening, a world that influences them so profoundly, so insidiously, and so unconsciously that they — and we — don't know why we think the way we do. With a heavy heart, I continued with my point. We are living with such severe racial stratification that even a five-year-old can tell us what is supposed to happen next. Even with no malice — even with no hatred — the black-crime association made its way into the mind of my five-year-old son, into all of our children, into all of us' (Eberhardt, 2009, pp. 3-4).

Aversive racism

As liberal values have been on the rise, racism seems to have morphed. Several commentators, including Robert Livingston, observe a change in the expression of racism from more blatant acts of exclusion, oppression and violence in the first half of the 20th century, to more subtle forms in the latter half of the 20th century and into the 21st. The cultural shift towards egalitarian values in the wake of civil rights and other social movements in the 1960s saw white people began to genuinely adopt egalitarian values — including the belief that all people, regardless of race, should be treated with dignity and have the same access to opportunity. However, negative feelings towards Black people did not fully disappear but went underground (Livingston, 2021, pp. 26-27).

Social psychologist, Stephen Franzoi describes aversive racism in the US context: 'On the one hand the majority of whites hold to egalitarian values that stress equal treatment of all people and a sympathy for social groups who have been mistreated in the past. Therefore, they sympathise with the victims of racial prejudice and tend to support public policies that promote racial equality. On the other hand, because of exposure to unflattering stereotypes and media images of African Americans as lazy, unmotivated, and violent, and due to simple ingroup-outgroup biases, many whites come to possess negative feelings and beliefs about blacks that directly contradict their egalitarian values'. The Protestant work ethic, which emphasises self-reliance and individual initiative in pursuing life goals, reinforces these negative social perceptions. 'Given their own relative lack of personal experience with the negative impact of racial prejudice, many whites tend to believe that anyone who works hard has a good chance of succeeding in life. Therefore, many of them conclude that at least part of the source of continued inequality between the various races is what they perceive as a low level of motivation and effort' (Franzoi, 1996, pp. 404-405).

Franzoi continues: 'Because an egalitarian value system is important to their self-concept, many whites are ashamed of these negative feelings and do not openly acknowledge them. Because interacting with members of disadvantaged racial groups tends to make whites aware of their prejudicial attitudes, they avoid such interactions and, thus, avoid confronting their true feelings. This is why the combination of both positive and negative beliefs and attitudes about a particular racial group is called aversive racism. White people encountering people from other ethnic groups experience this attitudinal conflict and this awareness threatens their self-concept as a fair-minded, yet discerning human being' (pp. 404-405).

Livingston (2021, p. 27) comments, aversive racism is 'the paradoxical result of white egalitarian values and anti-Black feelings which together create an aversion or contradiction. Whites push their negative feelings towards Blacks into the subconscious and just focus on their egalitarian values, believing that they are unbiased and that they treat everyone the same. This was one of the early theoretical foundations of research on implicit bias'.

Implicit/unconscious bias

Today there are many measures of implicit bias, the Implicit Association Test (IAT) being the most widely used. It shows that about 80% of white Americans have negative biases against Black Americans compared with a much smaller percentage of Blacks showing implicit bias against whites. Indeed, implicit bias research shows a high degree of internalised racism against people of colour by people of colour. Livingston reports that these

days research confirms that implicit bias is not permanent but is malleable — determined by culture, norms, history and other social factors (Livingston, 2021 p. 31). I have observed, when conducting diversity education in corporate environments, that the evidence that unconscious bias exists, and that there are ways to reduce or eliminate it, is readily accepted by participants.

Owning and disowning racism

Coming to grips with racism, according to Robin DiAngelo (2018, p. 138), involves learning to see *how* our racism manifests not *if*. In a radio discussion in 2021 she adds, 'And let me just be really clear. As a result of being raised in the society as a white person, I'm racist. I have a racist worldview. There is no way I don't have a racist worldview, because it's embedded in everything. And that means I have racist assumptions and behaviours and investments. And it's liberating to start from that premise and then just get to work trying to figure out how it's manifesting and interrupting that, rather than the insistence that we could be untouched by 'the water we are swimming in' (Tippett, p. 2021).

Owning racism means learning to recognise our biases, learning about unconscious bias, the conditions under which it is more likely to kick in, and developing conscious steps to interrupt it. Owning racism means noticing the pull to sidestep racism, claim we are colourblind and that we have already 'arrived'. Owning racism is not a blame game. DiAngelo suggests that for those of us who are white it means beginning to see ourselves as a member of a racial group. It also means coming to know in ourselves and in our relationships the dynamics of white fragility when we are challenged, white centredness in how we see the world and white silence when racist views are expressed and we say nothing. DiAngelo suggests white people have personal work to do on racism. 'I am actually getting to where I do think that we should not be having these conversations together until we've done a fair amount of our own personal work as white people, because we cause so much wounding in these conversations. And our consciousness is — you can get through graduate school in this country without ever discussing systemic racism. And so we just have a pretty low critical awareness, and we go into these dialogues and we cause a lot of harm' (Tippett, 2021).

Structural/systemic racism

As DiAngelo describes it, racism is embedded in our institutions. Structural or systemic bias is not just about personal prejudice but the collective effects of bias. It is the kind of racism that has the power to drastically impact people's life chances (Eddo-Lodge, 2017, p. 64). These include spiritual, mental and physical health, equitable access to employment, education,

health services, home ownership, equal pay, economic wellbeing, sense of belonging and more (Kandola, 2018; Paradies, Harris, & Anderson, 2008; Australian Human Rights Commission, 2020).

Systemic racism is a major focus of the 2020 report by June Oscar, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner, based on large scale consultation with First Nations women and girls in Australia. 'As Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, we live in the knowledge that our peoples governed themselves over tens of thousands of years. We are united in the conviction that colonisation has not broken us. It is the system that is broken. Our women, girls and their communities have had enough of being ignored and of taking part in processes that are limited to tweaking fundamentally flawed systems: systems that reflect Australian governments' continuing focus on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander assimilation to mainstream values, systems and perspectives. Women are asking for nothing less than a fundamental change in the way government does business with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and for the transformation of this relationship to be reflected in the design of our governing structures. It is only through a fundamental shift in the way Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are represented, respected and empowered in this country that we will see the long-term, systemic change that is needed to close the gap in outcomes for our people (AHRC, 2020, p. 92).

Globally the Black Lives Matter movement is successfully drawing attention to deep racial disparities in policing and the criminal justice system. In *Why I am no longer talking to white people about race*, Journalist Reni Eddo-Lodge (2017) gives a compelling description of how structural or systemic racism has played out in Britain showing the history of inequitable treatment of people of colour by the police, a pattern of structural racism which is recognisable in many countries across the world where over-policing and grossly disproportionate incarceration rates of indigenous peoples, Black people and people of colour are evident. This includes Maori in Aotearoa New Zealand, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in Australia, People of Colour in Britain, and African Americans in the USA.

In defining structural racism, Eddo-Lodge quotes a report into the death of eighteen-year-old, Stephen Lawrence, at the hands of a gang of white men around his age while he was waiting for a bus, and the subsequent handling of this case by the police. The report defined institutional racism as 'the collective failure of an organisation to provide an appropriate and professional service to people because of their colour, culture or ethnic origin. It can be seen or detected in processes, attitudes and behaviour which amount to discrimination through unwitting prejudice, ignorance, thoughtlessness and racist stereotyping which disadvantage minority ethnic people.' Most importantly, it is a form of collective behaviour, a workplace

culture supported by a structural status quo, and a consensus — often excused and ignored by authorities' (Eddo-Lodge, 2017, p. 61).

The Uluru Statement from the Heart addresses this form of racism in Australia: 'Proportionally, we are the most incarcerated people on the planet. We are not an innately criminal people. Our children are aliened from their families at unprecedented rates. This cannot be because we have no love for them. And our youth languish in detention centres in obscene numbers. They should be our hope for the future. These dimensions of our crisis tell plainly the structural nature of our problem. This is the *torment of our powerlessness*. We seek constitutional reforms to empower our people and take a *rightful place* in our own country. When we have power over our destiny our children will flourish. They will walk in two worlds and their culture will be a gift to their country' (Davis & Williams, 2021).

Globally, structural or systemic racism is apparent in disparities such as access to employment, pay gaps between white and other ethnic groups and selection for leadership roles. British business psychologist Binna Kandola (2018) examines the pay gap present in Britain, Canada and the US. In Canada, for example, university-educated visible minorities earn on average 12.6% less than their caucasian peers. A study of the global consulting firm PwC surfaced a gender pay gap of 14% and a race pay gap of 13%. Furthermore, leadership prototype research has consistently found a pro-white leadership bias which expects leaders to be white and subordinates to be from a minority: not only white people have this bias, minorities show this pro-white bias too.

Action

In his book *How to be an antiracist*, Professor of History and International Relations, Ibram Kendi, revises the terminology about structural racism. He thinks 'racist policy' is a more tangible and exacting term than institutional racism, structural racism or systemic racism. A racist policy, he explains is 'any measure that produces or sustains racial inequity between racial groups…Racist policy says exactly what the problem is and where the problem is' (Kendi, 2019, p. 18). 'We all have the power to discriminate. Only an exclusive few have the power to make policy. Focusing on racial discrimination takes our eyes off the central agents of racism: racist policy and racist policy makers, or what I called racist power' (p. 19).

Kendi invites us to re-think the word 'racist'. He says it's not a pejorative or the equivalent of a slur. It's descriptive and it needs to be used. 'The only way to undo racism is to consistently identify and describe it — and then dismantle it' (p. 9).

He gives a strong lead on personal action to dismantle racism. For a start, he says, the opposite of racist is not 'not racist', it is anti-racist. 'The good news is that racist and anti-racist are not fixed identities. We can be a

racist one minute and an anti-racist the next. What we say about race, what we do about race, in each moment, determines what — not who — we are.' In our struggle to be fully human and see that others are fully human, 'an anti-racist world in all its imperfect beauty can become real if we focus on power instead of people, if we focus on changing policy instead of groups of people. It's possible if we overcome our cynicism about the permanence of racism' (pp. 9-10). Kendi distinguishes between merely demonstrating for change and joining focussed campaigns to end racist policies.

Gillian Triggs is a former President of the Australian Human Rights Commission and since 2019 the Assistant High Commissioner for protection of refugees at the United Nations. In her memoir *Speaking up* she observes that overt racism is on the rise in Australia and that, in response, we have much to do (Triggs, 2020, p. 107). She highlights where action to end systemic racism is needed saying it is time for all Australians to speak up to end discrimination against First Nations peoples and achieve meaningful equality (p. 100). She reminds us that there are 65 million displaced people in the world, about a third of them refugees. 'Australia's response to this global tragedy has been exceptionally harsh, illegal and humane, attracting international condemnation' (p. 72). 'The personal face of the policy of offshore processing has been largely hidden from public view. It is time to bring an end to this tragedy. The only viable solution, especially for those with close family ties, is to return the legally recognised refugees to Australia, where they can receive proper medical and psychological care, and start to repair and rebuild their lives' (p. 204).

Who will bring an end to systemic racism? Gillian Triggs suggests this may well depend upon civil society and professionals, rather than government initiatives. While the law and the Racial Discrimination Act, in particular, provide a framework for prohibiting racism, she sees its 'cultural and social rejection as the strongest ingredients of success' (p. 263).

Gillian Triggs prompts Australians to participate in our democracy. The need to overcome apathy, denial and indifference is emphasised by a number of writers in this field including Kandola and Livingston. I am reminded of the interest in democracy expressed by Moreno, Lewin and Allport. Kurt Lewin commented that democracy is a far more difficult social structure to attain and to maintain than autocracy, and that democracy must be learned anew in each generation (Allport in preface to Lewin, 1967). Moreno's vision too was that every citizen become an active participant in their world.

Robin DiAngelo highlights that for white people this means getting out of their comfort zone. 'I just really want to push back against any narrative that white people are innocent of race. I think it takes energy not to see it. It's a kind of wilful not-knowing or refusal to know. And I offer this question.

When white people ask me, 'what do I do?' I ask them in return, 'how have you managed not to know, when the information's everywhere, they've been telling us forever?' What does it take for us to ask, and then to keep asking? And it just speaks to how seductive the forces of comfort are. So what am I going to do to keep myself uncomfortable, because that comfort is really seductive and powerful?' (Tippett, 2021).

Conclusion

I trust that the voices presented here about how racism has developed and how it can be transformed will confirm or refresh your perspective and provide encouragement for further learning, dialogue and action.

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Jenny Hutt is a Sociodramatist, TEP, Distinguished Member (AANZPA) and Director of Training at Psychodrama Australia's Melbourne Campus. She has been involved for several decades in facilitating workplace diversity initiatives; and more recently with Aboriginal organisations; and with other Australians coming to grips with reconciliation. Jenny is an Associate of Burbangana, a First Nations owned and managed consulting company.