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Understanding Critical Whiteness Studies: Harmful or Helpful in the Struggle for Racial Equity in the Academy?

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With great thanks to the editors and co-authors of this book, who I continue to learn from and have the utmost respect for. With thanks also to Carol Hughes, for her expertise, scholarship and solidarity, and in acknowledgement of family, friends, colleagues, scholars and forebearers from marginalised communities that helped make this chapter, and my activism, possible.

What matters is not so much the color of your skin as the power you serve and the millions you betray. Fanon (2000)

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Introduction

Thirty-two years since Richard Dyer's (1988) essay "White", which emerged ten years hence from Judith Katz's (1978) *White Awareness: Handbook For Anti-Racism*, and a further seventy-eight years after W.E.B DuBois' (1910) "The Souls of White Folk", this chapter explores how *Critical Whiteness Studies (CWS)* can help in the struggle for racial equity. During the course of this chapter, the fundamentals of 'Whiteness' are explained, and the principal dilemmas confronting its use, reviewed. It will conclude with suggestions for how its pitfalls may be avoided, including where it requires a (re)configuration with anti-colonial scholarship. Taken in its entirety, this chapter intends to support the dismantling of White supremacist structures and the eradication of anti-Black racism in UK academia. It is hoped that teachers and researchers may be better equipped, by a Critical Whiteness Studies (CWS) approach rooted in anti-colonial praxis, to take action in solidarity with the racially oppressed in the pursuit of educational equity.

In the UK there has been a small but committed movement of anti-racist scholars who, within their work, have interrogated and critiqued racism and Whiteness in post-colonial Britain and/or education (e.g. Sara Ahmed, Akala, Kehinde Andrews, Jason Arday, Gurminder Bhambra, Kalwant Bhopal, Charlotte Chadderton, Namita Chakrabarty, Ornette D Clennon, Reni Eddo-Lodge, Steve Garner, David Gillborn, Paul Gilroy, Stuart Hall, Kevin Hylton, Nisha Kapoor, Paul Miller, Heidi Mirza, John Preston, Nicola Rollock, Meera Sabaratnam, Gurnam Singh, Ambalavaner Sivanandan and Satnam Virdee). Embracing their work and the work of others, and specifically utilising the conceptual framework of 'Critical Whiteness', should strengthen anti-racist communities of praxis.

Critical Whiteness Studies has, however, been condemned as "fundamentally disturbing" (Andersen 2003, p. 21) for various reasons, most notably that it reifies essentialised notions of 'race'; sustains Whiteness via performativity; inadequately considers class; and diverts attention away from racism by personalising the issue of raced power dynamics at the expense of institutional change (Sivanandan 1984; Bonnett 1996;

Alexander 2004; Hartman 2004; Leonardo 2004; Doane and Bonilla-Silva 2013). Furthermore, Jafri (2012) warns that declarations of social privilege can re-inscribe power positions, and that this over-investment in the dominant subject focuses analysis on the unlearning process, rather than destabilising the coloniser/colonised binary, through which racial power is constituted.

In contrast, and in accord with scholars of the sociology of race, such as Garner (2006) and Leonardo (2004), this chapter affirms that whilst Critical Whiteness Studies is vital, it must be complemented by a rigorous examination of White supremacy in the context of Black Marxism (Robinson 2000) and racial capitalism and neoliberalism (Bhattacharyya 2020). Moreover, Critical Whiteness Studies can only be successful in helping to bring about fundamental changes in the training, development and practice of educators, if it is conceptualised in a way that sets it within a communal praxis of intersectional and decolonising (Bhambra et al. 2018) activism. This declaration is not new, nor—whilst progressive—is it free from exploitation by White researchers in the field of racism analysis who are phenotypically and fiscally removed and protected from the oppression it asserts to combat. It, therefore, obliges me to acknowledge the reality of my position—the author, as White scholar—writing this book chapter on anti-racist praxis.

Opening Position Statement

In the first draft of this chapter I made a conscious and deliberate, but erroneous, choice to exclude mention of my positionality as a White man. I did so for two reasons. First, because I thought by writing about an identity that society racialises me as, that is, White, this was somehow acceptable. Second, I feared centring my (White) self in the discourse. With feedback from the editors (who clearly welcomed my contribution as a White academic) and hindsight informed by my own ongoing auto-ethnographic PhD research—I understood better that the former was a guiding rule that does not, and should not, apply to scholars writing about race *who occupy a position in the group that holds power and benefits from oppression*. I also better understood that the latter was not only

naïve—of course, one can never exclude oneself from their writing!—*but that it centred Whiteness by its very nondisclosure*. By this I mean to say that the colonially inscribed, routine normalcy of a White man authoring a book chapter, particularly a text about racism, was signalled as such by its omission. In short, the stealth inherent in Whiteness, whether conscious or unconscious, was such that I was both succumbing to *and* directing it.

My interest in Whiteness as a state of being that upholds an unjust system of racialised inequities began consciously in my late teens, as a middle-class White boy in suburban Essex, England. Since entering higher education as an academic at the start of my thirties, Critical Whiteness Studies has been central to my pedagogical approach. Now, in my fortieth year, it continues to inform my approach to social justice activism in the academy. It is beyond the remit of this book chapter to explore my origins much further, or to elucidate the incidences that contributed to a passionate interest in understanding the reasons for racial social injustices, or further to examine my experiences as a lecturer and flawed (though, I hope, sometimes productive) activist. These factors are given due prominence, clarity and interrogation via autoethnography in my PhD thesis.

In lieu of this, and to operate within the parameters of this book chapter, I explicitly acknowledge that my status as a White scholar who is able to—and invited to—explore and interrogate race relatively openly and freely is a colossal privilege that has historically not been afforded to academics of colour. My writing here must serve to undermine, rather than reinforce the White privileges in-built in higher education. Therefore, with this chapter, I aim to challenge racialised discourses and encourage social action within the academy. I had hoped that the chapter would achieve this in and of itself but offer this small but significant insight into my positionality and privilege in acknowledgement that it would not have. By doing this, I hope to remove myself from the ‘centre’—a position White academics who have historically done this occupy—and centre the actual problem at hand, which is the centrality of Whiteness and its inequitable reach.

My intention with this chapter is, therefore, to provide a critical pedagogic voice. I have tried to remain vigilant so as not to deliver a “tokenistic discussion of race which reinforce[s] the current forms of inequality and White privilege, whilst violating the alterity” of colleagues of colour (Hobson and Whigham 2018). Striving to avoid unconscious reinforcement of the institutional Whiteness of academic scholarship is something I urge us all, particularly White people, to do if we are to become better anti-racist allies.

But we need to do more than write book chapters about the problem of Whiteness. There is much more personal development and community action to be done, and I hope that White colleagues join in committing to the private and interpersonal work necessary to develop anti-racist allyship.

But what does this ‘work’ mean to me, a middle-class White man, born and raised in the UK? My interpretation—built on personal reflection, and the works and words of activists and colleagues of colour—is that it requires me to fulfil *my* agency, rather than expecting to be taught, or listened to, by people of colour; it is an obligation to process, internally, the range of emotional reflexes of White fragility, tears and resistance that may (and sometimes still do) transpire when I misstep, or receive criticism. It is my responsibility to listen to and act on such criticism, not only because it is rooted in resistance and love (in the bell Hooks sense), but also because when it comes from the experts and those who are affected, it is of the highest value and risk. It is also my duty to listen to—and then part ways with—any impulsive inner voices that tempt me to exclaim: “No, you misunderstand me...no, that wasn’t my intention...no, this feels unfair...but I’m trying my best!” It is an accountability that requires my continued efforts in the struggle to stand in solidarity with the oppressed to dismantle White supremacy. Furthermore, it is an introspection that helps me not to forget that the most significant privileges I have as a White anti-racist academic are the inescapable luxuries of *choice* in whether I do the work or not, and the *absence of racial oppression* when I pick up my pen to write, or walk into a lecture room to talk.

To be effective, anti-racist solidarities should conjoin as wide a range of historical relationships as colonialism itself created. (Wolfe 2016)

Is There Value in Critical Whiteness Studies?

Critical Whiteness Studies (CWS) is a transdisciplinary project that concentrates attention upon the socio-politically constructed nature of White identity, power, norms and ideology. It shares a descendent relationship with Critical Race Theory (CRT), in that CRT has overlapping concerns with the centrality and impact of racism on racialised communities (see Box 21.1 for a brief history of Critical Whiteness Studies). CWS concentrates on the creation and maintenance of racial hierarchies and the systems that protect them, aiming to expose and deconstruct the racialised power dynamics within intergroup relations, and in doing so problematise, interrogate and challenge the identity and practices of the dominant White group. It does this by understanding ‘White’ as a colonial-capitalist construct of embodied racialised power that serves as a foundational function of White supremacy (Bonilla-Silva 2001). White is a concept of White supremacy, an oppressive system of racialised power inequities that operates on the personal, institutional and cultural, to bestow advantages and benefits for White people at the expense of the racialised subaltern (Gramsci 2012). Given the complexity of this phenomenon, it is clear that to work with and through CWS—in order to dismantle White supremacy in education—one must understand how and why ‘White’ was manufactured, and its enduring effects.

Box 21.1 The Study of Whiteness

The theoretical conceptualisation of ‘whiteness’ began with W.E.B DuBois, Frantz Fanon, and more latterly bell hooks, Audre Lorde, Toni Morrison and James Baldwin and has been critically illuminated further by the likes of Barbara Applebaum, Theodore Allen, Eduardo Bonilla-Silva, Robin DiAngelo, Ruth Frankenberg, Barnor Hesse, Noel Ignatiev, Gloria Ladson-Billings, Zeus Leonardo, Walter Mignolo, Anoop Nayak, Aníbal Quijano, David Roediger, Edward Said, Guyatri Spivak, and George Yancy, to name but a few of the luminaries. Whiteness refers to the ways of thinking, acting, receiving and being that White people (and sometimes non-White people socialised into Whiteness) engage in that serve to hide, protect and further the interests of White people at the expense of non-White people. Peggy Macintosh coined the term ‘White privilege’ (the lineage of which

(continued)

Box 21.1 (continued)

can be traced through DuBois' 'wages of whiteness' and on in to Harris' 'whiteness as property') which has become somewhat misused in its contemporary application as primarily a focus on *individual* advantages ascribed to persons by virtue of being constructed as White. These benefits are distorted by class, gender, sexuality, disability, religion, citizenship and ethnicity but are not transcended by them. The people who hold these privileges are unlikely to fight to dismantle the system that provides them, for that would mean giving them up. Critical Whiteness Studies (CWS) is an auxiliary of Critical Race Theory (CRT), a praxis that emerged in the 1980s (after Derrick Bell's Critical Legal Studies, itself driven by the enduring racism within the post-War North American justice system). Like CRT, CWS helps to make sense of, deconstruct, and challenge the racial inequities of White supremacist society. CWS scholars, like CRT scholars, hold the correct socio-political construct understanding of 'race' and a commitment to interrogating and opposing the systems that subjugate people racialised as non-White. CWS continues to undergo revision and refinement in relation to new developments in socio-economic and socio-political discourses, in response to the activist-scholarship experiences of its proponents, and in reflection to the necessitous critique from scholars across various fields of inquiry and theoretic insights. These include CRT, Black Marxism, Black Feminist Theory, Critical Indigenous Theory, Queer Theory, Border Theory and Post-Colonial and Decolonising scholarship, to name but a few of the global social theories that a robust interrogation of race requires. CWS enables 'White' scholars to academically and strategically interrogate their complicity in the system of White supremacy and attempt to subvert Whiteness. CWS recognises that BAME/BIPOC peoples generally have a special knowledge of Whiteness, predicated upon the European colonisation of their ancestors and up to the present-day realities of being disproportionately oppressed. By being informed by counternarratives, but by turning the ethnographic gaze on to their own Whiteness, White scholars of CWS aim to be accomplices, acting in solidarity, external to but in close orbit around the centrality of oppressed counternarratives and intimately linked to the wider community of struggles towards dismantling White supremacy. Scholars of CWS should aim to inspire an interrogation of White identities that is capable of disturbing the more traditional focus of race enquiry, in order to provoke new theory, political practice, such that new geographies of Whiteness can displace any assumptions of CWS as a Western pursuit, and open up researchers to a global interpretation and postcolonial understanding of race.

Understanding Whiteness

In order to understand Whiteness, academics new to or unfamiliar with Critical Whiteness Studies must from the outset carefully develop their ‘racial literacy’ and understanding of ‘anti-racism’.

- Racial literacy (see Fig. 21.1) is understanding:
 - The racial character of capitalism that is the European colonial processes and forces that subsumed the existing racialisms of Western feudal society and religious difference and directed its mutation into a system of anti-Black/brownness based on the economic exploitation of indigenous and enslaved peoples, their land and their resources (Robinson 2000).
 - The pseudo-biological essentialisations of human race sub-categories, by way of post-hoc spatial-ethno-cultural and physical observation by and through the European elite’s ‘White gaze’ (Morrison 1987) to denigrate (from the Latin ‘*nigare*’ that is “to blacken, make dark” [O’Neil 2014]) the racialised other by skin tone, phenotype, ethnicity, and religiosity and which bequeathed the non-sciences of racial anthropometry, phrenology, physiognomics and eugenics. Many scholars have detailed the origins of contemporary racism that is the colonial enslavement and othering that was essential to imperial conquest and modern capitalism (see, e.g., Roediger 1994; Wolfe 2016) and readers are encouraged to seek out these histories.
 - The shifting phenomena of colonial Whiteness as predicated on the subaltern (Hesse 2006), noting that it is a fluid concept that includes and omits dependent on its needs at any particular time. Contingent on the historical and geopolitical context, and the specific access to a particular resource (or proximity to disenfranchisement), the following ethnic groups, for example, have been considered ‘White’, ‘non-White’, or ‘closer-to-White’: Slavs, Irish, Jewish, Latinx, Portuguese and Greek peoples.
 - Current discourse and terminology may reify racialisation and be counter-productive to social justice movements, as it may silence

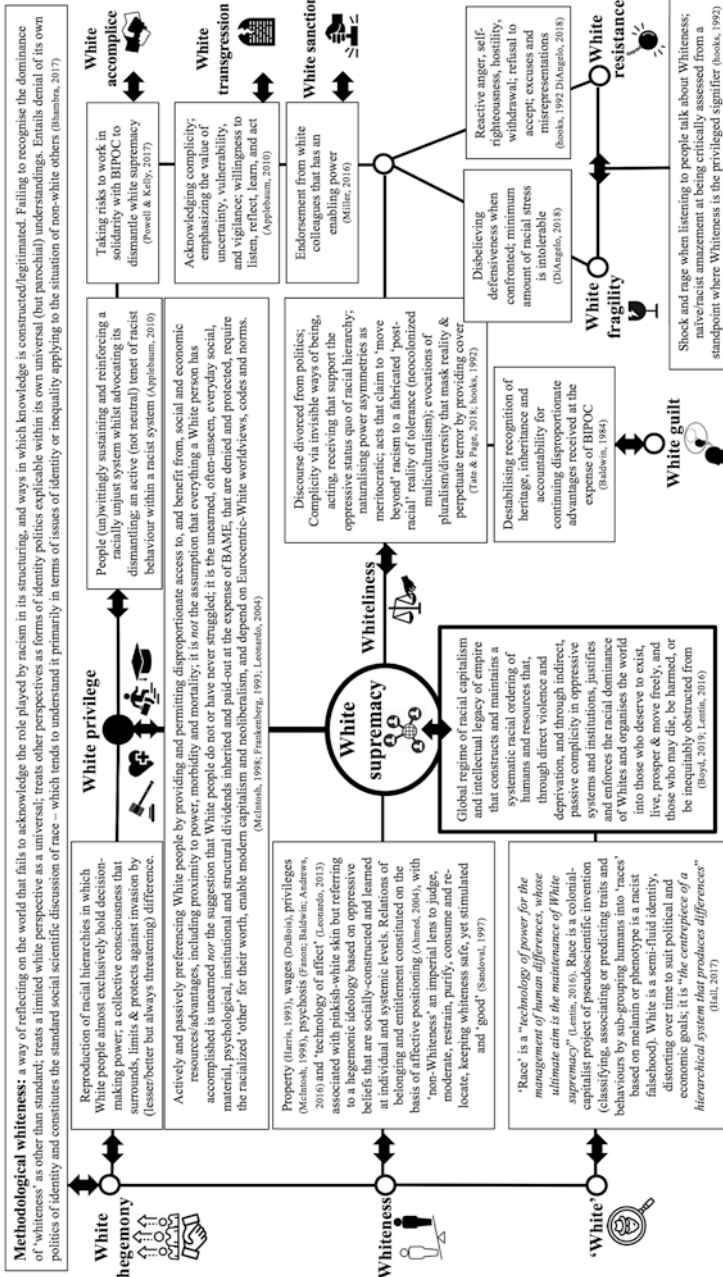


Fig. 21.1 Whiteness Infographic

sub-groups, dilute resistance, and manufacture conflict within inter-community activism. For example, the terms ‘Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic’/‘BAME’ and ‘People of Colour’ suggests that the struggles of, say, a British Muslim teenager of East Asian heritage, are the same as that of, say, a Black British pensioner. Furthermore, ‘Black’ itself gives no recognition of the differences in lived experiences between a Black-Caribbean British woman and a Black British man of Senegalese heritage. In addition, the state-sanctioned ethnicisation of ‘Black’ has been considered a tool that de-links and blunts Black political struggle, and that a ‘return to a radical kinship of solidarity politics is needed’ (Sivanandan 1984; Aouragh 2019).

- The consequences of White supremacist racism (Bonilla-Silva 2001) including the specific colonial nature of anti-Blackness and the intersecting oppressions of gender, sexuality, class, disability, age, ethnicity, religion and citizenship.
 - The vocabulary and self-efficacy required to discuss, identify and challenge racisms and racist structures, including Whiteness and coloniality.
- *Anti-racism Is Understanding:*
 - the difference between ‘non-racist’ and ‘anti-racist’ action (Kendi 2018). For example, non-racism is claiming the post-racial position that racism does not exist (or that it once did but is now of negligible significance), or that one ‘does not see colour’, or that because one does not use explicitly racist language, that one is not culpable or complicit in maintaining a system of White supremacy by virtue of their inaction. Non-racism is also claiming that an anti-White people bias is ‘reverse racism’ and therefore a real phenomenon, rather than it being a prejudice against racialised-as-White people that is not influenced by or implicated in structural power dynamics and systemic oppression (see Fig. 21.2).
 - the term ‘racist’ refers to systems and actions (Lentin 2016) not an identity, nor is conscious or subconscious intention (necessarily) required for it.

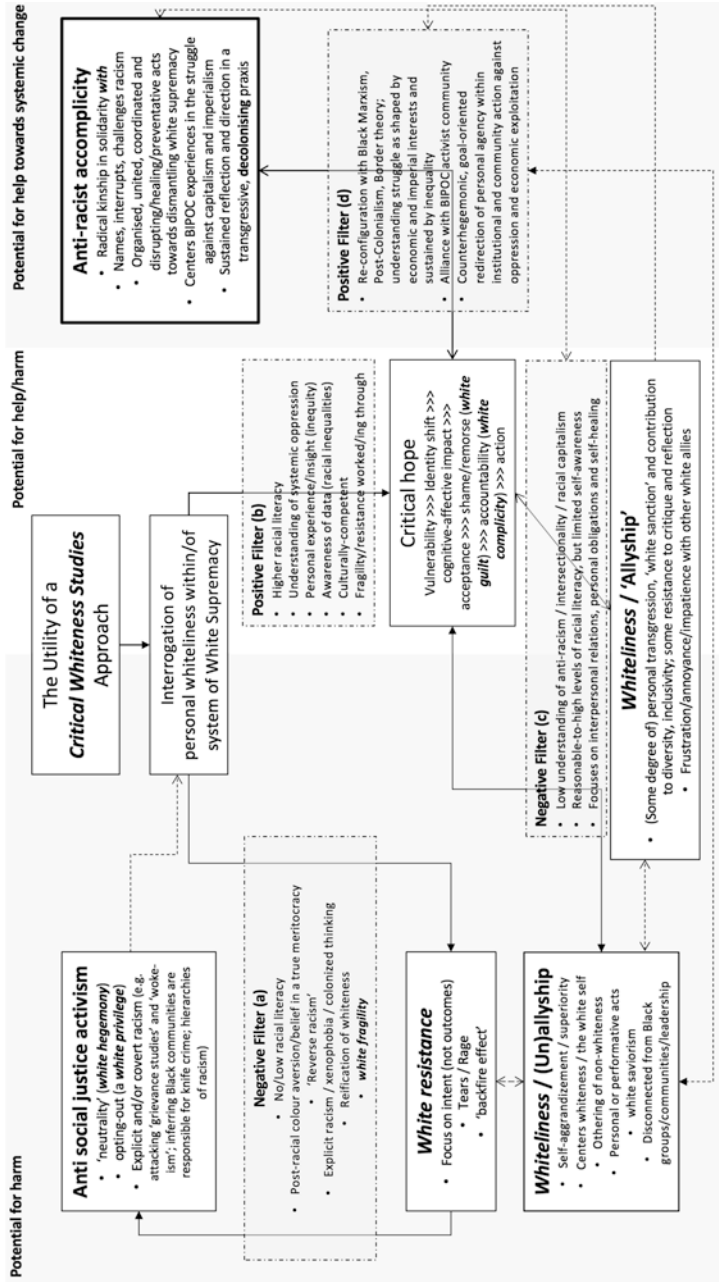


Fig. 21.2 Anti-racism schema

- that the circumstances of the struggle against racism are primarily shaped by economic and imperial interests (Aouragh 2019) and can only be successful with personal and collective action (Sivanandan 1984).
- that Britain possessed (and possesses) its own Black Power movement, rooted in an anti-colonial politics that connects domestic racism with issues of imperialism and global inequality (Narayan 2019).

Despite the incontrovertible facts of racist inequities, and its entwined genesis with and sustenance from the neoliberal and colonial-capitalist project, there is, in contemporary Britain, a tendency on the Left to consider colonial history as irrelevant to present progressive, liberal culture. Whereas, on the Centre-Right there is a tendency to celebrate the post-colonial British Empire with nostalgic solemnity, viewing it not as a racist endeavour but as a predominantly righteous and progressive, enriching project that one should be proud of, and keen to see return. Furthermore, discourses of Whiteness often acknowledge White privilege only as a function of Whites' actions towards marginalised subjects, and not as accumulations of unearned advantages in an unfair system. Dove-tailing with these White-Left and Centre-Right ontologies is a renewed and vigorous populism that attacks those who attempt to name and interrogate Whiteness, denouncing them as the 'real racists', or as playing the 'race card' of identity politics, and in doing so positioning *them* as the problem, rather than the racism itself. On the limited occasions when critical interrogations of Whiteness are welcome, the concept of Whiteness often makes for an individualised, compartmentalised and personal 'MacGuffin' of virtue; that is to say, that White people anticipating a solution to the (un)mystery of racism often follow a limited narrative of personal growth. Thus, although the initial provocation of 'personal growth' is a motivator to initiate change, it becomes somewhat of a diversion away from community struggle and institutional transformation.

Part of the solution to these diversions is greater utilisation of post-colonial theory, as it offers a useful framework with which we can identify, understand and articulate the historical and socio-political construct of Whiteness. Here I use the metaphor of toxic White *fruits* to symbolise Whiteness, with the entire crop and field denoting the racist structure of

our White supremacist system. Post-colonial theory helps us see that “despite the fact that white racial domination precedes us, Whites daily recreate it on both the individual and institutional level” (Leonardo 2004, p. 139). Post-colonial theory provides a vital set of tools with which we can, and must, interrogate and act in order to change the system by uprooting and destroying the crops, and tending to the earth in a different manner altogether.

Privilege is the daily cognate of structural domination. (Leonardo 2004)

Working Through Whiteness: Personal Growth and Community Solidarity

Once racial literacy and anti-racist understanding begin to develop, White people must adjoin them with efforts towards accepting their *Whiteness* and their *Whiteliness*. Full acceptance may never arrive, given the power, dexterity and cunning of the phenomena, however for the journey to continue they must proceed through the vertiginous awakening and sickening realisation of *White guilt* in order to overcome any internal struggles of *White fragility* and *resistance* when confronted with the realities of *White privilege* (see Fig. 21.1).

Figure 21.2 shows how the diversions take place if the exposure of a disavowed complicity (Willet 2007) and shift in identity are processed through a *negative* filter. White privilege becomes the central axis, taking on an appearance of domination without agents, such that ‘instead of emphasizing the process of appropriation, the discourse of privilege centers the discussion on the advantages that Whites receive; it mistakes the symptoms for causes’ (Leonardo 2004). However, if White people can process their Whiteness through a *positive* filter, they can move to a position that eschews guilt or conflict for an intellectual and emotional openness. Such vulnerability is antithetical to the coloniser’s mind and is a pre-condition for anti-racist potential (Bailey 2015) and represents a decolonising of ‘White fragility’ and ‘self-forgiveness’ (Tate and Page 2018) from which a critical hope can emerge (Applebaum 2017). This

critical hope must then be harnessed in a way that ensures any good intentions do not become lost in a personal growth mindset that manifests in internalised action or externalised ‘White saviourism’.

If White people can move away from individualism—despite the necessary personal reckoning with Whiteness—and towards community, they may not only begin to see the toxic White fruits but might also then use the tools necessary to destroy it at the root, in collaboration with the oppressed. In other words, they may grasp the connectiveness and kinship required to fulfil their anti-racist potential, that is, by “joining the fight for institutional reform within their places of work and from the outside by making contact with Black organisations in order to co-ordinate activities and learn from one another” (Galliers 1987, p. 70). Figure 21.2 illustrates this schema of anti-racist potential.

...white supremacy is their construct, a construct they have benefited from, and deconstructing white supremacy is their duty. (Oluo 2019)

Summary

Critical Whiteness Studies is useful for helping to identify internalised, often invisible or covert forms of oppression—including the advantages those constructed as White have at the expense of those constructed as Black—that contribute to White supremacist institutional and systemic racism (Aouragh 2019). However, as anti-racist praxis it is insufficient without complicity with anti-Black activists and the critical understating of colonialism and capitalism required to process White positionality, agency and complicity through a positive filter.

Only by taking a decolonial political philosophy can we authentically embrace the concept of ourselves as White people helping to dismantle Whiteness. Without this, good intentions may be hijacked by concerns with:

- individual growth, rather than structural change
- superficial reflection and shallow ‘activist-tourism’, rather than critically reflexive praxis

- attempting to own/lead the anti-racist struggle, rather than in solidarity with the racially oppressed
- inadvertently reifying, essentialising and/or centring ‘White’/Whiteness, rather than dismantling it (e.g., as I was/am in danger of doing by writing this chapter—a risk referred to in the opening position statement)

Critical Whiteness Studies is a vital tool of scholarly activism, provided those who utilise it stay true to its transdisciplinary origins within, and overlapping with, epistemologies of global social theories.

It is clear that the struggle for racial equity is the responsibility of all educators. It is also clear that White people with lower levels of racial literacy risk diversion or derailment by their fragility, resistance and rage, whereas White people with higher levels of racial literacy but lower understanding of anti-racism risk diversion by notions of personal growth and White saviourism.

Closing Position Statement

In summarising the importance of Post-Colonial Theory and Critical Black theories in Critical Whiteness Studies, one might be invigorated to ask the question, ‘so, what does this look like in your practice in higher education?’ The answer to this question will always be context-specific, depending on the demands and constraints of the given situation. We are all unique, and so are our individual approaches to activism. What follows is a small example of my day-to-day practice as a Senior Lecturer in Sports Therapy, using a reflexive approach to the scholarship of learning and teaching with colleagues.

In order to help address the systems-deficit at the heart of the disproportionate undergraduate degree awarding outcomes for our BAME students, I joined a group working towards this goal. When confronted with difficult challenges that may call our own personhoods and sense of reality into question we are naturally drawn to quick and painless solutions, and not necessarily to the emotionally/intellectually hard work required to rectify them. This tends to be the case when becoming aware of our

complicity in a neo-colonial White supremacist educational system (Mcduff et al. 2018; Sultana 2019) that contributes to the ‘great unspoken shame’ (Ross et al. 2018) of racially disproportionate experiences, assessments, awarding and opportunities for undergraduate ‘BAME’ students relative to their White peers (Universities UK 2019). We identified that a scaffolded approach is of benefit to colleagues who wish to engage with racial social justice pedagogies, particularly for those who are White. The common impulse is to grasp for simple strategies (e.g., tick boxes and toolboxes) to address challenges that are more about ideology and will, than planning. However, it is useful to begin with some guiding principles of practice that provide a scaffold for the sense of direction in which one chooses to go.

Subsequently, I designed and now utilise the *Educators’ Anti-Racism Self-reflection* tool (EARS), a helpful starting point for academics to assess and critically reflect on their pedagogical approach. The EARS tool (see Table 21.1) may also be useful for experienced anti-racist teachers to help articulate and reinforce existing good practice, and as a point of reflection and critical discussion. It should be noted that academics of colour are likely to have been manifesting these and other factors supported by their personal insights, experiences and expertise that White academics are not privy to nor able to engage in with at the same level of craft or impact. It should also be noted that some of the suggestions and expectations for action within the tool are likely to incur much greater risk for academics of colour, particularly women of colour and colleagues with additional marginalised characteristics. Nonetheless, as a starting point for White anti-racists, it is helpful.

EARS consist of nine factors, each ‘scored’ numerically and accompanied by a narrative commentary that may include peer and student input. Focussing on these helps develop anti-racist praxis, though it is not a substitute for essential readings and ongoing, consistent, deep reflection. The EARS tool is a snapshot of equitable practice, not a destination and scores should not be perceived as indication of ‘wrongfulness’ or ‘inadequacy’; a low score helps to direct where to focus one’s self-development most urgently, and scoring high does not mean one has ‘done’ ‘it’, as one may not score highly again next year, or even next week. I have found the tool to be helpful in day-to-day teaching practice. Sharing it with

Table 21.1 The Educators' Anti-Racist Self-reflection (EARS) tool

Educators' Anti-Racist Self-reflection (EARS) tool	Score
<p>Allyship Use of the <i>Advice for Being an Ally</i> resource (Abdi 2020). Addressing racial biases in how you perceive others. Inviting, platforming, supporting and making opportunities for BAME colleagues, especially in meetings, committees, panels, funding, co-authorship, and 'White sanction'. Standing with, not for. Speaking-up about racism before (proactive), and during and after if it occurs (reactive).</p> <p>Curriculum representation Images/authors/case-studies/perspectives/narratives/data/ways of knowing; HPL/GL selection, Student committees. Planning and review panels.</p> <p>Curriculum content Use of the <i>Decolonising Learning and Teaching</i> resource (SOAS 2018). In what ways do you address social justice issues and critical thinking? The historical and contemporary socio-political contest to the discipline/knowledge. How are decolonising approaches used with content, learning, and support. How is your module linked to other modules, careers, post-graduate education, local communities, industry, current affairs, and cultures?</p> <p>Student-centredness How do you provide space for students to express themselves? Link learning with/build on their experiences? Feel in co-control of their learning? Co-creation of learning culture, expectations, roles and responsibilities? Peer-mentorship? Industry mentorship? Co-generative dialogue? Returning alumni? VLE/online/distance-learning?</p> <p>Assessment & Feedback Use of the <i>Assessment and Feedback Benchmarking</i> resource (NUS 2015). How are you addressing your racial biases in marking? How inclusive (e.g. varied, flexible, formative, anonymous, moderated, transparent, scaffolded, modelled, submission, feedback quality and timeliness, feedforward accountability and integration; alignment with other modules, timing with academic and religious holidays).</p> <p>Critical Reflection & CPD Which formal and informal CPD related to decolonising and social justice pedagogy have you engaged in within in the past 12 months? How has this impacted on your approach? What are you doing about your complicity in systemic racism? What peer-learning have you engaged in? How are you decolonising your mind?</p>	

(continued)

Table 21.1 (continued)

Educators' Anti-Racist Self-reflection (EARS) tool	Score
Academic Skills & Learning Sciences	
What support is on offer and how is this embedded, framed, communicated? How do you utilise cognitive learning sciences i.e. What is the nature/extent of your instruction, interleaving, retrieval, dual-coding, modelling, scaffolding? Study techniques? Relation to previous learning? Stories? Cognitive load? feedback literacy?	
Interpersonal impact	
Addressing racial biases in how you perceive others. Opportunities and support for BAME students and colleagues. Engagement strategies (physical, digital and social messages/activities, small group tutorials, teaching spaces), personal connectedness, and awareness of own identity, privileges and colonial thinking.	
Data	
What do the numbers say about retention and achievement on your module/programme when adjusted for ethnicity and gender? Have you included this in your module and programme reviews, and personal development review? Have you explored and stated solutions and actions? What are the changes since the last data review?	

colleagues across my institution has had positive impact but has not been without the difficulties or tensions inherent in trying to engage in anti-racist practice in academia.

With this small example of my practice, and the chapter as a whole, I hope that it might in some way contribute to White academics choosing to use their privilege to become better allies with scholars of colour in higher education. I urge White colleagues to interrogate their racial biases (we all have them) and to understand that choosing a (pseudo)neutral stance on race and ethnicity or avoiding it because it 'doesn't affect us' or because 'we are not sociologists' or because of a standpoint that 'we should not see colour' are all positions that are irreconcilable with the very essence of equitable learning and teaching.

We are all complicit in the current system. Our choice is not 'whether to act or not', but 'how'.

As White scholars in the...teaching professions we believe that the fight to end white, hetero-patriarchy occurs in our classrooms, through our research, and in our communities through direct action. In these spaces, we seek to locate ourselves in the movement not as benevolent supporters, but

as risk-takers who aim to destabilize white supremacy in ourselves, families, schools, [and] communities. (Powell and Kelly (2017, p. 43)

The whole purpose of knowing who we are is not to interpret the world, but to change it. (Sivanandan 1984)

Conclusion

Critical Whiteness Studies is a vital part of social justice activism, particularly for racialised-as-White people. Renouncing one's Whiteness—or becoming a 'race traitor' (Ignatiev and Garvey 2014)—is definitely a choice for many Whites (Leonardo 2004) but without the accompanying activism for structural change, it does not adequately disrupt the institutional regime of White supremacy. One must be mindful of the potential diversions and derailments that engaging with critical analyses of Whiteness presents, and the strategies to facilitate constructive outcomes through positive filters.

As a tool for change, Critical Whiteness Studies can make major contributions to racial social justice in education, but only if White scholars continue to re-configure it with colonial history, respect its genesis from and debt to Critical Race Theory and Black Feminist scholarship, and incorporate these to routinely and deeply re-interrogate their own profit from and complicity in White supremacy. White people must reflect on and interrogate their awareness and agency in the counter-hegemonic, goal-oriented redirection of their own Whiteness, in solidarity of *action*—not just in mind or pen—with the struggle; in short, to choose treason to Whiteness (Ignatiev and Garvey 2014).

This chapter closes with a reminder that, as operators within and of the education machine, changing our actions can change the larger system. We must not “merely tinker with educational methods and techniques and leave unaltered the whole racist structure of the educational system...[we must] not [conduct] just an examination of curricula and syllabuses but of the whole fabric of education: organization and administration, methods and materials, attitudes and practices” (Sivanandan 1984, p. 5). Rather, we must ensure that education is the ‘force for changing the values that make society racist’.

This chapter contends that Critical Whiteness Studies, when made inseparable from anti-colonial praxis, is a necessary element in this struggle, particularly for White academics who wish to act in solidarity, or, to paraphrase Sivanandan: *find unity in action*.

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