Understanding Racism in a Post-Racial World

Visible Invisibilities

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For Mantabe Kamaloni, who passed away while I was in the process of writing this book.

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Introduction

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I have an appointment with one of the doctors at the University Health Services. I am fifteen minutes early. The white woman at the reception does not seem particularly happy with me. She says, "Go sit over there and wait." I find a comfortable spot in the waiting room. Fifteen minutes pass and I'm still waiting. I assume it is because the clinic is busy and so I wait some more. And then another fifteen minutes go by. I walk up to the reception and ask what time the doctor will be available to see me. The woman explains that sometimes the doctors go overtime and there is nothing I can do but wait. She seems irritated so I go back to my seat, and watch as the receptionist interacts with the people who come to the desk. She smiles and engages in small talk, clearly being friendly with them. Another fifteen minutes go by. I become restless as people who came after me go in and out of the doctor's office. Instinctively I know something is not right but I can't put my finger on it. I go back to the reception to find out why I'm being kept waiting. This time the receptionist doesn't even look at me but sternly tells me to wait. Suddenly, I feel guilty, as though I am being particularly difficult. I go back to my seat and summon all the patience I can find. I concentrate on my book to distract me. When I look up at the

clock, it is 5.15 pm and there is no one in the waiting room, and no one at the reception desk. A sense of alarm fills me as I get up. The whole practice is empty. I go for the door and it is locked. I panic. I can feel the nausea rising from my stomach to my chest. How did this happen? How could the whole clinic close without anyone telling me? How could the receptionist forget about me? Since I work for the University, I have the University security number in my phone, which I dial frantically. I explain to the person on the other end of the line that I have been locked in the clinic. Within five minutes there is a security guard who opens for me to let me out. He asks me what happened and so I explain. He is shocked and encourages me to lodge a complaint. I don't know what to make of the incident or how to process it and so I simply walk away feeling utterly bewildered. And I never lodge a complaint.

I use this poignant incident as an entry point into a discussion of racism and the experience of inhabiting a highly racialised body in contemporary Australia. This incident captures the way race, though unspoken in many instances, continues to be part of the fabric of everyday life. The encounter reflects many other similar incidents that have happened to me since moving to Australia in 2009. These episodes form a pattern that reveal the complicated ways I exist in my body and the ways I am made to experience it in and out of spaces that are part and parcel of my daily life. As George Yancy writes, there is a peculiarity in experiencing one's body as a thing "confiscated" yet without the evidence of physical chains (2008). The pattern of experiences also reveals the new ways that race is mobilised and encountered in a world that has come to be viewed as postracial—a world after race. At the time of this incident, I was in my final year of my undergraduate degree, and one of the first things that struck me when I shared what had happened was the doubt expressed by classmates and colleagues. I was asked particular questions: "Are you sure that was really what happened?", "Aren't you being overly sensitive?", and "Wasn't she just being rude?" These questions interrupted the process of arriving at a thorough understanding of the situation by hijacking the identification of the racism, which was the real elephant in the room. Instead, the racism was described as something I was bringing into the situation by being overly sensitive or thinking that race was the problem. In essence, what was being questioned was the validity of my experience.

It is not directly evident that the receptionist was being racist. I could not point to something tangible and say, "there, racist!" She did not use any racial slurs or words that implied she was looking down on me because of my race. She may have been visibly rude, but there was nothing overt about her behaviour that I could latch onto to prove that I had experienced racism. There was no language I could use that captured the nuance of that experience in a way that vividly described how racism is also produced through the interaction of bodies in ordinary spaces like the doctor's office.

The questioning of the validity of my experience at the doctor's office is symptomatic of the new ways race is silenced and experiences of racism are denied and dismissed. This is important because it draws attention to the mechanisms that obscure racism while sustaining it. In this book I present a way to talk about the subtle racism that happens in everyday spaces by offering an experiential reflection on the effects of discourses that silence race and deny racism in people's everyday lives. The book pays attention to the changing nature of race by exploring the shifting manifestations of racism in different everyday spaces.

Overall and over time, there has certainly been a cultural movement away from overt racist practices that were the hallmark of the eras of the conquistadors, slavery and colonisation. While this shift from overt racism is commendable and necessary, the racism that has replaced it is even more insidious. The turn to more subtle and quiet ways of responding to race may have changed the style, but the substance of the problem has merely reconfigured to adapt to the times. The concept that, for me, fully describes this shift is post-racialism, an idea I would describe by borrowing Howard Winant's characterisation of another similar concept, colourblindness, an institutionalised forgetting of the meaning of race (2015, p. 313). Post-racial ideals have been identified as the norm in a wide range of domains: as a broad set of ideological beliefs (Goldberg 2015; Lentin 2011, 2014; Bonilla-Silva 2001; Plaut 2002; Winant 2015), in educational initiatives to manage diversity (Pollock 2004; Sue 2004), as a focal point of legal debate (Alexander 2010; Duncan 2000; Norton et al. 2006) and as one of the new dominant ways to view and discuss race in this century (Goldberg 2015; Lentin 2015; Murji and Solomos 2015; Bernard 2011; Bonilla-Silva 2001; Simon 2010; Sundquist 2011; Winant 2015).

So the present racial moment in many Western societies is one that is characterised by this idea of post-racialism. This particular characterisation blurs the specificity of countless marginalised experiences because they are all collectively gathered under the umbrella of diversity (Lentin 2011; Cooper 2004; Ahmed 2008; Goldberg 2002). While the concept has become common across Western countries, some of its practices are expressed differently, depending on the particular context and history of that country. In America, where a strong and overt racist system had been implemented through slavery and the Jim Crow system,[1] the continuity of racism even after the mechanisms that had sustained it have been taken away seems understandable. For many, though, the absence of these mechanisms of the past simply means that racism has been done away with. Therefore, much of the discourse of post-racialism must be understood within this historical context. Witnessing the election of an African American president for the first time in American history as well as black celebrities who have successfully managed to appeal to both black and white audiences has been influential in Americans' use of the colour-blind frame in articulating the contemporary racial moment. The argument is that if race were still an issue, black people would not have access to the highest echelons of society.

In Australia, post-racialism is shrouded in ideas of multiculturalism. Australian debates about race have increased over the years, but racial incidents are often reduced to momentary lapses in judgement or the famed Australian humour, with much of the emphasis on the fact that genuine Australians are not racist (Aly 2013; Farouque 2012; Soutphommasane 2013). The belief is that many Australians are fundamentally good people who do not judge others by the colour of their skin or their culture. What these arguments and assumptions overlook is the complexity of race that allows it to be mobilised in different ways in everyday spaces by ordinary people. They also overlook the contradiction contained within post-racialism. Anyone can say they are colour-blind and post-racial, but merely expressing post-racial views does not keep one from participating in producing racist interactions. And thus one of the most important aspects of post-racialism remains largely uninterrogated, namely, its masking of racism in everyday interactions and spaces.

Going to the doctor, for example, is an everyday occurrence. However, the incident I narrate at the beginning disrupts this normalcy and creates obstacles that are subtle yet powerful. The receptionist who acts as the gatekeeper to the doctor is unfriendly and dismissive. She holds the power to shut the door and deny me access to a basic need, which she does at every point until ultimately I am left locked up in the waiting area, excluded and "imprisoned," as it were. Her repeated unyielding request to me to wait is in stark contrast to the movement I see in the office, of people coming in and going out. The receptionist's response to my complaint about waiting produces conflicting feelings within me. On the one hand, I feel justified for highlighting the amount of time I have been kept waiting, but on the other hand, I feel guilty for the very same reason. The tone of her voice and the harshness it carries seem to suggest that I am either impatient or demanding. There is also a distinct way she looks at me: not making eye contact and the quick glances that allow her to talk to me while doing something else on her computer. It is as though I am standing in front of her but I am also not there. It is this looking but not seeing that makes me feel invisible in the space.

My own reaction to the feelings of being invisible in this space is visceral. At different points, I feel the surging emotions of shock, fear and panic in my body, and these also manifest themselves in the nausea I experience at the end. Much later, after the incident and after I had had the time to process it, anger was another strong emotion that surfaced. I was able to use words such as *race* and *racism* in trying to internally articulate it. However, the ease with which I could use these terms was a result of a complex process of self-examination, an individualised mobilisation of racial history and negotiation of embodied feelings. The woman's response to me coalesced with other experiences I have had with other white people (Yancy 2008, p. 849). Despite coming to this conclusion, there was a limit to how I could use those same words in describing the incident to other people.

If what happened to me in the doctor's office is not racism, then what is it? How can my being present yet unseen, visible yet invisible in a space that is common and open to all be accounted for? What is it about the doctor's office that sets me up in this manner? Even though there is no mention of race at any point, I walk away from the encounter feeling

racialised and acutely aware of my racial difference. Although I am sitting in the waiting room, the receptionist is blind to me to the point of closing up the office without informing me. It is as if I am indeed not there. As I wait, I sit side by side with white bodies that come and go, and from the social and physical position I occupy within the space, I notice the ease of their movement and passage in and out of the space. I feel powerless at the extent to which my body can be ideologically and socially constructed by the white gaze. As a black body, it is evident that I am marked as different, and yet despite this visible difference I am also invisible. Experiencing this paradox is disempowering yet significant in unravelling the racialisation process. It reveals one of the salient ways race continues to be mobilised and manifested in an age where it seems to have been kicked to the curb.

Framing the Everyday Experience

My study into race began for me as a way of understanding and articulating my experiences in a country known for its tolerance and multiculturalism. I was interested in what it meant when I was treated differently while shopping or called a "*black bitch*" as I walked on the street. I was also curious what people meant by "*I don't think of you as black*" or "*You are overly sensitive about race.*" It was an interest that grew out of desperation for answers to the everyday unexpected experiences of racism that were so subtle their truth could be challenged, and were indeed challenged.

For the meaning of the "everyday," I refer to the work of Philomena Essed. In her pioneering study, *Understanding Everyday Racism*, she tentatively defines the everyday as "socialized meanings making practices immediately definable and uncontested so that, in principle, these practices can be managed according to (sub) cultural norms and expectations" (1991, p. 48). This definition is useful in that it makes the important distinction between the everyday and the non-everyday, the non-everyday being that which is unfamiliar, incidental and also cannot be generalised or taken for granted. The practices highlighted in the definition of everyday refer to those practices that are routine and repetitive and can be expected and generalised (Essed 1991, p. 49). My use of everyday

throughout this book hinges on this notion of routine and repetitiveness as it affects not only practices but also the spaces in which these practices occur. For my purposes, it is important to note that everyday life happens in and relates to the immediate physical and social environment of a person. Alison Mountz and Jennifer Hyndman, in writing about globalisation from a feminist perspective, argue for a relational understanding of the global and the local, which they call *intimate* (2006). The authors conceptualise intimate as social relations that are embodied and include mobility, emotion, materiality, belonging and alienation (Mountz and Hyndman 2006, p. 447). They use the term to also encompass not only the complexities of the everyday but also the subtlety of their interconnectedness with other everyday intimacies in other places and times. What Mountz and Hyndman call intimate is what in totality I refer to as the *everyday*. I should also point out that the authors' encapsulation of the term intimate involves a particular proximity of the body that materialises its intimacies and economies (2006, p. 450). I include this body proximity in my use of the term everyday. As Essed concludes, "everyday life is not only reproductive of persons but also of the positions of persons in social relations and of the social relations themselves" (Essed 1991, p. 48). The situations of the everyday that I interrogate have very much to do with social relations and the positions of persons within these social relations and how they are substructured by race and everyday spaces.

Currently and since Essed's trail-blazing work on everyday racism, there is a growing backlash against the argument that learning from the experience of racism is fundamental to understanding and overcoming it. This is rooted in the aim to constantly resist the dismantling of racism both within scholarship and public culture. The denial of the concept of race and its material effects is what gives the post-racial its impetus. If race is not significant, it cannot be central to the analysis of racism, which means experiences of racism are rendered null and void as they are based on a lie. Failing to consider race by actively denying its role in social processes is itself an engagement in the deniability of race and a key feature of the new racism, the racism of the post-racial world. Therefore, writing about my own racial experiences speaks against this contemporary trend and provides a solid claim for why this approach is necessary to understanding the nature of contemporary racism.

Self-Positioning

Writing about the significance of the everyday experience also requires that I bring myself into the narrative. It asks me to consider who I am, my identity in the world and my credentials for writing such a book. I come to this part of my life not only as a racialised body but as an educated migrant woman who has lived her life at the intersections of three different countries; a woman who has travelled the world and is a keen observer of humanity; a black, African woman whose physical appearance still largely determines her position in society and in people's consciousness. As a result, my life's different textures ground this book, and I situate myself as centre from which this particular story of race unfolds.

I am in many ways a child of globalisation. I was born and raised in Zambia, a developing Southern African country whose past is neatly tied to British colonial conquests. I have been indeed surprised by how more "culturally British" I am in comparison to some of the Australians I have met, yet this is an aspect that is easily dismissed on account of my race. Although Zambia was no longer a British colony by the time I was born, the legacy of that history continues to shape the country's political, social and economic place in the world. This colonial history had left a mark on the way my parents' generation understood themselves in relation to the white man. Nonetheless, my parents were strong educators and egalitarians, and they cultivated in me a culture of open-mindedness, curiosity and respect for human difference. This is the environment I grew up in. This approach translated itself in how we lived and interacted with others in our community and outside. From an early age, I became fascinated with the concept of difference in all its manifestations: individual, cultural and racial. This fascination intensified as studies of colonial history and everyday attitudes about race began to find their place in my understanding of difference. I came to learn that race was a problem, but none of the arguments I heard could explain why it was so. This question began to haunt me.

I left Zambia for South Africa in 2006 to begin my university journey. I was excited about the opportunity to get a much broader education and, through that, as is common for most African migrants, secure a better future for my family. I had never wanted to be confined to one region of the world. Since my earliest memory, I had felt compelled to see the world as my platform—a type of universal home. Before global citizenry

had become a fashionable concept, I had grappled with its practical implication in my own perception and understanding of my place in the world. I was a global citizen from the very beginning. However, this strong sense of self-knowledge and my personal interests and questions about race and difference did not prepare me for being catapulted right into the belly of a country that was still heavily hung over from a bloody racial history. The racism in South Africa was not subtle. It happened in classrooms, in supermarkets, in the streets, in housing complexes. It shocked me, but propelled me yet again into the study of culture, society and politics. When it was time to go, I left South Africa with a much deeper understanding of and appreciation for her place in history and for the anger that still brewed on the surface of her skin.

My identity as a global citizen led me to Australia, first as an undergraduate exchange student, and now, eight years later, as a permanent resident of the country. Migrating to a Western country is full of contradictions. On the one hand, it is an exciting venture with promises of a new life and culture, new people and friendships. But on the other hand, it is utterly isolating, alienating and disappointing. Part of the disappointment is due to unmet expectations of the idealised immigrant experience that mostly speaks of acceptance, integration and global cultural exchange. Some of these tales are based on the belief that the advanced technological developments, improvements in transportation and the invention of the Internet as a super highway of information have turned the world into a global village where everyone knows of everyone else and distant lands and cultures are no longer seen as foreign. This development in many ways has made the global appear local and the local appear insignificant in the ways that matter most. This was the experience I was holding out for when I moved to Australia. On the basis of the proliferation of cultural knowledge that my generation enjoys and the experience of having lived in another country other than my own, I expected an easier integration into Australia. I did not fully grasp the significant gap between the dissemination of knowledge and the practical lived experiences of people. My pre-departure research led me to believe that Australia was different from South Africa—there, diversity was welcome and celebrated. My expectations were thus mostly shaped by the tourist books and brochures I read, as well as candid conversations I had with Australian acquaintances.

However, I found my experience on the ground much more disturbing than what I had experienced in South Africa. There was silence around many of the same things that in South Africa were quite clearly identified as racism. Most notable in the first year, I had people continuously express shock that I could speak English; I had extreme difficulty in finding housing despite having all the required documents and finances; individuals displayed discomfort at sitting next to me on public transport; and I was exposed to constant stares and the cold treatment in shops and restaurants. Various people I befriended told me they did not see me or think of me as black but at the same time continually made references to my African culture and heritage. There was a general sentiment that there was no problem with the fact that I was black, and yet I was treated differently. It meant people could talk to me only when it suited them. It meant I could be avoided while being assured it had nothing to do with my race. Nobody spoke about the unnaturalness of these encounters, and my efforts to make sense of them by sharing my experiences with those around me were often met with doubt, accusations of sensitivity and failure to fit into the Australian culture. These responses as well as the experiences themselves confused and unnerved me and forced me to the point of avoiding a lot of public spaces. It caused me to withdraw within myself as though the problem lay somewhere deep inside of me. These stories and the silences that surround them are what propelled me into writing.

Aims and Location

In this book I highlight the importance of stories of embodied everyday experiences and narratives as key to understanding racism. Gargi Bhattacharyya speaks about storytelling as a force, a power that can bring to light what is hidden of the everyday (1998). What is strange is illuminated and explained to bring meaning. Story or narrative "extracts and liberates, disassembles and reassembles" the core and the fragments of the everyday, creating a bridge between time and space, past and present (Seremetakis 1994, p. 31). But to understand, story/narrative requires listening and waiting. This goal of achieving enlightenment

through storytelling is, of course, a huge responsibility for the storyteller. As a black woman, it is not my responsibility to speak about race, despite the fact that this is a responsibility that is generally viewed as falling on the shoulders of those who are raced. It is rather a responsibility I have taken up as a matter of desperation—the desire to be visible, to be seen and to be counted among all that is considered the norm and dominant. However, this responsibility of being a storyteller does not come with a voice, a voice with authority to speak in the dominant arena. And thus, at the core of this book is my quest for that voice.

There are those stories that are told to explain what bodies of dark-skinned women have meant. These stories, according to Bhattacharyya, are about a straitjacket history, that constrains and confines, that seems never ending (1998, pp. 9–14). These stories hold up mirrors only to reflect our ancestors and to relive the past over and over and over again. Then there are those stories that seek to tell the plight of black women in the now. They are focused on extrapolating the complexities of the contemporary moment, and they challenge us to see the same picture in a different way, "seeing afresh the ways we take for granted." The third kind of stories, according to Bhattacharyya, includes the "exciting" ones that hunger for new meanings. These tell of the complexity of the lived experience entangling the past and the present while presenting the future as hopeful and clean. My narrative embodies all three of these types of stories, for to talk about the past of dark-skinned women is, in many ways, to talk about their present and their hopes for the future. Liberation for black women is one long stream of consciousness from their ancestors to their unborn daughters. To bring this struggle for liberation into the present moment, it is crucial to consider the ways in which race has evolved to adapt to the twenty-first century.

Methodology

Sara Ahmed writes about the starting point of any research as a form of arrival and the process that facilitates and motivates the beginning of any research project. She encapsulates the arrival as a form of story, in particular a story of our encounters (2012, p. 6). My arrival and my own

encounters take centre stage in my exploration of race, otherness and belonging. Calling to mind past experiences in which I was made to experience myself as a body out of place in a country I now consider home, is, in my view, an act of political defiance, particularly in a country like Australia where calling out racism is considered a bigger issue than the racism itself. I write about my experiences not only to make sense of them but also to provide a first-hand account of what it means to be a highly racialised body in Australia. I explore the intimacy of bodily and social spaces. The link between bodies and spaces and how the two domains flow into one another is what creates experience, and to understand the experience, it has to be unpacked—a feat that can be begun through the act of narrating the experience. Charting everyday experiences reveals how racism hides in small acts which are consciously or unconsciously perpetrated, known as micro-aggressions that come in forms such as exclusions, control, humiliations and belittlements (Delgado and Stefancic 2001, p. 2). The focus on micro-aggressions reveals how racism persists and is sustained in the intimate link between bodies and space. The interaction between bodies as well as between bodies and spaces generate racism that becomes embedded in the interactions themselves. The focus on space and bodies releases us from the invisibility that is post-racialism. It provides an answer to the question of why ignoring race is a problem. The evolution of race is bound to space. The reason I can walk into a space, like the doctor's office, and feel out of place in the space and in my body is that race has been embedded in the organisation of that space. Space and the spaces between bodies are the arena and the structural mechanism that ground and organise racial experiences. Such an analysis also suggests that race and racism are not flaws in the system but rather part and parcel of the way the world is organised to operate.

The act of arriving at somewhat larger political conclusions through the process of analysing one's own personal experience is no doubt contentious. However, there is a value that comes with looking at one's experience rather than from another vantage point. Certain political and cultural issues come to light in ways that would otherwise be obscured. This is not to say that this position provides an objective stance that can be generalised, but as many feminist theories have argued, issues of power and identity are embedded in the politics of experience (Essed 1994; Mirza 1997; Puwar 2004; Stacey 1997).

I want to briefly acknowledge here feminist discussions of the standpoint theory. The theory introduced by Nancy Hartsock argues for a feminist method that would enable us to connect everyday life with the analysis of the social institutions that shape that life (Hartsock 1983). The theory has been heavily criticised since its inception for its supposedly unscientific flawed view of reality, truth and objectivity (Harding 2004; Hekman 1997; Intemann 2010). It has even been regarded as a whimsical "relic of feminism's less sophisticated past" (Hekman 1997, p. 341). However, I do want to acknowledge the advantages of the theory in recognising a multiplicity and complexity of standpoints or points of view on social life and experiences. In this way, the theory provides a crucial foundation for processing and articulating my own lived experiences or my contextual knowledge of the world, and my use of the theory is also closely aligned with Patricia Hill Collins's argument that standpoint refers to "groups having shared histories based on their shared location in relations of power" (2004, p. 248). Although I use my own experience to illustrate the state of race in the twenty-first century, I do not isolate my experience but rather situate it within the shared experience of racial oppression of marginalised groups.

Phenomenological models have been instrumental in shaping my research orientation and my concerns about describing the racial experience. Phenomenology provides us a critical lens through which to think about mundane experiences, whether they take place in institutional spaces or ordinary, everyday spaces (Ahmed 2012, p. 15). In highlighting the embodied experience, I do emphasise the body—having the body is having the world. Sensation and feeling, which for the purpose of this book I am distilling to experience, cannot exist without and apart from the body. According to Merleau-Ponty, "the body and the forms of sensual perception which take place through it and because of it are not merely physiological phenomena or psychological responses to physical causes but rather emerge from relations to a situation and to an environment" (1963, p. 4). The body is an object for others and a lived reality for the subject. Merleau-Ponty argues that the body is defined by its relations with (other) objects and in the process defines these objects as such. The body bestows sense and gives form, and provides structure, organisation and the ground within which other objects are to be situated and against which the subject body is positioned (Grosz 1994, p. 87). In other words,

the body does not exist in isolation and cannot be known in isolation, but instead it is the mechanism by which knowledge and information about the world is received and meaning is produced.

As a black woman, I am a product of historical discourses of race that have been inscribed on my body such that when I appear, history is materialised in my body and is right on the surface of my skin. This positioning has a power that comes to bear on how I experience the world and the spaces through which I move. As Elizabeth Grosz attests, "our experiences are organized not by real objects and relations but by the expectations and meanings objects have for the body's movements and capacities" (1994, p. 89).

My concern in this book therefore is to describe how the experiences of race in everyday spaces are the least noticeable yet sit at the centre of how racism is reproduced and contribute immensely to this process. And to be able to describe this process, it is essential to speak of everyday encounters of race and the experiences of those encounters. My research follows this tradition of tracing the everydayness of embodied experience as a method of extrapolating and explaining the complexity that lurks behind the mundane. Ordinariness can conceal forms of difference that have been over time embedded in the spaces and in the encounters that happen in those spaces. This book then is the story of my own encounters with the *ordinary way of life* in certain Australian spaces, and how my story fits into the larger narrative of the marginalised social position. As a subject, I am particular in that I live and have lived in different countries and with unique racial contexts. Here I want to clarify and strongly emphasise that while I acknowledge gender as an important aspect of my particularity and the intersectionality of my lived experience, by design this book mainly focuses on race. This is because as research and experience have shown, as a black woman my race comes before my gender (Collins 2000). This influences the way in which I write about my encounters and the way in which I map them onto the larger canvas of the social theory.

Encounters are not simply meetings confined to the present but rather each encounter reopens past encounters (Ahmed 2000, p. 8). This is why even everyday experiences of race bring to the fore larger historical racial encounters such as slavery or apartheid. It, therefore, should not be

strange that racialised bodies that experience indifference, coldness or other bodies distancing themselves in everyday spaces often link these experiences to other racial experiences and even to the history that undergirds our understanding about race. There is a sense in which people who experience racism become seasoned experts through the continual dealing with racism (Essed 1991; Yancy 2008). Their general knowledge of racism becomes organised in complex ways, and they become adept at recognising racist gestures. With racial encounters, the face-to-face meeting between two or more subjects is fraught with a kind of conflict—implications of inequality, difference, power struggle, inferiority and superiority. This is because these encounters are part and parcel of the process of creating what becomes the *norm* and what is considered *other*, and in this way they allow for the mobilisation of difference.

According to Ahmed, difference as a marker of power is never determined in "the 'space' of the particular or the general, but in the very determination of their historical relation – a determination that is never final or complete, as it involves strange encounters" (2000, p. 8). In other words, for us to understand how difference or otherness becomes political, we have to account for this historical relationship between the particular and the general. The everyday mundane experiences of race are bound to the larger historical issues and vice versa. This is why present encounters reopen past encounters. Ahmed contends that otherness can be understood through thinking about the role that everyday encounters play in the forming of social and bodily space. Such otherness then is not affixed onto the bodies of others but rather determined through the encounters between bodies (2000, p. 9). Difference or otherness only emerges in relationship to something else. Thus, these encounters between bodies that produce otherness are influenced also by other encounters, which are determined by larger systemic divisions such as gender, race, nationality or class. There is a way in which embodiment carries traces of these larger formations (Ahmed 2000, p. 9). In articulating with the bigger issues surrounding race in the modern world, I make use of personal encounters as a way of maintaining the particularity of my embodiment. Many analyses of race that solely rely on historical or social constructionist theories erase the particularity of the embodiment of any racial experience.

Similarly, feminist theorist Jackie Stacey writes about her cancer experience through the form of narrative. She explores her experience like a story and indeed argues that illnesses rapidly become narratives in the way that different aspects of an illness such as the diagnosis, the symptom and the experience become fitted together to tell a whole "story" (1997, p. 40). Interestingly, Stacey outlines a method or sequence of how a story of an illness such as cancer generally progresses: first, the cancer is named, with attention paid to the specific details of what kind it is and where it originates; second, the cancer or tumour is described—for example, is it large, fast-growing or one-sided? With these two steps, Stacey argues that many a cancer patient can trace memories of their transformed bodies in order to produce a retrospective account of the illness. The narrative of illness can thus, gradually, organise physical sensations into "temporal sequence with a causative effect" (Stacey 1997, p. 4). In other words, by going through this process of naming and describing, cancer patients retrospectively recognise passing sensations that barely registered at the time as signs of carrying a life-threatening disease within their bodies. Within this idea of illness as narrative, as in any other form of narrative, is a sense of wanting to create order or to make sense of the situation. Because an illness is seen as a disruption that needs to be contained, it is imperative that a sense of time and sequence as well as the patient's experience and those of others affected are explained.

What I particularly draw out of Stacey's work is her use of narrative as a legitimate form of rigorously cataloguing the experience of the body and human experience in general. Through the process of naming and describing, we gain a tool that not only illuminates our experience but also allows us to seemingly travel between past and present in capturing the sequence and sensations of experiences. And for my research, this is paramount as my aim is to show how racial experiences are embodied experiences that need to be understood within the spatial contexts within which they occur, and therefore establish the need to name and describe these contexts as well as the experiences themselves. Needless to say, I can draw other parallels between embodied racial experiences and Stacey's work on cancer, and one worth mentioning is the metaphor of cancer as a monster that invades from the outside and threatens bodily order

(Stacey 1997, p. 10). In the same way, tales of the racialised other are ones that portray them as invaders from the outside who threaten the order of human society (Ahmed 2000; Puwar 2004). This is a narrative that is intrinsic to the experiences of the other. In order to encounter space as racialised, the other must be framed as foreign to the space.

I contend that narratives are equivalent to encounters because the two phenomena are intimately linked. The two are symbiotic. Narratives spring out of particular encounters, while encounters exist because of narratives. Even when encounters are used as method of enquiry, we get to them by way of narrating, describing and ascribing meaning to the encounters. This is not something strange. Feminist scholars come to the sphere of the lived experience by way of stories and narratives. Gargi Bhattacharyya, for instance, in her well-received book, *Tales of dark-skinned women* (1998), uses stories to explore how corporeal characteristics such as skin colour come to embed the notion of difference. The movement she creates between storylines and concrete racial issues and politics opens up a channel of dialogue between academia and the wider sociopolitical concerns of an ever-changing world.

Mountz and Hyndman argue that "feminists reclaim and analyse sites, voices, and ways of knowing the world epistemologically and methodologically that produce differences and disparities, among them gender and geographical location" (2006, p. 447). In the same way, my use of personal stories to engage with the larger issues of racial politics and racial experience aims to make the global personal and the personal global. It is a way to flesh out the everyday and understand it as well as memorialise it. Put simply, I seek to do what Mountz and Hyndman refer to as claiming the global through the intimate. As Bhattacharyya states, "a remembrance of mundane pains is the only route to the heart of the story" (1998, p. 3).

Another important aspect to highlight is the reason behind the telling and narrating of personal racial experiences, which often can be traumatic. In writing about her traumatic experience with cancer, Stacey suggests that the feeling of isolation created by the trauma generates a desire for others to bear witness to the impact of the shock, and thus, the repetition of the narrative in this case works to rehearse that sense of disbelief

but also to return to the moment of impact (1997, p. 16). Therefore, for many cancer patients, relating their stories is fundamental to their recovery as well as confirming the similarity between patients. In this regard, narrative is viewed as a significant mechanism for recognition and, for many patients, for sanity (Stacey 1997, p. 16). We could thus use a similar framework to theorise why many feminist scholars who write about race do so by mapping personal experiences onto theory. The act of sharing a racialised experience can be similarly illuminating and empowering. As I have stated, the racial experience is often traumatic, leaving the subject in some form of shock. The retelling of that experience not only allows us to return to the moment of the impact with the subject but also invites us to bear witness to the experience. And for racialised experiences, bearing witness to the encounters is integral to the dispelling of sensitivity around racial issues.

Nonetheless, there is a tension engendered in the "looking at" or bearing witness to racial experiences. Often, people would rather turn away because there is a nervousness that comes with talking about race, particularly everyday experiences of race which may appear ambiguous (Essed 1991). This anxiety manifests in a kind of censorship and self-censorship. And when race or racism happens to come up, they are shrouded in not so much euphemisms but a particular type of discourse that allows for either their watering down or their dismissal. Even while being spoken they become unspeakable.

In many ways, race as a cultural phenomenon remains capable of causing rapid intense emotional reactions to certain kinds of experiences like we saw in the Cronulla riots in Sydney (Noble 2009). These types of experiences expose the deep-seated anxieties people have around race and racism. The depth of people's anxieties around these issues is perhaps indicative of a continuing larger cultural anxiety about difference. On a much broader scale, the use of narratives for this research suggests a far-reaching question about what everyday encounters about race might tell us about the cultural construction of race, and whether this construction is more of a reflection of cultural anxieties. The use of narratives uncovers post-racialism as one such response to cultural anxieties about race and the desire to leave race behind by pretending it does not exist.

Some Definitions

Post-racialism creates a problem of definitions. It speaks of race while erasing it, and thereby making it unclear what we mean exactly by race and racism. The goal of many post-racial pundits is to do away with the concept of race altogether. The argument is that retaining race even as a socially produced concept only works to reify it (St. Louis 2015). But what this argument overlooks is the materiality of the concept and its racial categories. My contention and the place from which I view race is that of its material foundation as well as its mutability. I draw on David Wellman's definition of racism as a "system of advantage based on race" (1977, p. 250). This definition is useful because it allows us to see that racism is not only a personal problem and ideology but also a system involving institutional policies, governmentality, cultural messages as well as the beliefs and practices of individuals (Tatum 2017, p. 87). To this effect, while I argue for the recognition of visible racial cues and categories, I acknowledge that what is problematic is the meaning attached to these visible categories. Post-racialism denies the truth of racialised disadvantage based on cultural meanings attached to people who embody racial cues such as black or brown skin. The racial appearance of these bodies is racialised as part of a powerfully imagined system of racial hierarchy.

Blackness, which I focus on in this book, is more than skin colour; it is a social construct consistently perceived as an opposition to whiteness. It not only defines whiteness but is also made inferior by it (Mapedzahama and Kwansah-Aidoo 2017, p. 1). Blackness, in opposition to whiteness, highlights the objectification of the black body, particularly in spaces that are considered white. Certain historical and cultural mythology has been displaced onto the bodies of real people. While white people are mythologised as those who embody all that is good, light and civilised, black people, on the other hand, are seen to embody the very opposite—darkness and evil. Therefore, blackness as "race" is understood through the "medium of historically structured forms of knowledge" that presents the black body as dangerous, suspicious and guilty (Yancy 2008, p. 846).

By centring analysis on my black African experience in Australia, I, in part, address a subject that is rarely discussed in Australian scholarship. Talking about blackness, particularly African subjectivities and their inseparable context of race, racism and racialisation remain highly contentious in Australia. I acknowledge the complexity in the theoretical understanding of blackness in an Australian context that has Indigenous peoples who are sometimes referred to as "blacks." It is not my intention to make generalised arguments about blackness in its totality within Australia, for that would be an impossibility; rather, I focus on examining the material particularities of racism experienced as a black African female body. In so doing, I am in no way denying the reality of everyday racialised experiences of Australia's First Peoples or non-African minorities. While my focus is very specific, I use it to make broader comments on the racialised experiences in Australia. I see my role as facilitating a dialogue between scholarship and public culture, opening the door, as it were, to how we can specifically talk about race and racism in a post-racial setting.

Why Australia

The social and cultural contexts of Australian society are discrete and self-consciously multicultural. In many ways, Australia as a country seems in perpetual denial of its racist history and structure. It presents a classic case study of a society that self-consciously believes itself to be post-racial. Accounting for race conceptually and in practice across historically disparate contexts is useful in comprehending and mapping out the relationality and connection of marginalised social positioning that race creates wherever it is mobilised as a form of governmentality. The literature suggests that there are two main sets of discourses: the first set silences or diminishes racism's occurrence (see Augoustinos and Every 2010; Dunn et al. 2011). This effort to silence is reflected in the country's political leadership too. In 1996, politician Pauline Hanson in her maiden speech in the Parliament attacked Asian immigration and Aboriginal welfare by claiming that Aboriginals were not disadvantaged. Ms. Hanson's comments were not only ill-informed but also disconnected from history.

This is a characteristic of Australian public debates about racism—it is often stripped from its history and context, thereby making it irrelevant. The second set of discourses is focused on the fact that Australia is a racialised space with a past etched in white supremacist notions. As a country it was devised as a white man's country, with discrimination central to its migration and foreign policies. Such discourses state that despite racism being seen as an anomaly, it is part and parcel of the structure and regular functioning of society (see Hage 1998; Lake and Reynolds 2008; Wolfe 2016; Mapedzahama and Kwansah-Aidoo 2014). Of the two, the silencing discourses are more ubiquitous and, in this context, inherently challenging to speak about and write about racism, particularly how it impacts black people. One of the most common responses to black Africans' accounts of racism is that every migrant group has been constructed as the enemy at some point and faced some form of racial bigotry whether Aboriginals, Chinese, Turkish, Vietnamese, Greek or Italian. And so Africans are told to persevere as everybody has been through it. In this way, history is mobilised as a tool to silence and diminish racial experiences. Racism is thus reduced to a rite of passage to becoming fully integrated into Australian society. On a broader level, Australia demonstrates complex feelings of insecurity and uncertainty about its multicultural population. There is a sense in which it dispels these concerns by focusing on seemingly insoluble debates about immigration and borders as well as preoccupation with what it means to be Australian. There is a self-consciousness that peers, through revealing a deep discomfort around people who are not white nor see themselves and identify as Australian. It is important to consider how racism persists in such a country and in such a time when post-racialism has become a popular way of thinking and talking about race.

Note

1. A racial caste system that operated in the United States, particularly in the southern states, between 1877 and the mid-1960s, which considered African Americans as second-class citizens who had to be segregated from whites in all areas of life.

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2

Where Did You Come From (You Black Bitch)? Australia and Racism

October 2015

It is a beautiful summer's day and a walk seems like the perfect thing to do. In celebration of the end of a harsh winter that had overshadowed spring, I decide to walk to the grocery store. I can't help but admire the way the sun falls on everything, illuminating and generous with its warmth. Australia is a beautiful country – the thought crosses my mind unbidden. It lingers, colouring everything I see. As I make the turn into Koornang road, the main road that passes through the suburb where I shop, a woman accosts me. She is white and middle aged. She is screaming at me. At first I don't hear what she is saying because I am perplexed by this sudden ferocious noise in what had been a quiet walk. "Where did you come from?" She shouts, her mouth twisting in anger and disgust. She spits on the ground. "Go back to where you came from, you black bitch!" I am shaken to the core as I try to walk away from her faster than my legs can carry me. She continues to hurl racial epithets at me. There are people everywhere. Did they hear that? I panic. Surely they must have heard that. I want to die of mortification.

Much later, after my shopping, I remember crying all the way back home. I didn't care that anyone could see my tears. For a moment the woman had shocked me out of my complacency. I had begun to feel at home in the country. I was a black woman from perhaps one of the most obscure countries in Africa. I didn't come from wealth or prestige. In fact, my parents were government workers who had sacrificed everything they had to send my four siblings and me to school. Did I have the right to be in this country, a country that considered itself multicultural yet still had a preference for white people? I traced the long and arduous process I had gone through to get the papers that had allowed me to enter the country. I was not an illegal immigrant. I had a valid visa. In addition to studying, I had a job and I was paying taxes. Wasn't that enough to earn me an "accepted status" in a country that had been my home for seven years, a country I had come to love? I mulled over the incident for days, looking for meaning. What confronted me the most was how personal the attack felt. It jolted me out of my skin yet fixing me in it at the same time, for it was my visible black body that had alerted the woman of my difference and offended her. I was powerless at her onslaught, with no fixed sense of control over how my body and identity are read. It was disconcerting to say the least.

Australian society has significantly changed since its founding. In 1978, there were 13.8 million people in the country. Today, Australia is home to 25 million people. Racial and ethnic diversity has increased over time as a direct result of immigration. A large number of immigrants come from countries in Asia, the Middle East and Africa. Public sources show strong support for cultural diversity and multiculturalism. The most recent Scanlon Foundation study of social cohesion in Australia found that 83.4% of respondents agreed that multiculturalism was good for Australia, but it is unclear what this means in practice. There is little public discourse on the day-to-day experiences of multiculturalism, particularly for visibly different groups in Australian society. One of Australia's achievements since the days of the White Australia Policy and cultural assimilation is the passing of laws that protect citizens against any kind of discrimination on the basis of ethnicity or race.[1] Cultural diversity has become a right of citizenship and widely accepted as a normal and positive feature of Australian society. However, this is not to say there is no

racism in the country. This in itself is a controversial position to take in a country that prides itself in having different cultures living side by side and "a fair go"[2] for everyone. In fact the charge of racism provokes very robust reactions from the Australian public, most of them denials. Racial intolerance is often explained away as a type of insensitivity embodied in the famed mischievous Aussie (Australian) humour. There is an expectation to overlook racial offences because, as the Australian logic goes, they are driven by neither hate nor malice. It is simply not the Aussie way to either be racist or accuse others of racism. The tendency to vehemently deny the existence of racism while participating in it is not only a common folk view but also reflected in the Australian leadership. In 2018, amidst conflated media reports about African gangs terrorising the city of Melbourne, the then Home Affairs Minister Peter Dutton used these media reports to employ racial rhetoric that was damaging to the perception of African youths in the country. This rhetoric ignored the real live statistics from the Crime Statistics Agency that revealed that crime involving Sudanese residents account for only 1% of Victoria's total criminal activity (Hanrahan 2018). The then Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull also jumped on the bandwagon, supporting Mr Dutton's assertion. The seemingly casual way in which politicians mobilise race for their own agendas is revealing. But this is not anything new. When the Cronulla Riots happened in 2005, Prime Minister John Howard declared the event showed no underlying racism in Australian society (Soutphommasane 2012, p. 84), when the riot was plainly centred on race. Howard criticised the riots but refused to acknowledge any significant problem. What his stance did was indicate that any "suggestion of racism should be construed as a judgement about an underlying quality in the national character" (Soutphommasane 2012, p. 84–85). This has continually coloured any public debate about racism because in Australia to call out racism is akin to calling into question the very dignity of every Australian.

So what does it mean when a random white woman on the street tells me "Go back to where you came from, you black bitch?" When I shared my experience with my white colleagues and friends, many were quick to point out that the woman was unhinged and probably on drugs. They assured me these kinds of things never happened in Australia. She was simply one bad apple, and it was to my benefit to put it behind me. This,

however, did not reassure me. Instead, it brought into question my perception and judgement of the experience. I had felt racially discriminated against regardless of whether the woman was unhinged or not. The context within which any racism is produced does not lessen the impact.

In 2014, rarely a week went by without an incident of racism in Australia, particularly on public transport. Most of the incidences were captured on smart phone videos and posted on the Internet, where they went viral, provoking public outrage, which, in turn, led to short-lived public debates about whether Australia is a racist country. In one incident, a woman on a Sydney train went on a racial tirade directed at an Asian woman and some children who failed to give her a seat. Later the woman apologised for her behaviour, citing a range of personal issues that she claimed had driven her to that point (Ralston 2014). The logic of writing away acts of racism by putting the blame on something else is in fact common practice in Australian society. The perpetrators become the victims and the racism is often forgotten in the defence of the Australian national character of which the perpetrator is seen to represent. This focus away from the racism itself to the perpetrator individualises racism and gives a pass to structural and institutional forms of racism to become invisible. This effectively separates racism from the racists, which leads to racism being viewed and described as an "accusation" that hurts the individual or institution in question. And this almost guarantees any response to take the form of a defence of the individual or institution (Ahmed 2012, p. 151). This, I have come to understand, is one characteristic of Australian racism. It hijacks experiences of racialised minorities by erasing race as an explanatory framework of these experiences (Lentin 2015, p. 39).

Another question I pondered after my encounter with the woman on the street was, what is so controversial about a black body in a society that is multicultural? This is the same question Tariro Mavondo, one of the first graduates of the Victorian College of the Arts at Melbourne University, inadvertently asks in her reflection on the lack of diversity on the Australian screen and stage (2012). Over the years, two of the most popular TV shows in Australia, *Neighbours* and *Home and Away*, have introduced black characters into their scripts only to kill them off as quickly as they are allowed in. These characters have often lacked a

continual and sustainable investment in their representation and story plot. It is almost as though they exist only as a sneaky reminder that Australia is indeed a multicultural society but it is not a fact that must be dwelt on for too long. It would get too uncomfortable too quickly. It would prod questions at why black bodies on screen are generally portrayed as illegal, queue-jumping immigrants or refugees embroiled in some kind of residency fraud. The story is never uncomplicated for these characters. This is in contrast to the blond and blue-eyed surfing men or skinny women in bikinis who are cast to represent "real" Australians. What is reflected on the small screen is a reflection of the whitewashing of the Australian story that only allows occasional peppering of multiculturalism. But this seemingly fragmented multiculturalism did not simply evolve out of nothing.

Australia's History with Race

Understanding racism in Australia today first requires looking backwards to trace the path that led us to this point. It requires taking a look at the Australia before multiculturalism and the political façade of diversity and inclusion. The problem with Australian racial history though is that there are different versions of it. Perhaps, the same could be said for any racial history in any country. While being a sentinel moment, the landing of Captain Cook at Botany Bay in 1770, for example, is remembered differently by white Australians than it is by Aboriginal peoples. According to the iconic painting of the landing by Emanuel Phillips Fox, Cook is portrayed as bringing civilisation and progress to a new land.[3] He is seen as extending his arm to tell his men not to fire at the two Aboriginal Australians confronting them with spears. However, this same incident is remembered and interpreted differently by the Aboriginals. Captain Cook did not restrain his men but in fact ordered them to first shoot above the heads of the two men to temporarily alarm them. The Aboriginals dropped their spears and retreated. What the painting leaves out, and in this I argue, what the history contained in that painting omits is that the two Aboriginal men returned almost immediately and Cook ordered his men to shoot them in the legs (Cavanagh 2013). Only then

did the two men withdraw so Cook and his men could land. To the Aboriginals this was an invasion or a dispossession rather than a "discovery" of new land. These are not terms that Emanuel Philips Fox's painting portrays nor are they terms that white Australians naturally use to describe the arrival of the First Fleet. Captain Cook's encounter with the Aboriginals challenged the right of the British to land, thus undermining the entire notion of *Terra Nullius* upon which the entire invasion of the Eastern part of Australia was based.[4] The settler's perspective in Australian history omits this key point. This difference in historical narrative became a consistent aspect of Australia's racial identity.

Some historians argue that the remarkable growth of multiculturalism and development of a diverse society over the past decades have contributed to a rapid decline of knowledge of the previous 220 years of Australian history, both the half-baked Anglo-centric settlers' histories that were perpetuated and taught to earlier generations and the shared history since the bicentennial (Cavanagh 2013; Conor 2016; Hirst 2005). It was at the bicentennial celebrations in 1988 that Aboriginals insisted for the first time that the way Australian history was taught and embodied needed to also acknowledge Australia's black history. This historical baggage is not only what influences attitudes but also translates into practical contemporary imaginings of Australia today. I recall teaching an undergraduate class, and in a particular week when we were looking at narrative, memory and identity, I had a young white Australian student who got so offended by the idea of considering Aboriginal history as part of Australian history that he stormed out of the class. His passionate views against Aboriginals were so shocking and seemed incongruent with the belief that the younger Australian generation is more open to diverse yet complete retelling of Australian history. These kinds of ruptures point to a particular way in which Australian history is disseminated and shared. There is a sense in which Aboriginal people are largely erased from Australian history, as though they are irrelevant to the main story of Australia's past. In fact, it was not until the 1967 referendum that Aboriginals were finally considered Australian citizens. Before then, they were regarded as part of the country's flora and fauna.[5]

There is what historian Paddy Cavanagh calls an unstable "perceived wisdom" about Australia's past, and its ubiquity is a strong influence in

shaping the popular view of Australia's national identity (2013, p. 34). How one's personal identity connects with this collective view of the past determines how comfortable they feel within Australian society. This is a useful premise from which to investigate how Aboriginals and migrants in Australia fare in Australian society. A historical kaleidoscope where Aboriginals are erased is one that leaves whiteness as the central formation of Australian identity, making it difficult for Aboriginals and migrants to feel at home in the context. As a country Australia has an undeniable Aboriginal heritage, a political system based on British ideals and a character that is contemporary and multicultural. All these aspects are part of Australia's identity and while they may not always sit comfortably together, an acknowledgement of them is necessary for any cohesive understanding of Australia's past, present and future.

The historical development of Australia as a state followed a similar pattern to that of other white settler countries such as the United States, Canada, Rhodesia and South Africa. The pattern was the same in that land would be taken from the inhabitants and the Indigenous populations would be displaced and/or exterminated. The untold deaths of Indigenous populations either through warfare, extermination or disease were considered inevitable aspects of the colonial mission. As mentioned, British colonisation in Australia was based on the concept of Terra Nullius—the idea that Australian land was uninhabited, and therefore had no government, law or history. For some, like historian John Hirst, the British didn't understand the Aboriginals' deep connection with the land, and this lack of understanding absolved them of any wrongdoing (2005, p. 65). But I would argue that such arguments are grounded precisely in the belief of the European's superiority, and thus his infallibility or innocence. There may not have been a premeditated project aimed at destroying the Aboriginal people but that is what happened nonetheless. The colonisation of Australia involved the physical destruction of another people and their culture, and this was the inevitable price of the British colonisation.

From the 1830s onwards, race in Australia became centred on the question of cheap labour. Convict labour was declining by 1837, and pastoralists in New South Wales began looking for new sources of cheap labour. The focus turned to indentured labour from India, which was not

a popular idea. There was fear by British colonial officers that labourers from India would become a fixed and permanent blight in the colony, thus endangering the goal of creating a place where the English race would spread unmixed with any other lower races. Moreover, the colonial officials were careful not to make the same mistake their ancestors made in North America by colonising the whole continent from Africa. The same arguments were used to disfavour importing Chinese labour. This further intensified public concern, particularly because while Indian labour was hypothetical, Chinese labour was real and streaming into the country in significant numbers during the Gold Rush years. Anti-Chinese riots erupted in many gold fields, including Hanging Rock (1852), Bendigo (2884) and Bucklan River (1857). In 1862, following riots at Lambing Flat, a bill restricting Chinese immigration was passed in New South Wales Parliament (Soutphommasane 2015, p. 14). The rhetoric of the time depicted the Chinese as inferior, grotesque and contemptible. In addition, Chinese immigrants were seen as an economic threat creating unfair competition of Asian labour against European labour. What was significant about the anti-Chinese sentiments during the nineteenth century was the way race was mobilised civically to say if the Chinese could never be seen and accepted as equals, it was better that they were not accepted into society in the first place. In the colonial imagination, Australia was facing a real physical threat from Asia.

White Australia

When the commonwealth of Australia was born on 1 January 1901, one of its inaugural acts was the expulsion of several thousand Pacific Islanders, also commonly known as "Kanakas," who had been brought into the country as plantation labour (Lake and Reynolds 2008, p. 137). This was the nation's first legislated act of racial expulsion, and it came to be known as the Pacific Island Labourers Act. Following this was the passing of further legislation (the Immigration Restriction Act) to ensure that no other non-whites would settle in Australia. The goal was to create a white Australia, and this legislation culminated in the White Australia Policy. In the words of the first Prime Minister, Edmund Barton, Australia was

resolved to "make a legislative declaration of our racial identity" (Barton 1901). The Pacific Island Labourers Act and the Immigration Restrictive Act were considered the necessary backbone of the White Australia Policy. To the disappointment of some parliamentarians, the Immigration Restrictive Act of 1901 did not issue a direct ban on non-white migration but instead introduced new administrative requirements for immigrants in the form of a dictation test which involved writing a passage of 50 words in any European language. The Act empowered customs officials to exclude anyone they deemed undesirable on the basis of their race or nationality. This resulted in non-European immigrants who could speak fluent English but not write a passage dictated in any other European language to be denied entry into Australia.

The White Australia Policy was not only exclusionary but it also made evident the racial hierarchies it cemented. For example, the Japanese considered it an offence to be regarded as racially inferior to blacks, Indians, Pacific Islanders and other Asian people. Other European people who were regarded as hostile as a result of the First World War also became affected by the policy. The Germans, Austrians, Hungarians and Bulgarians, for instance, were not allowed to immigrate to Australia until 1926. Other nationalities like the Estonians, Poles and Czechs were given quotas. Throughout the world wars, the belief that Australia should be maintained as a white British nation remained strong and firm. It was believed that Australia's national unity and prosperity was predicated on racial and cultural homogeneity (Soutphommasane 2015, p. 32). Whiteness was thus declared the heart and centre of Australia's national identity. This is important in as far as it not only shaped Australia's identity but also continues to provide a tracking point of the shifting cultural landscapes in Australia today.

Multicultural Australia

One of the unique aspects of Australia as a nation today is its supposedly successful multicultural story. Multiculturalism is no doubt one of Australia's most defining characteristics. The multiculturalism practised in Australia is different to that practised in Canada or the United States.

In Canada, the approach adopted had to recognise the continuation of its bilingual and bicultural heritage, while in the United States, multiculturalism was largely drawn out of the civil rights and constitutional protections which included ethnic quotas in public appointments and taking into account ethnic distribution in drawing up electoral boundaries (Markus et al. 2009, p. 4). While Australian multiculturalism policy can trace its origins to Canada when the Gough Whitlam government adopted both the name and the policy Canada was using, in Australia the model used was one where migrants could belong to Australia while keeping their birth country's customs and traditions.

There is much value in David Goldberg's history of multiculturalism. According to him, its roots can be traced to the emergence of racial non-racialisation—a kind of thinking and understanding that does away or overlooks historical legacies of race. It is a way that is not concerned with the racially produced historical inequalities but rather to identify those who have been excluded in order to include them in a society that is seen as racially advanced and "healed." At the core of non-racialism is the belief that real injustice is not the continuation of racial histories in the present but rather the lack of assimilation and integration of those formerly excluded. In this framework, assimilation is not a product of conscious policy but a "happy" coincidence (Goldberg 2015, p. 21). Colour-blindness is a practical example illustrating how non-racialism works. It expresses a kind of double consciousness where it claims to be blind to colour while seeing colour. In other words, it is blind to the very thing it is designed to see—race. In countries like the United States where it is prevalent, it produced an environment where the appearance of the mixed, hybrid and multi was romanced and celebrated or, in practice, seen to be working well or getting along.

From the 1970s to the 2000s, institutional multiculturalism became the label for what Goldberg calls the "racially unnameable." He argues that where "the non-racial mutes the racial, the raciality mutates into multiculturalism" (Goldberg 2015, p. 22). This, I feel, perfectly encapsulates one of the core characteristics of Australian multiculturalism. Experiences like mine, where a random white woman on the street throws racial epithets at me, are stripped of their racial context and presented as an abnormal yet normal part of Australian life. Following the Second

World War, the silencing of race came to be replaced by the consumable cultural proliferation and through culture, race and ethnicity meshed. What has always been overlooked is how culture is intricately tied to the racial, particularly in how culture is used to give expression to that which is racialised, for example, blacks are criminals, and Muslims are violent. Goldberg argues that this culturalisation is merely a stepping stone to race's afterlife—the "post-racial" status. Multiculturalism lasted a quarter of a century, waning at the end of the twentieth century when European leaders like British Prime Minister David Cameron and German Chancellor Angela Merkel declared war on multiculturalism for its role in creating "extremist ideologies" or "home grown Islamic terrorism" in Australia (Goldberg 2015, p. 24). Goldberg and other scholars (see Lentin 2005, 2011, 2014; Bonilla-Silva and Ray 2015) position post-raciality as a response to the wrung-out multiculturalism. The post-racial present asserts itself as the end of race. In reality, it presents a new or different ordering and arrangement of the racial necessitating a new way of thinking about race.

Post-racialism: Definitions

Post-racialism entails, for the most part, the questioning or outright rejection of racialised experiences. This is closely linked to the ever-increasing unease with multiculturalism (Lentin 2014). The belief that multiculturalism is in crisis has been extensively growing since 9/11. The particularities of this notion are based on the premise that multiculturalism creates a problem of too much diversity, and when you have too many different cultures mixing together, you are likely to have sociopolitical and socio-economic problems such as crime, terrorism, unemployment or urban segregation. Within this growing opposition to multiculturalism, what has become evident is the loss of the language of race and racism in favour for one that is about "equality" and "difference." What this has done is render the experiences of racism not only questionable but also invisible.

In this book, I define post-racialism in a way that incorporates the effects it produces. Therefore, I consider it as the denial of or/and refusal

to acknowledge race and its continual effect, which ultimately leads to the invisibility of particular bodies in particular spaces at particular times. I recall a vivid illustration of one way the post-racial functions in a 2013 study by two Swedish economists who wanted to examine the relationship between economic freedom and racial tolerance. The survey asked respondents from 80 different countries to answer a question that involved choosing whether they would accept having people of a different race as their next-door neighbours. The researchers determined a racially tolerant country by the more positive answers they received to the question from people of that country while a less tolerant country had more people say they did not want neighbours from other races. Based on that assessment, the survey data showed that Anglo-Saxon and Latin American countries were the most tolerant, while India and Jordan were the least tolerant countries (Berggren and Nilsson 2013; Fisher 2013).

What is problematic about these results is that they do not actually represent the racial attitudes of the country but rather the ease with which people answer a question that potentially has a racist answer. The respondents show a level of proficiency in a particular type of talking about race that steers clear of explicit negative comments and allows them to dress up attitudes in a manner that frees them from worrying about getting into trouble. This in itself reflects aspects of the post-racial, including the desire to appear enlightened and progressive by taking a non-racist stance that avoids all references to race. This type of manoeuvring is a semantic move or a rhetorical construction to avoid appearing racist. It is worth noting that the countries that were considered most tolerant are Anglo-Saxon countries such as the United States, Australia, Canada and New Zealand where the idea of being post-racial is most prevalent. Furthermore, tolerance, much like post-racialism, does not measure integration or engagement, and it cannot be a reliable indicator of non-racism. In this example, being post-racial is in the skill the respondents show in understanding the dominant language about race and the expectation of what one can and cannot say about race in public.

The knowledge of what to say and what not to say about race also involves a fear of talking about it that has become another manifestation of a post-racial society. In particular, there is an unspoken trend developing: a hesitance and fear to talk about race that has led to many

people believing that to confess to seeing racial difference is to be a racist or, at the very least, politically incorrect. From my own experiences of sharing racial encounters I have had in public spaces, the first response particularly from my white colleagues is often to assure me that it probably has nothing to do with race. Other things like drugs, mental health and even my own supposed sensitivity are attributed to the experiences. To many Australians, those explanations seem more plausible than the fact that I would be treated differently based on my race. Non-racial explanations are presented as the possible explanation for racial events. This disempowers the victim by taking away their right to see and name racial injustice. At the same time, it empowers the non-victim by, firstly, allowing them to discredit the victim's experience and, secondly, affording them the means and power to name what qualifies as racism and what does not. The racial experience is minimised and instead viewed as either an irregularity committed by the few ignorant, anachronistic racists or as generated by the victims themselves.

In practice, white people do not experience the post-racial world in the same way that people of colour do because common life experiences are framed and defined in terms that whites can easily identify with and relate to. Therefore, they can ignore racism because it does not affect them and they can justify the current social order. One of the major ways that white people ignore race and racism is by avoiding any discussions about it. This cultivated silence largely contributes to sustaining the problem. Some ridicule the idea that not talking about race would solve the problem of racism because racism is similar to any other societal problem our civilisation faces (Bonilla-Silva 2010; Wise 2010). They argue that we have not solved sexism, crime or poverty by advocating silence. Why then would our approach to racism be any different? The fear of talking about race is real and ubiquitous, affecting whites as well as non-whites. It is tied in to the fear of offending or being seen as too sensitive. In an age where saying the "wrong" thing in public has the potential to garner a backlash, particularly on social media, it has become comfortable to let sleeping dogs lie. Getting to the roots of society's problems has become complicated, and the choice of appearing enlightened by avoiding controversial subjects such as racism has become that much more appealing. Consequently, post-racialism turns race into a taboo

subject and creates an atmosphere in which the open expression of racial experiences, especially for people of colour, is rendered challenging and sometimes even impossible.

The desire to be seen as non-racist also manifests itself in the avoidance of racist terminology. While on the surface this may seem like a positive thing, it actually flows into a more complicated aspect of post-racialism that again prohibits the open expression of and talking about race. Therefore, people, particularly whites, make use of subtle, covert and indirect non-racial language to express their racial views. The navigation around race is often justified and framed as a fear of offending people who are not white. However, it makes whites appear innocent while still fostering the silence around race. In a 2013 controversy over a Volkswagen advertisement that portrayed a white American male speaking with a fluent Jamaican accent, the American CNN news commentary host, while interviewing two African American panellists about the advertisement, expressed her fear around describing them as "African American," citing that the subject of race made her feel nervous.[6] The host's comment is ironic seeing as the entire discussion is centred on race and yet she distances herself from the subject by claiming she does not want to offend anyone. The juxtaposing of the two black men and the white host is also interesting in the way it frames the discussion as a black issue while the white woman seems to act as the conscience of the two men. In the end, she appears somewhat removed from the real conversation and takes on an innocence that comes as a result of framing herself as wanting to avoid offence. This incident exposes this new way of talking about race—a skating around the issue while distancing oneself. Bonilla-Silva calls this kind of language the new race talk (2001, p. 154). It allows people to censor their racial perceptions and views in public talk.

Effectively, this is what post-racialism is and achieves in practice. It allows us to tiptoe around race and racism or avoid them altogether. What this means explicitly is that post-racialism can never provide us with an accurate gauge of a society's racist views and tendencies. It ignores the racism that is mapped onto spaces by way of interactions between bodies as well as the ways spaces have been historically organised through segregation and the visibility and invisibility of particular bodies. The woman refusing to participate in the conversation for fear of offending

can still produce racism by the way she responds to black bodies she encounters in everyday spaces, for instance. The phenomenon expressed in these examples is what I am referring to when I talk about post-racialism. It has a far-reaching impact on how people think and behave.

Another belief about race that is characteristic of this post-racial period is the idea that people's ignorance about race is what causes racism. As a result, it is believed that this malady can be cured by education. And since education and general well-being are increasing, racism should soon disappear entirely except, of course, as a sign of mental derangement or certifiable racists like neo-Nazis. In this view, individuals are seen as a source of racism, a racism that can only be verified if translated into tangible acts such as racial epithets or visible discriminations that can be verified by law as discrimination. This creates a perception that racism is something that happens in people's minds privately and so we cannot know for sure if someone is being racist unless they perform obvious racist acts, because we cannot enter their minds to see what they are thinking. This premise completely overlooks the collective and cultural dimensions of race and racism. Instead, racism is imagined as occurring in isolation and stripped away from the wider historical and cultural context. This imagination leads to a one-way, dead-end street where the only solution available is to claim "everyone is racist" or to simply ignore race, which is effectively what post-racialism is all about.

Many Australians are often adamant that they don't see my race or racial difference, yet proceed to want to touch my hair or ask endless questions about the different ways I can style it. To identify as racially blind or "colour-blind" as it is commonly referred to in American literature, is, in essence, to be viewed as educated and enlightened about the ways of the world. An American study conducted by race researchers Eduardo Bonilla-Silva and Tyrone Forman actually attests to the opposite. The 2000 study revealed that being educated has less impact on people's racial prejudice than previously believed. In the surveys and interviews conducted with college students, the authors found that the students were significantly more likely to hold and express prejudiced views on a number of issues such as interracial marriage, residential and school segregation and affirmative action than the average American. The findings were significant because they were in contrast to the direction of

more racial tolerance which researchers have, in the past, consistently found in young, college-educated whites. They were thus previously seen as being more likely to be racially tolerant than any other segment of the white population (Bobo and Licari 1989; Schuman et al. 1988). Bonilla-Silva and Forman found that these college students filtered their prejudiced views through myriad semantic moves (Bonilla-Silva and Forman 2000, p. 76). The students in this study display a proficiency in talking about race in ways that are not controversial.

On the surface, talking about race in Australia does not seem to require proficiency or literacy. There is a particular way that Australians talk about race that unravels itself in the process. Whenever racial discrimination is the topic of discussion, most Australians are quite clear of their condemnation of any kind of racism, yet the actual incident in question may receive little (if any at all) focused and nuanced discussion about why the incident is racist and what it means practically and theoretically. Before long, the question always quickly and effortlessly shifts to, "is Australia a racist country?" This seems to be a much more pressing question for many Australians, as evidenced by the number of times it comes up in any national discussion on race and racism. In some way it reveals a deep insecurity over our racial and national identity. Australians generally display a strong defensiveness over being charged with racism whether at a national or at an individual level. To be called a racist is considered one of the worst things one can be accused of. And it is supported by the display of shock when acts of racial prejudice or bigotry occur, with many Australians citing multiculturalism as the reason why Australia cannot be racist, and therefore the conclusion as to why such racial incidents happen is often laid at the feet of either random anachronism or the victims' sensitivity.

Tim Soutphommasane, the former Australian Racial Discrimination Commissioner, called out Australians' tendency to turn "every incident involving racism into a test that demands of us a wholesale judgement about the Australian national character" (2015, p. 6). Yet this is precisely what sits at the core of Australia's insecurity about its identity, and it is also what informs the fear and doubt that many Australians bring to any national or private conversation on race. Soutphommasane is right in that racism is never as simple as it looks, and in a country like Australia

where complexity and sophistication are shunned upon, the reality of racism as a complex phenomenon that can leave us "with a sense of contradictions" (2015, p. 8) is confronting for many ordinary Australians.

And while one of the popular views about the cause of racism in Australia is being bogan (a local Australian slang that refers to someone who is unrefined, uneducated in the way they dress, speak and behave), there is sense in which education and sophistication are demonised not only by the general public but by those in political power. The view that Australians are simple folk who work hard and don't need high levels of education to navigate the world is worn as a badge of honour. So on the one hand, a lack of education is purported to be one of the causes of racism, but on the other hand, being highly educated or at least calling out racism because one is "educated" is seen as being un-Australian.

Despite the claim that they were colour-blind, many whites in Bonilla-Silva's 2000 study lived out their everyday lives within a white habitus and were colour-conscious when it came to their choice of significant other, the neighbourhood they lived in and the company of friends they kept. When confronted with these evident contradictions, they argued that "it's economic and not race"; "it's just the way things are"; or "it's natural for people to gravitate towards likeness." Thus, racial issues are often decontextualised in a way that justifies racially unfair situations. This is precisely what makes post-racialism a formidable racial ideology and even more so because it leaves little or no room for people to support and sustain the strategies that are required to achieve meaningful racial change. And so some scholars argue that post-racialism provides an almost bulletproof defence of modern white supremacy (Lentin 2015; Bonilla-Silva 2001; Feagin 1991; Simon 2010). It is these types of ideological formations that produce the common stories about race that become part of racial folk theory. These formations are believed, used and shared by people, and they supply powerful emotional and almost instinctive rationales for why the world is racially organised the way it is and why it should stay that way.

There is, therefore, a resistance to dismantling the current racial order and a complexity with which this resistance is organised, embedded and strengthened through centuries of racial practice. Alana Lentin refers to this resistance as the three Ds (deflection, distancing and denial) of

post-racial racism management. Her work speaks to the way in which racism today is avoided by tying it to bygone eras. Racist attitudes and behaviour are seen to belong to particular historical periods such as the Jim Crow era in America or apartheid in South Africa. The problem with relegating racism to these examples of the past is that it creates a universal consensus that race is dead and racism is a problem of the past (Goldberg 2013; Hage 2014; Lentin 2015).

One of the biggest challenges today is a failure in contextualising racism, particularly around the framing of dialogue. While the need for complex conversation and interracial dialogue is often recognised and acknowledged as a means to open people's minds to explore differing perspectives and ideas through the sharing of personal stories and experiences, there is an emphasis on moving towards solutions rather than continuing to express or analyse the problem. This approach subtly seeks to move the conversation away from the very problem of race to finding solutions. While solutions to racism are absolutely critical, it is important to understand the conceptual process that precedes them. In other words, the dialogue that a multicultural Australia advocates is one that asks the public to not focus on seeing race any more but on making it go away or at least pretend it isn't there.

Closely linked to this is the lack of anticipation or allowance provided for the expression of the anger many minorities feel but cannot usually communicate since the dialogue is to be non-confrontational. What this does is subtly strip minorities of the right and occasion to speak fully from their experiences. Research has shown that racial experiences leave deep and lasting emotional and psychological scars (see Essed 1991; Feagin 1991; Myers and Williamson 2001; Sue et al. 2008). However, minorities are always asked to speak about race in an emotionless manner so as to avoid offence. There is a great fear that issues of race have the potential to undo the social fabric of communities (Goering 2001, p. 474). Therefore, the focus is always on people who are identified as people of goodwill to participate in national dialogues. People of goodwill are considered to be those who would "not begin the process in anger or organised protest" (Goering 2001, p. 474). In the end, this approach proves to be unsuccessful and unsustainable when anger and emotional discord do come to the fore and eventually flare into the open. I would

argue that perhaps this fear that focusing on race or talking about it would destabilise society is also what underlies post-racialism. This fear is what sustains the common folk belief that racism is made worse by discussing it. In Australia, this is coupled with a unique national temperament determined to keep things relaxed and comfortable. Talking about racism is acceptable only if it is done in the form of seemingly harmless humour that is passed off as jokes or satire. And often these kinds of conversations begin with the popular disclaimer "I'm not racist but…." People who disrupt these conversations to point out the racism are either ridiculed for taking things too seriously or made to feel uncomfortable. This in itself is a subtle process through which othering and exclusion are routinised and normalised.

Post-racialism: A Residue of the Past

At first glance, the move towards a post-racial rhetoric does indeed look like the end of racism as it seeks to dismantle the racial categories that are blamed for racism, that is seeing and acknowledging racial characteristics such as skin colour. But post-racialism is not a twenty-first-century racial idea that has supposedly solved the issue of racism. It is part of an ongoing evolutionary development of race that is following certain logics and responding to certain developments in time and social changes. There is a traceable historical evolution of race that shows how post-racialism is in effect a perpetuation of racism through the evolution of racial discourse that changes over time according to its cultural context rather than springing from biological reality. This also means that folk beliefs about race have not been replaced by social constructionism.

Race and Folk Theory

In Western countries, the last three centuries saw the formulation of race as a blend of science and folk ideas (Ossorio and Duster 2005, p. 115). These folk ideas are related to the social chaos of the fifteenth to nineteenth centuries that attempted to explain the origins of the races through

slavery, eugenics and evolutionary or theologically based theories. Historians have also shown how, in this time period, race was a folk idea, a categorising term that was similar and interchangeable with such terms as type, kind, sort, breed and even species (Allen 1994; Carr 1997; Hannaford 1996; Smedley 1999). This interchangeability highlights the link between race and biology, a link that is intricately tied to the long history of race. Race first emerged in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries as a critical concept of enlightened thinking about human beings and their nature. This was a shift from the traditional view of the Middle Ages that considered all humanity as creations of God. The enlightened view focused on the physical aspects of humanity, and thus race as a concept was closely associated with the physicality of things like social habits, land, climate and political freedom. According to French philosopher Charles de Montesquieu, climate was responsible for the quality of the mind and heart of men. This was seen to determine the essence, the soul or the spirit of a country's laws and governments. Where the heat was seen to drain and exhaust men, those who lived in cold climates were seen to have certain "vigour of body and mind which renders them impatient and intrepid and qualifies them for arduous enterprises" (Montesquieu 1949, p. 264). Those differences were used to explain the subservient nature of Asia, for instance, as opposed to the industrious spirit of Europe. Race quickly became a tangible characteristic that helped explain why Europeans were much more civilised than all the other peoples. And thus grew the folk ideas that being white and European was the very definition of civilisation. This notion of superiority became the ideological bedrock of Europe's dominion and colonising mission over the rest of the world. As Charles Mills writes, for the past 500 years, Europeans had the "power to determine the standing of non-Europeans, and they did so by dividing the world between 'men' and 'natives'" (1997, p. 20). Natives were conquered and dominated, their cultures destroyed and their once occupied lands were termed "discovered." Race thus worked as the foundational ideological basis of imperial expansion and conquest and exclusion of non-Europeans.

The key component of the folk theory about race is that it is biological and a clear and visible sign of the origins of human populations. The popular understanding is it is what people see when they look at other people; the characteristics read into people's material bodies. Essentially,

this basic understanding of race being what is observable on the surface of material bodies is what people claim to ignore when they are being post-racial. In this way, folk theory is useful in examining how race and racism continue to work in ordinary, everyday life, impacting on people's interactions and response to racial difference. The logic of post-racialism is consequently dependent on the idea that race is something that people see with their eyes when they look at someone. But even though they know race exists and is there, possibly right in front of their eyes, they choose not to acknowledge it because they are post-racial. Since post-racialism thrives on the common belief that race is biological, it dictates that racism is the failure of individuals to look beyond the "race" that is present on the bodies of others. In this manner, racism is completely a matter of individual beliefs, intentions and actions. In folk theory, a racist is a person who believes that non-white people are biologically, intellectually and culturally inferior to whites (Woodward 1966, p. 21). Therefore, racism is what this type of white supremacist person thinks and does. The folk theory holds that such people are anachronisms who are ignorant, vicious and removed from mainstream consciousness. This interpretation ignores the small, subtle ways in which ordinary people, who may not be doing overtly racist things or saying racist things, still perpetuate racism.

By the mid-nineteenth century, Montesquieu's ideas about race had evolved. Reinforced by the colonial experience of colonisation, discussions of race took on a more heightened tone most evident by the work of French aristocrat Count Arthur Gobineau, who wrote his four-volume work "*The Inequality of the Human Races*" in the 1850s. This was the first attempt at a systematic articulation of "scientific racism" (Soutphommasane 2015, p. 20). Gobineau's work presented the different races as sitting in a hierarchy. In Gobineau's words, "everyone great, noble and fruitful in the world of men belongs to one family alone – the Aryan race" (1915). By 1859, debates over Charles Darwin's "On the Origin of Species" and its effects erupted. The doctrine of natural selection, while controversial, provided an explanation for the irreversible and inequality of the races, while maintaining that all humans were one species. This bolstered belief in the innate superiority of white people over other races. With all these theories, race became much more than a law of nature—it became a category with a real biological basis.

European and American scientists began to group biologically similar people into racial classifications that were dependent on physical attributes such as diminutive bodies and head sizes (Darwin 1882, p. 167; Darwin 1871; Gould 1981; Smedley and Smedley 2005). Cranial measurements, for instance, were widely accepted and used as evidence that certain racial groups had a limited intellectual capacity and were, therefore, in need of supervision and control. The link between race and intelligence was thus established. Assumptions of racial differences in intelligence and achievement were a crucial part of the colonial and eugenic justification (Sternberg et al. 2005). Prior to the invention and establishment of intelligence tests in the early twentieth century, intelligence was ascertained by cranial measurements and brain sizes (see Anderson 1997, p. 86; Daniels 1997, p. 10). Intelligence tests like the IQ test cemented ideas and beliefs that mental or physical abilities and morality were linked to race.

Scientists and anthropologists of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries believed that physical features were supposedly carriers of distinctive psychological features (Shields and Bhata 2009, p. 111). Thus, people's mental and emotional behaviour became linked to their physical features. Charles Darwin's and Francis Galton's theories of evolution and eugenics, respectively, were highly influential in solidifying European discourse on race. Darwin used race to refer to groups of people who shared distinct physical features, and, therefore, race was very much biological. He predicted that competition among groups would eventually lead the "civilised races of man to replace throughout the world the savage races" (1871, p. 193). These ideas gave birth to the social Darwinism of the nineteenth century, which in turn helped advance eugenics, a theory that advocated for more suitable races to prevail over less suitable ones. It was believed that the civilised European races as a result of their superior intellect would ultimately win the inter-group competition and replace primitive races. In Germany, Adolf Hitler used eugenics in an effort to create a master race of physical perfection, a venture that ended in the mass murder of approximately six million Jews, who were considered to be defective and therefore a less suitable race to survive. Biology was thus clearly central to the articulation of race and difference.

Despite the fact that scientists have not been able to verify that race is a genetic phenomenon (see Bhopal 1997; Chaturvedi 2001; Fullwiley 2007; Ossorio and Duster 2005; Schwartz 2001; Sternberg et al. 2005), the concept itself has readily infiltrated people's common understanding about race. With the help of nineteenth- and twentieth-century science, which presented non-white peoples, especially Africans, as fundamentally different from the white race, these notions filtered down to the common man. The view that Africans and blacks were a mere step up from the apes and therefore more animal-like in nature was popular knowledge. Women like Sarah Baartman, commonly known as the Hottentot Venus, became victims of colonial and anthropological exploitation (Anderson 1997, p. 85; Holmes 2007, p. 166). These biological notions of race set into motion an intimate association between race and biology and, consequently, implicated the body as the sole carrier of race.

Categorising bodies was an important part of Europe's imperial mission. The difference that was mapped onto the bodies of conquered peoples in Africa, Australia and the Americas, for example, was a crucial determining factor in how those peoples were treated, giving expression to a particular form of racism. Bodies of colonial subjects were "primitivised," with anatomical parts and skeletal remains acting as markers of the racial identification and ranking of the colonised population. The body was used as evidence of evolutionary superiority or inferiority. The work of colonial scientists and entrepreneurs of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries continued to inform European discourse on race and difference mainly through exhibitions of indigenous people taken back to Europe as displays (Nelson 2010, p. 125).

Bodies and Space in Racial History

To tell a story about race's past without interrogating how bodies have long interacted in space is to tell only a partial story. The social links between race and space are not new. Historically, long-standing roots of the race-space connection exist in the process of imperialism and colonialism. Racisms have always relied on population definition as ways of distancing, categorising and disposing people, for example, the "Negro"

or "Black" (black fella as Aboriginals were commonly called in Australia), "African," "Muslim" or "Asian." These terms have always been about both geography and spatiality—as Goldberg elucidates, they have been about the geopolitical order at the macro levels and the lived arrangements at the micro levels. It means something to be black in a world that privileges whiteness but it also means something in how that being black is lived out in day-to-day context. The micro-expression of racisms often mirrors the macro-manifesting as-it-were long-standing conflicting histories. Racialising bodies and groups has been linked to the theft of land and the control of space. Jennifer Nelson asserts that domination itself revolves around how "groups marked as racially inferior have been defined, confined, regulated and eradicated…through the control of space" (2008, p. 281).

For example, the conquest of America was a significant historical event because it was the beginning of a consolidated social structure of exploitation, appropriation and domination (Omi and Winant 1994, p. 62). Its representation and justification, first in religious terms, then in scientific and political ones, set into motion what we now know as modern-day racial awareness. The construction of world civilisation as a product of the rise of Europe and the subjugation of the rest of us, to this day, defines the race concept and fastens the racial structure in place.

Geographical location, land and space were very much located at the heart of European conquest and settlement. There was a strong spatial imaginary whose basis was founded on the belief that "free nations had to be composed of homogenous populations with ties to the national landscape, 'timeless spaces' where citizens lived in complete harmony with one another" (Lipsitz 2007, p. 14). This idea of achieving and ensuring harmony through homogenous populations was very important to the colonialists because it allowed them to distinguish the population by race. American space was understood and theorised as an ideal pure space that would offer refuge for all those who would adhere to its principles and standards—those who were equally pure. The creation of America and by extension any pure and homogenous space demanded the removal and exclusion of those deemed impure, different and deficient—indigenous and non-white populations. This belief in the idea of a pure space remains at the core of contemporary racial segregation and the exclusion of the other.

European colonialists imagined that conquered spaces might offer refuge from the corruptions of the time. Western countries became the idealised islands of virtue where free citizens could live free from the contamination of the rest of the world. This idea was very influential in the creation of the United States as an imagined community as it became standardised within the American rhetoric and national culture. Transcendentalists such as Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau who wrote about each individual finding their relation to the universe emphasised the importance of nature and pure, natural lands in this quest as did period historians who portrayed the American frontier as a unique source of regeneration. The supposedly empty and vast North American space was nominated to serve as an "island of virtue in a global sea of corruption" (see Noble 2002).

Mapping Race onto Space

In a similar way, the native lands came to represent the very corruption that the colonialists were on a mission to avoid. This was largely done through the linking of race and space. Space can be seen as what remains after the institutional and material structures that governed racism in the past are taken away. Therefore, space—empty or not—is still full of racial and cultural constraints that inform how bodies interact in those spaces. These constraints are mapped onto the space by way of how the space is organised and structured. In many ways, this is a legacy of the institutionalisation of race that began to take hold during the period of imperialism, particularly the slave trade where thousands of African slaves were shipped from their native home to the Americas mainly as labour for the plantations.

Through the linkage of race and space, individuals also became linked to spaces because of their race and the spaces came to be associated to individuals because of their race. This process of norming space is intricately bound to the norming of individuals. Charles Mills calls this process the *racing* of space (1997, pp. 41–42). He explains it as the norming of space done by representing or organising space as dominated by individuals of a certain race. At the same time, the norming of the individual is attained by *spacing* her/him, that is representing the individual

as carrying and embodying the characteristics of a particular type of space: "you are what you are in part because you originate from a certain kind of space, and that space has those properties in part because it is inhabited by creatures like yourself" (Mills 1997, p. 42). And this is how in articulating the other, the individual and the space they inhabit come to be viewed as alien.

Similar to America, Australia was also historically idealised as a pure space in its own right. The production of Australian space in the imaginary was as a space of both possibility and dread—possibility because the move presented an opportunity for the pioneers to start afresh in a new land; dread because it was a British penal colony that was extremely brutal (Hollinsworth 2006; London 1970). The convicts were sailing off to an unknown land, leaving behind their homes and families. The idea of Australian space is further complicated by the country's colonial history, which bears witness to an Australia founded on the dispossession of Aboriginal land, displacement and poverty. Stolen Indigenous lands and stolen generations of Indigenous children are often controversial reminders that Australia as a country is largely "culturally produced, imposed and enforced" (Lambert 2010, p. 308). White Australia began this process of producing a country by privileging certain relationships to space and intentionally obscuring others. Australia was projected as a settled Anglo-European space, while Aboriginal connections to land, space, society and history were either ignored or concealed by emphasising the pre-eminence of white Anglo-Saxon people. This was done in a way that justified the seizure of Aboriginal land.

Since the land was *Terra Nullius*, it made it easy for the British to colonise and occupy the land by refusing to recognise the Indigenous people as the rightful owners of the land. Similar to the North American space, Australia has historically been framed as a vast, empty land characterised by wide open spaces such as the outback, deserts and beaches. These ideas about space with the help of Darwinism fostered the belief that Australia was a country where a new breed of men would be created: the new man of Australia who would be superior to the man from England would come into being in the new land (Hollinsworth 2006; London 1970; McMahon 2010; Tavan 2005). Ideologically, the supposition of space as empty and vast is important in understanding and seeing precisely how

space becomes synonymous with neutrality and how this affects how racial interactions are read within a space. Racism becomes hidden under the guise of neutral spaces.

True to Mills's theory, during the imperial mission of the British Empire, the state of full Europeans and non-Europeans was manifested in the character of the spaces they respectively inhabited. Most vividly was the way Africa and its inhabitants were represented. Considered the home of the savages, Africa was depicted as wild, overtaken by forests and wild animals, strange landscapes and impenetrable darkness. As the etymology of "savage" itself indicates, the Latin *Silva* means wood such that the savage is the wild man of the wood, the man in whom wildness and wilderness is deeply embedded to the point that you can take the wild man out of the wilderness but you cannot take the wilderness out of the man. Looking at how non-white bodies experience space is one way we can capture this dominant thought. There is then a constant, invisible and ideological spatial struggle in which the savage and barbaric are seen as resisting and encroaching on civilised and clean space. Ultimately, this struggle is played out on the bodies of people, for instance, in what Mills calls "the contaminated and contaminating carnal halo of the non-white body" (1997, p. 44). In modern texts, like Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1989) and Francis Ford Coppola's 1979 adaptation of Conrad's book as the movie *Apocalypse Now*, the battle against the savagery or the other is portrayed, in many ways, as a permanent endeavour as long as the savages continue to exist, contaminating and being contaminated by the non-white space that surrounds them or contaminating the white space they enter. Mills comments, "the non-white body carries a halo of blackness around it which may actually make some whites physically uncomfortable" (1997, p. 51). And this is one of the ways in which the larger issue of normalisation—a social process by which certain ideas come to be viewed as "normal"—is manifested in the micro-space of the body.

The normalisation of bodies also importantly highlights that geographical locations were not the only strategic political locations during Europe's empire-building or colonialism. The body also became the landscape of conquest and colonisation (hooks 1981, p. 18; Milner-Thornton 2007, p. 1111). The body, therefore, became actively involved as part of

what is known as the "contact zones – the space of colonial encounters, the space in which peoples geographically and historically separated come into contact with each other and establish ongoing relations usually involving conditions of coercion, racial inequality and intractable conflict" (Pratt 1992, p. 6). Raced, sexed, classed and ethnicised bodies were key sites through which imperial and colonial power was imagined and exercised. Pratt further states that the contact zones are also "geographical and spatial places where disparate cultures meet, clash and grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination such as colonialism, slavery or their aftermath lived out across the globe today" (1992, p. 4). This is important because it identifies that rather than being solely historical phenomena, the contact zones have a continuous, extensive and enduring effect as they continue to exist in the present day, visible in the everyday life experiences of people in different geographical locations around the world, and particularly on bodies that are othered.

Constructing Race Socially

In the 1990s, Ferdinand de Saussure's seminal course in *General Linguistics* introduced the notion of structure to language (de Saussure 1983; Dosse 1997). De Saussure's connection of language and structure filtered through into the social sciences and became a key concept in the formation of the intellectual movement that became known as structuralism (Harris 1983). Structuralism came to question the biological essentialism that was attributed to race. New ways of thinking about and understanding race that moved away from essentialism and instead focused on the relationship between human culture and larger overarching systems and structures emerged. Social constructionism emerged out of structuralism, and it implied a shift in emphasis from the fixity of social concepts to the idea that they were socially constructed through the assemblage of different parts in discrete stages to form larger structures (Berger and Luckman 1966; Hibberd 2005). Social constructionism critiques biological notions of race that suggest the physicality of race is fixed and cannot be changed. It is instead concerned with the way people are organised socially and

how racism is produced through social and cultural institutions. It allows for a racial theory that recognises race as an artificial, dynamic, unstable and decentred complex of social meanings which are constantly being transformed by political struggle.

Social constructionism is important to address because it not only shows how racial discourse is something that evolves over time according to its cultural context but it also illustrates that folk beliefs about race have not been replaced by it. Unfortunately, social constructionist approaches do not erase race because the paradigm still makes use of racial signs to self-articulate. Consequently, it can be argued that social constructionism and essentialism are intricately connected. Ruth Frankenberg's pioneering account of the social geography of whiteness, for example, though concerned with the social construction of race, was still grounded in the corporeal certainty of her respondents (1993).

Michel Foucault, who has been one of the more influential social theorists of the twentieth century, argues against the body as fixed biology but rather as a product of society and the environment. As a result, the body is a site on which social norms and practices operate. Because the body is a construction, it becomes "insufficiently stable to serve as the basis for self-recognition or for understanding other men" (Foucault 1977, p. 153). Foucault's discussion of race and racism is framed within a discourse of power. He particularly pinpoints the state as administrator of this power, which is then distributed and functions in terms of the relations between different institutions, bureaucracies and groups such as media or businesses, fields or disciplines within the state. These relations of power are therefore not set in stone but can quickly flow from one area to another depending on the circumstance. This fluidity and instability is what ultimately makes power mobile and unpredictable. And this idea has been fundamental to the social constructionism argument, which focuses on how phenomena develop within social contexts rather than on any inherent quality possessed within themselves. In a Foucauldian view, race then is a socially constructed category through which societies organise populations.

Michael Omi and Howard Winant's work on the development of race has also been influential. The authors trace this racial development in their 1994 book *Racial formation in the United States*. By focusing on the

years between the 1960s and the 1990s, the authors show the development of the racial concept and the effects of that evolution on American race relations in that time period. Their racial formation theory accounts for the complex interplay between the historical representation and organisation of human bodies and social structures, and the evolution of hegemony and the way in which society is organised and ruled. Omi and Winant thus define racial formation as "the socio-political process by which racial categories are created, inhabited, transformed and destroyed" (1994, p. 55). From this perspective, race is a matter of both social structure and cultural representation. The racial development theory privileges politics in its analysis because the authors argue that race is now mainly a political phenomenon (Omi and Winant 1994, p. 65).

This approach highlights race as focused on the organisation of people. It indicates how certain groups of people are organised to be seen as superior while others are structured to be inferior. Black people, who are at the bottom of the racial hierarchy, are generally viewed as poor, uneducated and lazy because of the way institutions and society organise them—these people live in the inner cities or in the fringes of urban areas, and they take on these labels by virtue of living in those areas that are considered poor and marginalised. Again, here we see how race is mapped onto the bodies and spaces. At the same time, societal structures that promote racial segregation make it difficult for them to live anywhere else. In this we see how race is important in tracking how people are organised in their places throughout society.

According to Mark Steedman (2008), race is premised on the idea of dependence and independence connecting race intrinsically to practices of subordination, and it is essentially a practice of subordinating some human beings to others. Steedman traces how wage labour in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries produced the concept of race through entailing dependence (2008, pp. 50–58). The master-slave and master-servant relationships these centuries produced were based on a relationship between dependence and independence. Servants or hirelings, who were mostly black, were by definition dependent, and therefore, their fitness for self-government and autonomy was automatically questioned. Whites, on the other hand, had an unquestioned claim to freedom and independence. By the time slavery was abolished, blackness

and servility had become so intertwined that the term "black" came to mean dependent, inferior or servile. Race, then, naturalises a particular form of subordination that casts relations of mastery and servitude—superiority and inferiority. It is through the practice of naturalising dependence and independence that supposedly categorical biological differences are deployed. Race is constructed out of the social practices that surround it. In Steedman's view, race emerges as a specific set of social practices and beliefs centred on naturalising forms of subordination.

It is interesting to note the connections between biological notions of race and Steedman's argument. Racial classifications of people based on biology in the early fifteenth century were aimed at controlling those people who were regarded as inferior in the same way that dependence and subordination created by slavery in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries took away the autonomy of those who were classified as dependents and slaves. Kate Lowe writes about the fifteenth century as a time of European self-definition, and with that self-definition came a widespread use of black slaves as opposed to white slaves (2005). The arrival of black Africans in fifteenth-century Europe provoked a "European-wide" reaction because they were perceived to be in opposition to the specific "Renaissance vision of white, European culture and civilisation" (Lowe 2005, p. 19). Black skin was almost uniformly condemned, and it provided a cultural context for prejudice, the worst of which was the equating of black skin with slavery. This conjunction facilitated the denial of emancipation for black Africans because society at large associated black skin with slavery and many ex-slaves were captured as fugitives and compelled to renegotiate their freedom through the courts.

In the same way, the slavery of the nineteenth century of which Steedman writes created a clear distinction between whites and non-whites (who mostly occupied servile positions) to the point of mapping dependence and servanthood onto the bodies of these non-whites. Benjamin G. Humphreys, the governor of the state of Mississippi from 1865 to 1868, for example, said about the freedom of African Americans, "the Negro is free whether we like it or not…to be free, however, does not make him a citizen or entitle him to social or political equality with the white man…" (Gosset 1997, p. 256). Thus there was a degree to which the freedom of black Americans was hindered by their race. My point

here is that the concept of race is always shrouded in ideas of power, domination, supremacy, inferiority, subordination and exploitation. This link also highlights the ever-changing nature of race. By using race words, we apply labels, but we also construct status, impose norms of behaviour and police boundaries, and justify hierarchies of domination. In the nine-teenth and early-twentieth centuries, white elites in the US South saw the servility and dependence of blacks and articulated the social distance cre-ated between the whites and blacks as race (Steedman 2008, pp. 56–57). This is why Italians who lived in the South and did "Negro work" (agri-cultural and plantation work) in this time period were considered to be as "black as the blackest Negro" (Cunningham 1965, p. 27). The Italian was robbed of his status as a white man because of his "identification with non-white labour, especially with the negro (Brandfon 1964, p. 610). This demonstrates how the "Negro's work" rather than skin colour became the badge of inferiority. So black came to mean servile, inferior or dependent, and this attribution will continue to make sense as long as existing forms of domination are understood to make those dominated servile and dependent. Here again, it is noticeable that race is never new or old but always mutating by virtue of adapting to the conditions within which it operates.

I must clarify that I am not arguing that race does not really exist nor am I saying that because it is something that evolves it is then purely a matter of discourse. Race creates experiences that are material and embod-ied. And hence the body and the environment in which it interacts with other bodies must be considered. This book argues for the recognition and continuation of race while problematising racism. Contemporary discourses such as post-racialism that ignore race still effectively produce racism in everyday interactions in everyday spaces.

The Backlash

Racism has adapted and continues to adapt to contemporary cultural shifts. In this way, it also speaks to the overall constant changing nature of race as it fits into cultural moments at particular time periods. As a concept, post-raciality has become an explicit key tool used against

responses to race. Conservative reactionaries today in countries like Australia and the United States use post-racialism as a justification for their own racism (Boyle 2013; Smith et al. 2011; Winant 2004). Questions about why Aboriginals should get different welfare benefits, for example, are debated and criticised.

In the United States, affirmative action is seen as racist as it is prejudiced against whites, and white conservatives who present themselves as enlightened, post-racial and colour-blind take public offence to such policies. Thus, post-racialism is increasingly used as a weapon to attack the very ideal it supposedly stands for.

In Bonilla-Silva's study, Carrie, a retired white woman, was asked to comment on the significance of discrimination for blacks' life chances:

> I don't think it's the case. I think it, I think they are looking for an easy way out. Some of them, I mean it's not your, ah, ah, well, what I'm trying to say is, it's not your, ah, aha…the ones who, your educated ones, it's not them. It's the other ones who are just too lazy to get up and get a job and they are looking for an easy way out…instead of studying, the world's against them, so they just sit and get into gangs and things like that…it bothers it, a lot of things bother me, I'm not trying to be racist or anything like that, but I just feel that, ah, I think a lot of them hurt themselves.

What this respondent does is attribute blacks' poor life chances to their own laziness and their wanting an easy way out instead of studying and working like everyone else. Put simply, blacks are to blame for their situation in life. She then stresses that she is not trying to be racist but rather stating the way she feels things are. Although she frames her comments within a racial discourse utilising stereotypes, she still makes it a point to emphasise that she is not trying to be racist. As earlier noted, this type of manoeuvring around racial language in itself demonstrates the subtle slipperiness and contradictory nature of post-racialism. People can easily claim to be post-racial and still mobilise racial frames in understanding and navigating the world. This desire to be seen or thought of as non-racist speaks to the core of post-racialism. It allows people to take a non-racist stance while being prejudiced at the same time. It also demonstrates the reaction against affirmative action or the idea that people of colour

should be given equal access to employment and educational opportunities. Rather as Carrie argues, blacks do not have access to these things because they are lazy.

In the same study, another white respondent answering a question about discrimination in the United States expressed the following:

> I think if people act responsible they will not be discriminated against. People who are acting irresponsible, in other words, demanding things, ah, "I need this" or "You did this because of my skin color"…yeah then, they will be discriminated against. People who are intelligent present themselves in a manner that is appropriate for the situation and will not be discriminated against. (Bonilla-Silva 2001, p. 152)

In this case, the respondent blames victims themselves for not being intelligent enough to present themselves appropriately in situations where they are discriminated against. In other words, people bring racial discrimination on themselves by not being intelligent enough. To understand this explanation, there is a need to refer back to the historical framing of intelligence, which is intricately bound with biological essentialism. So when the respondent speaks of intelligence as a shield against discrimination, she is literally mobilising as well as re-embedding the classical connection between race and biology. What her statement implies is that discrimination only happens to those who are dumb. Historically, those who were considered dumb and unintelligent have always been non-white people, whilst whites have been represented as the highest state of physical and mental human evolution. We should take particular note of how post-racial frames for racial events are fraught with biological notions of race. In this case, racial discrimination is reduced to a matter of intelligence and social graces.

Racial phenomena have to be explained as non-racial for post-racialism to work. Inherent in it is a denial that race is a relational as well as a structural problem. And this denial obscures from view how race is constantly changing and adapting to fit the times in which it is operating. This new way of responding to race that uses post-racism explicitly as a way to deny the structural inequalities is itself a response against race. It is a way that racist thought defends itself against being rooted out because it is serving

a particular purpose for a particular people. While post-racialism may be defended for its noble intention, it is also a weapon against the very people it supposedly was meant to liberate.

Notes

1. The White Australia Policy (1901–1973) was legislature introduced to enforce racial aspects to immigration law (1901–1973). The aim was to bar all persons belonging to any coloured race from immigrating to Australia.
2. An informal Australian concept that emphasises that everyone has the right to reasonable opportunity to do something. No one should be discriminated against.
3. E. Phillips Fox (1902), Landing of Captain Cook at Botany Bay, 1770, National Gallery of Victoria (NGV), available at https://www.ngv.vic.gov.au/explore/collection/work/5576/ (last accessed 14 October 2018).
4. Terra Nullius was the Latin concept used to describe Australian land as empty and belonging to no one.
5. The 1967 referendum saw Australians voting overwhelmingly to include Aboriginals in the national census.
6. VW Jamaican-theme Super Bowl ad: Funny or Offensive, available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fxmPCCMwHLY (last accessed 14 October 2018).

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3

Can I Touch You? Everyday Racism

October 2016

I'm standing under the bus shelter at Murrumbeena waiting for my bus. It's a beautiful summer's day and I'm wearing my blue tank top that leaves most of my arms exposed. There is a white man sharing the shelter with me. He is wearing a uniform, so I immediately assume he works for the bus company and manning the stop today. After saying hello to me, he strikes up a conversation. Everything is going well, and inevitably, as most conversations with Australians go, he asks me where I am from. He seems sufficiently interested yet ignorant about the geography of the world. This doesn't surprise me but it does grate because how many times do I have to explain that Africa is not a country? Then he makes a comment about my skin and asks whether it feels like normal skin. I'm taken aback by his question, and before I know what is happening he reaches out his hand and touches my bare shoulder, running his hand down my arm. I wince and turn away. I feel violated but I'm too shocked to speak. I step away from him and pretend to look at my phone as I listen to my own screaming in my head.

As a black woman, there is always that eerie moment when you realise you have no real control over how your body is perceived and read by others. This incident was one of those moments for me. In hindsight, I should have been more prepared for it. Up until that point, I had had many experiences where people, even strangers, had reached out to touch my hair to "feel" for themselves what black hair felt like; they reached out to touch and handle me without my permission and without any consideration of what that action entailed—the dismissal and disregard of my bodily autonomy. Despite these experiences, I was unprepared for the moment my skin became such a spectacle, open to the random touch of a random man at a bus stop. There was a sense of being ambushed in broad daylight. I was not prepared for the intimacy of that unwanted gesture. While there is a tendency to see the devaluation of black women as occurring only in the context of slavery and colonisation, it, in fact, continues to this day even in societies that consider themselves post-racial and multicultural. One way we see this sustained colonisation is in how the black female body is available for interpellation, connection and enjoyment by white strangers. The man at the bus stop not only sees my body as the manifestation of an idea about race, but he is able to articulate it in a curious and "friendly" overture. He is able to reach out from his position and claim an experience in the name of verifying that my skin is indeed "normal." Such episodes are scary in their unpredictability. They can happen in private or in public. They suggest no space is safe to exist as a black body.

There is a certain way in which the raced black body comes into view in Australia. It carries with it a hyper-visibility that renders it the site of surveillance, scrutiny and curiosity. One of the things I couldn't stand in my first 3–5 years in Australia was the stares I got no matter where I went, but particularly on public transport. I found the experience incredibly disconcerting. I had to will myself to leave the house each day. It got to a point where I would often choose to walk to a place regardless of the distance rather than subject myself to the onslaught of curious and sometimes incriminating gazes of strangers on public transport. The stares made me feel responsible for my black body, my race and whatever narratives were formulated through the white gaze. This was a burden to me, and it was a burden I had to navigate every single day I stepped out into society.

In Australia, everyday racism is commonly known as "casual" racism. This is considered the racism that happens because people don't really mean it; it is devoid of any malice, making it accidental at best. Soutphommasane makes a stark distinction between casual racism and everyday racism—casual racism refers to the manner in which the discrimination is expressed, while everyday racism is the setting in which the racism occurs (2015, p. 149). As a matter of principle, I steer away from referring to the racism that happens in Australia as casual because this particular framing essentially reinscribes the Australian relationship to race and racism as being divorced from the historical and sociopolitical context, and indeed renders it "casual," that is, easy-going and intolerant of intolerance as-it-were, which in and of itself is an oxymoron. An underlying key concern here is the tension between race and racism. In the present Australian context, like other Western countries, there is a desire to move beyond race and imagine a world where racism has finally been eliminated. Post-racialism grows out of this tension between wanting to move beyond race and the multiple ways racism continues to be produced. The mechanism that sustains this continuity of racism is what has not been adequately addressed by scholars. Ash Amin argues that in certain historical moments, the laborious achievements of the anti-racism struggle can be speedily and extensively unravelled, indicating that the mechanisms that maintain race as an exclusionary force close to the surface and ready to spring into action need to be analysed (2010). Denise da Silva puts it another way: there is lack of consideration for the "how of race" whenever the "what of race" is examined. She argues that the two cannot be separated (2011, p. 138). My argument is that the continuity of racism is secured through the complex machinery that, at its core, involves how bodies interact in spaces as well as how those spaces are arranged and controlled.

What happens when post-racialism is imagined as the solution to racism but is also the very mechanism by which racism is produced and sustained? I want to explore this paradox by looking at some specific concepts that post-raciality brings to the fore. These concepts include whiteness, visibility and invisibility, bodies and spaces. Post-racialism highlights the tension between race and racism inasmuch as it embodies it. In this chapter, I explore this tension through its manifestation in racial visibility and invisibility and how these are significant in the way

race is mobilised to produce racism in everyday interactions between bodies in everyday spaces. Bodies and spaces are the key elements of racism's persistence because the evolution of race is made possible by race adapting to bodies and space.

Post-racialism and Whiteness

Post-racialism cannot be divorced from whiteness. Indeed, it can be argued that post-racialism is simply a token of whiteness. This is because post-racialism and whiteness share something in common—they erase the other and sustain inequality by unracing race. Although there is the increasing popularity of the idea that racism is now "reversed" or anti-"white" (Barker 1981; Stolcke 1995), post-racialism appears to target minority groups rather than white people. When people talk about being post-racial, they are generally referring to the ways non-white people do not experience racism anymore. White people and whiteness remain the normal standard against which all social groups are measured, and therefore, post-racialism also masks the privileges that whites have by nature of being white. It ignores the power relations and inequality that already exist between minorities and white people (Bernard 2011; Bonilla-Silva 2010; Fryberg and Stephens 2010; Simon 2010).

Heidi Mirza defines whiteness as that "powerful place that makes invisible or reappropriates things, people and places it does not want to see or hear and then through misnaming, renaming or not naming at all, invents the truth" (1997, p. 3). Whiteness has chameleon-like qualities, able to pass as both a marked and an unmarked racial category, depending on the circumstances. This makes it a privileged location that escapes the trappings of a racial position and as such constructing it as a natural category rather than a raced one. What we are told is "normal," neutral, and universal simply becomes the way it is. Mirza's definition presents whiteness as a dominating and oppressive system that erases and renders certain places, persons and experiences valueless and invisible. Here, I also want to link whiteness to space because a belief that space is neutral echoes the idea of whiteness as neutral. In order to perform a comprehensive analysis of space, we have to critically examine whiteness. The crucial thing about

whiteness is that it asserts its dominance while essentialising and discriminating against all others that are non-white. Whiteness's expression in everyday culture is so pervasive that it is rendered invisible. So, much like space, it functions optimally in less visible and obvious ways. The invisibility of whiteness is what works to naturalise whiteness to the point of becoming what people identify and accept as normal.

Fundamentally, whiteness is a system of rewarding whites with privileges based on the premise that by virtue of their race, they are better human beings in the same way that blackness or otherness is premised on the idea of being lesser or inferior human beings. Juxtaposing whiteness with blackness is in no way aimed at reducing racial identities to binaries but to simply point out that, practically, the system of domination mainly recognises white identities and non-white identities. And anyone who falls in between or can easily pass in either category is treated accordingly based on the category with which they most align. That middle ground between white and non-white is still a highly contentious and ambiguous space, which, for many people, is still considered non-white. So whiteness as a racial category is invisible, but it is this invisibility that normalises it. This is in sharp contrast to the invisibility that non-white bodies experience. Part of the manifestation of this difference is tied to the idea of white privilege and the refusal of many white people to acknowledge the freedom and opportunities accorded to them by virtue of being white. Part of the evidence of this denial is bound up in the desire by most whites to be seen as non-racist. White Australians, for instance, use phrases such as "I am not a racist but…" and "some of my best friends are Asian" extensively, and we can conclude that these phrases have become standard in post-racial discourse.

On different occasions, white people who have come to know me have told me that they do not think of me as black. This is often given as a positive and firm assurance, suggesting that these people may still attach negative connotations to being black but I have somehow eclipsed that category. When I enquire as to how I am thought of if not a black woman, answers have included "as a person" or "just a woman." In one particular incident where I was discussing interracial relationships with a white woman, she assured me at the beginning of the conversation that she did not think of me as black or see me as a black woman. But when I expressed

my acceptance of interracial relationships, she aggressively went on to disapprove of my stance, citing genetic differences between races that render interracial relationships incompatible. While claiming to not see the colour of my skin and/or my racial category, she was still able to express racist beliefs. In her mind, she had successfully de-raced me, but only as it served the purpose of expressing a particular viewpoint. The moment an issue arose that required de-racing both white and black, she quickly reverted to the societal norm that posits black and white people as fundamentally different. This demonstrates how post-racialism can be used as a tool to avoid being seen as racist while still harbouring racist ideals. We see here how post-racialism acts as a cushion to assuage white guilt and anxieties where race is concerned. It can be used in an opportunistic way that prevents mostly white people from feeling overwhelmed by the guilt of racial inequality. Of course, this is not to say every white person who claims to be post-racial is avoiding this guilt. The key point is that post-racialism serves a purpose, whether it is consciously or subconsciously mobilised.

At the beginning of the book, I talked about the experience of sitting in the doctor's office but yet being invisible. As a black body, moving through the world, my life is often filled with this kind of uncertainty and anxiety. I am settled, as I am unsettled. The source of my anxiety is my visible difference as a black woman. There is no hiding it. Even when I forget about it, I am reminded of it. I notice people's sudden and quick eye movements when they approach me akin to Nirmal Puwar's blinking and looking again, a process of disorientation caused by the arrival of a body out of place (2004). Some do not even meet my eyes but look above me as they talk with me. These encounters always make me conscious of and anxious about my black skin. I feel it grow taut on the surface of my body as they look at it and ascribe a value to it. My difference becomes a spectacle, and I find myself participating in the rendering of it as such. And in this way, I experience my own visibility in a visceral way. When the man at the bus stop touches my skin, there is a palpable surrealism that befalls me. I witness the man literally shape me into being, his touch the thing that confirms my humanity to him even as it destroys the idea of myself as an already fully existing body. For a moment it shatters the illusion that my identity is a given. And, in this way, it is not only my visibility that comes into focus through the everyday encounters but also

my invisibility. I recall a time when we had a work farewell dinner for a colleague who was leaving the arts office and the university. I narrate below from a diary entry:

> It feels strange. Sitting with six white women whom I consider close friends and yet feeling excluded by them. They are talking about beauty. And to them it is described in white porcelain skin, long, dark or blonde hair and blue eyes. I feel uncomfortable because their use of these words and terms draws attention to the fact that I lack these markers of beauty and to the sudden awareness of my invisibility. I know they do not mean to ignore me, but the way they carry on without any acknowledgement of a different kind of beauty, the kind women like myself possess, completely excludes me anyway. It is as though I am not here.

In this incident, I specifically remember feeling like I was having an out-of-body experience. I had left my body and was hovering over the group, unseen and unheard. Even as I feel to be outside of my body, I also experience the emotions and feelings inside my body. I have an anxious desire to simply get up and leave. My mind begins to race; my heart pounds and my hands are unsteady as I fidget with my empty plate and cutlery. The invisibility is painful for me. I was struck by their use of seemingly clear structured boundaries for what beauty is and should be. And everything else that falls outside these boundaries is, by default, rendered unbeautiful and irrelevant. In a poignant way, this is how I experience invisibility in most ordinary spaces. I experience the space from outside of this boundary. I fall outside the marked limits of acceptable visibility. But what exactly is (in)visibility? And why do I link it to post-racialism?

Visibility, Invisibility and Post-racialism as Bedfellows

Put simply, the state of a body being noticed and recognised and the process by which this occurs is what I am referring to as visibility. Greg Noble writes about recognition as going beyond the validation of difference to acknowledging people as fully legitimate participants in a given

space (2005, p. 115). I contend that both these aspects are crucial for visibility, and for non-white bodies, they come to bear in a mostly negative way. In contrast, invisibility is the opposite of a body being noticed and recognised, which Noble argues is an orchestrated and active regulation of the unfit existence of others (2005, p. 115). This emphasises how certain people come to be reminded of their unsuitability in a space through everyday interactions, habits and routines. Visibility and invisibility are fundamental elements of racial experiences; as a result, they should be central to discussions about racism and its contemporary manifestation. They are the vehicles through which post-racialism functions today and the very thing it reproduces. The disavowal of race by its very nature seeks to negate those bodies that are marked and classified by racial difference. Those bodies become invisible, and by default, other particular bodies become visible. It is important to note that for a body to be invisible, it must first be rendered visible and then deemed "unfit." Historically, bodies that are made invisible have to be first made visible as bodies that are different and in need of erasure. The erasure of the difference is what post-racialism achieves practically and in that way makes these bodies invisible.

As a phenomenon, the key feature of (in)visibility is its complex and paradoxical nature. It is always unstable, always shifting. Sometimes it is better to be visible, while at other times, it is better to be invisible. Even the question of whether a body is automatically visible if it is not invisible does not give us a straightforward answer because sometimes a body can occupy both states simultaneously. The experience of black people is a clear example of this, with research showing that they live out their lives at the intersections of visibility and invisibility (see Bonilla-Silva 2001; hooks 1981; Feagin 1991; Ford 2011). This points to the ambiguity of the concept. It shifts in particular ways in different contexts, sometimes making it difficult to pinpoint what is really going on. This is why this phenomenon is best analysed through the exploration of seemingly insignificant everyday interactions and moments. It allows us to look at how visibility and invisibility and, by extension, post-racialism actually operate in everyday life, and also illustrates how they work by looking at how differently they function in different settings and spaces and with different people.

Although the paradoxical nature of (in)visibility is what mainly characterises it, there is one very important overarching principle that sustains it in all its operations—a consistent powerlessness and a lack of authority over when one gets to be visible and when one gets to be invisible. As a black woman, I want to be noticed and fully recognised as such, but many of my experiences demonstrate that I do not get to decide when I am visible and when I am invisible. I feel too visible when I don't want to feel so visible, and I am rendered invisible when I want to be visible. Each case study demonstrates that to have your body raced seems to mean a lack of control over the level of visibility and invisibility one has: when everyone sees you as the subject of attention in the room and when everyone does not notice that you are there. And this powerlessness manifests itself differently in different spaces and settings. This is the one stable and continuous attribute of the (in)visibility phenomenon.

As metaphors, visibility, invisibility and post-racialism, which advocates a type of racial blindness, are all linked by the concept of sight. To function in any particular situation, they require a form of seeing or lack thereof. They all draw upon ways of seeing. Although closely connected, they each can operate differently in different situations and spaces. They also mean different things in different contexts; there are times and spaces where being visible is positive and being invisible is not, while at other times and in certain spaces, being invisible is desirable and being visible can be detrimental. This tension in how these three ideas mesh together and are experienced is critical to understanding the paradox that post-racialism creates.

Anderson J. Franklin, writing from clinical psychology, defines invisibility as the "inner struggle with the feeling that one's talents, abilities, personality and worth are not valued or even recognised because of prejudice and racism" (1999, p. 761). This definition does not capture the social account I want to present because it appears to negate the social contexts that lead to feelings of invisibility and the role that social interactions play in perpetuating and sustaining invisibility. In addition, it appears to suggest that (in)visibility is an internal problem, the very idea that post-racialism also promotes. However, society upholds values and rules that undergird the way invisibility is managed, seen, lived and experienced. As a result, society is structured in a particular way that allows

certain bodies to become visible or invisible, depending on the context. Therefore, we can argue that while post-racialism works to produce and sustain (in)visibility, it is society that manages the rules and regulations that determine who is seen and who is not. Societies and communities shape (in)visibility with rules and codes that govern who is seen, who is not seen and when they are seen. Many scholars have argued, for example, that invisibility is an essential aspect of being black in a white-dominated society (Feagin and Sikes 1994; hooks 1994; Mowatt et al. 2013). However, when we look at the black female body in particular, it tends to come into view when it is discussed as a sexual object (Mowatt et al. 2013). Sex and sexual misdemeanour are the historical conventions that shape black women's visibility in society. In the same way, their invisibility is shaped by the rules and codes that exist to exclude them. When it comes to beauty, their bodies and identities are deemed unfit for the conventions of mainstream beauty which include standard features of white skin, blue eyes and long, blond hair (Hunter 2005; hooks 1992). There are undertones of this as the man at the bus stop verifies whether my skin feels "normal" or not. There is a way in which my validity as a woman comes into question. The man, in that moment, performs the role of society's gatekeeper, ratifying my body, as-it-were. It makes visibility and invisibility essential core elements of inclusion and exclusion. The rules of society determine who is included and who is excluded. And these determinations are based upon who is seen to occupy the centre of society and who is relegated to the margins. The societal views about the value of certain bodies arrived upon by prejudice as well as acts of subtle or overt racism create the environment and context in which there is inner tension and feeling of being invisible or visible for the wrong reasons.

In linking (in)visibility to post-racialism, I first want to make reference to Ralph Ellison's prologue in his highly acclaimed 1952 novel *Invisible Man*. The protagonist begins his narration by stating,

> I am an invisible man…I am invisible, understand, simply because people refuse to see me. Like the bodiless heads you see sometimes in circus side-shows, it is as though I have been surrounded by mirrors of hard, distorting glass. When they approach me they see only my surroundings, themselves,

or figments of their imagination – indeed, everything and anything except me. Nor is my invisibility exactly a matter of a biochemical accident to my epidermis. That invisibility to which I refer occurs because of a peculiar disposition of the eyes of those with whom I come in contact. A matter of construction of their *inner* eyes, those eyes with which they look through their physical eyes upon reality. (p. 3, emphasis in original)

In this very short excerpt, the invisible man unpacks his condition and the invisibility that ails him essentially to "a way of being seen." He directly relates his condition to people's refusal to see him and to the construction of their inner eyes with which they look through their physical eyes upon reality. In other words, the way we see things perceptually affects how we see things physically. Everything we see in the world passes through and is coloured by our inner eyes—a way of seeing the world that involves mappings and codings we have collected along the way that shape the way we see (Bhattacharyya 1998, pp. 71–82).

In talking about post-racialism, I want to pick up on this refusal by people to see the invisible man. He emphasises that this is the reason why he is invisible: because people refuse to see him. This informs my use of post-racialism. While I do use it to also refer to the idea and belief that race no longer matters, I want to stress that the belief is based on another undergirding idea that people can choose not to see race or racial difference. In many cases, being post-racial is used as a self-congratulatory pat on the back. Much like the invisible man's argument, I view post-racialism as a conscious endeavour because the people who say they are post-racial in a way choose to ignore or deny the existence of race. They refuse to see race as signified by different skins and bodies. The lack of acknowledgement of this difference is what then leads to certain bodies being visible or invisible in particular spaces. As an illustration, it is well known that negative stereotypes and representations about black people as a social group send out a specific message, but so does *non-representation*. In domains where black people are not represented or acknowledged, like mainstream media, certain neighbourhoods and high-level corporate management positions, they are rendered invisible. This invisibility communicates a message that in effect says they are either not welcome in these spaces or they do not belong there. Stephanie Fryberg and Nicole

Stephens argue that in reality negative representation and invisibility are not that different (2010, p. 117). Invisibility is a big part of post-racialism. In fact, it feeds the whole concept of rendering race, racialised bodies and the spaces where racial encounters occur unnoticeable and irrelevant. Therefore, raced people become de-raced, and this movement strips them of their identity and a place from which they can speak of their racial experiences. How can they have negative racial experiences when everyone supposedly cannot "see" their race?

The Case of Segregation

Segregation is a good example of how (in)visibility organises populations. It is premised on the idea of preference—the belief that those who are alike prefer to be with those of their kind. Like post-racialism, it is fraught with invisible racial prejudices that inform these preferences. Jane Hill uses sitting patterns in US school cafeterias where it is said black students all sit at the same tables by preference, to argue that white and black (sitting) preferences cannot be the same as they operate with different power dynamics intricately linked with hierarchies and hegemonies (2008, p. 7). Research shows that it is normal for whites not to see white cliquing because they view racial separation and segregation as unproblematic (Zuberi and Bonilla-Silva 2008; Bonilla-Silva 2001; Lipsitz 1998; Bonilla-Silva et al. 2006). There is a level of discrepancy that exists between whites' "integration ideals and their actual interacted behaviors" (Bonilla-Silva et al. 2006, p. 239).

Where people live remains an indication of the levels of segregation in a society. It also shows how space, proximity and distance are relevant in conceptualising race in the twenty-first century. Neighbourhoods and social spaces are still racially coded with stereotypes shaping and influencing the degree of willingness to enter or remain in racially integrated living spaces. This racial coding plays an important part in people's determination of where to live. In many Western cities, whites are often concentrated in white sections of the cities, while people of colour are concentrated in non-white areas of the cities (Bobo 2011, p. 22; Bonilla-Silva 2001, p. 95; Simon 2010, p. 287). Segregation fosters little or no

interracial interaction, and it merely creates a situation where white norms are considered normal and natural. The distance created by segregation between whites and non-whites only fuels a lack of knowledge of the other, trust, respect and empathy (Ullucci 2006, p. 537). The interesting thing about people who claim to not see race is that they generally express their support and desire to live in a multicultural society. White Australians are vehement about living in multicultural Australia, for instance. However, the majority of them do not actually realise this goal in their everyday lives—they live in segregated neighbourhoods, have friends from the same race and interact with those who are within their racial and cultural habitus. This in itself highlights the complex ways post-racialism is tied to bodies and space and how this complex interplay is demonstrated through racial visibility and invisibility.

Segregation also highlights the spatial logic of post-racialism that needs to be emphasised. The importance of the spatial is it "establishes relations of proximity and distance" (Ahmed 2004, p. 3). Post-racialism assumes that as a result of not seeing or acknowledging race, there will be an increase of close encounters between the races. It presumes an inherent proximity in the invisibility of race. Today, the proximity of different races in everyday spaces gives the impression that race does not matter. Bryant Simon's ethnographic study on Starbucks found that people perform colour-blindness (2010). While the Starbucks stores he studied boasted an array of racially different individuals making the space appear multicultural and diverse, he found that, on the ground, there were no ongoing interactions between the diverse populations of people (Simon 2010, p. 285). Even where interracial encounters have indeed increased, they do not necessarily lead to greater racial integration (Houssay-Holzschuch and Teppo 2009, p. 361).

Bodies and Spaces

Notions of the body and space are central to race discourses. In understanding post-racialism, the body and space are central in how they draw attention to themselves through their absence. Post-racialism makes race and racialised bodies invisible, and in the process, also ignores the spaces

in which racial interactions between bodies occur. In the meantime, race continues to have real effects on how bodies are positioned within different spaces. The segregation discussed in the previous section is an example of the effect of race on bodies in space. Race organises bodies within spaces. Studying how race does this in different spaces illuminates the process of racialisation. Bodies and spaces are key in understanding how post-racialism mobilises race to produce racism.

The Body

While the social constructionist approach has been indispensable to understanding and dismantling structures that maintain racial inequalities, it has a weakness in that the body and its material experiences are rendered invisible and lost through this process. As a result, the ways in which race persists and adapts to the contemporary setting are equally masked and rendered invisible. Grace Musila observes that there is a sense in which the body is absent from discussions on dismantling oppressive structures despite it being the site of both oppression and acts of resistance (2007, p. 50). Aileen Douglas's comment, "if you prick a socially constructed body, it still bleeds," poignantly highlights the irony of social constructionist theories which ignore the body while attempting to explain people's experiences and responses to forms of oppression. It is indeed ironic that the body's experiences can be excluded in the very discourses attempting to emancipate it.

Accounting for the body helps move away from reducing and exploring experience as only an effect of the social structures within which subjects find themselves. Race does not only function at the level of the institution, but it also occurs and is re-enforced through racialised ways of being in the world which not only shape interactions between people but also shape embodied perceptions. These perceptions are whole-body experiences of the world, making it clear that the bodily reactions that may accompany racist observations, which may include fear, anxiety, anger or nausea, are not reactions that come after the perception but are constitutive of the perception itself. Such phenomenological experiences, however uncertain, provide a rich source of analysis of the function of race (Dukes 1984, p. 198). By situating the body and the personal at the

centre of race research, we can highlight how they contribute to racism's continuity. We cannot ignore the fact that physical appearance remains the primary channel to learn and teach about, understand, evaluate and judge racial differences. And if this is the case, then cultural representations of highly racialised bodies seem to play a significant role in helping us understand how the knowledge of race is passed on from one generation to another. The physical body is still the means by which we identify race. Isabell Cserno calls it the "final frontier" of identifying racial belonging (2008, p. 74). Although racial difference has been adopted and engraved in societal and governmental laws and other structures and in aspects of social life like economic access and educational opportunities, determining a person's racial status relies heavily on what they look like on the outside. Accounting for the body provides for a much more accurate and rich analysis of how racism continues to be sustained and maintained through micro-aggressions.

I must caution here that too much focus on the body has an adverse effect. It obscures the bigger picture that social constructionism does well to highlight. Neglecting the role that larger structures such as institutions and culture play in racial analyses only gives a myopic view and focuses too much on individual experiences. It also takes us back to the biological essentialism of the eighteenth to twentieth centuries. This is where space comes in. Space is what mediates between the specificity of bodies and the larger structures and mechanisms of racism. By focusing on the space within which racist interactions occur and how individuals interact in those spaces, we move away from the traditional idea of citing either the individual or the institution for racism alone and see how they are both constitutive practices of racism. The dynamics of a space and the interaction between bodies in the space create a particular type of experience, and consequently, racism can be reproduced in certain racial interactions regardless of an individual's motivation or personal feeling about race. This is why the rhetoric of post-racialism is problematic as it naively assumes individuals choosing not to see race is a sign of agency.

In reality, post-racialism blinds individuals to themselves and to the ways in which their interactions continue to perpetuate racism. Instead of creating the envisioned raceless world, it creates a world where racism persists without racists. It shows that despite the evolution of race since the fifteenth century, there has been a failure to adequately account for its

continuation and the way it adapts itself to the historical and social conditions within which it operates. And the organisation of bodies and space, which are crucial aspects of this adaptation, has largely been ignored in the way race has been thought of and articulated. Past discourses of race have mainly focused on either the body or the larger structures of society (space) as agents of racism without much interrogation of how the two phenomena influence and feed off one another to sustain racism.

Space

Historically, race has always been mapped onto space, making the two constitutive of each other (Massey 1994). This is because racial identities and categories are interpreted according to when and where they are contextualised and positioned. Different spaces affect how racialised bodies are positioned and read. Spaces organise bodies in particular ways, and this organisation is never devoid of the influence and workings of power and ideology. Like race, space is always changing and is politically contested. Social spaces are not blank canvasses on which anybody can write or open for anybody to occupy (Puwar 2004, p. 8). In theory, while anyone can enter a particular space, it is certain types of bodies that are silently designated as legitimate owners or occupiers of that space. In accordance with how the spaces and bodies are imagined, some bodies are regarded as having the right to belong, while others are seen as trespassers. Spaces are thus created by and maintained through "performative" embodied experience (Neely and Samura 2011, p. 1934). Space falls between isolated bodies and the wider discourses and institutions, and it is also where bodies interact in a wider shared context, making it the place where bodily habits and expressions are formed and enacted.

The Character of Space

The study of space is not a new phenomenon in the humanities. Human geographers for one have studied and differentiated between space and

place (Buttimer and Seamon 1980; Relph 1976; Tuan 1974, 1977). The question of space and place in geographical knowledge is essentially about where, when, how and why something happens (Harvey 1973; Lefebvre 1991; Massey 1994; Soja 1989, 1996). Similarly, there has been a growing number of scholars in fields such as education, law, politics and sociology that seek to answer these questions using spatial analyses. Unfortunately, these fields are not always in conversation with one another. In many of these fields, clear demarcations have been made, resulting in space being categorised mainly as private space, public space, social space, cultural space and even spaces of leisure or work (Neely and Samura 2011). This form of categorisation, while helpful, also has the potential to overlook how spaces interlink and inform each other, sometimes even creating spaces that cannot be neatly packaged into a category: spaces we can call non-spaces such as the airport or border checkpoints (Auge 2008).

Everyday spaces, of which I am particularly interested, are instructive in the way they demonstrate the thin line between these spatial categories. Everyday spaces or the spaces in which our everyday life is conducted vary in terms of their purpose and the nature of interactions that take place within their confines. Common sense affords us the ability to identify the uniqueness inherent in each particular space, and this in turn helps to frame the kind of relationship we form with these spaces. These spaces are arranged in a way that accommodates the types of interactions and activities they are designed for. We know, for example, that a university is different from a public park; therefore, the sorts of interactions we might expect in a university classroom may not be the same as those we expect to get in a public park. This common sense we have about spaces and how they should function is what makes us respond with feelings of discomfort when any particular space does not conform to our expectations. However, while spaces are unalike in certain specific ways, they all share a common characteristic that allows us to understand the process by which race is articulated and responded to in similar ways across spaces. This characteristic is the observation that at a fundamental level, all spaces support and promote certain forms of relations or interactions while at the same time inhibiting others. Spaces are zones where "difference and sameness collide" (Fleetwood 2004, p. 37).

As an illustration of this collision and how fraught it is with power, I want, for a moment, to consider an example of a person dancing in the aisles of a supermarket. On the one hand, the example points to the ambiguity and unpredictability of spaces in that we cannot control how bodies appear or collide with one another, but on the other hand, it raises a question: what if someone really did start dancing in the supermarket? How would passers-by react to this "anomaly" in the space? There are two general possibilities: one, they would pretend the individual dancing is invisible, or, two, they would glare at the individual or treat them in a way that is consciously or unconsciously intended to make them feel overly visible and ashamed of their behaviour. And so part of the reason why people do not go around dancing in the supermarket is because they would feel foolish and/or the gaze of other people would make them feel strange or ashamed. This illustrates how what happens in spaces is more about all the bodies operating together than individual agency. Spaces are therefore constructed collaboratively. The example also shows that even in a "neutral" space, there are all sorts of power relations, authority and visual relationships continually making people feel visible or invisible. I refer back to my opening example of my experience in the doctor's office. The authority the receptionist has as the gatekeeper to accessing the doctor is one such power relation that makes me feel invisible in relation to the other bodies in the space. At the same time, the interaction makes me feel visible as a black body. These power relations and interactions also enforce standards and norms that determine which bodies are considered "at home" in these spaces.

Much of the ambiguity in public spaces lies in the combination of intimacy and anonymity. Every time we walk in and out of everyday spaces, we come across people we have never seen before and may never see again. We stand next to them in supermarket queues and witness as they purchase products as intimate as shaving cream or sanitary pads. Even though in that moment we become privy to their toiletry choices, we still do not know who they are nor do we have control over their choice of toiletries. And thus, as uncomfortable as it may make us feel to bear witness to strangers' personal shopping choices, the nature of the space and the way it is organised do not allow us to avoid this type of encounter. We watch others while we ourselves are being watched. It is

impossible to evade this conundrum of watching while being watched. Consequently, the dynamics of many everyday spaces are governed by the fact that one does not have much control over the forms of encounters or the people one encounters in these spaces. This is an important aspect of the nature of the collision between difference and sameness.

Geographer Nigel Thrift alerts us to the problem of reducing space to simply a series of interlocked worlds touching each other: in other words, space as merely the meeting and crossing of different territories. Instead, he encourages a view of space as a construction born out of what he calls a "spatial swirl of affects" (2006, p. 143). The idea of affects instantly brings the body to the fore of any concrete spatial analysis, and the picture that Thrift paints is that of a churning and convulsion of bodies as the very fabric of space. This argument presents us with an interesting question, and that is whether space can be considered space without the mixing or interacting of bodies. My answer to that question is no, as the nature of the kinds of spaces I am talking about is brought into being by the very existence of bodies in those spaces. Bodies by themselves highlight issues of difference, and these differences, such as gender and race, impact our understanding of space and how it is experienced.

Other markers of difference that distinguish the other as an outsider include skin colour, accent, ways of speaking, style of dressing and behaviour. These markers of difference are worth highlighting because they all speak of experience that cannot be divorced from the body. This corporeal experience of the other in space incorporates feelings and perception. Brian Massumi argues that bodily feelings are an instantaneous assessment of affect, affect being the capacity for a body to affect and be affected (2002, p. 216). Massumi's expression is helpful because one of the things that many people who find themselves in a racialised encounter bring out is the feeling of being discriminated against either by their bodies being avoided or feeling uncomfortable and/or unwelcome in a space. But since these feelings are considered subjective, they are often dismissed by those who are not victims of racism as being products of victims' oversensitivity to race. I argue the perceived sensitivity of a racialised other is actually a product of the racial system, as it holds to the idea that racism is produced and sustained by victims of racism. The point is that racism is not only about the individual but also about the context and spaces within

which our interactions take place. We have to move away from the traditional focus on the individual, as it has only repackaged racism into more palatable ideals such as post-racialism and keeps us from truly moving forward in addressing racism. To that end, the bodily feelings that are stimulated and experienced within a space, despite not being able to be fully articulated, need to be acknowledged and explored because they contribute to our understanding of how race works in mundane interactions of everyday life. Engaging the body in analyses of everyday life is powerful in the way it can reveal what is often hidden and intangible.

Understanding Space

As we have seen, different spaces do different things. This difference can also be applied to ways of understanding space. The relationship between race and space is symbiotic in nature. Insofar as space is a primary platform for the expression of everyday life, it is also an active agent in the formation of the very fabric of everyday life. It follows then that it is an active agent in the formation of ideas about race and identity. In a 2002 lecture, black activist and writer Angela Davis stated that racism in the twenty-first century is embedded in the structures that govern our daily lives (2002). This is true. However, the actual spaces and built environment that house these structures and the spaces that are in turn created by institutions such as government bodies, education, media and the judicial system are vital to consider (Harris 2007, p. 2). Diane Harris further identifies the primary terms of racism such as segregation, seclusion, marginalisation, incarceration and hierarchy as being spatial phenomena. And in order to disrupt and dismantle these social structures, we have to understand the ways in which they operate in and through the spaces that accommodate them.

Race is important to consider whether we are looking at the spaces owned or occupied by minority groups or spaces owned and occupied by whites because such an approach will prompt us to question the often implicit and taken-for-granted assumption that all spaces are white unless otherwise stated such as an Aboriginal reserve or a ghetto. Since white

identities are racial identities, any interrogations of race and space must include comments or studies of those spaces that are seen to be belonging to the dominant white culture (Harris 2007, p. 3). The relevance of looking into race and space is that it allows us to see how messages about access, belonging, exclusion, community and multiculturalism are manifested in the organisation of space as well as the everyday interactions that happen in ordinary spaces of everyday life. This becomes possible to see because space, by its very nature, is ideological in the way it is arranged and in the way it structures what takes place within its borders.

Spatial organisation plays a significant role in how a society as a whole functions as well as how it transforms. In the present where larger processes like globalisation easily overshadow the everyday, it becomes important to highlight the role that the routine and monotonous repetition of everyday life plays in sustaining larger systems and mechanisms. Highlighting the everyday also shows institutional systems being contested in everyday spaces, particularly by marginalised groups in society who have come to view these spaces as sites for resistance and struggle (Fleetwood 2004, p. 37).

South Africa is a vivid example of racial gradation. The apartheid state had segregation so entrenched that trains, buses, stores and doors were clearly marked to ensure that the races did not mix. Doors, for example, were marked with signs that identified each race: white, native, Indian or coloured. Sometimes the races were grouped into two distinctions, whites and non-whites. Thus, individuals had to identify with one race in order to walk through a door. The classification of doorways emphasises the spatial nature of the segregation. The very act of walking through a door was racialising in itself such that even in the absence of the door, one remained racialised. What is so unique about South Africa is that white supremacy took such a strong hold and was more pervasive than in any other British colony in Africa and Asia. It developed into an organised, systematic and legalised discrimination, which shaped the entirety of the country economically, socially and politically (Alexander 2002; Dubow 1989; Farrah 2007; Kagee and Price 1995). My experience of racism in South Africa was always overt and visible. Even though apartheid had ended in the 1990s, about a decade prior to my moving there, the residue

of a thoroughly organised and integrated racial past was still palpable. The longer I lived in the country, the more socialised I became to know instinctively which places I could go and the spaces to avoid.

Understanding the ways in which power operates through the construction of white identities can help us identify how power operates in spaces. Again, this idea is largely informed by the normative taken-for-granted belief that all space is white space unless otherwise specified. What this normative status of space does is make those who are non-white visible in the space. These are further represented as being outsiders and not of the space. And in this manner, exclusion is mapped onto the space. The differentiation is made between those who are considered as belonging to the space and those who do not. Through this process, certain relationships to the space are privileged, while others are obscured.

Power and the construction of white identities both seem to function through the mechanism of invisibility and partly because, as George Lipsitz argues, "the lived experience of race has a spatial dimension to it and the lived experiences of space has a racial dimension" (2007, p. 12). He also argues that "the racial demography of the places where people live, work, play, shop and travel exposes them to a socially shared system of exclusion and inclusion" (2007, p. 12). The exclusion and inclusion are mapped onto the spaces. This is achieved through a process; the non-neutrality of space makes it possible to have certain ideologies determine how the space is organised. A clear example of this is how people in most major cities of the world are relegated to different physical locations. In Melbourne, people of African descent, for example, particularly from the Sudanese community, are largely confined economically and socially to Dandenong, a suburb located in the southeast of the city and known for its culturally diverse population, with more than half of the population coming from non–English-speaking backgrounds. The suburb is also popularly known as a hub of crime and violence that Sudanese youth are believed to perpetrate (Topsfield 2009; Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission Report 2008). It has been at the centre of many a moral panic in the last five years. On the other hand, the wealthiest of whites in Melbourne live in suburbs like Toorak and Armadale, far away from the problematic areas of the city (Forrest et al. 2006; Grimes 1993).

How Space Works

The beach is a perfect example of the ideological value of space, and it has been an important element in the discursive representation and theorisation of Australia as a country (Cousins 2011; Lobo 2013; Wise 2009). The link between the Australian bodies and the beach has always been strong in the national imaginary, and there is considerable scholarship on this (Arthur 2009; Hills 2009; McMahon 2005, 2010). The beach represents the openness of the Australian landscape—the outback, the sunshine and the freedom. Its iconography is that of long, languid summer days, a carefree and laidback life of surfing and lying in the sun. Going to the beach is seen as an integral part of the Australian way of life. It is the ideal weekend and holiday destination, and it is accessible to the majority of the population in urban coastal regions. Images of bronze-skinned bodies relaxing on sun-filled beaches have been consistently used to signify and epitomise Australian identity. Renowned Australian photographer Max Dupain exemplifies this representation in his famous 1937 *Sunbaker* photograph. The photo captures an athletic young man lying on the sand, with a sculptural pattern of his body formed by his head, arms and muscular shoulders. Dupain's work was dubbed quintessentially Australian because it conveyed what it is to be an Australian— relaxed, comfortable, free and at one with the land (Crombie 1999; Noble 2009). What is interesting is that the subject in the photo happens to be Hal Savage, a British friend of Max Dupain, who at the time was travelling with a group of friends on a surfing trip (White 2003, p. 22). And yet, despite being British, he came to symbolise Australian identity. Isobel Crombie, curator of photography at the National Gallery of Victoria, highlights the iconic nature of the *Sunbaker* in that it is a symbol of the body in contact with primal forces because the body on the beach receives nourishment and sustenance from the earth, sun and water (2004, pp. 149–151). The muscular, well-toned and well-tanned body with residues of sweat glistening across his torso plus the white sand and sun all speak of health, vitality, masculine power and potency as well as an irresistible beauty, innocence and simplicity. It is also clear that the *Sunbaker* represents a racial prototype of the ideal Australian.

Another important figure that has come to be recognised as the Australian beach body is the figure of the lifeguard or lifesaver (Brawley 2007; Crombie 2004; Higgins et al. 2006). Through promotion, the images of idealised lifesavers' bodies have been imprinted in the national imaginary and narrative as the quintessential Australian bodies safeguarding and protecting a quintessential Australian space—the beach. It was within the context of this national imaginary and narrative of ideal Australian bodies and spaces that the Cronulla riots of 2005 happened. The riots were triggered by a physical altercation between several off-duty lifesavers and a group of Lebanese men who had come into conflict over the use of space on the beach. The fight left the lifesavers injured. The following week, prompted by viral text messages and radio broadcasts calling for the protection of "our" beach, about 5000 youths, mostly from white, English-speaking backgrounds, went on a rampage around the beach, shops and the railway station attacking anyone of Lebanese and Middle Eastern appearance (Noble 2009, p. 1). In many ways, the Cronulla riots were a defence of the dream of the quintessential Australian bodies and beaches. The text messages that were circulated and the slogans that were written upon the beach itself and on the bodies of many in the crowd were highly nationalistic and exclusionary in nature. Slogans such as "100% Aussie Pride" and "White Pride" were echoed throughout the day. These riots seemed to send a clear message: that the beach space is predominantly a white Australian space. As one Cronulla protester wrote on his chest, "We grew here! You flew here!" (Elder 2007, p. 304). The Australian beach is portrayed as an iconic white space where Australians are "still finding their freedom" (Lambert 2010, p. 241). And thus, non-Australians who enter this space are represented as ethnic groups who use the beach in ways that are different to the Anglo-Australian norm. For example, they may engage in rowdy behaviour and violence, and in this way they are seen as being in opposition to the Anglo-Australians who are represented as family units. The discourse of multiculturalism—the idea that Australian beaches are free for all and to all no matter the culture and race—is severely undermined here, as evidenced by the intercultural tensions that simmer and erupt (Noble 2009). Ethnic visitors are seen to use the space in different ways—ways that do not conform to acceptable norms of social behaviour (Lobo 2013, p. 101).

The story of these foreign bodies on beaches being a threat to the Australian family unit, especially white women and children, is deployed to justify the represented image of these ethnic groups. Lambert argues that the construction of some parts of Australia as "bad" is indeed a discursive move needed partly because "the law needs the outlaw for reassuring citizens that the unruly and the unknown can be named and contained even if they cannot be annihilated" (2010, p. 310). This can also be said for spaces at the micro level. The unruly and unknown are mapped onto the bodies of whoever is considered alien in a space, and, therefore, their bodies come to contain all that is threatening or contaminating to the space. Therefore, dispelling the body of the outsider becomes synonymous with dispelling the threat or contaminants from the space. This type of attitude and reaction to racialised bodies is what governs many interactions in everyday spaces.

Public transit in Australia, particularly the bus, is another intriguing space to consider in this light. In many ways, it is a rigid space framed by the physical limits of the vehicle. It is also a tightly enclosed space, with one narrow aisle only allowing movement up and down and to and from the driver. Most of the seats are arranged to face forward, and passengers have few options in regard to where and how they sit. As a space, the bus is organised in an expected, controlled pattern in which passengers have little control over the location of their bodies and belongings. However, despite the seemingly rigid nature of the space, it is dynamic and fluid in the types of bodies that enter the space as well as the types of encounters these bodies have with each other and with the space. The bus offers a physically confining space, and since one cannot remove oneself while the bus is in motion, there is a never-ending negotiation between passengers in terms of attitude and conduct towards each other. The presence of bodies or passengers in the space is what dictates the interactions and encounters. Passengers on a bus find themselves being both spectator and spectacle at the same time. There is a sense of watching and being watched; you are watching your belongings, your body and how close it comes to the body that sits next to you. As stressed before, this is not an active, vigilant form of watching but more subtle so as not to draw attention to oneself. The other factor that makes the bus space dynamic is the continuous change and movement of the bus through differing areas and

landscapes. The constant motion and the generally large windows that seem to let the outside in give the bus a sense of openness that is mostly an illusion (Fleetwood 2004).

There is an intimacy that comes with the way the bus is organised. Although the bus driver acts as gatekeeper, the only prerequisite to entering the space is a valid ticket. Everything else is of no consequence, and as a result, passengers become witness to events, people and conversations that they have no control over. It is this lack of control over what happens in the space that makes the space highly volatile and unstable. It remains a site for struggle and resistance, especially for racialised groups. During the American Civil Rights era, for instance, buses were a daily site of racial struggle and resistance. The bus became one of the symbolic platforms of the struggle for space and accessibility. It was on a bus that the famous activism of Rosa Parks took place in 1955. The response to Rosa Parks's refusal to give up her seat on a bus for a white passenger inspired boycotts of the buses by black communities in Montgomery, Alabama. These boycotts became important symbols of the Civil Rights Movement. Parks's story, however, was not an isolated incident. There are countless examples of how the government at state and national levels, and many white citizens, worked to limit public transit access to black women, in particular. Some of their efforts included physically attacking and forcibly removing black women from public transportation (Higginbotham 1992). To this day, public transportation remains a contested zone in many urban areas of the United States as well as other parts of the world.[1]

When I first moved to Melbourne in 2009, taking the bus was a source of anxiety for me. I was hyper-aware of how my body moved through the space, how much space I was taking up on a seat in case other people wanted to squeeze in. I was conscious of the stares and the fact that the seat next to me would be the very last one to be claimed no matter where on the bus I sat. And sometimes it would go unclaimed; despite the bus being full, people would choose to stand rather than sit next to me. I felt highly visible in the space, but also unsafe. A 2012 bus incident in Melbourne demonstrated how volatile and unstable these physically confined spaces could become. A young French woman was verbally abused for singing a song in her native tongue. Fellow passengers, who also called

her a dog, bitch and threatened to cut out her breasts, told her to "speak English or die.". The incident quickly became tense as more passengers joined in with comments about hating blacks and how "darkies should be kept at the back of the bus where they belong." A female passenger chanted, "Aussie, Aussie, Aussie" (Lowe 2012; Cooper 2014). What is important to note is that these ordinary passengers were able to mobilise historical contexts of race in their articulation. References to black people occupying the back seats of buses and the "Aussie, Aussie, Aussie" chant which, depending on the context, can act as a symbol of aggressive nationalism and xenophobia, indicate a level of historical understanding of what these issues mean and how they still impact those very groups they target. These passengers were able to mobilise race to stake a claim to the bus space as Aussie and white. We can see then how public transport, much like the beach, is highly structured and can be racially volatile. But unlike the beach, the bus is an enclosed setting from which one cannot remove oneself while it is in motion. As Fleetwood argues, what is paramount to the dynamics of public transport is that "one cannot choose one's company. Because of its combination of intimacy and anonymity, riders are forced to bear witness to events and people outside of their ability to control" (2004, p. 37). As I stressed before, similar to other everyday spaces, public transit spaces like buses, trains and trams are zones where difference and sameness collide. They show how in structuring interactions, these spaces are essentially about bodies.

Tom Shields contends that space is not simply about relations or the distance between elements but a socially produced *order of difference* (2006, p. 149). Bodies exist within the space and are arranged according to this order. There is nothing homogeneous about difference because it is heterogeneous in and of itself. In their work on public space in post-apartheid Cape Town, Houssay-Holzschuch and Teppo speak of racial and spatial boundaries as part of what they refer to as the *display of difference* (2009, p. 369). There is a level and element of separateness that takes place in most ordinary spaces. There are invisible boundaries that keep people from moving from their predetermined place and thus maintaining the order of difference. What appears on the surface as a peaceful coexistence of people from all walks of life in many everyday spaces is

underneath an invisible organised system of being in the world and inter-acting that is controlled by racial and cultural boundaries. Houssay-Holzschuch and Teppo call this display of coexistence an "attractive show of multiculturalism" (2009, p. 369). In countries such as Australia where multiculturalism is an important part of its identity as a nation, everyday spaces then become absolutely crucial as sites of the representation of just how multicultural Australian society is.

Space is the place where everyone is on display. People see and can be seen within space, and it thus provides the contextual framework to any racial experience. The study of space and how it impacts racial experience needs to be refocussed on processes of interaction and othering through those interactions. In multicultural societies like Australia, there tends to be an emphasis on the steady increase of interracial encounters as a sign of tolerance when increased interracial encounters do not necessarily mean increased racial integration. This is because many interracial encounters often take place within contexts of unequal power relations. Space's existence and functioning cannot be isolated from the power relations that shape it and are embedded within it, and by extension impact all that takes place within the space. One observable result that is produced from this intimate relationship and interplay between bodies and space is the visibility and invisibility of particular bodies in particular spaces and at particular times. Recall that I argue that the post-racial project is essentially about making certain bodies invisible. Therefore, post-racialism, like race, is corporeal in its effect. But it is also spatial.

Note

1. Reminiscent of the Rosa Parks's incident and her act of defiance, in 2011, an Israeli woman refused to sit at the back of a bus which was travelling to an ultra-orthodox neighbourhood in Jerusalem. Her refusal came after she was pressured to leave her seat by ultra-orthodox Jewish men. Israel's ultra-orthodox community has attempted to force gender segregation on buses in the country in the name of religion. This clearly highlights how these larger cultural issues get played out in ordinary spaces (Stewart 2011).

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4

What Are You Doing Here? The Politics of Race and Belonging at the Airport

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Today I arrived back in Australia after being away for about a month. The airport is poignantly one of those places where I feel acutely aware of my difference. My otherness and foreign-ness becomes the centre from which I navigate my sense of self through the space. Perhaps it's an unwritten rule, but at the airport, essentially you get treated according to the body you have and the label in your passport that accompanies it. Even though there is a sense of pride in who I am and where I come from, there is also an acute self-consciousness and trepidation as I queue to have my passport checked and stamped. Before heading over to customs, I make a trip to the ladies' room mostly to gather myself together and put on my armour and this time it is my brave "I can take anything" facade which I feel I need in this space. As I leave the restroom, a white middle-aged woman almost runs into me. I move out of her way and mumble an apology. I notice that she recoils from me, glancing at me with disapproving eyes, with her forehead folding into a scowl and her mouth twitching uneasily. I see the disgust written all over her face, and she quickly moves away from me. Naturally, my heart sinks but I walk out telling myself that her behaviour has got nothing to do with me. And for a while, I believe it. Later, as I wait in

another queue, I find myself standing next to a black man with a trolley full of luggage. There is enough distance between us to indicate we are sole travellers but I see the customs officer look at the man and then at me, and then ask the man, 'Are you together?' I marvel at the question because if we were together shouldn't I be standing beside him or close enough? Should we be together simply because we are both black?

The first time I ever set foot in an airport was in 1987. I was saying goodbye to my father, who was travelling to London, in the United Kingdom, for a one-year work program. He was leaving behind a wife and five children. I was six years old. And even at that age, I remember feeling uncertain about the space. There was a power that was apparent even to me, even as a child. Everything was arranged systematically—the primly dressed airport officials who took my dad's paperwork and ushered him along through the long corridors to the other side, away from us; the way his suitcase was tagged and I watched as it floated away on the conveyor belt among many other suitcases; and the way we were ordered to stand in one particular spot because we were not allowed to cross a threshold to say goodbye to my father. I remember being struck by this as a child, by feelings of separateness, unfamiliarity, strangeness and loss in the space. And to this day, many years later, the airport remains a source of anxiety for me. There is always a sense of excitement and terror that fills me whenever I walk through the entrance to an airport. This mixture of emotions is always grounded in uncertainty—uncertainty about the processes that lie ahead, of checking in and being successfully cleared through; uncertainty about my bags and about the journey itself. Do I have my ticket? Did I pack my toothbrush? Did I put my aerosols in a see-through plastic bag? Do I have my passport? This is a mental checklist I run through every single time, without fail. The anxiety begins at least three days before a trip and it is accentuated by the long drive to the airport. The arrival at the airport is itself confronting in the way it highlights the state of arrival and yet departure all at the same time. This anxiety comes from the fear of not knowing whether and when I will be stopped or singled out for extra security checks.

For the airport, particularity is key, and being singled out for extra security checks is seen as part of the mechanism of how the airport

operates. And even though the narrative around being stopped is steeped in discourses of security, race cannot be overlooked because, in practice, it plays an important part in who is singled out. The airport as an institution wants to define the person: Who is she? Where is she from? What is she carrying? In this way, identity becomes an essential element of how the airport is arranged and understood. Race then, as a marker of identity, is very visible in this space. The numbers of security checks that target non-white travellers suggest that race is as important a screening marker as travel documents.

The homogenising of groups of people helps propagate and sustain stereotypes that influence how these groups of people are received and treated in any space. What is notable within the airport space is that race is first articulated through these general stereotypes, and then from there, individuals are singled out for their particularity, that is passport, country of origin. For example, the general perception that terrorists come from Islamic states or regions and therefore people from these parts of the world should be closely watched throughout the airport terminals or subjected to extra security checks (Lyon 2008, p. 42) shows how race in the airport is drawn from established stereotypical ideas, in this case that all raced people are homogenous entities with no individual traits to help discern one from the other. Bodies in a traditional institutionalised space like the airport are arranged in a hierarchical order of nationality and race, thus shaping the encounters and the experience of the space itself. As a result of that, the airport ceases to be merely an institutionalised space but becomes one of corporeality. How this corporeality interacts with authority and control in the space is one way that race becomes embedded and mapped onto the space.

With this spatial and affective context in mind, this chapter basically considers one question: what is it like to be a black woman in the airport? In asking this question, I aim to unpack the politics of bodies in space by interrogating how the airport as a space produces racialised particularities of experience. As I have contended, contemporary discourses about race are centred on the notion of the post-racial, which assumes race is something we have moved past and therefore cannot practically engage with. My key intention in this chapter is to show that the nature of the airport through its use of explicit sets of procedures and processes of documenting

bodies illuminates the often-clear ways race is experienced in the space. What is significant about the airport perhaps much more so than all the other spaces I have looked at in this book is the exactness of the experiences as a result of the clear and specific ways race is mobilised within the airport's confines.

I locate this discussion within Joseph Pugliese's (2007a) *geocorpographies* in order to highlight how my body and, by extension, racialised bodies are geopolitically positioned in spaces like airports. Pugliese coins the term *geocorpographies* in his work on the technology of surveillance, law and terrorism "to bring into focus the violent enmeshment of the flesh and blood of the body within the geopolitics of race, war and empire" (2007a, p. 1). This encapsulates, first of all, how the body is always geopolitically situated, and, second, the conceptual merging of the corporeal body with geography. Bodies come to be positioned in spaces through a process of symbolic, historical, political and cultural discourses.

Airports as Space

David Pascoe (2001, p. 34) beautifully describes the airport as a "national frontier on the outskirts of a major city in the middle of a country." Although not located at the territorial limit, this national space is indeed a frontier. However, it is a national frontier that connects to international spaces and a grounded site that embodies mobility (Salter 2007). Airports have been characterised as transition spaces (Gottdiener 2001), non-places (Auge 2008), spaces of authority (Kellerman 2008), sites of surveillance (Lyon 2003), seminal spaces for discussions of modernity and post-modernity (Cresswell 2006) and symbols of mobility (Adey 2004a). Marked with such versatility, the airport is very much a contradictory space. It can be fun and exciting, on the one hand, but serious and controlling, on the other. While there are particular areas of the airport where these different faces are evident, there is nevertheless an acknowledgement that the serious face of the airport can impose itself in the more relaxed areas of the space at any time. It is partly this quality that makes the space of the airport unstable.

The airport has the hustle and bustle of a social space. It can be a sea of bodies, colours and cacophonies of sounds, from airport announcements to tired business travellers and chaotic families going on holiday. Sounds and snippets of people's conversations waft through the air, offering sneak, quick glimpses into travellers' lives. Screens flash with names of attractive-sounding destinations like Zurich and Frankfurt, mirroring the diverse crowd of people that involuntarily meet and cross paths within the airport's tunnel-like corridors and interiors—people from all walks of life, backgrounds, nationalities, ethnicities and races. The airport can be a vibrant meeting place where friends can rendezvous as they wait for a flight. It can be a place where strangers can turn into friends and occasionally a place where romance can happen. We have seen many a movie scene that involves love at the airport. Although this makes these encounters interesting, they are also full of tension and uncertainty. Most of the encounters are tempered with a transience that flows through from the space itself. It is a space in between spaces where people pass through en route to more permanent places, a space of everywhere and nowhere (Gilsdorf 2008).

Nonetheless, there is a familiarity and sameness to airports that cuts across countries and regions of the world. Terminals are predictable and conform to a general pattern of organisation comprising corridors, lounges, video screens, storefronts, toilets, food outlets and duty-free goods. Over the years, the airport as a space has evolved into a one-stop shop from parking lots to overnight lodging facilities. San Francisco International Airport demonstrates how airports have evolved into places of entertainment, with an accredited museum that showcases an extensive program of art exhibitions (Carstensen 2011). It also presents live music during winter holiday and summer seasons. Thus we see the truly multifaceted nature of the space.

The airport is also highly institutionalised charged with the responsibility of checking people in and out of a country in accordance with specific rules and regulations pertaining to citizenship and migration. Legal documents in the form of passports, travel documents as well as a plane ticket are the required currency for entry and mobility within the space. And even then, these documents have to be the right kind that can be verified by the airport passport control staff. For many airports, the

process of verifying the legality of, say, a passport, and consequently the face and body attached to that passport, facilitates a separation between citizens and non-citizens. Citizens are lined up in one queue that leads them to one counter, while non-citizens are ushered into a different queue to a different counter. In some Western countries, the non-citizens are further broken down into groups that are separated by regions. At Gatwick Airport, for instance, there are a few separate queues to choose from: the European Union (EU), European Economic Area (EEA), British nationals and Swiss nationals queue or the "all other nationalities" queue. This regulation of where people go and how their passports are controlled is an important aspect of the airport's process of surveillance and security management, an issue I will delve into more fully later in this chapter.

Other sections of the airport that fall within security management include security check and customs and immigration. Both these areas are organised in a very systematic and top-down fashion—it is the authority figure in the form of the security and customs officer screening the passenger with little or no allowance for talking back. On the other hand, the structure of the airport makes it possible to question some of the processes that bodies of passengers are subjected to simply because the classifications and categorisations of bodies are rendered visible. This, then, presents us with a tension between compliance with the institution/system and talking back to the system, a tension that will be further examined in this chapter.

What is mostly overlooked and highly undermined is that the airport is also a corporeal space. The environment of the airport makes bodies highly visible through mechanisms of surveillance, screening and validating. These processes as well as the space itself elicit numerous kinds of feelings, from fear, anxiety, worry, frustration, panic, loneliness, disgust, pain, sadness and boredom to excitement, happiness, pleasure and euphoria. In my opening narration, I talk about feeling acutely aware and self-conscious of my body and the otherness attached to it. This is at two levels: there is the otherness that historically comes as a result of being a "black" body, but there is also the otherness that is transferred onto me by the process of moving through a traditionally white space. As a black woman travelling alone, there is a sense of fear and vulnerability that

accompanies me on most of my travels, particularly going through institutionalised spaces like the airport where a hierarchical order is evident. Entering the airport space triggers confusing feelings regarding self and identity. Arriving at Melbourne's Tullamarine Airport, on which the case study for this chapter is based, is often conflicting in how it leaves me feeling disembodied. In a place where national identity matters, I feel neither Zambian nor Australian.

Peter Adey (2008, p. 151) argues that it is not an accident that the airport produces these feelings because the management of how an airport feels is not an arbitrary phenomenon. He posits that the airport can be understood as a "differentiated landscape of intensity" where the airport's very design, in turn, affects passengers' emotions and their approaches and orientations towards particular forms of docility and conformity (Adey 2004b, 2008). Debbie Lisle (2003) suggests that these feelings, which come through intimate experiences of the space, are sometimes intended, engineered and foreseen by airport authorities. This production of affect demonstrates how the airport space is produced, arranged and managed. For instance, architects of the 1930s, 1940s and 1950s, heavily influenced by the modernist pioneer Le Corbusier, wanted to create airports that would have the power to emphasise the pleasures, sensations and wonders of air travel so that passengers would find it exciting. There are several studies that have explored the notion of airport experience for air travellers—for example, airport service, quality and passenger satisfaction have been studied using service and management theory (Correia and Wirasinghe 2007; Fodness and Murray 2007). Sociologically, the concept of sense of place has been applied to the airport context to understand the meanings and cultural attachments one has to a place (Losekoot and Wright 2011). Passengers' stress levels and frustration have been examined using a psychological concept called airport anxiety (McIntosh et al. 1998). Then there is the retail shopping experience of passengers and the effects the airport environment has on their shopping behaviour (Rowley and Slack 1999; Adey 2008; Clifford 2011). All of these demonstrate the many facets that make up the airport as a space. However, the potential for flight and its affective awe contrast with the ways movement through the space of the border is heavily controlled.

Surveillance: Big Brother Is Watching

Perhaps there is a covert sense of the airport being a place of uncertainty, even danger, a vulnerable space that needs to be protected 24 hours a day. Apart from the dangers of contamination and outbreak of disease, there is a constant fear of terror attacks, a phenomenon that has increased since 9/11. The general perception is that bodies, particularly non-white bodies, are often the sources of these dangers, and the general consensus is these bodies need to be surveilled, controlled, detained, managed and/or expelled. Airport officials, such as security officers, passport agents and airline personnel who represent the authority of the airport and are manifestations of the institution, exist to keep order in the space and to control the procedures and processes of the airport flow. There is no question about their authority. In fact, the way the space is organised works to enforce this authority. Travellers and passengers are restricted to certain areas of the terminals and cannot go beyond security boundaries until screened and checked.

Authority in the airport is distributed in a top-down fashion, from the people managing the space in the background to the officials who are on the ground physically interacting with passengers and customers. The authority of the space is thus distributed. Perhaps this diffused distribution is what makes it harder to pinpoint the institutionalised racism in the airport, and it masks the ways in which it operates through mechanisms similar to surveillance or targeted security screening. This is tied in to how the airport may be conceived of as a post-racial space in that race becomes lost in the discourse of security and protection, even though this means that while ensuring security, certain people of particular nationalities and races are targeted. In that way the airport can profess to be colour-blind while explicitly operating as a racially conscious institution.

Since post-racialism employs the denial and non-recognition of race and skin colour that leads to the invisibility of particular bodies, the impact of this denial is that it perpetuates racism while denying its existence. In many ways, it can be argued that the airport is a colour-blind space. Institutionally, the airport arranges and ranks people and bodies into national boxes that identify who is a citizen and who is not. Since

nationality is the official identification marker of people moving through the airport, there is an impression that how they look has no bearing on their mobility through the space. And consequently, there is a blindness to the particularity of bodies and their experiences within the airport space.

However, many (random) security checks, for example, reveal that there is actually a pattern—the same bodies get stopped time and time again, bodies on which threats to security are mapped (Ahmed 2007; Baker 2002; Fiske 1998; Hage 2014). Since the 9/11 attacks in the United States which saw the hijacking of aeroplanes by individuals who were identified as "Arabs," there has been increased surveillance at airports globally among national groups which include Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, Jordan, Libya and those who have historically been lower priority for permission to enter through specifically Western borders (Lyon 2008, p. 42). Ironically, the post-9/11 world, which is argued to be postracial, is also seen as unsafe, fearful and vulnerable, and thus calls for an urgent need to protect borders from illegitimate bodies. Theoretically, the events of 9/11 provided many Western countries a justification for racial profiling, targeting specific racial groups for strict identity management at borders. This means every citizen from a particular region, nationality and race is a suspect. This discrimination happens before any offence is committed.

Tied into this is the way surveillance works, particularly how it involves watching and keeping track of bodies as they flow through the airport space. The events of 9/11 prompted new and expanded ways of surveilling bodies through airports such as biometrics, which are technologies that measure the body as a way of identifying individuals (Clarkson 2014). The premise is that people's bodies are watched for almost the entire time they spend in the airport. This is a process that begins way before the subject presents himself or herself at a border. The biometric proxies of these subjects are mobilised as "proxies for criminalisation" (see Pugliese 2005). When deployed, this type of logic creates a system where racialised stereotypes are projected onto bodies that are of a particular appearance, and these bodies are stopped or their movements hindered through the space. This is in part how difference becomes homogenised—every Middle Eastern man or woman, for instance,

becomes interchangeable. According to Pugliese, "the face of terror is already homogenised and identical to itself despite its irreducible difference and absolute discontinuities" (2005, p. 30). Often security threats are identified through the unease that some bodies exhibit, and therefore airport security members are trained to watch the body language and movement of passengers as they approach any checkpoint or even in a different area of the airport altogether. What is interesting and often overlooked is that the very presence of security and checkpoints trigger feelings of unease for racialised bodies. I began this chapter with a narration of my own experience of being in the airport. Standing in the queue to be processed often brings conflicting emotions for me, which my racialised identity generates. I am fearful of being randomly stopped or asked questions that I may not be able to answer. I worry about how innocent or believable I look and sound. Thus, there are already feelings of unease even before I approach the security check counter.

The airport functions as many systems within one central system, with rules and regulations in place that are aimed at protecting and safeguarding passengers while providing a service. As a fixed environment, the airport produces flows—flows of passengers, goods—through the constant taking off and landing of aeroplanes. Despite the differences evident on people's bodies and passports, there is an image about the airport that suggests a singularity of purpose and mission and consequently, expectation of experience. There is the general perception that airport authorities, much like the judicial courts, ensure that all bodies are subjected to the same processes in the airport. This is where we see racism as part and parcel of airports' operational discourse. Racial discrimination becomes interpolated within the discourses and practices of surveillance, security screening as well as body management.

It is important to remember that bodies are very much passwords at border controls just as much as passports. The first thing that airport authorities at check points notice is the body, which speaks for itself, even before documents are presented (Ahmed 2007). The rights that each body is assigned have, as Lyon argues, "deeply consequential aspects" (2008, p. 43).

While airports may generally subscribe to the ideals of the post-racial in the name of security (i.e. random security checks that are explained as

being random and not racially motivated), what takes place on the ground is far from the idealised intent. Bodies are sifted through different categorisations based on nationality, race and class. Preferred passengers are privileged at security checks and screenings. Post-racialism produces an invisibility that is material and embodied. Border authorities' ability to regulate the bodies of people and their movement also includes the power to determine that people are who they say they are regardless of whether the officials hear the people's stories or not. Sadly, this invisibility is tied to a separation that is an aspect of airport flows (Kellerman 2008, p. 174). Either nationality or flight classes might separate passengers at different stations: for example, at check-in, passport control, airline lounges, boarding and security. This is visible in how certain passengers can be singled out and stopped at certain points, while others are allowed to go on.

The curious aspect of the institutionalised space of the airport is that while it creates rigid and structured processes of interactions, it, unlike many other everyday spaces, does afford the opportunity for one to talk back—or, at the very least, ask questions. As a result, the institutionalised structure of the airport may, on the one hand, be less threatening. Subtle racial encounters in other spaces such as a supermarket, for instance (see Chap. 6), are more difficult to challenge as there are many uncontrolled variables that may be at play, and the loose structure of the space makes it difficult to talk back or challenge subtle manifestations of racism. To illustrate this point, I want to refer to an incident that happened as I travelled from Sydney to Melbourne:

> I was a victim of yet another random security check. This time it was at Sydney International Airport. As I packed up my belongings after going through the security check point, the officer who had been standing at the end of the conveyor belt informed me that I had been randomly selected for a security check. This surprised me because I had been in the queue and aware of the officer for almost 15 minutes and as far as I could tell he was simply standing there and not selecting random passengers for security screens. So why did he pick me? I had had a long and tedious conference and I was exhausted, so unfortunately or fortunately I told him exactly what I thought about the random security check system. I let him know that I thought he had selected me because I was black. I threatened to write

about him in my research, then went on to demand that he explain how this random selection worked. He seemed perturbed and attempted to explain but all he kept saying was that it was "random." So I told him that I would wait there until he had picked someone else for a "random" check. He smiled. I was angry and so I waited. The next passenger through the security screening and who was also stopped was a white male. I turned around and walked away feeling somewhat relieved and justified.

An opportunity presented itself for me to question the process of random security checks. In this instance, I did not supress my anger but instead used it as a prompt to query an airport procedure. This is not to say the airport as an institution does not threaten me; the officer could have taken me to task for being "insolent," but my determination in this particular case came from the fact that for the 15 minutes I was standing in the security line I had not witnessed any passenger randomly stopped for a security check. And because of what appeared to me like subtle racism hiding in procedural processes that are labelled "random," I felt compelled to take the officer to task.

The airport then in some ways allows for this talking back to occur because of the structured nature of the interactions that the space produces. It is explicit in how certain bodies are processed through the space and, therefore, gives us the opportunity to witness how race comes to play in different situations in different parts of the airport. There is little doubt in my mind that one of the reasons I am picked for the random security check is my visibly dark skin. And it is not clear whether the white man who comes after me is stopped simply because I insist on waiting to make sure the security checks are indeed random and not targeting passengers whose bodies do not exhibit the normalised Australian or European physical characteristics. The structure of my interaction with the officer and how that comes to bear on me compels me to, and in a sense allows me to ask explicit questions. This ability to engage and ask questions in situations such as this is what the concept of post-racialism undermines.

However, even with this allowance to talk back to the system, there is a level at which it becomes inconsequential because of the constant movement of bodies through and within the space. In order to stop and

question each and every one of these demonstrations of racial inequity, one has to have the time as well as the gumption. There are also much larger structural and social processes at play, and in an institutionalised space like the airport, there is always fear of being detained, missing flights or denied passage through the many borders spread out in the space.

What this experience at Sydney Airport and the many random security checks I'm constantly subjected to at different airports—whether it's Malaysia or New Zealand—reminds me of are the subtle means of inclusion and exclusion that continue to formally and informally operate through the designated somatic norm and processes of surveillance. Evidently, though I have a valid visa that legally allows me to enter Australia, I feel self-conscious and fearful of not being allowed in, every time I leave. Despite my legal right to occupy the space, I feel like a trespasser with no real guarantee that my legal rights will be considered should any situation arise. My self-consciousness arises from the acute awareness that I am being watched, and through this looking, my blackness, first and foremost, is what is visible. The fact that I have been a law-abiding citizen in three different countries and that I am highly educated is not visible to the watching eye.

In this regard, the airport is a site of diligent surveillance. The way that this surveillance operates is quite intriguing in that it identifies the abnormal by what it looks like rather than by what it does. This means abnormalisation or criminalisation is achieved through visible social categorisation and geocorpograhies rather than social behaviour. At airports there are certain norms that enable institutions and agencies such as drug enforcement or customs personnel to stop and search those who are seen to be outside or within these norms. These norms include wearing gold chains, wearing a black jumpsuit or being a member of ethnic groups that are associated with the drug trade or illegal activity (Fiske 1998, p. 83). It is important to note that these norms are all dependent on the physical appearance of the subjects.

Because surveillance has always been racialised in that the observing eye is white, and its object is coloured, the white knowledge of the apparatuses of immigration and custom control and airport policing is imprinted with notions of objectivity, equality and justice that assign

race-free causes to the racially unbalanced effects of those apparatuses. The racialised other, on the other hand, is aware that the operations of these apparatuses are informed by white racism despite its absence from their public faces (Fiske 1998, p. 70). And this is what Fiske calls a "non-racist racism." This is the type of racism that is encoded into what on the surface appears to be race-neutral discourses and practices. This idea of a non-racist racism is closely linked to the colour-blind idea which works mostly to conceal the racist nature and tendencies of society. Therefore, Fiske argues that surveillance is a perfect technology for non-racist racism because the ubiquity and perceived and accepted impartiality of its technology, in addition to the prevalent assumption that all citizens benefit from the increased public safety and order it promotes, hides the racial difference in its operations and effects (1998, p. 71). It is this claim and wide support for the idea that surveillance operates for a generalised public good that enables it to effectively hide those operations that are racist, exclusionary and oppressive (Puwar 2004, p. 61; Fiske 1998, p. 71).

In the end, the airport, through its highly organised surveillance and monitoring, is experienced as a space where authority is explicitly manifested, expressed and enacted through its very environment, its operations and the top-down interactions that happen between airport representatives and travellers (Kellerman 2008, p. 162). There is a sense that the space can use both positive and punitive powers on passengers, and perhaps even on workers. In this way, the airport is a contact zone that presses against passengers and passengers against it in an authority-generated, often unequal flow of relations. The contact between the airport and passengers reveals the nature of the space as Big Brother, always watching for bodies that do not fit a particular mould. It is important to stress that social spaces are not blank spaces on which anybody can write. They are not open for anybody to occupy. In theory, while anyone can enter a particular space, it is certain types of bodies that are silently designated as legitimate owners or occupiers of that space. In accordance with how the spaces and bodies are imagined, some bodies are regarded as having the right to belong while others are seen as trespassers. These legitimate bodies, known as the somatic norm, belong to white people (Puwar 2004, p. 3).

Borders

Airports have also been studied as symbols of mobility (Adey 2004a). They are indeed a fitting representation of a world in the process of globalisation. And when you add post-raciality to the equation, it becomes interesting to see how, in such a world, mobility is managed and experienced (Burrell 2008, p. 354). Airports have become places where millions of people flow in, out and within countries each year. John Torpey has proposed that nations have the right and authority over the legitimate mobility of their citizens, or as he calls it "legitimate means of movement" (2000, p. 1). Therefore, the need for states to ensure that every movement into their territory is legitimate has evolved into a complex process of surveillance and control. The border zones through which people must pass have thus become the focus of intensified surveillance, checks and control (Adey 2004b). In a mobile world, borders as barriers to movement and mobility can be experienced as a time-consuming nuisance. In a perceived insecure, vulnerable and fearful world, borders become a necessary safeguard against illegal and threatening entrants. Mobility, in this latter instance, is seen as a risk to the safety and ordered territories of spaces.

I am particularly interested in the idea of the border as a spatial and corporeal boundary. David Newman (2006) argues for an understanding of borders as a process, a bordering process to be exact, as opposed to "the border" itself. The understanding of the border as a process moves away from the traditional conceptualisations of borders as physical and highly visible lines of separation between political, social and economic spaces to encompassing how they affect our lives on a daily basis, and most significantly at the very micro, interpersonal level (Newman 2006, p. 144). In essence, borders create and reflect difference, a demarcation between countries, geographical spaces, social spaces but also between people, us and them, insiders and outsiders. What is produced henceforth is a criterion of inclusion and exclusion: who belongs and who does not. Thinking about the bordering process allows us to (re)imagine and reflect on this criterion and how it (re)creates difference in the affective and corporeal space of the airport.

Orvar Lofgren (2004) identifies national borders as personal boundaries, broadly implicating how the personal and, by extension, the corporeal cannot be separated from the idea of the border. Narratives about experiences at borders reveal the borders that surround us on a daily basis and how our movement is restricted at those borders because we do not belong on the other side. In the world of border controls, bodies become passwords. David Lyon (2008) makes this point in light of the shift to identity management as a form of security control in public spaces, particularly at airports. Individuals' personal data and information come under scrupulous scrutiny at borders even as their physical bodies are checked, verified and identified. The picture that emerges from surveillance studies is one of airports as vulnerable and dangerous spaces that need to be surveilled for and secured from strange, illegal bodies.

Bodies and Mobility

It is important to locate the body in the airport precisely because it is through the body as an entity coming into contact with the space (the border) that we can explore and flesh out the embodied dimension of everyday living and knowing. The goal is to see the intimate link between the space and the body, and therein the intimate link between the global and the everyday, as well as that link between race, space and the body. The airport in and by itself embodies a sense of the global. It is the entryway to a new country and in many respects represents the country in which it is situated. But the coming and going of aeroplanes, peoples and goods evinces a space that is linked to many different other spaces and peoples outside the bounds of the country. Mountz and Hyndman argue that to express the global through the intimate and the intimate through the global, the sites of border, home and body need to be explored (2006, p. 447). They liken the interconnectedness of the corporeal with these sites to a kaleidoscope, with border, home and body each blurring the global and the intimate into the "fold of quotidian life" (p. 447). Hence, we come to see how bodies are geopolitically positioned in the global through the intimate inter-corporeal encounters that constitute everyday lived space.

Mapping these intimate experiences onto space highlights the ways in which the meanings and uses of space have more to do with determining and assigning who does and who does not have the power to define, claim and control space (Neely and Samura 2011, p. 1939). This is where the link between race, space and body becomes apparent. Here I want to weave in the concept of geocorpography precisely because bodies do not exist as abstract entities in a vacuum but rather are always already socio-culturally positioned and graphically inscribed (Pugliese 2007b, p. 125). The emergence and function of corporeality within any given space are thus determined by the complex interplay of historical, political and sociocultural factors (Pugliese 2007a). For non-white bodies, for instance, public spaces like the airport become spaces of anxiety and danger where they are subjected to repeated security checks and harassment and the possibility of both symbolic and physical violence. These power relations are played out through racial interactions in spaces. This is why the relationship between space and race is defined by inequality and difference (Neely and Samura 2011; Rollock et al. 2011; Shields 2006). Edward Said's (1978) work on "orientalism," particularly his concept of "imagined geographies," traces out the spatial dimensions of imperialism. He asserts that the meanings of race and space are constantly created and recreated in relation to an "other." This understanding makes more apparent the symbolic and material ways in which race becomes embedded into the spatiality of everyday social life. One of the key questions to keep in mind while examining my experiences at the airport is, thus, what social relations and identities are being produced and reproduced through the airport as a geocorpography of social and physical space?

The Somatic Norm Versus All Other Bodies

When the customs officer asks me whether I am with the black man in front of me in the queue, my first reaction is surprise. I had never seen the man before in my life. He exists to me only in the moment I realise he is the person ahead of me. There is nothing in my behaviour or demeanour that indicate that I know the man or am even acquainted with him. My natural inclination then is to question why the customs officer assumes

that the "strange" black man and I are together. There is a tension between the way the officer reads us and defines us as a couple and the way we read ourselves as distinct individuals. It is clear that the officer's reading of the situation is not based on any concrete, material evidence of couple-ship. This is in stark contrast to various traveller couples in the same queue that are standing very close to one another, talking to each other and helping each other with their luggage. In our case, as I note in my opening narration, there is enough distance between us to alert anyone that we are simply two people standing in a queue. Whether he intended to or not, the officer's definition of us as a couple brings race into his surveillant perception: that we both look "the same" and so by implication we are or should be together. The officer draws from a racialised "regime of visuality" that activates the stereotypical pairing, and thereby resignifies my individual identity into a collective one (Pugliese 2006).

The officer's attempt to locate our bodies within the space involves a process that sees him linking separate bodies together and reading them as a unit—a representative whole. Pugliese in his seminal work on biometrics notes the historical progression of a racialised visuality in surveillance in the inability of British colonial officers to read ethnic difference in places like India (2005, p. 11). British officials complained of the "problem of racial homogeneity" characterised by similar physical features such as hair, eyes and skin complexion. I refer to this geocorpography not only because it highlights the historical and sociocultural context of the airport official's surveilling gaze but because it also demonstrates the specificity of the manifestations of my racialised experience. Locating me as the black other allows the officer to make the assumption that I am connected to a random black man. In assuming this connection, the officer taps into general and historical beliefs about black people being an undifferentiated mass, a people whose unique individuality and positions become lost as they are decontextualised and instead viewed as interchangeable—one black person is the same as another black person (Collins 2000; hooks 1981).

While it is not clear whether the security officer finds the possibility of the black man and I "being a couple" threatening or reassuring, his assumption focuses my attention on his white gaze. This type of superficial collating of bodies not only perpetuates racial stereotypes—that is, a

black woman should be with a black man—but it also speaks to larger historical and political conditionings of reading the racialised body. A benign reading of the officer's gaze is that his job simply requires him to group similar people together as a form of racialised risk profiling in a disorganised space. However, it is important to recognise this gaze is not merely an innocuous reflex of conditional training. It is, in fact, political. The deployment of surveillance technologies is highly racialised, and, as Pugliese attests, it is another "instantiation of unacknowledged whiteness" (2005, p. 2). Biometric systems, which are calibrated to whiteness and identify and verify subjects based on phenotypical norms, inscribe black bodies as problems for computation. Black bodies are more likely to fall outside the operating parameter of a biometric system because the technology precludes the biometric capture of the features of non-white subjects (Pugliese 2005, p. 5). This greatly influences how some bodies are rendered more visible or invisible. I want to emphasise here the contradiction between the white bodies in the queue and my own body as well as the black man's. The white bodies are not questioned; their identities speak for themselves. Whiteness as an ethnic particularity has always been unmarked and unseen for those in power. Therefore, the white body acts as the universal "somatic norm." Nirmal Puwar defines the somatic norm as "the corporeal imagination of power as naturalised in the body of white, male/middle class bodies" (2001, p. 652). Bodies that are the somatic norm have an undisputed right to occupy a space (Puwar 2004, p. 8). They are the geocorpograhies of a sustained colonial power evident in the practices of everyday life.

The juxtaposing of white bodies and black bodies in a historically white space, such as the airport, demonstrates how particular bodies are rendered natural to the space. According to Sara Ahmed, "white bodies are comfortable as they inhabit spaces that extend their shape" (2007, p. 158). These spaces in which white bodies are comfortable are the ones whose surfaces have already been impressed by white bodies through the familial repetition of inhabiting them. The juxtaposed encounters between white bodies and black bodies in seemingly ordinary spaces highlight their geocorpographic dimensions, that is, the constructed historical and imaginary boundaries assigned to particular bodies. Therefore, despite the legal right for all bodies with the correct documentation to

enter the airport space, there exists a covert and subtle process of inclusion and exclusion that continues to casually operate through the differentiation of the somatic norm from all *other* bodies. Having the right passport then does not make a difference if you have the wrong body. Some bodies, more than others, are recognised as strangers and as bodies out of place.

This perceptual relegation of bodies to their "appropriate" spaces greatly impacts on the everyday location of racialised bodies, as is evidenced by the officer's reaction to my proximity to another black body. The officer's gaze draws attention to my invisibility as well as my visibility. I am invisible inasmuch as the officer fails to read the social cues that indicate that I am a woman travelling on my own. This is indeed troubling because his role as a security officer ostensibly demands acute and accurate perception. At the same time, my visibility is highlighted in the way I am only allowed to exist in that particular space at that particular moment as an identity that he perceives and judges appropriate for a black woman—attached to another black person. I feel that I am not being seen or acknowledged as an individual in my own right. Research has shown that black people overwhelmingly report white people's inability to recognise and distinguish black faces unless impressed upon them in a "relationship" (Feagin and Sikes 1994). In these encounters, many black people describe feeling invisible—that their presence or contribution is judged to be less valuable (Sue et al. 2008, p. 334). The officer lumping me together with the unknown fellow traveller further differentiates our bodies from the other bodies in the queue, which happen to be predominantly white-skinned.

The Feeling Body

Standing in the airport queue, there is an acute awareness of my body: of my black skin and my differently textured hair which is often hidden in braids. I am uncertain about how I will be perceived and processed. As a result, I am invaded and overwhelmed by a sense of anxiety and powerlessness at the lack of control over how I will be seen, and therefore how I will be evaluated as a secure or risky body. I become alert and edgy, keeping my attention focused on everything that is happening around me. I notice the

way the airport officials interact with travellers of different races and nationalities. I notice the looks given, the nature of the questions asked and then I brace myself for the worst. There is an internal dialogue constantly occurring about whether I have the right to pass through the border and whether I have committed any crimes I wasn't aware of that may deny me passage. And suddenly I'm feeling unsure about my legality and guilty about things I did not do. The awareness that there are forces beyond my control that have the power to determine my identity within the space as well as my legality manifests itself in feelings of doubt and uneasiness within my body – heart thumping, shaking, and holding of my breath.

The corporeal and affective characteristics of my experience in the airport are emblematic and a critical part of how I experience the world as a black woman. The inner dialogue and the manifestations of anxiety and fear in the physiological forms of increased heart rate, shaking and fast breathing are a constant in many of the racial experiences I have had and continue to have. This demonstrates not only the corporeal nature of racism and spaces but also the importance of understanding the body as the centre of experience. However, these internalised responses often go unacknowledged or critically unexamined in the moment of impact or in theories about race. The reactions become something one has to hide—particularly if they have to do with strong emotions like anger. Studies reveal that there is a general perception from white people that the emotions of black people, especially anger, are not appropriate and should therefore be repressed (Feagin and Sikes 1994; Wingfield 2010, p. 259). This negative affective perception is responsible for the stereotypes of black people as "angry." There is a certain danger ascribed to "black anger" that ironically makes it unsafe for black people to openly display their anger.

As a black woman I am conscious of this representation, and to avoid perpetuating the stereotype, I have often suppressed my anger at the differential treatment I receive in different spaces. I am not the only one. Many black women avoid publicly expressing emotions of bitterness or anger for fear of being labelled with the Sapphire identity—a stereotypical identity that was historically projected onto any black woman who overtly expressed anger, rage or bitterness about her life situation (hooks

1981, p. 86). The point I want to emphasise here is the way in which racial incidents set me at war with myself. This sets up a key problem of the post-racial ethos: racism becomes a struggle with oneself because, as an idea, post-racialism essentially and practically hides the real, complex and contextual experience of race in ordinary spaces.

The Body as a Border

Borders produce and reproduce difference because they construct people as in or out, legal or illegal, here or there and white or racialised other. The border is perhaps the most tangible embodiment of geocorpography—the geography of the space and the corporeality of the bodies within the space intermingle in ways we can witness. In Chap. 2, I talked about contact zones as spaces in which people geographically and historically separated come into contact with each other, establishing relations which really involve conditions of coercion, racial inequality and conflict. Borders are contact zones where all these conditions are present, but along with them are conditions of safety, security and comfort. Borders embody contradictions, much like the body itself, and particularly the body of the racialised other.

My black body is a haunting reminder of how borders can be/are reproduced and carved onto the body even in daily life. The border essentially produces identities that are linked to types of bodies. And in many instances, these bodies have to be classified as either/or. As I stand in the queue at Melbourne's Tullamarine Airport, I can only be one thing—foreign and other, as visibly represented by my body. This is why Mountz and Hyndman (2006) argue that understandings of border and body are integrated into one and the other. I take it further to argue that the body is also a border. Historically, geographical locations were not the only strategic political locations during the slave trade or for European empire-building during colonialism. The body, particularly of the black female, also became the landscape of conquest and colonisation (Milner-Thornton 2007).

The collision between the border and bodies is not the only type of encounter happening in the airport. The constant movement in the space

means that bodies meet and clash with other bodies all the time. These are the types of encounters I am calling "body on body" encounters, and they illustrate how the body acts as a border through abjection. Julia Kristeva in *Power of Horror* (1982) defines the "abject" as the human reaction to a breakdown in meaning caused by the loss of distinction between the subject and the object or between the self and the other. I am using abjection here to emphasise the movement across bodily borders related to different kinds of people coming into contact with each other. Abjection as a concept serves to reinforce or maintain the boundary between the self and the other (Kristeva 1982; Philips 2014).

The function of the national border is to protect against illegal entry or contamination. The same concept applies to bodily borders. With the proximity of bodies in the airport, there is a fear of contamination and disease. The body on body encounter is another form of encounter that happens in the airport from which we can draw narratives about the location of the racial body in space. My encounter with the woman in the restroom mentioned in the opening of this chapter is an example. It acts as a mirror reflecting the global onto the intimate. The encounter felt like an extension of the larger airport processes happening at the passport control point, the customs check counter and the security check point—the checking and rechecking, identification and classification of bodies and the inter-corporeal anxiety that is embedded in these practices and through which they are sustained. There is a sense in which these processes become transferred onto the space such that bodies become able to police other bodies as they move through the space. The woman's first reaction to our near collision is surprise, then anger and, finally, disgust. My own reaction to my encounter with the woman is varied. Like her, I am surprised when she suddenly appears behind the door as I attempt to push it open. I do not expect that, and thus, her sudden presence catches me off guard. I offer an apology as I step aside to allow her to walk through first. I make eye contact, seeking her acknowledgement of my apology. Instead, I see confusion, disapproval and revulsion on her face. This initially throws me, and I have my own visceral response to her reaction. My first thought is about my skin, and I become acutely aware of the blackness of it. I wonder if she is associating it with dirt, bad smells and uncleanness epitomised by the very space

within which we stand. As my heart beats faster at the thoughts, I am flooded with embarrassment.

Bodily revulsion is the sign of abjection, the abject being that which needs to be expelled and excluded (Kristeva 1982; Stacey 1997, p. 82). According to Newman (2006), animosity and dislike for the other takes on a concrete form through the act of meeting. So when the woman and I collide in the restroom, what in the past may have been only the woman's awareness of the other based on invisibility and a lack of knowledge now takes on a material and definite form. I become the materialised abjection. When it comes to bodies, abjection or the loathing of other bodies is political in the way it plays a crucial role in the ritual exclusion of people from what is considered in need of protection or preservation (Stacey 1997, p. 75). Here I also want to highlight how this interaction between myself and the woman appears to be simply an expression of daily interactions people have in everyday spaces away from the watchful eye of, in this case, the airport institution. When I encounter the woman in the restroom, it is within a space (of course, within the larger space of the institutionalised airport) that is devoid of the structured regulation present at sites like customs check or passport control. Yet the emotions and embodied experience the private encounter elicits for me are similar to when I am queuing up, holding my breath and waiting to be declared "legal" and "safe" to cross through the different thresholds and pass through the border. The corporeal experiences of the airport reveal how the airport acts as a difference-making machine, whereby it sorts out identities, classifying, distinguishing and separating them from each other.

Because rituals of cleanliness and purification are symbolic of ordering and organising the environment, dirt, and by extension "dirty" bodies, are a sign of disorder (Douglas 1966, p. 2). The airport is particularly interesting in this regard as it requires people to be sanitised. People coming from particular countries are asked questions about certain diseases, their health during their stay in foreign countries and whether they have been immunised or sanitised. Any threat is punished through detention or denial of the right to cross the border. There is fear of and concern regarding introducing pandemics, diseases and bodily pollution which may create disorder. The airport is thus bound up in the politics

of regulating and monitoring not only the nation's borders but the borders of bodies as well. In relation to these anxieties of contamination, pandemics and pollution, bodies have been understood as organised within and through a system of boundaries, which are fundamental to beliefs about contamination and sanitisation (Stacey 1997, p. 75).

Within this system then, separating, eliminating, sanitising and demarcating bodies in the airport are not viewed as negative but rather as a required way to order the space and protect it against possible contamination. The instituting of these boundaries can in fact be closely linked to the cultural practices of establishing some identities as "other" which are in need of regulation through expulsion or denial of entry. In this instance, the processes at the foundation of bodily subjectivity are not just metaphors for the social but are absolutely crucial to forms of social regulation and control. For example, Sander Gilman (1985) shows how colonial disgust with black bodies constructed the black body as opposed to the norms of white culture, consequently the black body as the other. Therefore, the brunt of social othering that the woman in the restroom extends to me with her bodily reaction is derived from the cultural designation of my body as abject.

The threat posed by the bodies of others to bodily and social norms is registered on the skin, or as Ahmed eloquently puts it, "the skin comes to be felt as a border through the violence of the impression of one surface upon another" (2004, p. 54). Thus, I argue that the white woman in the restroom experiences this violence when my black body unexpectedly impresses upon the surface of her own white skin, causing her to react to the collective consciousness and representation of blackness as opposed to whiteness. Her reaction collects into one final emotion, which displays before she turns away from me—disgust. Disgust, like many other emotions, involves the emergence of bodies when we encounter others in intimate and public spaces (Ahmed 2004, p. 55). As with hatred, disgust is a negative bodily and affective connection to another that one wishes to be removed from, a connection that can be argued is sustained through the removal or expulsion of the other from bodily and social proximity. The woman's disgust and her reaction of quickly moving away from me indicate feelings that her physical or personal space has been invaded. She moves hastily aside, as though my presence is engulfing her, illustrating

that even one single non-white body can be seen to be taking up more physical space than it actually occupies. Intertwined with this imagined idea of racial amplification is the phenomenon of visibility, as bodies considered out of place, or unexpected bodies, become highly conspicuous. Sometimes this results in violence and fatality, as in the case of the police shooting of Jean Charles de Menezes, who was racially profiled—his Brazilian ethnicity resignified to South Asian—and in the process criminalised, condemned and killed (Pugliese 2006); or in the case of Liep Johnson Gony, a young Sudanese teen bashed with metal poles by two white men in Melbourne. Gony later died from his injuries when his family decided to remove him from life support. During the trial of the two Caucasian men, the judge ruled that Gony's death was not racially motivated despite evidence that indicated otherwise (Fogarty 2009). Even in death, non-white bodies are dislodged from context, a systemic logic that justifies the punishment, violence and death inflicted on such bodies. This racial visibility comes from non-white bodies not being the somatic norm. The amplification happens precisely because the geocorpographies of non-white bodies are known and perceived in ways that are seen to threaten the artificial claims to space for the dominant, superior and normalised white identity. There is an evident anxiety on the part of governing bodies, a fear, a terror almost, of numbers, a fear of being swamped and taken over. And this necessitates management and control on behalf of those bodies that are ascribed racial normality and safety. In other words, this amplification reveals the geocorpographic underpinning of bodies in airports.

Conclusion

As an institution, the airport can be viewed as what Salter (2008) calls a "metastable," meaning an institution which is stable only in its instability. This state is primarily a result of the ambiguity embodied by the space demonstrated in mobility. As a space, the airport is all about mobility. However, a closer look reveals that what is happening at the airport is actually not as orderly or as clear-cut as it appears to be. And this is illustrated in the fact that the airport, while embodying mobility and

movement, is a place where people do a lot of waiting as well as a place where people are stopped. People are often in a constant state of movement and stillness (waiting), all at the same time. The airport gives us a glimpse into the political and economic nature of mobility, warranting governments globally to increasingly look into ways of controlling and regulating people's movements. The airport then is a microcosm of intense surveillance, policing and control. At the same time, and speaking of its ambiguity, many airports have also instituted express lanes and spaces for the elite, transnational class as well as invisible corridors for the "deportation class" (Salter 2008). Thus airports are spaces where people get to be organised into classifications and hierarchies and, in turn, practise these ways of existence because experiences of how to navigate the structures of modern hierarchical order become embodied and mapped onto bodies and spaces.

The airport as a space can therefore be seen as a reflection of larger geocorpographic concerns—a corporeal map of how bodies are geopolitically positioned in space and a model for organising cities into heavily surveilled, heavily controlled and managed spaces (Sorkin 2003, pp. 261–62). This is especially so in our post-9/11 environment in which there is almost a blind faith in new technologies (particularly identity securitisation and management technologies which are often first tested at airports) to solve social and political problems. This is a post-racial fallacy that ignores the role bodies and space play in sustaining social and political problems. The heavily surveilled airport is a creation of a corporeal-racial-technology nexus. The geocorpography of the modern international airport must be understood as ultimately a contact zone through which certain bodies are rendered invisible as subjects but visible as objects. The airport highlights the power imbalance between bodies, even as it further comments on levels of fear and anxiety in an increasingly globalised world—the fear and anxiety exhibited at the airport is particularly over the borders of bodies, bodies on to which illegality, disease and foreignness are mapped. And this is indicative of larger social issues of race and management of the other. As a lived space, the airport is a model of Western society itself. It is within this context that I can answer the question I began in the introduction, and make sense of the affective dimension of my experience as a black woman in the airport.

I am subject to a racialised visual regime of surveillance that not only positions me as a threat in the space but also sets me at war with myself. The geocorpography of my black body is at once both troubling and exhausting, as I navigate the corporeality of everyday life.

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5

Is There Someone Else I Can Talk to? Raced Bodies at Work

August 2010

Today is the University's Open Day. This means the campus is full with would-be students and their parents. This is the second Open Day that I have had to work since starting my job at the Arts Faculty, and I feel nervous. There are so many people and so many questions to field. My colleagues and I take turns. It is while I am on duty that a mother and her daughter approach the desk. I ask if I can help her with anything. She asks to speak to someone who works in the faculty. So I tell her that I work for the faculty and I can happily assist her with anything she needs. In my mind I'm thinking, "Would I be here if I did not have anything to do with the faculty?" She says she wants to talk to someone else. I politely tell her that I am the person responsible for the desk and if she has any questions she can ask me. At this point she looks at me annoyed and raises her voice, "Is there someone else I can talk to?" Upon hearing this, one of my colleagues comes to the desk and asks the woman whether there is a problem. The woman explains that she doesn't want to deal with me and asks for the third time if there is someone else she can talk to. She seems eager to begin to speak to my white colleague about why she is here but my colleague stops her and stresses to her that I work for the faculty and that I am responsible for the desk and therefore she should speak to me. The woman

walks away in a huff with her daughter following behind. I am utterly taken aback by this. A few minutes later, I excuse myself and rush to the restroom, where I break down and sob.

As a space, this workplace is different from the airport. In general, most workplaces are not characterised by structural borders and the constant movement of people and goods. While the airport is indeed a workspace for the employees who work there, I'm considering a particular workspace that demonstrates the complex interplay of bodies, race and space. The larger context and setting for my experience in this instance is the university. Similar to the airport, universities can be spaces where diverse bodies and cultures cross paths and bump against each other. They are both institutions where power and authority is concentrated at the top and then flows down to be distributed throughout the different sections of the institution. As a result, they are both unavoidably bureaucratic in their operations. However, my aim is to focus on a particular experience in this specific workplace of the university to consider how racism is produced in workplaces that consider themselves post-racial or—as is commonly known here in Australia—multicultural.

My workspace for the duration of my employment with the university was a small office with a maximum of six staff members; I was the only black woman. Our entire section of the faculty was tasked with serving students, and sometimes their parents and guardians, through offering them any administrative support they needed. The nature of this work dictated how the office space was arranged—in an open plan, semi-formal fashion to appear inviting and not too corporate or intimidating for students. As a workspace it was convenient, easy and practical. It allowed for easy mobility and access to the students. However, this mobility was restricted. I had a large counter in front of me that acted as a boundary between the students and me. It indicated the limits of our interactions. Everyone who worked in the office had a specific space to work from, complete with desk and computer and enough room to have personal artefacts. The different workstations within the office also signified the process of inquiry that sometimes students had to go through. I was the first port of call, and if I could not assist the student, I would forward them on to the person above me. All the stations were physically

positioned and structured that way, and they all led to the faculty manager's office. In theory, there was a stipulated hierarchy in the overall functioning of the workspace. However, the proximity of our bodies as well as our individual work with each other created relations that, over time, ensured a more relaxed approach to the hierarchy. It did not, nonetheless, take away the racial aspect of my experience working in the office, but it did mean that I, for example, could directly walk into the manager's office if I needed to, bypassing the hierarchy entirely.

Perhaps the most distinguishing factor was not so much the space's physicality but the way it interacted with the culture within it, a product of the different attitudes, perspectives, work ethics, power dynamics and relations that make up any given space. While the culture of interaction between colleagues was often reliably the same, day in and day out, it was the interaction with the students or whoever came to the front desk that was uncertain and produced the greatest source of anxiety and sometimes fear for me. The experience with the mother and her daughter is merely a reflection of one of the more common attitudes I encountered in my job, particularly within the first 12 months but also throughout the four years I worked for the faculty. In the first 12 months, many of the experiences were unexpected and shocking. However, as time went on, I became more familiar and aware of the different ways race was being mobilised.

Much like my experience in the airport, I had a visceral reaction to the encounter with the woman, with feelings of shock, anger, shame and hurt invading my body, feelings I could literally feel. I ran away to the restroom so I could hide this struggle that was happening within me. The doubts around the nature of my experience began to form immediately after coming back from the restroom and noticing the normalcy of the space with everything calm and business as usual. The contrast between what was going on inside me and in the space made me question my own interpretation of the encounter and forced me to conform to the stability of the space. I felt compelled to bring myself under control and proceeded as though nothing had happened while trying to suppress the emotions within.

There is an expectation of bodies such as my own to not appear in institutional spaces such as universities. The appearance necessitates a blinking and looking again, which in itself suggests a question over the

movements of my body encapsulated in questions such as "What are you doing here?" This looking also challenges my capacity to fully function in this space and results in another kind of question, "Can I talk to somebody else?" This is despite my face and body being part of the university's diversity campaign, displayed on posters around the two major campuses. This in itself speaks to the post-racialism in the university that renders me visible as a symbol of diversity but invisible as an employee. The image of me smiling into the camera in the midst of what, compared to me, could be considered "white" bodies suggests an image of the university that is multicultural and happy. Ahmed calls these types of representations "happy diversity" (Ahmed 2008). What makes the image happy is precisely what it conceals from view, the negative experiences I have as a black body within the university.

As I argued in Chap. 4, these types of experiences are disempowering in the way they set me at war with myself rather than with the source of the problem. Turning around and responding to the woman aggressively or complaining about it to my colleagues would have itself confirmed stereotypes about how black people are always looking for racism in situations. Racism then is no longer something I can confront but instead becomes something that I must deal with by running away to the restroom and crying. It becomes about directing everything inwards, and this is essentially what the post-racial world is all about. It makes racism an internal problem, something to be dealt with in secret and not something we can see with our eyes in how race is mobilised through everyday interactions such as the one I have with the woman at the counter.

In this chapter I focus on what it feels like to be invisible at work as a black woman. This focus carries a supposition about the nature of workspaces and that is that they are places of corporeality and embodiment, places where emotions that come as a result of being racialised are manifested differently. There is a tension between visibility and invisibility in the reproduction and mobilisation of race in encounters between bodies in this space. What is fascinating to me is how this tension becomes mapped onto racialised bodies that find themselves representatives of institutional spaces while at the same time being representatives of their race. This tension is also between the different types of authority accorded

to different types of bodies in different positions at work. This dichotomy causes not only stress but also institutional and personal trouble for racialised bodies. In tracing this trouble, we notice the ways in which spaces fail to do what they are designed to do. There is an evident gap between what the intent of a space is and what actually takes place on the ground because people are real and there is an unpredictability that exists when bodies rub against one another. Post-racial ideals that deny the existence of racism also erase the specificity of these racial experiences.

My Work Identity

When I was growing up in one of the farming belts of rural Zambia, work was an important part of our family life. From the time we were as young as eight years of age, each morning my siblings and I were assigned tasks to complete. The girls' work usually comprised sweeping and washing the dishes and laundry while my brothers were responsible for the yard work, anything from gathering leaves off the lawns to watering the garden. On Sundays, we all worked together as a family on any big project that needed to be done around the house. Sometimes it was cutting or trimming the hedges, mowing the lawn, working in the garden and, most commonly, furrowing the fields. There was always work to be done, and despite our childish response of irritation and neglect to many of the tasks most of the time, it became clear early on that work was a significant part of who we were as a family and as individuals. From there grew my esteem for work and more so for a job well done. The fact that my family was from a low-income bracket made work especially paramount to our survival. Mum and Dad had eight-to-five jobs that provided our livelihood, especially for essentials like food, education and medical care. There were no extras—no pocket money or allowances. This level of activity was normal, and I came to understand that money was something I would only have once I secured a job of my own, in the future. As a result of family values, coupled with social status and expectation, the culture of hard work was instilled in me from a young age. I knew that to acquire anything that was worthwhile, I had to work for it, and not only that, but my work had

to be good. This relationship with work that began with it as a prerequisite for success turned into a more versatile and holistic one where work began to be much more than a means to an end. It became something I enjoyed doing as well as an investment in my own personal development. My valuing work and what it produces, in fact, defines me. The question of who I am as a woman and as a human being is intricately tied to what I do—what I create and produce in the world.

This is why, the experience in the workspace is perhaps the more traumatic for me, firstly, because it brings into question my idealised perception about my working self and my role in the world, and secondly, it reminds me that institutions in many ways continue to be places of trouble for women who look like me—undeniably black. This trouble is around their identity as well as their capabilities. There is a sense in which they continually have to prove themselves because of their gender and race (Collins 2000; Puwar 2004).

My encounter with the woman disrupts the image of a seamless, unquestioned and foundational social order of work I had crafted around my identity. It instantly causes a disruption in my understanding of the world and the value it places on work and the bodies that perform that work. This eruption is forceful and unexpected because while I have experienced micro-aggressions in other spaces, this incident exposes my use of hard work and diligence as armour to protect myself from possible discrimination against my black skin. I believed that once people saw my hard work and dedication, they would not associate me with stereotypes such as laziness and unintelligence linked to black people. This coming undone of my perception of race and work adds to the trauma of the experience itself. I find myself in serious trouble as I flee from the incident to find solace in a restroom. I find myself in trouble with my body and my identity. Avery Gordon (2008) notes that there is a sense of trouble that emerges when the social order cracks open and feelings and bodies that are considered out of place are exposed. This is also what Sara Ahmed refers to as "moments of political and personal trouble" (2008). Puwar has done extensive work on this aspect of racial experience. She notes that when bodies arrive who appear out of place in institutional spaces such as a faculty of a historically white university, people experience what she calls a process of "disorientation" where they blink and

look again (2004, p. 43). The proximity of such out-of-place bodies makes familiar places appear strange, and as a result people are bewildered because a whole worldview is shaken.

I argue that the workspace is a space where I negotiate my identity and the racial stigma attached to my identity. This process of negotiation requires navigating strong emotions like shock, anger, shame and frustration and it creates mental and physical turmoil. I want to draw on Ahmed's work on emotion because emotions involve a form of "contact" between self and others or objects (2004, p. 31). Emotions are therefore bound up with how we inhabit the world with others. The contact between self and others is shaped by longer histories of contact that leave marks or impressions on the surface of bodies. And the skin is a place on the body that records past impressions and past encounters with others. These impressions stick to the skin and are relived and brought to the surface in inter-corporeal encounters such as racism. In a racist encounter, the racial other may experience intense emotions such as shame, fear and discomfort and in response may either *move away* from the non-racialised body or *move towards* the body in anger. This moment of contact is thus shaped by the past—past histories of contact that allow the proximity of these bodies to be perceived in a particular way.

Workspaces and the Bodies That Occupy Them

Workspaces have established rules and regulations to control interpersonal interactions. As a result of these interactions, workspaces are also places where identities are formed and developed. It is also the place where these identities and bodies rub against one another. It follows then that workspaces are structured in a way that frames the kinds of relations and interactions that may occur in the space. And in turn, the space works as a backdrop of these interactions. Society, and in this case the labour economy, is structured according to the sets of relationships that make up the economy itself. Regardless of what type of work is undertaken in a space, the general motivation is to create an environment that promotes the most productivity and effectiveness.

In workspaces such as the university, people are given the opportunity to offer their time, energy and skill in exchange for monetary remuneration, recognition for research or teaching output and professional development (Brown 1990; Eveline 2004; Wernick 2006). These spaces are designed exclusively for direct creation and production of "education." In practice, this means that workers, even as they create the space with their presence, have a vested interest in the work they do. This investment is not only driven by economic factors but also by the intellectual and emotional attachment workers may have with their work. As a result, the university will always be arranged in a way intended to achieve these goals, and this will in turn produce certain kinds of interactions and relations (Eveline 2004; Lim 2009).

Historically, these relations were structured spatially and implied positions of domination and subordination (see Arnesen 2001; Cunningham 1965; Grint 1998; Steedman 2008). I am particularly interested in how work implies positions of power, domination and subordination and how these are interpolated with the visibility and invisibility of bodies. Work highlights the nature of these relations that different bodies negotiate in the workplace because of the position they occupy.

In order to clarify the work-body relationship, we do have to consider the sociology of the body, and for this I want to briefly engage with the work of Erving Goffman (1963, 1969, 1974). I am interested in Goffman's conceptualisation of the body because it has helped us understand the location of the body in society. It also begins to address the importance of embodied interactions in shaping society. For Goffman, the body plays a fundamental role in negotiating the relationship between self-identity and social identity. He sees people's management of their bodies as necessary for maintaining social order. Individuals have the ability to control and monitor their bodily performances and, consequently, have a responsibility to manage the social meanings and implications of these performances as well as the social meanings of their individual embodiment such as the stigma of disability, for example (Goffman 1963). Goffman is interested in how the body enables individuals to intervene in the flow of daily life through anticipating, deciphering and repairing any infractions in social interactions (Goffman 1974; see also Shilling 2003; Wolkowitz 2006).

While Goffman focuses on face work, it is implied that his theory can be extended to body work. Unlike Michel Foucault who views social identities as coming into existence through social actors' performed activity, Goffman sees social actors as mediating social identities through embodied "performances." Goffman sees social structures arranged in an interactional manner through the body, with class status symbols "literally embodied and enacted during routine social interactions." While I acknowledge the significance of the work of this pioneer in the field of the sociology of the body, I do want to move towards a more corporeal feminist perspective. I fully situate the body in the specificities of embodied racial encounters, a concern that was not central in Goffman's work. I emphasise corporeality as an aspect of work and fundamental to social identity and subjectivity. This becomes evident when we look at how the lived, raced body is experienced from the inside out (Grosz 1994; Wolkowitz 2006, p. 26).

The corporeality of work must be viewed within the context of space, which is itself made up of the bodies that occupy it. Spaces, in particular public spaces, take shape through the constant and frequent action of bodies. Thus, spaces come to acquire the shape of the bodies that inhabit them habitually. In this way, spaces become extensions of bodies. They acquire the "skin of the bodies that inhabit them" (Ahmed 2007a, p. 157). Spaces become continuously oriented around certain bodies, excluding others. The proximity of some bodies and not others is what shapes these spaces, particularly institutional spaces like universities. In many of these institutional spaces, white bodies gather and merge to create the edges of these spaces. In other words, it is assumed that whiteness is institutionalised as the norm of public spaces, making non-white bodies feel uncomfortable, different, highly visible and exposed whenever they take up these spaces. In her book *Space Invaders* (2004), Nirmal Puwar explores what happens when those who are embodied differently enter or occupy spaces they rarely occupy. She argues that the symbiotic relationship between spaces and bodies locates different bodies in specific spaces as "space invaders" (2004, p. 141). These are the bodies that are considered alien to the space, which, over time, have become associated with specific bodies. Puwar specifically looks at how women and minorities experience and are experienced when they enter fields of work where white male

power is firmly embedded, such as government departments. Puwar's work highlights the boundaries of different bodies in spaces. It maps out the affective and experiential moments of being a space invader.

It is important for us to consider how spaces become oriented around certain types of bodies in the first place. The point is, whiteness and otherness, such as blackness, shape what bodies can do in the world. But what makes whiteness different from, say, blackness is that whiteness is invested with power to cohere, to bring together and to provide meaning for the world (Frankenberg 1993; Garner 2007; Hill 2008; McIntosh 1989; McIntyre 1997; Mirza 1997). Whiteness is important for my discussion here, particularly because the workplace is one area where we can observe the deeply embedded implications of what it means to be white in the world. This is specifically in relation to how whiteness over the centuries has come to represent civilisation, development and progress, all considered important end products of work (Bonnett 2002; Kellington 2002).

To understand whiteness, we have to start with whiteness as an orientation. Orientations are about how we begin and proceed from a particular point. And in this case, the particular point is always the "here," the point that Husserl (1989) describes as the zero point of orientation or the point from which the world unfolds. According to Ahmed (2007a), the point from which the world unfolds, or the starting point for orientation, is about the intimacy of bodies and their dwelling places. And therefore, in that unfolding, bodies are shaped by the objects that they come into contact with. What these objects are is determined by the orientation of the body—where this body moves off from or its starting point as it unfolds. Orientation then is the direction a body takes that puts some things and not others in the body's reach (Ahmed 2007a, p. 152). What this concept of beginning with the "here" does is provide a context for us in understanding how bodies come to be seen as invaders of a space. It means that when those bodies enter a space, they arrive into the "here" that is already coherent and meaningful, but their presence disrupts this cohesion, hence making them appear as bodies out of place and out of space.

Throughout my employment with the faculty, I wrestled with feelings of being out of place—feelings of "I am not supposed to be here"—despite proving myself through hard work and intelligence time and time

again. There was always an uncertainty that came with each new work-day, not knowing whether that would be the day I would be found out. Encounters such as the one with the woman became a materialisation and confirmation of these internalised feelings. The post-racial paradigm would posit that these experiences happen because of my internalised fears and doubt because unless it is overt, it cannot be racism. However, this perspective overlooks a fundamental way that spaces and bodies are organised around race. For example, the reason I carry doubts about my work is not because I am racist against myself but because I, along with society, have been socialised to see race as a determining factor of laziness or inability. Certain bodies materialise the ideal working body, and others do not. And, therefore, because of my race, the moment I step into a workspace the odds are stacked against me and I carry an added burden of having to prove my place and position in that space.

This position of being a body out of place and out of space is indicative of how these bodies are positioned within the space and how they become a part of the space. I want to suggest then that racial experiences in the workplace, whether they include feelings of pain, fear, relief or any type of emotion evoked by the experience, are part and parcel of the material-ity of workspaces. And this is why race matters: it determines the posi-tions that bodies occupy within space and consequently how that space is organised. The ways in which society and discourse work to produce race—in this case whiteness and otherness—are an indication of race as a social construction rather than a biological essence. However, the map-ping of race onto the surface of the body and its biology are paramount in understanding how racial discourse that sets up hierarchies of value is perpetuated. Bodies that look different become canvasses on which race stories are written. Zine Magubane (2001, p. 817) notes that one clear way we can see this perpetuation is through social relations. Social rela-tions provide the background and context for human encounters and are key to understanding the construction of boundaries between whiteness and otherness (Magubane 2001, pp. 819, 821). She concludes that what we see when we look at each other is in fact mediated by social context. This brings into sharp awareness what makes up our social contexts: social interactions and the spaces, which act as the backdrop of these interactions.

By examining spaces we notice how their structure, set-up and operation are congruent with racial discourses that suppose hierarchies of value among races, for example, the belief that black people are the quintessential embodiment and epitome of otherness. This is evident in my encounter with the woman at the counter. I experience my body as out of place as I witness the woman's response to my position within the space. My presence in a space where one would normally expect whiteness disrupts the coherence of that space and it compels the past to rush back into the present, a past that has constructed blacks as servants and lazy with no access to institutional spaces where the real work happens. By refusing to accept my help even though it is my job to help her, the woman mobilises historical understandings about the racial positioning of black people that still show up in the contemporary moment, and in this instance, it is the unexpected shock of having a black woman in a position that is not the stereotypical cleaning and scrubbing but rather utilising a brain and intellect. Thus my presence as a black woman reproduces history while being a product and victim of that history.

After this incident, I noticed a significant change in how I approached my work and the space. I found myself having to steel myself, arm myself every time a student or client approached my desk. I was thankful for the boundary that my large counter created between the students and myself. I became conscious of my appearance and my sound. I had to make a conscious decision to enunciate, to be clear and articulate to avoid any misunderstanding. This was a source of stress for me, particularly when the clients were impatient, abrupt and demanding in their manner. On many days I felt burdened to solve all the problems that arrived at my desk. While it is in my nature to genuinely go above and beyond to help, it was compounded by the expectation I felt to contest the stereotype that black people are lazy. I was carrying the stereotype of a whole people on my shoulders and I had to flatten that stereotype as much as I could, to not perpetuate it. Sometimes this was not conscious but manifested itself in the anxiety I felt whenever a student questioned my position or my knowledge of my work. Students and parents would want to verify the information I gave them twice and sometimes even three times. I was met with "Are you sure?" or "Is there someone else I can talk to?" on many occasions. This made me feel incompetent, but even more painful was the

awareness of how these scenarios made me appear—like the black woman who does not know how to do her job. Regardless of how confident I am and was in doing my job, this feeling of failure would rise up in my body and remind me of my difference in the space. This was despite appraisals from my manager and fellow colleagues and performance reviews that indicated that I was meeting all the departmental targets for my job position.

My stance of trying so hard can be seen as a working to inhabit whiteness as it represents the character of the university, the institution (Ahmed 2007a). Wanting to inhabit whiteness is much more than a desire for whiteness, but rather the subtle pressure to be representative of the very thing that the institution is oriented around and thus even the bodies that are not white that arrive in this space must still inhabit whiteness to be eligible to enter or to stay. Thus, spaces are also oriented in a particular direction around certain bodies. Perhaps a clear example of how I may be seen to inhabit whiteness is the most common experience I had while working at the faculty speaking to many clients—students and parents—on the telephone. Over the phone our conversations would be smooth, clear and often very pleasant. Personal details would be divulged, smiles and laughs exchanged. But whenever the same students and parents arrived at the office asking for me, a look of puzzlement would often sweep across their faces as if trying to match my voice to my body. The surprise is quite evident, poignant even: a meeting of the eyes, a visible jolt and then a pulling away. It is not a look of acknowledgement but rather of question, "How are you here?" Unlike on the phone where the interaction is smooth and unhindered, here I am forced to experience my own body as an obstacle to the interaction as I feel them pulling away.

Workspaces as Places of Emotion

Work involves the expenditure of bodily energy and effort, and not acknowledging this fact assumes that human beings have infinite physical and emotional resources. The non-acknowledgement also assumes that the human body is malleable and can therefore be stretched and stretched exponentially. This tensile character fosters attitudes and work environments

which are arranged around competition and long work hours, leading to what Wolkowitz claims is the "current epidemic in stress, overwork and depression" (2006, p. 2). The materiality of the body and its role in how embodiment is experienced also speak to how important factors such as race contribute to experiencing embodiment in work and employment. The materiality of workplaces and workers' physical and emotional health cannot be divorced from the sociology of work. Consequently, feelings, whether they are pain, fear, relief or any type of emotion evoked by the experience of race in the workplace, are part and parcel of the materiality of workspaces (Hochschild 1983). Again, this is why race matters.

Negotiating or navigating an undermined and devalued racial status requires extensive emotion management because social limitations in any space have an effect on how the self and identity are negotiated. I see workspaces, in particular, as emotional spaces where roles, expectations and power dynamics have to be negotiated. My experience reveals how race complicates such negotiations, as it is an attribute that people use to form opinions about people, mostly based on stereotypes and consequently creating stigmas. These stigmas have emotional ramifications that impact how people work and how they experience the workspace (Feagin and Sikes 1994). Negotiating a racial stigma creates emotion work (Harlow 2003, p. 350). But the traditional racial hierarchy of society, which sees the white man on top and the black woman at the bottom, most often complicates this emotion work. This hierarchy is expected to prevail in most spaces. It provides a framework of meaning to society. But at a local level in the ordinary spaces of the everyday, it frames the rules and regulations that govern interactions and encounters.

In my interaction with the woman at the faculty desk, I experience a pressure not to be, or at least appear not to be, too sensitive about the incident. I feel compelled to downplay my hurt feelings. As much as I want full disclosure and acknowledgement from my work colleagues about the wrongness of what had occurred to me, I do not feel safe enough in the space to express my hurt feelings and so I flee to the restroom. When I come back, everything is normal again, at least around me. It is as though nothing happened, and thus there is an expectation for me to go straight back to work. The non-acknowledgement of the incident by my colleagues makes me feel embarrassed and ashamed

because without the acknowledgement what remains is my own sensitivity to race. I begin to question the validity of my experience and pain. The feelings of shame that move through my body bring enormous pressure to minimise the event and what it means to me.

This is not a new phenomenon. Research indicates that for many black professionals, downplaying or minimising racial isolation, hostility and micro-aggressions is fundamental to their experiencing the workplace as a space of pleasantness and congeniality (Wingfield 2010, p. 258). Wingfield found that there were rules established in professional workspaces to regulate racialised feeling. She found that her African American respondents often had different feeling rules that applied to them than their white colleagues. For instance, when it comes to expressing irritation and anger in the workplace, whites are much more able to work within the proper channels of revealing their emotions to their supervisors, and therefore the organisation, than blacks (Wingfield 2010, p. 259). Many of Wingfield's respondents revealed how organisational channels to which they could show their frustration were simply inaccessible to them. The general rule is that black people's emotions, particularly anger, are never appropriate and therefore should be suppressed and hidden (Wingfield 2010; Feagin 1991). Therefore, there is an expectation to be tough-skinned and insensitive to racial incidents such as stereotyping or negative racial comments. Although this expectation may very well come from institutional structures aimed at reducing racism in the workplace, it does instead make the workplace an uncomfortable environment for black employees. Failure to acknowledge that subtle racial hostilities happen in the workspace is to deny the experience of many black people.

Going back to the encounter with the woman, it also leaves me feeling disrespected. Her refusal to deal with me says something about her perception of me—particularly her instant assessment of whether I can provide her with the information she wants. What is striking is that when my white colleague comes to the desk, the woman, after repeating her statement of wanting to speak to someone else other than me, immediately launches into the reason for her visit. My colleague stops her and tells her to direct the questions at me. What is painful for me is that the woman's immediate response towards my colleague upon her approach indicates a clear association made between whiteness and trustworthiness.

It reminds me that my blackness is out of place in this space. It also means that it can never compete with whiteness because in professional and institutional spaces such as this one, in terms of which body to work with, whiteness may always be picked over blackness. White skin, it appears, provides an automatic assurance that all is well in the world. In his study, Joe Feagin (1991) found that African Americans must often depend on symbols such as clothing to indicate their respectability and trustworthiness, while for whites, their skin colour or orientation automatically provides this assurance. This is problematic in the way it sets up double standards and two sets of rules for different bodies in the workplace. And this, in my experience, is a source of great emotional stress.

What I find most remarkable about these stereotypes associated with black people's expression of emotion is that on one hand, there is a stereotype of black people being happy-go-lucky people who are always smiling and entertaining, while on the other hand, there is the image of the angry black person who is violent and cannot be reasoned with, raging and shaking with anger (Fanon 1967). It is as though there is no winning—nothing in between that quite captures the black person's true relationship with emotion. This knowledge is also manifested in the fear that grips me at the thought of demanding that my feelings and irritation that arise from my encounter with the woman be addressed. This knowing is written on the body as part of history that is recalled into the present. Malhotra and Perez describe the unfolding of this knowing as "always already inscribed within those colonial relations, always already positioned in that" (2005, p. 60). Bodies remember these histories because they surface on the body itself, but not only that, they also shape how bodies surface. And for racialised bodies such as mine surfacing in workspaces, it is to the experience of an emotional rendering of otherness.

Post-racialism and Diversity

Universities, and in this case Australian universities, display a particular form of post-racialism through their relationship to and use of diversity. In the face of contending with the strong rise of anti-racism in many developed countries, implementing diversity policies has become a sign

that an institution is indeed post-racial. A university's specific character can be seen by reading the politics of the university through its arrangement of buildings and bodies (Ahmed and Swan 2006, p. 752). This arrangement is part of their identity formation, and it is an important aspect of their marketing strategy. In creating an image, universities have a logo and brand as well as attribute certain kinds of characteristics that set them apart as a certain type of organisation, for example, research leader or elite and global (Ahmed and Swan 2006; Eveline 2004). These characteristics and the image itself are contained within policies and documents as well as visual representations that make claims about the university by describing it as having certain qualities, like diversity, for example. These documents become forms of institutional performance in that they are the mechanism through which the universities perform an image of themselves and also a way in which they perform a sense of "doing well." In talking about diversity, it has come to be seen as a sign of university quality, competence and accountability for moving past race and all its problems. It therefore represents a type of institutional success, a kind of good performance.

Within the Australian context, there is a sort of straitjacketed focus on diversity that blurs the specificity of marginalised experiences, making it difficult to talk explicitly about race and racism (see Lentin 2011; Cooper 2004; Ahmed 2008; Goldberg 2002). More and more I find myself having conversations where the response to my racial positioning and experiences are compared to other forms of oppression and discrimination. The implication is that if all oppressions are the same, why can't I respond to them the way other people who are also marginalised respond? While there is a proliferation of diversity talk which includes the language of inclusion and shared struggle—and there is indeed a place for that—we have lost the language with which to directly speak about race, and the impact is grave in a country where there is already a lack of proficient conversation around race. As an institutional forgetting of race, post-racialism, in effect, makes all marginalised experiences equal, and in so doing, not only does it erase the very specific histories and sociopolitical constructions of those marginalised positions, but it also gains the legitimacy to evaluate and decide which marginalised experience and groups get attention, sympathy and redress.

Diversity, of course, appeals to our sense of justice, and its value, largely mainstream, finds its way into higher education through marketisation. And in a cultural climate where universities, particularly in Australia, are becoming more and more commercialised, a university can use diversity to extend its self-image as well as to generate the right image—that it is a happy place where difference is celebrated and welcomed, what Ahmed calls "happy diversity" (2007c). The problem with measuring a university's commitment to racial equality through its image of diversity is that it conceals the very inequalities that this image is designed to reveal. The image of happy diversity prevents the university from recognising the work that still needs to be done. This is how the university can be post-racial, failing to recognise the racial experiences of othered bodies within its campuses.

The Face of Diversity

When I was in my first year of PhD, I was invited to take part in my university's "happy diversity" campaign. There were a number of students who were specifically chosen for this particular photo. Our bodies were arranged in a particular way, and we were told to lean in, look into the camera and smile; in other words, to perform happiness and comfort with each other, which would then be reflected onto the university. What this image does not reveal is that we had all met for the first time on the day of the shoot and were encouraged to get to know each other before the shoot began. Off camera, there was unease and discomfort and our bodies stood apart and away from each other. Therefore for this image, we are required to pose and perform a diversity that is happy yet masks the ways that I, for instance, have experienced the university as a racialised space. As Ahmed argues, "the happy smiling face of diversity would not then simply re-brand the university, but point instead to what gets concealed by this very image: the inequalities that are behind it, and which give it its surface appeal" (2007b, p. 606). The photo creates a fantasy image of the university that focuses on changing the perception of the university as a white space.

A Case of Visible Invisibility

The question of what invisibility feels like at work can be answered through considering my body because it is central to how I experience any space. As I have tried to show throughout this book, we cannot understand spaces without understanding the body because, in essence, space only means something as a result of the bodies that occupy it and interact with it. In that sense, to unpack (in)visibility, we have to notice how it comes to be experienced in the body. The denial or non-recognition of these quotidian experiences that call into question one's sense of being in the world is fundamental in rendering highly visible bodies invisible. I will illustrate: while holding a high representative role in the postgraduate student association of the university, I travelled to Malaysia with two colleagues. One was a Filipino and the other a white British national. We all had been living in Australia for more than two years. The work trip was to visit colleagues of ours working in a similar capacity at the Malaysian campus of our university. The goal was to evaluate, discuss and compare student experiences on both campuses as well as to exchange ideas. All the work was conducted in a university setting: in seminar rooms and meeting rooms on university grounds similar to the ones on the Australian campus, diverse with a big propor-tion of international students. The first meeting we had was held in a meeting room full of student representatives. It was a disaster. It was a disaster for me. I quote here in full from my diary entry of that meeting:

> So we get to the University on the Monday and the association that is hosting us meets us and takes us into a meeting room where we proceed to have a discussion. Of course *Bill* [the Filipino] is the star; he is loud, smart, smooth and charming. That in and of itself is startling but what shocks me even more is that everybody is looking to him and to *Mary* [British girl] for answers. Nobody makes eye contact with me. Even when I ask a question or make a comment, they (most of them Asian compris-ing of Chinese, Sri Lankans and Indians) address their answer to Bill and Mary with a small quick glance at me. The first few times it happens I sit there and smile because I am thinking, "This cannot truly be

happening…I must be imagining it." When it persists, my thoughts turn more reactive: "I am the President. I execute the decisions that will SOLVE your problems, how dare you ignore me?" As the meeting carries on and the disregard continues, my internal defiance fades. Fear grips me. I am so distraught that I just want to get up and run out of the room. I want to find somewhere to hide and cry. It means nothing that I am president of an entire association that looks after thousands of students when I am the wrong skin colour. I feel invisible. I feel it in my body. I feel all the eyes in the room but it is like they are looking past me. I feel like screaming. But instead I clam up and withdraw into myself for that is the only place I feel safe. If people can't even make eye contact with me to acknowledge my presence in this room, what is there for me to say or claim? Why do I have to prove myself all the time?

Of course in hindsight, there were thoughts about how I could have been more assertive, forceful; thoughts about how I could have taken more charge, how I could have commanded the room more. There is always more to do as a black woman. However, looking at my two colleagues who seemed to fit into the fabrics of the space did not require any performance of confidence. One of the things that struck me the most during this work trip was the overwhelming feeling of being invisible, of literally not being seen while being ostensibly present. It was as though I was an observer, standing on the outside and watching the world and its activities unfold before me. It was an experience of sheer loneliness and helplessness. My credentials as president of a large university association did not seem to add any credibility to my identity, much like the encounter with the woman at the faculty desk. In the face of my visible difference, my qualifications and experience are seriously undermined.

This undermining is achieved and made complete in tandem with how the space is organised to position certain bodies within it. How we use this space is dependent on where and how we are organised within it. Apart from my colleagues, I am meeting these people for the first time. They are strangers. Yet as we sit around the table and exchange thoughts and ideas, we cross over the boundaries of strangeness to familiarity. This is the goal of this particular space and this meeting. However, it is not as

seamless as it appears. The crossing over for me is made complicated by my race which sits in the room with me. It becomes a boundary in and of itself and impacts how I use my body and my voice. This struggle of unfolding within the space is reflected back to me in the avoidance and the looking beyond me of the bodies around me. My colleagues, however, occupy the space differently. They are the centres of attention and all eyes are on them. I watch their visibility even as I feel my own invisibility. The different treatment my two colleagues receive provides a good indication of how our bodies are positioned in the space.

Of course, Malaysia is different from Australia in terms of racial history and dynamics. And as a result, we might expect a difference in specific spatial arrangements of everyday life. Yet the similarities are also noteworthy. My experience of being a non-recognised body that is rendered invisible even in the spaces where I have authority, for instance, in a meeting room to discuss student issues in my capacity as Association President, speaks to similar experiences I have had in Australia. Perhaps the contrast between the two contexts is that my experience in Malaysia highlights a particular form of post-racialism that is not liberal or tolerant and would jar with its Western counterpart. The Australian adherence to ideals of post-racialism is connected to ideas of progressiveness and enlightenment. And so it is believed that those who have reached this level of enlightenment are generally those who have freed themselves from the shackles of race and racism by believing that race no longer plays a significant role in the lives of people today and therefore can claim not to see it. The result of this is micro-aggressions that occur within spaces and are attached to the hierarchical positioning of bodies. The experience of these micro-aggressions is fraught with sensitivity for those on the receiving end of them and met with denial by those who claim to be colour-blind. There is indeed a paradox when it comes to micro-aggressions: while they are described as unintentional and are often subtle and covert small acts, they are experienced as confronting, overt, grating, distressful and harmful (Sue et al. 2008, p. 330). Perpetrators of micro-aggressions often minimise their importance or impact by asserting that they are "little things" and encouraging victims, particularly black people, to "let go of their anger and suspicions" (Sue et al. 2008,

p. 330). In Australia, this is demonstrated in the use of humour to cover up. Victims are told "It was just a joke, mate" and are expected to not take offence. To take offence is interpreted as being un-Australian because Australians are laid-back and easy-going, and do not take things too seriously.

Malaysia, on the other hand, historically has had a distinct racial separation between its inhabitants. According to Lian Kwen Fee, race and ethnicity have influenced (and continue to influence) how Malaysians conduct their lives at all levels, from politics to where to eat or how to interact with different people in social and professional contexts (2006, p. 219). The Malays and Chinese, who are the dominant groups in Malaysia, have historically racialised each other, and both groups have racialised and marginalised the Indian population on account of their lack of political and economic power (Ambikaipaker 2008; Fee 2006). The contemporary manifestation of racism and micro-aggression will be unique on account of this historical context.

However, I do want to highlight the way my experience in Malaysia shows a different manifestation of post-racialism, one that is overtly negative. There is an overtly racist aspect to my experience in the way I'm clearly avoided and ignored in meeting conversations. Nonetheless, when I share my experience with one of my colleagues, I am met with surprise that I would feel that way in a place where there are so many different nationalities. Therefore, there is a manner in which even this seemingly overt experience of racism is hidden behind the image of the university as a diverse space. In a general comparison, my Australian experiences, on the other hand, involve a post-racialism that often produces much more subtle micro-aggressions. This is not to say that the Australian experience is any better but rather to show how racism can mean different things and be expressed differently within different spaces in different contexts. This in turn produces different manifestations of visibility and invisibility. In the Malaysian context, my body is still rendered invisible even as it is highly visible, while in many of my experiences in Australia, my body is rendered visible even as it is highly invisible.

Can I Speak to Someone Else?

The woman's outright demand to speak to someone other than me at the faculty desk is an explicit challenge to my position and ability to do the work expected of me. The moment of invisibility becomes real and felt in my body. My individuality disappears, as "someone else" becomes the standard to which I am held up. In the workspace, individuality is just as vital as teamwork. This is because one's work is judged on individual input and expertise. There is also a complexity to this in that in many work environments workers are expected to be part of a cohesive team that represents the company or organisation. Workers then become the manifestation of the work organisation in much the same way, as the airport officials are representatives of the airport space. This means a visit to any organisation carries with it an implicit expectation to be helped by any representative of that organisation who meets them at the point of call.

In the same way, students who come to the arts office expect any of the representatives that meet them at the front desk to answer their questions and address their concerns. In this manner, all the roles in an organisation may be standardised at a particular level so as to provide consistent general information about the organisation to any walk-in clients. This enables the organisation to provide efficient and effective service. There is a tension here because while work is very much an individual concept with workers assessed individually on the quality of their work, there is also the element of the organisation representing its workers as uniform across the board, particularly when representing the organisation to the general public. Hence, the workspace is arranged in a way that gives authority to the workers who are responsible for being the face of the organisation and come into contact with customers.

One task of workers in an organisation regardless of their role is to supply a standard view of the organisation. An example of this is when my work colleague attempts to explain to the woman described at the beginning of this chapter that even if someone else assisted her, she would be provided with the same information I would have presented her. The woman's refusal to deal with me highlights one of the ways race is

mobilised in places and institutions of work. Instead of responding to my individuality, which includes what I know about the arts faculty, what I know of my job and responsibilities, my experience in the role, the woman's reaction calls into question all these facets. Instead I end up occupying the space as a symbol of a larger section of people who are generally considered incompetent and foreign to the space. My individuality is de-emphasised in favour of a view that sees me as part of the mass of black people.

While the space and the university as an institution accords me authority, this authority is undermined by my race. In this example, we see the conflict between these two forms of authority. It seems simply that for authority to be absolute, race has to align to the accepted norm of power and authority in society. That is, power should be white. De-emphasising my individuality as well as being suddenly singled out in a space where I work as part of a team makes the experience traumatic. I argue thus precisely because of the way the woman responds to my colleague who comes to my aid during the encounter. While the woman is looking for someone who works for the faculty, in her judgement, it cannot be me but it can certainly be my colleague, who happens to be white.

The failure of my authority to hold up in the encounter with the woman also seems to suggest how the space fails to achieve its desired outcome. The university as an institution prides itself on the commitment to provide a working environment that is safe, inclusive and non-discriminatory on the basis of race, gender, sex and religion. These are ideals that are embraced by all faculties across the university, and they provide a map for how the spaces of work within the faculties are imagined to operate. However, as seen on the ground, the tension between my identity as a generalised representative of the university and my identity as a generalised representative of black people brings these ideals to nought. This tension manifested itself in different ways. For example, as I alluded to earlier, students questioned my position by questioning the information I gave them. Despite the fact that the students were often incorrect about their assumptions, somehow this uncertainty was often deflected onto me and made me feel that I was responsible for the answers not being what the students expected them to be. This contributed to the feeling of needing to prove myself time and time again. I had to make

sure that I was as up to date as possible with all the faculty regulations and policies. But regardless of my effort to stay current with the information, students would ask for a second opinion or to speak to somebody else. Some of the students went as far as booking appointments with my colleagues who were undoubtedly more experienced than I was to discuss the very same issues they had discussed with me. This made me feel dispensable. And dispensable bodies cannot hold sustained positions of authority.

The authority accorded to me by the university, the nature of my work and the space itself come undone when my race comes into the picture. This authority is unravelled, placing me in a peculiar position of both invisibility and visibility. I am invisible in that my individuality is deemphasised, and along with that, my expertise, knowledge of the work and ability to perform it are ignored. On the other hand, I become racially visible as part of a mass of people whose otherness is seen to make them a homogenous entity. To imagine an "authentic" post-racial workspace would be to imagine a space where race is not a determining factor in the encounters and interactions that happen in the space. What happened after my encounter with the woman suggests one of the ways in which post-racism or the new racism manifests itself: I went off to the restroom and cried. Despite the incident being clearly visible, the matter was never acknowledged or discussed with my work colleagues. The workspace is much the same as the airport. These spaces are post-racial inasmuch as they appear to be so at surface level. In actual fact, they remain highly racialised and obscure acts of embodied racism.

Conclusion

The question I want to end this chapter on is perhaps one I ask of all spaces: "What is the workspace doing to me?" This question leads onto to other pertinent questions: what makes my body experience race in a visceral manner in this space? Why do I feel so racialised? These questions have guided the discussion through this chapter. The key point to highlight is that space only means something because of what people do within it, and this includes how their bodies are positioned to occupy

that space. People thus become the manifestation of space. Because certain bodies are considered at home in most public spaces, it becomes imperative that we notice the arrival of other bodies in order to ascertain how these spaces are organised, which, in turn, impacts on the interactions that occur.

As a black woman working in this particular space, I am constructed as a disruption. Attention is drawn to me while at the same time it is taken from me. This tension is confronting and conflicting. My arrival in the space is never complete as with each encounter in which my presence is challenged and questioned, I arrive yet again. And this arrival forces my race to the fore. The suddenness of this reminder and the shock of it lie in being picked out unexpectedly. These sudden visibilities and invisibilities of my body not only disrupt me but also reify my already racialised body. The question "Is there anyone else I can talk to?" is a symbolic indication of my existence and positioning in the space. I am the body that is there but not there. The space erases me while constructing me as a body out of place. It makes me invisible while at the same time making me visible. It is a peculiar embodied experience akin to Franz Fanon's "negation" (Fanon 1967, p. 110). "To feel negated is to feel pressure upon your bodily surface; your body feels the pressure point, as a restriction in what it can do" (Ahmed 2007a, p. 16). This summation epitomises my embodied experience in the workspace.

There is enormous pressure at the point of realisation that despite how open and wide a space may physically be, ideologically there are boundaries that are set in place to control the movements and positioning of certain bodies. And these boundaries practically affect bodies through interactions, causing movement to be slow and sometimes stopped altogether. Ahmed attests that questions such as "Who are you?" "Why are you here?" "What are you doing?" and, I would add, "Is there someone else I can talk to?" are all a kind of *stopping device* that necessitate an abrupt action of stopping, preventing, blocking or closing. Bodies such as mine are stopped more than others.

The workspace fails me. It fails me in that despite its design to function as a space where my performance as a worker takes centre stage, it instead positions me as a body out of place, a raced body that disrupts the normal face and function of the space causing me to be stopped time and time

again. The experience of being stopped and singled out as a body out of place is often traumatic in its suddenness. However, this sudden and shocking drawing attention to the raced body is part of the mechanism of racism. The use of race historically as well as contemporarily is to negatively highlight difference. And the idea is that when difference arrives, it does so in a place where similitude has been embedded and thus its arrival is unsettling to that which already is. In other words, to be raced is to be the opposite of what is normal and universal, or what Lewis Gordon calls to be "not" (1999, p. 340). And this being "not," the negative of being, he argues, is really the description of the social and experiential realities of racism. The expression of being not is evident in the interactions that occur in spaces such as the workplace revealing a gap between what spaces are designed to do and what actually happens on the ground when bodies interact. The unpredictability of people and bodies rubbing against each other is what makes spaces unstable and non-neutral. In many ways, it is also what makes spaces fail to live up to the expectation of a post-racial world.

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6

What Do You Have There? Carrying Race in My Shopping Basket

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Today, after the gym I went to get a few things from Woolworths in Carnegie. As I wait in line at the till, I watch the cashier interacting with the customer in front of me who happens to be a white woman. They chat happily. The cashier is friendly and this impresses me because I find it stressful when there is an unfriendly person at the till. When my turn comes, bolstered by what I witnessed I enthusiastically approach the counter and give her one of my best smiles, followed by a hearty hello. The cashier briefly glances at me and quickly looks away. She doesn't return my greeting and she abruptly proceeds to scan my items in an awkward and grouchy manner. I'm taken aback by the sudden change in her demeanour. It's as though she couldn't get rid of me fast enough. The careless way she handles my items as she dumps them in the bag concerns me. I wonder what happened in the few seconds between the previous customer walking away and my approaching the till that has made her so hostile. When she completes my transaction, I pick up my bag of groceries and say "thank you." She looks at me with a dismissive look and turns to the next customer. I walk away feeling unwelcome and quite disrespected.

What stands out about being in the supermarket for me is precisely the mundaneness of being in the space and the act of picking products off the shelves and putting them into my shopping basket. It stands out because this is something I do at least once a week, and therefore the activity is ingrained. Generally, from the moment I step into the store, with the help of a grocery list, I know where to go and what to avoid. My mandate is often to get in and get out. Grocery shopping has never been something I particularly enjoy. It is a chore I try to get done as quickly as possible. There are times, however, when I do become a victim of looking—looking at the different products in the aisles even though I have no need for them. In the supermarket, as is the case with many other places of consumption, there is always an opportunity to look. For example, in my local Woolworths, to get to the milk section, one has to pass through a lot of other different aisles filled with an assortment of goods, providing the chance to linger and look and possibly be enticed. Walking into Woolworths, I feel ushered along a systematic path. Woolworths spruiks itself as the "Fresh Food People"; the entrance of the store greets you with green produce, giving the impression of abundance and freshness. The fruits and vegetables, the bakery, cheeses, the deli and the meats are all visible and attractive. The aisles start off from this fresh food section.

As I walk this familiar route to the other parts of the store, I take notice of other customers, who seem to follow the same path I do. Like me, some of them have grocery lists in their hands, tracing the landscape of the store according to the list that acts as a map. The store music mixes in with the constant beeps from the scanners as goods are scanned through at the counters, as well as the squeaky sound of shopping trolley wheels turning on the hard, concrete floor. On some days the store is less busy. It is quieter and calmer, while on other days, it is jam-packed with people: parents, kids, couples, lone shoppers as well as store employees who may be assisting customers or restocking the shelves. On any day, the supermarket is a place of activity.

So even though supermarkets are designed to move you along, they are also built to be places where people linger. They linger over the fresh food, the vegetables, the cheeses or the meats. It encourages customers to visit sections of the store other than those that carry items on their

shopping list, and also impulse buying. This lingering also means bodies moving across each other and sharing space, stopping, looking and occasionally bumping into each other. But even with this, the supermarket is a place of disconnectedness. It is a space where strangers cross paths and more often remain strangers. There is little engagement or interaction amongst shoppers. Jan Phillips argues that grocery shopping is an important socio-emotional site where adults and children can be observed actively collaborating and negotiating with, and resisting one another in the process of reconstituting themselves as family (2008). It's important to note that in Phillips' argument, these interactions that do occur in supermarket aisles are between family members, individuals who are already intimate with one another. Interactions between shoppers who may not be intimate with one another are almost non-existent. Shoppers generally have their focus on the products on the shelves. The space does not encourage them to stop, look at each other, talk to each other, consider, reflect or debate anything except what is on display. In this way, the space de-emphasises individuality. Large groups of shoppers participating in annual bargain sales, for instance, have been referred to as a "sea of shoppers," indicating a mass identification of individuals with the act of shopping or consumption (McNeilage 2013). This has also been prompted by the move to mass-market retailing, which began in America and Britain in the 1970s and has grown ever since (Kingston 1994). This does not take away from the ordinariness of shopping that makes it an escape for people in a sense that they do not have to worry about being recognised or singled out based on categories of identity. Race, on the other hand, creates a different dynamic as I illustrate in this chapter. The supermarket though, first and foremost, organises people as consumers in a market economy. And so for anyone to engage in this space, they have to have money, a required prerequisite to fully participating in the space. This idea that people are organised as consumers in the space is important because it allows customers to be seen as a homogenous mass seeking to consume products (McNeilage 2013). Unlike the airport, where particularity is important, in the supermarket, one's individuality is de-emphasised. But like the workspace, there is a tension; while customers are looked upon as a mass, most supermarkets position themselves as caring for the individual customer and meeting their unique needs. This is

evident in ideals and slogans such as "The customer is always right" and the claim that every customer is treated uniquely. This, however, does not take away the mass, homogenous identity that these spaces and institutions place on people as customers.

The supermarket and shopping in general have been subjects of much research (Bevan 2005; Blythman 2007; Kingston 1994; Miller 1998; Miller et al. 1998; Moss 2007; Seth and Randall 1999; Underhill 2009). I particularly want to talk about supermarkets as spaces of visibility and invisibility, spaces of looking and seeing. Because supermarkets are sites for daily mundane activities, which are often unreflective and routine (Miller 1998, p. 2; Miller et al. 1998), they are compelling indicators of how interactions between different types of bodies and people become embedded in ordinary spaces in ordinary life. Supermarkets are not only places of consumption but also places of daily interaction between bodies that can highlight how these bodies are looked upon and seen. Do I walk into the store with race in my shopping basket? Do I bring race into the space with me? These are some of the questions racial experiences in this space bring up. And in considering these, one of the fundamental questions I am particularly interested in asking is, what exactly does my experience in Woolworths say about race in the twenty-first century in a country like Australia? In this chapter, I explore the ways visibility and invisibility manifest themselves in the supermarket. I consider whether (in)visibility feels and means something different in the supermarket and whether this illuminates our race-space problem.

Supermarket as a Space

The supermarket is a space of sensory stimulation. It is a space where bodies, though overshadowed by the selling and buying that occurs in the space, are actually right at the centre of these transactions. Supermarket operators appeal directly to consumers' senses—sight, hearing, smell, touch and taste—in order to sell goods. Thus, supermarkets are laid out in a way that stimulates the senses (Underhill 2009). Eyes, ears, noses, hands and tongues become an important part of how consumers experience the space and how products are advertised and sold. Supermarkets

are well-lit spaces that utilise light to create a sense of fullness and abundance. Crates, fridges and shelves are full of goods and the bright lighting emphasises these. Customers are lured in by the lighting that provides visual stimulation by drawing attention to certain aspects of products like the freshness of vegetables or the juicy ripeness of fruits. This visual stimulus encourages customers to use their senses of touch and smell by picking up and handling the fresh commodity, for instance. Lighting brightens up the visual landscape of the supermarket.

In the early 1940s when supermarkets were just becoming popularised, fluorescent lighting in supermarkets drew large crowds; this type of lighting attracted customers because it created a fantastic daylight effect that gave assurance that all merchandise on the shelves would be visible even during evening hours (Mack 2010, p. 822). Through lighting, supermarkets can make the most of the appealing qualities of labels and containers, highlighting colour, packaging and layout of products. In Woolworths, the entrance to the store is laden with enticing visuals of colourful and luscious-looking fruit and vegetables that promise the same delights from all the other products waiting in the rows and rows of aisles. As a customer, you are pushed through the supermarket space, through these rows of tunnel-like aisles jam-packed with products and goods from all over the world. The products on the shelf, particularly food, come from different places and cultures, for example, Asian food juxtaposed with Mexican food. The juxtaposing on shelves indicates a multicultural consumption of food and supposedly of the very culture the food represents.

The strong visual cues in the supermarket direct us to an important aspect of the space: that of the power of looking and by extension visibility and the role it plays in consumption and consumption spaces. The act of looking is a crucial part of today's consumer culture. According to Mack, this act of looking and the development of fantastical visual displays in the invention of photography, motion pictures or the construction of museums, department stores and amusement parks expressed the values and promises of Western consumer culture (2010, p. 816). The developers of supermarkets followed in the tradition of urban department stores in utilising visual appeal and visibility to link senses to consumer desire and in the process make consumption exciting, fun and

pleasurable. Advertising and shopping depend on products being visible to the human gaze (Blythman 2007; Cook 2008; Kim and Kim 2008; Miller et al. 1998; Moss 2007). Supermarkets use the visual appeal to get customers to buy much more than they initially plan to, for example, by lining certain products closer to the checkout counter or, as already mentioned, through the visual display of particular goods. But there is also another type of looking and seeing that happens in the supermarket as it does in all other everyday spaces. This kind involves the seeing of bodies within the space as well as the experience of bodies crossing each other's paths or colliding in the aisles.

Bodies in the Supermarket

My encounter with the cashier stands raw in a space that is so organised and mundane. It symbolises a type of collision. On the one hand, it seems like an eruption in the normal flow of the supermarket as it showcases the moment two bodies collide. Yet on the other hand, it also points to how embedded these sorts of reactions are within ordinary spaces—how people generally react when they collide with particular types of bodies. It is unsettling even as it is normalising. The sudden resurfacing of race testifies to how it must be part of the organisation and ordinary functioning of the space, part and parcel of the unseen yet established system. This eruption in my encounter with the cashier is witness to this.

Walking and lingering through Woolworths, particularly on a less busy day, one notices the enormous space available for one's movement and one's looking. Bodies pass each other in aisles with considerable care to allow enough space between so there is no touching or bumping into each other. However, when it comes to leaving the store, the space is more limiting as people have to line up to access the checkout points. The queues then become sites where bodies are forced to come close together. Here proximity is unavoidable, something cashiers cannot avoid in their day-to-day work. While the counter acts as a barrier, demarcating the space between the supermarket authorities and the customer, the cashier is still expected to deal with all kinds of people who walk through that passage. The cashier's job is essentially one of service to the customer, and

it is at this point of contact with supermarket representatives in the super-market experience that personal and individualised service to each customer becomes important. In my case, the cashier seems perturbed by this job and performs it poorly by erecting an invisible barrier between us that allows her to be rude and dismissive.

Who Brings Race into the Supermarket?

I consider the question I posed at the beginning of this chapter: do I bring race with me into the supermarket? This question speaks to the problematic nature of contemporary perceptions about race encapsulated in post-racialism. Since it is no longer acceptable to be overtly racist—using racial slurs or epithets, being denied entry into spaces based on race—the general belief is that those who still see racism seek it out themselves. The argument about racism today, particularly subtle racism, has come to centre on sensitivity. Black people's complaints about racism are seen as a problem because they are viewed as always looking at things through racial terms even when it is not about race (Dei et al. 2004). It is seen as exploiting racist or non-racist attitudes to accuse others of racism. What this does is stop the interrogation of the problem right in its tracks by shifting the focus off the problem to accusations of being overly sensitive and making everything about race. Dei et al. argue that this is a rhetorical functional mechanism that is used to place responsibility for anti-racist moments at the feet of the oppressed or victims (2004, p. 129). So to answer the question of whether I bring race with me into the supermarket, I begin by considering that race is something I can never escape no matter where I go. Racism works by asserting race as an attribute of the body. Ahmed argues that categories such as black, white or Asian have effects even as they in themselves are effects, particularly if we are seen to inhabit them (2004). Therefore, because of racism my unmistakable marker of dark skin means race is something that is stuck to my body. I contend that I do not carry race into the supermarket; however, race is central to how my body is positioned in the space because of social hierarchies as evident in my embodied interactions with other bodies.

The way the cashier responds to me is fundamental in cementing the link between historical views of race and the modern ways it is articulated and highlighted. As it came up in the other case studies, my sudden visible invisibility in that moment is not an accident but can be traced back to the historical operation of racial hierarchies that rendered certain types of bodies visible or invisible (Deliovsky and Kitossa 2013; Winant 2015). One of the primary considerations in this process is skin colour and how it has been used historically and presently to fix African-descended peoples in a state of ever shifting visibility and invisibility. In practice, the cultural mythologies of white skin (civilised, good and light) and black skin (primitive, evil and darkness) became displaced onto the bodies of real people (Deliovsky and Kitossa 2013, p. 164).

According to Dei et al., the "economy of racial visibility" where skin colour takes on the role of operating as an indicator of social value and moral worth is a function of power (2004, p. 92). It denotes social positioning as well as boundaries of relations and being and moving through the world. Racial visibility thus provides the "social and symbolic definitions and representations that mark the boundaries of power, privilege and belonging in Western societies" (Deliovsky and Kitossa 2013, p. 164). Racial categorisation such as skin colour provides a symbolic representation in day-to-day interactions when race is consciously or unconsciously mobilised. It precedes the body even as the body becomes intimately tied to its skin colour. This is why my race is brought to the centre when the cashier treats me differently from the previous white customer. It draws a symbolic line that reminds me of the myths and histories that are ever present on my body and can be called upon to the surface anytime and anywhere.

The anxiety and uncertainty I feel about calling out the encounter with the cashier as racist is evidence of the way post-racialism works to cast doubt on racial experiences. I do not want to be thought of as overly sensitive, and this prompts me to question whether the unfriendliness and differential treatment from the cashier is all in my head. The idea that experiences of racism are "all in your head" has become a common understanding of racism in the twenty-first century such that it has earned its own name, "playing the race card," the belief that people of colour seek to exploit the system and other people by calling out racism. Therefore,

to avoid being uncomfortable, I, myself, make the racism invisible. This, too, is a common coping mechanism among black people (see Feagin and Sikes 1994). Race becomes the elephant in the room, the one thing I am certain is being mobilised in the encounter but the very thing I try to push away from my understanding of my own experience. My self-policing produces a fear of being viewed as oversensitive. Accusations of oversensitivity about discrimination are part of a major form of everyday repression expressed in the privileging of a particular definition of reality (Essed 2002, pp. 207–208). Research shows that consumers who see themselves as objects of discrimination experience embarrassment and a lack of control and confidence in negotiating in-store interactions (Brumbaugh and Rosa 2009, p. 349; Woodruffe-Burton and Wakenshaw 2011). These consumers have to find ways of coping, and these may include limiting their interaction with service personnel or other shoppers and exiting the hostile shopping environment (Feagin 1991, p. 103).

What is most problematic is that, on the surface, my encounter with the cashier may appear random and perfectly innocent because we have no way of knowing for certain the motive behind the cashier's sudden change in attitude, mood and behaviour when I approach the till. If we had to evaluate the encounter using the post-racial paradigm, it would be argued that since racism is something that happens inside individuals and since we cannot look inside her head to see what she is thinking or feeling, there is essentially no way of proving whether the cashier was being racist or not. However, these are some of the ways in which micro-aggressions continue to be sustained in today's global cultural environment and prop up post-racialism as an ideal. There is a general belief, particularly among people who do not acknowledge or experience racism, that racism only manifests itself in violence or riots, when, in reality, it happens in quiet places in quiet ways. The moment we reduce racism to personal prejudices, we become side-tracked from the real issue. This in itself is an attribute of post-racialism because by focusing on personal prejudices, it overlooks the way racism is produced in relationships and interactions between different bodies and through visibility and invisibility.

The belief that the dissolution of laws that in the past explicitly told people which bus to get on and which water fountain to use means that

the thing which these laws were designed to police no longer exists reinforces perceptions that victims of racism are themselves the originators of this problem. The post-racial brings focus to the psychology of the prejudiced person and the intent or motive behind the discrimination while overlooking the often-evident effect of the discrimination. To pinpoint the racism in this encounter, the focus cannot be on what the cashier is thinking inside of herself but on the type of experience her actions produce. Therefore, even though I cannot claim to know or account for what is going on in the cashier's mind as she interacts with me, the important thing is that my interaction with her still produces a racialised experience for me. Of course, there is no mention of race between us, and this is precisely the point—that race can be mobilised quietly in interactions between people. Discrimination happens whether or not individuals in a particular interaction are aware of their attitudes and motives (Essed 2002, p. 206).

Historicising Consumption and the Commodification of Race

The history of consumer culture here is intricately bound up with processes of imperialism and colonialism, and the creation of hierarchical categories of race through these processes. History reveals the foundation of today's consumer culture in the way race is positioned within it. The creation of racial hierarchical categories, which hold the foundation firm, was achieved and articulated through the differentiation between the self and the other, the civilised and the primitive, and whiteness and blackness. Deliovsky and Kitossa argue these categories, particularly the white/black binary paradigm, provide a contextual frame for how groups were and are still defined today in society (2013, p. 166). They suggested that there was a hierarchy in place and that white people and non-white people all knew and understood their position as well as their sense of self in relation to others. These differentiations themselves became transformed in the practices of consumer culture. Nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century advertising, for example, especially for empire goods like tea, coffee, cocoa, cotton and soap, was fraught with imperialistic and racist

notions. There are myriad, clear examples of this in the advertising of that time period. Anne McClintock alludes to one such 1899 advertisement for PEARS soap which claimed:

> The first step towards lightening the White Man's Burden is through teaching the virtues of cleanliness. PEARS soap is a potent factor in brightening the dark corners of the earth as civilisation advances, while amongst the cultured of all nations it holds the highest place – it is the ideal toilet soap. (1994, p. 132)

In this advertisement, soap is portrayed as the empire's cleansing agent in its imperial quest to bring light to the dark corners of the Earth. In another PEARS soap advertisement, a little black boy is represented in a cast-iron bathtub ready to be soaped and scrubbed by a young white nursemaid. The young maid is then portrayed with a face of delighted amazement at the effects of the soap because where the soap has been applied, the boy's skin has changed colour from black to white. In both these advertisements, as in much other contemporaneous advertising for empire goods, there is a reliance on a casual identification of whiteness with cleanliness and civilisation, while blackness is identified with dirt and primitiveness (Lury 1996, p. 157). This intricate link between imperialism and consumption can be explored further in imperial and colonial exhibitions which were popular marketing exercises sponsored by commercial companies and manufacturers of products such as tea, coffee, cocoa and other colonial products. At their height in the 1920s, these exhibitions attracted close to 27 million people. Through these exhibitions, the empire was able to disseminate its mission and colonial propaganda. In this broader social and political climate, advertisements for soap like PEARS and other colonial goods gained their cultural appeal and in the process spread the imperial message attached to them (Lury 1996, p. 161). McClintock argues that this was the beginning of commodity racism as distinct from scientific racism in its capacity to expand beyond the literate elite and reach diverse groups of people through the marketing of commodity spectacle. These scenarios highlight the history that sits at the core of consumption and the interactions that occur between people in these spaces of consumption. It is possible to see how

this history still plays out today in the ordinary shopping and consumer experiences of people. It lends itself to setting up different types of bodies for different types of experiences.

Politics in the Aisles: Consuming Post-racialism

Supermarkets, similar to many consumption places, are symbols of capitalism and how capitalism sets itself up as a purveyor of the post-racial ideal. A study on colour-blindness conducted by Bryant Simon revealed that the idea does not only play out in American politics but perhaps is even more fully and consistently expressed in what Americans buy and consume (2010, p. 272). The study, which was based on the American coffee giant Starbucks, showed how, as a company, Starbucks gained a competitive edge by opening stores in areas such as the inner-city neighbourhoods of the United States where other companies would not take a chance. Additionally, by lending a helping hand to poor communities and capitalising on ideas that race was no longer relevant in the twenty-first century, Starbucks marketed and positioned itself as a tolerant and successful company that cared a great deal about diversity and the promotion of equality (Simon 2010, p. 281). This distinguished not only the company but also its customers. Customers who go to Starbucks are generally believed to be less preoccupied with race and in support of interracial and multicultural interaction. However, as Simon's study revealed, this is not really the case on the ground. The study showed that while Starbucks is marketed as a strong supporter of diversity and even draws a considerable diverse crowd, there is no real interracial contact occurring within the space. Despite the race-doesn't-matter rhetoric Starbucks employs, race does matter; it simply remains unspoken, and it is taken for granted that the number of multicultural and multiracial customers who walk through the Starbucks door means people are not concerned about race anymore (Simon 2010, p. 281).

The Starbucks study explicitly singles out the presence of African Americans, both literally and figuratively, at Starbucks as a performance—what Simon calls the "performance of colour-blindness." Simon argues that in these productions, whites need non-whites either in the foreground or background to show that they don't care about race and

difference (2010, p. 274). In the words of Yale University sociologist Elijah Anderson, "even if white customers don't interact with the African Americans around them at Starbucks, they will still reward themselves with tolerance points for just being near people of color" (Simon 2010, p. 287). From Anderson's assertion, it can be argued then that the current movement of post-racialism does something similar—it allows most whites to claim innocence by association.

In a larger context, the selling of the notion of colour-blindness demonstrates the intensifying politicisation of buying and consumption. Starbucks sells a narrative of diversity and colour-blindness in addition to products that are advertised to bring good coffee, decent jobs and opportunities to the inner city and the world's poorest regions. Customers are happy to consume this coffee and this narrative sold by this company that maintains that it treats all people fairly regardless of race. It brings us back to Sara Ahmed's notion of happy diversity (2008). Having people from different racial and ethnic backgrounds mix in a Starbucks store becomes an image of happy multiculturalism and a sign that race is no longer a problem sustained by the general idea that proximity solves the problem of racism. There is something to be said for racial proximities, however: there is a distinction between real proximities and the performance of such proximities.

Unlike the American Starbucks, Woolworths is not strongly marketed as an active supporter of diversity and colour-blind narratives. This is not to say that the Australian retailing giant is not a supporter of diversity and racial equity. In 2011, the Supermarket launched its Reconciliation Action Plan, a strategy that was aimed at creating employment and education outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians.[1] Woolworths is also opposed to discrimination on the basis of race, colour, age, gender, sexuality or religious beliefs in its employment processes and treatment of customers. The retailer states that its philosophy is "to demonstrate corporate leadership by doing the right thing."[2] To Woolworths, doing the right thing includes supporting local farmers, growers and manufacturers, supporting quality grassroots initiatives with sustainable outcomes, providing value-for-money food and groceries and good customer service, promoting inclusiveness and reconciliation within Australia's very diverse society with a special focus on the Aboriginal community.

However, these values, as wonderful as they are, are not at the forefront of Woolworths' public image. This is visible in most of Woolworths' television advertising campaigns, which portray Australia as a monolithic country and nothing at all like the multicultural vision that is used in the country's tourism campaigns. The advertisement "welcome to Australia's fresh food people,"[3] which characterises a line-up of Woolworths' suppliers and partners from the farmer to the fishmonger to the store manager as quintessentially white Australian, as well as the "bringing Christmas together"[4] advertisement featuring English celebrity chef Jamie Oliver, which is a mash up of good old Aussie food, family and fun, all display an image of Woolworths that is white as embodied by the people used in the advertisements. Everyone in the advertisements is smiling and happy, and everyone is white. Woolworths crafts an idealised image of its space as being about families, Australian values and the Australian community. It is not a place where race has a place. Woolworths is therefore a good example of what Ahmed calls "doing the document rather than doing the doing" (2007, p. 590). Most of its commitment to diversity is contained in policy documents that become the measure of its success. Whether these documents are put into practice becomes less important than having them. They are there to change the perception of whiteness rather than the whiteness of the company.

Post-racial rhetoric thus posits that all Woolworths' consumers will receive the same level of customer service when spending the same dollars. Thus, Woolworths also embraces a narrative of equality, especially in its claim to "do the right thing" and not to discriminate on the basis of race, colour, age, gender or religion against any of its customers or employees. However, the encounter I have with the cashier is far removed from this noble narrative of fairness and equality.

Giant companies like Woolworths and Starbucks have an advantage in projecting an image of providing spaces where race is not an issue—spaces where consumption is king and people can shop with no concern about racial tensions or anything else. They weave these beliefs of equality and diversity into their corporate image and advertising campaigns, creating the impression that these egalitarian ideals do indeed translate into practical application on the ground. In some cases, it is indeed so, but in many instances, race plays a part in how people experience the

ordinary task of shopping or dining. And it is within the mundaneness of these spaces that post-racialism becomes institutionalised and practised through holding up company slogans and branding as proof that there is "no racism in this place."

The cashier's response to me perhaps brings to light the racial barriers and hostility embedded in the everyday and often triggered by interactions that cross racial and cultural boundaries. Her lack of interaction may be viewed as poor customer service, but this behaviour happens to be in line with research that shows that whites do not see their own racial avoidance, segregation and isolation as racial issues (Bonilla-Silva et al. 2006, p. 241). It should also be noted though that experiences and social interactions that appear normal or natural might indeed be embedded forms of social hierarchies (Langman 1993, p. 111). The cashier is no doubt aware of her employers' requirement to treat all customers with respect and cordiality as outlined in the Woolworths Limited Code of Conduct Manual:

> Part of our approach for success is to make a lasting, positive impression on our customers every time we have an opportunity to interact with them. The way we behave when we are with or near our customers shows how we feel about them and our Company. To this end you should act in the following way when dealing with a Woolworths Limited customer, no matter who they are:
>
> Be helpful at all times;
> Smile and make contact;
> Give them a warm friendly greeting;
> Be responsive to their questions;
> Ask if there is anything else you can help them with; and
> Say thank you and give them a friendly parting comment. (Code of Conduct, Woolworths Limited)

However, the knowledge of this responsibility does not stop her from breaching it. There is a failure, therefore, of this code of conduct document. The promise of "personalised service" breaks down when I arrive at the counter. The promise of individualised service is an illusion that breaks down in racialised moments.

Whiteness in Spaces of Consumption

The 2014 Scanlon Foundation Mapping Cohesion Survey reported shopping centres as the second highest location of racism.[5] The findings were indicative of the prevalence of everyday racism in Australia. In a study by Mapedzahama and Kwansah-Aidoo (2017) looking at the experience of black Africans in Australia, it was found that many African Australians experience hyper visibility and differential treatment while shopping:

> For example if you walk into a shop and you are standing there looking for somebody to attend to you and for 15 minutes and everybody seems to be busy, and then somebody, a white person, comes in and then suddenly a worker is available because they probably think this black person is not going to buy anything, he is just going to waste our time. You could also be standing there at the bar and somebody decides not to see you at all. They ask somebody behind you if they have been served.

Another respondent in the study had this to say: "I was in a store, I was buying meat, and I stood there for a long time. People come in and they serve them; people come in and they sell to them, and I just stood there quiet, I never reacted until they were fed up. And then they came to serve me." These accounts are important for conceptualising the stark delineation between experiences of white Australians and black Australians.

In Joe Feagin and Melvin Sikes's groundbreaking study of black people's experiences in public spaces in the United States, many respondents reported excessive surveillance during shopping. Several white stereotypes underlie this form of discrimination, including blacks being seen as shoplifters and as unclean (1994, p. 107). The study is aimed at critiquing the myriad literature on contemporary US racial relations, which tends to view black middle-class life as largely free of traditional discrimination. By drawing on 37 in-depth interviews with black middle-class respondents in several cities, Feagin and Sikes analysed their experience of public accommodation and other public places such as stores. A black utility company executive in an American East Coast city recounts an incident where she and her husband went to pick up their son from camp. They stopped at a little store in the neighbourhood near the camp.

When they went into the store to get their son an ice cream, the proprietor informed them that he had a little window where people could go up and order things. He refused to serve them inside the store, saying, "Well, I can't give it to you here, but if you go outside to the window, I'll give it to you." There were other people inside the store being served who happened to be white, so the couple and their son left without buying anything.

Although this example seems like a throwback to the more overt racial discrimination of the American South in the 1950s where blacks were required to use the back or side of a store, the experience also clearly highlights the differential treatment that is still very much a feature of modern-day racial discrimination. Differential treatment tells us something significant about the structures of society, but it also maps out the way the spaces within which we interact are organised and arranged. It particularly shows how certain bodies have access to certain privileges, while others are blocked from this access. As Feagin's study shows, a significant number of African Americans experience different treatment in public spaces, ranging in scope from housing and access to financial services to day-to-day shopping. Susan Willis writes that the exploitation of black consumers can only begin to be understood through the lens of white supremacy and racism because the theory and practice of it denies non-white people access to the dominant modes of production and consumption (1990, pp. 86–87). Often seen as intruders, non-whites in public spaces are interrogated formally—they are stopped by the police, followed in stores or shown discourtesy by store or service clerks (Myers and Williamson 2001, p. 13). The reaction elicited by the presence of non-whites in public spaces is a way of the dominant group putting them back in their place, which is often out of the public eye and "away from white resources" (Myers and Williamson 2001, p. 15). This form of white surveillance reinforces racial segregation.

In another study, a black respondent narrated the following experience: "I put money in someone's hand and they won't put the money back in my hand. They'll make sure they put the money on the counter as if I'm toxic" (Sue et al. 2008). This participant believed the cashier did not want to have any physical contact with her because she was unclean. This idea of being unclean is specifically one that can be

traced back to the historical development of consumption as earlier explored in the chapter. It is the identification of uncleanness with blackness and whiteness with cleanness that is evident in this black woman's experience. This belief was further exacerbated by observations that the salesperson would hand change directly to customers if they were white. This is also about the abject: the notion of fixing the aberrant black body that is unclean through sanitation, expulsion or denial of access like we saw in the example of the black utility company executive and her family.

The cashier in my Woolworths encounter also clearly makes a distinction between the previous white customer and myself, and this distinction becomes visible in her different reactions to and treatment of us individually. In that moment, she gets to decide who gets better customer service and who doesn't. It is here that we see the flip side of the discrimination black people experience in shops and supermarkets—the privilege experienced by whites. Implicit in these disparate experiences is the notion of status, which touches on the positions bodies occupy within society.

It is nothing new that white people in general experience something as mundane as shopping differently (Feagin and Sikes 1994; Feagin 1991). They also experience the shopping space differently. When Clifford Brown tried to ascertain whether shoppers at a mall were more likely to respect white people's spatial territory than black people's, he found that status was a crucial influence in the invasion or non-invasion of shared space (1981, p. 107). Brown found that passers-by were less likely to walk through perceived high-status white dyads than through perceived low-status black dyads. This idea of status is crucial in identifying preferential treatment in market place interactions because it is very much linked with the idea of privilege. Whites' perceived high status comes from the privilege they receive on a daily basis, which is not recognised precisely because it is customary and expected (Williams 2005, p. 464).

One of the hallmarks of differential treatment in consumption is what it assumes about who are the valued and best customers and who are not. Whites get better service as they, based on their privileged position in society, are considered the ideal customers, while non-whites are invisible unless the product is tailor-made for them, for example, black movies

that target black audiences. This segmentation of the consumer market is relevant in how it ensures that white customers get a better standard of customer service. To illustrate how this plays out in ordinary day-to-day shopping, I want to recall an experience in a market in New Delhi, India, while on a university trip:

> Today we went to the market and it was perplexing how most of the traders targeted my six white colleagues. The traders flocked to them, prompted perhaps by past experience or even the perception that my white colleagues are the ones with the money. Throughout the trip, the six women have haggled like professionals and constantly expressed a fear, annoyance and distaste at being ripped off or taken advantage of by traders in the market and in the shops. My Japanese colleague and I, who have felt sensitive to the plight of these traders and have been more than willing to be ripped off just so we could leave a little extra for them, have been largely ignored. A guy selling sunglasses approaches me but instead of trying to get me to buy, he explicitly says, "I want your white friends to buy." I find his statement quite unbelievable because of what it implies about his perception of my position and me. To him, something about my appearance (that I'm not white like my colleagues) seems to suggest that I either don't have the money or will not spend it on his sunglasses.

In this specific situation, it is interesting how economic power is expressed through whiteness; even without the evidence that my white colleagues do indeed have more money than I do, they are still preferred as the ideal customers, as the sunglasses trader eloquently expresses it: "I want your white friends to buy." This practice and, by extension, most differential treatment in consumption places work to promote the image of the model customer and client as white, where other customers are tolerated if they have money but not truly accepted.

Issues of Authority

Like in most other spaces, authority is an important consideration in the supermarket. It determines what bodies can or cannot do. Some bodies are accorded more authority than others. In the supermarket, however, it

works very differently from, say, the workspace. But first let's consider the relationship the cashier has with the space and environment of the store. My relationship with the supermarket is at best transient; it is a place I visit once a week and sometimes even once a fortnight. For me it is a temporary space, while for her it is also her place of work—her source of income. While I am mostly passing through, collecting my groceries and exiting, she is fixed in the space for a number of hours in a day. She has a different relationship to the space than I do. In terms of authority, the cashier is the representative of the supermarket as an institution. The counter is set up as a boundary between her and the customer. She stands near the exit and in a way acts as a filter to ensure that everyone who files past her with products pays for them. My sudden presence at the counter seems to destabilise a particular order of her power and authority. The general and historical understanding of societal hierarchy is that blacks are meant to be servants, and so to be placed in a position where she has to serve me appears to be confronting for her. Ultimately, her reaction mobilises long-held beliefs about race and power, beliefs that may have been learnt or passed on through social tendencies, predispositions and the organisation of bodies in spaces. In this instance, we see race, my race to be precise, undermining the authority the institutional space of the supermarket accords her. In that moment where she has to serve me, her status and identity may appear blurred; her position in society and in the space becomes suspended, causing her discomfort because it is the destabilising of the generally accepted racial hierarchy.

In the previous chapter's example, even though the workspace gives me authority, it is rendered useless by my race, whereas in this example, my authority given by the space as a valued and unique customer who has the right to be treated well is undermined by my race. In both cases, it is clear that whether it is the space or the institution that gives me authority, I still encounter the same experience of being singled out and my authority being hijacked because of my race. Consequently, whether I am in a position that accords me some authority or not, my race is still problematic.

Similar to the Starbucks scenario and Feagin and Sikes's study on black people's experiences in public spaces, my encounter with the cashier is emblematic of other experiences in public spaces. The idea that racial issues can be resolved by merely putting people of different races in close proximity is problematic, yet it is precisely this idea that post-racialism

promotes. The widespread internalisation of this belief in general points to the desire in society to move away from the realities of difference—whether they are the realities of institutional racial inequalities or those of personal experiences of racial discrimination. The point is, many would prefer a world without race and all the problems it brings. However, people from different racial and cultural backgrounds crossing paths in supermarket aisles is not a true reflection of racial tolerance or progress. This is because proximity without any meaningful interaction does not modify people's racial beliefs or inclinations. Creating spaces of "happy diversity" as a sign that race does not matter is a very simplistic understanding of the complex relationship between race and space.

It is important to remember that space is never neutral. It is always charged with the ideals and suppositions of those designated as legitimate owners or occupiers of that space (Puwar 2004; Neely and Samura 2011). Hence, when I walk into Woolworths as a black African woman and migrant, the unseen conventions that invisibly bear upon my body are those of white, middle-class norms, as the cashier vividly reminds me through her reaction. Therefore, even though Woolworths as a space appears neutral and free of any form of ideology, underneath that appearance is what Doreen Massey calls "a complex web of relations of domination and subordination, of solidarity and cooperation" (1993, p. 81). This highlights the role that knowledge and power play in the formation of any type of space. Through the cashier's interaction with me, she recreates the spatial meaning of the store, and organises the space by claiming the power to define and control the space as well as the power to define and control my visibility in relation to the space and in relation to her. Through her hostile reaction she reinscribes and reinforces my otherness, and by so doing excludes and expels me from the space. In contrast, by treating the previous customers before me with respect and cordiality, she deems them suitable occupants of the space.

The Problem with My Woolworths Experience

I often feel anonymous in the supermarket. I know that no one is particularly interested in me to the point of following me around and closely watching the products I put into my shopping basket or my indecisiveness

which leads me to walk up and down the aisles several times every occasion I go shopping. As a result, I feel free to be in the space. I can take all the time I have without feeling like I am being watched. I welcome a kind of invisibility that brings about this freedom. This form of invisibility allows me to exist in a public space without any reference to my racialised identity. In other words, my occupying the supermarket space is not dependent, or so it seems at first, on what I look like or who I am. The medium of exchange in a supermarket is money, and because I have money, I have the right to enter the space. Generally, the supermarket appears open for all to enter, whether they have money or not. But there has been research conducted that shows how supermarkets and service environments use background music as a means of controlling shoppers' behaviour (Duncan 1996; Knight 1996). For example, classical music such as Mozart, Brahms and Bach has been used to deter loitering youths (Morris 2005). It is impossible to tell by mere appearances alone whether a customer can afford their groceries or not, the point here being that anonymity is a huge part of the supermarket experience. On the other hand, personalised service that recognises each customer as an individual, unique and special is something I would argue most customers come to expect from supermarkets or chain stores. This tension between anonymity and personalised customer service is an interesting one, and it mirrors the tension between visibility and invisibility. I experience this tension forcefully when the cashier fails to be civil and to regard me as an individual, valued Woolworths customer. The cashier interacts with me in a way that forces me to feel racialised as I become a faceless customer whose individuality is swallowed up in the anonymity at a point where it should be visible: at the counter. What is left is a strong awareness of my body. In that moment I am rendered highly visible yet invisible.

This invisibility is different in that it is intimately attached to my identity as it superficially sits on my body and thus works to hide the particulars of who I am not only as a customer but also as a person. It is the kind that renders me powerless as it denies me a voice. At a time when I need to be seen as an individual customer and treated as one, I become a faceless body standing in a queue at a counter, and faceless bodies do not have voices. The cashier can physically see me because I am physically there, but her manner of interaction and her non-recognition of my presence

posit me as an absent body, and it is in that precise moment I begin to feel invisible. As with the encounters in the doctor's office, the airport or the workspace, experiencing the intersection between visibility and invisibility is felt in a corporeal way. I jolt at the cashier's change in demeanour, which not only throws me but also makes me feel as though I am being pushed out of the space, expelled as it were.

Comparing the way the cashier responds to me with the interaction she has with the previous customer is telling. From being happy and chirpy, she immediately withdraws and recoils the instant I step up to the counter. This reaction, together with her silence, sullen handling of my grocery items, the creased lines on her forehead, dismissive glances and lack of engagement, reveals a deep, perhaps even a subconscious, flinching response to the visible appearance of my body (Feagin 1991, p. 109). Her behaviour and actions clearly make a distinction between the previous white customer and me. This distinction inevitably brings up pre-existing and historical assumptions about race and difference. These historical assumptions about race, blackness in particular, are mobilised in this instance and brought back to me to negotiate as the "othered" person. The cashier may not be conscious of this, and this is in itself a testament to how racial micro-aggressions become normalised in everyday interactions. These micro-aggressions become custodians and carriers of racial ideology, which, in turn, is mediated through their practice in all these spaces.

Shopping While (In)visible

In my account of the experience with the cashier, I write about feeling unwelcome and disrespected. There is an unease, a discomfort that creeps in, a feeling like I do not belong. I am reminded of my obvious, visible and physical difference, and this, in turn, increases my discomfort. This, for me, is how race arrives into the picture. It begins with the awareness of my body. It is a sort of rediscovering of my racialised self even while at the very same time it is a type of reification. I want to go back to Phillips's argument about how families are created, maintained, challenged and transformed in mundane activities such as grocery shopping. Following

her thought process, I argue that mundane encounters such as mine also act as a socio-emotional site where identities are reconstituted. In this encounter with the cashier, it is my racialised self that is made and remade. In the same manner, the cashier's whiteness is enacted and maintained.

The cashier and I have different realities owing to our different positions in society. Nonetheless, the encounter precipitates the collision of our worlds because of the proximity of our bodies. Ahmed argues that bodies are disorganised and reorganised as they come into contact with other bodies that are already identified as "the hated" (2004, p. 54). I propose that it is a similar process for bodies that are recognised as "the other." The organisation of bodily and social space creates a boundary, which intensifies feelings and emotions. The cashier's expression of annoyance and disgust at handling my products not only makes me feel apart from the space, but it also emphasises the racial distance between her body and mine. By looking at the previous customer and her body language while interacting with that customer, it is clear that the alignment of bodies in spaces involves those bodies with which the alignment is seamless and non-problematic and those others with which the alignment is difficult and avoided. The white cashier's refusal to acknowledge me makes me feel pressured to leave as quickly as possible. I feel compelled to exit because I am made to feel like I do not belong in the space. Needless to say, this is precisely the aim of exclusion. It is a microaggression that provides insight into the nature of modern racism and discrimination. In this instance, the discrimination is not overt; there is no signage proclaiming "No Negroes" as was common in the past, but the rejection or expulsion comes in the form of avoidance, receiving poor service and cold or hostile treatment from in-store personnel.

My experience in Woolworths is not new. I have had similar reception in several service places, from clothing shops to restaurants where I received dismissive glances as I looked around or attempted to attract the attention of service personnel. In these moments I experience my invisibility. This invisibility is often disrupted the moment I open my mouth to speak. My fluent English takes many clerks and store attendants aback. And on many occasions I find that I have to raise my voice to sound more authoritative and confident to feel like I'm being taken seriously as a customer. This is a way of forcing my visibility to the fore. As effective as it

is generally, it is not something I enjoy doing, as it requires a type of aggression I do not naturally have. The point is that every time I experience visibility in these spaces, it must be brought to the surface, forced, either by me because I want to catch the attention of the clerks or by the clerks themselves in discomfort at my proximity much like the Woolworths cashier. When she responds to my presence in the space by giving me differential treatment, the sudden unexpectedness of being singled out for this kind of treatment in a group of other shoppers is confronting for me as I am forced to come face to face with my own visibility and bear it.

Thus, while I experience the supermarket as a free space where I can walk around and linger without worrying about my race, it is only when I am far away from supermarket authorities or do not come into intimate contact with other bodies that this freedom lasts. Again, this speaks to the tension between my visibility and invisibility. They come into play when they are convenient and serve a particular purpose in the space, and they work in tandem with the visibility and invisibility of other bodies. They reorganise my positioning in the space in relation to other bodies within it and within the larger market economy. In some parts of the space, I am invisible and that has no consequences for how I'm perceived and treated, similar to when I'm walking up and down the aisles filling my shopping basket. In other parts of the space, I am visible as a racialised body and invisible as a customer, like when I am standing in front of the cashier at the counter. And while I may appear to have some power or control over my visibility, ultimately, my visibility as a racialised other only serves to foster my invisibility as a body in space.

The case of merged identity is a harrowing manifestation of invisibility in service places. I refer to an experience I had in the post office:

> I'm at the post office today sending off letters when the man next to me looks up and asks me, "Is that your sister?" I am so confused by his question that I don't know what to say until I look up to where his gaze is directed. At the till is a black girl. I look at the man, smile and simply say, "No". He makes a comment to the effect that she and I are similar. I make sure I look at the girl as she walks out of the post office – we look nothing alike. I shake my head. What was that all about? I wonder. This is not the first time I have been mistaken for another black woman. I find it frustrating that people tend to think I look like every other black woman. Is this a

case of ignorance? Laziness? Or perhaps indifference? I find myself very impatient with people who one black person as every black person. Do all white people look the same? Do all Asians look the same? Of course not. Isn't that just common sense?

The reaction of the man in this encounter is similar to the way the officer in the airport assumes that the black man in the queue next to me was traveling with me. It is a way of de-individualising black people by assuming that they are all the same. Collins argues that people who are enclosed in these assigned spaces become defined by the spaces they occupy as well as by the gap that separates them from others (2000). And in this way, individuals who are classified in this manner become interchangeable. Therefore, one black woman is the same as any other, and all of them are different from everyone else. Therefore, what I question as the "ignorance" that the man displays in the aforementioned encounter may not so much be ignorance but the way society and spaces organise certain bodies in relation to one another and in relation to the space. This organisation is informed by the prevalent knowledge about black women that permeates our culture. It is the same form of structure that governs common stereotypes of black women, which require and even demand that all black women conform to these generalisations society has specified for them. Collins identifies this as a clear form of domination (2000).

Presently, this domination not only operates by structuring institutional power from the top-down but has also evolved to locate itself effectively in the daily, normal functioning of ordinary people. One of the ways it does this is by rendering particular bodies invisible and other bodies visible in any particular space. What is key to keep in mind is that we live in a society which actively shapes how we perceive the things we see and there is no escaping the historical, cultural and sociopolitical aspects constantly contextualising our world. In this light, the man in the post office is not talking about a simple case of mistaken identity, because if he were, he would have noticed that the other woman and I looked nothing alike. Contextualising his comment points to how his perception of black women, a subjective perception which probably has been shaped by years of conditioning, clouds the reality that the two women he was merging are in fact two distinct black women with different experiences

and different histories. In other words, his comments reveal how some bodies have also been accorded the power to render other bodies invisible. And this has real consequences for real people.

Conclusion

So, how could such an experience be accounted for in a country that prides itself as a multicultural beacon of the world? Australian multiculturalism hauntingly intersects with contemporary discourses of postracialism by masking the ease with which race is mobilised in ordinary interactions in ordinary spaces. Most retail spaces, like Woolworths, position themselves as public spaces that are open to all regardless of race or colour; they are portrayed as spaces of "happy diversity." However, a closer look reveals that these spaces are not neutral but instead are embedded with a racial hierarchy that impacts those who carry difference on their bodies. In the supermarket, as in the airport space and workspace, my racial visibility is first of all attached to my body, and second, it only works to manifest my invisibility. I move in and out of being visible and invisible depending on the situation as well as the types of bodies surrounding me. Ultimately, I feel stuck as a body invisible in these spaces.

The illusion of personalised service breaks down in my encounter with the cashier. Even though in the Woolworths ethos I am positioned within the space as a unique and valued customer, the moment I rub against other bodies, and, in this particular instant, a representative of the store, I become a visible yet invisible body in the space. This overshadows my spatial position as a valued customer. Here again, like in the workspace, my race undermines my authority. This is not about the Woolworths cashier being racist but rather how I become racialised, the process by which I come to embody race itself in this encounter. Do I walk into the store with racism in my shopping basket? Do I bring it into the space with me? Racism is rather reproduced through the interaction I have with the cashier. Race is mobilised quietly but effectively, and this is evident in her change of demeanour and the visible discomfort she displays at my proximity. This implies the interplay of bodies in these everyday spaces is critical to these experiences and how they in turn become mapped onto

the space. Furthermore, the concept of racial proximity does not mean racial tolerance or understanding of race. And therefore, the mere mixing of people of different races in supermarket aisles is not an indication of enlightenment.

Notes

1. Woolworths launches reconciliation action plan, press release available at https://www.woolworthsgroup.com.au/icms_docs/185448_Woolworths_launches_Reconciliation_Action_Plan_to_advance_opportunities_for_Indigenous_Australians.pdf (last accessed 28 October 2018).
2. Woolworths Code of Conduct Manual, available at https://www.woolworthsgroup.com.au/content/Document/Dec%202016_Code%20of%20Conduct.pdf (last accessed 28 October 2018). Please note that the document is updated constantly, so wording may not match.
3. Welcome to Australia's fresh food people, available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Duq9kw_J3Mg (last accessed 28 October 2018).
4. Bringing Christmas together with Jamie Oliver, available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JhyTgjsi9Lc (last accessed 28 October 2018).
5. Social cohesion undermined by everyday racism in neighbourhoods and shops. State News Service, 29 Oct. 2014.

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7

Conclusion

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I was very proud of the way my braided hair looked. For the first time in 6 years I had it done back in Zambia, where braided hair is the norm. When you live in a city like Melbourne where there are few Africans let alone salons that cater for black hair, even something as mundane as looking after your hair is challenging. With my new hairdo I was set for the next couple of months. I won't have to stress about how much time I spend in the morning combing it out or finding a hair dresser who is not going to cost me an arm and a leg. I walk into the office on my first day back at work from holiday feeling good about my hair and myself. I'm the first one to arrive, so I make myself comfortable and settle into catching up on emails. A few moments later, my colleague walks in and the first words that come out of her mouth are: "You look like Whoopi Goldberg." I am startled by this comment and I don't know how to respond. It takes me a few seconds to process and decide that I am offended by it. Am I being too sensitive? I wonder to myself. Why can't my hair simply be appreciated for solely being on my head? Why does it have to drag along with it every other black woman? And why Whoopi Goldberg? I look nothing like her. The comparison grates but I put on a smile and instead of a witty come back, a nervous laugh is all I can manage as I turn my attention away from my colleague and back to the computer in front of me.

I wanted to end this book here because, for me, this account illustrates the normalcy with which a seemingly unsuspecting public employs racist tropes in daily life. Perhaps this account also powerfully reminds me how challenging it is sometimes to explain racism without being accused of oversensitivity or playing the race card. On the surface, this episode appears random, an innocent comment made by a well-meaning colleague who may have thought she was paying me a compliment. But the default position of using one black woman (usually a celebrity or an acquaintance) as the reference point for all other black women is a historical function of the white gaze. It renders all black women the same while erasing them in the process. Hair is not only one of the most mundane of things, but for many black women, it is also a matter of identity, which in and of itself makes it political. One way that we can see this is in how black women's bodies including their hair are open to interpretation and handling by white people. As mentioned in the Introduction, I have experienced many times when my hair has been a spectacle—a topic of conversation and the thing to be touched and handled. I have had strangers reach for my hair to "feel" it for themselves without asking for permission. And for the few who do ask for permission, there is that awkward moment when the question perplexes me. Saying "no" is interpreted as shutting down the conversation, and it is also viewed as being too touchy about something as nonsensical as hair. Black women are told to "take it easy, it's just hair." Curiously, this pushback reveals its inherent double standards—my white and Asian friends rarely have to concern themselves with strangers wanting to touch their hair. It is the effect of this standard that makes random encounters such as these racist. Black hair is unnecessarily weighted with meaning, and that makes it a perfect illustration of the way society is still structured around race even when race is consciously avoided. It is a symbol of what society considers outside the standards of beauty, and it thus demonstrates the connection between the macro, in this case society, and the micro, black women's hair.

The overwhelming state of black hair in an Australian context is invisible unless when it is a spectacle. This is often characterised by comments about the way it grows from the head, its naturalness and the assumed invitation to touch and handle it. The responses to this experience of

touching black hair range from shock and surprise to curiosity and awkwardness. The intimacy with which black women's hair is handled by strangers and is related to is in contrast to how they, themselves as subjects, are situated in the state. In many ways, like the hair they carry, black women are viewed with shock, surprise, curiosity and much awkwardness.

What does it matter that I look like Whoopi Goldberg or not if the person who says that to me means well? It matters because racism is more than intention, it is the way bodies are socialised to interact with other bodies in space and the kinds of experiences those interactions produce.

One of the key questions that prompted this research project was why does racism live on? Why does it not go away? Previous studies have sought to examine this continuity of racism by looking at the changing nature of race as a political and socially constructed phenomenon. This book has explored how racism continues through the interaction of bodies and spaces in everyday spaces. By using a methodology that privileges everyday embodied experiences of race, we can move away from discourses like post-racialism that silence and deny race. Post-racialism does not imply the end of race or people's ability to will it out of existence, but rather race's evolution in response to historical circumstances. This book has argued that post-racialism is both a concept and a practice; a concept that explains racism as a personal, individual problem of people who focus on race or "see" colour as it were. The case studies revealed how post-racialism works as a practice of everyday interactions in everyday spaces, allowing individuals to tiptoe around race and obscure racism through semantic moves. It works to veil the process of evolution and adaptation that race follows in changing societies. This process happens in everyday spaces through the interactions between bodies. These interactions, organised by the structure of the space, produce racial visibility and invisibility. And this, in turn, is what fixes race onto these spaces and into the structures of society as it positions bodies differently within the space.

Discourses that deny race turn victims of racism into producers of racism and, indeed, force them to imagine themselves as such. Racism is explained as an internal, personal problem that afflicts those who focus on race or see colour. All the case studies showed the conflict I experienced

within myself around naming and expressing the racism. Fears of being thought of as overly sensitive and denial (from my audience) that race was indeed a factor in my encounters interfered with calling out the racism I experienced. This book, therefore, argues that the experience of being raced means one is never able to avoid the produced effect of racism. It suggests that racism is produced not only by intent but by the way bodies are arranged within space to either be invisible or visible at different moments. There is a lack of control over how and when a raced body is visible or invisible. The way bodies are positioned within a space creates power for some while disempowering others. According to Eveline, power is structured through how we respond to others, and therefore individuals can exercise power over others in seemingly mundane incidents and encounters (2004, p. 29). The auto-reflexive methodology thus illustrates the importance of analyses of the everyday to illuminate the invisible effects of racial power.

The key to unpacking the mystery of why racism continues to haunt lies within the intimate relationship between race, bodies and space and how they produce visibility or invisibility whenever they collide. Such discussions of race are multifaceted and complex. As the case studies revealed, racial experiences are made up of different dimensions that, like racism itself, may be in a constantly shifting state, depending on the space. This book is therefore an intervention into a complicated process of how bodies become visible or invisible in spaces through interaction as well as the positions these bodies are organised to occupy in space.

Summary of Findings

This study highlights the very intricate relationship between racial visibility and invisibility and how post-racialism is the mechanism by which they are regulated and reproduced. From the three main case study analyses, racial visibility appears to work only to highlight and concentrate racial invisibility. In the airport, visibility is emphasised, as it is an important part of the surveillance machinery that processes bodies that come through the space and the borders. However, this visibility works to single out particular types of bodies, who are then subjected to extra security

checks, while, at the same time, other bodies are not. This differentiation de-emphasises bodies' individuality and lumps them into categories that, in turn, render individuals invisible. This is also the case at work, where my visibility as an authority within the space is undermined by my race and, therefore, makes me invisible. I become visible only to be invisible. A similar process occurs in my supermarket experience where the act of the cashier responding to my presence and proximity to her in the space is to single me out by treating me differently from the other customers. I am highly visible standing in front of her, yet her non-acknowledgement of me as a unique customer renders me invisible.

The idea of post-racialism obscures these acts of embodied racism. It highlights the gap between what institutions and people believe about race and what they actually do about it on the ground. In the workspace and supermarket example, it was clear how documents that exist to give framing to these particular spaces and how they should function failed. The illusion of "happy diversity" and colour-blindness broke down when bodies came into close proximity. Noticing how bodies interact in spaces uncovers the interplay between racial visibility and invisibility. Ignoring and denying this specificity of racially embodied interactions is what works to maintain, sustain and generate new practices and forms of racism. Race becomes mapped onto space through the normalising of subtle and embodied racial interactions such as the ones pinpointed in this book.

The process of bodies becoming visible or invisible in spaces is an important one, and one that I considered in each of the case studies. Bodies becoming visible or invisible cannot be divorced from the corporeal experience of the spaces and the interactions within. In all the encounters, the feelings in my body are direct responses to the nature of the encounters. Feelings of anger, shock, fear, discomfort, nausea and expulsion are all part and parcel of how I experience my body as invisible. I struggle with these feelings internally. The fact that the feelings are internal is important in the face of how post-racialism as an ideal implies that racial experiences are to be directed inwards, resulting in setting the self at war with itself. Racism then becomes an internal struggle that only the victims feel and the perpetrators cannot see. In Australia, this is particularly so as a result of a culture that views naming racism as an indictment on the entire society and therefore un-Australian.

Authority is another important dimension to all three experiences. It frames the position I, as a body, occupy in all three spaces. In the airport, perhaps the most institutionalised of the three, I have no real authority. Even as a fully paying passenger with rights, my rights are localised to the airline I'm flying with. Within the general space of the airport, I am a body that is processed through different borders. I am stopped and checked as part of the identification process of the space. Travelling in the Western world, particularly as a black woman with visibly dark skin and a Zambian passport, accords me little or no recognition at all. The hierarchy that exists in the airport organises bodies according to nationalities, but also race comes into play as witnessed by how many non-whites are targeted for extra security screenings.

However, the very top-down institutionalised nature of the airport space, which is explicit in how certain bodies are singled out for certain processes, allows room for explicit interrogation about the way race is mobilised in the space. As I show with the security man, I can question him about why I am stopped and bluntly refer to my race. This is something that is impossible to do in the workspace or the supermarket because of the subtle context in which my race comes up. So while I have no authority in the airport, there is opportunity to talk back to authority. This, of course, is not a conclusive solution, but it does highlight how post-racialism takes away our ability to talk back to race and thus perpetuate the continued, invisible ways people experience racism today.

In the workspace, despite having full authority as a university representative and employee, my authority is questioned and ultimately denied. I find myself constantly having to prove my authority not only to myself but to the clients I have to deal with on a daily basis. The woman's refusal to deal with me at the counter but her willingness to deal with my white colleague is an indication of position, status and power. Her response automatically racialises me, and in this instance, my authority is undermined by my race. In this particular instance, the idea that power should be white becomes embodied. It is a similar situation in the supermarket where the white cashier serves me with hesitation and agitation. Her position in the supermarket is as a representative of the supermarket, but it is also to serve customers. While she serves white customers with a kind of glee, she responds to me with a dismissive attitude that I experience as

uncomfortable and disrespectful. My presence at the counter appears to take into question hers as a white woman because, as a historical understanding of societal hierarchy would have it, blacks are meant to be the servers and not the other way round. And thus my race is seen to undermine the authority the space accords her, and in turn the authority and privilege I have as a customer are again undermined by my race.

The theoretical case for understanding the link between race, bodies and space needs to be emphasised in order to capture the ways racism continues to evolve and adapt itself to the present. The spatial framework I have proposed suggests that new forms and practices of racism, which have their root in history, become mapped onto spaces through interactions between bodies within these spaces. Wherever there are bodies in space, there will be reproductions of racism. This means overcoming racism must go beyond theory but also involve a shift in how bodies interact in space. Anti-racism has to be embodied. The spatial framework further demonstrates how contemporary ideas like post-racialism function to conceal the reality and persistence of racism. The narratives of individuals' experiences of racism in everyday spaces must be accounted for in theory, as they are the critical building blocks to understanding how racism adapts to its cultural environment and maintains its powerful hold on society.

Understanding racism today demands that we have a clear awareness of the processes that enable it to remain a problem in the twenty-first century. Situating race within a spatial paradigm and auto-reflexive writing is a worthwhile project, as it allows us to see and explicitly trace how race trickles down from the institutional level to the micro level, the level composed mainly of interactions between people. Interactions are the basis of human connection, and they do not take place in a vacuum. They occur within specific contexts in space, and they are never entirely free of outside influence, particularly from the environment within which they happen. Aside from foregrounding interactions, space also acts as a background by providing the necessary information that shapes interactions.

Space is intimately linked to bodies. It is shaped by bodies' proximity and interactions even as it gives shape to them. It is through this proximity and rubbing together of bodies that spaces acquire their characteristics. It is within this context that I set off to explore the specific conundrum

of visible invisibilities and how they manifest in ordinary spaces in the contemporary cultural climate, which prizes ideas of racial transcendence. Discourses like post-racialism which, as scholars (see Winant 2015, p. 313) have argued, are based on an institutionalised forgetting of the meaning of race have not only infiltrated scholarship but also filtered through to public culture, to the everyday embodied practices and contemporary understanding of what race means. These modern beliefs that claim multicultural existences and blindness to race as a way of eradicating racism are dangerous because they allow for difference, race and skin colour to go unnamed while still powerfully impacting how the body of the other is racialised, perceived, articulated and interacted with. Despite the post-racial and multicultural rhetoric, much of Western society, including Australia, remains racialised, and any movement towards progress requires honest and courageous embodied engagement with race.

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