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Abstract
Renewed calls for decolonizing anthropology in the 21st century raise the question of what work earlier waves of decolonization since the 1960s have left undone. Some of this work should focus on the classification of human differences, which figured prominently in all phases of the discipline's history: as a methodology in its racist phases, as an object of study during its late colonial phase of professionalization, as self-critical reflexivity in the 1980s and 1990s, and as a renewed critique in the 21st century. Can a universal methodology of studying classifications of human kinds arise from the discipline's past of colonial stereotyping? I argue affirmatively, through an approach that recognizes time as the epistemic condition that connects past and present positions to present and future methodologies. Firstly, my analysis distinguishes the parochial embedding in colonial culture of Durkheim and Mauss' ideas about classification from their more universal intentions. This is then developed into a threefold reflexive and timeful methodology of studying classification's nominal-descriptive, constructive, and interventionist dimensions—a process of adding temporality to the study of classification. Subsequently, Anténor Firmin's 19th-century critique of racial classifications, and W. E. B. Du Bois's theory of double consciousness help to show how this threefold methodology addresses the insufficiently theorized process of being classified and discriminated against through racial categories wielded by the powers that be. These arguments radicalize the essay's timeful perspective by concluding that we need to avoid modernist uses of *time as* classification and adopt the aforementioned threefold

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methodology in order to put *time in* classifications of human kinds. This reverses modern positivism's subordination to methodological rules of the epistemic conditions posed by contingent history and shows instead that the universal goals of methodology should be understood as a future ideal.

Keywords
Classification, decolonization, temporality, methodology

Introduction

Despite its anti-racist self-image and assertions of care for human difference, anthropology has not been able to escape a 'central paradox of modernity': while the discipline promises that it applies universally and equally to all of its practitioners, it still faces accusations of denying equal access to those labelled as (racial) other (Goldberg, 1993: 4; cf. Allen and Jobson, 2016; Nyamnjoh, 2012: 69; Wekker, 2016). The twenty-first century calls for a new, third wave of decolonizing the discipline—fuelled by neighbouring disciplines' unease about their 'unbearable whiteness' (Derickson, 2017: 236), by the popularization of a 'coloniality/modernity' paradigm (Escobar, 2007; Mignolo, 2011; Quijano, 2007 [1992]), and, perhaps most importantly, by social movements like Black Lives Matter and Rhodes Must Fall—show that anthropology's first and second decolonizing waves were never complete. For someone like me, who was educated by the critical anthropologists of the first wave of the late 1960s and 1970s, and who contributed to the second wave of the 1980s and 1990s, the realization that we were still teaching—until recently—a largely white and male canon was embarrassing. It also raises the questions: what did earlier generations achieve, and which anthropological theories and practices should still be subjected to decolonizing critique today?

This essay discusses some of the more theoretical of these questions by revisiting the *topos* of classification—once central to disciplinary rhetoric, but somewhat neglected since—in an attempt to rethink this central paradox in an anthropologically constructive way. Classification played a crucial role in the emergence and professionalization of the discipline. Taxonomic classification of human differences was an almost unquestioned methodology of mid-19th-century scientific racism, although (as we shall see) that neither meant it was methodically applied, nor that it escaped critique. Subsequently, leading practitioners on both sides of the North Atlantic turned native classifications, also known as 'collective representations' or 'culture', into the core data of the discipline—a methodological transformation that co-constituted it as an academic profession during its late colonial career.

In contrast, the second decolonizing wave stands out by its critique of *modern* temporal and geographical classifications (Fabian, 1983; Said, 1978; Pels, 2014).

The most recent decolonizing wave of critique also targets classification: in the essay that laid the foundations for the 'coloniality/modernity' approach, Aníbal Quijano argued that the racial, ethnic, anthropological and national 'social discriminations' produced by European colonialism provide the main epistemic condition for explaining why, despite decolonization, coloniality is 'still the most general form of domination in the world today' (2007 [1992]: 168, 170). The historical study of anthropological uses of classification may therefore enlighten us about the discipline's contemporary universalist claims to knowledge, as well as the extent to which these claims did, or did not, uphold North Atlantic biases and privileges, and exclude those classified as other. Such reflexivity seems pivotal for assessing the validity of such claims. Universalizing a methodology stands or falls by the success of its equal and symmetrical application—not least, to the categories of North Atlantic thought themselves.

On the one hand, revisiting such categories of human difference may help to deconstruct the singularity of the universal claims that they supported. On the other, it may also show how they aspired to transcend the particular political projects in which they were deployed, despite their parochial embedding. In any case, we can neither recognize these categories' historical limits nor their potential for present or future application without rethinking culture '*through* connection' (Gupta and Ferguson, 1992: 8)—in other words, without 'provincializing' (some) anthropological universals as 'North Atlantic' (Chakrabarty, 2000; Trouillot, 2002). Yet however much the concept of classification may be a contingent product of anthropology's sedimentation of colonial connections, that history alone fails to prove that the concept is useless as an ideal for interpreting anthropology's current intellectual position. (A comparable critique was levelled by historians of science against the notion of objectivity—see Daston and Galison, 2007; Pels, 2014.)

My main argument is that anthropologists need a *timeful* methodology of studying classifications and categories of human difference: one that keeps the moments at which they describe, construct, or intervene in social relationships analytically separate, while studying the concrete historical processes in which they converged. Once we realize that what a classification of human kind is meant to describe may differ from the meanings governing its construction and social intervention—that the same classification may *do* quite different things in the course of its social life— we begin to formulate a methodology of studying classifications that may aspire to transcend some of the epistemic conditions bequeathed to anthropology by European colonialism.

The first section of this essay rethinks the transformation of the object of anthropology around 1900, by reconnecting the arguments about 'primitive classification' by Emile Durkheim and Marcel Mauss to contemporaneous developments in colonial knowledge. The second section resituates the two scholars' methodological innovations in their position in French society, in order to develop my analytical distinction between the descriptive, constructive and interventionist aspects of classification. The third section turns to an earlier Francophone anthropologist and his rare critique of the nominal-descriptive aspects of his peers' *racial*

classifications. It re-establishes cross-Atlantic connections because the author, Anténor Firmin, embodied the legacy of the Haitian Revolution—mounting (then, as now) a public and paradoxical challenge to the egalitarian conceits of modernity. The fourth section continues to focus on Black Atlantic connections by discussing W. E. B. Du Bois's theory of double consciousness—as a theory of how racial classifications are constructed and intervene in social relationships, but also as a timeful and dynamic realization that socio-historical positions always consist of *both* historically established identities *and* their sometimes universalizing future aspirations.

My conclusion picks up at that point, because I want to argue that colonial reifications and essentializations were, often implicitly, reproduced by the use of *time as* a form of classification. They hide even in discursive patterns that proclaim the abolition of racism. Neither the futurism of modernization rhetoric nor the essentializations of 'colour-blindness' and/or 'Africanist' critique have managed to overcome the stagnation of anthropological decolonization, let alone the structural racism that recently triggered the activism of Black Lives Matter and Rhodes Must Fall. Nahum Chandler helped me recognize the timefulness of W. E. B. Du Bois's theorizing: Du Bois made the present past of positions defined by racial classification hinge *as well* on African Americans' future-directed 'spiritual strivings' (1994 [1903]: 1; Chandler, 2014: 3). I think that such a timeful 'betweenness' applies equally to people who are in the process of divesting themselves of a colonial legacy: we are not only where we come from, but also where we are going.

This essay therefore concludes that bringing *time in* classifications is an essential ingredient of anthropological methodology. However, that realization requires anthropologists to treat time as a fundamental epistemological condition, connecting the geo-historical positions of both researcher and researched to a future that their methodology suggests is applicable to all. This may avoid the reifications of modernist classifications of time (such as epochalism) and maintain or introduce a timeful awareness of the incompleteness of the decolonization project—and, perhaps, realign our theorizing with the practical actions its universal ideals call for.

Primitive Classification revisited: Rethinking the object of anthropology

The claim that 'native' or indigenous classifications form the primary research materials of anthropology is not new. The problem lies rather in how inclusive the classification of 'natives' is made out to be. The colonial, racialized sense of the term (as in 'the native question') primarily excludes; it differs profoundly from critical and inclusive uses of 'native' in the African American diaspora (as in 'native son': Wright, 2000 [1940]; Baldwin, 2017 [1955]).[1] An exclusive classification of the 'primitive' also marked the initial suggestion by Emile Durkheim and Marcel Mauss to take collective representations as the central object of social theory in 1903, and the 1912 proposal by William Rivers, Barbara Freire-

Marreco and R. R. Marrett (among others) to turn 'native' categories into the bedrock of anthropological methodology (Durkheim and Mauss, 1963 [1903]; Stocking, 2001: 179–183).

The claim that indigenous classifications form anthropology's core research material was repeated by the translator of *Primitive Classification*, Rodney Needham, who enlisted Edward Evans-Pritchard's support in stating that the first duty of anthropological researchers was to 'assimilate' the 'distinctive categories' of the people studied (Needham, 1963: viii).[2] It may therefore seem surprising that anthropologists have not situated the study of classification and categories more at the centre of social theory. While cognitive psychology and the sociology of work have defined classification as indispensable for social and cultural reproduction—whether as the foundation of intellectual activity (Estes, 1994: 4) or as the hidden structuration of social institutions (Bowker and Star, 1999; Star, 1999)—anthropologists rarely developed classification theory beyond Durkheim and Mauss (but see Comaroff and Comaroff, 1992; Needham, 1975, 1979; Ohnuki-Tierney 1981). Yet, 'classification' is still presented in overviews and encyclopaedias as a key concept of the anthropological enterprise (Ellen 1996; Rapport and Overing, 2000: 32–40). It may be that classification is associated—perhaps through William Rivers' genealogical method, which grounded his plea to study indigenous categories—with an antiquated discourse on kinship. However, the concept may also remind anthropologists too much of its 'dark ages' of racial classification (Stocking, 1973: xii), when anthropological science helped turn 'social discriminations' of European colonialism into the global forms of domination that endure today (Quijano, 2007 [1992]: 168, 170).

In any case, Durkheim and Mauss' *On Some Primitive Forms of Classification: Contribution to the Study of Collective Representations* (as the original French title goes) marked an epistemic shift in anthropology away from the collection of objects, facts and bodies for 'natural history', towards study of the categories by which human societies collectively represent themselves, whether these were called classifications, myths, culture, or the 'native point of view'.[3] This shift signalled a cultural transformation of North Atlantic science: practitioners moved away from the 'mechanical objectivity' of visually reproducing specimens with as little interference of the human subject as possible. From the 1880s onwards, they increasingly redefined reality in terms of 'relational invariants' that, in contrast to the objective realities put forward around 1830, could not be directly observed: they were deemed accessible only by quantification and mathematics, experiment, or some form of 'trained judgment' (Daston and Galison, 2007). Trained judgment in anthropology implied that researchers, to properly delineate the social wholes of 'primitive' societies, would first have to familiarize themselves with indigenous representations. Notions like function, culture and social structure would, from the last decade of the 19th century onwards, come to describe these social wholes. The universalist surface presented by that academic vocabulary, however, was often subverted by the colonial origins of the identities it reclassified (see, for example, Sharpe, 1986).

Durkheim and Mauss start their essay by stating that 'our conception of class' is 'a circumscription with fixed and definite outlines' and that it therefore differs from the general 'state of indistinction' in which the human mind found itself during its 'prehistory' (1963 [1903]: 4). The 'fundamental confusion of all images and ideas' of primitive society 'exists today only as a survival . . . in certain distinctly localized functions of collective thought', that is, in literature, religion and folklore (Durkheim and Mauss, 1963 [1903]: 4). In this quintessentially modern and colonial gesture, 'primitive' thought is portrayed as a *Fremdkörper* trespassing on a new epoch characterized by secular scientific classification.

However, the conclusion of their essay seems to reverse this dichotomy of confused primitive and knowledgeable modern. As they reflect on (among other cases) aboriginal Australian 'totemism', Durkheim and Mauss conclude that 'the conditions on which these very ancient classifications depend may have played an important part in the genesis of the classificatory function in general' because 'the nature of these conditions is social'. 'The first logical categories', they continue, 'were social categories; the first classes of things were classes of men [sic]. . .' (1963 [1903]: 82). While this 'social affectivity' of categories has, they presume, progressively weakened in modernity, it still forms 'the very cadre of all classification': 'the ensemble of mental habits by virtue of which we conceive things and facts in the form of coordinated or hierarchized groups' (1963 [1903]: 878).

Once we take the latter observation out of its 'primitive' context and apply it reflexively to the classificatory work that Durkheim and Mauss do themselves, its truth is amply demonstrated: their category of 'primitive' classification perfectly mirrors the global social hierarchies that Europeans were rationalizing in the 20 years after they carved up Africa into colonial possessions. The 'social affectivity' of the classifications invented by Durkheim and Mauss was recognized some 65 years later, when Claude Lévi-Strauss described the category of totemism as a kind of 'hysteria' and 'exorcism' that intended to banish mental attitudes incompatible with an idealized modernity 'outside our own universe' (1969: 71). Lévi-Strauss regarded the use of natural species to classify human groups not as confused but as perfectly logical: so-called totemistic thinkers had no other model available for naming human kinds (1969: 166).[4] As yet later commentators argued, the *content* of such classifications of human difference may be particular to specific sociocultural and historical positions, but the *activity* of classifying other human collectives as different from 'us' seems primordial, if not universal (cf. Comaroff and Comaroff, 1992: 54).

This re-evaluation of a classic of colonial anthropology therefore both provincializes its classifications and suggests how to reinterpret its limitations to provide insights into a more encompassing theory of classification. Note, however, that this is only possible on the basis of two fundamental and recent methodological shifts: firstly, rethinking 'primitive classification' through its *connections* to colonialism; and secondly, elaborating on the *temporalities* of the 'looping effects' of such human kinds (Hacking, 1995).

The first shift identifies Durkheim and Mauss' concept of 'primitive classification' as colonial and thereby reclassifies the sociality of anthropological research as globally connected *as well as* parochial—thus 'rethinking difference through connection' (Gupta and Ferguson, 1992: 8; emphasis omitted). Such a shift suggests that the romance of anthropological researchers' privileged communion with indigenous people, and their subsequent privileged understanding of indigenous categories, is neither a fantasy nor an impossibility—but classifies this romance as a contingent product of colonialism. The romance of ethnographic intersubjectivity emerged when Indian colonial administrators (such as Herbert Hope Risley and William Temple) teamed up with academics in Britain (William Rivers, Charles Seligman, Alfred Haddon) to promote anthropology—both as 'intensive fieldwork' and as 'sympathy with the native'—to prevent colonial conflict (Pels and Salemink, 1999: 37; Stocking, 2001: 179). It was consummated when Bronislaw Malinowski banned colonial 'practical men' from the research relationship (because of their presumed ignorance) and reduced the relationship's complexities to a dyad between 'Ethnographer' and researched (Malinowski, 1922). Malinowski thereby appropriated Rivers' original methodology of 'intensive fieldwork' and its focus on the 'native point of view' at the same time that he also suppressed awareness of the discipline's embedding in unequal global power relationships (unlike Rivers and Haddon, who, as 'ethical' imperialists, structurally included colonial administration in their designs).[5] Since then, a majority of North Atlantic anthropologists adopted Malinowski's example. Elsewhere, I argued that the colonial positions from which ethnographic intersubjectivity emerged should warn us that the mere methodological aspiration to safeguard the interests of our interlocutors, common among anthropological activists, may not undo the asymmetries that these epistemic positions built into ethnographic research in the first place—let alone support the assumption that relationships between ethnographer and people studied are symmetrical (Pels, 2014).[6]

Rethinking *Primitive Classification* as classification: Description, construction, intervention

The second methodological shift added by a reflexive reading of *Primitive Classification* tells us that the 'looping' (or feedback) effects of classifications of human kinds generate multiple and sometimes unexpected temporalities: classifications meant to describe or exclude groups, for example, may turn out to change them or support their emancipation (Hacking, 1995). The effort to decolonize anthropology becomes easier once we realize that the work of classifying human differences knows at least three different dimensions, and that we need to study how they coalesce *in time* if we want to fully understand what classifications do. The first is the *nominal-descriptive* dimension of classification: the fact that we usually expect a classification of human differences to (timelessly) describe or name a group of people (i.e. some aboriginal Australians said 'we are grubs';

Durkheim and Mauss said 'Aboriginal Australians are primitive'). This dimension is most familiar: we all routinely act like positivists, as if our classifications copy reality 'out there'. We are also all nominalists, aware that words may not always encompass all individual items in the class that they name. We may even be aware that classifications also acquire meaning from what they exclude: a glimpse of a structuralist semiotics. Put differently, it seems human beings are universally capable of recognizing that their descriptions may *cause* human differences instead of merely describing them—but that capacity is rarely dominant, and realized only under fortuitous social circumstances.

Durkheim's and Mauss's confidence that all primitives are confused, while 'our' classifications are supposed to be clear and unambiguous, displays the positivism of the introduction to *Primitive Classification*. It subordinates their nominalist awareness, which appears when they nuance this positive classification by recognizing that religious and folkloric confusions still exists among 'us'—but only as a survival.[7] They show a structuralist awareness when arguing that we cannot understand 'our' scientific classifications unless we compare them with the social affectivity of totemistic ones.

In contrast, their conclusion moves away from essentialism and positivism to emphasize the second socially and historically *constructive* aspect of classificatory work. Methodologically speaking, a classification is always also an index of the contingent work that went into it: a performing agent constructed it for an audience at a specific point in time, for reasons specific to that contingent relationship. Once we pose basic ethnographic questions about the discourse of *Primitive Classification* ('what does it say, why, when?' and 'for whom?'), the available answers in the literature tell us, firstly, that Durkheim's core concern with collective representations—in part, his fears that modern societies may be undermined by irrational forces in the collective unconscious—mirrored his anxieties about his own 'neurasthenia'. This condition, now often labelled 'stress', may well be related to the contradiction between his generalized faith in the secular and rational—that is, universal—foundations of the French nation-state, and his personal experience of anti-Semitic discrimination by his countrymen (Fournier, 2012: 177).

The literature also suggests that uncle Emile and nephew Marcel were aware that their views, not least on race, were synchronized with French colonialism. Mauss was giving direction to the research of the École Française d'Extrême-Orient in Hanoi in the same year that their essay was published (Pels and Salemink, 1999: 37). Moreover, we know that both uncle and nephew were preoccupied with (mechanical) solidarity, reciprocity and generosity—themes that arose from their liberal socialist aspirations. These aspirations seem sharply opposed to the racism and pro-slavery sentiments of their anthropological predecessors in Paul Broca's Sociéte Anthropologique de Paris, which vexed Haitian anthropologist Anténor Firmin 20 years earlier (see the next section).

Finally, *Primitive Classification* indexes a major historical transformation of the meaning of classification in anthropology. What Broca, Firmin and many others saw as a nominal-descriptive *method* that could help explain or attack biologist

defences of inequality and slavery, was turned by Durkheim and Mauss into an *object* to be studied for what it can tell us about differences between 'modern' and 'primitive' social relations. The reflexive study of the historical construction of 'our' classifications, in other words, teaches us a fundamental and universal critique of positivism: the meanings and uses of classifications are multiple and change over time. *Primitive Classification* even combines contradictory uses, asserting a colonial dichotomy in a new guise while at the same time displacing previous methods of racial classification by insisting on intersubjective research.

The third dimension of studying classification is the *intervention* classifications and categories make in people's lives, especially when the powers that be transform them into standards of social conduct. Producing a permanent social infrastructure inevitably involves imposing certain classifications of human differences as standards (Bowker and Star, 1999; Star, 1999). This changes both the people setting the standards and the people to whom the standards apply. When, for example, the South African Apartheid regime turned the 'common sense' racial discrimination of their colonial predecessors into law in 1950, they fixed 'black', 'coloured' and 'white' identities into a permanent infrastructure with social effects out-living apartheid (see Posel, 2001). Simultaneously, however, they turned the National Party into a pariah of globally hegemonic anti-racism.

Classificatory interventions, however, do not need to be standardized by powerful institutions to carry social effects across time. We can choose to respect Durkheim and Mauss's reasoning because it admits 'primitive' classifications to human thought (and thereby counters racism and essentialism). Even when we reject the colonial dichotomies presented in their introduction, we recognize the conclusion they reach through them as potentially universal. In general, classificatory interventions often produce paradox and contradiction, if only because classifying 'others' will always rub against the modern nation-state's professions to safeguard human equality (the conceit of 'brotherhood'). It does not seem irrational for two scholars of Jewish descent who suffered from anti-Semitism to classify all religious classifications as confused: it may have helped to define their own future in safer, because secular, terms.[8] It nevertheless seems paradoxical that both Durkheim and Mauss re-described phenomena, which they tended to classify as religious survivals in 1903, as solutions to modernity's lack of cohesion and reciprocity a decade or two later (see Durkheim, 1965 [1912]; Mauss, 1966 [1923–1924]; Pels, 2003: 19–22). Scholars' political and theoretical positions do not always seem to 'keep time' with the way they formulated their timeless and universal aspirations—or vice versa.

Racial classification revisited: Anténor Firmin's 'positive anthropology'

Both the constructionist and the interventionist dimensions of classification point to a crucial yet undertheorized phenomenon in the study of culture and consciousness: the fact that the effects of a classificatory intervention differ radically across

power differences, especially when we compare those who actively construct the classification with those who suffer its effects in their lives, like W. E. B. Du Bois's theory of this phenomenon, discussed in the next section. Racial classification is an important example of this: it situates the phenomenon of classification at a global scale (Sanjek, 1996: 584). More importantly, it poses the classificatory riddle of race: how repeated attempts to declare race to be an illusory description have failed (as yet) to rid the world of racist social constructs and interventions. This seems but a variant of the 'central paradox' of modernity: the side-by-side emergence, during the Enlightenment and Romantic eras, of the doctrine of human equality and the scientific concept of racial inequality (Goldberg, 1993: 4). Scholars increasingly seem to agree that biology was enlisted to support nation-states' discriminatory policies at the same time that the Age of Revolution standardized human equality (see Wade, 2015). When revolutionaries attacked royal, aristocratic and religious hierarchies, scientific—biological—classifications offered more legitimate forms of in- and exclusion. They were standardized by a 'biopolitics' of 'species difference' that could also serve to deny those people who were subjected to modern transatlantic slavery the right to claim equality (Foucault, 1980: 139; Stoler, 1995). Because the Haitian revolution shaped the 'positive anthropology' of anthropologist Anténor Firmin, his work may help us understand both the promise and the limitations of such nominal-descriptive aspects of racial classification, especially when compared in the next section to the work of two contemporaries: William E. B. Du Bois and Franz Boas.

Diplomat and scholar Firmin experienced the central paradox of modernity on arrival in Paris in 1884. Hospitably received into the Société d'Anthropologie de Paris (SAP), he was shocked 'to have seating as equals within the same society with men whom the science which one is supposed to represent seems to declare unequal' (Firmin, 2000 [1885]: li). Firmin's book-length response to this racial hierarchy is striking even today for its erudition and logic, but even more for the way he demolishes the theories and methodologies on which his contemporaries built the biologist classification of a hierarchy of human races.[9] Firmin's methodology exemplifies the critical promise of positivism: his insistence on knowledge positively proven attacks the followers of Paul Broca at the level of the first, nominal/descriptive dimension of classification. He starts by noting the lack of consistency in the early classification systems of Johann Friedrich Blumenbach, Georges Cuvier and James Cowles Prichard. The next chapters continue criticizing the inconsistencies of biological definitions of animal species, and chapter four argues that neither monogenism (the doctrine that all humans descend from a single pair of ancestors) nor polygenism (the doctrine that humanity consists of multiple species) can be logically maintained. The centrepiece of the book is Firmin's demonstration that the European scientists' taxonomic criteria for classifying human races do not live up to their promise of maintaining a rigorous method. Their claim to rely exclusively on the objective measures of craniometry remained mere performance, because they *first* classified cranial shapes as belonging to a race, and *only then* 'set out to discover' how their empirical materials

conformed to these classifications (2000 [1885]: 90). Not only did Broca and his followers 'discover' what their assumptions had already introduced into their methods from the outset: as soon as craniometry failed to verify the racial differences assumed by their classifications, they arbitrarily adopted other criteria—physical, mental or historical– to restore the ideological integrity of the classifications that had been compromised (2000 [1885]: 108).[10]

After demonstrating that the polythetic classifications of Broca and his followers conceal the absence of a consistent 'zootaxis' and methodology, Firmin shows his awareness of the constructionist dimensions of racial classifications by pointing out that they emerged from colonial social, rather than biological relationships. Arguing that polygenism only became a popular doctrine after slave owners in the New World tried to defend slavery against abolitionists, Firmin observes that 'the rumble crossed the ocean' well before the start of the American Civil War (2000 [1885]: 37). Yet French scientists adopted polygenism with 'an altogether different objective': to defend the 'independence of science and its separation from the tenets of religion' (2000 [1885]: 37–38).[11] A secularist agenda also characterized polygenists in their battle with monogenists in the United Kingdom. However, it emerged long after the 'rumble' crossed the Atlantic into Britain, where abolitionists had already confronted Caribbean planter ideologues in the 1770s. The leaders of British ethnology mostly remained Christian humanitarians until well into the 1850s, and were never eclipsed by secularist anthropology as much as in France (see Drescher, 1990; Flandreau, 2016; Pels, 2008; Stocking, 1971; 1987). Nevertheless, British racial thinking remained equally dominated by polythetic classifications, by the master dichotomy of black versus white, and by transatlantic negrophobia and negrophilia, as was its French counterpart (see Courtet, cited in Drescher, 1990: 439).[12] In contrast, Firmin's critique—maybe *because of* its positivist emphasis on the nominal-descriptive dimension of classification—seems a particularly sophisticated predecessor of the promises of systematic anthropological methodology today.

Finally, it is important to note that Firmin's *anthropologie positive* does not destroy the classification of white and black: his defence of the equality of human races presents positive evidence to show that whites cannot claim all advances of civilization, citing Haiti and Egypt as black achievements (Firmin, 2000 [1885]: lvi, ch. 7; for an earlier, abolitionist use of the same argument among Parisian ethnologists, see Drescher, 1990; 433, 438–439). The theme emerges when Firmin praises the incomparable 'greatness' of the French Revolution's ideal of equality. He insists that Haiti was more true to these principles than Napoleon Bonaparte because the latter imprisoned Haitian leader Toussaint Louverture and tried to reintroduce slavery in 1804 (2000 [1885]: 20–21). Firmin's discourse rehearses these geohistorical positions, when pitting universalist scientific standards of consistency and definitional rigor against the arbitrary and historically contingent classifications of Broca and his followers in the SAP. Thus, he shows that one can set up a singular standard of scientific and human civilization, even while affirming the existence of racial differences. (Firmin does this on the basis of the criterion of

colour, which, however, he finds too indistinct to allow for taxonomy [2000 (1885): 116–117].) Firmin's refusal to affirm a 'colour-blind' perspective (which may *seem* universal) is important—but to explicate this quandary it is helpful to compare his thinking first to the views of anthropological successors like W. E. B. Du Bois and Franz Boas.

Negative classification theorized: W. E. B. Du Bois's 'double consciousness'

W. E. B. Du Bois seems to be the first to have theorized the negative effects on consciousness of the interventionist dimension: what happens when people are 'othered' by a powerfully institutionalized, exclusionary classification. In the first pages of *The Souls of Black Folk*, published in the same year as *Primitive Classification*, the relevant theory is set out in a style that clearly expresses its foundation in experience:

> It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his two-ness—an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder. (1994 [1903]: 7)

Nevertheless, being 'born with a veil' also endows sufferers, like African Americans, with a 'second-sight' that allows them to see an 'American world' beyond the veil—a world to which they are only rarely granted full access. Du Bois's text reverberates with the 'sorrow songs' that often voice African Americans' alienation in terms of their desire to join Jesus in another world that He freely opens up for them (see also Wright, 2008 [1957]). Thus, Du Bois elaborated a double position confirmed by many subsequent experiences: on the one hand, African American identity is overwhelmingly conditioned by a history in which what stood 'between the world and me' was sometimes a veil but more often a violated black body (see Coates, 2015; Fanon, 1991 [1952]: 111; Wright, 2008 [1957]: 759–760). On the other, 'second sight' and sorrow songs materialize spiritual strivings that aim beyond such veils and barriers, and try to reform the hyphen in the relationship. Nahum Chandler's brilliant reflections on the positioning of the first word of *Souls* ('Between') show Du Bois's relational epistemology—an epistemology of time, hyphenation, and other global connections. He affirms that Du Bois had to strategically essentialize American black and white identities if he wanted to successfully theorize a movement from the contingent past-and-present of oppression towards de-essentialized (and hopefully better) futures (Chandler, 2014).[13]

However, this was not the direction the 20th-century future would initially take. Du Bois's social constructivism did not lead to widespread adoption of the insight that classifications can construct identities in their seemingly descriptive image via a process of historical intervention—that race was constructed by racism rather than vice versa (Du Bois, 2007 [1940]: 87; Visweswaran, 1998: 78).[14] In the 20th century, North Atlantic scientific and popular discourse ignored race as contingent culture, concentrating instead on its assumed biological basis—or, increasingly, its lack of it, by declaring race in humans to be a myth or illusion (Baker 1998: 210; Leiris, 1950; Visweswaran, 1998). Du Bois's insights into racialized consciousness were rarely recognized, except by the 'second sight' of African American writers like James Baldwin and Toni Morrison, who were aware that being racist also creates a kind of double consciousness in the racist himself—not least, in the pathological generation of fear (Baldwin, 1991 [1961]: 67, 113–114; Morrison, 1993).

Instead, the transatlantic discourse on race was fed, particularly after 1945 saw the defeat of Nazism, by an anti-racism informed by Boasian 'colour-blindness'. Both Du Bois and Boas were trained in German historical idealism. Boas had, like Durkheim and Mauss, experienced racial discrimination at first hand (even if European anti-Semitism differs from American racism). Both men respected African American culture and each other. As scholars they seem to diverge primarily in their understanding of African–American identity. While Du Bois focused on its future and on 'unreconciled' African *and* American 'spiritual strivings' that looked beyond 'the veil', Boas emphasized tradition, and 'viewed African American folklore strictly in terms of *survivals from Africa* and not integral to the southern Negro experience' (Baker, 1998: 164; my emphasis). Boas and his pupils—perhaps because they failed to question that 'culture' was traditional and homogeneous—lacked a theory of double consciousness. They could not see race as culture (Benedict, 1934; Visweswaran, 1998).

Moreover, Boasian colour-blindness fed into the 1950s civil rights campaign of Thurgood Marshall and the Howard University sociologists to convince the Supreme Court that there was no scientific rationale for racial segregation—ignoring, for strategic reasons, the affirmation of African American folklore (Baker, 1998: 210). Simultaneously, Boasian colour-blindness was internationally canonized by UNESCO in the 1950s—only to mutate, paradoxically, into neoliberal curtailing of equal opportunity and affirmative action programs, two decades after they had been put in place by the Civil Rights legislation of the 1960s (Baker, 1998: ch. 10; Kelly and Dobbin, 1998; Leiris, 1950; Visweswaran, 1998). Critiques of such conservative tendencies in anti-racism took a long time to emerge (Lentin, 2004). Thus, comparing Firmin, Du Bois and the Boasians suggests that anti-racist colour-blindness may go together with a cultural relativism that exaggerates the continuity of past identities. In contrast, to reinterpret identities in terms of the construction of, and intervention by, classifications across power inequalities highlights the inherently *temporal* and changing nature of their geo-historical positions. I conclude by turning to them.

Conclusion: *Time In* versus *Time As* classification

Talking about time and history, it seems crucial to affirm, first of all, that much recent academic awareness of the 'unbearable whiteness' of social science in general, and of anthropology in particular, arose 'after Ferguson' (Derickson, 2017)—that is, from the seedbed of Black Lives Matter and (at least in British anthropology) from the 'Rhodes Must Fall' experience of expatriate South African students. In other words, it arose from action and practice rather than theory, and therefore from a different, less academic embedding in time.[15] This commands modesty in making theoretical claims. However, it also indicates a possible and partial reconciliation of practice and theory, Since the threefold methodology of studying classification proposed in this essay is timeful, it can also be seen as *putting time in* classifications (and their theorizing)—just as Pierre Bourdieu needed to put time back in reciprocity and gift-giving, by recognizing strategy, tactics, anticipation and disappointment, when sketching a theory of practice (1977: 5–6). Just as we must avoid essentializing the return of a gift, the methodology I propose cautions against essentializing a classification's meanings and the accompanying strategies and tactics at a particular moment in its biography. Indeed, the Black Lives Matter and Rhodes Must Fall movements themselves demonstrate the need for such empirical agility.[16]

Conversely, philosophy tells us to be wary of our classifications of time, by acknowledging that no form of recording or representing time can ever substitute for time's actual passing (Merleau-Ponty, 1962: 415). In short, using *time as* classification (something done by both the powers that be and practice-oriented activists; if not, perhaps, in equal measure) can make us fail to heed its concrete contingency, to forget we are situated in time and in the epistemic conditions it imposes.

Time as classification impinges upon the previous analysis once we realize that Boasian anti-racism and its UNESCO offspring of colour-blindness emerged in the late colonial context of developmentalist thought. Steeped in an epochal classification of time that finds its archetype in the colonial dichotomy of tradition and modernity (Pels, 2015), developmentalism became hegemonic after World War Two and US President Harry Truman's famous 1949 'Point Four' speech. Simultaneously, UNESCO proclaimed that racism was based on traditional prejudice that should be discarded by developed thought—ignoring that modern thought itself had introduced biological racism, and that the paradox of national equality and racialized citizenship was a particularly modern political project (Goldberg, 1993; Lentin, 2004). Epochal classification greatly contributed to the foundation of modern positions. The colonial habit of appropriating newness and the future by classifications of epochs, thereby relegating 'other' human beings to another time, has been and has to be criticized (Fabian, 1983; Mbembe, 2015: 13; Pels, 2015; Tsing, 2000: 332–333). It should be replaced by a critical methodology of studying modernity's temporal classifications as *taking place in* time. They construct and intervene in history, rather than merely describing assumed historical 'breaks'.

This is crucial for decolonizing global minds. Epistemic positions inherited from colonialism still form 'the most general form of domination in the world today' (Quijano, 2007 [1992]: 170) because we tend to make temporal dichotomies congruent with historically prior classifications of race and ethnicity. This may perpetuate structural discrimination in new classificatory guises. The description and construction of temporal classifications of human difference, therefore, have to be studied with as much critical rigor as other 'us/them' classifications, just like the ways they intervened in human relations. (Developmentalist discourse, of course, has been targeted by critique since the 1990s—Ferguson, 1994; Escobar, 1995; Sachs, 1992.) Even concepts that suggest a break with modernity (such as 'globalization' or 'postmodernity'), or simple temporal markers ('not yet', 'still') may continue to signpost futurism (Chakrabarty, 2000: 8; Tsing, 2000: 332–33)—just as 'survivals' once did for Durkheim, Mauss and other late Victorian anthropologists. Colonialism and the developmentalist nation-state spread such temporal classifications of modern thought globally (Pels, 2015: 780). We need to criticize them, but not to deny that historical breaks exist, nor that things change, nor even that 'development' may (sometimes) be necessary. Rather, they warn us that the kind of polythetic dichotomies that wreaked havoc on human interactions during colonial rule, such as 'the native question' or 'black/white', can be reproduced by conflations of futurism that temporally oppose 'moderns', or 'globals' (or other people who know the future) to 'tradition' or 'the locals' (Tsing, 2000: 332–333).

How can we avoid the pitfalls of time as classification? How can we put time in (the study of) classifications of human kinds? Four conclusions can be drawn from my preceding arguments:

1. *Suspect neutral descriptions*: The first three sections of this essay have given sufficient reason to doubt claims that scientific classifications are clear, methodically transparent and neutral. Moreover, we do not want to end up like the Norwegian professor in linguistics who argued that 'in Norwegian tradition . . . *Neger* means black, and is a neutral description of people with a darker skin colour than us'. The example highlights how, at least at the time of the professor's TV-performance, his 'neutral' description excluded Norwegians of colour from his definition of 'us' (cited in Gullestad, 2005: 32). I have hesitated to define classification (or a word such as 'native') in this essay, because definitions may prematurely remove the quotation marks that this methodology eventually puts around *all* classifications of human kinds, including one's own. Anthropologists are notorious for adding quotation marks: they thereby signal that the meaning of the marked term is enunciated from a contingent position and may vary. This theoretical and methodological awareness hypothesizes that definitions of human kinds never work *except as constructions and interventions in and of practice*. The definition of human kinds should be subordinated to the study of their social construction and intervention in social life—not least, because classifications can become artefacts laden with considerable, and at times deadly, persuasive power.

2. *Suspect futurism*: Epochal classifications can easily reproduce binary juxtapositions of human kinds because they tend to homogenize both the 'new' and 'traditional' sides of the dichotomy. A North Atlantic history of the future has spread epochalism globally. Criticizing it is therefore a privileged way to provincialize modernity in general and Europe in particular (Koselleck, 2004; Chakrabarty, 2000; Pels, 2015: 783–784). However, epochalism is also built into the political economy of Academia: our reputations are more often than not founded on the claim to have written, formulated or researched something 'new'. This opens up our own practice and position to the temptations of homogenizing both the positions we claim to have abandoned, and those we appropriate as the 'new' future.[17] This temporal political economy is also 'at work in Africanist problematics' (Chandler, 2013: 14). Naive claims that a nonessentialist discourse can be produced presuppose 'an oppositional theoretical architecture at its core, in the supposed and self-serving distinction between a discourse or position that does not operate on the basis of an essence and those that do' (Chandler, 2014: 14–15).

For example, while this essay could not have been written without heeding Jafari Allen's and Ryan Jobson's call to recognize the contribution of African diaspora intellectuals (2016: 135), their notion of a 'decolonizing generation' (Harrison, 2010 [1991]) seems to be insufficiently critical of 'academic fads' (Glick Schiller, 2016: 141), to neglect the preceding critiques that made this generation possible (Hale, 2016: 142), and to 'intellectually absent' the experiences of other Black anthropologists and even of the Third World in general (Channa, 2016: 140; Nyamnjoh, 2016). Allen and Jobson's use of time as classification generates homogenizing effects comparable to those that the provincializing critique of European 'futures past' was meant to counter. Of course, it is formulated from a very different contingent position (not least, in relating to activist temporalities)—but as Chandler argues, copying the 'oppositional architecture' that one criticizes may risk misunderstanding the ways it constitutes both self and other.

3. *Treat classifications as contingent, historical connections*: To 'rethink difference through connection' (Gupta and Ferguson, 1992: 8; emphasis omitted), I have drawn especially on the long-term perspective of the 'coloniality/modernity' paradigm, represented by Aníbal Quijano's insistence that the racial classifications that determine today's legacies of colonialism go back to the colonization of the Americas in the 16th century.[18] It shows that 'North Atlantic universals' cannot be understood without the Black Atlantic violence that accompanied and supported it (Gilroy, 1993; Trouillot, 2002). However, insisting on the determining influence of geohistorical connections seems difficult to combine with attempts from within the 'coloniality/modernity' paradigm to once again isolate and purify geohistorical entities. The desire to 'delink' from 'the West' (Mignolo, 2011: 276), the geographical reification of a decolonial 'locus of enunciation' (Ndhlovu-Gatsheni, 2012: 51), or the attempt to think from someplace 'exterior' to the modern world system (Escobar, 2007: 183) may (re-)produce a geography as imaginary as Edward Said made the 'Orient' out to be. These geographically situated respites may be compared to the 'free zone' or

'quiet place' wrongly assumed by the Africanist anti-essentialist positions criticized by Nahum Chandler (see the final point below).

4. *Treat the universal as an aspiration*: The universal claims of theory and methodology seem, when re-embedded in the positions from which they were formulated, aspirational at best, and, at worst, conceited or in bad faith. This essay showed as much by the examples of certain 'colour-blind' claims to universality, that W. E. B. Du Bois (among others) allows us to understand as 'white' in practice (see also Wekker, 2016). Likewise, Anténor Firmin's identification of the universal conceit of craniometric methodology is pre-positioned by white supremacist classifications. Time and position are inalienably concrete conditions of our knowledge practices, however god-like and transcendent we make our methodological claims out to be. Critical anthropology has known this ever since its epistemology was reinterpreted as an empirical philosophy (Bateson, 1973; Fabian, 1983)—ever since we found that 'methodology (the rules of correct and successful procedure)' can neither replace nor subordinate epistemology ('reflection on the constitution of communicable knowledge'; Fabian, 1971: 20). Methodology cannot furnish 'a free zone or quiet place' or an 'unconditional condition' from which we classify problems with certain human kinds or identities, when its claims sever its contingent connections to a usually 'hidden' set of assumptions about the (often 'white') subject—the ground against which the figure classified as problematic emerges (Chandler, 2014: 14–15, 188). In fact, we rarely use a fixed methodology for doing innovative research: closed paradigms lead to 'normal science' and their methodology is 'prophylactic in its essence' (Andreski, 1973: 115; Kuhn, 1962), as Firmin's critique of craniometry shows (see also Note 10). If research requires methodology, it is more to stimulate creative and open-ended practice. In practice, methodology more commonly operates as a future ideal: we teach it to our students as future 'best practice'; we perform it for potential sponsors, to persuade them to materialize our future research by granting us funds; we may employ it as a critical standard to which future research of colleagues should conform. It is in the spirit of a future ideal that this essay proposes a universalist methodology based on a triple awareness of the temporalities at play in the anthropology of classification. Theorized as emerging from contingent epistemic conditions that require a critical political interrogation, it should not confuse a proclamation of an ideal future with a neutral, timeless or universal zone to which one can safely withdraw. It should strategically position its emancipatory or decolonizing action in the present, always at the juncture of the descriptive, constructive and interventionist dimensions of the classifications it applies to anthropologists, their interlocutors and the third parties in their relationship.

Acknowledgments

students who participated, for the insights and wisdom I was able to gather from them. I also thank Thandeka Cochrane, Nina Glick Schiller and two anonymous reviewers of *Anthropological Theory* for encouraging me to transcend previous, somewhat peevish, positions. None of them should be blamed if I have failed to succeed.

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Notes

1. I hope to revisit the anthropological understanding of 'native' in more detail in another essay.
2. The slightly later emergence of 'culture' in the United States had similar methodological effects (especially in Benedict, 1934), although Franz Boas's focus was less on indigenous classification than on indigenous texts (see Boas, 1940 [1914]) and his pupils read Malinowski rather than Rivers.
3. I thank Myfel Paluga for drawing my attention to and sharing his research into the increasing sophistication with which Mauss distinguished classifications, categories and related terms in his later work. I cannot develop here that discussion of late 19th-century elaborations of semiotics and how they reverberated all the way up to Needham's critical treatment of the 'symbolic' (1979) and current critical discussions of typologies and types (Sadre-Orafai 2020).
4. Lévi-Strauss borrowed this idea from Henri Bergson's re-interpretation of Durkheimian totemism (Bergson, 1932). Lévi-Strauss's critical assessment of *Primitive Classification* used Linton's finding that totemistic classifications could also be found in the American Expeditionary Forces in World War One (Linton, 1924). The Comaroffs used this argument to differentiate totemism from modern ethnic classifications by arguing that the former type of classification is not intrinsically hierarchical (Comaroff and Comaroff, 1992: 52).,
5. See Stocking (1983), and my discussion of the history of anthropological ethics (Pels, 1999).
6. This argument requires elaboration: it fails to address how scholarly asymmetries in ethnography may or may not coalesce with asymmetries in power relationships. I thank Margaret Sleeboom-Faulkner for pointing out this diversity of ethnographic situations and enabling future joint work on this theme.
7. Note that Durkheim and Mauss need a *temporal* classification ('survival') to eliminate anomalies from their original categorization. For a similar methodological sleight of hand, see the next section on Firmin (especially note 10). It reinforces my thesis that the fundamental classifications of human difference in modernity are more often than not temporal (see Pels, 2015 and the Conclusion of this essay).

8. However, Judaism was, at the time, increasingly classified in biological terms (Wade, 2015: 20). Moreover, our post-9/11 present teaches that Durkheimian secularism can also support anti-religious racism.

9. Firmin was not alone—his compatriot and fellow-member of the SAP, Louis-Joseph Janvier, wrote a pamphlet with a similar title—but his seems the more comprehensive publication (see Fluehr-Lobban, 2000).

10. While 20th-century philosophy of science identified this methodological sleight of hand as a common threat to verification procedures, it still frequently occurs in social science (for example, in the initial failure to reflect on classifications in Dutch migration studies; see Geschiere, 2009: 147–153). As Firmin argued: 'Classifications of race are confusing because their authors mix all sorts of criteria together instead of limiting themselves to a single one' (2000 [1885]: 116). Indeed, the classification of race is a polythetic amalgam of fact and fiction, of empirical givens and narrative assumptions (M'charek, 2013). Polythetic dichotomous classifications can be extremely effective in maintaining realist conceits (Needham, 1975).

11. Paul Broca attributed the first formulation of the 'complete idea of race' around 1820 (combining biological with mental and historical criteria) to William Edwards. Rooted in New World slavery—Edwards' father was a planter who fled the Caribbean in fear of the Haitian Revolution, to settle in France—polygenism's secularist agenda may have emerged only later (Blanckaert, 1988: 20; Drescher, 1990).

12. By negrophobia, I mean a North Atlantic imaginary complex predominantly built around hereditary endowment coupled to sexual fantasies of miscegenation and rape of white women; by negrophilia, an equally imaginary but less aggressive sense of Christian sacrifice and paternalistic duty towards less privileged human beings.

13. My debt to Nahum Chandler can perhaps be better acknowledged by saying that his work on Du Bois is the most important lacuna in my review of anthropologies of the future (Pels, 2015). Also, I cannot do justice to the vast literature on Du Bois here and hope to elaborate on his theory of double consciousness as well as his global awareness elsewhere.

14. Such constructivism was anticipated by Firmin when he argued that maltreatment by slave-owners made 'Haitian mulattoes' often 'vagabonds out of necessity', who only learned to exercise their full human potential after receiving the promise of human rights (Firmin, 2000 [1885]: 73).

15. I thank Thandeka Cochrane and an anonymous reviewer of *Anthropological Theory* for pointing this out, and for generous readings of an earlier draft that considerably matured this essay.

16. The mutation of the iconoclast 'Rhodes Must Fall' into 'Fees Must Fall' in South Africa, or the change of Black Lives Matter from a response to police violence in the United States to a protest against the denial of structural racism in the Netherlands are examples that prove the point.

17. See, for a particularly lucid diagnosis of this dilemma, Miyazaki (2015: 790).

18. Gurminder Bhambra (2014) finds that this *longue durée* distinguishes 'decolonial' from the 'postcolonial' perspectives, focusing mostly on post-1800 colonialism, developed during the second decolonizing wave.

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