What does it mean to "go beyond race"?

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Abstract

In this commentary piece, we argue that we must interrogate the meaning of race and examine why and how race *does* matter in different societies across contexts before we can even consider moving "beyond race." We understand race as fundamentally related to power, privilege, and oppression; we discuss how we cannot go "beyond race" in the face of persistent racisms, hierarchies and maintenance of power and privilege. We address that demographic changes in itself does not bring us "beyond race" and the importance of active policies and political mobilization through addressing race as an analytical category is necessary to go "beyond racism."

Keywords: Race, Racism, Power, Privilege, Oppression

Introduction

> *PORTER BRASWELL: So, another question that we've received is will we ever live in a post racial society? But I think a more interesting question is: should we ever live in a post-racial society? Should that be something that we strive for?*
> *DEVON LEE: I think the thing that we should really strive for is a post racist society. Like, like you know, again, I want to hone in to this point that it's not about race. It's about racism. That's where the problem is. (Braswell, 2021)*

In this commentary piece, we consider some of the complexities that are implicit in Saharso and Scharrer's suggestion that we can or should move "beyond race" and their related statement that "race will no longer matter" (2021). We argue that we must first interrogate the meaning of race and examine why and how race *does* currently matter in different societies across contexts before we can even consider moving "beyond race." After exploring the meaning and function of race as centrally about racism and maintaining structural privileges and inequities, we connect our understanding of why we cannot go beyond race to the four proposed themes: Demographic changes, Policies, Political mobilization and, Race as an analytical category. We end the commentary by returning to the question, "can we go beyond race?," especially in the face of existing racism across contexts. We write this commentary as scholars who are ascribed as and self-identify as Asian or Asian American, and through our experiences of conducting research on race and racism in Japan, Sweden and the US.

Race

Any discussion of moving "beyond race" must first clarify what is meant by "race." We understand race as "a technology of power and control" (Lentin, 2020). Race is not an objective or neutral demographic category related to phenotypical differences. Race erroneously essentializes characteristics (including phenotypical characteristics), creating prescribed (but changing) social categories that individuals may or may not self-identify with and that others may or may not "accurately" assign. The purported boundaries of racial groups based on physical characteristics and the association of behavior or abilities with phenotype are not accurate or empirically supported (Smedley & Smedley, 2005). However, this does not mean that race is not "real." "Race" as a concept is not actually rooted phenotypes or abilities. Race as a social category is rooted in the historical and current creation and maintenance of hierarchies of power and related privilege and oppression (Fredrickson, 2015; Markus, 2008; Smedley & Smedley, 2005). Phenotype and visibility are only a "primary carrier of race" whereby our bodies are "collectively turned into populations to be regulated and confined" (Lentin, 2020, p. 46). That is, as Devon Lee points out, "It's not about race. It's about racism."

Racism is a structural system of hierarchies of power and privilege and associated oppression. Power is the ability to influence, which can be acquired and earned throughout different situations. But when power is unearned and automatically accessed based on membership in arbitrary socially constructed categories, it becomes privilege. Privileges are difficult to see and understand if one has them, because one has not needed to question their existence and generally assumes that the power one has is earned and deserved (McIntosh, 2018; Suyemoto et al., in press). But privileges are much easier to see and understand if one does not have them and cannot access them. Differentiated hierarchical privileges create oppression for those in "lower" statuses, defined as, "structural phenomena that immobilize or diminish a group", characterized by exploitation, marginalization, powerlessness, cultural imperialism, and violence (Young, 1990). The racial privilege or oppression that one experiences is not an individual choice, given that race is a social construct embedded in societal cultures and institutions.

"Race" associates hierarchical privilege with phenotypical categories that are, themselves, socially constructed. Visual categorical cues are central to how we are perceived by others (Johnson et al., 2015), but as Song (2020) points out, *what* characteristics are perceived as mattering, *how* these categories matter, and *who* is considered (racially) visible is constantly changing, despite individual phenotypes being unchanging. The meanings and "matterings" of visual markers are socially contingent; contextually chosen phenotypes evoke social meanings rooted in the function of sustaining hierarchies of power, privilege and oppression (Daynes & Lee, 2008; McEachrane, 2014). In other words, racial groups are continuously formed (and re-formed) in each society historically and politically, on the basis of power, privilege, and oppression. Racism is what matters, not race, because "race works with and in the service of racism" (Lentin, 2015, p. 1402). Racism "devaluates the lives and integrity of some people" on the basis of race (McEachrane, 2014, p. 105) and the creation of race is rooted in this function (Fredrickson, 2015; Smedley & Smedley, 2005).

Above we have argued that it is not phenotype that "makes" race, but it is the privilege and oppression hierarchy anchored to and essentialized in what is visible which

generates the social construction of race, and the particular privileges and oppressions afforded to groups that delineate the boundaries of racial categories and their social importance. Given that meanings of race and boundaries of racial categories change to maintain privilege and oppression, we might better think of race as a process, rather than a thing. Omi and Winant define racial formation as "the sociohistorical process by which racial categories are created, inhabited, transformed, and destroyed" (Omi & Winant, 1994, p. 55). Cultural norms, values, and institutions socialize individuals into racialized understandings and identities and are, in turn, maintained by such socialized individuals.

Racialization is the enactment of race among and within people in each society. It is the process which connects the formation of race as related to the structures of privilege and oppression (Omi & Winant, 1994) to individual and group experience. Racialization is the reciprocal social construction whereby individuals are socialized into a racial worldview (ideology) through our culture and institutions (e.g., education, law and legal practices, social policies, etc.) and through our relationships and interpersonal interactions (which are shaped by our culture and institutions). Simultaneously, individuals who have been socialized into that racial worldview create and maintain racialized relationships, institutions, and culture. All people are affected by racialization: it is not only the minority who are racialized but also (even more so) the majority group within society who have the most power and control to create the bases and boundaries of racialization. At the individual or interpersonal level, Song writes that racialization is a useful concept in understanding "a relativistic assessment of each racial interaction (an interaction which can make reference to racial, religious or ethnic background and/or characteristics), and the degree to which it can be regarded as racist" (Song, 2014, p. 115).

We are not asserting that race is the only social category implicated in creating, maintaining, or reflecting hierarchies of power. Multiple hierarchies of oppression and privilege are embedded within our worldviews, relationships, culture, and institutions (e.g., ethnicity, gender, sexuality, social class; Suyemoto et al., in press). Furthermore, Crenshaw's (2017) work on intersectionality calls our attention to the ways in which socially meaningful differences in privilege and oppression interact and are simultaneously negotiated. People experience racially marked or charged events and conditions differently depending on the relative privilege that individuals experience (Goldberg, 2015), some of which are related to intersectional statuses and identities. This relates to race being both multilevel and multidimensional as a construct.

Race as contextual, multilevel and multidimensional construct

Race influences (and is influenced by) individual meanings and worldviews, interpersonal relationship processes, and institutional arrangements (Goldberg, 2015; Lentin, 2020). Race is both multilevel and multidimensional as a social construct. Multilevel considers the ecological levels at which race is constructed, maintained, and enacted through the institutionalized structure of hierarchy, the social arrangement and organizations which normalize and reproduce racial structure. Goldberg (2015) argues that experiences of racist expression or action function as an underlying structural condition, and the individual and collective experiences in turn reinforce the racial structures of the society already in place. Multilevel considers the various effects experienced

at different ecological levels: the individual internalization of racial worldviews and arrangements, the application of racial worldviews to interpersonal interactions, and the institutionalization of racialized norms and privileges (Carter et al., 2019; David et al., 2019; Prilleltensky, 2012; Young, 1990). At the individual level, racism is embedded into our judgements and beliefs about ourselves and others, and in the actions we take that reflect those beliefs. At the interpersonal level, racism is embedded into our social interactions, whether or not we choose to see the effects of race (Bonilla-Silva, 2010) and whether or not we intend to enact and/or choose to resist our racialized beliefs (Dovidio et al., 2015, 2017). Forms of aversive racism or existence of implicit bias and judgments reflect the structure of inequity that persist independent of individual desire or identification (Banaji & Greenwald, 2016; Dovidio et al., 1986). At the institutional or systemic level, racism is manifested in forms of explicit and implicit policies, law and institutional arrangements which maintains inequality in health, education, labor and housing market (Bonilla-Silva, 1997; Golash-Boza, 2018).

Race as multidimensional considers the ways that race is enacted or deployed. For example, as identity, as social categorization, or as social structure of inequity. In order to understand how individuals and the institutions internalize and maintain racial structures, we need to separate race as social categorization from race as social identity and consider both in relation to structural inequality.

Racial categorization is a systemic practice to maintain the racialized structure: it is the social formation of race as applied to creating bounded categories for ascribing hierarchical status and associate privileges. Because race is socially constructed, racial categories are contextual—this again relates to understanding that race is about socially constructed *boundaries* of power, privilege and oppression. Although race *functions* similarly across different contexts as a tool to maintain hierarchy, race is not *manifested* in the same way in these different contexts, given different histories and demographic compositions. The basis of categorical boundaries of power shifts depending on the ways that different societies identify or prioritize various "sorts" of phenotypes, what is defined as visible, and the associated meanings. Color and visibility mattered and still matter differently in North America, Asia, Middle East and Africa, affecting individual life chances negatively and positively because of the structure of power, privilege and oppression that are attached to the different kinds of visible cues (Dixon & Telles, 2017). In the context of Japan, for example, there are two parallel and interacting forms of racial privileges: On one hand the colonial past of Japan means that Koreans, Chinese and other non-Japanese Asians in Japan have historically been racialized as second-class. Their oppressed racialized status as "Asian" (meaning non-Japanese and foreigner) is maintained multigenerationally systemically through immigration control, economic exploitation, policing and unequal provision of rights (Hirano, 2020). Simultaneously, the legacies from WWII and the aftermath locate Japan in the Global system of racial hierarchy with associated admiration towards the West; this anchors racialized power within Western phenotypes. Japanese as the dominant racial majority in Japan enjoy privileges similar to White privilege in the Western context while simultaneously elevating Whiteness itself due to influences from the Global racial hierarchy which privileges those who are racially White. The co-existence of these two structures of privileges invested in both the idea of superior "Japaneseness" and the superior "White West" is evident when looking

at how mixed race Japanese are socialized into the racial structure and how they internalize and perform their identity as mixed and/or Japanese: Mixed Japanese with Asian background, both consciously and unconsciously pass as Japanese (to avoid oppression) and mixed Japanese with Western phenotypes exercise their position as White (to gain privilege) in Japan. (Sato et al., Forthcoming, 2022).

In this example, we see the interaction of racial categorization and racial identity. Racial identity is about how we personally negotiate social categories of race, including how we connect with our own racialized group, including salience, centrality, negotiation, and chosen attitude towards membership (Helms, 1990; Seller et al., 1998). Individuals may choose whether or how they identify with a given racial category, but they cannot choose whether or how they will be racialized or racially categorized by others within a society that participates in a racial worldview (Markus, 2008; Smedley & Smedley, 2005). In our example above, the multiracial Japanese individuals' identity claims or attempts to "pass" may or may not be recognized by others. The recognition or lack of recognition may then affect racial identity. Thus, racial identity is related to racial categorization because salience, centrality, and choice is affected by ascribed (imposed) categorization. This is not to say that one must accept the imposition of those categories and their attendant meaning, but only to say that one must negotiate that imposition in some manner. Roth's (2016) multiple dimensions of race demonstrate that even self-identification interacts with social categorization, as she expands beyond racial identity (subjective self-identification) to consider racial self-classification (the race you check on an official form), observed race (the race others believe you to be), and reflected race (the race you believe others assume you to be). Morning (2018) includes additional bases of racial claims and racial identity such as genetic (through genetic testing), cosmetic (through body alternation), emotive (feeling of belonging) or constructed (seeing race as only a matter of reflected race). The work of these authors highlights how social identification and categorization often involve inconsistency and create gaps between them, because while identity is flexible, categorizations are socially conditioned (Song, 2012). In sum, although individuals can claim subjective identity on different bases, their claims may not always be validated because race is not only about individual choice: Race constitutes the structure of inequity that individuals then negotiate as influences on, and organizing frameworks for, identity.

Understanding race as inherently related to hierarchies of privilege and attention turns attention to the ways that racial categories are organized and bounded by access to privilege and shared historical and current experiences of oppression. In-group and individual identity development are therefore framed in relation to that shared experience, and not wholly or primarily based on phenotype or self-claim. Tensions within racialized groups may emerge related to discrepancies in what is shared (e.g. colorism; Dixon & Telles, 2017) which are, themselves related to privilege hierarchies. However, the shared experience of persistence, resilience, resistance, and joy in the face of oppression often contributes to a strong sense of fellowship and pride, including active attempts to redefine the meanings of racial categories and identities in relation to these positive experiences of persistence and resistance, and not only in relation to the shared experience of oppression or marginalization (e.g. Juang et al., 2017; Lin, 2020). At the group level, racial identity contributes to mobilization and resistance for social justice. For example,

the civil rights movement in the 1960s in the US and the Ethnic Studies movement centralizing the experiences of oppressions among Black, Asian, Latinx and Indigenous persons are examples of racialized groups reclaiming their own collective history and identification. A group level identity also enables positive meanings and pan-ethnic and cross racial connections, through recognition of affinity, shared (racialized) cultural background and cultural strength (Kibria, 1997; Markus, 2008; Rivas-Drake et al., 2021). At the individual level, racial identity models focus on liberating oneself from negative impositions of oppression, locating those meanings within racialized (and racist) structural ideologies, and exploring positive meanings through developing fellowship and pride (e.g. see overview in Sue et al., 2019).

Individuals may also negotiate racial identity in the absence of any official practice of racial classification and categorization at the structural and institutional level, recognizing the social meaning of race. For example individuals develop and assert racial identity through awareness and experiences of systemic oppression and dominant institutions characterized by the idea of "Swedishness" perpetuating the structure of hierarchy through racialization (see for example Gardell et al., 2018 for experiences of Black Swedes). In our own research on multiracial/mixed identities across contexts, independent of whether individuals subjectively identify racially and whether that racial identity is central for the individual, the consequences and the structure of oppression that the individuals face due to racialization, and the awareness and the psychological consequences of racial ascriptions (objective and reflected race) continue across contexts (Osanami Törngren et al., 2021). Racial categories can be formally absent, existing categories can dissolve or shift, and how we may identify with our racialized groups and categories might be flexible, but individuals are aware of race because racial structures are centrally connected to the boundaries of power and privilege and are perpetuated through racialization.

Thus, understanding race as inherently related to racism and as multidimensional also means connecting racial categorizations and identity negotiations to the experiences of structural inequities. For example, a recent study shows that the perception of Swedishness is determined by how people perceive and categorize phenotypes into different racial groups. Those who are categorized as White are perceived to be Swedish, but those who are categorized as Asian, Black, Latino, Middle Eastern or Mixed were significantly less perceived as Swedish (Osanami Törngren and Nyström, under review). And perception of "Swedishness" matters structurally. For example, research on labor market discrimination indicates that hiring and promotion privileges those who are racialized as White and Swedish and discriminates against those who are racialized as non-White (and therefore non-Swedish; Gardell et al., 2018; Wolgast & Wolgast, 2021). Independent of how individuals self-identify, categorizations based on the phenotype maintain the borders of who counts as the majority and who does not, which manifests in the experiences of inequities.

What does it mean to "go beyond race"?

From this foundation of race as fundamentally related to power, privilege, and oppression, going "beyond race," would mean eradicating racism, such that there is no structure of power privileging one group over another that is related to the sociohistorical

categorization that has essentialized phenotype. In Goldberg's (2015) words, thinking beyond race means to "un-think contemporary incapacitations and limits on the possibilities of societies privileging some at the cost to most" (p. 180). We cannot go "beyond race" in the face of persistent antisemitism, anti-Black, anti-Asian, anti-Muslim racisms and other actions which maintains the structure of oppression in society. As long as there are racisms manifested in hierarchies and maintenance of power and privilege, we can never go beyond race.

Individuals and groups *can* be "deracialized" depending on the changing societal circumstances (Gans, 2017). But unless we see structural changes in privilege and oppression, deracialization is merely an individual process of passing or covering (Yoshino, 2007) or a social process of shifting categorical boundaries for specific isolated groups. It is not a process of going "beyond race" more broadly, with associated elimination of experienced oppression and structural inequities for all. For example, we have witnessed the process of deracialization from the experiences of the Italians or the Irish in the US, or the Finnish, Italian and former Yugoslavians in Sweden. We also observe an ongoing process of deracialization of Poles or mixed Swedes (Adolfsson, 2021; Osanami Törngren, Forthcoming 2022). These individuals and groups have come closer to or became part of the structure of power and privilege that the native majority dominates, (i.e. the "mainstream"; Alba & Foner, 2015) and are no longer stigmatized, or differentiated because their phenotype is no longer assumed or created to be the other, the less worthy. They are achieving the privileges as belonging to the majority group even if their phenotypical differences might still be evident to some. But the foundational existence of a dominant, majority group and subordinate oppressed groups has not changed. This means that as some become deracialized, others may become more oppressively racialized because the White majority remains powerful even if they become numerical minority (Alba & Duyvendak, 2019). For example, MENA and Muslim Americans, a group historically racially categorized as White, now experience racial appraisals as non-White in their everyday lives, which make them illegible and made subordinate to the hegemonic American Whiteness (Maghbouleh, 2020). There is also always a risk of "reracialization" (Gans, 2017) as long as there is a structural hierarchy of power and privilege anchored to our phenotype and other visibilities. Deracialization may then only mean that the boundaries of the categories in relation to power, privilege, and oppression have shifted while the structures of privileges that subjugate other racialized groups remains.

Similarly, post-raciality as a simple approach of erasing and denying any racial categorization or reference to race in public institutions is not a meaningful way to "go beyond race". This kind of post-raciality will only enable people to "conceive of ourselves no longer in racial terms" and *think* of ourselves as "transcending racial categorization" (Goldberg, 2015, p. 69), even as the effects of the hierarchy of race remain. Functionally, this only serves to protect and maintain the racial arrangements and ideology which benefit the individuals with privilege and power and maintains racism (Bonilla-Silva, 2010; Plaut et al., 2018). For example, more specifically, psychological research indicates that not talking about race and endorsing colorblind racial ideology actually maintains racism (Neville et al., 2013). The aspiration and need to be postracial and "unlearn race" involve ignoring the ongoing effects of race, and are therefore

the practice of those who have a choice, the privilege of those "without racial qualities" who are able to enjoy the structure that benefits them in society. Goldberg (2015) writes how Whiteness has become the defining power in the relational conditions of raciality, a position that has become the norm, invisible and transparent, a structure perpetuating power and privilege on multiple levels and dimensions (p. 125). As Lentin (2020) argues, not speaking about race only benefit and serves those who are not targeted by racism: it is necessary to name Whiteness to name racialized power.

Furthermore, being "postracial" often involves proxying race to a supposedly colorblind term such as ethnicity, nationality or country of origins. However, this too serves as avoidance to addressing the power basis of race (Suyemoto et al., 2020b). The uncomfortableness to speak in terms of race and preference to use terms as nationality, ethnicity, culture, and immigration status is mirroring what DiAngelo calls "White fragility" (2018) and Wekker calls "White innocence" (2016). Ethnicity, for example, is also a socially constructed and multifaced concept based on one's cultural heritage and origin. Discrimination based on ethnicity does occur, however ethnic identity and categorizations are primarily defined by the individuals within the group (Jenkins, 2005), unless ethnicity is confounded with racialization. Ethnic identity and categorization can therefore be optional (Waters, 1990), symbolic (Gans, 1979) and/or situational (Okamura, 1981). Ethnicity characterized by cultural affiliations are not inherently related to race or racialization (Markus, 2008). These points are related to Omi and Winant's (1994) observation that ethnicity and race are often confounded and the term "ethnicity" used as a substitute for "race" *because* it obscures the power basis that relates to inequality. McEachrane (2014) argues that political rejection of race has led to a situation where on one hand race is said to have no meaning, on the other hand social distinctions such as ethnicity, religion and nationality have more meaning because they are being used as proxies for race. Dixon and Telles (2017) find the obscuring of race and color in research in Europe as particularly notable given Europe's centrality in the spread of White supremacy and colorism throughout the globe historically. This promotion of racial colorblind ideology is a denial of the meaning of the differences that we see and socially created.

Sweden is an example where post-raciality and proxying of race to ethnicity is evident. In 2009 Sweden took away the term "race" from the Discrimination Act, followed by a decision in 2014 by the Government to erase the term "race" from all legislation. Simultaneously, in the Discrimination Act, ethnicity is defined as "national or ethnic origin, skin colour or other similar circumstance"(Government of Sweden, 2008). These decisions to erase the word "race" reflects a post-racial aspiration based on a misconception that the *word* race would give legitimacy to racist beliefs stressing the biological reality of race (McEachrane, 2014, 2018). But the phenotypical basis of racial categorization that is used to justify biological assumptions ("skin colour or other similar circumstance") is still maintained in the definition of ethnicity. Studies in Sweden clearly show racialization and racial formation; how people are made aware of their position in society as Black, Asian, Middle Eastern and Latino; and the ways in which their bodies function as "racial frontiers" (Lentin, 2020). At the same time, the idea of "Swedishness" among majority Swedes is also constructed with the symbolic boundaries of phenotype, maintaining socioeconomic status and privileges

in society (Hübinette & Tigervall, 2009; Kalonaityte et al., 2007; Khosravi, 2009; Lundström, 2007).

What is even more perplexing is the decision to replace the word race with "racialization" in Sweden. Racialization is the extension of racial meaning and part of our socialization in maintaining the hierarchical structure: How can we talk about racialization without addressing race? In the Swedish decision, the terms racialization and racialized unproblematically refer solely to the experiences of the non-White minorities (Osanami Törngren, Forthcoming 2022). This approach serves to obscure the ways that White people are also racialized, and thereby normalize racial privilege. This is a single example of a well acknowledged broader issue: although White people often don't see themselves as racialized, there is no racial category that is "neutral." There is a White racial category, and White people are perceived and socialized into racial meanings for themselves, meanings imbued with unexamined privilege (Goldberg, 2015; Lentin, 2020). Increasingly, the meaningfulness of being White, personally, interpersonally, and structurally is being examined. Models of White racial identity and White racial consciousness (e.g. Helms, 2019; Thomann & Suyemoto, 2018) emphasize the ways that White people, also, must negotiate the imposition of racial meanings. Being White and categorized as White gives structural privileges in many racialized context (e.g. Essed, 1991; Harris, 1993; Mattsson & Tesfahuney, 2002), as noted above.

Analysis about "the racialized" that only focuses on the experiences of racisms and discrimination and highlights the oppression that non-White "immigrants" and their descendants experience therefore supports the dominance of Whiteness. Because race is too often falsely understood simply in terms of visibility and not as structural, those with power and privilege tend to see race as something only relevant for the non-White minorities. White Swedish majority see themselves as "raceless" in the process of racialization, which interacts with the confounding of race and ethnicity and the use of ethnicity to obscure the power basis of race. The White Swedish majority normalize Swedish culture and being White and "ethnic Swedish" as the majority, prescribing ethnicity (proxying for race, now as "racialization") only to those who are visibly non-White. Ethnicity, which should encompass everybody equally (because everybody has origin and culture), thus becomes a proxy of race and something that is only relevant for "the racialized" while simultaneously avoiding engaging race and its associated power basis. Here "the racialized" and those who do not subscribe to the Swedish culture have no choice but to be characterized for their failure to integrate and assimilate into Swedish society while the privileges of the White majority "natives" are left untouched. Racial hierarchies of power and privilege are maintained unaddressed, and only the *term* race is discarded.

Four ways of understanding why we need to address race
Now let us turn to the four themes of understanding "beyond race" that Saharso and Scharrer (2022) suggest and consider them in light of our definition of race.

Demographic changes
We do believe that increasing population identifying as mixed across the globe reflects hope about the future beyond racism. But this hope is rooted less in the existence of multiracial people or identities, and more in the fact that mixed children

come from interracial marriages. Removing legal and structural barriers, which are examples of institutional racism, has increased interracial marriages and interracial marriages are a primary indicator of decreased social distance between races, which reflects decreases in racial discrimination. This is, indeed, hopeful. But, again, it is not the existence of multiracial identities that are the basis of hope. Mixed populations are defined and ascribed categorization or relative privilege *based on maintaining power of the elite.* Multiracial individuals are often coded as non-White, and subject to racial discrimination (Osanami Törngren, 2020; Song, 2017). Assertion of mixed identity is not always validated by the majority who maintain the power and privilege, leading to individual identities being questioned (Masuoka, 2017). Even those that may be less subject to direct interpersonal racial oppression are embedded in the history and systems of oppression and negotiate the meanings of racism through family and history. They experience and witness racism through their parents and their family. Our research on mixed identity in Japan, Sweden and the US show how mixed individuals navigate the complex racial hierarchy that exist through negotiating and contesting their positions within the existing racial hierarchies (Osanami Törngren, 2021; Suyemoto, 2004; Suyemoto & Dimas, 2013).

We are not against including more nuanced options for ethnic and racial categorizations which shift away from the White/non-White or immigrant/native binary (Alba, 2018, 2020), but the binary of privileged and non-privileged may still remain. Therefore, we need to carefully evaluate which racial and ethnic boundaries are maintained and what the shifts in boundaries mean, as in the case of deracialization, and understand how the persisting boundaries relate to the privilege and oppression basis of race. Research indicates that multiracial people sometimes, but not always, access the privileges of the racially dominant group in a given society (Alba, 2018; Song, 2017). In today's racialized world, the mixed population may blur the classification and visible markers of race, but not necessarily the structure of hierarchy itself. Furthermore, if one *identifies* as multiracial, this does not mean that one will be ascribed as mixed or as White and able to access racial privilege. If only multiracial people who "pass" or are coded as White have access to privilege, we are not beyond race, we are maintaining racial power, privilege, and oppression just the same.

Furthermore, changing numbers in populations sometimes, but not always, lead to changes in structures of power, privilege, and oppression (Alba, 2012). South Africa is a good example of how demographics of "majority" do not inherently shift power. We need to understand that "minority" is not about numbers but is about power, and who is subject to differential treatment, stigma, oppression, and discrimination by those in more powerful social positions independent of the size of the group (Allport, 1979; Wirth, 1945). What does it mean when research shows that the White majority Americans feel threat from reports pointing to the non-White population outnumbering the White population on the census, but feel less threat when the same story is told as an enduring White majority through expanding multiracial and multiethnic population (Myers & Levy, 2018)? Such responses raise questions about perceiving changing demographics related to increasing multiracial populations as indicators that we are "beyond race."

Policies

As we have made clear, any possibility of truly moving "beyond race" is really about rooting out racism. Liberal values have rationalized and pushed back against racially conscious programs such as affirmative or positive action, promoting "equality" through "neutrality" (Goldberg, 2015, p. 34). However when beginning with an unequal system of institutional and structural inequality (e.g. education, economic, achievement racial biases), "neutrality" only works to *maintain*, not challenge, the existing structural privilege and power (Bhopal, 2018; Goldberg, 2015). Policies like affirmative action aim at addressing existing structural inequalities of racism—the systemic and institutional embodiments of racism. These policies are not about individuals. If we agree that race is a socially constructed technology of power, we understand the intergenerational trauma and transmission of inequality. It is too naïve to dismiss affirmative actions for mixed persons who "look White", because then the focus is simply on color and what is visible for that specific *individual* person, and not on the structure of oppression, whether directly or intergenerationally experienced. The question is not "who is White" (or "who belongs to the nation"?) but *who is privileged? Who is entitled to rights and justice? Who can access resources and opportunities? And on what basis?*

Today, few people would subscribe to explicitly racist policies, however abolishing only explicit racist policies does not inevitably lead to the erasure of the racist structures that were upheld throughout generations, or to redress of the ongoing effects. Generations of marginalization and unequal opportunities continue to have effects on people. We observe this through South Africa or Brazil where racial segregation is still prominent although affirmative actions has improved the inequities. In Japan, one of the most racialized groups that has lived through the generations of oppressions are Koreans born and living in Japan, often for multiple generations. Stripped of their Japanese nationality in 1951 and becoming stateless, despite the forced imposition of Japanese nationality and assimilation during the colonization, Koreans faced severe marginalization and exclusion from the economic, social, and cultural citizenship in Japanese society. With no affirmative action in place, and despite the openness to social security system for "foreign nationals" based on employment, we continue to observe institutional exclusion of multigenerational Koreans from national pension systems, public assistance or education, due to the provision of rights based on racialized Japanese citizenship, not to mention the widespread negative attitudes that are communicated and maintained interpersonally (Hirano, 2020; Shiobara, 2020).

Political mobilization

Political mobilization based on group-based identities are often disputed as "identity politics." Today the advocates and critics of identity politics are divided over the function of identity politics as intersectional approach in addressing social injustice or as particularistic and divisive. We stress the importance of the former understanding: that identity politics was initially conceived to elevate one's own voice in one's own liberation not to the exclusion of other's (e.g. Eisenstein, 1978). Identity politics as divisive, competitive, or participating in a "divide and conquer" approach indeed *are* problematic (Marable, 1993; Sengupta, 2006). However, we argue that political mobilization related to identity or group-specific issues is not "identity politics" in this meaning: creating this equation

is a straw man that, once again, obscures the power basis of race. Organizing based on race can be an effective means to combat oppression and structural inequities, building on unifying pride and fellowship (Suyemoto et al., 2015; Lin, 2020), in order to resist and engage intersectionally within the systems of privilege (Walters, 2018; Crenshaw, 1991).

Understanding race as centrally about racism, a system of oppression, means that we should never stop organizing ourselves based on race, because organizing based on race means organizing against racism. For example, the Movement for Black Lives (and Black Lives Matter or BLM) is not about an identity of being Black. BLM is about resisting anti-Blackness. If the society is built upon racial ideas that privilege a particular race in power, then everyone should unite against that inequity. And it is not only Black people who do (or should) support BLM. Simultaneously, because racism takes different forms in different contexts and with different targets, our political mobilization needs to take up the particularities of these forms: anti-Blackness is not the same thing as anti-Asianness or anti-Arab, although all simultaneously relate to racism. That is why BLM addressing the specific experiences of being Black becomes important. We need to engage with particularities of Black experiences (for example) to understand our positions in the hierarchy of privilege in relation to each other, and to understand the oppression that are common and unique across spaces and groups. Furthermore, centering the experiences and leadership of those who are most affected—which relates to the marginalization and silencing aspects of oppression and how to effectively address oppression from a privileged space (Suyemoto & Hochman, 2021)—is not an exclusionary process. How we take actions for resistance relates to our knowledge and experience from the different racial positions that we occupy which our bodies represent. The Movement for Black Lives should be led by Black people because Black people are the ones who best understand the experience and effects of oppression, and their leadership is the foundation of restorative and procedural justice (Prilleltensky, 2012).

This echoes what Abou Jahjah (2020) addresses; "We fight racism not because we are its victims; we fight it because we are opposed to it". He is clear on what *matters*: it is not race but racism that matters. The purpose of political mobilization is not on creating exclusive power based on racial identity, but on resisting racism, to address racial inequality and admitting to racial privileges. Focusing on White privilege for no other purpose than defining and essentializing Whiteness could be justly criticized as problematic identity politics. But focusing on White privilege as a developmental component towards taking action against racial hierarchy and racism is a different thing (Suyemoto & Hochman, 2021). Furthermore, we cannot go "beyond race" and say "all lives matter" because that will prevent us from redressing racism (McEachrane, 2014), which is not targeting"all." We need to see and engage race as a category and admit that it has an effect in order to consider and demonstrate where power and privilege is embedded. With awareness of our racial identity and positions, we can resist and mobilize ourselves politically to resist racism. To get rid of the racial categories should be the last thing to do if you are anti-racist (Kendi, 2019).

Because political mobilization around race is mobilization against racism, and not identity politics, the particularities of experiences in one context can amplify the voices of the minorities across continents in the internationalized and globalized world today. These mobilizations are a unifying call connecting the contextually specific racial

experiences of oppression across the Globe. In the Japanese context, mixed Black-Japanese figures such as the tennis player Naomi Osaka or basketball player Rui Hachimura who are internationally known, but also national figures such as Musashi Suzuki or Evelyn Mawuli and other celebrities of multiracial and multiethnic mix engage in the conversation on racisms in Japan. They address not only what being Black means but also what is systemic across contexts. Their voices are heard within and outside of Japan which impacts antiracist activism and allyship globally. Younger mixed Asian-Japanese who are not always phenotypically visible but embody racial groups (e.g., Korean, Chinese and Filipinos) that are systemically oppressed also choose to "come out" as mixed, instead of enduring the practice of passing and covering which may "deracialize" them through maintaining the racial hierarchy and their own oppression (Osanami Törngren & Sato, 2021).

Beyond race as an analytical category

The question of race as an analytical category brings us back to the meaning of race and racialization, and how and why race matters. Lentin (2020) asks, "how can we dismantle race without studying it?" (p. 178). Above, we argue that how post-raciality and color-blind racial ideologies actually support the maintenance of race as hierarchy. Race as an analytical category is important in order to address oppression. Race is not essential within an individual and race is not solely or primarily about visibility or phenotype. Race relates to racism, and a shared sociohistorical history of oppression. Race is about the experience of oppression and not determined by choice; racially, we are embodied history, culture and structure. Roth's study (2018) clearly shows that disapproval of Dolazel as Black came not because she "did not look Black" but because claiming a label or identity with a group does not mean that you belong to the racialized group experience, in this case, an experience defined by generational experiences of oppression. One's race is not wholly determined by self- or public awareness of ancestry, culture, experiences, and self-identification. *The social meaning of race is not about choice*. One's race is determined by and determines reciprocally one's position in a hierarchy of power, privilege and oppression based on essentialization of phenotype. To engage in race as analytical category means addressing not only the oppression that others experience but also to acknowledge the privilege one has (Goodman, 2011; McIntosh, 2018).

Can we "go beyond race"?

> Jack: When I look at you, I don't see color. I just see my son.
> Randall: Then you don't see me, Dad. (This Is Us, Season 4, Episode 6. "The Club")

Race is not just a category. Race is not just visibility. Despite the multiplicities in the expressions or choices of personal identities, social categories remain and structure societies; individuals in different societies are constantly policed on the boundaries of social categorization (Brubaker, 2016); and racial categorization has direct implications for lived experiences and access to resources, opportunities, decision making, and psychological well-being (Bhopal, 2018; Goodman, 2011). In the contexts that we are familiar with (US, Sweden, and Japan) we hear too often that "racism is everywhere" together with "race does not matter here", which are statements not only minimizing the effects of

racisms for the individuals but also an act of refusal to undo the effects of privilege and oppression.

As Lentin (2020) writes, "[i]gnoring race and denying that it matters or reaching for euphemisms that comfort White anxieties will not make race matter any less than it does" (p. 178). As long as our phenotypes are inscribed in the structure of power and privilege, favoring those who are racialized as White and/or majority, there is a need to "re-politicize" race instead of avoiding it (McEachrane, 2014). We are not in any way ready to stop talking about race because we continue to see the surge of anti-Black, anti-Brown, anti-Latinx, anti-Indigenous, anti-Asian, anti-Muslim, anti-Jewish racisms. As long as we are committed to being antiracist, we need to address the oppressive basis of race—racism—and the only way we are going to do that is by actually addressing race (Song, 2018).

We believe that our argument is clear. Even if we dream about the day that we might truly go beyond *racism*, the day that the structural hierarchies are no more existent, that day will not come "soon". In fact, that day will never come if we decide to simplistically and euphemistically "go beyond race" today. Race cannot be understood simply as a term, color, visibility, categories, and statistics. Race is a reciprocal process that creates and maintains hierarchies of power, privilege, and oppression in different societies. Race is socialized into our worldviews and integrated into our institutions across generations. To imagine that we can go "beyond race" without addressing the existence and effects of racism as mechanisms of hierarchy is what McInstosh refers to as a "negative privilege"—a privilege that contributes to others' oppression. To purportedly unlearn race without unlearning racism is to engage in racial colorblindness, a denial of the creation of the social understanding and hierarchy that has significant material, psychological, and relational costs. To go beyond race now is simply to pretend that something does not exist, even as it is causing harm. Detachment of racism and race is absurd. To claim that race no longer matters then means to claim that there is no racism, so that no one must be accountable for racially biased actions (i.e. racism, even if unintentional).

Lentin (2020) argues that "what we think racist to be is shaped by and in turn impacts on what we think race is" (p. 63). So, we should not go beyond race, or unlearn "race" but we very much need to do the work to be unlearning *racism*. Unlearning racism is *one* aspect of learning justice, or unlearning oppression (Hooks, 2014). In this process we need to address not only our own oppressions but reflect on our own areas of privileges (Suyemoto et al., 2020a), to engage procedural and relational justice in our personal and interpersonal actions, as well as in our institutions (Prilleltensky, 2012). To be post-racial and to go beyond race is the dream, an aspiration (Goldberg, 2015, p. 163), and to be antiracist is to actively address race and how racism matters *now* in the service of that dream.

Those who are racially privileged have a choice about whether they want to fool themselves that they can go "beyond race." But not all of us have a choice. We are not just individuals with physically marked visibility, who may or may not experience discrimination and racisms. We embody the structure and history; our bodies carry with us the shifting meanings in our different contexts, meanings that manifest our history and current experience of power and privilege, powerlessness, and oppression. Our current experience of loss and pain. The post-racial stance paints an illusion of equality, denying

racialized experiences that are documented again and again, denying the fact that we are all part of the racialization.

Declarations

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