Surfing the third wave of whiteness studies: reflections on Twine and Gallagher

Steve Garner

To cite this article: Steve Garner (2017) Surfing the third wave of whiteness studies: reflections on Twine and Gallagher, Ethnic and Racial Studies, 40:9, 1582-1597, DOI: 10.1080/01419870.2017.1300301

To link to this article: http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/01419870.2017.1300301

Published online: 05 Jun 2017.

Submit your article to this journal

View related articles

View Crossmark data
Surfing the third wave of whiteness studies: reflections on Twine and Gallagher

Steve Garner

Department of Criminology and Sociology, Birmingham City University, Birmingham, UK


ABSTRACT

The influential special issue and overview essay co-edited and co-authored respectively, by Winddance Twine and Charles Gallagher, set out their interpretation of whiteness studies’ genealogy, development and future. In this essay I identify their arguments and critique them in the light of a further eight years’ work on the racialization of white identities produced by the global academy. Particular attention is paid to the proliferation of micro studies about an ever-increasing array of sites, both in thematic and international terms, and to the corpus’ addressing of power relations. Moreover, I underscore Twine and Gallagher’s prescience on the strand of the work they review that bears on the racial project of recuperating white supremacy in a variety of ways, a project that is enjoying heightened visibility in 2016.

ARTICLE HISTORY

Received 29 September 2016; Accepted 10 October 2016

KEYWORDS

Whiteness; white supremacy; racialization; racism; identities; race

France Winddance Twine and Charles Gallagher’s (2008) influential overview of their special issue on whiteness sets out a genealogy of whiteness studies comprising three waves distinguished from one another by context, aims and focus. The third of these was identified as the current permutation. Eight years down the line, I revisit this statement, summarizing its key points, and raising some questions about what the statement means for our practice as scholars of “race”. Finally, I draw on particular aspects of Gallagher and Twine’s initial analysis and speculate on where studies of whiteness are heading.
The three waves

In terms of conditions of production and substantive emphasis, three subsets of work on whiteness are distinguished from one another, into the following “waves”.

The first wave comprises the historical foundations: the critique of whiteness and power developed in Du Bois’ empirical work on Philadelphia ([1899] 1970) and the archival research and analysis of Reconstruction (1935). This work sets the frame for African-American activists and scholars seeking to identify, describe and deconstruct the structures of white supremacy in the U.S.A. through the nineteenth century and into the first half of the twentieth.

The second wave covers the multidisciplinary intellectual effort invested in expatiating on Du Bois’ critique, aimed at “challenging and making white supremacy and institutional racism visible” (Twine and Gallagher 2008, 10) in the twentieth century. Historians, social scientists, cultural critics and novelists contributed to the theoretical and empirical accounts of racism that comprise this wave, which reaches its peak in the 1990s, with the blossoming of whiteness as a focus for critical legal scholars (Harris 1993; Haney Lopez 1996) and labour historians (Roediger 1991; Allen 1994). Importantly, at this point, there is an effort to produce edited collections (Frankenberg 1997; Rasmussen 2001), to reflect selectively on the corpus, and an attempt to propose a canon (Delgado and Stefancic 1997).

The provisionally entitled “third wave” postulated by Twine and Gallagher (2008, 13–15) is facilitated by the two previous ones. They argue that: “Institutional arrangements; ideological beliefs and state practices that maintain white privilege” (Twine and Gallagher 2008, 5) lie at the heart of the methodologically and geographically diverse third wave, whose central focus is to analyse “the nuanced and locally specific ways in which whiteness as a form of power is defined, deployed, performed, policed and reinvented” (Twine and Gallagher 2008, 5). A lack of attention to power relations had been a criticism levelled at the third wave, but Gallagher and Twine mount a robust defence, pointing out that a focus on power relations is a constitutive element of the third wave.

A number of interesting and potentially fruitful avenues of inquiry thus emerge, but exploration of them all is not possible here. Instead I will focus on what I see as the strengths and weaknesses of the analysis put forward (some of which are inherent in the enterprise of taking whiteness as the object of study per se rather than stemming from Gallagher and Twine’s take on it).

(Whiteness) matters arising

I have been wondering to what extent there is actually such a thing as “whiteness studies”. I pose this question not to contest Gallagher and Twine’s thesis,
but for clarification about what we are discussing. In any case, someone with the word “whiteness” in as many of their publications as I do would be treading on thin ice by pursuing this too far. Is whiteness studies a self-contained body of work, as envisaged by Delgado and Stefancic (1997), or the Australian Critical Whiteness Studies Association and its excellent e-journal, for example, or is it one strand of study within the framework of the sociology of racism, a sub-field? I do not think both can be simultaneously true, and this distinction matters. The former requires a clear rationale and is easier to critique in terms of performativity (Ahmed 2004) than the latter, while the trajectories such studies might follow are less determinable in the latter case. There were a number of criticisms of the second wave and early third wave relating to centring white people’s lives and losing sight of the impacts whiteness has on those of people of colour. It may also give the impression of locating the impetus and possibility of change within white people’s minds and actions. Indeed, an obsessive focus on white privilege, the lives and mental worlds of people racialized as white, etc., without sufficient connection to the larger social relations that these form part of is not a desirable direction of travel. Lastly, it cannot be ignored that one of the outcomes of studying whiteness as a racialized identity is that legitimacy may well end up being attributed to whiteness as a racial identity: which is of course a departure point for any number of reactionary political projects. Although most of the architects of such projects scarcely need social scientists to help them produce such ideas, it is not a comfortable position to bolster such boundary-consolidation practices, even inadvertently.

Moreover, I have never been convinced that the border between whiteness literature and racism literature in general is convincingly and consistently delineated, or even “policeable”, and that is probably how it should be. It is hard to sustain the premise that whiteness studies exists as a self-contained corpus, in which work that uses concepts and strategies developed from other studies of whiteness are distinguished from studies of racism that are in turn, de facto about whiteness. It is difficult to imagine how, whatever else they are about, classic texts such as Custer Died for Your Sins (Deloria 1969); Policing the Crisis (Hall et al. 1979); Decolonising Research (Smith 1999), for example, are not also about whiteness (if “making white supremacy visible” is the broad guideline). Yet these works are seldom incorporated into any putative whiteness studies canon. What I think we should be talking about is the sub-field: an emphasis within studies of racism in which power structures, ideologies and practices that comprise the identification of white racialized interests in a specific set of areas constitute the object of scrutiny.

Although it is not made explicit in Gallagher and Twine’s essay, the objectives of the work they identify as crucial throughout is activist oriented, aimed at deconstructing white supremacy. Engaging in this field is essentially an activist function, producing knowledge for the liberation of white people from
whiteness, so that the struggles of those not racialized as white can be better understood and delineating the mechanisms of contemporary racisms in order to contribute to the definition and production of analytical frames for antiracist struggles. Indeed, the role of the second wave in Gallagher and Twine’s terms, “making visible & challenging white supremacy”, should be the principal criterion for evaluating studies. If these studies do not add to our understanding of how racism functions (and ironically, one of those is by taking what white people say and do more seriously than people of colour), then why are we doing it? The sword of Damocles hanging over the scholar of whiteness is the question of how to wrestle its meanings into connection with other social relationships, always asking yourself, “what’s the point of this?” and remaining true to the first wave origin: make white supremacy visible.

The final point is that of definition. I have been working on the racialization of white identities on and off for thirteen years and am still incapable of providing a single slick definition of “whiteness”. There are instead, as aptly demonstrated in Gallagher and Twine’s article among many others, a series of phrases beginning “whiteness as …” for example, “a global/national set of power relationships”, “a pattern of outcomes that advantage white people vis-a-vis people of colour”, “a delusion”, “a fantasy”, “a contingent hierarchy” and “a source of terror”. As well as comprising a series of interlocking ways of analysing social relationships, whiteness is also a paradigm, in which the emphasis is precisely on some of these other fragments wherein they are assumed to exist before the analysis takes place. The case for having a different term for the paradigm and the various conclusions about what whiteness is seems undeniable.

Yet the failure to provide a coherent definition that can be identified from an artist’s impression, then bundled into a van and taken for interrogation presents simultaneously as a strength and weakness. On one hand, what serious concept in the social sciences cannot be defined, and therefore properly operationalized? Is conceptual clarity not the prerequisite of effective implementation? On the other, one outcome of pursuing the third wave studies brandishing such a provisional net of definitional elements seems so far to have been that those definitional elements become more compellingly developed, and others emerge in the process. With a more robust definition, there would be less freedom for manoeuvre, and the striking components of the “third wave” would not necessarily be possible.

Indeed the third wave is about juggling the micro and the macro; about how whiteness functions in different national scenarios, and in an array of institutional and everyday contexts. In sociology, it is primarily the result of qualitative studies privileging interview and ethnography in combination with secondary research and archives, whereas in history it is bibliographic research leaning on the existing theoretical corpus. I see the third wave as
having accumulated in size and multiplied in direction after taking off since 2008, and now covering an unprecedented variety of areas, to which we shall now turn.

Still surfing the third wave

Gallagher and Twine’s capture of the third wave adumbrates a number of strands of development. There are four interconnected strands on which I will focus here.

First, a focused interest in an ever-widening set of everyday practices that enables us to better understand how whiteness normalizes itself. Second, the “various ideological narratives” (Twine and Gallagher 2008, 9) that maintain white privilege. Third, “an interest in the cultural practices and discursive strategies of whites as they struggle to recuperate, reconstitute and restore white identities and the supremacy of whiteness in post-apartheid, post-industrial, post-Civil Rights’ societies” (Twine and Gallagher 2008, 13).

Lastly, the focus on “nuanced and locally specific ways” (Twine and Gallagher 2008, 5) that whiteness functions in different national contexts is a notable characteristic of the work on whiteness since 2008. The relevance of this nexus of topics in a moment characterized by the white nationalist projects expressed through Trumpism and BREXIT, the emergence of #blacklivesmatter and the increasing overlap of liberal and illiberal islamophobias (Mondon and Winter 2016) is even more pressing in 2017 than it was in 2008.

These four elements are clearly linked: the understanding of whiteness in which it includes socialization processes, ways of making sense of the world and the political choices therein is fed by the turnover of work on a dizzying plethora of sites in popular culture, from skiing (Travers 2011; Harrison 2013) to farmers’ markets (Alkon and McCullen 2011), soccer (Bradbury 2013; Hylton and Lawrence 2015), religion (Vassenden and Andersson 2011; Moosavi 2015; Reeve 2015), employment (McDowell 2011; Leonard 2016), education, (Montgomery 2012) and the English seaside (Burdsey 2016). The reach of recent literature encompasses sites of visual culture such as video games (Dietrich 2013), vampires in television and film (Kirkland 2013), Bollywood (Beeman and Nanjyan 2011) and others.

The proliferation of descriptions and analyses of the ways in which whiteness normalizes itself is an important development because the formal, populist political mobilizations depend on a set of longer term informal mobilizations culminating in positions that cannot be planted there solely by a short-term political campaign. This is not to argue that there is a simple causal relationship between the social relationships envisaged in vampire films and likelihood of participating in a political mobilization, for example. The metaphor is closer to a “join-the-dots” kind: the expanding corpus on engagements with popular culture fills in connections that
enable us to understand the broader picture, of which right-wing nationalist and populist political mobilization is an important but not determining element. The movement of ideas is not unilaterally from the far right into the mainstream. The dots do not always connect in a straightforward way, but the intellectual labour of connecting them is crucial to the enterprise (see below), if not, the studies are slices of attention paid to white culture in isolation.

The departure points in racialized discourse identified in the U.K. and the U.S.A. for example prior to 2015, are framed by Song’s (2014) “culture of racial equivalence” and fleshed out in qualitative fieldwork (Gallagher 2015; Garner 2015). From this we see that three items are widely understood to be true: there is now a level playing field between whites and Others; there is nothing exceptional about minorities’ experiences and racism is not a power relationship but a risk attached equally to every group. The contours of “colourblind racism” referred to by Gallagher and Twine, and followed up in post-2008 literature on “race”, provide the undergirding for such broad statements.

**Level playing fields and historical investment**

I would say that the main development in this area in the last decade is the increasingly voiced observation that even the so-called “level playing field” is no longer level, and that resources are inequitably transferred from white indigenous people toward minorities. Norton and Sommers’ (2011) survey of attitudes about discrimination demonstrate that white Americans see themselves as the losing party in the discrimination game (as discrimination against blacks diminishes, discrimination against whites increases). Moreover, elements of this “backlash” (Hewitt 2005; Hughey 2014) include a spectrum of historical revisionism, through the supposedly innocent celebration of the older racialized order (e.g. the Confederate flag, historical figures engaged in slavery and/or colonial violence seen as national and local heroes), through to the sustained denial of specifics of transatlantic slavery as oppressive.

Indeed, the “whataboutery” of discourse attached to media discussions of slavery in film, and of reparations (Garner and Jones 2015) is a dot that clearly connects to contemporary claims that white people are oppressed as white people. Slavery narratives and cases for reparations are critiqued for being forms of special pleading, as are affirmative action and any anti-discriminatory initiative. According to the critics, white people were also oppressed, their conditions were worse and colonized groups engaged in slaughter that was the equal of that perpetrated by Europeans. This counter-narrative has multiple functions. One of these is to deprecate African-diaspora claims for justice and reparations by comparing African-diaspora experiences to those
of “enslaved” whites, thus eradicating racial specifics. Hogan (2016) has traced a recurrent internet and social media meme stating that the Irish were slaves, but in the U.S.A. they have managed to overcome this without generating claims for reparations or of ongoing racism. This discourse is deployed to deny any specifics of structural disadvantage stemming from slavery, which is transformed into just another set of hurdles that other groups have also successfully negotiated, meaning that there is something deficient in African-diaspora cultures that means people cannot overcome the past. This logic had been identified as a constitutive element of “colourblind” racism in the early twenty-first century (Gallagher 2003), but the technological capability of social media and the reach of the internet enables a far broader sweep of such ideas in 2016.

In other words, studies of the ways people play sport, do other leisure activities, worship, convey information through social media, engage with popular culture, etc., track people’s identifications with whitened normalities, seeing the world as almost having a default setting. Without this default setting (of privileges accruing in different forms to differently positioned white people) being understood as “normal”, the threats to that normality cannot be understood, and the political responses to these perceived threats do not make sense. Whiteness scholars have charted the shift in this setting from complaints about the level playing field being under threat, to complaints that it has been bent irrevocably toward minorities. The changes in the relationship to the level playing field are thus manifest in restructuring of engagements with other narratives about justice, such as slavery.

What is the plural of white habitus?

Analysis of the range and variation of the white “habituses” beyond urban U.S.A. (Bonilla-Silva, Goar, and Embrick 2006) is a notable characteristic of the third wave. There has been more in depth geographical coverage of national and global whitenesses since 2008. The former Dominions of the British Empire (settler colonies) are, unsurprisingly, well covered in this expansion, especially Canada (Baldwin, Cameron, and Kobayashi 2011; Helleiner, 2012), Australia (Nielsen, Stuart, and Gorman 2014; Moreton-Robinson 2015; Stratton 2016), South Africa (West and Schmidt 2010; Andrucki 2010; Leonard, 2013), as well as welcome comparative work (Wanhalla 2009; Salter 2013). These contexts are primarily about possession of territory and the ongoing colonizing relationship between settlers and indigenous.

However whiteness as a paradigm can be described as “catching on” in Europe outside the U.K., particularly in the Nordic nations. The crisis of social welfare state is analysed by whiteness scholars as deriving from a failure to fully engage with multicultural society and its outcomes, and to
blame the incoming migrants for economic and cultural crises. This then
develops into crises of national identity (Hübinette and Lundström 2014).
The lurch to the populist, anti-immigrant right is a Pan-European experience,
but it feels different in the Nordic countries (Loftsdóttir and Jensen 2016),
from Iceland’s postcolonial seeking of a role as a bridge between developed
and developing world (Loftsdóttir 2014), through Finland’s project of
establishing itself as Western and developed, and authentically white
(Keskinen 2014). Within the Nordic world, other Nordics are seen as extended
family vis-à-vis other migrants (Guðjónsdóttir and Loftsdóttir 2016) from else-
where in Europe (van Riemsdijk 2010). Nordic nations are the site of serious
backlash politics as the populist right assumes a greater proportion of
power, and more importantly, gets to influence the debates on national iden-
tity and immigration disproportionately to their electoral standing, through
calitions.

Moreover, initial studies using Asian (Lundström 2014; Maher and Lafferty
2014; Myslinska 2014) and African case studies (Khan 2012; Pilossof 2012; Raf-
topulos 2012; Morton 2013) have multiplied. This work is located firmly
within the colonial/postcolonial tensions of social divisions and the ghosts
of their specific histories. However, these specific colonial relationships
reveal themselves at the same time as sharing West vs The Rest foundations
that implicate not only the original colonial power but white people from
other nations, and show how The Rest still plays a part in the other country’s
postcolonial view of itself (Loftsdóttir 2014). So without wanting to get
trapped in methodological nationalism, I think these studies based in Asia,
Africa and Latin America display plenty of symmetries and overlaps alongside
the distinctiveness which is to be expected.

Recuperating white supremacy

For me, Gallagher and Twine’s identification of white attempts to recuperate
supremacy as a major locus of the interest of whiteness studies is their flag-
ship finding. Here, they were right on the money. The results of projects
that have culminated in populist racist and colonialist expressions of resist-
ce to what is understood by many as unfair shifting of the playing field
toward minorities (e.g. Trumpism and the BREXIT campaign in the U.K. refer-
endum) have been evident in different studies (including my own), in the last
ten to fifteen years. More importantly, the broad bases upon which any such
political collusions could be developed had to pre-exist the temporally narrow
experience of Donald Trump’s presidential campaign (2015–16) or the U.K.
“Leave” campaign (2016). This recent period has witnessed the formal
linking to political projects that absorb the mainstream (not just far-right
nationalists); and where the middle classes play significant roles (as I have
long argued). So without trying to pretend this was all predicted, it could
be argued that the constants were in play that would allow them to be galvanized into political projects by local circumstances.

It is worth reiterating that a major development since 2008 is the mainstreaming of white supremacy: by this I mean that assumptions, ideas and thus positions linked previously to the far right are now considered to fall within the boundaries of mainstream discussion. This process did not begin and end in recent years, with Trump and Farage (or Marine Le Pen, Pauline Hanson or the True Finns, *inter alia*). Indeed it can be traced back to the immediate post-war period in the U.K. (Fryer 1984; Gilroy 1987), for example, but in terms of formal political channels, such strident assertions of the incompatibility of immigrant cultures with British and American culture, of the threats to the nation posed by Islam, and the economy and by immigrant workers (regardless of the boring statistics suggesting otherwise) are a feature worth noting because they represent the return to the agenda of what can be voiced. It is worth noting that this voicing of racist claims is frequently accompanied by the claim that such ideas are not allowed to be expressed. The realization that whiteness no longer equals unchallenged privilege has enabled a variety of responses, many of which are picked up in the multiple studies using whiteness as a paradigm.

We are left with the social fact that although it is empirically demonstrable that materially conditions for people of colour both in Europe and North America are worse than those for whites (as an average), and that this is a trend, a considerable minority of white people are convinced that this is not the case, and that the trend is actually going in the opposite direction: hence their support for projects that seem to offer mechanisms or at the very least aspirations toward turning back the clock to a time when whiteness worked more effectively as a magic cloak of privilege.

### Conclusions, challenges, directions: the third wave unfurling

Gallagher and Twine charted the third wave at a relatively early stage. Although the first two waves were U.S.-based – if not completely U.S.-centric – the third has unfurled more equally across the globe. In this third wave, a lack of definitional clarity around the key concept is counter-balanced by the shared understandings of whiteness as a form of power structure, rather than purely one of bodies and individuals. I think the delicate balance of micro and macro, and between structure and agency is now evident in most empirical studies, and that the vast majority of the work does not simplify but does justice, or at least seeks to do justice to, the subject matter in all its complexity. The charting of the trends feeding into the important and intensifying backlash politics of 2008–16 (against Obama, the European Union, political correctness, immigration, etc.) is a major strength of the work, as is the increasingly visible connectedness of
the proliferation of national sites where research takes place, through a loose project of postcolonial domination. “Postcolonial” in terms of whiteness can also link polities and histories derived from more complicated engagements with the formal colonial system, such as the various Nordic nations and Ireland, to the broader contemporary projects of white supremacy. So far, so good. But how can those of us producing scholarship at various points within a critical whiteness paradigm make it better still, and what might the limits of this paradigm be?

Writing on whiteness has always covered a wide terrain, with empirical studies of white people’s activities, attitudes and interactions, at one end of the spectrum, and critical analyses of secondary sources at the other. While I think critiques suggesting that whiteness paradigm does not make strong enough distinctions between the various groups identified as white are at this stage, mainly evidence that the particular critic has not read enough of the published fieldwork, but there are still blind spots around class and gender. There are some more attempts to engage with white middleclass-ness but the balance of studies still leans toward a focus on the working classes and men. If there is space to be nuanced it lies here, in the potential to map more clearly the intersectional complexities of social relationships without losing sight of the two operational racialized “borders”; the one separating “whites” from people not racialized as white; and the plethora of internal localized social hierarchies in formation between those notionally categorized as white. The latter are fascinating, but only make sense because of the former.

Whatever else it is, whiteness is relational and to do with power relations. This relentless incompleteness is paradoxically the very core of whiteness. Whiteness as power is perpetually struggling for better purchase in the social relations in which it is embedded. One of the key elements of the second wave for example is the labour historians’ emphasis on processes of becoming white among the nineteenth and early twentieth-century European migrants in the U.S.A. (Roediger 1991). This hierarchy-in-progress implicating those nominally racialized as white emerges in many places at many times, and the sobering attacks on Eastern Europeans in the U.K. in the wake of the June 2016 BREXIT vote show that this exclusionary vision is core to real social relationships.5

The reiterated claims of losing ground, a riff traceable to at least the 1870s (Lake and Reynolds 2008), now mark the recognition of existing privilege rather than its diminution: the goal of making white supremacy more visible has at some level been achieved.

So what is the point of critical whiteness studies? It is not a question readily resolved. Power relations in explorations of whiteness that embrace only people racialized as white are often implicit and easy to neglect, generating
the risk that the questions of what do we do with our knowledge remain unsatisfactorily answered.

If a transformative practice is to emerge it will have to keep the need to critique power relationships foremost, and find spaces into which it can feed, generate discussion and be useful in some way to movements and action aimed at contesting racialized inequalities, from #blacklivesmatter to #whyismycurriculumwhite, through #rhodesmustfall to the Dakota pipeline protest, inter alia.

Currently, I am not convinced that this is possible in any sustained way. First, within the academy, there is not enough transdisciplinary learning and dissemination per se. The subject-specific siloes generated by academic practice dominate. Even the sociology of education and the sociology of racism do not use the same range of references on whiteness. Moreover, it is difficult to generate spaces in which to formally engage academics and activists (not that these two groups are always mutually exclusive). The onus is on academics to do so, to make a convincing case that what they do is worth engaging with.

As Gallagher and Twine suggest, the trend toward whiteness being used as a paradigm in relation to an ever-increasing variety of national contexts, and on an ever-increasing variety of activities and areas of social life will continue. Gallagher and Twine cite Duster (2001, 114) who lists “simple police-event-free driving” (emphasis in the original) among the areas that come “unreflectively with the territory of being white”. The grisly list of names of people whose driving was not police-event free grows much faster than the academic publishing cycle turns round. One of the reasons pushing us to examine the social world through the critical whiteness prism is the fact that Alfred Olango (28 September 2016) is unlikely to be the last African-American killed by police in relation while driving, even in 2016. By the time you read this, there will have been more deaths.

The bludgeoning realities of extrajudicial state executions in the U.S.A. indicate the challenge and limit of this whiteness paradigm. Whiteness centres the mismatch of white and black readings of the social world that lie so far from the aforementioned bludgeoning realities: it draws attention to the entitlement of police officers to differentially police the public; it allows the impunity with which killings are carried out to be analysed; and emphasizes the power to normalize such events and find the victim deserving of the outcome, regardless of his/her actual behaviour. Whiteness is the conditioning that enables such conclusions to be arrived at, and such actions to flourish in the relative absence of danger for white people in the same circumstances. Indeed, the scholarship is in a way testimony to the power of its subject matter to reinvent and consolidate itself: all of these elements could be recognized through the first and second waves. At the moment the third wave is still full of potential energy, enabling resistance, chipping away at the cloak of invisibility beneath which whiteness is enacted, and this is the point that the project has so far reached: at once its limit and its achievement.
Notes

1. I do understand the various rationales for the focus on whiteness as a distinct subject matter around which an activist/academic project can be organized. The Australian Critical Race and Whiteness Studies Association (ACRAWSA) for example, focuses on indigenous political struggles and theorizes whiteness as the dominant structure:

   “Whiteness” is mentioned specifically in order to challenge the common perception that “race” is only a problem for people who do not qualify as white. This perception is common because whiteness often goes unmarked, being presented as the “norm” against which other categories are defined as different. This often produces assimilatory policies in which not being white is seen as a “problem” that needs to be fixed by encouraging non-white people to become more like white people. http://www.acrawsa.org.au/about/

2. Most contributors to the Souls special issue (4 (4), 2011) conclude that whiteness is not a particularly fruitful project.
3. Critics of the whiteness paradigm are paradoxically more interested in this. Although I could not agree less with Niemonen’s (2010) assumptions about the positioning of scholars of whiteness vis-a-vis their objects of study, he at least attempts to systematically identify a corpus.
4. Google Scholar searches turn up reviews, and thus inflate numbers. Moreover, “whiteness” is also a term used natural science disciplines to describe colours, so this statement is very approximate: more studies published per year contain “whiteness” “anywhere in the article” every year, although the number with whiteness “in the title” peaked in the 2008–12 period. There were also special issues; English in Africa 37 (1) 2010 – “Whiteness Studies: A South African Perspective”; Social Identities (Whiteness in the Nordic Nations, 2014); Ethnicities, September 2010; Ethnicities 10(3) (UK, race, class and nation, 2012). There is also a new journal, Whiteness and Education (Taylor and Francis) first published in 2016.
5. Polish national Arkadiusz Jóźwik was beaten to death in Harlow (S.E England) in September 2016. Other less serious physical and verbal attacks on Eastern European migrants had occurred since the end of June.
6. My previous draft, from 27 September, had the name “Keith Scott” here.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

References


