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Racialization: the genealogy and critique of a concept

Rohit Barot and John Bird

Abstract

Recently sociological analysis of what used to be identified as 'race' and 'race relations' has shifted to racism as an ideology and racialization as a process that ascribes physical and cultural differences to individuals and groups. While scholars have critically examined 'race' and 'race relations', the concept of racialization has received insufficient systematic attention. The purpose of this article is to trace the genealogy of concepts of racialization and deracialization and to demonstrate that the meaning of these designations has changed since their appearance in the late-nineteenth century to the emergence of racialization in contemporary debates on effects of racism; and to trace the different trajectories of racialization from the centre and from the periphery.

Keywords: Racialization; 'race'; the race relations problematic; racism; ethnicity.

As Banton (1995), Miles (1989) and many others have argued, the concept of 'race' should now be abandoned by sociologists as signifying nothing; this despite other claims – Winant (1994), most noticeable – that the dustbin is not empty. For Banton and Miles, it is an intellectual error; for Rustin (1991), it is an empty signifier, dangerous because of its very emptiness. In essence, therefore, 'race' is part of what Bachelard (1951) calls lapsed history, part of that series of errors, for example, phlogiston, which can be consigned to the prehistory of sciences of man. However, 'race' still remains as part of the lived experience of many people, and it is this problem of the lived experience of people on the one hand and uneasiness of sociology with the concept on the other, that seems to account for the current popularity of racialization.¹

There are two questions we can ask about this history of 'race' and racialization. First, and only a minor consideration in this article, why do people act as if 'race' is still important and can tell us something about the nature of different human populations and about the societies and cultures in which these populations live? Put another way, why does

corporeality still play a central part of peoples' experiences of 'race'? Secondly, what is the *ratified* history of 'race' and ethnicity, a history in which the concept of ethnicity has come to dominate? Concretely, is the designation racialization now the essential concept which can, for sociologists, provide the key to understanding forms of racial discrimination and racial hatred? To paraphrase Solomos and Back (1994, p. 15), is racialization the problematic which is best able to deal with the contemporary world, best able to provide the conceptual clarity for which Banton, among others, has asked (1997)?

Part of the answer to this series of questions lies in exploring the origins and contemporary uses of racialization as a concept, and we can begin that process by identifying the original uses of the concept as identified in the *Concise Oxford English Dictionary* (1971).

Racialization: the process of making or becoming racial in outlook or sympathies. So racialize vb. trans.

1918 Hastings *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics* (Volume X, pp. 557/2). "Why should the most progressive Muslim populations be effected most powerfully by 'racialization', which is clearly a retrogressive tendency?" 1930 Month Dec. 485: "A Catholic, following St Paul, will repudiate this attempt to racialize the universal genius of Christianity" (*Oxford English Dictionary* (1971, pp. 154–55)).

Deracialization: to remove racial characteristics of features from. So, racialization.

1899 Patten Devel/Engl. Thoughts 365 "Religious leaders, no longer deracialized by education, are dissatisfied with foreign platitudes and common places".

1907 *Westminster Gazette* 21 Feb 2.2 "Good service they have rendered by deracializing, (so to speak) the elections". 1931 Sir A Keith Ethnos 27 "Where Huxley went wrong was in believing that when Europeans belonging to separate racial stocks, were planted together . . . they became, if I may coin a term, deracialized" Ibid 90, "I am convinced that deracialization is possible (*Oxford English Dictionary* (1971, p.282)).

Racialization has become an important concept in the sociologies of 'race' and ethnicity, particularly in the work of Robert Miles. Miles

(1989, pp. 73–74) indicates that the concept was first used by Fanon in a discussion of national culture (Fanon 1968, p. 212). This article will seek to show that the designation has a longer history. It was first used, according to the *Oxford English Dictionary* (1971) in 1899; and a wide usage, for example, in physical anthropology and its relation to debates about nationhood (Keith 1973 {1931}); in discussions of religion and nationalism (Toynbee 1918); in discussions of religion (see Patten, 1899, above); and in political analysis (see Westminster Gazette, 1907 above). The term has, in addition, taken on a variety of meanings and, at least in the early part of the twentieth century, had a couplet – deracialization – which referred to the loss of the quality of a race through increasing mixing of populations. Deracialization seems, in fact, to predate racialization. On the whole, racialization is used in the late-nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth centuries and then disappears to re-emerge within the sociology of ‘race’ and ethnic relations. It is necessary to trace this emergence, disappearance and re-emergence as it reveals shifting meanings of racialization and the selective way in which the concept has been used in sociology.

Earlier uses of racialization and deracialization: Keith vs. Toynbee

The terms racialization and deracialization were used sporadically between 1899 and the early 1930s and then, as far as we can ascertain, disappeared. We can contrast Keith (1931) and Toynbee (1918, 1948), as exemplars of two opposing tendencies in early discussions on racialization, as showing two sides of a debate about race and nationhood.

In a lecture that Keith delivered to students of Aberdeen University in 1930, he had explored his thesis on the existence of a primordial ‘tribal feeling’ which has been the basis of community formation from pre-historic times to present day (1973). He saw this feeling as something deeply ingrained in human nature as the following quote illustrates eloquently:

The human heart, with its prejudices, its instinctive tendencies, its likes and dislikes, its passions and desires, its spiritual aspirations and idealism, is an essential part of the great scheme of human evolution – the scheme whereby Nature, throughout the aeons of the past has sought to bring into the world ever better and higher races of mankind (Keith 1973, p.26).

Keith regarded this as a primordial tribal prejudice according to which groups preferred their own kind to the exclusion of others. He also believed that ‘various forms of prejudice – personal prejudice, local prejudice, national prejudice and racial prejudice’ were deeply planted by Nature for her own purpose, ‘the production of higher and better

‘races of Mankind’ (Keith 1973, p.35). The emphasis on this theme also finds expression in his *Ethnos or the Problem of Race Considered from a New Point of View* (Keith 1930). In this study, he argued that race was everything. Using phrases such as ‘production of race’ and ‘patriotism as a factor in race building’ (Keith 1930, p. 19), he saw ‘racialization’ as a physical process. In assessing the prospects of the loss of the physical and cultural distinctiveness of races, Keith uses the concept of deracialization. This meaning is most apparent in his comment on Huxley’s work when he says, ‘Where Huxley went wrong was in believing that when Europeans belonging to separate racial stocks and guided by different traditions were planted together in the same land they became, if I may coin a term, deracialized’ (Keith 1931, p. 27). In considering the question of deracialization in the sense of a dissolution of physical and cultural differences between ‘racial groups’, Keith asks if such a process is possible (Keith 1931, pp. 89–90). His answer is yes, but that positive answer is not Keith’s preferred answer. Although he entertained the theoretical possibility of deracialization as a eugenics project over a long period of time (Keith 1931, p. 90), his preference was for ‘inborn tribal instincts and racial prejudices under the rule of reason’ (Keith 1931, p. 91).

Keith took up this theme most forcefully in his Aberdeen lecture. As the modern world created more contacts between different populations through the division of labour and economic competition, Keith expressed his concern for ‘the spirit of unrest which afflicts the modern world’ (Keith 1931, p.44). He examined arguments about the universal brotherhood of man and whether mankind can ‘be massed until it forms a single united harmonious tribe’ (p.45). In considering this issue, he asks, ‘Why not undo Nature’s handiwork and free the world for ever from the antagonisms of nationality and race?’ His answer is clear and is an answer which suggests that deracialization, while possible, is unsupported because of the deep-seatedness of ‘race feeling’ and of attachment to ones own.

If this scheme of universal deracialization ever comes before you as a matter of practical politics – as the sole way of establishing peace and good will in all parts of our world, I feel certain both head and heart will rise against it. There will well up within you an overmastering antipathy to securing peace at such a price. This antipathy or race prejudice Nature has implanted within you for her own ends – the improvement of Mankind through racial differentiation. Race prejudice, I believe, works for the ultimate good of mankind and must be given a recognised place in all our efforts to obtain natural justice for the world (Keith 1973, p.48).

As Banton has pointed out recently, Keith’s genetic explanation of

racial prejudice is unconvincing as it fails to account for the complexity of sociological and psychological factors which bear on the formation of racial prejudice (Banton 1998, pp. 110–111). In his recent study of concepts of ‘race’ in Britain and the United States, Elazar Barkan confirms that ‘Keith emphasised inborn reaction or prejudice – race feeling – “as part of the evolutionary machinery which safeguards the purity of race”’ (Barkan 1992, pp. 46–47). Further, Keith also regarded nation and race as being synonymous, evidenced explicitly in the titling of a section in his 1931 book ‘Nation and Race are the same things’. This conflation has influenced debates on nation and nationhood in more recent times.² Barkan concludes that ‘Keith’s evolutionary theory turned into a racist exposition, which in the thirties was exploited as such by war-mongers and racists alike’ (Barkan 1992, p. 47). Keith himself feels bound to say,

Thus I come deliberately to the opinion that race prejudice has to be given a recognised place in our modern civilisation have asked you to count the price you must pay for a deracialized world. In turn you may demand of me whether I have reckoned the cost of maintaining our racialized world. Yes, I have. . . . Without competition Mankind can never progress; the price of progress is competition’ (Keith 1931, p. 48).

Both Keith and Toynbee essentialize race as a factor in the formation of human groups, but in very different ways. While Keith remains fully committed to a unilinear view of ‘race production’ and ‘race building’, Toynbee in his comparative study of human civilizations, criticizes Comte de Gobineau’s racial ideas as ‘some more telling nonsense’ (Toynbee 1948, p. 52). However, he does not dismiss race entirely but does not lend it any primary causal efficacy. In contrast to Sir Arthur Keith, he argues for a more modernist position according to which interaction between special qualities in human beings and their environments are closely linked in the genesis of civilizations (Toynbee 1948, p. 51).

This defensive recrudescence of race-feeling is characteristic of all civilisations that have passed their prime. . . . There has been a . . . “racialization” of the division between those inside and those outside the civilised pale. . . . {The} historical analysis of the development of modern race-feeling raises a problem. Why should the most progressive Muslim populations be effected most powerfully by “racialization” which is clearly a retrogressive tendency?. . . . The answer seems to be that the degeneration of group-feeling which we have traced, from the anti-racial spirit of the Catholic Church to the almost unmitigated racialism of contemporary nationality, is only one strand in the development of European civilisation as a

whole. . . . This anti-racial tendency . . . is what we name 'democracy . . .'. (pp.554, 557, 558)

Whereas, for Keith, race feeling is progressive, for Toynbee it is regressive and relates to particular stages in the development of civilizations.

We can characterize and contrast the views of Keith and Toynbee in the following terms. For Toynbee, racialization is a problem and, through democracy and the decline in nationalism, deracialization is the solution. Therefore, democracy and anti-racialism go hand-in-hand. For Keith, on the other hand, racialization is the solution to the deracializing tendency of democracy, to its social levelling and the achievement of equality. For both, race-feeling is deeply embedded: Modern civilisation has crossed Nature's evolutionary plans; her old tribal organization has been broken up and replaced by a conglomeration of massed communities – nations, states, vast empires (Keith 1931, p. 13). You may make and unmake social contracts, draw up acts of union or declarations of independence, make slavery a legal status or abolish it by emancipation, but these underlying bonds and divisions {of race-feeling} remain eternal, and are not to be modified by human desire or human contrivance (Toynbee 1899, p. 551).

For Keith, 'race' is phylogenetic, necessary, a precondition for social order and sets limits to democracy. Massification and equality cross nature's plans, much as they are seen to do by a whole range of writers who are concerned with what sociologists would now call mass society (Eliot, T.S. 1958, for example). For Toynbee, it becomes a phylogenetic myth, but one with real consequences including the maintenance of racial inequalities. It is this latter meaning which re-emerges in sociology from the late 1970s and the early 80s. For example, as we shall see below, Miles, Goldberg and others come to see 'race' as having real social consequences while being mythical; for them racialization is reintroduced into sociology as a more *useful* term.

Contemporary trajectories of racialization

The reintroduction of racialization into social sciences can be seen to have occurred from two directions; that is, from the centre – in the works, for example, of Banton and Miles; and from the periphery – most notably in the works of Franz Fanon. As we shall argue below, the two reintroductions see racialization and its effects in distinct ways.

Racialization from the centre

We can start with the work of Banton as an author who reintroduced racialization into sociological analysis. As we shall see, he uses this designation only after rejecting the usefulness of a number of other concepts including 'race' and riation.

Banton did not use the concept racialization in his 1967 *Race Relations*. Concerned to avoid single factor explanations, he argued that there are three major models of racial friction (Banton 1967, p. 7): firstly, that relating to the ideology of racism; secondly, that based upon the study of attitudes and of prejudice; thirdly, that based upon the study of social relationships which involve discrimination. Although these three have been used to study different issues, they are not seen as mutually exclusive. Thus:

... it has not always been appreciated that the three approaches are complementary, and social scientists coming to this field from particular disciplines have been inclined to assert that the factor of interest to their discipline is the fundamental one that, in the end, determines the other features. (Banton 1967, pp. 9–10)

Banton sees his study as providing important insights into the study of the social relationships of racial discrimination, largely because there were, at the time, relatively few sociological works in comparison with studies done by psychologists. He identifies institutionalized contact, acculturation, domination, integration, paternalism and pluralism as areas of importance for a sociological approach to issues of 'race'. These become the basis for a race relations problematic (see Solomos and Back 1994, pp. 143–44).

Racialization appears as a distinctive expression in Banton's writing from 1977 onwards, in particular, with the publication of *The Idea of Race*. The first chapter of this book provides material on the intellectual inheritance of the idea of 'race' in science and sociology. The titles of two subsequent chapters are relevant for an understanding of the concept of racialization. In chapter 2 entitled *The racialization of the West*, Banton states clearly that the concept of 'race' developed as Europeans came into contact with people whose physical appearance was very different. As Banton says, 'the contacts were important to the development by Europeans of racial categories' (Banton 1977, p. 13). Issues of corporeality were central to developing racial discourses and were seen as signs of something else, that is, signs of superiority and inferiority. This racialization goes hand-in-hand with the racialization of the world, the substance of chapter 3; the processes are two sides of the same coin; all types of group formation come to be seen through the lens of 'race'. As such, physical differences come to signify much more than the physical; in addition, they become real in their effects even where they may seem to lack a real foundation.

The clearest statement of Banton's argument occurs in *Ethnic and Racial Consciousness*:

The differences between people were racialised by the use of words

which implied that the differences sprang from biological determinants postulated in racial theories. This conception of racialisation has been taken up by sociologists as a way out of the difficulties caused by the multiplicity of meanings given to the word race. To say that the differences were racialized is to say that they were interpreted in the light of prevailing racial theories, without entering into any debate about the validity of these theories (Banton 1997, 35).³

and:

At the beginning of this chapter it was asserted, with reference to race, that it is wrong to assume that because there is a word there must be something which corresponds to it. That same argument also applies to the word 'racism' which has been used in a bewildering variety of senses. . . . It is possible to discuss the sociology of race relations without using the word 'racism' provided that other words are employed to designate the things people have in mind when they speak of racism (Banton 1997, pp. 40, 45).

We can see the term racialization as part of what Banton calls the cleaning up of concepts (1997, p. 46), that is, as part of the attempt to bring some conceptual clarity to this area of sociology. Many sociologists – Reeves (1983); Miles (1989); Smith (1989); Anthias and Yuval-Davis (1993); Goldberg (1993); Small (1994); Winant (1994) Bradley (1996); Holdaway (1996); Hesse (1997); Malik (1997) – have used the concept in this way while giving it a range of inflections and connotations. Whereas Miles and Small, for example, use the term to avoid reifying race, Malik sees racialization in a broader sense of seeing issues in racial terms (Malik 1997, p. 33). Holdaway sees the importance of Miles' deconstruction of 'race' (Holdaway 1996, p. 12) and argues that Miles uses the designation also to relate racialization to social class relations. Small calls for a move from discussions of relations between races to discussions of relations which have been racialized (Small 1994, p. 30). For Winant, the emphasis should be on racial formation where 'race is understood as a fluid, unstable, and "decentred" complex of social meanings constantly being transformed by political conflict . . . {shaping} the individual psyche . . . and furnish[ing] an irreducible component of collective identities and social structures' (Winant 1994, p. 59). Racialization, for Winant, is the process of constructing racial identities and meanings.

For Goldberg, racialized discourses should be the focus, suggesting both a multiplicity of meanings and a multiplicity of points of origin. Following Foucault, Goldberg rejects class and other forms of reductionism in issues of 'race'. Also, in common with Foucault, racialization consists of forms of power/knowledge relationship which focus on the

body and processes of subjection. Hierarchies are established with reference to body – biological, hygienic, cultural, environmental hierarchies (Goldberg 1993, p. 54) – and multiple forms of exclusion result that range from the structural (exclusion from labour markets) to the psychological (formation of self through the denigration of others).

However, as with Foucault, racialization can be resisted and can become ‘the site of counter assault, a ground or field for launching liberatory projects or from which to expand freedom(s) and open up emancipatory spaces’ (Goldberg 1993, p. 211). Goldberg (1993, pp. 40–56 in particular) refers to racialized discourses which have little unity, arise within the context of modernity and have their own regimes of rationality. For Anthias and Yuval-Davis, the crucial task in understanding racialized boundaries is how ethnicity, gender and social class interact despite their own distinctiveness. The importance of gender had already been identified by the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (in particular, 1982). Bradley (1996), develops her argument in a discussion of fractured identities related to class, gender and ethnicity. Hesse (1997, p. 103, footnote 3), identifies three levels of racialization: the reduction of diverse cultures to the fixity of biological racism; the hegemony of white culture and the denial of cultural dialogues; and social conflicts around racism and racialized identities. In all these uses there are strong connotations of process and socio-historical variability.

It is probably in Miles’ work that the concept of racialization has been most fully developed. When Miles carried out a critical review of the use of ‘race’ and ‘race relations’ in *Racism and Migrant Labour* (1982), he questioned the use of these conceptions in view of the fact that they did not have any basis in science. He presented his criticism of race relations orthodoxy as ‘the race relations problematic’ and argued that the terminology had reified a realm of relations which did not have any foundation in science. As he later wrote: ‘{Race is} an idea that should be explicitly and consistently confined to the dustbin of analytically useless terms’ (1989, p. 72). Miles advanced the view that it was not ‘race’ but the ideology of racism that was the most important factor for explaining and understanding the effects of racism in society.

The concept of racialization⁴ – as more than simply an extension of the idea of ‘race’ but as a racist ideology in which all intergroup differences are racialized – begins to play a crucial role in Miles’ writing over a period of about fifteen–seventeen years from 1982. In Chapter 5 of *Racism and Migrant Labour* – ‘Capitalism and colonialism, the Ideological legacy’ (1982) – he makes an explicit use of racialization as a concept to describe the process of racial categorization (Miles 1989, p. 74). In this initial formulation, Miles saw racism as an element of bourgeois class ideology. Its precise role as an ideology effecting popular consciousness and the extent of its autonomy was already a theme that he and Annie Phizacklea had explored in their study of Willesden (1979).

However, it is in his Key Ideas book *Racism* (1989) that Miles provides a more explicit treatment of the concept, extending his argument about racial categorization as a process of racialization. Miles is explicit:

I therefore employ the concept of racialisation to refer to those instances where social relations between people have been structured by the signification of human biological characteristics in such a way as to define and construct differentiated social collectivities. The concept therefore refers to a process of categorisation, a representational process of defining an Other (usually, but not exclusively) somatically (Miles 1989, p. 75).

His further comments on racialization are notable for highlighting the historical, reciprocal and unequal process of mutual ascription and reveal an affinity with Banton's use of the concept (especially 1977). As Miles argues: 'Racialisation is a dialectical process of signification. Ascribing a real or alleged biological characteristic with meaning to define the Other necessarily entails defining self by the same criterion' (Miles 1989, p. 75).

The latter point is precisely the suggestion made by Banton (1977), that both self and other are racialized. In concluding his argument, Miles states: 'I use the concept of racialisation to refer to a dialectical process by which meaning is attributed to particular biological features of human beings, as a result of which individuals may be assigned to a general category of persons which reproduces itself biologically' (Miles 1989, p. 75).

This gives the concept some precision and avoids the tendency in, for example, Barker (1981) and Guillamin (1995), to conflate issues of 'race' with other process of discrimination and othering – gender, age and so on – which ends up with a totally inflated idea of 'race' that makes it difficult to make distinctions between different social divisions and the structures of discrimination that accompany them.

Miles advances his thesis on ideologies of racism and processes of racialization in the context of the development of capitalism and colonialism. For example, Chapter 1 of *Racism after 'Race' Relations – A propos the idea of race . . . again*, explores the ideological basis of racism as one that brings about the process of racialization as a symbolic process that dialectically defines the identity and relationship between dominant and subordinate groups (1993). As with all views which see ideology as relatively autonomous, we are faced with the problem of specifying the meaning and extent of that autonomy. Further, it is unclear what is meant by describing the process of racialization as dialectical. The idea that racism structures production and that production structures racism suggests a relationship in which both have some autonomy but that is hardly what the term dialectical means. In addition,

if racialization mirrors, in one way or another, the dialectics of social class, then we are left with a largely redundant idea of racialization and a form of class reductionism. Critiques of, and alternatives to, such a class reductionist approach have subsequently come both from cultural studies and from postmodernist accounts of ethnic identities (Rattansi 1994, for example).

Racialization from the periphery: the contribution of Franz Fanon

Fanon, as Miles emphasizes, refers to processes of racialization in *The Wretched of the Earth* (1963/68). Talking of the desire of black intellectuals to escape the claws of colonialism and suggesting that this desire for escape is itself inscribed from the same point of view as that of colonialism, Fanon argues:

And it is only too true that those who are most responsible for this racialization of thought, are and remain those Europeans who have never ceased to set up white culture to fill the gap left by the absence of other cultures. Colonialism did not dream of wasting its time in denying the existence of one national culture after another. . . . In Africa, the native literature of the last twenty years is not a national literature but a Negro literature. The concept of negritude, for example, was the emotional if not the logical antithesis of that insult which the white man flung at humanity. This rush of negritude against the white man's contempt showed itself in certain spheres to be the one capable of lifting interdictions and anathemas. . . . The unconditional affirmation of African culture has succeeded the unconditional affirmation of European culture. On the whole, the poets of negritude oppose the idea of an old Europe to a young Africa, tiresome reason to lyricism, oppressive logic to high-stepping nature, and on the one side stiffness, ceremony, etiquette and scepticism, while on the other frankness, liveliness, liberty and – why not? – luxuriance: but also irresponsibility' (Fanon 1963/68 pp. 212–213).

and:

This historical necessity in which the men of Africa find themselves, to racialize their claims and to speak more of African culture than of national culture will tend to lead them up a blind alley' (Fanon 1963/68, p. 214).

For Fanon, as for Banton and Miles, the racialization of the world is something coming out of Europe which has served to negate other cultures. The reaction to this racialization, through the idea of negritude and the racialization of African culture, is a blind alley for black

intellectuals and political movements. The idea of negritude should be replaced with the idea of national culture and national identity which will have a deracializing effect.

Fanon's work is important for two reasons. Firstly, there is the suggestion of resistance to racialization, a resistance which may well, as he argues in *The Wretched of the Earth*, be necessarily violent. This is a violence which has been deposited by the experience of colonialism:

The colonized man will first manifest this aggressiveness which has been deposited in his bones against his own wishes . . . The native is an oppressed person whose permanent dream is to become a persecutor . . . The native's muscular tension finds outlet regularly in blood-thirsty explosions. Thus collective autodestruction in a very concrete form is one of the ways in which the native's muscular tension is set free . . . (Fanon 1963/68, pp. 52, 53, 54).

Secondly, and something that has had a somewhat uneasy place in subsequent operationalizations of racialization, he indicates the central importance of the body in all forms of racialization. The racializations of body and psyche analysed in *Black Skin, White Mask* (1967), provide a counterpoint to his analysis of the violence of colonial oppression and indicates the continuity between what have been seen by some as distinct forms of old and new racism (Barker 1981). The centrality of racialization of body and psyche and the violence of these is clear in the following, an encounter with what we might now call the white gaze:

On that day, completely dislocated, unable to be abroad with the other, the white man, who unmercifully imprisoned me . . . What else could it be for me but an amputation, an excision, a hemorrhage that splattered my whole body with black blood . . . My body was given back to me sprawled out, distorted, recoloured, clad in mourning . . . I was battered down with tom-toms, cannibalism, intellectual deficiency, fetishism, racial defects . . . (Fanon 1952/86, pp. 112, 113)

The emphasis on process and on ideological constructions of racial difference typical of those understandings of racialization within the mainstream of sociology have tended to lead sociologists to ignore the implications of such process for those who experience racism and how those experiences are about violence and are implicated in psychological states and views of the body. What makes Fanon's work so important is not only the links established between the structure of colonialism and aspects of psychology and embodiment, but also the extent to which a theorization from the periphery successfully avoids the almost abstracted way in which much sociology tackles issues of 'race' and racism. For Fanon, there is a racialization of body and psyche, what he

sees as the epidermalization of 'race'; this epidermalization is a far more profound and violently harmful process of othering than that involved in discourses of cultural difference.

We might characterize the difference between those approaches to racialization from the centre and those from the periphery in the following way. The former emphasizes aspects of culture and ideology and, in de-emphasizing violence and harm, suggests the recognition of others and of the damage done to them as a sufficient solution; the latter emphasizes aspects of corporeality and embodiment and of the violence done to bodies and psyches. These seem to be nearly mutually exclusive perspectives, and an understanding of this makes a simple distinction old and new racisms untenable. Both Keith and Toynbee note the deep seatedness of what they call race feeling, albeit from totally opposed political positions. What Fanon reminds us of is that this deep-seatedness has something to tell us about oppressors and oppressed and about the physical and psychic damage done by racism.

Conclusions

A number of things stand out about these various uses of the concept of racialization.

Firstly, although the term is used instead of the term race, 'race' is still widely in use. Even if in inverted commas – suggesting an almost Derridean desire to erase the concept but leave it there – the 'race' word is commonly used by sociologists and also has an important role in popular thinking. Miles' assertion that we should not use 'race' because of its spurious scientificity does not sanction its use in inverted commas nor imply that racialization with its emphasis on ideology and process is a more useful concept. The reality of 'race' and racialization, however varied their manifestations, is what Fanon reminds us of, warning us at the same time that debates about terminology and concepts are only a small part of the issue.

Secondly, as Banton suggests (1997 p. 35; see above, p. 6), racialization allows sociologists to side-step the issue of the validity of racial theories. 'Race' is a scientifically invalid term to be replaced with racialization which is a sociologically *useful* one. While racialization may be a more useful analytical tool than others in the study of 'race', issues of validity are surely important in the lived experience of those experiencing discrimination and hatred. Sociological discussions of 'race' so often float above the lives of those who experience racism – a notable exception being Banton's linking of the race problematic to human rights issues – and racialization does not seem to avoid this. Racism in practice is not relativistic but the terminology of sociologies of 'race' does little to address this.

Thirdly, racialization is used consistently to indicate process and

change at the cultural level, that is, forms of cultural racialization. This is perhaps its most useful connotation; that, as Miles suggests, there is no one, fixed ideology of race but a range of ways in which structures and ideas are racialized. Even though, for Miles, the real focus of 'race' is social class structures and inequalities, this does not imply that this is the only way we can understand processes of racialization. Smith (1994), among others, shows how gender and sexuality become racialized without any necessary relation to social class divisions. Again, the contribution of Fanon is critical here; if racialization *is* a process then it is a process that constructs bodies and psyches and may, as far as those who are at its ragged edges are concerned, look very like the forms of visceral hatred of older racial theories.

Finally, while racialization as an ideological process has become an established concept, its earlier companion, deracialization, has had a more shadowy existence within sociology and has taken on different meanings in the US and UK. In the United States the concept of deracialization has acquired meaning which is diametrically opposite to its nineteenth-century counterpart. In the US context, it has come to mean removal of the idea of race and its alleged consequences from a discourse, such that a group which is constructed and defined as a race may present itself in the public domain in non-racial terms. In electoral politics a black or a South Asian candidate may attempt to mobilize political support on the basis of common issues affecting a particular constituency irrespective of 'race' and ethnicity. The evidence from the US suggests that commentators and analysts may use deracialization to imply the irrelevance of 'race', for example, for mobilizing electoral support. Michael Jones-Correa refers to such uses of deracialization in elections in the United States (personal communication). He confirms that Locke, current Governor of Washington State, who is an Asian American and Douglas Wilder, former Governor of Virginia and an African-American, both ran successful 'deracialized' campaigns with various degree of success.

Most recently in October 2000, the publication of *The Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain: The Parekh Report* (2000) generated public debate on the nature of Britishness, its earlier racial connotation and the need to reconceptualize it so that it can encompass non-white minorities in the UK. In his article in *The Times*, Anatole Kaletsky criticized the report for saying that Britishness had racial connotations (*The Times*, Thursday 12 October 2000). Bhikhu Parekh responded to Kaletsky's article by a letter that appeared in *The Times* on 17 October 2000. He emphasized the distinction between racial and racist and affirmed that the Report did not suggest that Britishness was racist. He said,

Kaletsky says we have been 'purblind, self-indulgent and insensitive to suggest that Britishness has "racial connotations". We say "racial"

not “racist”. For centuries the British population was overwhelmingly white, and hence it is perfectly natural that Britishness connotes whiteness. Things are now changing. We warmly welcome the increasing *deracialisation* (the emphasis added) of the new Britishness which allows blacks, Asians and others to accept it with enthusiasm.

This particular use of deracialization to mean a decline in the significance of whiteness in Britishness is similar to the meaning attached to this term in the US. For the British context as indicated by Gillborn, deracialization has also come to imply removal of race as an issue in public policy. Discussing British educational policy in the 1980s and early 1990, Gillborn (1995, pp. 30–40), notes an official erasing of issues of race from the agenda. Issues of race cease to be part of accounts of the success or otherwise of African Caribbean and Asian students in schools. Race is either reduced to other forms of social division – for example, social class divisions which are seen to have priority over issues of race; or race is reduced from a structural issue to merely one of individual prejudice. Thus deracialization has changed from its nineteenth-century meaning – the loss of the physical essentials of races through mixing, to a contemporary meaning which emphasizes how race as an issue can be occluded in distinct ways; for example, as a matter of strategy by African and Asian American political candidates, or as a category that reduces the ‘racial’ content of a particular category such as Britishness and as a matter of UK government policy that reduces race to to some aspect of stratification. Howard Winant (personal communication) has also suggested that we should be wary of presenting racialization and deracialization as a simple binary opposition especially if this implies that the terms describe the same processes and have equal significance. According to him, the experience of mobility and success among black people should not be conflated or confused with deracialization. He sees the binary as a dead end and as leading to a situation in which we ignore some of the deep historical and experiential roots of racism.

We hope we have achieved two things in this article.

Firstly, we hope we have retrieved some of the history of the concept racialization and indicated how close some of the earlier uses – for example, in Toynbee – are to those of more recent sociological writings. This is an unrecognized and unintentional closeness. In addition, we hope that we have indicated distinct uses of the term racialization coming from the centre and from the periphery.

Secondly, we have argued that, although racialization has great advantages as a basis for understanding issues of race, it still has a bewildering variety of connotations. As the contributions of Miles and others illustrate, and as Fenton has recently argued, ‘sociology has the *emancipation from the concept of race* as one of its central features (1996, p. 141). The process of this emancipation is evident in recent theoretical

developments where a remarkable shift has occurred from a focus on the question of 'race and race relations' to the question of racisms and the racialization of intergroup relations.

What the use of racialization does not, in our view, appear to have achieved is finding 'a way out of the difficulties caused by the multiplicity of meanings given to the word race' (Banton 1997, p. 35). There is still an enormous conceptual armanentarium in sociology to write and talk about issues of race and ethnicity: race, racism, raction, racialism, racialization, 'race', ethnicity, ethnicism and so on. The dangers of this complexity are precisely those identified by Banton and Miles – 'race', or whatever term we use – takes on a spurious concreteness and validity which it does not really have and the common experiences of those who are racially oppressed seem to disappear from view.

We can conclude with the following which sums up our view of the current state of play: 'What seems to characterize the contemporary period is, on the one hand, a complex spectrum of racisms, and, on the other, the fragmentation of the definition of blackness as a political identity in favour of a resurgence of ethnicism and cultural differentiation. . . . There may well be contradictory trends emerging, but neither the *race relations problematic* of the 1970s nor the *racisms problematic* of the 1980s is equipped to deal with the contemporary situation.' (Solomos and Back 1994, p. 155). In our view, it is not clear that the racialization problematic is equipped to deal with the contemporary situation.

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Notes

1. Racialization is spelt consistently with a 'z' except where cited quotations use an 's'. In *The Race Concept*, Banton and Harwood (1975) use the term 'raction' to identify 'the process of divergent evolution of relatively isolated populations' (1975, pp. 74–75). Raction appears to refer to the physical and biological distinctiveness of a given population and the retention of 'particular combinations of genes intact over many generations' (1975, p. 74). It is significant that the sociologists have not used 'raction' as they have generally rejected a race-based explanation of group formation.
2. In responding to the question of what is a nation, David Pocock provides one of the clearest statements that illustrates not only the affinity between race and nation but also interchangeability between the two so that nation can signify race and vice versa (Pocock 1975, pp. 222–27).
3. *Ethnic and Racial Consciousness* is a rewritten edition of *Racial Consciousness*. The term 'racialization' does not appear in the latter; it is first used by Banton in the former.

4. It should be noted that in the US context, Omi and Winant (1986, pp.52–54) use the concept of *racial formation* as a perspective that is not fundamentally different from the concept of racialization as deployed in British literature in the 1980s. Winant uses racial formation to highlight dynamic and transformative nature of identification in which race-based meanings come to play such a decisive part (1994, pp. 59–68).

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