Anti-racism and everyday life

Kristine Aquino

Introduction

Despite the fact that much of ‘the history of anti-racism consists of the actions of ordinary people’, studies on ‘everyday anti-racism’ remain little consolidated in racism and anti-racism theory (Bonnett, 2000: 88). Following from Essed’s (1991) seminal work on the concept of ‘everyday racism’, the term ‘everyday anti-racism’ has been employed across varied studies to refer to the ways in which individuals respond to racism in interpersonal interactions and spaces of encounter in their day-to-day lives (Bonnett, 2000; Lamont and Fleming, 2005; Pollock, 2008; Mitchell et al., 2011; Nelson, 2015a; Aquino, 2017). This can include the actions of victims confronting perpetrators, witnesses speaking out against racism, practices that bridge cultural difference, material and subjective strategies deployed by those on the receiving end of racism to repair stigmatized identities, and aestheticized expressions through popular culture such as forms of music, youth cultures and media that challenge racism. In this chapter, I review selected works examining anti-racism in everyday life and draw out its key tenets as an area of study with the aim of highlighting how it contributes to broader anti-racism theory and praxis.

The chapter begins with a brief background discussion on how anti-racism debates are bound to older and larger deliberations around the concepts of race and racism which have been characterized by divergences in terms and concepts and dichotomies between the structural/ideological, macro/micro, economic/cultural, leading to calls to better connect theory with lived experience. I then summarize key areas that make up everyday anti-racism literature: the ‘micro’ dimensions of historical social movements and epochs; ‘doing’ anti-racism in organizational/institutional contexts; negotiating cultural difference and countering racism in spaces of ‘encounter’; and victims developing ‘cultural repertoires’ to cope with racism. By no means an exhaustive literature review, this chapter instead highlights some of the central objectives of research on everyday anti-racism which involve enhancing understandings of how ‘the everyday’ is an integral part of the processes that configure and challenge racism. In these works, everyday life is not just seen as the ‘setting’ where racism and anti-racism happen but applied as a conceptual tool that can problematize taken-for-granted understandings of how race, racism and resistance operate – understandings that have traditionally been predominated by a macro-sociology bias. According to Essed (2001: 188), the everyday does not simply refer to one’s immediate sphere, but rather, the intersection between micro and macro spheres – the complex of contexts, processes and practices ‘present in and activated at
the everyday level as well as pre-structured in a way that transcends the control of individual subjects. In this way, the everyday can involve multifaceted and contradictory processes of reproducing and contesting racism at both the structural and interactional, behavioral and ideological, macro and micro levels. As Essed (1991: 8) argues, ‘such analysis demands an eye for detail and challenge the researcher to organize and understand an enormous number of divergent experiences’ which has by convention deterred deep scholarly engagement. In reviewing studies of everyday anti-racism, this chapter shows how the ‘unruly quality of everyday experience’ (Smith, 2014: 1139) in particular can serve a significant function in racism studies, via the ways in which it can ‘shake our confidence in the seemingly clear-cut intellectual categories and stories by which we go about making sense of things’. Engaging with the everyday can have a ‘monitory effect’ (Smith, 2014: 1140) on how analysis is organized in the field – reminding researchers to check tendencies that fix concepts, categories and approaches which may be at odds with the instability of quotidian experience and this attentiveness can help enable racism theory and anti-racism praxis to remain socially and politically engaged.

Race, racism and anti-racism theory: fractures and divisions

At the simplest level, anti-racism can be defined as ‘forms of thought and/or practice that seek to confront, eradicate and/or ameliorate racism’ and as ‘ideologies and practices that affirm and seek to enable the equality of races and ethnic groups’ (Bonnett, 2000: 4). The straightforwardness, however, ends there as it remains contested how it is we actually reach this goal. What it means to be ‘equal’ is fraught with complexity – should we uphold ideals of universalism or particularism as the basis of equality? Do we really mean to address inequality or inequity? And how can we most productively deal with racism – do we focus change on institutions or individuals, systems or interactions, or practices and thinking? Dualistic logic has tended to underline the predominant ways in which anti-racism has been discussed which is bound to the prevalent ways in which the related terms of race and racism have also been debated and theorized. Over the three decades between the 1980s and 2000s, in the English-speaking academy, dichotomous conceptual and methodological approaches came to define race, racism and anti-racism as either cultural or economic concerns, structural or ideological processes, macro or micro phenomena. The fractures, according to some scholars, risked ‘over-theorizing’ of the field and, moreover, disconnection from social and political engagement (Knowles, 2010). In this section, I outline briefly some of the central issues underpinning these dialogues to set the scene as to how the study of everyday anti-racism has contributed some grounded insights to these debates. The field of study is sizable and I wish to note that I am only able to mention some of the voices in the debate. I also flag that while the conditions of racism and anti-racism are specific to place they also connect across contexts and so the discussion here specifies certain national circumstances but often crosses borders.

As an important starting point Lentin (2000; 2008) reminds us that grappling with the expansive discussion begins with the contested concept of race. In the early twentieth century, the invalidation by science of the biological certainty of racial difference and the challenges posed to racial regimes by social movements made up of long-oppressed racial minorities, threw up questions around the ideological basis of racism and the nature of racist practice, with some scholars calling for the abandonment of the term and concept of race. Gilroy (2002: 253) for example famously called for ‘the end to raciology’, arguing that the continued theoretical engagement with the discredited concept of race reified essentialisms
particularly in the construction of racial or ethnic ‘camps’ who in their anti-racism politics took up pre-defined positions around ‘the Black subject’, ‘the Asian subject’ and so on. Miles (1989) similarly argued against race’s persistent autonomy as an analytical category but instead stressed that it was operating to obscure the economic relations that produce racism. The work of other scholars like Taylor (1994), meanwhile, saw a turn to questions around ‘ethnicity’, ‘multiculturalism’ and a ‘politics of recognition’, exemplifying the culturalist discourse that came to ultimately supplant the discourse of race, wherein, ‘culture’ (customs, ways of life, traditions and so on) was taken up as the more apt marker of difference and posited as departing from the violence of old racial categories.

This ‘cultural turn’ became integral to giving voice to the experience of those most silenced by racism. For example, feminist accounts by hooks (1992) and Collins (2004) in the US on the experience of black women shed light on the different positionalities of the racialized subject to render understandings of racism more complex, in that, race can be gendered and gender can be racialized. Hall (1992) in his work on ‘new ethnicities’ in the UK, meanwhile, challenged understandings of migrant identities and positionalities as static and coherent through notions like hybridity and multiplicity which revealed processes of agency and flexibility to rework the fixedness in conceptions of diaspora and nation. Despite being taken up with enthusiasm, however, some scholars were skeptical that discourses of culture were eradicating essentialist ideas of group differences. Balibar (1991) and Taguieff (1990), for instance, writing from the French context, argued that domination was being newly articulated through a ‘differentialist racism’ and warned that anti-racism projects based on celebrating cultural pluralism would abet the perpetuation of a racism rationalized around the insurmountability of cultural differences. Those writing on Indigenous struggles, for instance in Australia, also pointed out that the focus on questions of culture and ethnicity was very problematic for Indigenous groups who particularly rely on mobilizing the history of race to distinguish their plight as separate from ‘ethnic minorities’ or ‘migrant groups’ (Cowlish and Morris, 1997).

Furthermore, structuralists remained persistent in arguing that concerns should be centered on social systems and not in ideological discussions of culture and identity nor questions related to recognition. In part this stemmed from long-held opposition to psychological definitions of racism, wherein, works by Bonilla-Silva (1997) and Goldberg (2002) in the US on racism’s systematic nature disputed early understandings that pathologized racism as an individual problem or a mere issue of cultural stereotypes and beliefs. Rather, the structural approach emphasized how histories of colonization and empire, institutions such as the state, and systems like capitalism, were the real sources of racism that needed to be challenged. A particular strand of theorization espoused by scholars like Miles (1987) in the UK, Wilson (1978) in the US, and Morrissey (1984) in Australia, specified that class relations and modes of production determined the limited power held by minority racial groups and positioned racism as the denial of access to resources. Against the latter, cultural studies scholars insisted on the non-reductiveness to race, ethnicity and culture but, as the cultural field became preoccupied with symbols and representation, were continually dismissed for making little progress against ending the material inequalities produced by racism (St Louis, 2002). There was, moreover, a prevailing ‘macro-sociological bias’ in racism studies according to Essed (1991: 101), that generally paid little serious attention to ‘micro-interactional perspectives on racism’ nor ‘the phenomenological dimensions of racism’, denoting a general indifference towards the ‘ordinary’ and the ‘underrating of the insights of “laypersons”’ in racism studies.
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These debates, Lentin (2000: 101) argues, were not merely semantic, but signal the profound difficulties in finding a language to analyse and understand racism ‘without tried and tested concepts’ that give meaning to the struggle for anti-racism. Evidenced in the earlier discussion in this chapter, initial analysis of anti-racism chiefly focused on the actions of governments, politicians, international human rights institutions and social movements which took form in public policy, anti-discrimination legislation, affirmative action, and political platforms. At this level, anti-racism has been crucial to addressing broader structures of power – focusing on the re-education of society by targeting institutions of socialization like schools and the media but also attempting to transform the economy, law enforcement, and allocation of resources and services. Yet, at times, under the control of institutions, anti-racism has also proven to be about ‘the reproduction of modern economies and the establishment of internationally accepted principles of political legitimacy’ (Bonnett, 2000: 26). The politicized interests that governments, institutions, and anti-racism groups have had in anti-racism thus made many initially critical of formal policies, legislation and programs which showed themselves as being pursued in the self-interest of political ideologies and economic outcomes (Gilroy, 2002).

A binary opposition of emphasizing sameness or difference as the basis of ‘equality’ also surfaced in anti-racism perspectives, simultaneously advancing much needed theoretical engagement with the notion of anti-racism but also began to undermine anti-racist action (Wieviorka, 1997). Equality defined by sameness is rooted in values of universalism and is, for example, embodied in ‘color-blind’ and ‘post-racial’ policies in the US which entails positioning ‘racial difference’ as irrelevant if everyone is to be treated as ‘the same’. Equality defined through difference, on the other hand, encourages acknowledging the particularities and pluralities of ethno-racial groups and manifest in policies of multiculturalism in states like Canada and Australia which advocate for ‘unity in diversity’. The former was criticized by scholars like Goldberg (2002) and Bonilla-Silva (2017) for invalidating struggles against racism especially masking how racial ideologies continue to permeate social systems. The acknowledgment of difference, meanwhile, produced populist backlash over affirmative action or diversity policies for giving ‘preferential’ treatment to minorities which Essed (1991) and Beneton (2001), among others, argued demonstrated the failures of cultural pluralism as anti-racism policy in sufficiently addressing the conduct, practice, and ideologies of racism. That pluralism was bearing little fruit in the fight against racism was never enough to give way to embracing universalism. Lentin (2004: 98), for example, argued that more damaging are the enduring universalist ideals of sameness once manifested in colonialism and which persist in assimilationist and integration policies.

Such debates are essential in exploring and exposing the complex contours of racism and its consequences. As Hall (2002: 41) has argued, while theoretical and ideological divisions are often seen as being opposed to each other ‘they can also be understood, in many respects, as inverted mirror images of one another. Each tries to supplement the weakness of the opposing paradigm by stressing the so-called “neglected” element’ (Hall, 2002: 38). Nonetheless, disputes around theory and approaches, can fall prey to disconnecting from the ordinary lives victimized by racism and their lived struggles fighting racism (Back and Solomos, 2002). Over the last decade or so in racism studies, renewed engagement with ‘the everyday’ – as a site of empirical investigation, as a concept to inform methodology, as a base from which to build theory – has allayed this risk to add further texture to the field.

Esséd’s theory of ‘everyday racism’ for example, while articulated in the past through concepts such as ‘infra-racism’ (Wieviorka, 1995) or ‘interactional racism’ (Brandt, 1986), has now been widely adopted as conceptual framework and methodological approach to
examine routinized racism in schools, workplaces and public spaces across a range of international contexts. It has stressed the mutual interdependence of macro and micro spheres through analysis of the intersection between social systems and human conduct, illuminating how ‘structures of racism do not exist external to agents – they are made by agents – but specific practices are by definition racist only when they activate existing structural racial inequalities in the system’ (Essed, 1991: 39). Work by Knowles (2003) on the concept of ‘everyday race-making’ is a similar mode of social analysis that advocates to close ‘the gap between hyper-theorized conceptions of race and the social practices that operate around them’ (Knowles, 2010: 26). Using a materialist approach to address the quandary of race as both mythical and real, she engages with ‘social texture’ by interrogating how the intersection of bodies, space and subjectivities produce or contest racialized privilege and disadvantage.

Understandings of anti-racism too have also been subject to an engagement with the everyday although little consolidated. In the section to follow I identify literature that explore the notion of everyday anti-racism and point out the ways in which these works bridge some theoretical and empirical gaps and disputes in larger debates.

**Everyday anti-racism: key themes in the literature**

*Micro dimensions of historical social movements and epochs*

Though not originally conceived within the discourse of ‘everyday anti-racism’, historical accounts of resisting racism in everyday life have been long documented via the activities of actors or groups directly participating in social movements against racial inequality or, more indirectly, accounting for the tactics of ‘everyday resistance’ deployed by ordinary people against racial systems set within historical epochs.

The literature on anti-colonial or anti-slavery movements contains some of these stories. For example, Vieira (1995) and Andrew’s (1994) writings on resistance from African slaves in colonial Brazil focus on how the abolition of slavery was enhanced through the actions of slaves who escaped from plantations to form self-sufficient communities called *quilombos*, setting up secret societies that enabled the preservation of some African cultural practices in modern Brazil. Moid (2017) has also described ‘everyday colonialism’ in Africa and the tactics used to challenge colonial demands in the continent such as Africans employing avoidance methods to escape wartime service or refusing to be recruited for jobs in public works to disrupt economic growth, which set the foundations for organized trade unions in the future. In the US, the work of Aptheker (1992) reports on the period from the eighteenth century to the emancipation of African American slaves, showing how rebellion was in part driven by multiracial coalitions between blacks and whites including arming themselves against slave owners or securing hideouts for escaped African Americans and set precedence to the establishment of multiracial groups like the NAACP (see O’Brien, 2009). Lawson (1991: 457) details scholarship on the civil rights movement between the 1970s and 1980s which shifted focus away from ‘leaders’ of the movement to grass-roots efforts which shed light on the experience of ordinary people involved. She describes literature by Chafe, Morris, and Killian which looked at the experience of student sit-ins and how these actors were shaped by protest cultures cultivated by churches, civic groups and colleges. Notably, literature in this area has also highlighted intersectionality by documenting the experience of non-white women involved in historical action (Keisha-Khan, 2004; Springer, 2005; Chun et al., 2013). The interest in
the ordinary people involved in larger movements are carried through in more recent writings on grass-roots resistance in contemporary racialized urban contexts, for example, in the fight against police racism and the struggle for land rights.

Related scholarship examining what Scott (1990) calls the ‘infra-politics’ of those unattached to organizations or political movements is also significant to the historical documentation of anti-racism in everyday life. Scott (1990) defines infra-politics as composed of ‘hidden transcripts’ of the oppressed which mock, criticize and subvert their oppressors. There is much work here on the everyday and popular culture practices of African Americans in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, such as historical research by Levine (1978) on the jokes, folklore songs and stories used by African Americans to mock white authority, or Kelley’s (1994) exposition of black working-class resistance such as foot-dragging on the factory floor, theft from the workplace, and secret practices of ‘black-listing’ abusive employers among black women working in domestic households. Again, the struggle against colonial domination by the colonized also provides similar stories, for example, Santiago Jr. (2015) has explored how incidents of ‘bad manners’ such as rudeness, deceitfulness, clumsiness, and insolence among native Filipinos in colonial Philippines were acts of defiance against colonial authority. España-Maram (2006) meanwhile historically accounts for how the zoot-suits worn by Filipino workers in Los Angeles during World War Two in low-brow taxi dance halls enabled a departure from their status as ‘servants’. These histories of cultural production ‘communicate the expressive and socially challenging content of everyday anti-racism’ (Bonnett, 2000: 91) and form the roots of contemporary ‘anti-racist popular culture’ (Bonnett, 2000: 92) expressed for example in subversive forms of music, leisure practices, and youth fashions today.

The focus on ordinary people in these accounts has widened perspectives that social movements are mostly played out at the legislative or policy stage or that historical change is only orchestrated by national leaders, but rather, that they have equally been driven by struggles engaged by individuals and within communities. This ‘history from below’ (Scott, 1990) which is the history of ordinary people, and its intersecting focus on ‘everyday resistance’ in the tradition of scholars like cultural theorist de Certeau or anthropologist Abu-Lughod, are not merely documented to celebrate ‘heroic acts’ in everyday life but also aim to shed light on how daily actions and practices can amass effect on relations of power both at the micro and macro levels. As well, the fight against racism is proven to be as much about the struggle for recognition and creating new identities for the oppressed as it is about creating structural change and how the latter may not be possible if not fueled by the former.

‘Doing’ anti-racism in organizational/institutional contexts

Complementing the large body of studies on the anti-racism initiatives and policies of organizations or institutions in societies in the North, is research that explores the experience of people grappling with the challenges of implementing initiatives ‘on the ground’ within these settings.

By far, the topic of practicing anti-racism in the educational sector forms a large part of the research in this area (Epstein, 1993; Kailin, 2002; Zembylas, 2012). The work of Pollock (2006, 2008, 2017) in particular is associated with furthering the term ‘everyday anti-racism’ via her edited collection Everyday Antiracism: Getting Real about Race in School. The book consists of contributions from researchers, many of whom were former teachers, reflecting on the messiness of practicing anti-racism in the American classroom around top-down directives such as ‘color-blindness’ or ‘race consciousness’. The research explores ‘everyday acts’ inside the classroom that can perpetuate racial inequality including how teachers talk to and discipline students, the ways in which communities are framed and discussed in curriculum,
how papers are graded, how teachers interact with parents, and the manner in which student aspirations are framed. Through these examples Pollock (2008) advances theoretically the concept of ‘the everyday’ in the term ‘everyday anti-racism’ by encouraging reflection in routine, taken-for-granted moments of the schooling experience. The collection hopes to function as a practical resource and puts forward four paradoxical points of reflection to facilitate a critical everyday anti-racism in the classroom: rejecting false notions of human difference; acknowledging and engaging in lived experiences along racial lines; building upon and celebrating the differences that racialized groups positively value about themselves; and equipping self and others to challenge racial inequality. These contradictory points aim to inspire routinely contemplating what moves to make and when, in terms of anti-racist practice.

The ‘hands-on’ challenges and successes of doing anti-racism are also documented in other organizational/institutional contexts such as healthcare and social welfare sectors (Cortis and Law, 2005; Durey, 2010; Pon et al., 2011), corporations (Wrench, 2005), and sporting clubs, bodies and programs (Woodward, 2007; Flintoff et al., 2015). Findings have, in particular, engaged with the status of whiteness of people undertaking the work of anti-racism and the implications around power and disadvantage within these organizational settings. Interestingly, recent focus has also been placed on individuals working in state or local government agencies, NGOs and community organizations who deal directly with ethnic groups, inter-ethnic relations and racism. For example, research by Nelson and Dunn (2017) in Australia discuss the ways in which employees are cognisant of the limitations of ‘celebratory’ initiatives such as multicultural festivals and ‘Harmony Day’ in addressing structural racisms but nonetheless deliver them, blaming pressures of a neoliberal agenda infiltrating the sector which has de-politicized racism and anti-racism. Nelson (2015b) elaborates by describing the difficulties in ‘speaking’ racism and anti-racism among these workers which can be attributed to things like the government’s hesitancy to use the term ‘racism’ and thus look unfavorably on program funding applications that use this word. Yet, despite actors being constrained by larger institutional pressures or that they must endorse initiatives that often fail to address deep-seated issues, there are still benefits to everyday anti-racism in these spaces. For example, because of the micro context, the successes and failures of the anti-racism can be ‘locally owned’ which still offers up possibilities to change norms (Nelson and Dunn, 2017).

These studies challenge the institutional/individual binary by reminding us that institutions comprise people and are not independent of them, and that structural racisms are perpetuated or challenged via human action. Moreover, they shed insight into the ambiguities of ‘applying’ or ‘doing’ the anti-racism policies of organizations and institutions, accentuating everyday anti-racism as a praxis that is ‘complex, conflict ridden and deeply consequential’ (Pollock, 2006: 4). Such research has also emphasized the importance of individuals reflecting on one’s positioning in terms of race, particularly white privilege, when occupying levels of institutional influence such as the position of a teacher, policy-maker, program coordinator, manager, coach and so on, but also simultaneously signals the risks in research focusing on a white-centric anti-racism.

**Negotiating cultural difference and countering racism in spaces of ‘encounter’**

While not explicitly framed as everyday anti-racism, over the last two decades, a prominent area of literature has looked at the bridging of cultural and racio-ethnic differences in spaces
of ‘encounter’. Approaches from geography and sociology, particularly from scholarly work in the UK and Australia, predominate in this literature and often focus on routine interpersonal encounters with difference in public or quasi-public spaces, with a growing interest in the private intimate sphere.

The most significant strand of this research looks at how collective civic cultures are forged in shared public spaces. Research on ‘everyday multiculturalism’ (Wise and Velayutham, 2009), ‘everyday cosmopolitanism’ (Noble, 2009), ‘rubbing along’ (Watson, 2009) and ‘micro-publics’ (Amin, 2008), have shed light on how cultural and racio-ethnic difference is negotiated in a range of spaces people traverse and inhabit such as neighborhood parks and streets, schools, workplaces, shopping centers, cafes, public transport, and leisure and sporting spaces. Perhaps the most taken up in empirical study has been investigation into modes of ‘everyday multiculturalism’, which Wise and Velayutham (2009: 3) define as a theory that pivots from ideological and policy-based definitions of multiculturalism to instead explaining how multiculturalism is ‘lived’. Accordingly, it espouses a grounded approach to studying multicultural communities via ethnographic and qualitative methods. Drawing on theorists such as Latour, Mauss, Massey, Bourdieu and Lefebvre, subsequent studies pay attention to the assemblage of bodies, practice, affect, matter and space that make possible the habits and dispositions for inclusive cohabitation but also those that produce racisms and intercultural conflict. For example, in examining suburban multiculturalism in Sydney, Wise (2005, 2011, 2013) fleshes out the sensory aspects of diversity materialized in shopping streets, wherein, encounters with different bodies and smells of food along with foreign signage can produce encounters of racism but also function as sites to connect across differences. Watson (2017), commenting from superdiverse London, stresses how the physical infrastructure and design of public space can encourage community cohesion and inter-ethnic interaction to reduce negative affect, distrust, fear and antagonism that can feed racist sentiments. Asian cities now also form the basis of analysis, such as navigating ethnically diverse workplaces in Singapore through the use of humor (Wise, 2016), or the use of linguistic resources among diverse workers in restaurants in Tokyo to communicate across difference (Pen-ycoook and Otsuji, 2014).

Investigation into encounters in private spaces, meanwhile, is less ubiquitous but growing, particularly through the work of Valentine who argues that interaction in public spaces are likely prefigured by habits and dispositions ‘developed, enacted and contested within “private” spaces of the homes of family and friends’ (Valentine and Sadgrove, 2012: 2,051) and so it is pertinent to understand the connection between the two spheres. In looking at family relationships in the UK and European contexts, Valentine et al. (2015) found that diversity experienced within the family through, for instance, the presence of inter-racial relationships, can foster positive attitudes in public life towards the social group the family member represents, but such attitudes are not enough to challenge wider prejudices towards other groups. Nelson (2015a) has taken up the same concerns in her Australian research and adopts Butler’s theory of performativity as a means to examining ‘whether social change might be enacted through performance’ (Nelson, 2015a: 491). She suggests that looking at performative racist talk and practice within families, a key site of socialization, can reveal ‘the repetitive and citational practices that both reproduce and potentially subvert discourse’ (Nelson, 2015a: 491–3).

The other strand of research that examines negotiating and countering racism in spaces of encounter are emergent studies on ‘bystander anti-racism’. The work of Australian scholars makes up recent research on this topic which takes some inspiration from social psychology to define bystander anti-racism as actions taken by people not directly involved or targeted by racism who speak out against or engage others to respond to interpersonal or systemic
racism. Nelson et al., (2011), for example, argue for recognizing the potentials of bystander anti-racism in taking some of the burden of combating racism away from the target, decreasing public expressions of racism if more witnesses speak out against racism, potentially educating and changing perpetrators’ behaviors when racism is called out, and feelings of personal satisfaction for the bystander for challenging racism. There are though obstacles that can hinder speaking up against racism which they identify as fears of perpetrators turning on the bystander, evaluations of the event as not being ‘serious’ enough to intervene, or the perceived idea that intervention would be ineffective (Stewart et al., 2014; also see Pedersen et al., 2011).

These literatures on encounter have come a long way from Allport’s original conception of the ‘contact hypothesis’ by illustrating the complexities of engaging with difference in everyday life. Scholarship on everyday multiculturalism has illuminated the textures of modes of inclusion and exclusion in lived experiences and the everyday methods and means through which we learn how to live together across difference. However, critiques are wary of spatial and temporal assumptions that fleeting encounters in public space necessarily alter deep-seated attitudes around racial and ethnic difference and thus the connection between public/private domains is worthy of more attention (Valentine, 2008). This speaks to the general challenge of how it is successful micro-encounters can be ‘scaled-up’ into successful policy to bring about larger social change (Onyx et al., 2011). Likewise, that the ‘bystander’ is often framed as a white actor cautions at the limitations of bystander anti-racism in shifting wider arrangements of racialized power (Lentin, 2017).

‘Cultural repertoires’ of coping with racism

The final noteworthy area of work on everyday anti-racism comes from American sociologist Lamont, who has investigated the ‘cultural repertoires’ that inform the coping mechanisms deployed by individuals victimized by racism. Lamont’s collaborative empirical studies have examined the experience of African American upper and working-class in the US (Lamont and Askartova, 2002; Lamont and Fleming, 2005) and North African immigrants in France (Lamont et al., 2002) and has recently expanded to international comparisons of immigrant and minority responses to racism in the contexts of Israel, Brazil, Sweden and Canada (Lamont and Mizrachi, 2012; Lamont et al., 2016).

Couched in Lamont’s long-term interest in using the tools of cultural sociology to understand how ordinary individuals construct and/or bridge group boundaries across race and class, Lamont and Fleming (2005: 31) conceive of everyday anti-racism as ‘micro level responses that individuals use to counter racist ideology in their daily life’ and unpack the ‘cultural repertoires’ that inform these responses – the ‘tool-kits’ of material and non-material devices, ‘the symbolic elements … the sets of ideas, stories, discourses, frames and beliefs that people draw on to create a line of action’ (Hall and Lamont, 2013: 18). There is a focus on Goffman-esque identity work and understanding the meaning-making processes that go into countering stigmatization, repairing ‘spoiled identities’ and ‘managing the self’. For example, Lamont and Fleming (2005) uncover how upper class African Americans draw on their education, intelligence and competence as anti-racist devices to rebut negative racial stereotypes. On the other hand, non-college educated African Americans see money and consumption practices as providing avenues to respect and ‘equal footing’ with the dominant group (Lamont, 2002). However, both groups draw on principles of the ‘universality of human nature’ to understand that everyone, regardless of race and class, ultimately shares the same status as ‘children of God’ with similar human needs. These findings particularly
highlight the situated nature of anti-racism in everyday life, in this case, there is a contextual way ordinary people operationalize values of universalism and particularism to conceive of ‘equality’ as opposed to seeing them as binary opposites.

Further multi-sited research by Lamont and collaborators expound comparative responses to racism across different stigmatized groups in different national contexts. Research in Israel, for example, indicates national markers of identity as central to the repertoires of marginalized groups compared to the market-oriented repertoires of stigmatized African Americans in the US. Findings from Mizrahi and Zawdu (2012) and Mizrahi and Herzog (2013) show how Ethiopian Jews manage the injuries of phenotypical racism associated with blackness by mobilizing the Zionist nationalist narrative to emphasize their ‘belonging’ to the nation, Mizrahi Jews play up their Jewishness to negate the low status attached to their arrival from other Arab countries, and Palestinian Arabs seek to maintain their dignity via the status of the ‘ultimate other’ in the context of ongoing violence between Arabs and Jews in the Middle East. Further away, in Sweden, Bursell (2012) illustrates how Middle Eastern migrants subscribe to a discourse of assimilation by exchanging their foreign-sounding surnames for Swedish-sounding ones to enable them to ‘pass’ in mainstream society while still remaining attached to their ethnic identity in their private lives. Outside of these collaborations, other scholars have also taken up Lamont’s model of everyday anti-racism and, interestingly, have focused on unearthing the experience of middle-class racial minorities. Lacy’s (2007) ethnography with suburban middle-class blacks in the US unpacks the ‘tool-kits’ from which this group draw to navigate their raced and classed positionalities which largely involve conflicted experiences with neo-liberalized choices around the suburbs in which they live or the schools to which they send their children. This is echoed in my own work on middle-class Filipino migrants in Sydney which reveal similar repertoires that feed strategies of social mobility, consumption practices and discourses of middle-class respectability as a means to repair stigmatized racial identities, but that also produce a status of in-betweenness as inclusion remains conditional and revocable (Aquino, 2016). Furthermore, middle-class individualism contrasts to the repertoires of working-class Filipino migrants who tend to draw on notions of solidarity, rights and justice as a means to cope with racism, including coping with the intra-ethnic othering they must endure from their more economically mobile counterparts (Aquino, 2017).

The idea of everyday anti-racism as being composed of ‘cultural repertoires’ helps reveal ‘the active elements in the processes through which actors make sense of their ability to pursue certain lines of action’ (Hall and Lamont, 2013: 18). It can draw out the heterogeneity in societies as different contexts make available (and attractive) distinct kinds of resources for resisting racism. The interesting focus on the experience of racial minorities in the middle-class has also complexified reductive structuralist arguments positing that social mobility and economic integration provide a buffer against racism. These actors are positioned in between inclusion/exclusion, equality/inequality which anti-racism dichotomies can fail to take into account. Moreover, anti-racism in these middle-class contexts reveal some problematic strategies to combat racism – such as those based on assimilationist, neo-liberal, individualistic, privatized values – which prompt necessary investigation into what kinds of inclusive membership need to be fostered across different milieus (Lamont and Fleming, 2005).

**Conclusion**

In recently mapping out the old and new terrains of anti-racism, Paradies (2016: 2–3) states that intellectual differences remain and ‘we still lack a shared notion of what is
meant by anti-racism’ nor do we yet have a ‘well developed typology of anti-racist theory and practice anywhere in the academic world’, although, ‘it is debatable whether distinct types of anti-racism can be distinguished, or more importantly, what the value is in doing so’. Paradies (2016: 2–3) therefore suggests instead for the ‘need to recognise the concomitant plurality of anti-racisms’ as ‘mutual reinforcement across various anti-racisms’ may perhaps be the most effective means of addressing racism. Everyday anti-racism, the ways in which individuals respond to racism in their day-to-day lives, can at times focus on resistance from the marginalized and points to the problematic way that the onus to combat racism continues to be mostly taken up by those victimized by racism. Investing in efforts to dismantle racism at the structural level through policy, legal and systemic change that addresses unequal power relations thus remains crucial. This is especially so in light of the resurgence of racisms in societies in the North that accentuate the historically deep-seated problem of racism and its profoundly institutionalized and transnational nature. However, everyday anti-racism is an important arena with which broader anti-racism theory and politics can engage, as it describes the lived and messy struggles against racism ‘on the ground’. Studies into everyday anti-racism reveal how racism is not experienced by people as a monolithic system but rather lived out contextually, necessitating situated strategies to negotiate racism across different temporal and spatial circumstances. It is a ‘people-centered’ study of racism and anti-racism but attempts to make important links between everyday practice and larger structures and institutions. It delves into questions of ‘culture’ and ‘identity’ that, while engaged with symbols, representation and discourse, also attempts to reconnect with questions around the redistribution of power. Furthermore, everyday anti-racism is an imperfect politics—at times engaging problematic strategies to combat racism that do not always aim to achieve ‘equality for all’—but nevertheless importantly reveal the hard and complicated labor of fighting racism which must be better taken into account in designing broader anti-racism policy and action.

References


Kristine Aquino


