Redefining *Irishness* in a Globalized World

This ground-breaking book draws on an innovative qualitative audio–visual approach to elicit information from people residing in Ireland what it means to be Irish in the 21st century given the rapidly changing nature of Irish society, in part, due to migration and globalisation. One of the key thought-provoking findings is the centrality of essentialist notions of race in the social construction of Irishness. This book is essential reading for anyone interested in identity formation, socio-psychological theorization of identity and nationhood in Europe and beyond.

—***Daniel Faas***, **Department of Sociology, Trinity College Dublin, Ireland**

This book cuts through the usual fluff about national identities being constructed and fluid, recognizing the gravitational pull of a bureaucratic regression to something less savoury. Remarkably, it does this while retaining a much-needed optimism that is grounded in a deeply felt ethical sensibility. Wonderful!

—***Andrew Finlay***, **Lecturer in Sociology, Trinity College Dublin, Ireland**

Yaqoub BouAynaya wonderfully captures the hard questions of the global challenges experienced as complex national(istic) internal divisions, while providing alternative frameworks of analysis in a rapidly changing Ireland. He very successfully avoids the clichés attached to the cultural wars, offering nuanced insights into the ways in which the dominant group in Ireland are making sense of contemporary Ireland and Irishness. We get a real sense of the processes, the mechanics, by which identity is redefined in Ireland across regions within the continuum of an ever-changing society. Drawing upon multi-disciplinary theoretical perspectives, diverse empirical work and an original qualitative methodology design of audio–visual production, the book will appeal to the widest audience, including those interested in Irish studies and more broadly questions of identity making in national contexts. Yaqoub BouAynaya is a highly skilled writer, who is able to communicate complex ideas in a simple language that is a joy to read.

—***Professor Mairtin Mac an Ghaill***, **Newman University Birmingham, England**

Redefining *Irishness* in a Globalized World: National Identity and European Integration

BY

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For TakiTora, Frances and Mary
peace & love

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About the Author

Yaqoub BouAynaya is a Lecturer in Sociology at the Institute of Art, Design and Technology (IADT), County Dublin, Ireland. Yaqoub is a Visual Sociologist whose topics of interest intersect identity studies, racial and ethnic studies, eco-sociology, equality and social justice.

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Abstract

This book explores perceived *Irishness* and to what extent identity in Ireland is redefined within the continuum of an ever-changing society. It examines how values associated with identity affect the ways in which individuals participate in their perceived social reality, are perceived by 'others' and are re/presented between the collective local, national, European and global levels. Thus, this study considers the evolution and maintenance of nationalism and relates this to the development of the postcolonial Irish nation state within the context of European governance and globalization.

The methodology takes a multistage approach that seeks to explore individuals' perceived sense of identity, either in stability or flux, by exposure to variations of *Irishness* through the viewing of a multimedia presentation. This novel and innovative qualitative design relies on an audio–visual production made from one-to-one interviews with four individuals of differing backgrounds but who are all Irish citizens. By showing it to eight focus groups, the ambition is to elicit in participants the deconstruction of 'Irish' national identity. Through focus group discussions on identity, ethnicity and citizenship, evidence emerges from the transcribed and thematically analysed conversations.

Consequently, in exploring the processes of socially constructing *Irishness*, this research facilitates insight into the processes which affect an individual's self-understanding and social categorization. Such a reflexive social investigation reveals findings that substantiate an identity theory positing explicit contradictions between individuals' reliance on deep-rooted and inherent notions of *Irishness* in contrast with awareness and a contemporary understanding of identity as being constructed through social experience.

Furthermore, through empirical validation, it postulates the socio-psychological process of *perceived rational pragmatism* as the means by which individuals within *ordo-liberal* liquid modernity perceive of themselves as rational liberated beings. Through reflection, theory synthesis and the embedded agential design, this study informs the reconceptualization of contemporary 'Irish' identity. Its admissions seek to expedite an alternative re-imagination of, 'what it means to be Irish' so as to better complement the aspirations towards an egalitarian-based socio-democracy.

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Foreword

Professor David Theo Goldberg

Over the past four decades, globalization has placed pressure on conventional formations and understandings of nation-states and national identities inherited from the past. Capital's global reach sought to soften, if not eradicate, the state's restrictions and controls of capital's movements. This, in turn, troubled states' management of their borders as goods, services, human and financial capital were moved legally and illicitly across borders, in and out of states, in search of resources, opportunities, lower costs, profits and better lives. As Etienne Balibar showed already in the early 1990s, this had the impact of both globalizing national identity and hyper-localizing racial insistence.

'Irish' identity has long been fashioned by pressures within and beyond Ireland itself. In 1850, the then young French surgeon, anatomist and inveterate measurer of skulls, Paul Broca, distinguished between the Irish and English 'races'. At more or less the same time, Thomas Carlyle famously identified Black Jamaicans with Irish 'needlewomen', in ways meant to disparage both. By later that century in both England and the US Irish migrants, in the wake of the potato famine, were being widely characterized as 'a lower race', and, indeed, as 'black'. These characterizations stretched back from both countries to include references to inhabitants of Ireland as well. So, national identities morph as a result of pressures internal and external to the boundaries of state.

Yaqoub BouAynaya's *Redefining* Irishness *in a Globalized World: National Identity and European Integration* addresses the more recent transformations in 'Irishness' within the Irish nation-state as a result of forces and influences both within and outside the state boundaries. As the modern-day Irish economy flourished, it attracted a significant up-tick in labour from near and afar. Ireland's membership in the European Union gave European workers easier access. Like the European birthrate more generally, Ireland's birthrate had declined over the previous three or four decades, and its labour needs likewise opened opportunities to those further afield. The result of push–pull forces led to an influx of migrants from around the world, drawn in by and seeking better opportunities for themselves and their families. These demographic shifts, in turn, have prompted first small and now, as BouAynaya makes clear, more ready pressures on Irish national identity to transform. The result is both a revealing empirical study and a careful sustained analysis of all the possible theoretical accounts for these shifts. The book as a consequence speaks compellingly both to the ways *Irishness* has transformed as a result and how best to think about changes in ethnonational identity more broadly.

BouAynaya is concerned in the book to show how contesting elements in the society are shaped into a frame of interactive and, in an extended sense, shared understanding of *Irishness*. These elements may include conceptions that at present are incomprehensible, considered by consummate 'insiders' even derogatory and unacceptable in current terms of understanding. They transform with time and changing social conditions into features that fashion a new, or newly valued, sense of ethnonational identification. And, in turn, they reorder imperatives of social inclusion and exclusion, refusal and strategic acceptance. BouAynaya is especially concerned to show how to read the fluidities of ethnoracial diversity, their social regulation, remaking and reordering in our current times and conditions.

Ethnonational configuration, in the analysis on offer, is fuelled by the interactive threading of family kinship and lineage, in both the immediate and broader familial senses, and their perceived relation to claimed clan and community connections.

These senses reinforce and are reinforced by a projected understanding of 'nativeness'. This involves the fusing of nativity and the long history of presence, establishing a claim to antique belonging which, in turn, undergirds a hierarchy of 'real' ethnonationals, of those who have ethnonational identity and those who are merely – because new(er) – national citizens. These differentiations quickly come to acquire and be invested with a naturalized – which is also to say a more or less explicit racially asserted – set of meanings and commitments. The force of these formations and their affiliated understandings, in turn, delimit the fluidity of identities as experienced in late modern times. They offer relatedly a contrived and restrictive sense of belonging at a time coming and going and coming again has assumed the lived reality of the world we inhabit. This set of sensibilities in effect evidences a reach for the artifice of conservation, of fixing the supposedly given in place, self-elevating those taking themselves to be 'local', to a greater or lesser degree across the *longue duree*, over the more recently arrived, the coming and – maybe the readily – going.

BouAynaya astutely characterizes those so readily self-elevating as engaging in a process of what he calls a mode of *perceived rational pragmatism*. This can be read as akin to the claim to a local 'common sense' in addressing the shifting terrain of those understanding themselves to be properly belonging and not, the constitutive insiders and perennial outsiders or excluded.

Redefining Irishness, then, critically navigates the driving socio-theoretical literature concerning ethnoracial composition. The book addresses the principal determinants and their contemporary applicability to understanding *Irishness*, and ethnonational identification more broadly. In this, BouAynaya gives us a more generalized critical social vocabulary for comprehending the readily shifting conditions of our times.

Irishness, accordingly, is revealing because, in many ways, exemplary of both the processes and lived impacts of ethnonationalisms more generally. Every ethnonationalism, of course, has unique conditions, prompts, manifestations and elaborations. Yet, they share causes and common grounds of their emergence and growth in given conjunctures. They forge commonalities in their relational

interactions, drawing on modes of thinking, adopting and adapting expressions from other places while giving them their own twist. Yaqoub BouAynaya's book, thus, provides a terrifically evocative reading of the applicability of the contemporary literature to the case of *Irishness* while offering us novel insights into how *Irishness* models insights into the workings of ethnonationalisms more generally.

Introducing *Irishness*

Keywords: *Irishness*/'Irish' identity; 'Race'; globalization; nationalism; categorization; modernity; governmentality; democracy; tolerance

Re-imaginations of *Irishness*

What it means to be 'Irish' in the late modern, or even postmodern world,[1] is rooted deeply in the realm of people's consciousness, particularly in the perceived ideas, philosophies and notions of Irish peoplehood. In this book, I explore people's propensity to categorize and give meaning to their social realities. I examine the boundaries of racialized and ethnicized *Irishness*. Such boundaries are considered to be as 'symbolic constructions, forged and reconstituted in a reciprocal process of interaction and reinforced by the *perceptions* of the differences thought to typify' an 'Irish' identity (Tovey et al., 1989, p. ii). In doing so, this book illuminates how people seed, cultivate and nurture through conversation their shared sense of *Irishness*. That is to say, in a primarily qualitative, but also innovative manner, I look to examine and redefine *Irishness* in a globalized world, as well as more broadly inquire into the factors that shape national identity and influence processes of European integration.

By critically evaluating people's responses to discussion on themes relating to individual and collectivized *Irishness*, in this book, I explore re-imaginations of 'Irish' identity in such a way as to produce 'positive' social outcomes. One such 'positive' impact would be the alleviation of intra-societal conflict or conflict that occurs within society. According to Tovey et al. (1989, p. i), problems in civic Ireland are deemed traceable to the inability of the Irish 'as a people to express a coherent and authentic sense of Irish identity, or a broadly acceptable philosophy of what it means to be Irish in today's world'. By mitigating social conflict among an increasingly diverse population residing in Ireland, an overarching consideration is to advocate more inclusive understandings of *Irishness*. Thus, a central purpose detailed herein is to recognize harmoniously and assess particularities of

[1]For further debate on *Modernity versus Postmodernity*, please refer to Habermas and Ben-Habib's (1981) aforementioned italicized title.

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Irishness, while, at the same time, exploring and pushing the boundaries, towards answering the question: 'who are the "we" who seek a shared future on the island of Ireland?'

The Social Construction of Identities and Knowledge-Based Society

This book sets out to acknowledge and investigate the theoretical 'de-centrings of modern thought' (Hall, 2000a, p. 145). I explore the frailty or ambiguity of identities and relate these to what Hall (2000a) defines as 'the relative decline, or erosion, the instability of the nation-state, of the self-sufficiency of national economies and consequently, of national identities as a point of reference, there has simultaneously been a fragmentation and erosion of collective social identity' (p. 146).

As such, it is an exploration of the sense of anxiety and fear within the ambivalence of identity, due to a loss of both the fixity of the individual and social identity, intertwined with the directionality of capitalist globalization and what Bauman (2001, pp. 121–122) elaborates as *liquid modernity*. As implied, *liquid modernity* describes a sense of continual change or condition where 'change is the only permanence …' (Bauman, 2012, p. viii). In this sense, identity is understood as inherently ambiguous because in its current condition, it is both linked territorially to nationality yet undermined by post-/late-modernist theory.

The focus is on Irish 'life politics' (Bauman, 2001), which are described as 'identity construction, negotiation and assertion' (p. 121). *Irishness*, nation state identity and pan-European notions of identity are investigated from the perspective of individuals living in Ireland. However, from the outset, the presupposition is that these identity formations are seen as existing to provide a sense of perceived fixity, yet are destabilized at their core when understood simply as social constructs. The frailty of such constructs becomes visible when exposed to the rapidity of change associated with globalization and ensuing apparent post-/late-modernity. Thus, I explore a newly emergent territory, which, in many ways, might be termed 'a terra incognita' (Bauman, 2000, p. 48) whereby new processes of identification emerge.

By exploring the constructed nature of 'Irish' identity, I compose a proposition of an 'imaginary political re-identification, reterritorialization' and to struggle for, as Hall (2000a) emphasizes, 'a change of consciousness, a change of self-recognition, a new process of identification …' whereby 'the emergence into visibility of a new subject' (p. 149), or subjects may be conceived, the reason being the conceptualization and envisaging of a new sense of belonging that is complementary to post-/late-modern constructivist theory. In other words, not taking the absoluteness of past truths but also emphasizing the importance of understanding how we make meaning of our lives and construct our knowledge. In a similar vein, by understanding and unravelling the construction of identity formations, this book provides the possibility to represent alternative identities

of *Irishness* and allow for the postulation of the existence of that which may be, at present, un-representable, excessive and abject (Coates, 1997, p. 78*f*.; De Lauretis, 1987). As Coates (1997) summarizes from Judith Butler's, *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"*, 'The abject … is always contained in that which is excluding or expelling it. The "return of the abject" radically destabilizes that from which it was expelled, opening the site to reconfiguration and resignification' (p. 79). Similarly, 'otherness' can be seen as the abject of currently conceived notions of 'Irish' identity; while 'the other' may exist in Irish society, or attempt to enter it, instead of becoming part of and redefining 'Irish' identity, its unrepresented status is simultaneously preserved and it may even be exiled figuratively, through the maintenance of predefined closed notions of *Irishness* and physically through state intervention, such as in its extreme through repatriation, deportation or fencing off, walling and closure of borders. Although a somewhat paradoxical nexus, the stance I take is the assertion that, while allowing for collective solidarities that are inclusive of that which is abject, the re-identification of the Irish collectivity is conversely required to accommodate specific traditional cultural values, attitudes, behaviours, norms and historic repertoires.

Importantly also, I relate such concerns of contemporary identity formation with macro-processes in the construction of *knowledge societies*, *globalization* and their potential effects towards *mono-culturalization*. Accommodating both processes of *globalization* and, at the same time, maintaining cultural identity, thus, unfolds complexities. From the macro perspective, juggling processes of *globalization* with the preservation of culturally specific repertoires relates to the construction of contemporary *knowledge societies*. Knowledge-driven societies purportedly allow for re/conciliation between the notion of identity in ambiguity. This is because knowledge-driven societies submit that there is nothing that can truthfully bind subjects together other than a singular collective 'humanity', but juxtapose this against the notion of fixed yet multifarious individual identities that are layered over an imaginary true self.

As the report by UNESCO (2005) entitled *Towards Knowledge Societies* elucidates, 'the concept of knowledge societies encompasses much broader social, ethical and political dimensions' (p. 17). It continues by advancing that

> there is a multitude of such dimensions which rules out the idea of any single, ready made model, for such a model would not take sufficient account of cultural and linguistic diversity, vital if individuals are to feel at home in a changing world. (UNESCO, 2005, p. 17)

The report proceeds to detail how knowledge and culture, in their various forms, lend to the development of any society through scientific progress and the adoption of modern technologies. In recognition of the importance of diverse knowledge/s and cultural understandings, the UNESCO (2005) report continues by claiming that 'it would be inadmissible to envisage the information and

communication revolution leading – through a narrow, fatalistic technological determinism – to a single possible form of society' (p. 17).[2]

Yet, the directionality of at least developed nations seems to be on course for a confined *nihilistic determinism*, an unavoidable condition where society is void of values. In parallel, in an Irish and broader context, Inglis (2008) sought to explore and describe 'to what extent local everyday life is becoming global' but, in particular, how 'Western culture is seeping into the everyday lives of more and more people' (p. 2). This is viewed as a 'mono-culturization' and erosion of discrete traditional practices which have evolved and developed over millennia and are passed down through processes of socialization (Inglis, 2008, p. 2). Such cultural practices derived from an unquestioned, pre-disposed way of being in the world, or a particular *habitus*,[3] that produces a sense of belonging and collective identity (Inglis, 2008, p. 2).

With the eradication of identities constructed through notions of fixity and territorial association, be it nation state or beyond, comes the threatening extinction of local or indigenous forms of knowledge. This leads to the contestation that, according to Clifford (2000, p. 105), 'Westernization' may not necessarily have been a linear progress. Yet almost simultaneously, Clifford (2000) compounds this previously stated view by reinforcing the notion of some sort of distinction, based on advancement between pre-modern and modern, by claiming that, 'Most histories of global development have had few second thoughts about people on the margins: "pre-modern" societies are destined either to assimilate or to vanish in a relentless homogenizing process' (p. 105). Though it reads quite definitively, by ascribing such terms, that explicitly suggest temporal positioning along a notion of progress that is linear, such statements subtly reinforce a *fatalism* leading towards an assimilated oneness that is concomitant with current trends in *globalization*. What Clifford is attempting to acknowledge, however, is, in fact, highlighting the flaw in such ascriptions and shedding light on what becomes obscured by some, yet constant, rhetoric of *globalization* and *acculturation*. Such *cultural assimilation* occurs when each generation of a minority group becomes incrementally similar to the majority or dominant group. Often said people, fully or partially, assimilate the *status quo* norms, values, attitudes, behaviours and beliefs. Clifford (2000) describes that '… visions of globalization tend to smooth over the constant (re)articulation of cultural identities and differences …' (p. 105). In contrast, Holton (2005) attempts to provide a critique of the *fatalism*

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[2]Such technological determinism may eventually correspond to the posit made by Marx whereby science and general progress are seen as interrelated and integral to the dominance of machinery through objectified labour over 'The worker' so that, 'The worker appears as superfluous to the extent that his action is not determined by [capital's] requirements' (Marx, 1857/1973, p. 695). For more on this, please refer to *The Grundrisse* (Marx, 1857/1973).

[3]For more on the concept of *habitus*, please refer to *Outline of a Theory and Practice* by Pierre Bourdieu (1977a, 1977b). *Habitus* refers to 'a subjective but not individual system of internalized structures, schemes of perception, conception, and action common to all members of the same group or class' (Bourdieu, 1977a, 1977b, p. 86).

many associate with *globalization*, by rejecting 'the view that globalisation happens, driven by various markets or technology, leaving human actors to adjust as best as they can' (p. 2). Instead for Holton (2005, p. 2), globalization is both a consequence of human activity and also a situational environment intended for human activity.

The UNESCO (2005) report is seen to attach discreetly, yet very purposely, the conditionality of the necessity to respect and follow scientific reasoning by avowing not only is

> […] the fate of languages threatened with extinction. What is also at stake is the space we should make for local or indigenous forms of knowledge within knowledge societies whose development models highly value the codification forms specific to scientific knowledge. (p. 18)

As such, promoting diversity also requires the nurturing of creativities and new knowledge as it emerges from the mélanges of contemporary society. As conveyed by UNESCO (2005),

> Such a prospect fulfils not only an abstract ethical imperative, it above all aims to raise in each society an awareness of the wealth of the forms of knowledge and capacities it possesses, in order to increase their value and take advantage of what they have to offer. (p. 18)

I would retain several reservations towards a rationale that places as superior scientific logicality; however, instead of getting distracted by critiquing the nuances in what is stated in the UNESCO report, with regard to the development of *knowledge societies*, within this book, I strive to go beyond the limiting aspect of fostering diversity for the benefit of scientific gain, by placing the processes of redefining identity and re-identification as central, not only to the emergence of new forms of identities, but as paramount to the preservation of collective consciousnesses as a multitude of forms that may also evade or transcend what may be considered *ethnocentric* scientific thought.

The Ethical Imperative of Knowledge, Categorization and Classification

In introducing the overarching approach of this study, it must be acknowledged that, from the onset, I disregard categorizations by the state, or otherwise, and instead provide access and voice to all those who are interested. Such an approach is considered to mitigate cross-cultural misconceptions and promote solidarity among differences. Thus, within this book, I account for the unavoidable politics of research and places centrally within it, as a component of the institution of academia, *The Ethical Imperative of Knowledge* (Larson, 2001). The content herein is centred on the acknowledgement and supposition that truth is not a

singular absolute, but rather established by perspectives that are produced and give order to experience (Larson, 2001).

Integral to knowledge construction is the paradoxical question, namely that 'unless one knows definitively what truth is how does or will anyone ever know when they have attained that knowledge which is truth?' Correspondingly, Larson (2001) argues that 'there is no definable objective position by which one can say what forms of organization are universally and absolutely valid' (p. 2). What becomes apparent is that in attaining knowledge the issues of perception and of who gets to be the judge of a truth claim become more the determinant. This relates to questions of power, societal influence and identification, where '… some discourses of truth are means of entrenching social hierarchies or practices of exclusion via class, race, sex, etc.' (Larson, 2001, p. 3). Accordingly, the methodological approach documented within this book is not merely about the attainment of knowledge as an end goal but to acknowledge the subjectivity of our understanding of what is deemed *significant knowledge*, as opposed to *substantive knowledge* (Crevoisier, 2015, p. 194), and to structurally embed within the methodological process means by which individual subjectivities are actively accounted for; where hierarchical distributions of knowledge/power are diminished to give greater equalized weight to contributing voices, actors or subjects.

Of particular concern is the influence exerted by those who wield power over processes that produce knowledge. As a consequence, in recognizing and justifying firstly, the *subjectivity* of knowledge acquisition and secondly, the inherent relationship between knowledge and power, only then can this study be deemed pertinent in mitigating imbalanced power relations, through its integrated methodology and incorporated reflexivity. The specific methodological approach taken is central to fulfilling both the objective of, and obligation in accounting for, *the ethical imperative of knowledge*. In this respect, key to the overall strategy and inbuilt methodology is the acknowledgement that for the populous to acquire knowledge, and intellectuals are no longer essential. As Foucault (1977) states, 'the masses know perfectly well, without illusion; they know far better than the intellectual and they are certainly capable of expressing themselves' (p. 207). For Foucault (1977), there exists a system of power which subtly, yet to a profound level, penetrates an entire societal network, whereby 'Intellectuals are themselves agents of this system of power: the idea of their responsibility for "consciousness" and discourse forms part of the system' (p. 207). Such an implication can lead us in divergent ways, either towards discrediting knowledge itself and slipping into a regressive stance or discerning new understandings that better complement our globalized reality. This book fits in neatly by investigating where alternative thinking may arise in contrast to power found in *manifest authority*.

From the position of Ireland as a contemporary Western, industrialized and information technologically driven society, which aspires to evolve into a *knowledge society* basing its economy on research and development, the fact that knowledge and power can be viewed as 'essentially contested concepts' (Gallie, 1955; Heaney, 2000, p. 102) would seem as pertinent a consideration as ever. What is implied here is to consciously scaffold politics with the incorporation of ethics. To achieve such would be to purposefully deliberate on new and emergent principles

that might inform how we are to live together in this globalized 21st century. As James (2006) argues, 'unless this is given priority, the current debates over *post-nationalism* and cosmopolitanism, globalism and localism, are bound to end up repeating, in late-modern or postmodern terms, the dead-end modernist arguments over the relative merits of nationalism and internationalism' (p. 294). Dilemmas relating to each are further expanded upon in Chapter 2.

If academia is a strand of civil society and inevitably plays a role in shaping politics as an integral component of *polity-public*, this would substantiate the argument that from within such institutional structures there is, and should be, recognition of *the ethical imperative of knowledge* production.[4]

From here, as a means of introducing the theoretical, conceptual and legal positioning discussed in the subsequent chapters, it is necessary to advance issues relating to categorization and classification, as situated in knowledge formation. The foundation of the structured society is the human ability to make binary distinctions (Lévi-Strauss, 1978, p. 22f.; MacCormack & Strathern, 1980, p. 2). The mind builds up its perceptions of the world by perceiving opposites or contrasts. MacCormack and Strathern (1980) add that 'the human mind seeks analogies with other contrastive phenomena and upon finding them encompasses the analogies into its system of classification' (p. 2).

On a conscious level, people are aware of concrete manifestations rather than the relations themselves, but for *structuralists*, the unconscious tendency to perceive relations is fundamental to the mind. Inglis (2008) informs us, 'our knowledge of the world begins with classification systems …' and later considers that 'classifying people as similar and different is embedded in social life, both in the micro-events and practices of everyday life and in the macro-strategies of organizations, institutions and nation-states' (p. 5). Such informs our understanding of culture and society within which myth arises so that individuals' minds 'structure myth, and in a feedback loop myth instruct our perceptions of the phenomenological universe' (MacCormack & Strathern, 1980, p. 6).

Beyond this is to consider reinterpreting how we see our phenomenal universe and create orders through the classifications we are socialized to understand and construct. The justification for this being the acknowledgment that, '… the unity of knowledge is nothing else than the very unity of the social collectivity extended to the universe' (Durkheim & Mauss, 1963, p. x). The fact that there are multifarious classifications and structures of society implies that, with such simultaneous variations across *space-time*, conceptualizing social collectivity in an alternative form may produce new forms of knowledge and new ways of existence that mitigate certain redundant social dilemmas of our time, thus reducing social conflict. Though not frivolous is the consideration as to whether society creates minds that categorize, or whether conversely, the individual mind has the intrinsic capacity to learn to classify and re-classify anew. It may well be that it is an interplay between both. Nonetheless, the focus is also the task of interrogating

[4]This quite suitably complements Gallie (1955) fitting description of democracy as being built on 'essentially contested concepts' (p. 184*f.*).

the order produced by classificatory schemes and to see if such order creates preventable and illogical bias.

Like all concepts underpinning the construction of the self, there is no essentialist perception of 'race' or ethnicity as formations of an absolute identity. The human mind has to be educated to think and visualize 'race' and/or ethnicity (Gilroy, 1998, p. 838), to perceive it and to re/imagine its existence. It is not an absolute descriptive term; it is a *floating signifier* that refers to concepts of classification and the making meaning of practices within culture (Hall, 1997). For Goldberg (2009), 'race' is argued as

> not simply a set of ideas or understandings. The category represents, more broadly, a way (or a set of ways) of being in the world, of living, of meaning-making. Those ways of being, living, and representation differ across space and time, between the regions …. (p. 152)

Furthermore although 'race' has its antecedents in pre-modern times, Goldberg (2009) argues that, 'race is an irreducibly modern notion defining and refining modern state formation' (p. 329) particularly within the contemporary era of world-transforming globalization. 'Race is a foundational pillar of modernizing globalization, both in shaping and coloring the structures of modern being and belonging, development and dislocation, state dynamism and social stasis' (Goldberg, 2009, p. 329f.). For Lentin (2008), 'race' acts 'as a more abstract signifier for separating human groups socially, politically and economically. As such, culture, ethnicity, religion, nationality and (but not always) skin colour can all stand for race at different times' (p. 490). Thus, 'race' can be viewed as a structuring feature of modern Irish society, as well as other societies such as Britain (Gilroy, 1990, p. 114).

Gilroy (1998) makes the ethical plea in *Race Ends Here* to counter racism and injustices by making 'a more consistent effort to de-nature and de-ontologize "race" and thereby to disaggregate raciologies' (p. 839). Linking to the ethical imperative proposed, the approach from the outset is to incorporate into the conceptual framework a research strategy that undermines and disturbs 'the persistent normative claims of raciology' (Gilroy, 1998, p. 840) and ethnicity that are based on a false biological or pseudo-scientific theory. That is not to attempt to make 'race' or ethnicity obsolete but rather to interrogate their foundations and confront the reification of 'race' and ethnicity, within the process of analysis and through re-definition and re-construction, rather than *deracination*.[5]

Thus, a core precept is the subversion of *racio-ethnic* constructions while simultaneously recognizing and acknowledging cultural ways of life as inherent to

[5]For more on such debates, please refer to works such as Between Camps: Nations, Cultures and the Allure of Race (Gilroy, 2000), 'Ethnicity Denial' and Racism: The Case of the Government of Ireland Against Irish Travellers (McVeigh, 2007), Alana Lentin's (2015) article, What does 'race' do? and Kapoor's (2013) work, The advancement of racial neoliberalism in Britain.