Is Race Political?

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Race[1] is one of the most powerful social signifiers of identity and difference in Canada, a country reputed for diversity, multiculturalism and tolerance worldwide. Demographic trends indicate that our racial diversity can only continue to increase in the coming years and decades, holding important implications for social, political, and economic life in Canada. In spite of the increasing relevance of race in Canadian society, analyses concerning the relationship(s) between race and politics have been, at best, tangential in mainstream English Canadian political science. McRae suggests that we can understand what constitutes the "mainstream" at least partially because of evidence that other streams, "lesser channels, eddies, backwaters, or even swamps, where different and possibly more interesting forms of life may be discovered," exist simultaneously alongside dominant paradigms and narratives (1979: 685). Research on race, which has usually been conceptualized as an apolitical force, exemplifies such a marginalized "other stream" as several political scientists have noted (McRae, 1979; Wilson, 1993; Vickers, 2002b; Malinda Smith, 2003). A fundamental disconnect exists between Canadian demographic and social reality, which illustrates the significance of race, and the disciplinary silence of English-Canadian political science on both the conceptualization of race as a political production and the incorporation of race as a compelling explanatory variable in the analysis of political phenomena. This contradiction raises an important question for the core of our discipline: Is race political?

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This article seeks to demonstrate that though the political nature of race is evident and constitutes an important area of research and study, there is a dearth of literature on race in mainstream English Canadian political science particularly as compared to other social sciences in English-speaking Canada. Simply demonstrating the existence of a gap in political science research would be tautological; it is far more important to ask why this dearth exists. I contend that it is possible to isolate a number of factors specific to political science that have prevented significant research on either the political production of race or the utilization of race as a compelling variable in political analyses, including methodological fuzziness, dominant elite-focused and colour-blind approaches to the study of politics, and the prevalence of ideas and foci about the nature of Canadian politics. The pages that follow will demonstrate that race is undeniably political both in content and consequences and should be considered an important aspect of the study of Canadian politics. As such, I conclude that there are a number of ways that we, as political scientists, can rectify this disparity between reality and our discipline, such as reconsidering the role of non-formal institutions and informal realms of politics, rejecting colour-blind political paradigms, and filling in identified research gaps.

I. What's Political about Race?

In one sense, domestic politics concerns the relationship between the state and society. In Canada, the state is far from a monolithic entity; rather, it comprises separate levels and branches of government, formal institutions, constitutions and legal instruments such as legislation, statutes, and policies. This official realm is further complemented by an entire informal network of political agents, organizations, and social movements. Though a comprehensive or unidirectional notion of society at large may be difficult to pinpoint, political agents such as the media, interest groups, and even individual citizens have the ability to influence the trajectory of political life in Canada. The relationship between state and society is multifaceted, complex, and simultaneously mutually constitutive and fragmenting (Cairns, 1986); both may act as independent or dependent variables, depending on context and interpretation.

In another sense, the definition of "the political" need not be limited to the state. Feminist, Marxist, and critical race theorists have long argued that the superstructures of patriarchy, capitalism, and white supremacy infiltrate and exist beyond the state arena, permeating all aspects of social and political life—and as such, everything is political. However, no matter which of these interpretations of the political is used, society is involved—at least to some extent—in the manifestation of politics.

Abstract. This article demonstrates that though the political nature of race is evident and constitutes an important area of research, there is a dearth of literature on race in English Canadian political science particularly as compared to other social sciences. The article provides explanations for this disciplinary silence, including methodological fuzziness, dominant elite-focused and colour-blind approaches to the study of politics, and the prevalence of ideas and foci about the nature of Canadian politics. In order to avoid the danger of disciplinary lag, it concludes with several ways of addressing this disparity between the political science and the society it purports to analyze.

Résumé. Malgré l'essence politique évidente du concept de «race» et son importance indéniable comme sujet de recherche, la littérature de science politique canadienne-anglaise s'y attarde très peu, surtout en comparaison des autres sciences sociales. L'article explique les causes de ce silence disciplinaire. Celles-ci incluent un flou méthodologique, une approche surtout centrée sur l'élite, une perspective «daltonienne» concernant l'étude de la politique, ainsi que la prédominance de certaines idées quant à la nature de la politique canadienne. Afin d'éviter un danger de lacune disciplinaire, l'article propose des solutions permettant de réduire l'écart entre la science politique et son objet d'étude, soit la société réelle.

But just who is implicated in the notion of Canadian society? Demographic data on the composition of Canadian society demonstrate that Canada is indeed racially diverse. According to 2001 census data, "visible minorities"[2] represent 13.4 per cent of the Canadian population, with the three most populous groups being Chinese (3.5 per cent), South Asian (3.1 per cent) and Black (2.2 per cent). These groups are heavily concentrated in urban areas, especially Vancouver and Toronto, where the proportion of visible minorities is over 36 per cent. Between 1996 and 2001, the visible minority population increased by 24.6 per cent; compared with an increase of the overall Canadian population of just under 4 per cent (Canada, 2001), this demographic trend is significant. This trend is even more significant when Aboriginal peoples are considered; the 2001 census reported that nearly a million people identified themselves with one (or more) of the constitutionally recognized Aboriginal groups of Indian, Inuit and Métis, a 22.2 per cent increase from the 1996 count.[3]

Though census data and federal employment equity policies use the more politically correct term of visible minorities to refer to members of racial groups in Canada,[4] in many other state and social arenas race is conflated with or replaced by paradigms of culture or ethnicity, perceived to be more inclusive. On one hand, this avoidance of race is promising; it indicates the possibility of moving beyond arbitrary racial distinctions. On the other hand, however, the conflation or equation of race with ethnicity often diminishes the claims of racial minorities. Like race, ethnicity is a social signifier of identity, but it is also fundamentally different. Ethnicity, which can overlap and intersect with race, often describes a collectivity with common ancestry, a shared past, culture, and language, and a sense of peoplehood or community (Cornell and Hartmann, 2007: 16–20). The importance of race or ethnicity in a given society is context-specific. Though race has played a key role in the

organization of most colonial societies, ethnicity has also played a critical role in Canada by facilitating what is considered to be far more than a linguistic divide between French and English Canada. However, the origins of race are in assignment and categorization, and while ethnicity can have similar beginnings it is more often associated with the assertions of group members (Cornell and Hartmann, 2007: 28).

Race has a history of constructed biological racialism, classification, categorization, and hierarchization based on visible physical attributes. The demarcation of racial boundaries has historically been a complicated and messy process, in which the state has been heavily involved. The categorization of mixed-race persons in Canada, for example, has changed over time. Between 1901 and 1941 mixed-race people were designated as belonging to whichever parent was non-white, from 1951 to 1971 designations followed patrilineal descent, and from 1981 to the present multiple responses on "ethnic origins" were permitted—though a direct question on "visible minority" status was only included for the first time on the 1996 census (Boyd et al., 2000). References to race most often invoke some visual form of embodiment, but Hesse illustrates that an unwarranted emphasis on corporeality is just one symptom larger political processes of racialization through which the European/non-European distinction became embedded in modernity (2007). Race, then, is not simply about skin colour and morphological characteristics but rather should be understood as the signifier of a complex set of power relations. The most important distinction between race and ethnicity is their different relationships to power. "Power is almost invariably an aspect of race; it may or may not be an aspect of ethnicity" (Cornell and Hartmann, 2007: 31). Consequently, research indicates that ethnicity and race are subject to different political consequences (Black, 2002).

Thus, on one level the fact that racial minorities represent a significant and rapidly growing portion of the Canadian population is important in and of itself. As an analytically generous interpretation of the political concerns the relationship between state and society, and since the demography of Canadian society includes racial minorities, race is, to some degree, political. However, such analytical stretching is not necessary to determine the political nature of race in Canada. Keith Banting and others have recently argued that Canada's social, economic, and political environments are highly racialized (2007). Examples include the continuation of immigrant "entrant status" in the labour market, gang-related violence in urban centres, second-generation immigrants arrested on terrorism charges in Toronto, and the sharp debate about the role of *sharia* law in Ontario. Reitz and Banerjee relate that 35.9 per cent of racial minorities report experiences of discrimination (2007). Conceptual stretching is not necessary to consider what state arenas are implicated in these

debates: criminal codes, the incarceration system, immigration policies and integration programs, human rights protections, family law, anti-terrorism legislation—the list goes on.

Though the idea that discrete, separate, and hierarchically ordered races exist as a matter of biological fact was the dominant ideology in the not-so-distant past,[5] it is now generally acknowledged that race is a social construction—though it has undoubtedly been constructed with incredible permeating power and longevity. However, ample evidence points not just to the social construction of race, but to the instrumental role the state itself has played in the creation of racial identities. Anthony Marx's comparative analysis of the United States, Brazil, and South Africa demonstrates that states *made* race (1998), and Ian Haney Lopez's book *White by Law* examines the central role played by law in the construction of race in the United States (1996). More recently, Melissa Nobles has demonstrated the political construction and consequences of race in American and Brazilian census categorizations (2000) while Jill Vickers considers the ways in which settler states such as Canada, the United States, and Australia established and relied on "race regimes" to maintain political and social order (2002a). Aside from these notable exceptions, however, race remains an under-researched and under-theorized subject within comparative political science. Moreover, Vickers (2002a) is one of the few authors to consider race in comparative political science while using Canada as a case study.

This disciplinary neglect has also been problematized in the context of American political science. Rogers Smith argues that we must examine "how elite political actors, institutions and public politics have not simply been reflecting, expressing, or 'enacting' racial identities through much of US history, but instead have been creating and transforming them," in order to illuminate how strongly race is tied to other manifestations of political power, including divisions and structures of government, the construction of criminal justice systems, education, social assistance, and the like (2004: 45). The point that race is political both in production and in consequence can be readily applied to Canada, where many aspects of historical and contemporary politics are, or have been, racialized. One need only think of the various and changing ways the *Indian Act* has defined Aboriginal identity to confirm the active role of the state in defining the boundaries of racial identities: "status" and "non-status" distinctions are part of a massive regulatory regime whose original aim was the assimilation of Aboriginal identities and cultures. In addition to the state's role in making race its redistributive function—combined with the undeniable connection between class and race—means that state action or inaction can alter, maintain, or solidify existing racial hierarchies. The state is relatively autonomous in deciding "who counts as a political actor, what is a political interest, and how the broad

state/society relationship is to be organized" (Omi and Winant, 1994: 83). This is not to say that social actors are powerless and without agency. However, the state's influence over social life—and especially racialized social life—is unparalleled. Politics in Canada has historically concerned both the regulation of subjects *inside* Canada (for example, the reserve system) and keeping other racialized subjects *outside* of Canada (for example, preferential immigration policies pre-1967). The central point, therefore, is that race is more than a mere and amorphous social construction; it is fundamentally a *political* one.

II. Is Race Neglected in English Canadian Political Science?

The centrality of race to the historical and contemporary political practices in Canada deviates significantly from the study of race in English Canadian political science. Though not all subfields within political science are the same, discussions of race are relatively absent in the bulk of the literature. The consideration of the extent to which race is absent in the field is an important line of inquiry, as "the study of topical exclusion and inclusion can illuminate the ways in which formal institutionalized structures for knowing the world—disciplines—bring some topics to their center even as they marginalize others" (Wilson and Frasure, 2007: 9).

The core of the discipline, or the "mainstream," is of central concern. The boundaries of the mainstream influence disciplinary thought in a number of ways: they dictate what and how we teach our undergraduate and graduate students, what is published in scholarly journals and books, how job candidates are evaluated, and how English Canadian political science presents its ideas and analyses to the world. While the mainstream may not necessarily be opposed to the study of race and racial consequences in politics, the fact remains that this subject is understudied in English Canadian political science.

One quantifiable indicator of what comprises the cannon in political science is the number of publications on a given topic in respected journals of the discipline. Ernest Wilson used this approach to measure the extent to which race was prevalent (or not) as a valid topic of analysis in American political science, finding that just 1 per cent of the articles published in *American Political Science Review* (from 1906 to 1990) and *Political Science Quarterly* (from 1886 to 1990), a total of 27 articles each, have focused on the analysis of the race in American politics (Wilson, 1985). More recently, Wilson and Frasure have updated and expanded this original 1985 study (2007). Considering the top-ranked journals in political science, sociology, history, and economics, they set out to determine whether the relative treatment of race across these dis-

ciplines has changed between their two periods of study: 1970–1985 and 1986–2003. They found that during the first time period economics ranked well below the other disciplines at 10 per cent of articles published pertaining to black topics. Like the original study in 1985, political science (31 per cent) ranked third after history (46 per cent) and sociology (38 per cent) (2007: 13). When the same search criteria were used for the second period (1986–2003), the authors found that political science's third-place ranking remained the same, and importantly, that political science was the only discipline in which the study of race did not increase between the two time periods (2007: 13–14).

These studies demonstrate that there is a dearth of literature in American political science concerning black or African-American subject matters, especially when compared to its sister disciplines of history or sociology. As several analysts note, English-Canadians often consider race an American problem, although no systemic comparative studies exist (Malinda Smith, 2003: 108; Vickers, 2002b: 16). A repetition of Wilson and Frasure's study using Canadian journals, however, would have been insufficient.[6] Their search terms refer specifically to African-American concerns, whereas I am interested in the treatment of race more generally in English Canadian political science. As such, I considered the following questions: (1) What are the relative rankings among English Canadian political science, history, and sociology in their attention to race? (2) What comparisons can be made in each of the disciplines between the prevalence of race versus ethnicity? To answer these questions, I conducted numerous searches of respected journals[7] in each of the three disciplines, using the keywords "race," "racial," "racism" and "visible minority" for "race," and "ethnic" and "ethnicity" for "ethnicity."[8] I divided the 36-year span of this study into three time periods: 1970–1984; 1985–2000; and 2001–2006. Each of these time periods marked major changes in the socio-political treatment of race in Canadian society: in the first period, the introduction and implementation of the points-based immigration policy (post-1967), Trudeau's statement on multiculturalism (1971), the repatriation of the constitution through the *Constitution Act, 1982*, and the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*; in the second period, the date when the Charter took effect (1985), and the federal government's Official Multiculturalism Policy (1988); in the third, the events of September 11, 2001, and the implementation of the *Anti-Terrorism Act* (2001).

The results of this Canadian study tell a remarkably similar story to Wilson and Frasure's (2007) consideration of American journals. These results confirm that political science ranks last among its sister disciplines of history and sociology in terms of the inclusion of race, but falls between the two for its consideration of ethnicity. The gap between political science, history, and sociology, however, is wider for race than eth-

TABLE 1
Social Science Results for the Prevalence of Keywords "Race/Ethnicity" as Percentages of Articles in a Given Time Period

	1970–1984		1985–2000		2001–2006		Average (1970–2006)	
	Race	Ethnicity	Race	Ethnicity	Race	Ethnicity	Race	Ethnicity
Political Science	0.6	2.8	1.8	4.8	3.4	7.2	1.6	4.5
History	1.9	1.0	4.3	4.7	7.8	8.9	4	4
Sociology	1.5	9.2	5.3	6.5	10.7	9.5	4.5	8

nicity: the range of the inclusion of race as a keyword is 4.5 per cent (sociology), 4 per cent (history) and 1.6 per cent (political science).

As Table 1 demonstrates, over the 36-year time period considered, the frequency of race increased in political science from 0.6 per cent in 1970–1984 to 3.4 per cent in 2001–2006. However, it should be noted that out of the total 1.6 per cent of articles concerning race over all three time periods, three of them, or 11 per cent, did not consider race in Canadian politics.[9] Furthermore, the data demonstrate that while race is subsumed by ethnicity in political science (1.6 per cent; 4.5 per cent) and sociology (4.5 per cent; 8 per cent), in history the two search terms were equally prevalent at 4 per cent. The implications of this study are clear. Compared with history and sociology, political science incorporates race the least often. Though the study of race in political science has increased over time (see Table 2), the discipline's highest proportion of articles pertaining to race (3.4 per cent in 2001–2006) is significantly lower than either sociology or history's proportion (4.3 per cent and 5.3 per cent, respectively) of articles in the *previous* (1985–2000) time period. Over the 36-year time period considered, only 1.6 per cent of articles in three respected English Canadian political science journals focused explicitly on race.

There are several limitations to this study. It focuses on the quantity of journal articles published rather than the quality of these studies. Fur-

TABLE 2
Number of Articles and Percentages for Race in Political Science

	1970–1984		1985–2000		2001–2006		Total (1970–2006)	
Journal	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
CJPS	3	0.9	3	1.0	5	4.5	11	1.5
CPP	0	0	9	2.9	3	3.4	12	2.6
CPA	0	0	3	1.3	1	1.5	4	0.9
Total	3	0.6	15	1.8	9	3.4	27	1.6

ther, are journal articles really an indicator of the extent to which race is neglected in English Canadian political science? Why these particular journals, instead of others which predominantly feature race and ethnicity? And what proportion of articles on race would be appropriate? As previously stated, this study is an attempt to consider the extent to which race is absent in mainstream English Canadian political science and measures of the core of the discipline can be ascertained by a number of mechanisms, of which the identification of dominant trends in respected journals is only one.

Articles published in journals, however, are an important indicator of the boundaries of the core of the discipline for several reasons. The peer review function of journal publishing is a gate-keeping mechanism that ensures the quality of the articles published and the state of the discipline can be ascertained by the material within the articles that make the cut. The question of proportionality is an important one but can perhaps only be answered indirectly and by comparison. In 2002, Cameron and Krikorian asked whether the study of federalism in Canadian political science had declined in recent years in favour of research concerning identity politics and social movements, as some had previously argued. They instead found that traditional concerns in federalism scholarship had actually increased over the decades from 5.45 per cent (1960–1969) to 12.5 per cent (1990–1999) of articles published in Canadian political science journals (Cameron and Krikorian, 2002: 331). Comparing federalism and race scholarship is much like comparing apples and oranges, but Cameron and Krikorian's reassurance that the prevalence of literature on federalism remained at an acceptable level at 12.5 per cent highlights even further the marginality and insufficiency of the 1.6 per cent of articles in English Canadian political science that contained race as a descriptor. This article makes no recommendation for what proportion of articles would be acceptable; it does, however, contend that by any measure, 1.6 per cent is shamefully low.

Journals not only maintain high standards for the articles published but also determine, to a certain extent, that which counts as political science and the scope of disciplinary boundary and content. Surely, more articles on racial or ethnic politics exist in other journals (*Ethnic and Racial Studies* and *Canadian Ethnic Studies* immediately come to mind) and Canadian political scientists may choose to publish their work in non-political science or non-Canadian journals. However, although the insights provided by both specialized journals and non-political science or non-Canadian journals are extremely valuable they do little to change the "puzzling place of race" (R. Smith, 2004) in mainstream English Canadian political science. This study calls into question not only the quantity of articles on race, but also the discipline's silence of this important area of study. Ernest Wilson argues that counting journal articles is an important

indicator, but more paradigmatically we must consider "the centrality of the scholarship on black life to the major disciplinary questions" (1985: 604). In English Canada, it is quite significant that most of the cutting-edge work on race and politics has been done in other disciplines such as history, sociology, and critical fields (Malinda Smith, 2003: 110). The need to incorporate scholarship on race in established disciplines is arguably even more pressing in Canada where, unlike the United States, specialized undergraduate or graduate degree programs on race and racial issues—such as African-American studies, Asian-American studies, ethnic studies, or cultural studies departments and programs—are a rarity. This disciplinary and pedagogical challenge, however, has largely been left unanswered. In sum, English Canadian political science has been ignoring all the signs that point to the relevance of race: demographic data point to the increasing racial population of Canada; the link between race and politics is clear both in terms of the production of race itself and the political and social barriers faced by racialized populations; and other disciplines in the social sciences have been far more successful than political science at publishing and presenting journal articles that take race as an important subject of research. Is political science simply ignoring reality? Or are there other reasons that may account for the relative absence of race in English Canadian political science?

III. What Accounts for the Absence of Race in English Canadian Political Science?

There are a myriad of factors that can potentially explain the sustained neglect of race in political science. To begin with, scholars (V. Wilson, 1993; Vickers, 2002b) have argued that the dominant narrative of Canadian society and politics is one in which there are no major racial problems. The ideational power of this narrative manifests not simply in the social sciences, but also in prevailing attitudes of the population. Reitz and Banerjee demonstrate that there is a "prevailing view that racism is marginal in Canada," and that "only a minority of the White population think that prejudice is something that the Canadian government should address with more determination" (mis)perceptions that are unlikely to change given the elevated mythological status of multiculturalism and its solidified place in the narrative of Canadian identity (2007: 11). Yet, race and racism are undeniable elements of Canadian society. The general denial that race matters in Canada is summarized well by V. Seymour Wilson: "The point in all this is that a tradition of racism and ethnocentrism amongst Canada's founding groups is either seldom acknowledged, often denied, sometimes conveniently ignored, soft-peddled or suppressed" (1993: 667).

This dominant narrative that neither race nor racism is a serious issue in Canada is complemented by characteristics of political science that perpetuate and manipulate this myth. In his presidential address to the Canadian Political Science Association, Kenneth McRae argued that "Western political thought in general has shown little understanding or respect for the cultural diversity of mankind and has made scant allowance for it as a possible concern of government" (1979: 685). Vickers furthers this line of argumentation by examining several assumptions in Western political thought that have led to a misperception of diversity, especially as it pertains to race. Specifically, she contends that Euro-American political theory is based on a norm of a homogenous people or nation that renders it unable to conceptualize the experiences of supplanting societies, which invariably were racially heterogeneous (2002b: 19). Moreover, Vickers argues that the categories and tools utilized by Western political thought posits the white (heterosexual, able-bodied) male at the centre of history, thereby advancing an exclusive epistemic privilege that is inaccessible to those deemed "too different" because of race or gender (2002b: 23). Like Mills these authors demonstrate that theoretical ideas about race are embedded in political philosophy and theory at a deep level (1997), and, as Vickers insightfully notes, the absence of race from "core texts in political theory and from political science paradigms is our clue that they are not sufficient for understanding the politics of 'race'" (2002b: 20).

This insufficiency is evidenced not only by the relative dearth of literature on race in English Canadian political science, but also by the manner in which race is examined in the discipline on those occasions when it surfaces. When analyses in political science do consider race, it is rarely acknowledged as a political production and thus the marginal disciplinary status of race remains unchanged. For example, though Canadian political theorists have invented and driven the discourse on multiculturalism (Kymlicka, 1995, 1998; C. Taylor, 1994; Carens, 2000), these debates largely concern the ability of liberalism to accommodate minority rights, especially when minority rights are synonymous with illiberal practices. Far from contributing to the centrality of race within Canadian political science, discourses of multiculturalism (somewhat ironically) perpetuate disciplinary myths that actually prevent any kind of meaningful analysis of the political production or consequences of race in Canada. In her assessment of the discursive impact of multiculturalism on women of colour, Bannerji questions the extent to which multiculturalism actually makes a difference in the lives of racial minorities who suffer from racism and systemic discrimination (2000). Taylor's central claims of the paramountcy of the "recognition" of identities "speaks to nothing like class formation or class struggle, the existence of active and deep racism, or of a social organization entailing racialized class productions of

gender" (Bannerji, 2000: 554). Discourses of multiculturalism and diversity, Bannerji argues, simultaneously hide and enshrine power relations (2000: 555).

The evidence points to the importance of race and the dearth of literature on race in English Canadian political science indicates that our discipline is missing an important aspect of the real world of the political. The danger of disciplinary lag—whereby political science becomes disconnected from the society it purports to analyze—is an important concern. Though the dominant narrative in Canadian society generally denies the relevance of race, political science has internalized this myth to a greater extent than other disciplines in the social sciences which, we may recall, have better incorporated discussions and analyses of race. Not only does this suggest that political science has failed to seriously consider a topic that has been identified as important by other scholars and disciplines, but also that the difficulty of analyzing race and racial consequences of politics may be a problem specific to political science. V. Seymour Wilson, for example, argues that Canadian political science's traditional focus on institutional federalism directs our attention to only territorially based groups, while the majority of racial minorities inhabit the country's eight largest metropolitan areas (1993: 648). Similarly, I contend that there are several dominant methodologies, approaches and ideas in the discipline itself that may result in neglect both of using race as an explanatory variable and considering race to be a political production.

Race is often overlooked as an explanatory variable because of dominant methodological trends in English Canadian political science, which demand a rigour that validates the scientific aspect of political *science*. Whether qualitative or quantitative, the normative ideal of political science research is puzzle-driven, with causal correlations demonstrating the relationship between two or more variables. According to these terms, race is a conceptually fuzzy variable. Its definition has varied over time and space, making both comparative work and longitudinal analyses difficult. In contemporary times, race is largely considered to be a matter best left to self-identification (at least, officially), rendering race a subjective measure of identity and, again, making comparisons and accurate data collection difficult. Considering the ethic and racial representation in Parliament, Jerome Black explains that objective measurement of racial identity would emphasize "group membership classifications that are external to the individuals involved, that is, independent of any self-labelling" (2002: 357). Such a calibration of racial identity is problematic, to say the least, privileging imposed racial identity based on visible morphological or phenological attributes, giving the power of racial definition to the observer and objectifying the racial subject. Imposed and supposedly objective racial identification also usually results in the mis-

recognition or negation of mixed-race identities. Yet, to rely on strictly subjective criteria—as Black puts it, "the sense and degree of felt attachment to the collectivity" (2002: 357)—makes comparisons difficult unless proper conceptualization and measurement of referent categories of potential belonging can be attained.

Using race as an explanatory variable, however, may be part of the problem. As Rupert Taylor notes, it is not clear how, in the current formulation of political science, race and ethnicity can help explain politics. The problem, Taylor argues, lies in the discipline itself: "Political science's specific commitment to the scientific method has dictated that 'race' and 'ethnicity' be taken as 'things' in themselves that we encounter, rather than prompting the need to see 'race' and 'ethnicity' as being problematic in themselves" (1996: 892). A means of overcoming this disciplinary shortcoming is to investigate the ways in which the political system has worked to solidify the idea that conceptions like race and ethnicity do, in fact, exist. Our methodological rigour would be better served in an interrogation of the social and political forces that reinforce the power of race.

Similarly, the dominant approaches to the study of English Canadian political science are unlikely to acknowledge race as a political production or phenomenon. Ernest Wilson contends that political science traditionally studies the actions of elites and decision makers; African-Americans, however, "have historically been deprived of elite status and hence rarely are involved in authoritative decisions; they are more frequently the objects or victims of the use of power" (1985: 604). This argument also has salience in the Canadian context, where the institutions, state parties, and "official politics" are dominant and where racial minorities are currently underrepresented in institutions like the House of Commons (Weaver, 1997; Black, 2000, 2002) and the formal bureaucracy of the Canadian government (Weaver, 1997; Canada, 2000). Also, political participation in Canada often concerns the activities of citizens, and only of citizens (Abu-Laban, 2002: 277) and until recently political science has not considered the liminal positioning of new immigrants, permanent residents and refugee claimants, the majority of whom belong to racial minority groups. This is not to say that racial minorities are politically passive, but rather that their access to power and decision makers is limited.

Approaches in mainstream political science concern more than a focus on elites and decision makers; analytical framing is also important. Though Dawson and Wilson have found that scholarship concerning race in the United States pays insufficient attention to the importance of theoretical modelling, they also acknowledge that the dominant theories and models of American political science—specifically, the individualistic nature of social/rational choice theory—is ill-equipped to consider

the collective desires or beliefs of racial minorities (1991: 193, 212). In English-speaking Canada, political science has largely focused on institutions, "often conceptualizing political developments such as province-building, Quebec nationalism, Aboriginal nationalisms, and multiculturalism in terms of political institutional reform" (Miriam Smith, 2005: 101). The focus on the state suggests a particular colour-blindness inherent in the liberal idea of equality and social justice. Institutions are designed to treat all citizens alike, regardless of colour. However, as Constance Backhouse has indicated, Canada's legal institutions have historically been colour-*coded* rather than colour-blind:

> Proponents of "race-neutrality" neglect to recognize that our society is not a race-neutral one. It is built upon centuries of racial division and discrimination. The legacy of such bigotry infects all of our institutions, relationships, and legal frameworks. To advocate "colour-blindness" as an ideal for the modern world is to adopt the false mythology of "racelessness" that has plagued the Canadian legal system for so long ... [that] it will only serve to condone the continuation of white supremacy across Canadian society. (1999: 274).

In effect, institutions that avoid race according to the principles of colour blindness serve to solidify existing social hierarchies. Furthermore, as the legal discourse surrounding formal versus substantive equality has demonstrated, colour blindness can never lead to equality while the social and economic playing field is not level.

A colour-blind approach to politics is not manifest in Canada's legal and political institutions alone; take the paradigmatic approaches to the study of Canadian political culture as an example. The Hartzian fragmentation thesis argues that New World societies can best be conceived as "fragments" with the ideological underpinnings of their former homelands that congealed into a dominant political culture (Hartz, 1955). Attempting to explain why socialism exists in Canada but not in the United States, Gad Horowitz adapted Hartz's original theory and argued that the fragments brought to French and English Canada are ideologically different than the liberal idealism of the United States; Canadian political culture "is touched by toryism and thus naturally produces and welcomes socialist ideas" (quoted by Forbes, 1987: 298). In the Hartz-Horowitz formulation, the Loyalist immigrants to British North America following the American Revolution were instrumental in formulating the political culture of English Canada. Here, the colour-blind emphasis on elite political actors and the subsequent erasure of racial minorities is apparent. Race is nowhere to be found in these theories, though the Loyalist migration included approximately 3,000 free blacks who had been emancipated in exchange for their loyalty to the British Crown during the American Revolution (Jhappan and Stasiulis, 1995: 107–08). Though these blacks were the first large migration of freed and fugitive slaves to

the Maritimes and can be linked to the modern-day black communities in Nova Scotia, Nelson Wiseman's recent discussion of the various regional political cultures in Canada omits any mention of black Loyalists (Wiseman, 2007). I mention this omission not to encourage an "add race and stir" type of analysis, but rather to illuminate the potential cracks in the presumption that the Loyalists were a homogenous group possessing similar reasons for settling in Canada, or even similar political orientations. Wiseman also contends that political culture in Canada is largely immigrant driven, but that the fifth and most contemporary wave, which, incidentally, is the most "visible, multicultural, and multiracial," is large numerically but weak in terms of political impact, as Canadian political culture is now "too established" (2007: 41). This is an interesting and disturbing point: Wiseman seems to contend that no matter what the demographic composition of Canadian society, racialized minorities will never be able to substantially participate in or influence Canadian political culture. Furthermore, it is interesting that the Hartz-Horowitz discussions of prevailing ideologies in new societies fail to engage with the colonialism and the ideological justification for the appropriation of the Aboriginal lands upon which these new societies were built. Without liberalism and the Lockean principles of property it carried in its wake, the doctrine of *terra nullus* could not have justified the Crown's claim to British North America (Asch, 2002). The combination of elite-focused analysis and colour-blind approaches doubly negates the inclusion of racial subjects or racial consequences in the study of Canadian political culture.

When race is taken into account, results are significantly different. Though Ailsa Henderson's account of regional political cultures in Canada reduces race to an indicator equated with ethnicity and religion, her inclusion of these criteria (among others) results in new conclusions about the nature of Canadian political culture. Rather than being provincially based, Henderson's work argues that there are distinct regional political cultures that transcend provincial boundaries (2004: 610). Importantly, some of these regions are specifically urban areas where the racial minority demographic is concentrated, thereby indicating, contrary to Wiseman's thesis, that new immigrants and racial minorities may have a lasting impact on the evolution of Canadian political cultures.[10]

Finally, a general point must be made about the impact of dominant ideas in English Canadian political science on the study of politics and the dearth of scholarship on race. There are two aspects of Canadian politics that are continually implicated: first, the myth of two founding nations and the status of Quebec and language politics, and second, Canadian identity and anti-Americanism. Each of these contains an ideational power that has permeated Canadian society and perhaps even the discipline of political science as a whole, yet each serves, albeit in distinct ways, to eradicate race from politics. The idea that Canada was founded by two

nations "obliterate[s] the history, role and claims of Aboriginal peoples" and has served to "exclude other identities and trivialize their contributions to the development of the country" (Jhappan and Stasiulis, 1995: 110, 127). While Quebec's contentious relationship with English Canada and the Canadian state is undeniable, the access to power that comes with being identified as a formal political entity in a federation is a privilege that has historically been denied to other minorities. This includes Aboriginal peoples, whose self-government agreements with federal and provincial governments will never result in the same amount of jurisdictional power and control guaranteed by Section 92 of the *Constitution Act, 1867*.

Secondly, the elusive search for a Canadian identity is continually defined against American nationalism and identity. The classic melting pot-versus-mosaic metaphor, inaccurate though it may be, has firmly implanted a utopian myth about the presence and potential of multiculturalism in the national psyche. Canada is constructed as the original promised land sought by fugitive slaves along the Underground Railroad, contrasted always, of course, with the oppressive and discriminatory realities of American politics and society. However, a fact check is in order: slavery was not officially abolished in Upper and Lower Canada until it was abolished throughout the entire British Empire in 1833. The Underground Railroad, the subject of many a heritage minute commercial, was originally created to smuggle slaves *out* of Canada and into the free northern United States (Cooper, 2006: 103). Further, upon arriving in Canada many ex-slaves found the only difference between the two countries was that in Canada they could not be re-enslaved (Malinda Smith, 2003: 117); that is, discrimination and segregation were just as prevalent in Canada as in the US. In contemporary times, racism is clearly a facet of Canadian society, whether it be indicated by under-representation of racial minorities in the House of Commons, the entrance status of highly educated and skilled new immigrants into the Canadian labour market, or the informal racial boundaries that permeate social life in Canada. For example, Reitz and Banerjee's research indicates that "while most Canadians deny harbouring racist views, they maintain a 'social distance' from minorities—they prefer not to interact with members of other racial groups in certain social situations" (2007: 12). Yet, to admit that racism exists in Canada, or to acknowledge the implicitly political nature of race, as most refuse to do, would be to admit that the moral superiority Canada holds over the United States in terms of race relations is unfounded and misleading. This is not to say that racism operates in absolutes, but rather to suggest that the comparison of racism in Canada to the more overt racism existing within the United States allows Canadians to deny the reality of racism in this country. This denial is made easily in Canada, for explicit race production or racism named and

acknowledged as such is difficult to find. As Backhouse points out, colour blindness is a Canadian mechanism for responding to racial issues, allowing Canadians to maintain a "stupefying innocence ... about the enormity of racial oppression" (1999: 278).

It is both surprising and disturbing that while race has so clearly been implicated in the practice of politics in Canada, English Canadian political science remains cautiously silent. As V. Seymour Wilson cautioned, this silence holds the dangerous potential of becoming disciplinary lag, an option that political scientists cannot—and should not—entertain (1993: 650). However, at least part of this research gap in our discipline may be symptomatic of a larger denial in Canadian society and the academy of the existence of racial discourses and racism in Canada. Recall that while both Canadian history and sociology incorporated race to a greater extent than political science, none of the three disciplines considered had higher than 10.7 per cent of articles pertaining to race in any given time period. Ideas—especially those that concern national narratives or mythologies—are powerful forces. But time will tell; racial minorities are a quickly growing population in Canada. If current demographic trends remain constant, it is estimated that both Toronto and Vancouver will be minority-majority cities by 2012. The status quo in political science may soon prove to be inadequate; demographic realities will eventually force the hand of the dominant approaches and ideas.

IV. Conclusion

This article has argued that there is a dearth of literature in English Canadian political science on race in spite of substantial evidence that demonstrates the significance of race in Canadian politics and society. It has provided a number of potential explanations for this disciplinary silence, including methodological fuzziness, dominant elite-focused and colour-blind approaches to the study of politics, and the prevalence of ideas and foci about the nature of Canadian politics. It demonstrates that political scientists must take heed of McRae's warning of "disciplinary lag" (1979); the lack of research on race is not simply an issue of identified gaps in political research but rather speaks to a fundamental disconnect between an academic discipline and the "on-the-ground" experiences of the society it purports to analyze and explore.

What should we, as political scientists, do to rectify this? First, as a discipline, political science can reconsider its elite and institution-focused approaches that dominate its core. Ernest Wilson points out that other disciplines that are stronger in the study of race, such as history and sociology, share a number of common features in their approach: "These

include (1) a concern with seeing society from the bottom up rather than the top down; (2) the study of the search for personal and group autonomy under constrained conditions; (3) a focus on the mobilization of new groups which put forward their own legitimate leaders; and (4) the role of non-formal institutions" (1985: 603). Each of these features is compatible with political science methodologies and could easily be adapted to mesh with our research paradigms. Moreover, a reconsideration of the dominant approaches in English Canadian political science, especially as they pertain to non-formal institutions and the informal realms of politics may reorient the field in a more inclusive manner.

Secondly, it is critical that we recognize that *we all study race*, regardless of sub-field, specialization or geographic interest. Racialized consequences permeate everyday life, not just for those who are labelled and categorized as racial minorities, but for everyone. But we cannot analyze what we refuse to see. In the words of Charles Mills, "the fish does not see the water, and whites do not see the racial nature of a white polity because it is natural to them, the element in which they move" (1997: 76). Privilege often does not recognize privilege as such—it is instead interpreted as normalcy. The notion of race neutrality promotes the idea that this normalcy is available to everyone regardless of race when evidence dictates that it surely is not. Therefore, a third point is that political scientists must make efforts to resist race-neutral and colour-blind paradigms that are designed to "simultaneously hide and enshrine" (Bannerji, 2000: 555) social hierarchies and political power relations.

Acknowledging race as a political construction is not intended to minimize or negate the very real political, social and economic consequences of being a racial minority in Canada. Nor is it simply a call for the "add race and stir" type of approach that feminists have long dismissed. Considering the racial dimensions of the study of politics in, for example, interest groups, parliamentarians, and the like is a necessary starting point among the many under-theorized dimensions of race in English Canadian political science. Other research realms that have yet to be addressed in the literature include a scrutiny of the historical and contemporary legislation and regulations that have constituted and maintained racial categories; the normative dimensions of race within the operation of Canadian democracy; an unmasking of racism of Canadian politics, especially as it pertains to the intersection of race, gender and class; and any kind of comparative analysis that considers the constitution of race in Canada alongside other racialized societies such as the United States, Great Britain, France, South Africa, Australia or Brazil. Rather than dismissing political science as white-washed, I believe that the discipline is well-equipped to analyze the political production of race and the racialized consequences of Canadian political life. The chal-

lenge, therefore, is not only theoretical and pragmatic, but also pedagogical and unavoidable.

Notes

1 From the outset, it is important to distinguish race from ethnicity, though the two terms are often conflated. Li (1999) writes that "the important aspect of an ethnic group is that its members share a sense of peoplehood or identity based on descent, language, religion, tradition, and other common experiences" (1999: 6). Race, on the other hand, is far more controversial, as it is often incorrectly equated with biological subspecies based on a common genetic constitution. Some sociologists advocate the use of the term "racialization" to demonstrate that social processes are the means by which certain groups are singled out for unequal treatments on the basis of real or imagined phonological differences (Li, 1999: 8).

2 According to the *Employment Equity Act* (1995), which is also used to determine racial categories in the census, visible minorities are "persons, other than aboriginal peoples, who are non-Caucasian in race and non-white in colour." Aboriginal peoples are not included in this definition, as they are defined separately in both the census and for employment equity purposes. However, the "visible minority" designation is clearly race-based and critics charge that the avoidance of racial language is an avoidance of issues of racism (Stasiulis, 1991).

3 Data and research on Aboriginal peoples are included in this article insofar as they demonstrate the racialization of this diverse population in Canada. However, the inclusion of Aboriginal peoples under a race framework is heavily contested by a number of scholars, who often invoke internal colonialism to confer the differences between the racism faced by Aboriginal peoples as compared to other racial minorities (Razack, 1998; Tully, 2000; Alfred, 2005; Green, 2007).

4 Race scholars have generally not adopted this terminology of "visible minorities," instead using terms such as "racialized" to make clear that the racism and discrimination faced by racial minorities is part of a *process* that encompasses individual, structural and macro-societal levels (Essed, 1991: 36–37). This article will use the term "racial minorities" to implicate this process of racialization, and, further, that as a process dependent upon economic, political, social and ideological conditions as well as time and space, not all racial minorities are racialized in the same way.

5 And in some cases, the all-too-apparent present. See Rushton (1994) and Hernnstein and Murray (1994), who have appealed to genetics to explain racial superiority and inferiority of intellect. See also the critiques of their theories in Fischer et al. (1996) and Flynn (2007).

6 Instead of using the JSTOR database, which did not include the all the requisite Canadian journals, the "America: History and Life" (AHL) database by publishers ABC-CLIO (http://www.abc-clio.com) provided greater breadth of journals and consistency for the purposes of this analysis. This survey of journal articles is based on journal or author-designated keywords, preventing inappropriate categorizations; for example, Aboriginal peoples were often excluded from the survey of journal articles in the social sciences, as it was rare to find an article that focused explicitly on Aboriginal peoples and issues which used "race" or "ethnicity" as a keyword. Further, this search engine had several important features: searches were limited to articles (excluding book reviews and commentaries); searches included both English and French articles where applicable; and keyword searches avoided the full-text/abstract search problem where "race" could refer to "race to the bottom." The database also provided the

total number of articles in a given journal for a given time period, thus enabling the compilation of percentages.

7 These journals were: the *Canadian Journal of Political Science*, *Canadian Public Policy*, *Canadian Public Administration*, *Canadian Historical Review*, *Canadian Journal of History*, *Canadian Review of Sociology and Anthropology*, and *Canadian Journal of Sociology*. They were selected after consultation with numerous scholars in history, sociology and political science in different universities in English-speaking Canada, who identified these journals as "top-ranked" in their respective fields.

8 The accuracy of the data was ensured by cross-referencing the AHL database results with the Scholars Portal multi-database search engine, which comprises several different databases (including PAIS International, Political Science: A SAGE Full-Text Collection, and Social Sciences Citation Index). Searches were limited by "descriptors" and by specific journal and book reviews were, again, excluded. Where new articles appeared through this cross-reference, each was double-checked against the AHL database to ensure that in adding to the counts of "race" and "ethnicity" as keywords, I was maintaining as accurate a percentage as possible. However, it is important to note that, if anything, these percentages are a generous interpretation of the disciplines' inclusion of race and ethnicity. While it was possible to search the Scholars Portal multi-database for omitted references that included descriptors of race or ethnicity, it was not possible to ascertain how many articles did not include race/ethnicity and were also not included in the total number of articles published. Therefore, any inaccuracies err on the side of a generous interpretation of the prevalence of race and ethnicity.

9 These articles were Adam (1971), Fleras (1985), and Nagy (2002).

10 Though, of course, the high concentration of racial minorities in urban areas combined with the disadvantages of the SMP electoral system does partially reaffirm Wiseman's implicit argument that racial minorities cannot influence Canadian politics.

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