Towards a Critical Race Criminology: Decolonising Criminological Practice

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Abstract

This article presents a rationale and strategy for bringing urgent attention to 'minority', 'excluded', and 'marginalised' perspectives within contemporary mainstream criminology. AQ1 Russell (2022) has previously called for the development of 'Black criminology', whilst Phillips and Bowling (2003) further argued that there is a need to develop 'minority perspectives' within in mainstream criminology. In allyship with these traditions, this article applies a Critical Race Theory lens to provide a rationale for a new criminological perspective presented here as Critical Race Criminology (CRC). CRC is applied here to demonstrate the necessity for centring on 'race and the racialization of crime' within the discipline of Criminology specifically, and within a global context more widely. It further calls for the development and articulation of a 'counter narrative' around race and crime within the discipline of criminology itself. Achieving this requires transcending the binary of the Global North–South divide, moving towards a unifying 'Critical Race Criminology' (CRC).

Introducing Critical Race Criminology (CRC)

There has been an array of literature focussed on contextualising race and the racialization crime within the discipline of criminology in recent years. Whilst this is important for discussions around matters of race and criminal justice in the field, we contend that against this backdrop, there is further scope to hold the discipline of criminology to account in ways which gives voice to racialised minority groups who have been largely excluded in mainstream criminological perspectives. This exclusion has invariably contributed to the ways in which racialised narratives are constructed within the dominant discourses which have characterised mainstream criminology, especially in the global north, and in particular in white majority societies with colonial histories. As this article progresses, we set out a rationale for CRC, in doing so setting out its relationality to existing bodies of work on black criminology, criminologies of the global south and also Critical Race Theory itself. There is an important question to ask here, in exactly *how* a CRC would hold 'mainstream criminology' accountable? The answer to this question lies in the application of the *apparatus* of Critical Race Theory (CRT) as a toolkit for providing a critical lens through which the discipline of criminology can be evaluated with regard to *how* it engages with narratives and discourses around race and criminal justice. It is important for us to outline here the CRT 'apparatus' which a CRC would employ. The central tenets of CRT can be identified primarily as:

The notion of racism as 'normal' in societies which have a history of European colonialism— this notion was perhaps most succinctly set out by Delgado and Stefancic (2000) in describing the state of race relations in the USA, who argued that that racism is 'normal and not aberrant in American society' (Delgado and Stefancic, 2000 : xvi). Whilst what might be considered explicit forms of racism may be contested in contemporary American society, Delgado and Stefancic, argue there are many more 'business as usual' (Delgado and Stefancic, 2001: xvi) types of racism which occur in unseen ways and yet permeate individuals' lives. From a CRT perspective, it is these more intangible and subtle forms of racism which constitute a far more substantive and persistent problem for race relations in contemporary society.

Whiteness as a set of power relations and its relationality to white identities/white individuals—The distinction between whiteness and white individuals has been articulated in frequently cited works such as Leonardo (2002). Leonardo outlines that 'whilst whiteness represents a racial discourse, the category of white people represents a socially constructed identity usually based on skin colour' (Leonardo 2002: 31). The distinction between whiteness as a racial discourse and white individuals allows us to explore the nuances of individuals' relationality to whiteness, and the various ways in which dynamics of identity intersect in ways which inform race marginalisation/race privilege.

Interest convergence and interest divergence—the interests of racialised minority groups are advocated or advanced only relative to a convergence in interests that includes gains for white groups. This is fundamentally bound up with questions about what constitutes 'neutral principles' (Bell 1980: 518) in decision making around policy. Interest convergence has evolved and implemented as an effective strategy for explaining why seemingly expansive policy and strategy around 'race' inequality still inevitably results in sustained inequity in terms of outcomes (see Gillborn 2008).

Tacit intentionality—Trends in racial disadvantage and inequities are the product of a tacit intentionality enacted by white powerholders and policymakers (Gillborn 2005). This intentionality is not obvious when viewing the social world from the perspective of master narratives around race, and consequently, this tacit quality allows racialised inequalities to be constructed and reconstructed without detection.

Counter-storytelling—counter-storytelling is a methodological tool for gaining access to and documenting experiences of racism. The rationale behind counter-storytelling is to give voice to those who experience tacit processes of racism (Breen 2018: 20). One important point to maintain here is that the purpose of counter-storytelling is rooted in informing more widely constructed counter narratives directed at challenging public or master narratives within which tacit processes of racism are largely absent (Breen 2018: 20).

Master narratives and counter narratives—The epistemological purpose of counter narratives is enmeshed with the convictions which underly CRT, with their purpose being to capture experiences which hold the presumed order of control manifested in the master narratives which inform dominant understandings around race and racialised marginalisation to account

(Stanley 2007: 14). Within this process, counter narratives can be drawn upon to undo the dominant discourses manifested in master narratives (Stanley 2007: 14).

Throughout the remainder of this article we propose that CRC move beyond the confines of mainstream criminology by drawing upon the apparatus of CRT above to generate counter narratives around race and criminal justice which draw attention to matters of race where they are over-looked in the wider mainstream criminological canon.

From Critical Race Theory to Critical Race Criminology

There is an important distinction to draw for the purpose of this article, in that CRC does not simply describe the application of CRT in criminological scholarship. Rather, CRC is a lens that it can be applied to hold mainstream criminology accountable, rather than a label for race-focussed subject matter. Whilst this distinction is important, there is an inevitable relationality between CRT as a theoretical perspective and CRC as the practice of applying its apparatus in confronting and reconstituting discussions on race within criminological scholarship. This process can be used to generate a movement of contemporary perspectives, ideas, and thinking in relation to race and the racialization of crime located within a wider global context. Within this application, a CRC would also draw attention to matters of reflexivity with regard to scholars, their own experiences and their relationality to whiteness through autoethnographic counter-storytelling as we have seen in applications of CRT elsewhere (see Ladson Billings 1998). Young and Sulton (1991) argue that many criminologists of colour have been historically excluded from the discipline of criminology, and express the view that privileged White criminologists must be more willing to broaden the scope of criminological inquiry by including diverse voices in the field of criminology as a whole. W.E.B. Du Bois, one of the earliest African Americans to write on crime causation, is arguably the most significant example, and many have advocated for his recognition in canonical criminological thought (see Gabbidon 1996). Serrant-Green (2010) takes this point further, arguing that the historical and political domination of research from a White privileged position not only influences the interpretation of research, but the type of research projects that get conducted and funded.

Drawing on our apparatus above, these can all be understood as examples of tacit intentionality, whereby the power to construct narratives around race and crime is maintained within white academic spaces and presented under the guise of race-neutral scholarship.

To elaborate on the anchor points we set out above:

- **CRC** is a *lens* through which to hold the *discipline* of criminology to account through enabling subordinated criminological perspectives to narrate and interpret events in opposition to dominant criminological narratives, whilst at the same time recognising the complexity of race, racialization, colour blindness, white privilege, and implicit bias around crime/criminal justice systems within the discipline of criminology;
- **CRC** is as concerned with pedagogic practice and the dissemination and production of knowledge and as such advocates a Critical Whiteness Pedagogy;
- **CRC** operates with Critical Race Theory's two distinct storytelling paradigms. 'Majoritarian stories' (the basis of master narratives) told by privileged criminologists, and 'counter-stories' (the basis of counter narratives) told by subordinated and racially marginalised criminologists. CRC intends to respond to majoritarian stories and the master narratives that they subsequently collectively inform, by critically evaluating how they reproduce claims in relation to race;
- **CRC** further envisions a bridging of the 'global north–south' divide within the discipline of mainstream criminology itself. The global north–south divide is a socio-economic and political divide which includes (global north) the United States, Canada, Western Europe, developed parts of Asia, Australia and New Zealand, who share similar economic and cultural characteristics. Whilst the global south on the other hand is made up of Africa, Latin America, and developing Asia including the Middle East. The stories and narratives of the global south, a space within which significant proportions of the global majority reside, are at present vastly under-represented in the wider canon of mainstream criminology.

The reasoning behind these assertions is rooted in the understanding that there is a privileging of particular criminological perspectives and debates on race and the racialization of crime

and criminal justice systems. As we will discuss later on, mainstream criminology is dominated by white voices, whilst others are excluded, seldom heard, seen, or referred to. We have already discussed CRC as a lens through which to hold the discipline to account, and the remainder of the article will consider implications for pedagogic practice, counter storytelling and counter narratives, and bridging the global North-South divide in turn.

Race and Differential Racialisation within a Critical Race Criminology

Tensions around discussing race in public political debates have perhaps been brought into focus in the context of the UK, around the designation of the term or 'BAME' (black and Asian Minority Ethnic groups) in discussions around racial disparities (see Aspinall 2021; Campbell-Stephens 2020). The problematics around this term have been widely discussed, and there is little merit in fully replicating those arguments here. However, it is worth noting that the power dynamic around imposing a term like BAME emphasises 'minority', and therefore further reinforces notions of disempowerment and marginalisation. More useful terms have emerged in academic discourse in recent years but have faced resistance in terms of their inclusion in canonical terminology in the social sciences. In particular, the term 'Global Majority', a term arising in the work of Rosemary Campbell-Stevens, does much to invert the power relations implicit within BAME. In contrast to BAME, the term emphasises global critical mass for individuals who identify as black, African, Asian, brown, dual heritage, indigenous to the global south, and or, have been racialised as 'ethnic minorities' (Campbell-Stephens 2020) in white majority societies. Globally, these groups represent approximately 80% of the world's population (Campbell-Stephens 2020), and so framing issues around race within this wider lens provides a convincing rationale for applying a similar shift in perspectives on race marginalisation in the field of criminology.

In line with this position, the article aims to present a shift in direction which sees a new centrality around race in criminological scholarship informed by a wider acknowledgement in the theoretical canon of the global critical mass of groups racialised as 'minority ethnic'. This is presented as a strategy for equipping criminology as a discipline with the resources required

to effectively comment on issues around race in an increasingly globalised world. The necessity for this is apparent, with issues such as racial disproportionality and mass incarceration (Deckert 2023), racial profiling (Glover 2007), policing and black community relations (Johnson 2004), the rise of the far right (Winlow et al 2017), racialization through media (Bhatia et al 2018), and mobilisations of the Black Lives Matter movement taking place across the world (Francis & Wright-Rigueur 2021). It is important for us to identify several distinctions, in the process including those between CRC, CRT and 'black criminology'. These distinctions will be further unpacked, but we first need to consider how race itself figures in the context of a CRC. There have been numerous works on the usefulness of the terms 'ethnicity' and 'race' in social science scholarship, and the replication of this work here would do more to limit the time we can give to our rationale for a CRC. In line with Miles & Torres (1996), we do not use race as a concept itself, rather we capture its use in everyday life by referring to the idea of race (Miles & Torres 1996: 70).

We do need to acknowledge that there have been critical concerns about the notion of race advancing binary white/non-white frameworks, which falsely homogenise the experiences of non-white groups (Kim 2004: 339). However, we contend here that the concept of differential racialisation, central to CRT, allows for race to be used meaningfully whilst explaining the nuances of racialised social locatedness and racist experience. As argued by Miles (2014), not all instances of social relations between individuals identified as being of a particular racial identity are followed by the mutual reproduction of the signification in practice (Miles 2014: 9). For Delgado & Stefancic (2001), differential racialisation refers to systems, institutions, and individuals with the social power to inscribe different racial meanings on groups of people to fulfil social, economic, or cultural needs, at different points in history (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). Within this socio-historic context, discourses, images, and representations of racial groups create relative positions of privilege, which further reinforce racial hierarchies (Quiros et al. 2020: 170).

Such differential racialization processes have generated a complex structure of multiple group positions in society (Kim 2004: 338), with intersecting systems and institutions producing

disparities via racial-based laws, practices, and outcomes based on inequitable social power differentials (Quiros et al. 2020: 165). It is through these mechanisms that individuals experience racialisation differentially due to the varying intersecting dynamics of identity which collude with race to inform individuals' social locatedness. Within this position, differential racialization calls attention to the way white majority societies racialize different groups, in different ways, in different times, in relation to structures such as the criminal justice system. Applying differential racialization within the discipline of criminology allows for addressing how the discipline structures and constructs its insights and understandings of race and racialization in relation to crime and criminal justice.

Mainstream Criminology, Whiteness, and the Colonial Project

Efforts have been made previously to develop a Critical Race Criminology by Glover (2009); however, its application within the discipline of criminology has been extremely limited. For Glover, a significant part of the rationale behind a Critical Race Criminology lies in pushing back against the 'white logic' and 'white methods orientation' of 'mainstream criminology' (Glover 2009: 4). This white logic orientation sees mainstream criminology enacting a racial project which can be exposed through utilising a Critical Race approach (Glover 2009: 6). The implications of this orientation within mainstream criminology are bound up with the production of knowledge around race and criminal justice within the discipline. This orientation has also been acknowledged elsewhere by scholars such as Agozino (2004), Bempah-Owusu & Gabbidon (2020), Murhula & Chivasa (2020), Dastile & Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2020), Henson et al (2023) and many others, who have drawn attention to criminology itself as a colonial project. Within this understanding, much of the foundation for criminology as a discipline is bound up with what colonial powers viewed as "the civilizing mission" of coloniality (Murhula & Chivasa 2020: 61). The process of colonial rule has been set out in Bempah-Owusu & Gabbidon's (2020) 'colonial model', which sees the invasion of one racial group (typically whites) into the country of another who take control of the majority population—typically people of colour (Bempah-Owusu & Gabbidon's (2020: 15). Within these contexts, resistance in the eyes of colonialists amounts to "offending against" the

system, with institutions of incarceration emerging as part of the consolidation of conquest and domination over the colonised (Dastile and Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2020: 8).

The legacies of these histories play out in what we have seen historically both under colonialism and in post-colonial countries where indigenous peoples have historically, and continue to be, vastly over-represented in criminal justice systems along with other racial minorities (Bempah-Owusu & Gabbidon's (2020: 14). The perpetuation of these legacies are manifested in practices in criminal justice which include the use of agnostic language which ignores crime as a construct of social control (Henson et al 2023: 18). Within this position, it is critical to challenge what is criminal and why, with consideration of how individuals with power and privilege shape definitions of crime and criminality (Henson et al 2023: 27). Concurrently, we have seen the emergence of criminology as a discipline focussed on understanding observations of how these racialised processes play out, but doing so through drawing on underdeveloped theories absent of this context (Henson et al 2023: 18). In reality, what we measure as criminal legal system outcomes are experiences with racism on an individual, community, and systemic levels. However, mainstream criminological research falls short of recognising this, and in doing so constructs and perpetuates racist narratives through blind acceptance of the definitions of crime without consideration of race and racism (Henson et al 2023: 28).

From this perspective, colonialism itself should be considered an antecedent factor in many of the social problems racialised minority groups face (Bempah-Owusu & Gabbidon (2020: 20), with many of these problems being criminalised even in spite of the malleability of the law (Henson et al 2023: 18). It is the legacies of histories of coloniality that invariably explain the innate whiteness that characterises mainstream criminology as a discipline. This is played out through selective 'facts' about race and crime, such as presenting high incarceration rates of African Americans as a proxy for offending rates without examining wider explanations (Phillips 2023: 449). Mainstream criminological scholarship has largely omitted critical enquiry into issues such as racialised mass incarceration, and this invariably perpetuates 'colour-blind' narratives of criminal justice and undermines decolonisation efforts in the discipline (Deckert

2023: 481). Furthermore, research which focuses on crime rates or incarceration rates without situating race as ‘a complex place-specific lived experience born out of white supremacy' solely serves to reinforce racial stereotypes that perpetuate the criminalization of racialized groups, even without the presence of criminal behaviour (Henson et al 2023: 18). A practical example of this would be the way that joint enterprise law has worked in the UK, whereby it is possible for individuals to be prosecuted for a crime committed by someone else if it can be proven that they intended to assist or encourage the actual offender (Young et al 2020: 462). Whilst research is limited on joint enterprise law, existing research indicates there is a disproportionate representation of black and South Asian men amongst those serving prison sentences who were convicted under joint enterprise (Young et al 2020: 463).

Disparities in the use of joint enterprise law along with focussing policing on street-level crime in spaces where high proportions of residents are racial and ethnic minorities (as opposed to crime in spaces characterised by affluent or middle class white groups), results in distorted crime rates which see ‘crime problems’ reframed as ‘minority crime problems’ (Bempah-Owusu & Gabbidon 2020 : 14). The reluctance to acknowledge how whiteness features in these processes has been a significant factor in facilitating the persistence of such problematic knowledge production around race in academic discourse. Where white scholars neglect to acknowledge whiteness as an intrinsic feature of mainstream criminology, they effectively de-racialize themselves (Earle 2023: 522). By positioning themselves in a state of race-less-ness, they deny the privileges incurred by their relationality to whiteness and any responsibility as stakeholders to confront it. It is through this process that whiteness is primarily rendered invisible in mainstream criminological discourse (Earle 2023: 523), where it can continue to shape narratives around race and crime undetected. This process represents a clear example of some of the more subtle and hard to detect ‘everyday forms of racism’ identified by Delgado and Stefancic (2000: xvi) impacting on the way knowledge is produced within the academy. Working to confront these more subtle racialised effects within the discipline would sit at the centre of a Critical Race Criminology (Glover 2009: 6).

On the Continuum—From Subject Matter to the Critical Race Criminology Lens

It is important for us to highlight that in advocating for a CRC we are not claiming ground which has already been covered by scholars such as Unnever et al. (2018) who call for a 'black criminology'. This work is, of course, significant in that bodies of work on black criminology and black feminist criminologies do much to draw attention to alternative narratives around race and the criminal justice system (see Choak 2020). Russell (2002) has previously called for the development of a 'black criminology', whilst Phillips and Bowling (2003) further argued that there is a need to develop 'minority perspectives' within mainstream criminology. Whilst we do not intend to replicate this work here, we do acknowledge that 'black criminology' as an academic movement has made significant contributions to subject matter on race and criminal justice. In proposing a CRC, we advocate for applying CRC as a critical lens rather than an alternative label for the subject matter which characterises much of 'black criminology'. Indeed, from CRT and CRC perspectives, these bodies of work represent counter narratives on race which are disruptive within what we have defined as 'mainstream criminology.' However, there are some important distinctions. Firstly, contributions made within black criminology are distinctive in their focus on black experiences— Critical Race Theory (CRT) has of course also historically focussed on black experiences, however in more recent years CRT has been developed and applied across a range of racialised minority groups including Hispanic, South Asian, Muslim and Asian American groups (see Solorzano & Delgado Bernal 2001 ; Housee 2012 ; Breen & Meer 2019 ; Breen 2018 ; Liu 2009).

Advocating for a CRC therefore extends beyond subject matter focusing on any one racialised minority group. Secondly, bodies of scholarship in black criminology do not necessarily or explicitly draw upon CRT as a theoretical framework or apparatus for analysis. Of course, a Critical Race Criminology would be strongly allied with existing and new work in black criminology but would be distinct in drawing directly from the apparatus of CRT as well as being dependent upon CRT as a conceptual and theoretical framework. Clearly, what we propose is of course very closely allied to pre-existing scholarship on black criminology and wider critical criminological scholarship on race. However, there is an important distinction to

draw out here, in that CRC specifically draws upon the conceptual framework provided through CRT to construct a lens through which criminology can be held to account with regard to knowledge production around race and criminality. Through focusing on the discipline in this way rather than race as subject matter within the discipline, CRC can be used as a strategy for developing counter narratives at the discipline level around the claims made around race and criminal justice in the criminological mainstream. This application is distinctive even from how CRT itself has been manifested as primarily a theory of race inequalities in the social sciences. What we propose here is intended to complement pre-existing critical criminological work on race and has a related but distinctive purpose. There is also perhaps a third important distinction between CRC and black criminology, in that whilst CRC is also concerned with generating counter narratives, ultimately CRC is focussed on communicating these kinds of alternative or counter narratives within white dominant spaces.

Whose Discipline Is It? —CRC from Scholarship to Pedagogy

The problem around race in the context of criminology as a discipline is one which exists both within and outside of knowledge production. For CRC, of equal importance to knowledge production is pedagogy within the academy. Writing as academics in a UK-based institution, our lived experience within that context invariably informs our perspective. Whilst we acknowledge that there is extensive scholarship and teaching around race and criminal justice in the academy in the US, by comparison provision in UK-based criminology is lacking in the extreme. Across the entire UK higher education sector there is only one institution offering an undergraduate black studies and criminal justice programme, and the same institution offers the first and only currently active dedicated undergraduate black studies programme. Furthermore, the vast majority of undergraduate criminology programmes in the UK lack even a single dedicated module on race and crime (Glynn 2021).

Having outlined how limited the provision around race is in contemporary undergraduate criminology programmes in the UK, we can also draw upon a much more substantive analysis provided by Greene et al (2018) on the representation of African American scholars within the

discipline and the academy in the USA. Whilst we do not have the space to replicate the detail in Greene et al.'s analysis here, their conclusions were that the representation of African American faculty members in the American academy had increased since 2002, but that this increase had been extremely minimal since 2010 (Greene et al 2018: 107). Furthermore, Greene et al. identify an extensive list of contributions to literature around issues of race and criminal justice by African American scholars but conclude that very little is known around how far these contributions have influenced criminology and criminal justice bodies of knowledge more widely (Greene et al 2018: 104).

The pedagogic implications which underpin CRC are derived directly from Critical Whiteness Studies in the form of Critical Whiteness Pedagogy, which represents a clear strategy underpinning the application of CRT to enact social change (see Matias & Mackey 2016). Critical Whiteness Pedagogy is concerned with promoting dialogue around issues of race and racism and the insights gained through Critical Race Scholarship with white publics. The space which criminologists occupy as academics can be used to confront both the discipline and Higher Education as an institution through the practice of Critical Whiteness Pedagogy as part of an all-encompassing strategy for holding knowledge production, curricular provision and pedagogic practice to account through the lens of CRC. In acknowledging the state of provision in, for example, undergraduate criminology programmes in the UK Higher Education sector, we are identifying a site within which knowledge can be contested through counter narratives at the discipline level in teaching practice. Applying CRC in this way gives criminologists a strategy for critically holding knowledge production around race in the discipline of criminology to account, whilst using the process to inform the type of criminological knowledge around race which students engage with.

Part of the CRT project has been based on the premise that 'as individuals develop morally, so will the groups with which they are socially intertwined; only then consciousness of inequalities may have the potential to arise collectively in an organised opposition' (Schneider 2004: 90). Whilst not exclusively the case, many undergraduate students in criminology and related programmes of study will invariably go on to undertake vocational roles in agencies of

criminal justice sectors such as policing. Expansion of provision around race and criminal justice in and of itself would clearly be beneficial, but expanding such provision through the kind of approach we have advocated so far would see the legacy of a CRC being carried through via the experiences of graduates as they navigate matters of race in criminal justice vocations.

CRC as a Mechanism for Constructing Criminological Counter Narratives

Retelling the history of criminology does not require altering the story criminologists have told about the origins and path of their discipline. However, what it does require is for the discipline to be open to re-contextualising a criminological history that connects itself to contemporary theoretical debates around race. Gilroy (2008) argues that the racialization of crime requires a detailed historical investigation that raises further and more speculative questions. He goes further to argue that historically 'the left' has failed to appreciate the complexities of black life and discounts the impact of structural racism within its overall class analysis (Gilroy 2008). What has historically constituted criminology as a discipline has ultimately prevented the inclusion of these kinds of stories when discussing issues around race and crime. Whilst the presence of social media provides a platform for engagement with issues around race, it also poses challenges for disciplines such as criminology which have been historically behind the curve on issues of race in established canonical scholarship. Not only does this draw attention to the need for a counter narrative within the discipline, it also draws attention to the immediacy of this need. Through the utilisation of the traditions of counter-storytelling and counter narratives in Critical Race Theory more widely, a Critical Race Criminology would create the methodological space for the legitimate inclusion of narratives around race informed through lived experiences in the new criminological canon.

As we set out above, CRC is concerned with drawing upon counter stories as a foundation for constructing counter narratives which contest the master narratives which presently dominate the mainstream criminological canon. To this end, what follows is a reflection on

the firsthand experiences of one of the authors of this article in working in the criminal justice system over several decades:

> *Indeed, my observations, connection to, and engagement with, the criminal justice system over 3 decades of working in prisons, would suggest that the current mainstream framing of race and the racialization in relation to crime as a whole is deeply flawed, inward looking, and does little for responding to the shifting patters of racial inequality within a global context. It is also my assertion that unless we comprehend how notions of the 'other' are constructed and acted upon, the discipline of mainstream criminology will merely continue to (re)produce and (re)inforce a continuing legacy of racialized dominance. Equally as important is to reconcile the contextual criminological understandings and differences that underpin the binary of the global North-South divide. Therefore, this criminological hegemony requires the development of a criminological counter narrative as a way of revising the discipline as a whole.*

Presenting a counter narrative to the master narratives that currently dominate criminological thinking will not only challenge the myth of meritocracy in the discipline, but also expose the white privilege embedded in the field in the process. By placing race and the racialization of crime at the centre of their analysis and moving away from paradigms that hold whiteness within criminology as the norm, Critical Race Criminologists must identify research agendas that incorporate collective actions taken by an inclusive cohort of 'activists scholars' committed to the struggle for academic validation, transformation, and change. This position contends that the criminological project is both incomplete and lacking unless there is a wider validation and inclusion of the contribution of excluded and marginalised non-white and progressive white scholars when looking at the racialization of crime.

Gabbidon et al (2004) understand that despite the moderate gains made to increase the inclusivity of black scholars in relation to criminology and criminal justice, more needs to be done to incorporate perspectives and theoretical ideas that deviate from those within mainstream criminology. As Fanon (1952) states:

The white man [sic] is sealed in his [sic] whiteness.

The black man [sic] in his [sic] blackness.

We shall seek to ascertain the directions of this dual narcissism.

And the motivations that inspire it (pp3).

The significance of Fanon's position is in the envisioning of CRC that requires a struggle to end the criminological hegemony that currently exists within mainstream criminology. Zinn (1959) has a word of caution for mainstream criminology's monopoly on the discipline and argues that centring on issues of race and racialization requires compliance amongst a vast number of people. When that compliance is withdrawn *en masse*, even force is inadequate in holding back the impulse for justice amongst those most marginalised (Zinn 1959). The exclusion of a diverse range of criminological theories and perspectives then can only lead to division and internal conflict amongst those who ultimately have one common aim: to ensure the understandings and insights around crime and criminal justice are strong, unified, and robust. Similarly, Barak (1991) suggests that implicit bias within criminal justice and criminology supresses the socio-historical context for making sense of the 'black experience' in relation to crime and criminal justice. In turn, Barak expresses the view that this suppression not only distorts overall perspectives on race in criminal justice but interferes with the emergence and development of a wider global conversation on crime and justice. If we return to the apparatus above, we can explain how these kinds of processes represent a tacit intentionality, whereby such omissions further isolate marginalised groups, which in turn reinforces racial stratification and polarisation. In essence, it reinforces society's classed, raced, and gendered constructs.

The need to reinvigorate discussions around the need for a race-centred 'counter narrative' within criminology becomes important here. We contend that mainstream criminology reproduces a biased account of crime and criminal justice, which does little to ameliorate racial disadvantage within the discipline itself, as well as doing little to contest racial disadvantage within criminal justice systems across the world. Mauer (2010) argues that the responsibility for alleviating racial disparities in criminal justice needs to be addressed

appropriately through both policy and practice at all levels of government, informed by effective criminological inquiry that is inclusive of a diverse range of perspectives. The Home Office (2014) has also acknowledged that the extent of racial disparity within the UK criminal justice system requires a national conversation around beliefs, insights, understandings, and perceptions on matters of race, the racialization of crime and criminal justice more widely. Despite a critical mass of research and scholarship emerging from the US, the context, orientation, and understanding of a broader 'race and racialization of crime' project within a global context is sadly lacking. For the scholar or student whose criminological interests lie within the study of the realms of race and racialization of crime there are limited options in terms in terms of courses, modular content, and even relevant texts.

Bridging the Global North–South Divide through CRC

The above raises some serious questions as to the ability for criminology as a discipline to respond to the kinds of contemporary concerns around race and criminal justice which have played out with recent global mobilisations such as the Black Lives Matter movement. These questions might include firstly: *how then does the study of race and the racialization of crime impact on the ways in which we view criminality emerging from global communities?* and secondly: *how do these impacts influence how we view crime as a whole in a global context?*

Addressing these questions requires an acknowledgement of existing racialized paradigms and the biases which exist within them. We define a paradigm as a set of assumptions, concepts, values, and practices that constitutes a way of viewing reality for a community that shares them, especially in an intellectual discipline (Gokturk 2005: 2). In short, the need to theorise by critically deconstructing racialized paradigms should serve as a rallying cry to criminologists who have grown tired of criminological theorising that ignores racialized discourses.

One way this could be achieved with a CRC would be through acknowledging the nuances in how race and crime are represented within the discipline across indigenous experiences, alongside people with histories of colonial exploitation and/or long standing diasporic migrant

settlement. For example, Nielsen and Robyn (2003) argue that colonial processes have restricted the involvement of indigenous peoples in criminal justice. They further observe that a distinctive pattern is evident in criminal justice systems which govern the lives of indigenous people—a pattern which sees them over-represented as both offenders and victims. Even in the light of this, Deckert (2023) identifies that elite mainstream criminology journals have largely neglected subject matter around the mass incarceration of indigenous people (Deckert 2023: 481). These omissions silence narratives in the discipline around Indigenous experiences in ways which do not play out for criminological enquiry around African American or Hispanic groups (Deckert 2023: 481). As we have considered so far, the ways in which matters of race are minimised, or misrepresented when discussing incarceration rates of African American or indeed Hispanic groups is highly problematic. A CRC informed counter narrative allows us to easily identify this process as a weaponisation of the racialised failings of criminal justice systems.

However, CRC also allows us to draw attention to the silencing of Indigenous experiences as a strategy for concealing the extent to which indigenous people experience racialized inequities in criminal justice. This can be demonstrated clearly, as indigenous experiences rarely feature at all in discussions of criminal justice, in spite of over-incarceration in criminal justice systems (Deckert 2023: 484). This problem is compounded through the erasure of indigenous people sometimes altogether, through the pooling of individuals into non-distinct categories such as ‘other’ (Deckert 2023: 484). Part of the function of a CRC would be to push back against such processes of silencing, both in advocating some of the larger scale kinds of research we have seen emerge with ‘QuantCrit’ in recent years (see Gillborn et al 2018), and through the CRT apparatus of counter-storytelling in qualitative research which would place indigenous voices at the centre of research scholarship.

As Agozino (2010) points out, criminology as a discipline must learn from Africa’s history in order to advance itself. Agozino’s argues forcibly that an ‘African centred criminology’ should focus less on the unravelling of the individual’s motivation towards criminality, but instead address the wider structural determinants that generate the condition from which criminality

emerges (Agozino 2010). Agozino's position can be presented as a call to arms for criminologists who feel that the histories of slavery and colonialism cannot be disconnected the ways that African peoples' have been subsequently criminalised in white majority societies. It logically follows then that in instances where criminality occurs in the lives of global majority individuals, accumulation of the systematic abuse of non-white and indigenous people could account for the kind of adaptions that lead to transgressions. It is critical to make a point of clarification here that acknowledging the relevance of the historical criminalisation of global majority people in the present for those who do transgress is not to suggest any necessary relationship between such historic experiences and inclination to transgression.

In this context, it is useful to draw upon the concept of 'prophetic research' which has emerged in critical scholarship in recent decades. In Race Matters (1993) Cornell West issued a call for prophetic black thinkers to 'turn the tide' on nihilism in black America and the wider apathy with which issues around race are met in wider society (West 1993). This prescribed 'prophetic inquiry' should be inherently inquisitive, proactive, culturally sensitive, introspective, collaborative and creative—not necessarily religious, but 'invariably radical' (Barnes et al. 2014: 2). For our purposes here, a prophetic approach studies the nuances of race and racialization within criminology, as well as expanding the discussion on crime beyond our current views and understandings. The need to understand the extent that race and the racialization of crime are impacting across all strata of criminal justice systems becomes important here. To address this issue directly we contend that there is a need to utilise CRC to produce a counter narrative to bring to account implicit biases within mainstream criminology. There is also a need to speak out against conservative criminologists who seek to stifle wider debates within the academy around the critical need for a more diverse lens when looking at race and the racialization of crime (much the same as feminist criminology has done in relation to the advancement of women within the study of criminology). It is to this end we propose a paradigm shift towards a Critical Race Criminology.

Concluding the Case for a Critical Race Criminology

Siegal and Zalman (1991) express the view that the criminal justice system aligns itself with traditional social science approaches that are not inclusive in terms of methodological rigour, thinking, or presentation. It is therefore important that CRC be utilised to push the field to undergo change, develop new ideas, and generate more rigorous and responsible knowledge production around race. This will also carry implications for a wider, real-world reframing of race in the context of criminal justice itself. For example, Browning and Cao (1992) explored how conflicting theoretical positions and biased empirical evidence shape perceptions of race and racialization in the criminal justice system. They further propose that ideologically driven assumptions regarding moral order and political arrangements can significantly affect outcomes that reproduce both privilege and oppression (see Browning and Cao 1992). In this line of thinking, Covington (1995) sees the racialization of academic criminology as a conduit used to justify increased control and criminalization of black individuals in wider society. The highly racialized nature of these 'controls' extend to encompass the criminalisation of similar persons of the global majority who are not involved in crime. This criminalization of race is important because it means that, since racial identities are constructed, they can be reconstructed to include decriminalised identities.

The reframing of criminological foci within this context sees the call for the discipline to be held to account for knowledge production around history, how criminality is framed with relation to colonial power, and even how these legacies have served in the erasure of historical narratives around colonialism. This is not to suggest that indigenous societies were necessarily a paradise of tranquillity before they were colonised, or that decolonisation would usher in a crime-free society (Agozino 2019: 6). In fact, part of the process of decolonising the discipline has taken the form of scholars from the global South publishing on issues arising from the legacies of colonialism which still impact on global majority groups living in the global South. There are bodies of criminological scholarship which focus on these issues, and one example relevant for Agozino's advocation for the reframing of history would be the legacies of colonial control which have come to inform models of policing in formerly colonised global majority societies (see Fanon 1961 ; Kasali & Odetola 2016 ; Asomah 2017). Such a reframing of how history is reformulated within the discipline of criminology would readily map onto existing

apparatus and bring more global understanding around criminological phenomena such as crimes of the powerful (see Moosavi 2019).

Therefore, Critical Race Criminology is not an end in itself, but rather a continuation of the need for the validation of diverse voices in the discipline of criminology. To this end, we see CRC as critically allied to black criminology, as scholarship on the subject matter of race from a black criminological perspective has been critical for contributing to more equitable accounts of race in the context of criminal justice. What we propose in the CRC approach is to draw upon the specific apparatus of Critical Race Theory to contextualise scholarship on race in the discipline of criminology, with an emphasis on the implications for knowledge production around race moving forward. It is not the purpose of CRC to co-opt or replicate bodies of work on black criminology, not least because (as within CRT) many CRC scholars may themselves be white, and therefore will be both unable to speak to black criminology by drawing on lived experience. However, such scholars would be able to draw on this scholarship to contextualise their own application of a CRC approach as a strategy for weaponizing their own whiteness against white interests within the discipline. Within this line of thinking, there is no CRC without black criminology, and what CRC intends to contribute does not intend to epistemically step on the toes of black criminology. Rather, it intends to operate in an allied fashion, with a focus on the evaluative implications of viewing the discipline through a CRC lens and holding it to account around knowledge production around race.

Part of this process will necessitate exploring the implications for how the reproduction of these narratives might play out in the experiences of global majority people in their relationality to criminal justice, especially within the context of the global north and in white majority societies with colonial histories. CRC is also a way of offering mainstream criminologists an opportunity to pause for reflection, and to engage in a critical dialogue more focussed on repair and progressive thinking than domination and subordination. In our view, the latter limits the overall impact of the discipline to bring about effective change for students, communities, and in turn wider society. If Critical Race Criminologists are to engage in a critical dialogue, with an epistemological shift towards acknowledging the wider global

context in our understanding of race and the racialization of crime, we must address, unify, and repair the global north–south divide. Failure to create a more equitable narrative within the discipline of mainstream criminology will simply continue to contribute to the promotion and reinforcement of the already subordinated statuses of excluded and marginalised criminological voices. CRC allows us to provide counter narratives which utilise the discipline of criminology to generate more equitable knowledge production around race and crime and empower those criminalised through racializing processes in criminal justice systems.

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