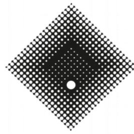

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Raced and risky subjects: the interplay of racial and managerial ideologies as an expression of “colorblind” racism

This is the Published version of the following publication

Agung-Igusti, Rama (2024) Raced and risky subjects: the interplay of racial and managerial ideologies as an expression of “colorblind” racism. American Journal of Community Psychology. ISSN 0091-0562

The publisher’s official version can be found at
https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/ajcp.12731
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Received: 1 October 2021 | Revised: 16 November 2023 | Accepted: 12 December 2023

DOI: 10.1002/ajcp.12731

SCRA SOCIETY FOR COMMUNITY RESEARCH AND ACTION

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Raced and risky subjects: The interplay of racial and managerial ideologies as an expression of "colorblind" racism

Rama P. Agung-Igusti

Institute of Health and Sport, Victoria University, Footscray, Victoria, Australia

Correspondence
Rama P. Agung-Igusti, Institute of Health and Sport, Victoria University, Footscray, VIC 3011, Australia.
Email: rama.p.agung@gmail.com

Abstract

Contemporary manifestations of race are dynamic and elusive in the forms and shapes they take. "Colourblind" racism is effective at drawing on seemingly objective and race-neutral discourses to obfuscate racialized forms of structural exclusion. Framed by Critical Race Theory and Critical Narrative Analysis this paper presents an example from the Australian context that examines the relationships between a grassroots initiative developed by creatives from the African diaspora and two not-for-profit human services organizations, to illustrate how ideologies of race are enacted and obscured by managerialist ideologies and discourses of risk. Specifically, it shows how harmful dominant cultural narratives of deficit and danger transforms racialized Africans in Australia into "risky subjects." In a managerialist organization, risk must be controlled, and thus risk becomes the rationality for the control of racialized and risky subjects. Resistance to control by those subjects produces forms of organizational defensiveness that are mobilized through managerialist discourses and practices that work to structurally exclude. These findings illustrate the ways ideologies of race work alongside and through other ideological discourses and practices which render racialized dynamics of oppression race-neutral.

KEYWORDS

"colorblind" racism, discourse, ideology, managerialism, narrative, risk

Highlights

- Contemporary and color-blind manifestations of racism are evasive.
- Ideologies of race are obscured by discourses of risk.
- Risk discourses contribute to racialized forms of control and structural exclusion.

INTRODUCTION

The centrality of race ideology to Australia's national identity, discourses, and societal structures is not a distant historical artifact but a constitutive feature that has endured into the present. The expressions of this ideology have changed shape over time, interacting with contemporary discourses that serve to obfuscate, and structurally exclude Indigenous and racialized people and communities in new ways (Bonilla-Silva, 2014). Yet the base logic of race ideology is unchanging. Grosfoguel (2016, p.10) defines racism as:

> a global hierarchy of superiority and inferiority … that have been politically, culturally and economically produced and reproduced for centuries by the institutions of the "capitalist/patriarchal western-centric/Christian-centric modern/colonial world system."

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Within this world system, Grosfoguel (2016) proposes Fanon's "line of the human" to understand how race cleaves into two: the zone of being or the human, those people above the line as "recognized socially in their humanity as human beings and, thus, [enjoying] access to rights (human rights, civil rights, women's rights, and/or labor rights), material resources, and social recognition to their subjectivities, identities, epistemologies and spiritualities" (p. 10); and the zone of nonbeing, those below the line whom are seen as non-human, and thus undeserving of the same rights, resources and recognition. In Australia the British colonial invasion, genocide, and forced assimilation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people was grounded in racial hierarchies that rendered them non-human (Fanon, 1967; Haebich, 2000; Tatz, 2017).

Through this hierarchy, dispossession of First Nations people was legitimated. Key to this was the legal principle of *Terra Nullius*, a principle that asserted that if land belonged to no man it lay free for claim by the British Empire (Aboriginal Heritage Office, 2023). By rendering the Traditional Custodians of Australia as non-human, land, waterways, and resources all became White possessions (Moreton-Robinson, 2015). Through this lie the British embarked on a project of violent expansion and genocide which robbed Aboriginal peoples of their lands and lives by gun and disease (Tatz, 2017). By the mid-1800s Australia adopted a policy of "protection" towards the decimated Aboriginal population, which made them wards of the state to be moved to reserves and missions with every aspect of their lives controlled, robbing them of their culture, language, and identities (Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, 1997). In the mid-20th century, Australia shifted to a policy of assimilation shaped by eugenicist beliefs and the desire for a wholly White Australia. These policies led to the stolen generations which saw tens of thousands of Aboriginal children forcibly removed from their homes and families and placed into institutions or adopted into White families (Haebich, 2000). "Mixed-race" children were targeted with the intention that they would be assimilated and their aboriginality bred out, while "full-blooded" Aboriginal peoples would naturally "die-out" (Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, 1997)—all predicated on the White supremacist ideologies that supposed Black inferiority.

These policies occurred in conjunction with a range of other White supremacist policies collectively known as the "White Australia Policy." These policies restricted non-White and non-European migration to the nation, and by 1947 only 2.7% of the population were born outside of Australia, Ireland or the United Kingdom (National Museum of Australia, 2023). The White Australia Policy would continue up until the 1970s where, recognizing the need for population growth and skilled labor to grow the nation, it would finally be dismantled with bipartisan political support and a policy of multiculturalism. Yet despite shifts in migration policy, the recognition of racial discrimination, or public attitudes, many argue that Australia remains a White nation with White supremacist ideologies continuing to shape national identity, discourses and institutions (Hage, 1998; Moreton-Robinson, 2015). This is evidenced by the many material and symbolic inequities experiences by people and communities that have been made into racialized *others*. Some examples of these inequities are under-representation within leadership roles across institutions and industries (Australian Human Rights Commission [AHRC], 2018); pervasive race-based discrimination (Markus, 2019; Wyn et al., 2018); and negative media representations (All Together Now, 2019).

It is important to note that the lived experience of racialization in Australia differs across groups. For example, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' experiences are bound to the dehumanizing colonial logics that legitimated dispossession (Haebich, 2000; Moreton-Robinson, 2015; Tatz, 2017). While migrant groups who have settled in Australia are subject to specific forms of racialization shaped by local/global, and contemporary/historical discourses that seek to prevent their claim to citizenship and belonging (Hage, 1998). For the African diaspora in Australia, racialising discourses are not dissimilar to those that have been deployed across other settler colonial states, discourses that equate Blackness with danger, criminality, and a lack of capacity (Collins, 2009; Fanon, 1967), and particular to the migration histories of some African diaspora communities in Australia, as "perpetual refugees" (Majavu, 2018). While some of these racializing discourses are similar to those experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, they are produced by different social, cultural, and political contexts and reflect politics and trajectories of global migration. For example, research examining race-related social commentary in Australian media showed significant differences between the types of covert and overt racism present across newspaper and television media. The research found in the examined media that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people were most often stereotyped as dangerous and culturally inferior, and that poor social outcomes could be attributed to Indigenous culture (rather than social and political factors created by colonization), and that Indigenous people needed to be integrated and assimilated. Historical events such as the stolen generation, the forced removal of children, were also ignored or denied, and media would also indicate that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people received preferential treatment from governments and other institutions due to their race. In media relating to crime and violence, racial descriptors such as "of African appearance" were overwhelmingly included, and represented fearmongering concerning "African gangs," and contributed to

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stereotypes of danger and violence (All Together Now, 2019). While there are similarities between stereotypes of violence and denigration of culture, they evoke different racialized images, assertions of cultural inferiority or incompatibility, and propose different responses of assimilation and removal/denial of entry.

While the first instances of Black African migration to Australia can be traced to the arrival of colonial British ships (Pybus, 2006), it wasn't until the 1990s and 2000s, that Australia saw significant migration from the Horn of Africa, West Africa, and sub-Saharan Africa in response to conflict in those respective regions (Markus, 2016). While many African migrants came to Australia as part of humanitarian programs, many also came through skilled visa programs seeking economic opportunities (Jakubowicz, 2010). In 2020 (excluding White South African migrants) there were approximately 168,000 people of African origin from sub-Saharan countries living in Australia, less than 1% of the total population (Counted & Renzaho, 2021). Despite the relative small size of the community, people of African background have become the focus of these harmful and racializing discourses (Kwansah-Aidoo & Mapedzahama, 2018; Majavu, 2018; Udah, 2018). These discourses are acutely felt with reports that 60%–77% of African migrants and 38.5% of students from African backgrounds have experienced discrimination (Markus, 2016; Priest et al., 2013). Yet, a feature of contemporary racism is the disavowal of race within processes of structural exclusion. Racializing discourses interact with other discourses that obscure the centrality of race in structural exclusion, and the experiences of those subject to racialization and exclusion are denied and challenged (Augoustinos & Every, 2007; Bonilla-Silva, 2014).

CONTEMPORARY MANIFESTATIONS OF RACE: COLOURBLIND RACISM

Race and raced subjects, are dynamically constructed and ever changing both temporally and contextually (Stevens, 2018)—race is a beast that continues to pervert and contort its body into at times grotesque and at times seemingly benign forms. However, this transmogrification is not evident to all. For White people, a powerful epistemology of ignorance to race distorts their own vision of the world. Race is redacted from the collective hermeneutical resources through which they understand their own position—and the ways and manner their power and privilege has accumulated over time (Mills, 1997). Contemporary forms of racism have increasingly reflected this evasiveness, embracing "color-blindness." Sociologist Eduardo Bonilla-Silva (2014) asserts that "racial inequality is reproduced through 'new racism' practices that are subtle, institutional, and apparently nonracial" (p. 3). A color-blind ideology of race works through key frames that obfuscates the language of race and racism by drawing on principles of liberalism in superficial ways to explain structural inequities experienced by racialized groups. Ideas of equality, liberty, freedom of choice, and individualism are deployed as explanatory frames which sustains the notion that inequities are the product of individuals who are responsible for the outcomes of their own lives. Systemic racialized oppression is disavowed and inequity is dehistoricized and depoliticized; success is attributed to hard work and the capacity and will to succeed.

Many scholars have documented the *everyday racism* (Essed, 1991) encountered by people of African heritage in Australia. This has included mundane and pernicious encounters across day-to-day lives (Kwansah-Aidoo & Mapedzahama, 2018); or the subtle and indirect forms of dehumanization, or *infrahumanisation*, that constructs people of African heritage as dysfunctional and culturally incompatible outsiders (Majavu, 2018). These are more insidious manifestations of racism, that while acutely felt by those who are subject to it, become harder to name than more explicit forms. Discursive strategies of denial that are deployed as explanatory devices for claims of racialized oppression. Augoustinos and Every (2007) show how these strategies of denial draw on discourses of reason, rationality and liberalism to justify racist views, and downplay race. Importantly, these discourses not only represent how people come to understand and normalize racialized inequities, but also shape their own actions and behaviors which contribute to structural exclusion.

Quayle and Sonn (2013) also demonstrate how these discourses are mobilized within institutions. In their work examining barriers to collaboration between non-Aboriginal local government employees and the local Aboriginal Noongar community of Western Australia, they show how a discursive frame of abstract liberalism is deployed to obscure the racializing foundations of barriers to partnership between government and community. This frame evoked ideas of meritocracy and equality that not only legitimized the dominant positions of non-Aboriginal peoples but also became a logic through which policies, such as affirmative action are constructed as forms of "reverse racism." These discourses do not just have explanatory power but shape the material conditions that contribute to structural exclusion. Importantly, they constitute a powerful denial of race ideology as a motivational force in the actions of individual actors, organizations, and institutions.

HUMAN SERVICES ORGANIZATIONS (HSOs) AND MANAGERIALISM

Many people from migrant communities will encounter nonprofit HSOs as part of their settlement journeys. These organizations provide support and seek to address some

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forms of structural exclusion experienced by marginalized communities through the provision of programs and services. HSOs can also be sites where discrimination is experienced, and inequity reproduced. For example, consultations with over 2500 African Australians and representatives from over 150 government and non-government stakeholders and services reported issues within HSOs related to a lack of cultural competency in service provision, the development of inappropriate services, discrimination, cultural assumptions, stereotyping, and miscommunication (AHRC, 2010). Other research has also identified power inequities within relationships between nonprofit organizations (including HSOs) and grassroots African Australian community organizations which create dependence, and leads to power hoarding and gatekeeping (Hiruy & Eversole, 2015). Many of these inequities are produced through dynamics grounded in a race ideology that constructs people of African backgrounds in racialized and denigrating ways (Kwansah-Aidoo & Mapedzahama, 2018; Majavu, 2018; Udah, 2018). Yet these dynamics can be difficult to name, as powerful discourses can work to render them invisible.

Managerialism has become a pervasive ideology within HSOs globally, representing a microlevel manifestation of macrolevel neoliberal policies implemented by government. This ideology sees all organizations as fundamentally alike, and thus optimum performance, productivity, and efficiency can be achieved through universalized structures and approaches. Central to this is the role and importance of the management class in overseeing these approaches through mechanisms of control and standardization (Kilkauer, 2015).

Managerialism orients organizations to maintain legitimacy via the interests of powerful external stakeholders (i.e., funders, boards and government). Threats to legitimacy—threats to growth, adherence to structures of governance, and the organization's image—are risky and must be mitigated. Practices of management grounded in rationality provide a seemingly objective (i.e., nonrisky), and color-blind path to decision making (Maier & Meyer, 2011). Heckler (2019) argues that managerial discourses reinforce White and masculine norms. If optimal efficiency is the desired goal of a managerialist organization, pursued through objective and effective technologies, then any inequities are cast as the result of non-White (and non-masculine) deficiencies.

Practices of managerialism are also adept at asserting forms of control that resist transformative change. For example, the pursuit of endless innovation has the effect of redirecting organizational resources away from racial justice projects of said organizations (Heckler, 2019). Other writers have demonstrated that managerial discourses and practices are effectively used as mechanisms of control and co-option in the context of adult–youth activist partnerships (Clay & Turner, 2021). Willner (2019) draws on the Critical Race Theory (CRT) concept of *interest divergence*, which describes how systems that perpetuate racialized disadvantage and accumulate power and privilege to Whiteness sustain the dominant position, and render managerialism fundamentally incompatible with social justice goals. They pose that managerialist practices actively preserve the status quo and undermine structural change through a number of ways, such as focussing on output over outcomes aligned with values. Thus, managerialism offers a particular set of discourses and practices within HSOs that can perpetrate and obscure racialized forms of structural exclusion.

The management of risk is one discourse within a managerial organization (Maier & Meyer, 2011) strongly connected to practices of control and exclusion. Risk management is concerned with the control and exclusion of risks, but how risk is applied can be shaped by race via discretionary policing (Roscigno, 2011)—the way individuals differentially deploy controlling bureaucratic practices, policing some people but not others. Risk has long been used in the construction of a dangerous *Other* (Douglas & Wildavsky, 1982), however, risk also constructs groups and individuals as problematic and in need of firm governance. Designations such as "at risk" are a form of symbolic violence; risk labels and discourses are taken for granted by a range of institutional actors such as scholars and human services workers and (re)produced unproblematically to describe the lives of marginalized groups in ways that disenfranchise them from knowing their own experience (Foster & Spencer, 2011). Furthermore, risk shapes subjectivities by narrowly defining the ways those deemed "at risk" can understand themselves (Foster & Spencer, 2011; Frantsman-Spector & Shoshana, 2021).

In designating risk to individuals and groups, they become subject to control and management. Their assumed deficit, which often they are made responsible for, becomes a cause for intervention (Follesø, 2015). According to Frantsman-Spector and Shoshana (2021) such interventions are a form of "cruel benevolence," gestures that are fundamentally discriminatory and engage practices of subordination, obedience, and indebtedness. This embroils those who are constructed as "at-risk" into beneficiaries of institutional good will. This dynamic points the lens away from dominant institutions—problems are firmly located within the minoritized "at-risk" groups, not the mainstream or the powerful (te Riele, 2006).

Risk as a discourse of managerialism can be deployed in similar ways to legitimate control and exclusion. One key example can be found in the ways Aboriginal-led organizations in Australia are undermined and have their autonomy constrained by government institutions that construct them as deficient and responsible for poor progress, despite creating the conditions that make it increasingly difficult for these organizations to operate effectively. These organizations are constructed as too risky to be trusted with self-governance (Bond

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et al., 2019). Brigg and Curth-Bibb (2017) argue this form of technically oriented governance leads to "controlled communities" rather than "community control," as organizations are constrained by prescriptive funding arrangements and reporting requirements. Seemingly neutral practices work through seemingly neutral systems to maintain control and Aboriginal forms of governance and ways of working grounded in Aboriginal culture and identity are devalued and cast as problematic. Thus, racialized individuals, communities, and organizations are made risky, and forms of governance steeped in managerialist ideology are deployed as mechanisms of control.

This paper is informed by CRT as a conceptual lens to explore how racialized dynamics of power become obscured within the setting of HSOs by discourses produced through managerialist ideologies. CRT emerged from the field of critical legal studies (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001) and has been a useful frame through which psychology can examine racism as systemically constituted (Salter & Haugen, 2017). Importantly this frame is a recognition of racism as systemic rather than an individual psychological phenomena; an understanding that powerful discourses work to mask the centrality of race in contemporary society and preserve the status quo; and that counter-storytelling and the centering of voices of those whom are racialized are essential tools for naming and unsettling racialized structures and dynamics in society (Reyes Cruz & Sonn, 2011; Salter & Haugen, 2017).

Using this lens, I present an example, taken from a broader research project, of how a managerial discourse of risk is mobilized, transforming racialized people into *risky subjects*, and legitimating practices that contribute to exclusion by rendering them as objective and colorblind practices of management and governance. This example draws on research documenting the creation of a self-determined community arts setting led by a collective of creatives from African backgrounds, and their relationships with two HSOs they sought support from.

METHODOLOGY

Context

This study was part of doctoral research examining the development of a self-determined grassroots initiative developed by a collective of creatives from the African diaspora in Naarm[1] (Melbourne), Australia. The collective was comprised of six creatives (later five—as one would leave the collective) whom all identified as belonging to the African diaspora in Australia. They are predominantly of South Sudanese heritage, with one member of Tanzanian and Comorian heritage. They predominantly identified as female, with one member identifying as male. The collective members were creatives across a range of disciplines such as film, photography, performance, and writing. They have also been involved across many community development and arts-based projects, either through HSOs, independently or in collaboration with other grassroots groups. The initiative was funded through a state government grant supporting the collective to be able to create a body of creative and critical projects responding to the forms of racialized structural exclusion experienced by both the collective within the creative industries and communities of the African diaspora more broadly. These projects would entail both material opportunities and recognition through counter-storytelling. The initiative itself would embody goals of self-determination, rejecting the dependent and constraining relationships that many individuals and grassroots groups from racialized communities experience when pursuing resources, spaces, and opportunities contingent on HSOs. In developing this initiative, the collective necessarily encountered various HSOs which played significant roles in the activities the collective were undertaking and were instrumental in the creation of the setting itself. In this paper, I draw on examples of the collectives' relationship with two specific organizations.

The community health organization (CHO)

The first example is that of a large CHO which served as an auspice through which the grant funding would be managed. Further responsibilities of this relationship were to provide administrative support, access to important networks and to develop the skills of the collective members around key areas such as finance and governance that would further develop their capacity to run a self-determining and independent initiative. However, key tensions arose across the relationship, centered around a lack of autonomy over accessing the grant funding, breakdown of mentoring support to develop key skill areas of the collective members, and protracted negotiations around an memorandum of understanding (MOU) and auspice agreement outlining each parties responsibilities.

The social housing organization (SHO)

The second example relates to a SHO that owned a studio space the collective sought to lease. An essential part of the initiative, explicated in the original application, was the securing of a physical space for the

[1]This is an Aboriginal place name for the area where Melbourne is located, on the lands of the Woi Wurrung and Boon Wurrung people of the Kulin Nation.

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initiative. This space would serve as a workspace for the collective, be used to hold events, exhibitions, artists-in-residence, and be an important community resource for the African diaspora in the city. This studio space was located in an inner-city suburb, with strong commercial and community ties to the African diaspora, and the space itself had been the base for the peer-led participatory community arts programs which the collective members had previously been engaged with and were part of the broader work of the CHO.

PARTICIPANTS AND DATA COLLECTION

Participants were members of the collective that had developed the self-determined initiative, as well as individuals connected to the project who were employed with the CHO that served as an auspice. I had existing relationships with both the collective members and the CHO across a number of previous projects, through these relationships, I was approached by the CHO and the collective to undertake an evaluation of the initiative. The five participants who were employed previously with the CHO held managerial roles in different areas and at different levels of the organization, but all had insights into the initiative. Two of these individuals also had insights regarding the relationship between the collective and the SHO. A single interview was held with each of these participants. To preserve confidentiality, further descriptive details will be omitted. Members of the collective were interviewed twice, once as they were beginning to develop the initiative, and a second time once the initiative was established and they reflected on previous events and experiences.

Each of the interviews were semi-structured and approximately 1 h in duration, taking place in-person or via the phone and web-conferencing software due to restrictions of the COVID-19 pandemic. Informed consent was obtained before the interviews. The interview questions elicited reflections on the involvement with the initiative, including experiences of collaboration either with the collective, or with other organizations. Questions included “Have there been any challenges you encountered as part of this initiative?” and “What are some things you may have learnt through working with the collective?.” Over the course of the project, spanning 2018 to 2021, I participated in activities and events organized through the initiative, attended planning meetings, and attended meetings with various organizational partners such as the CHO. At times I shared workspace with the collective multiple days a week, and assisted in setting up for events and other activities. Participant observation and field notes were used to document these experiences.

DATA ANALYSIS

In seeking to understand how powerful societal discourses are drawn into organizational contexts, reproduced through shared narratives, shaping organizational practices, it is necessary to draw on conceptual tools that are attuned to illustrating the interconnections that occur at different levels of our complex social worlds. Critical narrative analysis (CNA) offers a frame that accounts for how individuals come to understand and make meaning of their everyday lived contexts, drawing on cultural resources, and as situated within powerful societal discourses. The importance of understanding narratives as cultural resources has also been recognized within community psychology and can provide important insights into dynamics of power and resistance, and how people transform themselves and their contexts (Rappaport, 1995; Sonn et al., 2013). Furthermore, critical methodologies are necessary if community psychology is to realize transformative research and action and recognize marginalized knowers and knowledge (Reyes Cruz & Sonn, 2011; Sonn et al., 2013). By drawing on narrative and critical discourse approaches, CNA attends to the presence of ideology, discourse, and power within individual's narrative sense-making (Souto-Manning, 2012). CNA as a frame was employed alongside the systematic approach to narrative analysis as outlined by Lieblich et al. (2011).

I began analysis with a close reading and rereading of the verbatim interview transcripts, before I selected and compiled subtexts. These subtexts contained stories shared by each of the interview participants organized around key events that characterized the relationship between the collective and the two HSOs. Organizing data by these specific events allowed me to contrast and triangulate the experiences of participants who were positioned differently, in their roles as collective members or as HSO staff, or as holding White, or Black African diasporic identities. Also included in these subtexts were my field notes from participant observations which served to further contextualize the stories shared. These notes documented conversations between the collective members as they deconstructed their experiences and captured my own observations of some of these events.

Next, I defined thematic content categories within the subtexts—themes and perspectives that provided an organizational and meaning-making framework through which I could understand the data. Importantly, discourse related to risk, managerialism and race were identified in the narrative accounts, as well as related specific practices. For example, initial themes included *organizational risk management* and *inability to relinquish power*. Then open reading entailed the subtext to be read line by line in a process identifying important units of meanings, and the author's initial reflections. Units of meanings across the sub-text were then organized into

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the preliminary themes that had been developed and inputted into a purpose made excel spreadsheet that was used to further refine the themes.

Each narrative theme was then reviewed multiple times and refined into broader overarching themes, these broader themes were then examined more closely, some being collapsed, omitted, or made clearer. An example of this is an initial theme of "wanting to be treated like other organizations," which came to denote a shared narrative of "not being taken seriously." These themes were then re-examined, across the subtexts, and in relation to broader discourses. For example, the aforementioned theme spoke to how the racializing discourses evident in *dominant cultural narratives of deficit and danger*, which forged the experiences of the collective and the ways power and privilege shaped their relationships. Interpretations of the text were summarized, shared, and discussed with collective members as both member-checking and part of the collaborative process. These discussions were opportunities to share new conceptual tools that the collective reported useful for naming similar experiences and making connections to broader structures. For analyst triangulation and critical feedback, I presented preliminary findings to my research group.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In the following sections, I illustrate how ideologies of race are enacted and obscured by managerialist ideologies within interactions between a grassroots initiative developed by creatives from the African diaspora and two HSOs. The findings show how harmful dominant cultural narratives of deficit and criminality transform racialized Africans in Australia into "risky subjects." In a managerialist organization, risk must be controlled, and thus risk becomes the rationality for the control of racialized and risky subjects. Resistance to control by those subjects produces forms of organizational defensiveness that are mobilized through managerialist discourses and practices that work to structurally exclude.

ENCOUNTERING DOMINANT NARRATIVES OF DEFICIT AND DANGER

Ideologies circulating within social contexts are reproduced in organizations through the internalization of dominant cultural narratives, norms, and values (Bond & Wasco, 2017). For racialized groups and individuals from the African diaspora in Australia, there are many dominant narratives circulating that construct people of African heritage as being in deficit or as violent and criminal (Majavu, 2020). These dominant cultural narratives shape intersubjective engagement within organizational contexts. Within their relationship with the CHO, members of the collective reported feeling as if they were not taken seriously or respected:

> The level of respect from the organization to community groups and collectives, and how they are treated when they work with a nonprofit organization or community services. It's almost being treated as something mediocre.

This has been reported in previous research that shows the ways that Africans in Australia are constructed as less capable or qualified (Kwansah-Aidoo & Mapedzahama, 2018) and echoes similar findings that have shown Black youth in organizational settings are constructed as "scary" or "underachievers" (Hasford, 2016).

An individual affiliated with the CHO, reflecting on the participatory and peer-led community arts space from which the initiative developed, showed how dominant narratives of criminality and danger are also evoked:

> [The spaces' autonomy] was threatened by more insecure managers who felt concerned about the level of risk involved in open access, and the fact that there wasn't the same kinds of barriers between [the CHO's] staff and the "community"—in inverted commas. That the community and the staff were one [and the same] was very challenging to some of those structures…

For some in the organization there was a need to keep barriers between the racialized African diaspora communities that the organization "served," and the organization itself. Peer-led and participatory models, if not self-determined programs developed by members of a community, disrupted these boundaries that served to maintain asymmetrical power relationships. The construction of racialized Africans in Australia as criminal or dangerous have also been documented and serves to dehumanize and undermine the rights and needs which are only afforded to those deemed human (Majavu, 2018).

The collective's relationship with the SHO was also shaped by race and dominant narratives of criminality. The SHO was engaged through networks within the CHO to secure a physical space for the initiative to be based. Before the signing of a lease agreement, the SHO provided a letter of support as part of the funding grant application for the initiative showing nominal support to lease the space. However, as an initial MOU was being negotiated before the signing of a lease the collective experienced a series of racializing encounters with members of the SHO, as well as added stipulations to

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the MOU which were experienced as undue forms of surveillance and control. As one White affiliate of the CHO that was familiar with the initiative shared:

> Suddenly, there's always extra barriers, and there's all these kind of … racial biases as well about young African people being in this space and the implications that might have. They started talking a lot more about security, swipe tags … and I kind of feel like, if it was me and a bunch of White kids working on a comedy show or something and using that space, it just never would have come up. The members of the group could see it for exactly what it was. Even I was having to resist my gas light tendencies, to go "maybe they're reading too much into this, or maybe it's something else…"

This was felt to be a double standard, as the SHO was also about to lease the space below the studio to a licensed bar. The bar would not be held to the same restrictions around who could access the space and when. As one collective member recounted:

> …then there's this group of Black people that want to rent out the space upstairs whose patrons are mostly going to be people of colour. Then there's just like that unconscious bias—or conscious that, "This is going to become a recipe for disaster. There's going to be people coming down to the bar, and then going upstairs, and then who knows what's going to happen next?" … I saw that unfolding just in the conversations that we were having and the body language. Just even in their eyes and in their energy, you could feel that.

For this collective member, the perceived danger was assigned to Black creatives and people of color. This was presented as an objective process of risk management imposed by the SHO but was experienced as a double standard that was deployed within a racialized subtext. Not being able to secure a space would have profound effects on the collective's vision for their project and impacted their communities and other communities who experience racialization and structural exclusion in the Australian context. The limited availability of space within which they can come together, create, organize, and hold dialogs, renders racialized young people dependent on spaces that are managed by HSOs, other institutions, contingent on their norms, and shared with other groups. Many of these spaces are not experienced as culturally safe and or are spaces of surveillance and control. This compounds structural exclusion as it serves as a barrier to opportunities, access to resources and the creation of cultural products that contribute to positive forms of identity-making.

Through the above excerpts I have shown how dominant narratives construct people of African heritage in Australia as inherently in deficit, criminal, and dangerous, yet these are narratives that circulate globally with ideologies of race that emerged alongside coloniality and its hegemonic institutions. Across history, the colonized, the racialized, and dehumanized have been constructed as both lacking in capacity and entirely capable in their "dangerousness" (Fforde et al., 2013; Memmi, 2021). These narratives have continued to persevere (Hasford, 2016; Kwansah-Aidoo & Mapedzahama, 2018; Majavu, 2018), and through managerial discourses they are transformed—as raced subjects become risky subjects.

MOBILIZING RISK TO DE-RACE CONTROL AND EXCLUSION

The dominant cultural narratives of deficit and danger discussed in the previous section give form to controlling images (Collins, 2009) that legitimate the control and subordination of racialized groups and individuals. The designation of risk further provides a race-neutral logic to control and manage racialized subjects. HSOs often hold significant power within relationships with grassroots community-based groups and will resist relinquishing forms of control. This control is maintained through managerial discourses and practices that work to impact resources, block challenges, reinscribe power relations, and pacify resistance. For one person affiliated with the CHO, this was the core tensions that the organization faced in their relationship with an initiative that sought to be self-determining:

> …it was this idea of, "Yes, it's self-determined, but not in that case, and not over here." You can do all that, but there was still too much decision-making being done by people from a White standpoint, and not enough understanding within that organisational structure that young people of colour in that situation, where they are still answerable to White people is already hard, it's already difficult.

This power inequity is enshrined in the paternalistic approaches of many HSOs (and structurally upheld through arrangements that position organizations as controlling funding in collaborative relationships, or as managers of programs and initiatives that communities engage with) that attributes risk to marginalized communities, control then comes in a form of benevolence which these communities are beneficiaries

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of. As shared by one individual affiliated with the CHO:

> There's still so much about service delivery, particularly health service delivery, which is a very patriarchal model and very much about someone with the power, someone receiving the service, and the person with the power makes all the decisions and decides whether or not that community member needs this particular service, and how that service will be delivered.

For another individual, this dynamic of dependence and the role of the benevolent organization restricts reflexivity and a troubling of how power is situated:

> There was still a degree of comfort in being well-meaning and benevolent, a community health organization that didn't need to be told that the way it was working wasn't right.

When drawing on organizational logics through a managerial framework, these power dynamics are normalized as "best practice," as effective, efficient, and objective. Hiruy and Eversole (2015) also examined the institutional relationships between HSOs, governments and grassroots African community organizations in Australia. They found that these grassroots community organizations felt that many Not for Profits positioned themselves as gatekeepers, controlling access to funding and decision-making.

When forms of control that manifest through dependent relationships is challenged, practices of exclusion can be mobilized. For the community groups in Hiruy and Eversole's (2015) study, as capacity was developed and became better organized, they were seen as competition for funding and subject to forms of exclusion. Exclusion can be immediate as relationship ties are ended, or more gradual as an organization employs practices which force the other organization to withdraw from the relationship as it becomes too difficult to sustain. Within a partnership or collaboration between a larger organization and a smaller organization, this may look like the withdrawal of key forms of support, limiting of communication and access to decision makers through hierarchical structures, imposition of restrictive forms of bureaucracy and leveraging power and resource inequities within negotiations. Here one member of the collective recounts their difficulties in finalizing an auspice agreement between the collective and the CHO:

> It's interesting to see that there's still no agreement even for now. Blame it all on time management and things like that, but if this is something that you've auspiced and has been signed off at the top level from executive directors. There should be a microscope on these projects to see that it gets looked after the way it needed … I think that an auspice agreement can't be delegated to someone who's working one day a week when it needs to be signed off by an executive director.

The level of involvement of executive and middle management decreased, this was partly due to an organizational restructure and the exit of key employees involved in supporting the initiative at its conception, but also reflected a move to a more defensive positions as control was challenged through the insistence on an agreement which would enshrine responsibility and accountability for both parties. Negotiations around this agreement presented a significant resource drain on the collective and further led to feelings of not being supported. Further, when opting for mechanisms such as using legally binding agreements to ensure accountability within the relationship, mechanisms congruent with managerial governance practices, the CHO insisted instead on engaging in the relationship "in good faith."

In relation to the SHO, challenges to control led to a withdrawal of the studio as a space to lease. This had significant impacts on the collective, as one member shared:

> Then when [the opportunity for the space] was taken away, we all were just aloof, we were all just a mess. Basically, it allows an institution like that dragging things with you and giving you this sense of hope, but then later on being like, "We're not interested anymore." It's like, had we been a White institution, that wouldn't be the language.

The studio space was a central part of the initiative upon which many of their projects were contingent, two collective members further describe this renege as leading them to having "their confidence broken" and their "hopes and dreams crushed." Such exclusions reproduced the very forms of racialized structural exclusions they imagined the initiative to contest, such as previous experiences of being turned away from opportunities to lease studio spaces once their African heritage was evident on arrival. These power dynamics evoke the notion of property ownership and "White possessiveness" (Moreton-Robinson, 2015) that are fundamentally connected to coloniality and White supremacy—here risk guards against the "loss" of property, money or time and, therefore a loss power over the "non-human" subject for whom these are denied. As one collective member shared:

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> I felt that we didn't get the support that we needed to be able to get that space or the people that were supposed to… help us to gain this space didn't really fight for us in my opinion … it's already hard enough as Black people or in this community and in this society to be able to be accepted into spaces because people are very sceptical of us already and we have so many eyes on us in negative ways as well.

For this collective member, this exclusion also highlighted the lack of support from the CHO, demonstrating an *interest divergence* (Willner, 2019), as the relationship between the two organizations took precedence to any commitment of support or values oriented towards challenging forms of racism experienced by communities of the African diaspora. As one individual affiliated with the CHO shared:

> The thing about [the CHO] and a lot of organisations like [the CHO], is that they can talk the talk and they will have a relatively progressive kind of language and thinking on paper in their policies, but in terms of actually living it, there was very little evidence of that.

ORGANIZATIONAL DEFENSIVENESS: GASLIGHT, GATEKEEP AND GOVERNANCE

There has been much written on the ways Whiteness responds when confronted with the impacts of racism on racialized groups. Mills (1997) writes of the willful ignorance that is key to the racial contract that maintains a blindness to the existence of race and its concomitant dynamics of power and oppression. Others have spoken of White defensiveness (Yancy, 2018) and White fragility (DiAngelo, 2018) as powerful responses that serve to close discussion and negate the experiences of those who have experienced racialization and racism. This defensiveness arose when the collective challenged what they saw as racializing interactions and double standards in the levels of control required when negotiating the lease of the studio space with the SHO. As a collective member shared:

> [We] felt that they thought we came from a harsh point of view. For us it wasn't a harsh point of view … we're just being honest with what we want and that's all we want you guys to see. They saw it from a completely different end … I think some people are afraid of the truth sometimes, they don't want to hear it. That's where that White supremacy comes in for me. You're already judged and you're telling the truth…

Rather than being open to listening and engaging in dialog, a defensiveness and refusal to engage with the experiences of racialization occurred. This contrasted with later discussions with others within the organization, who were able to engage and validate the experiences of the collective, allowing for the relationship to ultimately move forward productively. For those subject to racialization, acceptance is contingent on not provoking White fragility, to do so risks being constructed as unreasonable or difficult or ungrateful for the seeming benevolence they have been afforded (DiAngelo, 2021).

Organizational contexts also offer a different set of discourses through which these denials and defences can operate. Here one individual affiliated with the CHO, and who identifies as White, refers to the "gaslighting tendencies" that were mobilized when confronted with the collective's experiences of racism:

> …there was probably times where I didn't push things as hard as I could have back to the [CHO] or to [the SHO] or just even didn't understand where they were coming from or didn't reflect on those gas lighting tendencies that sometimes come through, where they're saying, no, this is about racism and my mind is almost hardwired to go "is it though?"…. you get accustomed, particularly when you've worked within organizations to almost help justify their actions for reasons of risk management or governance…

Importantly, the way they are socialized into maintaining organizational legitimacy and power, further renders the organization as race neutral through discourses of risk management and governance. The organization is motivated by risk mitigation and reputation maintenance, but it is dominant narratives that construct racialized groups in harmful ways that shapes who and what is seen as a risk. This is an effective manifestation of contemporary racism rather than the direct violence of interpersonal racism or individual biases and prejudices (Bonilla-Silva, 2014; Malherbe et al., 2021). It's the deployment of organizational practices through organizational logics that are shaped by dominant narratives grounded in White supremacist and anti-Black ideologies. However, to challenge this provokes a protective response in the sphere of the individual and the organization.

The managerial discourses within organizations are infused with normative assumptions of Whiteness and masculinity (Heckler, 2019). These discourses are an

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important mechanism of control through the ways they construct organizational worlds in neutral and objective ways, obscuring the prevalence of dominant narratives and ideologies, and reinscribing inequitable power relations. This is evident in the excerpt below, which captures how this discourse is experienced and problematized by one of the collective members:

> There's almost a code switch that exists in those institutions and it's so competitive in a way, and that's why these languages exist. Basically, they're just saying the same thing that we would be saying, but in just this very complex English way. It doesn't make sense. It's just a loop that just goes around and around … You see a lot of hierarchy [and superiority] … It's a non-existing language … Even sitting … down with [a person in a high level managerial position at the CHO] there's this rigidness, we're going to promise you these things that you've come to us about, but then it's been a year and a half and nothing has occurred.

For this collective member, this language is instrumental and deployed with intentionality. It forms a social context marred by competition, racialized hierarchies, White supremacy, and attendant dynamics of paternalizing power and control. It places a boundary between the institutional and organizational world and the world of the community, gatekeeping access to legitimacy and authority. It gaslights. It pacifies. Lastly, it is non-performative as it promises action that never wholly eventuates (Ahmed, 2006).

CONCLUSION

In this paper, I have shown an example of the ways that a dominant ideology of managerialism within HSOs produces powerful discourses that obscure the presence of race in dynamics of power that contribute to structural exclusion. Risk is central to the governance of HSOs and—understood through an ideological frame of managerialism—must be controlled and mitigated to maintain legitimacy and achieve optimal performance (Willner, 2019). As such risk becomes an objective rationalization for the mitigation and control of racialized subjects. Race and managerialist ideologies ruthlessly and effectively work together within organizational settings to recreate and uphold racialized dynamics of oppression and exclusion through the construction of racialized and risky subjects. Risk is culture bound. Risk is ideological. Risk is a discursive tool that engenders the creation of practices and processes that mask insidious forms of racism central to the structural exclusion of racialized communities. Through these practices and processes, the racialized *Other* is controlled and excluded, and risk provides the logic for why control and exclusion is required. As risky subjects, mechanisms of control and exclusion grounded in dynamics of racialized oppression are rendered race neutral. Furthermore, when these forms of control and exclusion are challenged and race is named, an organizational and individual defensiveness arises to negate the experience of those who are impacted by these dynamics.

For many organizations, cultural awareness and implicit bias training has been posed as a remedy for racialized inequity. However, these approaches have been critiqued for, at best being ineffective (Bezrukova et al., 2016; Duguid & Thomas-Hunt, 2015) and, at worse, for sustaining epistemologies of ignorance by shifting focus away from the ideologies and structures that maintain inequity, while simultaneously absolving White guilt and legitimating the status quo (Tate & Page, 2018). Similarly, critics of building cultural competencies decry its emphasis on the individual over broader systems, its implicit othering of cultures outside of dominant normative Whiteness and cultural essentialisation (Pon, 2009). Building more diverse workforces and leaders is an important move to more equitable organizations, however, White normative cultures can still persist and be sustained by folks of color (Ostrander, 1999; Ward, 2008). Inclusion and commitments to diversity are limited in their capacity to transform oppressive systems (Malherbe et al., 2021).

Instead, we must start by recognizing and taking seriously the shared experiences of those subjected to racialized cultural and structural violence. From this vantage point contemporary manifestations of race, and the psychosocial cost of living and working within unjust systems becomes clearer. This can then inform efforts towards structural change, or a disruption of dominant organizational arrangements (Bond, 1999), and lead to processes of collaboration and support that are not guided by institutional risk management but instead an orientation to relationality and dialog. Such an orientation embodies practices of critical reflexivity, mutual learning, and conscientisation (Beals et al., 2021; Fernández et al., 2021). Together these approaches can contribute to forms of support that are situated and power-conscious and can guide organizations in leveraging institutional resources and power to support community-based programs and initiatives in ways that do not reproduce patterns of control and dependence. So to, as community psychologists, if we are to effectively engage in research and action that supports the creation of these settings, there is much need for us to continue to broaden our conceptual tools to encompass the "micropolitics of culture, power, and knowledge" (Reyes Cruz & Sonn, 2011, p. 27) and elevate the counter-stories that are too often obscured and erased.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Open access publishing facilitated by Victoria University, as part of the Wiley - Victoria University agreement via the Council of Australian University Librarians.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

ORCID

Rama P. Agung-Igusti http://orcid.org/0000-0002-3375-1279

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How to cite this article: Agung-Igusti, R. P. (2024). Raced and risky subjects: The interplay of racial and managerial ideologies as an expression of "colorblind" racism. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 1–13. https://doi.org/10.1002/ajcp.12731

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