Sleepwalking into the 'Post-Racial': Social Policy and Research-Led Teaching

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Research-led teaching is the sine qua non of the 21st century university. To understand its possibilities for teaching and learning about race in Social Policy requires, as a first step, interrogating the epistemological and theoretical core of the discipline, as well as its organisational dynamics. Using parts of Emirbayer and Desmond's (2012) framework of disciplinary reflexivity, this article traces the discipline's habits of thought but also its lacunae in the production of racial knowledge. This entails focusing on its different forms of institutionalised and epistemological whiteness, and what has shaped the omission or marginalisation of a full understanding of the racialisation of welfare subjects and regimes in the discipline. Throughout, the article offers alternative analyses and thinking that fully embrace the historical and contemporary role of race, racism, and nation in lived realities, institutional processes, and global racial orders. It concludes with pointers towards a re-envisioning of Social Policy, within a framework in which postcolonial and intersectional theory and praxis are championed. Only then might a decolonised curriculum be possible in which race is not peripheral to core teaching and learning.

Keywords: Disciplinary reflexivity, racialisation, racism, intersectionality, decolonising.

Introduction

The 2019 report on race in Social Policy teaching and learning commissioned by the Social Policy Association found that the representation of black and minority ethnic students and academics in the discipline and the record of teaching and publishing on race and racism was 'dismal' (Craig *et al.,* 2019).This raises two paradoxes: first, that this should co-exist with the recent development of ethno-nationalist populist politics, 'hostile environment' and securitisation policies, and ongoing persistent racial domination along the poverty line and the criminal justice system. We can add to this the heightened vulnerability of minority ethnic groups in contracting Covid-19[1] and in experiencing state-sanctioned police violence - current concerns at the time of writing but with long-standing histories. This points to the second paradox: this history has produced political contestations which have found some reflection in the discipline. The racism and anti-racism from the 1970s created new theories and critiques (Hall *et al.,* 1978; CCCS, 1982 Crenshaw, 1989) which, if not central, were influential in social policy and social work analyses and were on most course reading lists (Doyal, 1979; Dominelli, 1988; Williams, 1989). Yet over this century such a focus seems to have been erased in mainstream Social Policy and its core theories, in spite of Craig's (2007) compelling call to action.'

We seek to understand these paradoxes by combining our separate areas of research and experience as academics. One of us (Phillips) began a degree in Social Administration (as Social Policy was then called) in 1987 where the material studied spoke directly to her experiences as a black mixed-race young woman coming of age in Thatcher's Britain. It resonated with her lifeworld of familial economic adversity and the (sociology of) education literature fed her personal intellectualising of the racism she had faced in school. Fifteen years later, as a Lecturer in Social Policy with a specialism in criminology, she introduced an optional MSc course in *Ethnicity, Race and Social Policy* and found there was a striking absence of critical materials from mainstream Social Policy to enthuse students as she had once been. Twenty years later it remains the case that most of the resources used for the course come from outside the core of the discipline. The other of us

(Williams) finished her degree in Sociology and Social Administration in 1968 and, as a white feminist and anti-racist activist and academic teaching in the 1970s, was part of the movement to develop critical approaches to Social Policy. This included centralising issues of race, gender and class in understanding the welfare state (Williams, 1987; 1989). By the 21st century however, Williams too had observed that the core of social policy theory had only selectively deployed gendered critiques, and race was almost totally absent.

Recently both of us have turned our attention to this absence. In a critique of criminology Phillips and colleagues (2020) use Emirbayer and Desmond's (2012; 2015) framework of disciplinary reflexivity systematically to interrogate the false universalisms, obligatory problematics, and social relations of criminology. Williams (2021) looks at these aspects of Social Policy by critically examining the external and internal influences on the discipline since the 1990s, recognising the dipscline's eclectism does mean that neo-Marxist, post-structuralist, feminist, and anti-racist (and other) perspectives sometimes penetrate core ideas within the discipline. Surprisingly however, a focus on race is more commonly missing. Williams develops and advocates a new critical approach in which the intersecting crises of racism, of care, and of climate change are central to both the analysis and transformative possibilities of Social Policy.

In this article we combine some aspects of both analyses by applying elements of Emirbayer and Desmond's (2012) framework to Social Policy. The article proposes some ways forward to correct the marginalisation of race and to enhance the teaching of social policy within a decolonised curriculum. This is essential to avoid the discipline 'sleepwalking' into what Goldberg (2015) defines as the 'post-racial', whereby racial dynamics are seen no longer to limit economic and social wellbeing in residential settlement, education, employment opportunities, and social interaction. Self-evidently, this common-sense has been roundly challenged by government statistics, empirical evidence, and political protests, including #BlackLivesMatter (Jivraj and Simpson, 2015; Cabinet Office, 2017; Chattoo *et al.,* 2019).

A framework for disciplinary reflexivity

Drawing from Bourdieu, Emirbayer and Desmond (2012) propose an exercise in disciplinary autocritique that involves unpacking and analysing disciplinary beliefs by examining how they are formulated, critiqued, rejected, amended, and upheld. This approach seeks to expose the hidden suppositions that shape our thinking, perception and understanding, considering how our 'common sense assumptions pre-construct the objects of our inquiry' (Emirbayer and Desmond, 2012: 577-8). They maintain that such systematic reflexivity enables us to advance scholarship in the study of racial orders. They offer three levels of reflexivity. The first, the *social unconscious*[2], looks at how internalised biographical influences inform scholars' positionality, with an emphasis on making visible the whiteness of disciplinary representation and disciplinary tools, particularly concepts, methods and types of analysis. The second, the *disciplinary unconscious,* focuses on the social relations of the production of racial knowledge through the intellectual penchants and possibilities enabled by established academic practice. The third concept is the *scholastic unconscious*. For Emirbayer and Desmond, this refers to the place of academia in general and how the distance of the ivory tower give rise to racialising culturalist abstractions such as the tendency to either 'strip people of all virtue' or 'to cleanse them of all sin' (Emirbayer and Desmond, 2015: 46). Space precludes a comprehensive application of these concepts; here, we follow the first two conceptual levels to look at first, the whiteness of the discipline in two ways: its peopling and its concepts. Secondly - the disciplinary unconscious focuses on Social Policy's past and present 'habits of thought' (its empiricism, pragmatism, [methodological] nationalism, limited concepts of class and capitalism and structuralism), and its organisational dynamics, including its eclecticism. In our concluding section we refer to the influence of some of the broader characteristics of academia.

Whiteness: people and concepts (the social unconscious)

The whiteness of Social Policy can be measured by its staff and student representation. In these terms the report by Craig and his colleagues mentioned above found that this was overwhelmingly

white. But they also found that minority ethnic students did not find the curriculum relevant to their concerns (Craig *et al.,* 2019). There are thus two dimensions to whiteness in the discipline – people and concepts and these are linked. The lens through which we activate our research interests, epistemological stance, research questions, designs, analytical and interpretative tools, and our theorising, can never, whatever positivism may promise, be fully abstracted from biographical experience. A discipline that does not examine the racial baggage that its key concepts carry cannot expect to draw in those who are motivated to explore questions that emanate from their own experience. At the same time, however, it is important to say that while biographical experience shapes the questions academics ask, it does not determine them. To suggest that would be to let white academics off the hook of responsibility for undertaking a critical reflexivity of their academic, intellectual and relational practices, or to suppose erroneously that 'BAME'[3] academics and students are only interested in, and responsible for, teaching and researching issues of race.

With race seemingly marginalised in social policy journals and 'BAME' authors unrepresented (Craig *et al.,* 2019), such (potential) authors' own experiences are significant. The literature is awash with accounts of the presence of subtle yet undermining racial micro- and macro-aggressions that covertly and overtly maintain white privilege in the academy (Lewis, 2013; Tate, 2014; Bhopal *et al*., 2015). This includes perceptions that race-related research that many minority ethnic scholars conduct is considered to be of lesser quality and intellectual substance. There is also a burgeoning body of work that documents the structural impact of racism in the academy which produces the 'leaky pipeline', particularly when patronage so often determines appointment opportunities, promotion prospects, and career outcomes (Alexander and Arday, 2015a; 2015b; Rollock, 2019; Arday, 2020; Mahony and Weiner, 2020).

When it comes to concepts, ideas and values, the core of Social Policy also tends to reflect a whitened logic. That is to say, whiteness is the plumbline against which all other (non-white, non-middle-class) communities are measured (Emirbayer and Desmond, 2012: 579). It is where key concepts such as care, family, dependence, household, autonomy, agency, wellbeing, belonging,

social protection, human rights and freedom are based upon white, hetero-normative experiences which are then generalised to the universal. Needs, dispositions, and desires may be universally shared but that does not mean they are experienced in universal ways. Context, history and social positioning matter and all these concepts are mediated through race, ethnicity and culture (Parekh, 1998). Moreover, where race and racism are accounted for, it is often only as an additional dimension of inequality or set of experiences rather than a recalibration of how a concept is framed.

Take the concept of care. Feminist research on care did much to bring care out into the open and reveal the invisible unrecognised work undertaken by women. Disabled researchers expanded this into an understanding of care as a set of complex relations relating to provision and receipt. Research on paid care work also exposed the extent to which this skilled work is devalued, precarious work undertaken by women, often black, minority ethnic and migrant women. Indeed the Covid-19 pandemic revealed this aspect more fully to a public dependent on that care labour. Over the past twenty years care has become a global concept through research that has followed the increase in migrant care work across most developed countries, functioning to save those countries' social expenditure costs. This forces an analysis which has to understand care not only as devalued gendered and racialised labour but as part of the present and past geopolitcal relations between migrants' countries of origin and their destination countries. These relations emerge from colonial, postcolonial and neocolonial contexts of labour exploitation. They are absolutely necessary to understand not only the modern-day continuities of care as racialised servitude but also the ongoing history of dependence of welfare states on the economic and social resources provided by colonies and post-colonies (Williams, 2016 2021).

European welfare states of the twentieth century were part of the social reforms of modernity in which values of universalism, autonomy, equality and social and human rights were and are central. They have their origins in Enlightenment thinking that took a European conception of rational, autonomous 'Man' as the yardstick for the universal human (Fanon, 1952; O'Brien and Penna, 1998; Winter, 2003). Such a modernist conception was invested in a white, Western worldview in which

generic appeals to equality and universalism excluded those who were not autonomous white, European men. This exclusionary conception was instituted in a number of reforms in the 'universalist' post-war welfare state (Williams, 1989). It further reflected an occlusion of a history in which, from colonisation onwards, racialised and colonised people have been constructed in Gilroy's (2014) term as 'infrahuman' and in which their labour and lives were far from autonomous, denied even the right to have rights. Powerfully put by Emirbayer and Desmond (2012: 580), in the shadow of the most seemingly objective and universal concepts often 'crouches a black slave'. It points to the need to question the meanings of universalism, autonomy, equality and rights, but also how the history of welfare states is framed.

Such history matters when we consider a concept such as human rights. Generally this is presented as emerging through the Universal Declaration of Human Rights created by Western powers in 1948. This was an important marker but this perspective obscures the history of struggles against slavery, colonial racism, and the legacies of modern imperialism, which were struggles for collective human rights (Barreto, 2018). Similarly, resistance to racism today is still countering the notion of the 'infrahuman' that emerges in the dehumanising practices of welfare agencies, employers, the police, and immigration services (Chattoo *et al.*, 2019; Mayblin *et al.,* 2019). It is unsurprising then that in a July/August 2020 poll commissioned by the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Human Rights, 76 per cent of Black people disagreed that their human rights were equally protected compared to white people in the UK (Joint Committee on Human Rights, 2020). The struggle for human rights in other words remains a struggle for rights but also a struggle to assert, again, a new understanding of 'human'.

This false universalising is similarly embedded in multivariate analysis when the reference category of the white majority is not supplemented with minority ethnic booster sub-samples which enable meaningful comparison within and among minority ethnic groups. Curry-Stevens *et al.* (2011) have also pointed to data errors where survey and administrative data inadequately encompass family and household ethnic heterogeneity or where aggregated data masks within-group diversity.

For Emirbayer and Desmond (2012), such unconscious practices that legitimise the scientific status quo can be as insidious as structures of racial domination themselves.

These examples illustrate the importance not only of questioning whiteness in the meaning and application of concepts, and of acknowledging difference in the apparent universality of statistical data, but also thinking laterally about the broader framing of differences and inequalities. How far the core theories of Social Policy provide the means to do that is the question we pursue next.

Habits of thought (the discplinary unconscious)

Social Policy's ways of thinking must be understood in relation to internal disciplinary dynamics as well as within the context of its relation to the outside world of both social politics and other disciplines. Much has already been written about the foundational ideas which spurred Social Policy's development as a discipline. Traditions of pragmatic empiricism, wedded to notions of a benevolent nation-state, and a belief in gradual reformism underpinned by social democratic politics, can be seen as inherent features of the disciplinary unconscious of Social Policy (Mishra, 1977; Taylor-Gooby, 1981). It is also important to remember its early political and philosophical foundations (Williams, 1989). Historians such as Winter (1974) have observed the Webbs' justification of British imperialism as a 'benevolent necessity' in social organisation. He also documents Beatrice Webb's visceral disgust at the inferior 'Chinese race', with its assumed evolutionary backwardness. Both Beatrice and Sidney championed eugenicist principles to stave off miscegenation and to prevent 'race suicide' resulting from low white fertility rates. In diary entries Beatrice refers to Indians as 'strangely childish to intellect and undisciplined in conduct' (Webb, 1912: 516/3220), and Shaw was emphatic about a hierarchy of civilisations with Western Europeans at the top and those of Africa and Asia at the bottom (Schneider, 1973). The oft-cited reference to the Webbs' views of the 'non-adult races' in Britain's colonial territories was, of course, redolent of pro-imperialist attitudes more generally at the turn of the century, but this colonial complicity cannot be entirely disregarded.

This seam of thinking which took for granted a racial, colonial and geopolitical hierarchy shaped the early works of Richard Titmuss as well as debates around post-war reconstruction (Joshi and Carter, 1984; Williams, 1989). In this respect British Social Policy was not alone. In the 1940s Gunnar Myrdal, the architect of the Swedish welfare state, was invited to the USA to investigate what was described as 'the Negro problem'. His huge report, *An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy* (Myrdal, 1944: 929), recommended social reforms on the basis that 'it is the advantage of American Negroes as individuals and as a group to become assimilated into American culture, to acquire the traits held in esteem by the dominant white Americans'. At the same time, he warned against any sort of immigration of 'alien groups' to Sweden as leading to 'racial suicide' (p.32). This, and the idea of national and cultural homogeneity being the prerequisite for egalitarian social policies, was still a strong theme in cross-national social policy debates in the 1990s. In this, the minimal liberal welfare states of the US and the UK were correlated with their multicultural populations and stood as cautionary tales. It remerged in this century as an assertion that diversity had undermined solidarity (Alesina and Glaeser, 2004; Goodhart, 2004; for a counterview see Banting and Kymlicka, 2017).

The historical empiricism and pragmatism of Social Policy which gave rise to an atheoretical approach reflected a purpose to collect facts in order to influence policy-makers. Unsurprisingly this engagement with policy-making still underpins much social policy research. While this might seem propitious for dealing with the real world of racism, this does not seem to have been the case. One explanation may turn on the fact that this process has a long-standing predisposition to follow the research agenda set by governments (Taylor-Gooby and Dale, 1981). This does not imply that Social Policy academics are uncritical, but nevertheless, over the past three decades the policy imperatives in the UK, EU and US have centred on getting people into paid work as the answer to inequalities. This shifted the framing of gender and racial inequalities from sexism and racism towards paid work as a way of minimising social exclusion and away from processes of racialisation in neo-liberal welfare capitalism (Williams, 2021).

However, during this same period, Social Policy did also engage more with theory (Page, 2010). But this did not guarantee that the bigger picture would include race. While, as noted earlier, as new feminist, anti-racist and disability critiques in the 1970s and 1980s were emerging, welfare regime analysis moved into core theoretical position (Esping-Andersen, 1990). This reasserted the pre-eminence of class as *the* social division with agency that mattered and could be measured. While feminist critiques managed to chip away and reshape the focus on class and production by extending the frame of analysis to gender, class and social reproduction, the critiques around race and racism demanded greater conceptual and methodological reformulation (Williams, 1995; 2016). Conceptually, the hierarchies of postcolonial and geopolitcal realities neither fitted comfortably into the frames of class/capital/production nor were they considered relevant in the Nordic welfare states which were the centre of welfare regime analysis. This was in spite of the growing work on immigration regimes and the historical legacies of colonialism and their manifestation in postcolonial contexts (Brubaker, 1990; Midgley and Piachaud, 2011; Sainsbury, 2012; Erel *et al.,* 2016; Mayblin, 2017). In addition, welfare regime analyses tended not to see race and ethnicity as relatively autonomous modalities of inequality (Ginsburg, 2014), nor was data routinely collected on ethno-racial outcomes in poverty, employment, health and so on in a number of countries. No surprise then, given this development of core theories, that recent handbooks of comparative social policy, and welfare states more generally, contain a mere smattering of references to race (Castles *et al.,* 2010; Kennett, 2013).

The core of the discipline shifted in the mid-1990s into debates on the restructuring of the welfare state and the historical institutional approach gained ascendancy (Hall, 1993; Pierson, 1996). While inequalities, political claims, and the architecture of governance are central to this approach, there has been little systematic engagement with multiple social relations of power especially in relation to processes of racialisation, racism, or postcolonial governance. The idea of 'new social risks' spun off from this (Taylor-Gooby, 2004; Bonoli, 2007) and together with post-Fordist political economy approaches there was a focus on the restructuring of a complex re-settlement involving

retrenchment, expansion and transformation of welfare and capitalism (Jessop, 1994). This recognised new vulnerable groups at risk of precarity which included single parents and migrants. But the concept was remiss in failing to engage with historic racism or the growing racialisation of national borders (Walker and Wong, 2013; Williams, 2021). The assumption that the precariat represents a novel phenomenon ignores the political and economic conditions under which the black population lived long before the advent of neoliberalism (Hill II, 2017).

There are three issues here that appear to preclude an understanding of the bigger picture of race: a narrow structuralist understanding of capitalism, neo-liberalism, as well as a methodological nationalism. Most mainstream social policy tells the history of the British welfare state through the responses of different governments to the demands of changing capitalism, class and the labour movement, social reformers, and wars. Yet there is an important broader history which frames the history of the welfare state and labour movement within the frame of patriarchal imperialism, colonialism, and the end of Empire, and the transnational movement of colonised people.

To develop a reframing of history we can look to Virdee's (2019) understanding of how racial difference is deeply implicated in the exploitative potential of capitalism, fashioning a subaltern hierarchy which mitigates against solidarity and a shared class consciousness (see also Bhattacharyya, 2018). He documents how multiple forms of racism were constituted even before chattel slavery through the institutionalisation of a colour-coded hierarchy in law for African and English indentured labourers (see also Shilliam [2018] on the history of race and the undeserving poor). Likewise, in Bhambra and Holmwood's (2018) sociological account, colonial dispossession enshrined the racial construction of labour cementing the restriction of welfare reforms to Britain but not its colonial territories (Midgley and Piachaud, 2011). For Virdee (2019), many of these practices were subsequently upheld through racist and anti-Semitic socialist parties and workers' movements, as 'the racialized other played the role of unwitting foil against which to legitimize efforts to include the majority of the working class', sidestepping this inherent racism by being 'pristinely enveloped in

the universalist category of class' (Virdee, 2014: 21). In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century 'social imperialism' was the principal settlement supported by political parties and trade union leaders in the development of early welfare reforms (Semmel, 1960; Williams, 1989). This aimed to subordinate class and gender interests to those of the white British nation and Empire. It did so by representing social reforms as the fruits of imperialism, which in their turn required national efficiency and healthy workers, mothers and children. The post-war welfare was as much about the end of Empire ('the civilising mission brought home' – Williams, 1989) as it was about reconstruction. It was a postcolonial welfare state built in part by the labour from those colonies.

When it comes to the global rise of neoliberalism the focus in Social Policy has been on not only on an unspecific precarity (as noted above) but on deracialised analyses of privatisation, fiscalisation, and managerialism. Yet, as Goldberg (2009: 176) argues, the exalting of private corporate profit and processes of responsibilisation can serve to protect white privilege at the same time that the liberal state has, formally at least, defended equality claims for minority ethnic groups. In practice racisms are privatised as the state governs at a distance, withholding scrutiny of how welfare operates for those in vulnerable minority ethnic groups. Racial configurations are obscured in the private realm in which neoliberalism is operationalised. For Bhambra and Holmwood (2018), such neoliberal restrictions on welfare, for both white and 'non-white' citizens, are better understood as a continuation of the historical limiting of political and social rights to colonial subjects in favour of the metropole (see also Mayblin, 2017). For Williams (2021), the dramatic dovetailing of immigration and domestic racialising policies has provided governments with a template for withdrawing rights to all marginalised groups in the name of austerity. Racial neo-liberalism's contradictions between the demand for mobile labour and state tightening of border controls, have created a widening of social, economic and geopolitcal inequalities and forms of incarceration which disproportionately affect minority ethnic groups, migrants, refugees and indigenous people.

Transforming the narrow deracialised class logic of Social Policy's core theories requires an acknowledgement of the multi-ethnic composition of the working class in the UK (Virdee, 2014) and

of left parties' and trades union deficiencies in responding to racism and discrimination in electoral politics and workplaces (Virdee, 2000; Ouali and Jefferys, 2015; Wrench, 2015; Chakrabarti, 2016; Bassel and Emejulu, 2018; Ashe *et al.,* 2019). With some important exceptions the unpacking of the recent fiction of the 'white working class' counterposed with the 'immigrant/migrant' (Virdee, 2017; Meyerson, 2020) - has not been central to accounts of the effects of neoliberal welfare since the financial crisis. This splintering and the increasing appeal of far-right political parties must also be accounted for, not only in relation to public attitudes towards redistribution but also the capacity of political rhetoric to appeal to and link ethnocentric nationalism to 'our' welfare state and the sense of loss that Gilroy (2005) calls 'postcolonial melancholia' (Clarke, 2019; Williams, 2021).

Elaborating the racialisation of the polity and the consistent mobility of colonialist-informed policies and practices to postcolonial contexts also involves referencing that work done on the historical forces of antisemitism, anti-Irish policies and practices, Islamophobia and anti-Gypsyism before and after the European Enlightenment in its consideration of historical institutional perspectives (Hickman, 1995; Kushner and Valman, 2004; Mayall, 2004; Meer, 2013; Humphris, 2019). And in what Goldberg (2009) refers to as the 'deafening silence' around Europe's colonial legacy, there has been an obscuring of even how the Holocaust was operationalised using colonial tactics of governing through the prism of racial hygiene, discipline, surveillance, and violence, facilitated through emergency legislative powers. European countries' turn to invisibilising race (Craig, 2012) after the Holocaust has conveniently masked ongoing racial ordering, keeping concealed the dynamism and dynamics of racism.

In a similar vein, the development of European Union social policy is often understood in Social Policy as the piecemeal outcome of a cosmopolitan collectivity of nation-states committed to peace and economic prosperity. However, it is also a collection of former major colonial powers. The European Union was formed as decolonisation was taking or had just taken place, and the making of subsequent multicultural and postcolonial citizenships was wrought through racial and gendered relations of power,. This was not only externally in relation to previously colonised people but also

internally with respect to Roma and indigenous peoples (Ponzanesi and Blaagaard, 2012), and more recently with some Eastern European states (Mylinkska, 2019; see also Clark *et al.,* this themed section).

Finally, some of the limitations to seeing the bigger picture of geopolitcal relations of racial dominance also lie in a characteristic of much national and comparative Social Policy - its methodological nationalism. Identifying the individual nation as the frame for policy-making rather than understanding the place of that nation, its nation-building and nationality construction in terms of the histories of colonisation and settlement, is common practice.

Organisational Dynamics

The institutional structure of a discipline provides the constraints and opportunities that affect what becomes legitimised as appropriate knowledge. It is in these settings that the possibilities of race scholarship are determined (Emirbayer and Desmond, 2012). This will depend on, not only habits of thought within a discipline, but also on their rituals of consecration (Emirbayer and Desmond 2015: 39). For DaCosta (2012) one such ritual is the tenure and promotion system which incentivises scholars to pursue certain avenues and to steer clear of others. In the desire to gain economic stability and professional prestige, scholars must produce work that will be highly valued by their evaluators: the problematics, concepts and theorising that evaluators find most original and compelling. This rather inevitably means there may be little scope for research endeavours concerned with race as this is, as we have seen, not a core interest in the mainstream of the discipline (Craig *et al.,* 2019). There is a further dimension to this, as DaCosta (2012: 629) has observed, whereby '[p]erforming the hidden social work required to cultivate advocates, find mentors and learn the tricks of the trade, is more easily accomplished when one shares important social characteristics with those potential advocates and mentors'.

There has also been a different tendency encouraged by the demands of managerialisation of universities, promotion opportunities, and the REF, for greater specialisation. While those

researching race might find themselves separated and marginalised from the core of Social Policy and therefore ploughing their own furrow, this can become compounded by the demand to stay in their specialism. Related to this is Social Policy's own relationship with other disciplines. Being an eclectic and relatively porous discipline would seem to give it an advantage in 'admitting' other approaches to its field. The example of feminism suggests that Social Policy has been more open to reconstruction than many older, more boundaried white male-dominated disciplines such as economics or political science. However, this has only been limited so far. Core social policy theories take on gender in a relatively circumscribed way – the relationship of gender to the labour market being more prominent than social care, for example. Similarly, where race is admitted, as noted above, it stays within the confines of statistical inequalities rather than a wider explanation for those inequalities. It is also the case that the core theories have been more likely to emerge from other disciplines, particularly political science and economics, and these are less likely than Social Policy to entertain new critical approaches around race, in contrast to sociology and anthropology. However, Social Policy is not alone in its failure to decolonise its knowledge. Criminology, development studies, economics, migration studies, political science, and sociology have all now produced reports similar to Craig *et al.'*s (2019) (Hesse, 2014; Bhambra, 2015; Erel *et al.*, 2016; McClain *et al.,* 2016; CSMGEP, 2019; Pailey, 2020; Phillips *et al.,* 2020).

Disciplining and wakening from the post-racial to the future of Social Policy

This article has addressed why race is the missing dimension in Social Policy teaching and learning, locating absence and neglect at the heart of the discipline. Emirbayer and Desmond's (2012; 2015) disciplinary reflexivity framework has enabled an exploration of the position of racial knowledge in Social Policy scholarship. It is therefore hardly surprising that Williams' (1989) mission to attract and expose students (and potential entrants to the discipline) to understandings that incorporate their perspectives as (politically) black individuals remains disappointingly unfulfilled. Tate's (2014: 80) invocation that the academy listens to 'those who experience racism's touch to make us think again

about the theoretical givens' is particularly apt. While Social Policy engages more than many disciplines with the 'real world', it remains implicitly invested in the assumption that universities represent reasoned, liberal, multicultural and cosmopolitan ideals, which rise above irrational, populist enactments of racism – despite substantial evidence to the contrary (Tate 2014; Pilkington, 2015).

'The Past Must Address its Future'[4]

Embracing the historical and contemporary role of race, racism, and nation in lived realities, institutional processes, and global racial orders will ensure that Social Policy will not be forever 'haunted and constrained by its inability to shake the colonizing whiteness that continues to colour its imagination' (Back and Tate, 2014: 124). This is when a decolonised curriculum becomes a meaningful objective. As a conclusion we point to elements in social policy research that would reconstitute knowledge and subsequently contribute to a decolonised curriculum. The first is in-depth research into race, racism, and welfare states that would contribute further work on:

- An historical reconstruction of the development of welfare states in terms of the racial/welfare temporalities within colonisation, slavery, colonialism, imperialism and postcolonialism. This would focus on the economic, geopolitcal, cultural, social and ethical relationships between these times and welfare states, nation-building and the development of racial capitalism and social reproduction, focusing on both the racialisation of different social groups and resistance to those processes. Ideas and concepts from outside the discipline should inform such work, for example, reconstructing the redistributive economics of welfare to incorporate the financing of welfare states from colonial, postcolonial and neocolonial geopolitics, or challenging 'fiscal realism' which presupposes migrants and refugees are a drain on the public purse (see Hansen, 2021 for a new approach).
- Developing a framework of the qualitative and quantitative data available and needed on race, ethnicity, religion, nationality and citizenship status, it would focus on the ethnic

inequalities among employees, service users, unpaid workers, volunteers and activists, within and across the provision of welfare, mostly obviously but not exclusively in relation to the provision of health and welfare by migrant workers.

- A racialised understanding of subjective, relational, and collective agency in relation to Social Policy. In this respect academic-activist research - in which the research agenda and development of data/ knowledge is co-produced with minority ethnic and migrant groups – is particularly important, as is a focus on the intersections across racialisation and its contestation (see below).

Secondly, is the development and critique of whiteness in relation to Social Policy in both theory and practice (Hunter, 2015; https://www.whitespaces.org.uk). This article has pointed to a number of elements of this: having a more complex understanding of the social relations of power and inequality; avoiding reductionism to a narrow understanding of class, capitalism and production; and extending an understanding of political activism beyond formal party politics. This requires holding on 'to the 'old' analytic category of class in a way that neither privileges this form of social division as the primary one, nor sidelines it as a central arena of difference and inequality' (Lewis, 2000: 2). This necessitates interrogating universal concepts and remaking them as central to social policy for their understanding of difference. In practical terms this means that both research and research-led teaching must situate race more centrally. Brief add-ons in research designs, handbooks and edited volumes and in teaching programmes, modules and lectures, simply ghettoise without that knowledge being integrated into mainstream research and teaching.

The third aspect of reconstituting Social Policy knowledge recognises that racial identities are not separate from other identities: '[r]acialisation tells us that racism is never simply racism, but always exists in complex imbrication with nation, ethnicity, class, gender and sexuality' (Rattansi, 2005: 296). We can add disability, migration and age. What is important here is to develop the methodologies, frameworks, and policy recommendations in which issues and theories of race and

racism are centralised and integrated into more general theories without losing their specificities and salience. In other words, to develop a complex and multiple understanding of what is the 'social' in Social Policy. Intersectionality combines theory and method with praxis and as such can guide analysis into transformative possibilities for social justice (Hill Collins and Bilge, 2016; Williams, 2021). This also means that struggles against racism, racialisation, and the dehumanisation of borders, policing, and securitisation call for a new understanding of 'nation' in general and the UK in particular, to centrally inform any re-imagining of welfare for the future.

We end this piece by looking inward at our ivory towers. In our places of work where we usually practice Social Policy, social policy is experienced through the lived realities of (typically racialised migrant) workers who clean our offices, classrooms and student residences. They stand alongside (often) minority ethnic security staff whose vulnerability begins long before they enter our campuses on the frontline. With a heightened risk of poorer education, housing and employment outcomes, morbidities, exposure to crime, abuses of force by police, prison and immigration officers, we now also insert being disproportionately likely to contract and die from Covid-19. These are the brute facts which fall squarely within the domain of our discipline. Stories of workers such as these have not, with few exceptions, excited the interest of Social Policy scholars. We could do worse than start re-envisioning race and Social Policy right on our own doorsteps.

Notes

1 For an incisive critique of this emptying of racism from racially disparate outcomes in favour of a monocausal class analysis see Asaria (2020) https://www.lse.ac.uk/Events/2020/07/202007011400/covid

2 We acknowledge the risk in focusing on the 'unconscious' and highlight ways in which racism also flows consciously in university settings (Tate and Page, 2018).

3 This term is often used in official documents, but it has often been fiercely rejected by many whom it is meant to represent.

4 This is borrowed from Eze's (2001).

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