

RADICAL RACIAL PLURALISM

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A MORE RADICAL SOLUTION TO THE RACE PROBLEM

One debate that metaphysicians of race have been consumed with since the 1990s is what we can call the *US race debate*, which is the debate about what the nature and reality of race is according to the dominant ways that ‘race’ and race terms are used to classify people in contemporary American English. In 2014, I contributed a defence of biological racial realism in the US race debate that utilized new results about human genetic clustering from population genetics. In this paper, I will show that all US race theories have been wrong, including my own. This is because, as I will argue, the correct US race theory has a radically pluralist form. This is an instance of a metametaphysical position that I call *radical racial pluralism*. After defending radical racial pluralism in the US race debate, I explore valuable implications of the view for philosophers of race.

I

Introduction. What is race? Is race real? Is it biologically real? Is it a real social construct? Is it both? Is it real in a different way? Is race not real at all? These are the main questions that metaphysicians of race have addressed since the 1990s, when Anthony Appiah, Lucius Outlaw, and Naomi Zack initiated what is sometimes called ‘the race debate’ in the philosophy of race (Glasgow 2009, p. 9).¹ However, more clarification is needed about this debate. Were Appiah, Outlaw and Zack arguing about race given how ‘race’ is used to classify people in English only? Or was the debate broader? Or was it narrower? Was the focus on contemporary discourse? Or was the debate broader? Was the debate focused on folk discourse only? Or did it also include scientific discourse? Also, which racial discourse was anchoring the debate if there’s in fact a plurality of racial discourses? According to their own admissions, a charitable reconstruction of the race debate initiated by Appiah, Outlaw and

¹ For the main publications that initiated this debate, see Appiah (1990, 1992, 1996), Outlaw (1990, 1996), and (Zack 1993, 1994, 1995).

Zack is that it is the debate about the nature and reality of race according to the dominant ways that ‘race’ and race terms are used to classify people in contemporary, ordinary American English.²

Suppose *US race talk* consists of all of the dominant ways that ‘race’ and race terms are used to classify people in contemporary, ordinary American English. For instance, US race talk can be found in various recent national news stories in the US, such as whether Harvard’s undergraduate admissions process involves unlawful racial discrimination against Asian applicants, and whether Elizabeth Warren was wrongfully viewed as a Native American by Harvard or Penn when she was hired at each university. However, US race talk can also be found in mundane everyday communications in the US, such as when marking one’s race(s) on a new patient form for a health provider, or when a police officer mentions the perceived race of a suspected criminal to other police officers over police radio. Given the debate’s focus on US race talk, I’ll call this debate the *US race debate*. Theories about the nature and reality of race in the US race debate—which I’ll call *US race theories*—can be neatly classified by their answers to the following two questions:

- (I.1) Is race a biological entity?
- (I.2) Is race real?

The first US race theory developed was Appiah’s (1992) theory that *race is a biological entity and unreal*.³ The position that race is not real is known as *racial anti-realism* in the literature, and interestingly, all racial anti-realists to date in the US race debate have also argued for race as a biological entity. Some other proponents have been Blum (2002) and Glasgow (2009).

The second US race theory developed was Outlaw’s (1990) theory that *race is a biological entity and real*. I’ll call this metaphysical position *biological racial realism*. Some other biological racial realisms that have been developed in the US race debate are from Levin (2002), Kendig (2011), Spencer (2014), and Hardimon (2017).

The third, and most prolific, group of contributors to the US race debate have been those who have argued that *race is real, but not a*

² For evidence, see Outlaw (1990, pp. 58, 64, 67, 82); Zack (1994, p. 14); Appiah (1996, pp. 38, 41–2).

³ Interestingly, Appiah does not defend the non-reality of race in *Color Conscious* (1996), though he does so in a chapter of *In My Father’s House* (1992), which is a republication of his 1985 journal article on the topic.

biological entity. It appears as though Zack (1994, p. 18) was the first to defend this view in the debate, when she argued that ‘Race is a social construction imposed on biological differences’ but is nevertheless real ‘in the head’. The view that race is a non-biological social construct that’s real is often called *social constructionism about race* in the literature, and there are various types. Some social constructionists about race say that race is essentially a political entity. Examples are Mills (1998), Alcoff (2006), Haslanger (2012), and Taylor (2013). Some, such as Jeffers (2013), say that race is essentially a cultural entity. Some, such as Glasgow and Woodward (2015), have explored the possibility that race is neither a scientific nor a social entity. The fourth possible position in the US race debate is the view that *race is not a biological entity and not real*. However, to my knowledge, no one has defended this position in the literature.

In this paper, I will argue that the correct US race theory has a *radically pluralist* form and content, which is an instance of a meta-metaphysical position that I call *radical racial pluralism*.⁴ Radical racial pluralism is the view that there’s a plurality of natures and realities for race in the relevant linguistic context. And in the US race debate, the relevant linguistic context is US race talk. I call radical racial pluralism a ‘metametaphysical position’ because it’s not a race theory, but rather a position on the syntactic structure and semantic content of the correct race theory. For one, the correct race theory is a long conjunction. But also, the content of each conjunct is a statement about what race is and whether it’s real in a specific context of US race talk.

An example of a US race theory that’s not radically pluralist, but rather, is *monist*, is Sally Haslanger’s (2012, p. 308) US race theory that race is the racialized group and real. However, we can arrive at a radically pluralist US race theory from Haslanger’s by conjoining another monist US race theory to hers and reducing each theory’s scope. For instance, consider Hardimon’s (2017, pp. 31, 74–97) US race theory that race is the minimalist race and (biologically) real. In that case, a radically pluralist US race theory generated from these

⁴ Some precursors to radical racial pluralism are Lionel McPherson’s (2015, p. 675) ‘*deflationary pluralism*’ and David Ludwig’s (2015, p. 259) ‘*metaontological deflationism*’. However, radical racial pluralism is importantly different from both. McPherson’s deflationary pluralism is, technically, a normative view. It’s the view that ‘attempts to establish a master concept of race are unproductive’ (McPherson 2015, p. 675). As for Ludwig’s (2015, p. 245) metaontological deflationism, it merely rejects ‘one fundamental ontology of race’, which is actually something that many metaphysicians of race already reject.

two would state that race is the racialized group and real in context X of US race talk, and race is the minimalist race and real in context Y of US race talk—where $X \neq Y$ and racialized group \neq minimalist race.

The way that I will defend radical racial pluralism for US race talk is through partially developing what I consider to be the correct US race theory. In particular, I'll show that Office of Management and Budget (OMB) race talk is part of US race talk, and the nature of race in this race talk is such that radical racial pluralism is true for US race talk. In what follows, I'll articulate and clarify an argument for the truth of radical racial pluralism for US race talk. Then I'll defend that argument, which will include addressing strong objections. Finally, I'll provide a summary and discuss a few valuable implications of radical racial pluralism being true for the future of philosophy of race.

II

The Argument. I offer the argument below as sufficient evidence for the truth of radical racial pluralism for US race talk:

- (2.1) Radical racial pluralism is true for US race talk if the correct US race theory is radically pluralist.
- (2.2) The correct US race theory is radically pluralist if more than one distinct meaning of 'race' is used in US race talk.
- (2.3) One meaning of 'race' used in US race talk is the OMB's meaning of 'race'.
- (2.4) The OMB's meaning of 'race' is the set of human continental populations, and the OMB's meanings for 'American Indian', 'Asian', 'Black', 'Pacific Islander' and 'White' are Native American, East Asian, African, Oceanian and Caucasian, respectively.
- (2.5) The OMB's meaning of 'race' is not the only meaning of 'race' used in US race talk.
- (2.6) So radical racial pluralism is true for US race talk.

Since (2.1)–(2.6) can be shown to be valid in an appropriate formal logic once its premisses are translated correctly, I'll focus on

defending the premisses as true.⁵ But before I do that, I'll clarify three key terms used in the argument that I haven't already clarified. The first is 'meaning'.

My use of 'meaning' (or 'definition') is interchangeable with 'official content' as John Perry (2001, p. 18) uses the term. The *official content* of a term is the contribution it makes to the truth conditions of statements in which the term occurs, such as its referent or the reference-fixing descriptions that have been conventionally assigned to the term (Perry 2001, p. 18). Of course, understanding meaning in this way in (2.1)–(2.6) merely assumes that 'race' (and race terms) have truth-conditional meanings in US race talk. This isn't an arbitrary assumption. Rather, it's born from the fact that most specialists in philosophy of language endorse truth-conditional semantics for English names.⁶ A second term that deserves clarification is 'the OMB's meaning of "race"'.⁶

The US government is divided into three branches, one of which is the Executive Branch, whose job it is to implement and enforce federal laws. The executive branch is composed of the President, the Vice President, the Executive Office of the President, the Cabinet, and all Cabinet departments. Within the Executive Office of the President lies the OMB. One important job of the OMB is to manage all federal agencies within the Cabinet departments in the Executive Branch, such as the Centres for Disease Control and Prevention and the Bureau of Labor Statistics. In 1977, the OMB took it upon itself to manage the race talk of federal agencies by issuing Statistical Policy Directive No. 15. This is a presidential directive that requires all federal agencies to report racial and ethnic data to other federal agencies in a way that's translatable into the OMB's racial and ethnic schemes.

The OMB (1997, p. 58782) created Directive No. 15, first, to provide 'a common language' for comparing racial and ethnic data across federal agencies, and second, to facilitate the enforcement of 'civil rights laws' by federal agencies. In 1997, the OMB revised its racial scheme to be the following five-fold division: American

⁵ In particular, the argument (once correctly translated) is valid in Rod Girle's first-order free logic, the syntax and semantics of which are available in Girle (2009, chs. 2, 7 and 8, esp. p. 133). This is not to suggest that the argument is only valid in this logic, but rather that it's valid in a logic that's sufficiently weak for doing metaphysics.

⁶ For evidence, see Bourget and Chalmers (2014, p. 476).

Indian, Asian, Black, Pacific Islander, and White.⁷ The OMB also redefined ‘American Indian’ to include the people indigenous to all of South and North America (including Central America). Finally, the OMB allowed people to be multiracial. However, the OMB left its ethnic scheme alone, which always divided people into two ethnicities: Hispanic and non-Hispanic. The OMB (1997, p. 58782) revised its racial scheme to deal with the rise in immigration and the rise in children born from interracial marriages.

While the OMB did not attempt to create a formal definition (hereafter, ‘definition’) for ‘race’ in 1997, it spent an incredible amount of time, money, and resources to do so for each of its race terms. In the 1997 directive (FR 97-28653), each race is described as an ancestry group whose members descend from the original people to inhabit a specific geographic location. For example, the OMB (1997, p. 58789) says its ‘definition’ for ‘White’ is ‘A person having origins in any of the original peoples of Europe, the Middle East, or North Africa’. However, the OMB adds some social criteria in its ‘definition’ for ‘American Indian’. According to the OMB (1997, p. 58789), an *American Indian* is ‘A person having origins in any of the original peoples of North and South America (including Central America), and who maintains tribal affiliation or community attachment’. Also, the OMB (1997, p. 58789) adds some visible phenotype criteria in its ‘definition’ for ‘Black’ by fixing the reference of this term to anyone with origins in any of the ‘black’-skinned people in Africa.⁸

As you already know from my argument, I don’t think that the OMB’s ‘definitions’ of its race terms are the definitions of these terms. This is because the OMB’s ‘definitions’ of its race terms do not capture the official content of these terms. For example, consider the term ‘White’. Remember that the OMB’s (1997, p. 58789) ‘definition’ for a White person is ‘A person having origins in any of the original peoples of Europe, the Middle East, or North Africa’. Furthermore, some of the OMB’s paradigms of wholly or mixed White people are European Americans, Arabs, Louisiana Creoles,

⁷ The OMB’s official names for the American Indian, Black, and Pacific Islander races are ‘American Indian or Alaska Native’, ‘Black or African American’, and ‘Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander’, respectively (OMB 1997, p. 58789).

⁸ For each of the OMB’s ‘definitions’ for its race terms, see OMB (1997, p. 58789).

Cape Verdeans, Cubans, Mexican Americans, and Puerto Ricans (OMB 1995, p. 44682; OMB 1997, p. 36916; Wallman 1998, p. 32). However, according to the Out-of-Africa model of human migration history, anyone who satisfies the OMB's 'definition' for 'Asian', 'American Indian' or 'Pacific Islander' also has 'origins' in the 'original peoples' of the Middle East (Cavalli-Sforza and Feldman 2003, p. 270). So, for example, unmixed Chinese, Navajos and Papuans would be just as White as an unmixed European American if we took the OMB's 'definition' for 'White' seriously, which, of course, doesn't capture the official content of 'White' in the OMB's use of the term. Thus it's more accurate to think of the OMB's race term 'definitions' as descriptions that merely 'fix the reference' of the relevant terms, as Saul Kripke (1999, p. 55) would say.

Instead, I think that what the OMB means by its race terms are five biological populations in the human species that are sometimes called the *human continental populations* in the human genetics literature. I also think that what the OMB means by 'race' is just the set of these continental populations. But what are the human continental populations?

In previous research, I've worked out that the human continental populations are instances of genealogical populations (also known as ancestry groups) that I call 'K populations' (Spencer 2016, p. 796). The idea is roughly this. Suppose you want to divide a sexually reproducing species that forms a lineage into K genealogical groups of organisms such that the contemporaneous members of each group form a fuzzy set.⁹ Furthermore, suppose that each member of such a genealogical group has a degree of membership of 1 or a degree of membership that falls between 0 and 1 and is equal to the proportion of alleles in her genome that originate from previous members of the group the last time all members of the group had a membership degree of 1. Suppose we call that proportion an organism's *degree of genomic ancestry* from that group. If you actually succeed in dividing a species in this way, then you'd have a division of that species into K populations. It turns out that each human continental population is a K population in the human species. Below is

⁹ Suppose *crisp sets* are the objects called 'sets' in Zermelo-Fraenkel set theory. Let an *object space* X be a crisp set of objects. Suppose a *membership function* μ is a function such that $X \xrightarrow{\mu} [0, 1]$. In that case, a *fuzzy set* \tilde{A} is a pair $(X_{\tilde{A}}, \mu_{\tilde{A}})$. Suppose $x \in X_{\tilde{A}}$. In that case, $\mu_{\tilde{A}}(x)$ is x 's *grade of membership* (or *strength*) in \tilde{A} . Finally, x *belongs* to \tilde{A} just in case $x \in X_{\tilde{A}}$ and $\mu_{\tilde{A}}(x) > 0$.

a brief summary of the primary geographic ranges and some paradigm instances of people who belong to each human continental population, with average membership strengths enclosed in parentheses.

The *African* population exists mostly in sub-Saharan Africa. Some examples of people with strong membership in the African population are African Americans (0.81), Maasai Kenyans (0.70), Mbuti Congolese (0.99), San Namibians (0.98), and Yoruba Nigerians (0.98) (Spencer 2018, p. 1019). The *East Asian* population exists mostly in North-East and South-East Asia. Some examples of people with strong membership in this population are Han Chinese (0.98), Khmer Cambodians (0.94), and Yakut Siberians (0.87) (Spencer 2018, p. 1019). The *Caucasian* population exists mostly in Europe, North Africa, Central Asia, South Asia, and West Asia. Some examples of people with strong membership in this population are the French (0.97), Kalash Pakistanis (0.99), Mozabite Algerians (0.76), Palestinians (0.95), and Turkmen (0.73) (Spencer 2018, p. 1019). Next, the *Native American* population exists mostly in North and South America. Some examples of people with strong membership in this population are Greenlandic Inuits (0.73), Karitiana Brazilians (0.99), Mexican Americans (0.48), and Pima Mexicans (0.91) (Spencer 2018, p. 1019). Last, the *Oceanian* population exists mostly in Australia, Melanesia, Micronesia, and Polynesia. Some examples of people with strong membership in this population are Aboriginal Australians from the Riverina (0.64), Nasioi Bougainville Islanders (0.97), Māori New Zealanders (0.87), and Palauans (0.73) (Spencer 2018, p. 1019). That's it for clarifications. Now I'll move on to defending the premisses.

III

Defending the Premises.

3.1. *Defending All But (2.4).* Since (2.4) is far more controversial than the rest of the premisses, I won't spend too much time defending all of the other premisses. All that I'll say about (2.1) and (2.2) is that they are both true in virtue of the definitions of the terms employed in the sentences. However, (2.3) and (2.5) are a bit more substantive, since they're empirical claims. Nevertheless, (2.3) is true

in virtue of the fact that OMB race talk is involved in *some* US race talk. In particular, the OMB's racial scheme dominates how Americans racially classify themselves or others in many formal communications, such as on college applications, daycare enrolment forms, birth certificate request forms, health insurance enrolment forms, food stamp applications, and so forth. For example, the OMB's racial scheme is used on over of 95 per cent of residential mortgage loan applications in the US (Lucas and Torregosa 2010, p. ix).

As for (2.5), if (2.4) is true, then it's easy to see why (2.5) is true as well. Suppose (2.4) is true. Then, from simplification, it's true that the OMB's meaning of 'race' is the set of human continental populations. Now suppose (2.5) is false. These last two steps together imply that the set of human continental populations is the *only* meaning of 'race' used in US race talk. This is something I claimed in Spencer (2014), but it turns out that this claim is false. For instance, in US political polling, it's standard to use 'Hispanic' or 'Latino' as race terms instead of ethnicity terms. This is how American pollsters often racially stratify samples of likely voters, and as a result, it's how millions of Americans end up talking about US political polling results.¹⁰ But since Hispanic is not a human continental population (or any biological population, for that matter), and since the way Americans talk about race and races in US political polls is arguably part of US race talk, it follows that the set of human continental populations is not the only meaning of 'race' used in US race talk. Since this result generates a contradiction, we can infer that (2.5) is true. Of course, this rationale depends on (2.4) being true, so let's get to that defence now.

3.2. Defending (2.4). In what follows, I'll provide a summary of my previous evidence for (2.4), followed by some new evidence for it. My previous evidence for (2.4) is both hypothetico-probabilistic (H-P) and abductive. Here's some of the H-P evidence. Remember that if (2.4) is true, then the OMB's 'definitions' for its race terms aren't meanings, but rather, are merely reference-fixers. Nevertheless, one

¹⁰ For example, the Quinnipiac University Poll of likely voters in the 2016 presidential election in Florida and North Carolina, conducted on 3–6 November 2016, used 'Hispanic' as one of the races in its survey. For evidence, see the sample and methodology detail at the bottom of the following page: <https://poll.qu.edu/florida/release-detail?ReleaseID=2401>, Last accessed 25 April 2019.

property of reference-fixers is that, in the actual world, they work relatively well to pick out the intended referent or extension of the term.¹¹ This brings me to an interesting probabilistic consequence of (2.4) and some reasonable background assumptions. In particular, it's probable that each OMB race term 'definition' is a true description of any randomly selected person of the relevant human continental population. For example, consider the OMB's (1997, p. 58789) 'definition' for 'Pacific Islander', which is 'A person having origins in any of the original peoples of Hawaii, Guam, Samoa, or other Pacific Islands'.¹² When one looks at the relevant demographic and evolutionary facts, it's true that it's probable that the OMB's 'definition' for 'Pacific Islander' is a true description of any randomly selected person of the Oceanian population. One estimate is that 96.2 per cent of all living Oceanians satisfy the OMB's 'definition' for 'Pacific Islander'.¹³ Furthermore, the fact that the 'Pacific Islander' 'definition' so closely tracks Oceanic people is particularly strong evidence for (2.4), since the description itself is only true of 0.191 per cent of all living people.¹⁴

More H-P evidence for (2.4) is the following. If (2.4) is true, then, given reasonable background assumptions, it's probable that a randomly selected American i self-reports OMB race r if r is identical to human continental population p and i has her primary genomic ancestry in p .¹⁵ Some important assumptions that I'm making here are that the American is competent in OMB racial classification, is not using a hypodescent rule, and is reporting a single race. For instance, for an American with, say, 85 per cent African ancestry, there should

¹¹ By 'referent' I mean the thing that a term picks out, and by 'extension' I mean all of the things that a word applies to. These distinctions are from Quine (1951, pp. 21–2).

¹² This is the example I originally used in Spencer (2014).

¹³ This value was calculated using the finding from Spencer (2014, p. 1032, para. 2) and in the supplementary material for Spencer (2015, Table 4).

¹⁴ These calculations were made by assuming the Out-of-Africa model of human migration history, the Slow Boat model of how humans first settled Micronesia and Polynesia, Cavalli-Sforza et al.'s phylogenetic tree of human population history, Spencer's estimate of the census population size of all living Melanesians, Micronesians, and Polynesians, and the 2008 world population estimate from the United Nations. The sources for the first and third assumptions are Cavalli-Sforza and Feldman (2003). The source for the second assumption is Kim et al. (2012). The source for the fourth assumption is the supplementary material for Spencer (2015). The source for the fifth assumption is <https://population.un.org/wpp/Download/Standard/Population/>, Last accessed 25 April 2019.

¹⁵ By 'primary' I mean 'majority or plurality'.

be a high probability that she self-reports ‘Black’ in the OMB’s racial scheme if (2.4) is true.¹⁶ Interestingly, several experiments have tested this claim, and the result has been the same. Geneticists *are* able to very accurately predict Americans’ OMB race self-reports using human continental population membership information alone.

For example, [Guang Guo et al. \(2014, pp. 148–9\)](#) used the computer program *structure*, 162 ancestry-informative single-nucleotide polymorphisms (SNPs), and a sample of 1880 Americans. In terms of the sample-size weighted average, the authors were able to correctly predict OMB race self-reports with 93.7 per cent accuracy using primary human continental population membership alone ([Guo et al. 2014, p. 153](#)). Furthermore, [Hua Tang et al. \(2005, p. 271\)](#) were able to correctly predict the OMB race self-reports of 2658 Americans with 99.8 per cent accuracy using primary continental population membership alone.¹⁷ In addition, [Oscar Lao et al. \(2010, E1876, E1880\)](#) were able to correctly predict the OMB race self-reports of 485 Americans with 99.3 per cent accuracy using primary continental population membership alone.¹⁸

Even though the H-P evidence is impressive, some might worry that it’s not enough. For one, it’s not comparative. For instance, how well do rival hypotheses to (2.4) fair with respect to these two tests? Also, it’s very indirect. For instance, how well does (2.4) fair with respect to directly accounting for the intentions of the OMB demographers who authored FR 97-28653? Finally, the H-P evidence does not fully establish any identities, because it doesn’t address what ‘race’ and the race terms are intended to designate *necessarily* in the OMB’s racial scheme. However, all of these concerns are addressed with the abductive evidence.

For example, one serious rival to (2.4) is Michael Hardimon’s OMB race theory. [Hardimon \(2017, p. 30\)](#) considers the OMB’s racial scheme to house ‘archetypical examples of candidate races’ in

¹⁶ For ease of communication, I’m going to say ‘African ancestry’, ‘Native American ancestry’, and so forth, instead of ‘African genomic ancestry’, ‘Native American genomic ancestry’, and so forth.

¹⁷ The predictive accuracy value here is a sample-size weighted average, and it excludes the Hispanic and Asian subjects sampled in the study because they were not asked to self-report an OMB race. For evidence, see [Tang et al. \(2005, p. 269\)](#). Also, to determine human continental population memberships, the authors used 326 microsatellites and *structure*.

¹⁸ The predictive accuracy value here is a sample-size weighted average, and it does not include data from the Hispanic subjects sampled in the study because they were not asked to self-report an OMB race. Also, the authors used 24 ancestry-informative SNPs and *structure* to determine human continental population memberships.

ordinary English, and he develops his race theory in order to, among other aims, explain why the OMB's races are races. What Hardimon (2017, p. 27) comes up with is 'the minimalist concept of race', and he claims that all OMB races are minimalist races. For clarity, a *minimalist* race is essentially a group of human beings (C1) who, as a group, is distinguished from other groups of human beings by distinctive patterns among a number of innate, heritable, and real visible physical features that correspond to differences in geographical ancestry (the '*racial*' features), (C2) whose members are linked by a common ancestry that's peculiar to the members of the group, and (C3) who originated from a distinctive geographic location (Hardimon 2017, pp. 27, 31, 34–7).

While Hardimon's race theory is a respectable competitor, (2.4) better captures the intentions of the OMB demographers who defined 'race' and the OMB's race terms in 1997. With respect to Hardimon's view, the OMB never intended 'race' to satisfy (C1) necessarily. We can see this by exploring the truth-value of the following modal claim at our world:¹⁹

- (2.7) It's not possible for Pacific Islander to be a race and not satisfy (c1).

Of course, Hardimon's OMB race theory predicts that (2.7) is true. But what would the OMB say? It's uncontroversial that the OMB intends to pick out, at least, Micronesians, Polynesians and Melanesians with 'Pacific Islander'. For instance, the US Census Bureau (USCB) has been organizing Pacific Islander census data into these three subgroups since the 2000 census, and the USCB claims that they're using 'Pacific Islander' in the OMB's way in order to comply with Directive No. 15 (Grieco and Cassidy 2001, p. 2). But do these three human populations necessarily possess any *distinctive* pattern among a number of racial features? Well, no. And not even in the actual world. To put it crudely, on average, Micronesians and Polynesians look like tawny-skinned East Asians, and on average, Melanesians look like sub-Saharan Africans. More evidence that the OMB doesn't intend the Pacific Islander race to necessarily satisfy (C1) is found in the fact that the OMB doesn't include any visible physical features in its 'definition' of 'Pacific Islander' (OMB 1997,

¹⁹ Thus I'm assuming a modal logic with reflexive accessibility built into the semantics of 'possible'.

p. 58789). So (2.7) is false according to the OMB's intentions for who 'Pacific Islander' is supposed to designate. There's simply too much diversity in racial features among Pacific Islanders in order for them to satisfy (C1). Since having too much internal visible diversity to satisfy (C1) is one reason why Hardimon (2017, p. 38) rejects 'Latinos/Hispanics' as a minimalist race, he should agree that Pacific Islander is also not a minimalist race, despite the fact that it is an OMB race.

While there are other rival theories I could compare (2.4) with, it might be best to move on to a new source of evidence for (2.4). For some, (2.4)'s good track record with making accurate predictions and beating out serious rivals is still not enough to convince them of (2.4), because both sources of evidence are indirect. Rather, the best source of evidence for (2.4), according to these critics, would come from direct empirical support of the OMB's intention to directly refer with 'race' and its race terms, and to directly refer to the biological objects mentioned in (2.4).²⁰ This is a good concern, so here's that evidence.

Direct evidence for what the OMB intended to pick out with 'race' and its race terms can be found in its stated aims for creating Directive No. 15, the thirteen principles it provided at the beginning of FR 97-28653 to guide the revision process, the reasons the OMB gave or endorsed for rejecting certain revisions and accepting others, and testimony from government officials who were in direct conversation with the OMB. All of these data sources strongly support (2.4). For one, remember that the OMB's first stated aim for creating Directive No. 15 is to create 'a common language' for comparing racial and ethnic data across federal agencies. It turns out that directly referring with 'race' and race terms will achieve that goal better than giving these terms descriptive definitions since that would allow the referents of 'race' and race terms vary across the US. For example, (C1)–(C3) requires that races are *visible*; however, which features count as *visible* to people varies considerably across the US, thus allowing for races beyond the OMB's five races. Furthermore, directly referring to the referents proposed in (2.4) is especially helpful for achieving aim 1, since human continental population membership is determined the day one is conceived and cannot change throughout one's lifetime or social context. So, for example, if

²⁰ I owe this objection to Wayne Norman.

Blacks are just Africans, then, at any given time, the group of people that, say, the National Center for Health Statistics counts as *Black* will be the same group of people that, say, the National Center for Education Statistics counts as *Black*, which is what the OMB wants.

Next, one of the OMB's (1997, p. 58783) guiding principles (principle 4) in revising its race talk was to make the new racial scheme 'comprehensive in coverage'. It's not hard to see why. A racial scheme that's comprehensive in coverage will assign at least one race to every US immigrant and every child born in the US from an interracial couple. Of course, the set of human continental populations is comprehensive in coverage, and furthermore, it clarifies exactly which race(s) people whose geographic region of origin is not mentioned in the OMB's 'definitions' belong to. For example, it's unclear which race unmixed Aboriginal Australians belong to in the OMB's racial scheme, since their geographic region of origin doesn't appear in the OMB's 'definitions'. However, according to (2.4) and current human genetic clustering results, unmixed Aboriginal Australians are entirely Pacific Islanders (McEvoy et al. 2010, p. 300).

Next, lots of clues about what the OMB was trying to designate with 'race' and its race terms can be found in the reasons the OMB gave or endorsed for rejecting certain revisions and accepting others. For instance, during the revision process, much of the work was outsourced to the Interagency Committee for the Review of the Racial and Ethnic Standards (hereafter, 'the Interagency Committee'), whose members came from a diverse array of over 30 federal agencies in the US government. It turns out that several special interest groups in the US requested that the OMB adopt clearly non-biological groups of people as races in order to satisfy certain segments of the American public. Some of those candidates were 'Native American' (a group that includes all indigenous people to what is now the USA, including Native Hawaiians) and 'Mixed race' (a group that includes people with any combination of memberships in two or more other OMB races) (OMB 1995, pp. 44683, 44686). In all such instances, the Interagency Committee rejected these revisions on the grounds that such groups would be 'too heterogeneous for health research', and the OMB endorsed the rejection for this reason (OMB 1995, p. 44685; 1997, p. 58786). Also, against the Interagency Committee's recommendation, the OMB (1997, p. 58786) added a group to its racial scheme that *no* segment of the American public requested, but that is well-known to biologists and

anthropologists: Pacific Islander. It's hard to understand why the OMB added *Pacific Islander* to its racial scheme in 1997 (a group that comprised about 0.3 per cent of all Americans at the time) instead of, say, *Hispanic* (a group that comprised about 12.5 per cent of all Americans at the time) (Grieco 2001, p. 3; Guzmán 2001, p. 3).²¹ Well, it's hard to understand until you realize that the Interagency Committee and the OMB were deeply interested in dividing people into races in a way that's 'useful for health research' (OMB 1995, p. 44683; 1997, p. 58786).

Finally, Kenneth Prewitt, the USCB director from 1998 to 2001, wrote a book after he retired from his position about how the OMB has adopted a biological racial scheme that mirrored the eighteenth-century racial scheme of J. F. Blumenbach. In fact, it was Prewitt (2013, p. 18) who coined the term 'Blumenbachian races' for the OMB's races. According to Prewitt (2013, p. 18), the OMB did this primarily to obtain a racial scheme that assigns a race to every possible US immigrant and every possible child born from an interracial couple in the US. And Prewitt should know. He was in direct conversation with OMB demographers when he oversaw the 2000 US census count.

Despite all of the evidence provided above, there are still those who would strongly disagree with some of my premisses. For example, some metaphysicians of race would say that both (2.3) and (2.4) are not true at the same time; which is equivalent to saying that if (2.3) is true, then (2.4) is false, or if (2.4) is true, then (2.3) is false. What's the motivation for this objection? Well, a critic could agree that I'm right about (2.4), but disagree that (2.3) is true. For instance, Joshua Glasgow is one philosopher who might hold this view. In his book *A Theory of Race*, Glasgow (2009, p. 48) warns against focusing on uses of 'race' where 'race' is merely a 'specialist word', as opposed to 'how ordinary people conceive of race'. While in Glasgow's view there's nothing intrinsically wrong with using 'race' in a technical sense, to focus on such uses in the US race debate is a mistake, since this debate is about how 'ordinary folk' define 'race'. So Glasgow might have a serious worry about anyone asserting (2.3) and (2.4) together, because it's arguable that in the event that (2.4) is true, it's also true that (2.3) is false. Some further

²¹ These data are from the 2000 US census results, which is the earliest time that the US government possessed census data on the percentage of Pacific Islanders in the US.

rationale for this worry is that perhaps what's going on when we're using the OMB's racial scheme on college applications, job applications, and so on, is that we're using the OMB's racial scheme but not its meaning of 'race'. After all, it's arguable that most Americans are not even competent enough in anthropology to know who Pacific Islanders are, and are certainly not competent enough in genetics to know what genomic ancestry is.

This is a good concern. It is certainly possible that the OMB's meaning of 'race' isn't used in US race talk even though the OMB's racial scheme is. I also agree that it's puzzling how ordinary folk can be using 'race' with a meaning that they don't fully understand. Nevertheless, the claim that the set of human populations isn't used as a meaning of 'race' in US race talk is empirically implausible. Remember that geneticists can predict an American's self-report in the OMB's racial scheme with 93.7–99.8 per cent accuracy using only one's primary membership in a human continental population. To dismiss this achievement as merely a coincidence is not defensible on statistical grounds. Statistically, this feat is highly unlikely to be a coincidence. Also, there are societies where this phenomenon doesn't occur—such as in Brazil, where folk race talk is primarily based on skin colour rather than ancestry (Santos et al. 2009).

Of course, another explanation could be that the high predictive accuracy is not a coincidence, but a statistical artefact due to sampling bias. In fact, Glasgow (2009, p. 95) makes this very charge about Tang et al.'s study (2005), because they sample all of their Hispanic Americans from a single county in Texas. While sampling bias is a legitimate concern, two facts should assuage the concern here. First, I didn't include the Hispanic data when reporting the predictive accuracy results from Tang et al. Second, the fact that multiple, large-scale studies that use independent samples of Americans have reached very similar results tells us that the predictive accuracy phenomenon is not a statistical artefact.

However, it may still be puzzling how 'race' can sometimes mean the set of human continental populations in US race talk even though ordinary folk in the US don't really understand what a human continental population is, and can't even name all of the human continental populations. Well, this mystery is solved by positing that when 'race' means the set of human continental populations in US race talk, the meaning of 'race' is controlled by what Hilary Putnam (1973, p. 704) has called a 'division of linguistic labour'. In

particular, when ordinary folk are using ‘race’ to mean the set of human continental populations in US race talk, the OMB has defined ‘race’—not ordinary folk—and furthermore, ordinary folk are *semantically deferring* to the OMB.

Nevertheless, as you may recall, there is a different route to the same objection. That is, perhaps it’s the case that (2.4) is false if (2.3) is true. For instance, some philosophers might think that the OMB’s meaning of ‘race’ actually *is* part of US race talk, but that’s only because the OMB hasn’t stipulated an idiosyncratic meaning of ‘race’, but rather, is using a meaning of ‘race’ that’s shared among ordinary folk and the US government. One way that this scenario could occur is that the OMB’s races are merely part of the current extension for ‘race’ given how ordinary folk in the US use ‘race’, as opposed to being part of the OMB’s meaning for ‘race’. A metaphysician of race who might hold this view is Sally Haslanger. In her book *Resisting Reality*, Haslanger (2012, p. 298) says that ‘the semantics of the term “race” in public—specifically nonscientific—discourse’ is a consequence of ‘a collective social practice rather than a set of terms stipulated by an authority’. In other words, Haslanger is no fan of semantic deference when it comes to the use of ‘race’ by ordinary folk.

While Haslanger’s scepticism about semantic deference obtaining here is reasonable, it’s also empirically testable whether Americans semantically defer to the OMB when engaging in OMB race talk. Furthermore, once we test this claim, we’ll see that semantic deference is the best explanation for various observational patterns in how ordinary Americans use OMB race talk. For one, if ordinary Americans are semantically deferring to the OMB when classifying themselves and others in the OMB’s racial scheme, then we should be able to find that self-reported Asians, Blacks, Whites, and so on, share a substantial amount of genomic ancestry from the relevant continental population (since trivial amounts are probably unknown to individuals). One study that actually tested this connection is Guo et al. (2014, p. 155). In a separate experiment, they found that self-reported Asians (including South Asians and multiracial reporters), self-reported Blacks (including Hispanics and multiracial reporters), and self-reported Whites (including Hispanics and multiracial reporters) had, on average, 67.3 per cent, 84.6 per cent, and 95.5 per cent of their genomic ancestry from the East Asian, African and Caucasian populations, respectively. This is strong evidence that

Americans are trying to self-report in the OMB's racial scheme in a way that corresponds to their continental ancestry, just as the OMB wants.

In addition, there are subgroups of Americans who primarily self-report correctly in the OMB's racial scheme, but whose self-reports conflict with how these individuals prefer to racially self-report. For example, on the 2000 US census questionnaire, 53 per cent of Hispanic Americans racially self-reported 'White', but in a survey by the Pew Hispanic Center and the Kaiser Family Foundation in 2002, 56 per cent of Hispanic Americans racially self-reported 'Hispanic' or 'Latino' when it was presented as an option (Grieco 2001, p. 8; Guzmán 2001, p. 3; Brodie et al. 2002, p. 31). Also, before the 1997 revisions, Arab American interest groups complained to the Interagency Committee that they did not 'feel they fit' into any of the OMB's existing racial groups, and proposed 'Middle Eastern' or 'Arab' as an additional group (OMB 1995, pp. 44678, 44681). Despite this fuss, 80–97 per cent of Arab Americans ended up racially self-reporting 'White' on the 2000 US census questionnaire (de la Cruz and Brittingham 2003, p. 8). Since both Hispanic Americans and Arab Americans have, on average, predominantly Caucasian ancestry, the simplest explanation for these flips in racial self-reporting is semantic deference to the OMB.

To be sure, there are other worthy objections to my premisses. For example, do the set of human continental populations and the human continental populations actually exist? If not, then referential accounts of the OMB's meanings for 'race' and race terms are, at best, problematic.²² Also, there are some known mismatches between who the OMB lists in the current extensions of its race terms and what (2.4) and the relevant genetics implies about those extensions. For instance, the OMB lists all South Asians as examples of Asians (OMB 1997, p. 58786). However, (2.4) and the relevant genetics implies that unmixed South Asians (for instance, many Kalash Pakistanis) are White only.²³ But how can the OMB be wrong about some of the people they included in their original sample of Asians?

²² This is because of the 'no-reference' problem for referential theories of meaning (Perry 2001, p. 5).

²³ For some of this 'relevant genetics', see Supplementary Table 2 in Rosenberg et al. (2002).

While I do not have space to respond to these and other great concerns in this paper, know that there are replies that vindicate the attacked premisses.²⁴

IV

Concluding Remarks. In this paper, I have shown that radical racial pluralism is the correct metametaphysical view about the form and content of the correct US race theory. I've also shown that the correct US race theory has as part of its content (2.3) and (2.4). In fact, I used the latter fact to derive the radical racial pluralism result. If I am right about these two claims, then, first and foremost, the philosophy of race should undergo a paradigm shift. Currently, the US race debate is inundated with race theories that claim that there's a single, correct way to describe how ordinary folk use 'race' and race terms in US race talk. The most prolific camp in producing what we can call *monist* race theories are the social constructionists about race. However, if I'm right, then no matter how seductive social constructionism about race is, it's only part of a larger and more complex story about how ordinary Americans primarily talk about race. One idea for how to move forward is to piece together the most predictively powerful US race theory we can by conjoining (2.3) and (2.4) with other US race theories that are predictively powerful in specific US race talks, as long as those theories have been stripped of their monist content.

Second, if I'm right about radical racial pluralism for US race talk, then there is no such thing as a global meaning of 'race'. This is important, because there has been mounting pressure from some non-American metaphysicians of race for American metaphysicians of race to stop focusing so narrowly on US race talk. Instead, these critics urge that all metaphysicians of race should work together to try to develop a global theory of race.²⁵ However, if I'm right about radical racial pluralism for US race talk, this proposed project is

²⁴ For my responses to the actual existence objection, see [Spencer \(2014, 2015, 2018\)](#). Also, see [Haber \(2012\)](#) for a compelling handling of the second worry in the analogous case of type specimens that don't actually belong to the species they were used to discover.

²⁵ For one example, see [Atkin \(2017\)](#).

doomed from the start. Of course, this is not to say that metaphysicians of race working in different countries shouldn't work together on *some* project or other.²⁶

Third, if I'm right about radical racial pluralism for US race talk, then the way we tackle normative problems in the philosophy of race should undergo a paradigm shift as well. In short, there are almost always metaphysical assumptions about race or particular races embedded in our normative arguments in the philosophy of race. What radical racial pluralism implies is that the truth conditions for those metaphysical assumptions have no one-size-fits-all answer. Rather, the truth conditions will vary depending on context. For example, when developing an argument for or against racial profiling by American law enforcement officers, it would be prudent to use the meaning of 'race' that's operative in that context, which currently seems to be Glasgow's (2009, p. 33) meaning of 'race' as a division of people into groups that are visibly distinguishable to a significantly disproportionate extent in terms of 'racial traits'. For instance, when Minnesota police pulled over and shot Philando Castile for no good reason, they did not pull him over because of his ancestry. Rather, they pulled him over because, among other things, he *looked Black*. So in this context, *Blacks* are people who have sufficiently many of the Black racial traits, such as dark skin, full lips, afro-textured hair, wide noses, and so on. In that case, Melanesian Americans are just as Black as African Americans in this context.

Now, if you're trying to develop an argument for or against race-based preferential affirmative action in US college admissions, it would be prudent not to use a racial-trait-centred meaning of 'Black'. Instead, what matters in this context is ancestry. In particular, 98.9 per cent of selective American colleges that ask for an applicant's race in the college application process use the OMB's racial scheme.²⁷ So, for example, a Melanesian American who would be racially classified as *Black* by American policemen will be classified as *Pacific Islander* by selective American colleges. So if a philosopher wants to defend preferential affirmative action for Black Americans as not unjust towards White Americans because of, say, the 'white

²⁶ For an example of one such project, see Ludwig (2018).

²⁷ This is an unpublished calculation that was conducted with the help of Alexandra Johnson in the summer of 2017 on all ranked colleges in the US News and World Report's 2016 Rankings of the Best National Liberal Arts Colleges and the Best National Universities.

privilege' that all White Americans share, then what you're calling 'white privilege' better apply to DJ Khaled and all other brown-skinned Arab Americans who count as *non-Hispanic Whites* in American college admissions.

Before I close, I will make an important disclaimer. Nothing I've said about the OMB's meaning of 'race' implies any sort of racial hierarchy in terms of intelligence, criminality, beauty, or any other characteristic of social interest. Of course, nothing I've said implies that any such differences don't exist. Rather, the biological meaning of 'race' discussed in this paper is neutral on these matters. It's simply a way of classifying people in terms of genomic ancestry. Also, this is not political correctness. Rather, the empirical evidence that supports the existence of human continental populations is based on non-functional alleles in human genomes (especially SNPs, indels, and microsatellites). While it's true that some of these alleles are *genetic markers* (alleles that are linked to functional alleles), a separate empirical investigation is still needed to show that the genetic markers employed are linked to functional alleles whose frequencies generate a racial hierarchy in phenotypes that we care about.

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