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Researching race in Australian youth studies

Sherene Idriss 

Alfred Deakin Institute of Citizenship and Globalisation, Deakin University, Burwood, Australia

ABSTRACT

This paper seeks to historicise the formation of youth studies in Australia with a specific focus on how the absence of Paul Gilroy, Stuart Hall and other race critical and postcolonial scholars has produced particular research cultures, trajectories and traditions that have thus far made it difficult to incorporate race and ethnicity as central to an Australian youth studies agenda, both theoretically and methodologically. Drawing on a range of historical and contemporary examples of how racialisation plays out in Australia, it will be argued youth studies, as a field, needs to respond to how race as a complex, global, structural phenomenon comes to bear on the development of young people's identity making, life choices and lived experiences a necessary scholarly development.

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Introduction

In this paper, I propose the value of working with concepts of race and racialisation as key units of social and cultural analysis for theorising youth in the Australian settler-colonial context. In so doing, the paper builds on the calls for race critical scholarship to be brought into the mainstream of youth studies as made by others working in this field in recent years (Harries 2014; Hollingworth 2015a; Harries et al. 2016). For this theoretical approach to flourish, it will be suggested that closer attention must be paid to race as structuring the entire social system (Hollingworth 2015b) rather than being a feature of only some minority groups lived realities. On the ground, young people are comfortable with intercultural friendships (Harris, 2014); the Black Lives Matter movement has led to greater calls for better diversity policies and more education about racism in Australia, particularly relating to Indigenous communities.. Yet systemic material racial inequalities persist (Bodkin-Andrews and Carlson 2016; Macedo et al. 2019; Paradies 2016; Lentini 2020). How is this reality accounted for in Australian youth studies?

The central argument of this paper is that because theories of race that can hold together these inconsistencies were never fully developed and integrated into the Australian sociology of youth, beginning with the omission from the race/ethnicity axis of the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies tradition (Hall 1978; Gilroy [1987] 2002; Mirza 1997; Back 1996; Nayak 2003) and, later, the lack of a localised Indigenous-led critical

CONTACT Sherene Idriss  sherene.idriss@deakin.edu.au

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race framework (Moreton-Robinson 2000), the corpus of the literature treats race as only existing within specific areas of society and only affecting some cohorts of young people. Referring to predominantly UK scholarship, Harries et al. (2016) note that 'youth studies have tended to follow the dominant trajectory of the social sciences by focusing on (im)migration, super-diversity and versions of identity and culture that essentialize and flatten the ways in which race and racism intertwines into young people's lives' (178), leading to a 'whitening' of the field. In the Australian case, there is an overriding tendency to abstract theories of class and empirical studies of working class communities from research on ethnic minority groups and, concurrently, racialisation processes and theories of race. To this end, there are specific research questions, methodologies and paradigms that are directed towards racialised subjects (particularly relating to belonging and social inclusion), the findings of which can only marginally impact broader youth studies research agendas around social change.

In response to this bifurcation, I aim to do three things in this paper. First, I lay out the socio-economic, political context in which race has been seminal to the structuring order of Australian society. I then introduce some of the key elements of critical race theory as it relates to youth studies, influenced by Indigenous scholarship that centres the specificities of racial rule in this settler colony and its effects on academic knowledge systems and production (Wolfe 1999; Moreton-Robinson, 2000). Finally, I explore the effects of a bifurcated approach to class and race in the Australian sociology of youth, namely, to show how it positions the white youthful subject as emblematic of a universal youthful experience.

Racial rule, coloniality and multiculturalism in Australia

As a settler-colonial nation, Australia's early forms of governance were predicated on scientific racism that led to the genocide of Indigenous peoples, enslavement and the forced removal of Aboriginal children from their homes. Critical race and critical Indigenous scholars track how neo-coloniality persists in present day Australia (Paradies 2016; Bargallie 2020). As it stands, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people make up 50% of the youth justice system (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2020). Everyday racism leads to mental health issues (Macedo et al. 2019) beginning in childhood leading to serious impacts on their educational experiences and opportunities (Bodkin-Andrews and Carlson 2016). On-going systemic violence and inequality is perpetuated against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people, while multicultural policies, where cultural diversity is deliberately facilitated and managed by the state, have advanced the rights and opportunities of some cohorts of migrant young people (Hage 1998).

For example, in a post-World War II context, Australian multicultural policies led to resource allocation to support new migrants with their settlement pathways (Ang and Stratton 1998). These social welfare policies also facilitated new ways of imagining Australia as a nation that celebrates cultural diversity and sees the value of migrant communities as making meaningful contributions to society. These policies have contributed to the general understanding that in Australia, white supremacy is no longer foundational to the organisation of society, as it was, for example, at the turn of the twentieth century, where bills were proposed to sterilise Indigenous people and non-European migrants

who failed IQ tests (Jones 2007). The policy and ideological shifts from assimilation to multiculturalism further bore with it the silencing of race in favour of foregrounding of the term 'ethnic groups' in this new discourse (Stratton and Ang 1994). As such, today, racism is commonly located as a problem of right wing extremist minorities (Lentin 2014). As Moreton-Robinson (2015) has argued, legal instruments, such as anti-discrimination laws, an Australian-specific multiculturalist emphasis on social cohesion, along with more diverse voices in the media, makes it easy to assume that racism is a character flaw of individuals and as a lingering remnant of a bygone era or a temporary aberration in our history, seen for example in the media reporting on the Cronulla Riots of 2005 where 'this is not who we are' was an oft-repeated trope (Johns and Noble 2017).

The Australian 'multicultural success story' is reproduced in mainstream media and public campaigns, often by migrants themselves whose quality of life for their children has significantly improved compared to their countries of origin (Colic-Peisker 2011). The massification of higher education that enabled minority and migrant young people to complete further education has meant that economic upward mobility can be tangibly achieved (Harris, Spark, and Watts 2015). The height of multiculturalism as a dominant national narrative, in the 1990s, occurred at the same time as what is known as 'the reconciliation era' where

the Australian Government developed a number of Indigenous institutions, representing a shift from rejection to incorporation which arguably peaked with the introduction of native title through both the Mabo judgment of 1992 and the Native Title Act passed the following year. (Carey and Silverstein 2020, 8)

Since then, as social welfare support has been drastically reduced in Australia (Bessant, Watts, and Farthing 2017), and as more paternalistic policies, for managing Indigenous communities, were enacted (Askew et al. 2020), cleavages between some migrant background young people and Indigenous young people have widened. Indeed, positive outcomes for different migrant communities, in contrast with Indigenous communities, are often pointed to by those sceptical of the existence of racism in contemporary Australia.

However, as Aquino (2018) has argued, the capacity to achieve upward mobility is often related to one's position within an 'unpanicked' ethnic community. That is, groups whose members are not 'cued through broader, and increasingly digital, global mediations – e.g. the rabid Muslim; the black criminal; the lecherous or scheming, under-serving migrant' (Valluvan 2016, 2247). Within this schema, those individuals and communities, who do not achieve social mobility, become constitutive of a particular kind of underclass that is seen as insular, ghettoised and responsible for their own poverty vis a vis their seeming inability to assimilate and/or individually overcome systemic racism (Moreton-Robinson 2015). As such, the capacity to 'become' adult is unevenly experienced according to one's negatively racialised position that curtails opportunities in specific ways. As Harris (2017) has argued, 'old borders of identity and belonging and old modes of passaging towards citizenship and adulthood' (232) that don't consider the intersections of coloniality, race, ethnicity, class and gender become less useful frames for understanding the condition of youth itself.

Indeed, young people in Australia are growing up in a society where racist discourses are pervasive and widespread. Examples include the sharp rise of hate crimes against

ethnic and religious minorities (Mason 2019), racialised forms of bias in the rental market (MacDonald et al. 2016) and discourses of Chinese buyers stripping locals of the 'Australian dream' of home ownership as an extension of Orientalist rhetoric of 'Asian invasion'. Some young people, who belong to 'panicked' ethnic communities, intensely experience racial discrimination and prejudice in their everyday lives, compounded by their class, geographic, gendered and sexualised social locations.

Race, as central to the cultural, social, political and economic organisation of everyday life, produces locally grounded, dynamic relational processes with clear material and symbolic impacts on young people's identity making, their vocational pathways and their educational experiences. This goes beyond interpersonal prejudice; racism is evidenced through targeted state violence against specific groups of young people. For example, in 2018 an 'African youth gangs' discourse was weaponised by politicians and mainstream media against young Black African Australian young men to expand stop and frisk police powers (Majavu 2020). The on-going experience of being racialised, for migrant and Indigenous young people, by political and media rhetoric, takes shape, while Pauline Hanson's anti-immigration One Nation Party rose to prominence again in the 2019 Australian Federal election and the motion 'it's OK to be white'¹ was voted on in the Australian parliament as backlash against the Black/Blak Lives Matter movement. The rise of right wing white nationalist groups, as part and parcel of everyday life (Lentin 2020), is understood as the most recent iteration of the on-going backlash against the universality and human rights framework of multiculturalism of the twentieth century (Ang and Stratton 1998; Hage 1998). Expressions of racism in Australia and beyond are sustained then even though race has become an elusive category to define (Meer and Nayak 2015; Lentin 2020). How is this tension – the realities of systemic racism alongside myths of post-racialism – accounted for in youth studies?

Racialisation, materiality and performativity

One of the key tenets of critical race theory is that race is best understood as a way to reduce biological/phenotypical differences into a classificatory system to organise society. While the effects of this system are widespread and durable, race, racism and racialisation are not a concretely fixed set of terms and definitions (Lentin 2015). Instead, as Smith (2019) has shown, the increased securitisation and militarisation of the nation's borders, since the 1990s, have required 'race' to be utilised in a number of ways to achieve the political economic aims of neoliberal capitalism. Race thinking has seeped into national political consciousness in insidious ways, disguised by economic policymaking (Hage 1998) to the point where 'tropes like "Stop the Boats" are now mundane, though resilient, staples of right-wing electioneering' (Smith 2019, 193). The material effects of these racialising tropes, however, are that Australia has been a leader in enforcing mandatory, indefinite detention for refugees (Verma and Mitropoulos 2015). For young people, who are refugees settled into Australia for example, the accumulation of whiteness, as a form of social capital (Moreton-Robinson 2015; Bargallie 2020), is increasingly especially important as the threat of deportation is acutely felt and shapes mental health, educational outcomes and a sense of belonging (Fozdar and Hartley 2013).

At present, the route for youth studies researchers to uncover the impacts of racism is by researching how minoritised youthful subjects feel about or experience racism

individually rather than focus on how race, as a macro-structure, features in lives of all young people and closely connects with class and gender. The latter approach has been taken up outside of the sociology of youth in Australia where it is argued that coloniality is sustained by the modern state through legal, political, educational and media institutions (Hage 1998; Ang 2001; Moreton-Robinson 2015; Verma and Mitropoulos 2015; Ngo 2019).

In my own work, I approach race as operating at the interplay of the *material*, for example patterns of socio-economic disadvantage that are apparent across specific cultural groups and the conditions that underscore their migration, and *symbolic* or discursive, for example the media representations of particular groups of minoritised young people as folk devils and the source of moral panic. This approach is primarily informed by post-colonial theories of how Western-centric media representations, knowledge systems, capitalist projects of modernity and the expansion of empire produce racialised others (Hall 1980; Said 1978 [2003] ; Fanon 1967). In particular, Hall was a key architect of youth studies in the global North, who articulated how racial discourses are produced and reproduced in pervasive, subtle, discursive ways through popular culture and mass media in order to maintain white hegemony (1978). He advanced cultural study approaches about how the *signification* of race and ethnicity, through the repetition of racial stereotypes, shapes sociality, material inequalities and is critical for youth identity making projects. As a youth studies researcher interested in the temporal, affective and material conditions of youth, particularly as it relates to employment, career making and aspiration in late modernity, Hall's work has been foundation for my own thinking. In the following, I expand on some of the key concepts and arguments proposed by Stuart Hall and other postcolonial and de-colonial scholars to bring race to the fore of a contemporary youth studies agenda.

Briefly, Hall explains race as a discursive, floating signifier (1980). The repetition of symbols, codes and markers across and within institutions, particularly in popular culture and media, generates how we view and interpret racialised bodies and groups as part of a classificatory social system (1980, 1996). The effects of race thinking are material in that they reproduce racism and inequality in new, coded forms that shape young people's lives in profound ways, rendering some racialised young people 'folk devils'. The global diffusion of cultural symbols and the demise of sub-cultures, alongside the idea that young people today are part of a post-racial future (Harries 2018), have meant that this approach to signification and representation has become somewhat outdated. Yet Hall made several important claims about the necessity of theorising race in conjunction with class, which have remained as necessary as ever, but which have also sat at the periphery of Australian youth studies. He says,

Politically and culturally, the combined and uneven relations between class and race are historically more pertinent than their simple correspondence. At the economic level, it is clear that race must be given its distinctive and 'relatively autonomous' effectivity, as a distinctive feature. This does not mean that the economic is sufficient to found an explanation of how these relations concretely function. One needs to know how different racial and ethnic groups were inserted historically, and the relations which have tended to erode and transform, or to preserve these distinctions through time – not simply as residues and traces of previous modes, but as active structuring principles of the present organisation of society

... what are the different forms and relations in which these racial fractions were combined under capital? (1980, 300)

These processes of ordering and labelling, sometimes explicitly but most often implicitly, through everyday practices and interactions, along cultural and religious lines, in turn, reproduce hegemonic racial rule (Essed 1991). Hall and colleagues first demonstrate this in *Policing the Crisis*, which Hall explains came about as an intellectual project because –

Some boys all with a mixed race background got involved in an incident in Birmingham and were getting a whacking great sentence by the courts. We started out by asking why the huge sentence? What's the big fuss about this? What does it have to do with the fact that these boys are not white English working class lads? ... So, we looked at the courts and the police and the media, and these institutions whose definitions were feeding into defining the situation. When we put that together, we realised that we were really looking at a very much broader political moment. We were looking at the disintegration of the welfare state, post-war welfare state settlement that is what was coming apart. (Hall in Jhally 2016, 335)

Beyond explicit connections between deviancy and race through media reporting and politicians at the time, what Hall and colleagues noted were the cultural signifiers of race and racialisation. Racialisation refers 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 collectivities' (Miles and Brown 2003, 101). Dunn, Klocker, and Salabay (2007) use racialisation to explain Muslims and non-Muslim relations in Australia. They say, the repetitive use of well-rehearsed stereotypes, perceptions of threat and inferiority, as well as fantasies that the Other do not belong, or are absent have coalesced to work against Arabs and Muslims in Australian society (Dunn, Klocker, and Salabay 2007, 564). The encoding and decoding practices for understanding race and racism mean that there is no end, fixed point at which we have all the answers about how race reproduces itself. If we expand Dunn's case study more generally, it becomes untenable to avoid seeing the operation of race and/or ethnicity in almost all grounded, empirical studies of young people's lives especially against the settler colonial backdrop of Australia.

The other important claim Hall makes is that we need to look at race discursively, 'like a language' which is to view it as something which is always contextual and grounded, intersecting with other signifiers, such as class, sex, gender and so on (Hall and Jefferson 2006). Unlike earlier functionalist Marxists, Hall rejected the notion that race operates in a universal way or that these categories fix the individual into place. Rather he encouraged thinking about how individual agency and resistance is exerted in response to these Othering processes, predominantly through youth cultures and subcultures (Hall 1978). These responses, strategies, stylistic codes can be treated as signifiers of new forms of ethnic identification that are, as he reminds us, always fluid, hybrid, dynamic and contextual. At the heart of the CCCS cultural approach to class, politics and power, is an emphasis on the performativity and politicisation of identity which has no doubt shaped Australian youth studies.

The performativity of identity is, therefore, not about raceless youth cultures resisting hegemony, viscerally through embodied stylistic practices. Rather, categories of ethnicity

are never neutral but require active management of self-presentation (Hall 1996). For racialised young people, who face racism, this management of cultural identity can be in response to experiences of, or the threat of, violence, harm and prejudice across different arenas in their lives (Hall 1996). What Hall made visible was that *all* young people live racially structured lives, arguments similarly taken up and applied in rich ethnographic studies (Back 1996; Nayak 2003). Hall advanced this position by showing how the demise of 'old' overt and scientific forms of racism didn't eliminate racialisation altogether but that instead, in the 1980s in the UK, new forms of racism flourished that he characterised as cultural, insidious, elastic and mutable.

As Gilroy explained, 'the new variety of racism that was strongly cultural in character – so cultural, so different supposedly – from a biological racism that it could hold up its hands and plead that it wasn't racism at all' (2019, 182). Paul Gilroy's extension of the sociologist W.E.B. Dubois conceptualisation of 'double consciousness' in *The Black Atlantic* has been fundamental for informing my analysis of youthful identity-making and subjectivities. The condition of double consciousness is about reckoning with one's sense of Otherness through the eyes of the white hegemony 'in the contact zones between various cultures and histories and which desires to transcend both the structures of the nation-state and the constraints of ethnicity and nationality' (Gilroy 1993). Against what he saw as an explosion of studying 'the minutia of ethnicity' in tandem with the rise of corporate multi-culture, this emphasis on contact zones and how they produce double consciousness brought the discussion back to the condition of political Blackness which was much more concerned with undoing systemic racism.

In *There Ain't No Black*, Gilroy refuted a purely Marxist and economic analysis of inequalities, instead arguing that race and racism held 'equivocal epistemological weight and power to shape events, structures and political patterns as other dimensions like class and gender' ([1987] 2002, xvii). For non-white young people in the UK, their belonging within and across various institutions and social spaces always partial and contingent on political discourse and material forms of inequality (Gilroy 1993). In essence, both Hall and Gilroy advocated for an approach that considers race and ethnicity as amounting to social and political *locations*. Heidi Mirza (1997), referring to Black British girlhood takes this up, saying

Being black in the UK is a state of 'becoming'. A process of consciousness when colour becomes the defining factor about who you are. Located through your 'Otherness' a 'conscious coalition' emerges: a self-consciously constructed space where identity is not inscribed by a natural identification but a political kinship. Now living submerged in whiteness, physical difference becomes a defining issue, a signifier, a mark of whether or not you belong. Thus to be Black in Britain is to share a common structural location; a racial location. (1997, 3)

As Mirza and other postcolonial feminist writers have argued (Anthias and Yuval-Davis 1992), there is a violence that ensues from such internalisation of difference that is experienced more intensely at different moments by different racialised young people.

These post-colonial and race critical approaches that have been put to work in various fields and disciplines in Australia have not been seriously considered as integral to an Australian youth studies tradition thus far. Rather, youth studies on the whole have replicated one of the 'problems' of Northern sociological scholarship that Bhabra (2017) identifies whereby

an association of class with structural inequality embedded in the economic system and race as merely pointing to social divisions. As such, class is presumed to be more significant than race and to provide a universal category for inclusive action, in contrast to a supposedly divisive focus on race. However, this analysis fails to acknowledge the ways in which race has been fundamental to the configuration of the modern world and is integral to the very configuration of socio-economic inequalities in the present. (2017, 227)

In what follows, I demonstrate how this has occurred and illustrate where these two units of analysis – class and race – can be more closely integrated.

Class without race and multiculturalism without class?

In spite of the enormous legacy of Gilroy, Hall and other postcolonial thinkers for theorising the temporality, performativity and politicisation of identity-making within a racialised social system (Bhabha 2004) and highlighting the continued effects of colonialism (Said 1978 [2003]), their bearing on an Australian youth studies tradition has been minimal. Reflecting on the field of youth studies, Gilroy says, ‘the conversation over the meaning and signification of race has taken place in and around youth cultures and subcultures since their formation’ ([1987] 2002, 202). Minoritised Black young people in Britain formed syncretic youth cultures, styles and modes of consumption to transgress and resist the racism that was deeply intertwined with nationalism. The relational discourses between youth cultures, ethnicity and class were demonstrated by Poynting et al. (2004) and later in Tabar, Noble, and Poynting (2010) in their account of how young socio-economically disadvantaged Lebanese Australian boys responded to racial stereotypes in the late 1990s through modes of strategic essentialism and hybridity. What Gilroy describes is slightly different – in part due to the context in which these authors are writing – in that he shows how Black youth cultures were, from the outset, ‘mixed up’ with white working class cultures as forms of resistance against politically conservative ‘parent cultures’ (Gilroy [1987] 2002), thus arguing that ethnic identity making for diasporic young people is predicated on movement, exchange and subcultural youthful alliances (Gilroy 1993).

Although this paper is primarily interested in developing an Australian-based race critical youth studies, it is important to acknowledge that young people in Australia are also living global lives (Robertson, Harris, and Baldassar 2018) most commonly via social media and increased transnational connectivity (Harris and Johns 2020) wherein their consumption choices and everyday lives are shaped by popular cultures and political issues abroad. For example, they are, therefore, knowledgeable about and deeply affected by institutional racism abroad that might have negative effects on their family or community, for example the Muslim travel ban in the U.S in effect in 2018, police brutality against African American young people that mirrors the experiences of Indigenous Australian populations. Within this context, recent work on ‘the postracial’ demonstrates how diversity and representational politics have become part of the business model for corporations where gestures towards inclusivity are presented via branding and marketing strategies (Saha 2018; Benjamin 2019). The tension, between the realities of systemic racism against the media representations and consumption practices of global inclusive youth cultures, can make it difficult to discuss racism and indeed has been accounted for as central to the myth of a ‘postracial’ generation (Harries 2018). That is, a culture where

'young adults are often called upon to represent the multicultural or post-racial future' (Harries 2014, 1108) where race and racism is actively denied even when the effects of race thinking are materially felt by young people themselves.

This approach to youth studies, particularly in relation to cultures, has not been fully adopted in the Australian case. Morgan and Warren (2011) looking at Aboriginal young people and hip hop scenes note this absence, saying 'much scholarship on Aboriginal hip hop ... lacks a deeper ethnographic understanding of the dynamics between youth and parent cultures, and the tensions that might exist between the two' (928). Beyond addressing these intergenerational tensions, it is further apparent that while some empirical research closely examines racialised young people's lived experiences (Poynting et al. 2004; Morgan and Warren 2011; Nilan 2017; Aquino 2018; Idriss 2018) these works tend to sit on the periphery of youth studies theorisation in the Australian context and/or contribute to what is broadly considered migration studies in Australia. As a critique of this tendency, Noble (2015) and Harries (2018) have respectively argued that there is a need for an Australian sociology of youth to better capture formations of ethnic identities, as grounded and dynamic processes, irreducible to demographically demarcated cultural groups or as only contained within national borders. Similarly, France, Roberts, and Wood (2018, 364) argue for an Antipodean perspective on class in youth studies that accounts for the specific gendered and raced class structure established through colonisation (see also Threadgold 2018).

Other critiques of Northern youth studies suggest analyses of young people's lives informed by settler colonial studies, CRT and/or postcolonial theory are currently missing from the dominant theoretical frameworks (Cooper, Swartz, and Mahali 2019). Instead, there has been an overriding focus in Australian youth studies research cultures on identifiable 'groups' whose experiences of racism are framed through the prism of cultural difference (Harris and Herron 2017). While the dialectical nature of ethnic identity, making in relation to class-based inequalities, has been captured in the Australian context, these studies tend to sit within parallel research agendas that speak to discourses of multiculturalism and migration (Harris 2017). Meer and Nayak (2015) identify this silencing and sidestepping of race as a pattern endemic across sociology in the global North, saying,

there is an inherent paradox in the use of race that sociologists constantly grapple with. Many tend to portray the term under erasure by presenting it in inverted commas so as to indicate that we are referring to a socially constructed category, based upon a problematic idea, instead of something that is self-evidently real in the world. (2015, 8)

A youth studies agenda that attends to the operationalisation of this paradox that Meer and Nayak (2015) point to as necessary for understanding young people's lived experiences as simultaneously classed, gendered and raced.

To illuminate this further, Riley, Morey, and Griffin (2010) argue, the consumption practices of young people are closely tied to citizenship discourses. They add, being a consumer has become another way in which young people practice being neoliberal subjects insofar as their consumption activities 'allow for self-realisation and/or responsibility to the state' (2010, 36). Yet consumption choices and the making of the youthful citizen cannot be freely made without the influence of institutional and corporate interests who have 'moved away from one-size-fits-all mass marketing toward ethnically tailored

niches that capitalise on calls for diversity' (Benjamin 2019, 18). These economic interests have pushed a 'postracial' myth on consumers and pulled the conversation about anti-racism away from structural reform and systemic change (Harries 2018; Benjamin 2019). Beyond this myth, the reality is that young people, who are not racially coded as white and middle-class, struggle to experience the world, exert personal agency and make consumption choices without structural barriers (Idriss 2018). They deal with the underlying persistent concern that their subcultural expressions and consumption choices will be perceived as subversive or a danger to the nation state (Idriss and Atie 2020). While working class white young people have been shown to be pathologised in relation to their middle-class peers (Butler 2018), the specific forms of criminalisation, surveillance and moral panic over Blak/Black and non-white migrant background of young people requires analysis of how classed identities are rendered within racial rule or, at minimum, how class intersects with structural categories of race and gender (Hollingworth 2015a; Tabar, Noble, and Poynting 2010). To that end, more intersectional analysis (Anthias and Yuval-Davis 1992; Nayak 2003; Mirza 1997), such as the approaches taken in those earlier CCCS studies of young people's everyday lives under neoliberal capitalist reforms, is once again required.

Some researchers suggest that there already exists a clear, almost straight line from the CCCS tradition to Australian youth studies (Bennett 2015), evident in the emphasis on transitions, youth cultures and moreover, how the rise of political conservatism and neoliberal capitalism completely transformed the socio-material conditions of life for incoming generations of young people since the 1980s (Bessant, Watts, and Farthing 2017). I agree with Bennett's assessment of this lineage on the whole bar one exception. During his time at the CCCS Stuart Hall argued that the social welfare reforms and political culture of conservatism and individualisation in the UK were inherently raced. The roll-back of social welfare took shape as a brutal and reactionary force in some ways against the successes of Black colonial subjects. Gilroy ([1987] 2002) identified that central to nationhood itself, i.e. pre-dating Thatcherite reforms, was the convergence between race and economics. Both Hall and Gilroy argued that what was needed to demonstrate the hegemony of right wing nationalism and capitalist structures, were culturalist accounts that were attentive to the structural conditions of race of how people live, consumption practices and youthful, embodied everyday acts of resistance.

In Australia, the rise of free market trade and the breakdown of social welfare programmes under the Keating government, but especially during the Howard years had enormous effects on how young people live day to day and how they conceive of their own futures (Bessant, Watts, and Farthing 2017). A strong body of youth studies scholarship has demonstrated the material and cultural effects of individualisation discourses on young people since the 1980s; mainly by showing how any kind of linearity in the life course enjoyed by earlier generations is no longer viable for many in a gig economy (Taylor and Luckman 2018). But unlike the work of the CCCS, the link between neoliberal governance reform and its *racialising logics* has not been fully fleshed out in the dominant intellectual terrains that Australian youth studies scholarship works with. This is necessary because, as Stratton and Ang (1994) argue, the 'White Australia policy implied the official racialisation of Australian national identity in a concerted and consensual manner' (142); it is the white middle class who has been historically positioned as the symbol for Australian society (Moreton-Robinson 2000, 177). This reality

means that treating working class and disadvantaged young people as unmarked by race unless they belong to a non-white ethnic group or Indigenous avoids the centrality of whiteness to the national identity. Instead it is much more useful to treat whiteness as a form of capital, both materially and symbolically, within the settler state (Hage 1998; Moreton-Robinson 2004).

Taking just one short period in recent Australian history – during the Howard government (1996–2007) – as an example illuminates how pervasive discourses of whiteness are to notions of nationhood around which all other self-identification processes are expected to occur for young people (Hage 1998). For example, it was during the Howard years that racialised discourses of the ‘Tampa Crisis’ were splashed across media reports and when then senator Pauline Hanson declared this country to be ‘swamped by Asians’.² It was also under John Howard’s leadership that the race riots at Cronulla took place in 2005 and where, as Moreton-Robinson (2015) puts it ‘Howard... reaffirmed the nation as a white possession, one that is tolerant but secure in its white identity’ (p96) while failing to criticise Pauline Hanson and refusing to condemn the white nationalists that attacked Lebanese Australian communities at the beach. Further still,

The Howard Government’s ‘practical reconciliation’ and the ‘Northern Territory Emergency Response’, followed by the Rudd Government’s ‘Closing the Gap’ and ‘Stronger Solutions’, all claimed to be concerned with ameliorating differences between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples, centring efforts around monitoring and measuring disparities in health and socioeconomic status. In the resulting public health discourse, this has manifested as an oft-used convention of beginning reports about Indigenous health with a recent epidemiological portrait, thus creating a visual metaphor of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as a problem to be solved. (Askew et al. 2020, 1)

These events and policies are often treated as distinct from one another but through a critical race approach we might see them as connected to longer histories of structural racism and coloniality (Carey and Silverstein 2020; Moreton-Robinson 2015) where ‘the uneven distribution of political rights to Indigenous peoples in British settler polities in the nineteenth century always aided and upheld the economic and political imperatives of British settlement’ (Evans 2003, 2). It is my suggestion here, building on the work of Hall, Gilroy and others who applied race critically in conjunction with class as it related to young people’s lives, it is necessary now to see the value of a race critical youth studies where the settler colonial context is the key starting point from which on-going forms of ‘white possessive’ at an everyday level play out (Moreton-Robinson 2015) and from which material racial inequalities flow.

Conclusion

This paper has examined how a critical youth study informed by post-colonial and/or race critical *theory* has yet to receive enough traction among youth researchers working in the Australian context. Empirical research studies, working with minoritised young people, have tended to be perceived as a segmented body of work; critical Indigenous youth studies are segmented further still. What this paper showed is that the substantive elements of the *theories* of race and ethnicity can be of value for understanding a rapidly changing Australian society and the role of young

people within it. Furthermore, I have highlighted that where ethnicity is incorporated into youth studies, there needs to be greater attention to performativity and to treat this structural category as always inherently classed and gendered. This has direct bearing on youth transitions, cultures and identification processes and opens a host of new theoretical and methodological questions for the field. Finally, the paper aimed to move beyond a focus on minoritised young people only in relation to capturing how multiculturalism and/or Indigeneity operates in Australia to draw attention to the material and affective dimension of racialisation en masse. Drawing on a wide range of postcolonial and de-colonial scholarship I have proposed that a race critical youth study can more strongly and clearly situate the function of the state and other institutional powers in producing unequal outcomes among young people along racial, classed and gendered lines.

Notes

1. <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2018/oct/15/ok-to-be-white-australian-government-senators-condemn-anti-white-racism>.
2. <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-09-14/pauline-hanson-aiden-speech-asian-immigration/7645578>.

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ORCID

Sherene Idriss  <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-0842-5594>

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