Article

Re-imagining anti-racism as a core organisational value

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Abstract

Racism and anti-racism have received widespread attention in academic debates and public discourse. Having universal features, racism manifests differently nationally and locally, and has been met with diverse anti-racism efforts. Despite historical achievements of struggles against racial oppression, racism endures, and continues to evolve and adapt, posing challenges to racial justice and equity. Parallel to this, anti-racism scholarship and action have evolved over the past decade, targeting an increasing number of arenas of everyday life. However, the place of anti-racism within organisations remains overwhelmingly peripheral and often tokenistic. This article draws attention to this and argues for re-imagining anti-racism as a core organisational value. We critically evaluate current anti-racism practices, and call for broader, holistic, committed and well-funded anti-racism approaches within organisations. We then argue why establishing anti-racism as a core organisational value may help in addressing systemic/structural racism.

JEL Classification: J15, J71, M14, Z13

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1. Introduction

Racism exists as a system of injustice that undermines and erodes individual and group wellbeing, agency and power by creating and exploiting divisions within society (Binkley, 2016). It also exists as a system of inequity among groups and is sustained through the assignment of privileges/oppression based on socially constructed racial identities (Paradies, 2016). As an everyday, lived reality, racism manifests across various settings and domains, and bears its harmful effects across the life course (Gee et al., 2019).

Research indicates that the multi-dimensionality and varied forms of racism require an equally complex set of responses, with anti-racism efforts that could effectively address its manifestations (i.e. structurally, institutionally, interpersonally and as internalised) and cross-temporalities (i.e. contemporarily, intergenerationally and cumulatively) (Griffith et al., 2007; Came and Griffith, 2018; Jones, 2000). At the organisational level, anti-racism practices based on equity, diversity and inclusion have had varied degrees of success in tackling racism, while tackling structural and institutional racism remains an ongoing challenge (Came and Griffith, 2018; Griffith et al., 2007; Oswick and Noon, 2014; Walter et al., 2017).

The purpose of this article is to draw attention to the peripheral nature of much anti-racism practices within organisations as racialised entities, and to argue in favour of more holistic, concerted and multi-level anti-racism approaches. Drawing on multidisciplinary scholarship, we call for a re-imagining of anti-racism as a core organisational value. For disclosure, the three of us are migrants living in Australia, of different ethnocultural backgrounds, and with experience in the fields of economics, anthropology, migration studies and racism research.

As a dialectic opposite of racism, anti-racism seeks to dismantle, reverse or remedy the privileges/oppression that created racial inequity. Anti-racism involves deliberate and proactive efforts, and as such, aims for equality as a minimum point of departure. Proponents of anti-racism see acceptance of the equality of all human beings as a minimum and aim to reduce power differentials that disadvantage racialised groups (Paradies, 2005). Likewise, some scholars argue that one must move from merely being or becoming *non*-racist to becoming *anti*-racist (Kendi, 2019). Contemporary and historical evidence indicates that it is difficult to entirely eradicate racism by relying on a gradual process whereby reasonable people stop racist attitudes and actions (Feagin, 2013; Miller, 2021; Patel, 2022). This is because racism involves a system of oppression which manifests in terms of prejudice, inequity and discrimination (Feagin, 2013).

Prejudice may exist consciously or unconsciously because of various factors including ethnic, religious, or cultural differences, conflicting values, social categorisation/distance, bias and ignorance (Abrams, 2010; Allport, 1954). Addressing prejudice would then require continuous individual (micro level) and group (meso level) anti-racist actions and awareness creation efforts. Yet, given its institutional and systemic element (macro level), reducing the occurrences and manifestations of racism would require concerted efforts that transform how society organises itself in racially inequitable terms. This then may necessitate active anti-racism across all levels and spaces of social interaction, and the participation of all social groups.

Both racism and anti-racism have universal characteristics that manifest globally, in terms of ideas, policies and practices. Yet both phenomena also vary across countries and regions (Quillian et al., 2019) and exhibit certain features that are localised and culturally specific. For example, the experiences of Indigenous Australians and Māori in Aotearoa (New Zealand) with racism as related to settler colonialism differ from those of African Americans or Caribbean Black people in the United Kingdom and France, where they have been shaped by the Atlantic Slave trade and postcolonialism (Garner, 2017; Paradies, 2005). In South Africa, the Apartheid system created a racial division of labour in workplaces across the country; this differed from how migrants were racialised in the West (Mokoena, 2020).

In Australia, historical racism towards Indigenous peoples manifested through riots, massacres and exclusion while discrimination against immigrants from mainly non-white groups was expressed through negative public attitudes and enacted through state legislations (Elias et al., 2021; Hollinsworth, 2006; Jupp, 2002). Racism today remains an ongoing legacy of the country's settler colonial history, impacting on the lives of Indigenous peoples, and manifests in terms of intergenerational traumas, over-incarceration, deaths in custody, as well as poverty, poor education and health inequalities (Elias et al., 2021; Herring et al., 2013; Markwick et al., 2019). While this article draws on broader, global literature, it also discusses anti-racism within the Australian context.

Because racism is an issue facing the entirety of society, it requires targeted anti-racism addressing its diverse manifestations (e.g. anti-Black, xenophobia, anti-Indigenous). As such, everyone, especially white people considering their power and responsibility for its perpetuation, would be expected to work towards its eradication. Yet, a key drawback of contemporary anti-racism in the Global North has been its inability to engage white people as key stakeholders. Whiteness here refers to the racialised identity of people of European origin (Painter, 2010), as a socially constructed group and bound with power, privilege and domination that have manifested historically (Moreton-Robinson, 2015). In this sense, it is often argued that racism is a white problem more than it is a minority problem (Wellman, 1993). White majority societies have historically rejected the equality of ethno-racial minorities (Baker, 1998), through social, political and economic forms of exclusion. In addition, scientific racism as a belief in racial hierarchy has been invented for the privilege of Western white societies (Elias et al., 2021). Thus, creating solidarity among all racial groups with more proactive engagement of white stakeholders becomes a logical direction for anti-racism. Until now, this has not been the primary focus of anti-racism efforts across the Global North (van Dijk, 2021).

Yet, anti-racism has also been criticised for putting emphasis on white people (Lawrence and Dua, 2005; McWhorter, 2021; Sullivan, 2014); and on convincing them to accept, in mind, spirit and body, the equality of all human beings and act as such (Noon, 2018). Historically, abolitionist movements worldwide and many civil rights leaders after them have essentially appealed to the white ruling class, while these struggles have mainly involved resistance against white domination and oppression of racial minorities and the dismantling of settler colonialism. Anti-racism has confronted settler colonialism at various stages, as evidenced in Indigenous and Māori struggles in Australia and Aotearoa, and various anti-slavery, anti-Apartheid and anti-discrimination struggles across the world.

Likewise, some contemporary anti-racism approaches that involve increased intergroup contact, cultural diversity training and prejudice reduction programmes have focused on white people (Noon, 2018; Trenerry and Paradies, 2012). However, as envisioned, for example, by the leaders of the Black Power movement, anti-racism was conceived as a struggle by black people for social power (Kendi, 2019). The agentic empowerment of disenfranchised African Americans, Indigenous people and ethnic minorities elsewhere was one of the primary goals of the civil rights struggle, particularly of the late 1960s (Danns, 2002; Guinier, 1991).

Anti-racism within a white majority society such as the United States, United Kingdom, Australia and New Zealand would be expected to be more effective when it successfully engages white people to consider, acknowledge, understand and confront white privilege (Paluck et al., 2021). This confrontation is critical for deliberate anti-racism efforts. Given that whiteness is the norm in Western organisations (DiAngelo, 2018), engaging in anti-racism within organisations takes more than a recognition of diversity. Therefore, it is critical to evaluate whether recognition of diversity is accompanied by credible mental re-examination of one's prejudices and attitudes. In this sense, the onus of anti-racist moral responsibility is placed on white people as the beneficiaries of racism as a system of white privilege.

A popular way of addressing racism within organisations has been via forms of diversity training and cultural competency training (Ben et al., 2020; Noon, 2018). Some of its forms may be more effective than others; for example, diversity training has mixed effects on reducing prejudice and discrimination, due, for example, to the tokenistic nature of some interventions, their lack of explicit attention to racism, and the incorrect assumption that commitment to diversity and equality implies that racism has already been dealt with (e.g. Ahmed, 2012; Bezrukova et al., 2012; Dobbin and Kalev, 2016; Noon, 2018; Paradies, 2005; Pedersen and Barlow, 2008).

In this article, we argue for a more targeted, proactive and holistic anti-racism approach. We believe it is important to step up efforts against racism in organisations, and that a productive way to do so is to start re-imagining anti-racism as a core organisational value. Drawing on anti-racism theories, including critical race theory (CRT), and scholarship on everyday anti-racism, postcolonialism and decoloniality, we critically examine contemporary anti-racism within organisational settings. We then integrate insights from these theories to address the question of how anti-racism can become a default organisational value in a way that would make it a guiding principle for action and behaviour.

Organisational values as principles or core beliefs that individuals adhere to provide purpose and direction within an organisation. In addition, such core values help define organisational ethos or codes of conduct guiding stakeholders' behaviours and actions. Research indicates that different sets of organisational values may have differential impact on behaviour (Finegan, 2000). Likewise, elevating anti-racism to the level of core organisational value can have a significant impact in realising racial equity (Byrd and Sparkman, 2022). This approach recognises racism as an underlying problem and highlights the notion that organisations are not race-neutral but often racialised entities (Ray, 2019). It may encourage organisations to reorganise themselves radically and actively, thereby making confronting racism a central ethos. Similar ideas of challenging racism through concerted efforts in everyday life have been gaining ground in recent scholarship (Aquino, 2016; Mitchell et al., 2011; Whitehead, 2015).

2. Anti-racism theory and practice

In this article, we conceptualise racism as a system of oppression, which hierarchically categorises and dis/advantages groups based on social constructs such as race, colour, ethnicity and cultural background, generating and exacerbating unfair and avoidable inequalities (Berman and Paradies, 2010; Bonilla-Silva, 1997). These inequalities and disadvantages manifest across wide-ranging dimensions and transmit across generations (Gee et al., 2019; Gee and Ford, 2011). Research has shown that racism significantly impacts people's health, wellbeing, employment, education and other social outcomes (De Plevitz, 2007; Elias and Paradies, 2016; Paradies et al., 2015; Watego et al., 2021).

Anti-racism, in turn, can be defined as conscious efforts, actions and policies designed to confront, counter, resist and eradicate racism and remedy or redress the effects of racism (Jones, 2000). The prefix 'anti' in anti-racism affords the latter an oppositional power of resistance, a resistance to the injustice of racism. Anti-racism essentially gains its power from its moral stand for particular aspects of justice and fairness, namely racial justice (Kivel, 2017). As such, it can take many forms, ranging from moral or philosophical stands against racial oppression, to participation in training and education, to political and practical actions that explicitly aim to dismantle racism.

Anti-racism has its theoretical foundation in the social and political struggles that challenged various forms of racism. Whether in abolitionist movements, Indigenous resistance to settler-colonialism, anti-colonial struggles, labour movements or migration struggles, anti-racism has

been practised worldwide to challenge and oppose different kinds of racial oppressions such as slavery, segregation, discrimination, exclusion and economic exploitation (Bojadžijev, 2020; Bonnett, 2000). Bonnett (2000: 7) identifies at least seven reasons for why many people have engaged in or supported anti-racist efforts and policies, including that racism is socially disruptive, 'foreign' to their society or community, sustains the ruling class, hinders their community's progress, is viewed as an 'intellectual error', distorts and erases identities, and is socially unjust and anti-egalitarian.

Anti-racism has its philosophical underpinnings in notions of equality, justice and fairness, which have often inspired groups that have experienced or opposed various forms of enslavement, dispossession, discrimination and exploitation (Bonnett, 2000; Skinner, 2009). Anti-racism theory and practices are intertwined, and much theorisation on (anti)racism emanates from resistance to historical and ongoing manifestations of racism. A range of anti-racism theories have emerged, often framed in the context of colonialism (Bonnett, 2000; Crenshaw et al., 1995; van Dijk, 2021). Abolitionism, Pan-Africanism, postcolonial theory and decoloniality are some notable ideological strands that informed earlier anti-racism movements (Aquino, 2020; Bonnett, 2000; Quijano, 2000). All of them share the common tradition of resistance against European colonisation and domination. Historically, Abolitionist movements have succeeded in resisting slavery while Pan-African, Indigenous and related movements created solidarity among different racial groups (Moreton-Robinson, 2015). They can be conceived as practical anti-racism struggles with historical, political goals.

In the context of anti-racism, postcolonial theory is concerned with how power, economic relations, culture and religion operate to maintain colonial hegemony. Postcolonial thinkers emphasise the need for decolonisation, which refers to the process of dismantling ongoing colonial ideology and thinking and reversing the effects of colonialism. Influenced by the political philosophy of Frantz Fanon, Aime Cesaire, Edward Said and others, anti-racism in this tradition centres on resistance to ongoing imperialism and Western domination of the Global South (Young, 2016). While postcolonial thought has gained wide influence it has also been criticised for essentialising culture, marking the East and West as unbridgeable, denying universal values and characterising the Enlightenment as Eurocentric (Chibber, 2013).

Another widely researched anti-racism tradition is CRT, which emerged in US legal scholarship with the aim of critically examining the centrality of race across social structures, and challenging traditional civil-rights approaches (Crenshaw et al., 1995). It underscores that race continues to be a significant factor in determining inequity, and existing structures and laws confer unequal power, resource and privileges that disadvantage racial minorities (Ladson-Billings, 2021). CRT also postulates that within white dominated societies, institutional forms of anti-racism are hampered by design, and unlikely to be more than symbolic, since societal structures are designed to sustain existing racial hierarchies and the dominance of those who are in power (Ford and Airhihenbuwa, 2010; Jones, 2002).

Focusing on the social construction of race and racial hierarchy, CRT has thus contributed to a broader understanding of racism in its relationship with power and systemic racial inequities (Delgado and Stefancic, 2013). In this sense, rather than an aberration, racism is considered as ubiquitous, that is, continuously experienced by racial minorities in daily life and settings. Understanding the centrality and normality of racism therefore becomes critical for its dismantling. This theoretical framework rejects the colour-blind approach to anti-racism by emphasising race as a salient component of Western societies' social, economic, legal and political structures (Ladson-Billings, 1998; Treviño et al., 2008).

Anti-colonial and postcolonial anti-racism theories have strong connection with CRT. They see racism and its various manifestations as systems of oppression and exploitation established for the

continued domination of racial minorities by Western white societies. They present racism at macro-, institutional and structural levels and posit that their eradication requires the dismantling of colonialism both radically and holistically. Daily microaggressions and occasional racial violence are considered expressions of deeper systemic injustice, and much anti-racism practice draws on these theoretical traditions with varying degrees of emphases.

Bonnett (2000) identifies six anti-racism practices, four of which highlight some theoretical underpinnings: everyday anti-racism, multicultural anti-racism, psychological anti-racism and radical anti-racism. Everyday anti-racism is conceived as resistance to racial inequality 'that forms part of everyday popular culture' (Bonnett, 2000: 88), where anti-racism may refer to individuals' day-to-day responses to racism, with ordinary people engaging in acts of resistance to racial oppression (Aquino, 2020; Nelson et al., 2011). Multicultural anti-racism, on the contrary, consists of manners of affirming cultural diversity in order to engage with racism (Bonnett, 2000: 88), and may, in line with understandings of multiculturalism, focus largely on securing the political accommodation of minority groups (Modood, 2007). The attainment of equality and social justice are therefore seen as the ultimate goals in a multicultural society.

Bonnett's third concept, of psychological anti-racism, emphasises structures of individual and collective consciousness in aiming to identify and contest racism, drawing on diverse strategies such as education and training to alter individual attitudes and behaviours. Fourth, according to Bonnett (2000), radical anti-racism has a neo-Marxist tone, where it focuses on tackling 'structures of socio-economic power and privilege that foster and reproduce racism' (p. 88). This notion equates anti-racism with anti-capitalism and anti-colonialism, making decoloniality and resistance to the socio-economic status quo its ultimate goal. While focusing on class-based social structures, the radical anti-racist recognition that racism manifests as a legacy of colonialism is intertwined with anti-racism theories.

Contemporary anti-racism research indicates that anti-racism works better if it integrates diverse approaches and methodologies of countering racism (Ben et al., 2020; Byrd and Sparkman, 2022; Elias et al., 2021). Decades of anti-racism practice and movements impacted the discourse on racism, leading to the transformation of racist ideas and thinking (van Dijk, 2021). Being called a 'racist' is nowadays so stigmatising, that even avowed supporters of white supremacism deny that they are racist (DiAngelo, 2018). For this and related reasons, the binary representation of racism as only practised or held by 'bad' people has been heavily criticised (DiAngelo, 2018; Kendi, 2019; West, 1997). Contemporary anti-racist scholarship rejects this binary moral representation, as it collectively wipes off both unconscious and institutional racisms that represent much of historical and contemporary racism (Kendi, 2019). Racism today is often conceived as a 'system' or 'social structure' as described by CRT scholarship, rather than just, or predominantly, as personal/ social prejudice or as a policy (Feagin, 2013; Gee and Ford, 2011; Mile and Brown, 2003).

Practices incorporating the above formulations can also be classified into macro-, meso- and micro aspects of anti-racism depending on their application. Past macro-level anti-racist struggles have often involved direct political confrontations against the state, frequently demanding legislative reforms and abolishing institutional racism (Ahmed, 2012; Jonas, 2005). At the meso-level, anti-racism can take a form of identifying and confronting unjust norms and practices in groups and communities. This can, for instance, involve joining anti-racism activism, difficult conversations and bystander anti-racism (Nelson et al., 2011; Ray, 2019; Rozas and Miller, 2009).

Anti-racist interventions at the micro level mainly target interpersonal racism and are essential in changing attitudes and behaviours that drive institutional racism (Ahmed, 2012; Aquino, 2020). Micro-interventions, which can take many forms (e.g. exposing racism, challenging racist languages and slurs, educating offenders, becoming an ally of ethnic/racial minorities), can strengthen the uptake of anti-racism in everyday life (Aquino, 2016, 2020; Sue et al., 2019). They allow for

opening up a dialogue about microaggression, provide minorities critical spaces to reflect and process their feelings, provide tools to confront racist acts and behaviours, and educate those who perpetrate racism (Sue et al., 2019).

The way racism has been conceived and defined can be critical in what is done to address it (Bonnett, 2000). In a review of contemporary anti-racism, Ben et al. (2020) highlight the role of careful planning, solid theoretical foundation, targeted intervention, and evaluation based on evidence. They identify four distinct contemporary anti-racism approaches, which have been subject to different scales of evaluation and with varied degrees of effectiveness, including intergroup contact, training and education, communication and media campaign, and organisational development. Organisational development is particularly understudied, but evaluations of several such initiatives show promising results (Ben et al., 2020). Given its focus on organisations and attention to confronting systemic and institutional racism, it is central to our argument and therefore focused on in the following section. Drawing on radical and postcolonial approaches, as well as critical elements used in CRT for framing racism, we suggest that anti-racism in organisations may be more likely to succeed through holistic and integrated rather than tangential approaches.

3. Anti-racism in organisations

Anti-racism as an act of reversing and countering racism has often been promoted at the institutional level through inclusion and diversity campaigns, training and other activities (Noon, 2018). This draws on normative values of justice and fairness and has received wide acceptance across many organisations within the profit and not-for-profit sectors, as well as public organisations (Byrd and Sparkman, 2022). However, scholars argue that merely issuing diversity and inclusion policy statements does not progress issues of equity, race, and diversity; instead, it can inadvertently normalise racism and inequity by providing a false signal that these issues have already been dealt with in the organisation (Ahmed, 2012; Byrd and Sparkman, 2022).

Discussions of diversity, as well as diversity training programmes, can refer to socio-cultural groups that far exceed racial/ethnic minorities and phenomena such as racial discrimination and racism. In the Australian context, use of the term itself has been critiqued as too malleable (Ahmed, 2006), while diversity training programmes in Australia sometimes focus on workplace discrimination based on characteristics such as sexuality or gender despite ethnicity and Indigeneity being important aspects of Australian diversity (e.g. Saira et al., 2020; Shatnawi et al., 2022).

Anti-racism today remains peripheral to broader organisational values and is often added within diversity and inclusion policy and practice rather than as integral to organisations (Hassen et al., 2021). Racism in organisations is pervasive, as Australian studies consistently show with regard to workplaces (Dunn et al., 2011; Kamp et al., 2022). A range of approaches are used for addressing racism in organisations, of which the most commonly implemented and best studied are intergroup contact and forms of education and training, such as diversity training programmes (Ben et al., 2020). Other approaches have emerged more recently, and tackle racism in ways that are more holistic and multi-levelled (Hassen et al., 2021). One key approach is organisational development, which often incorporates elements of other approaches (e.g. diversity training, intergroup contact) and may use development and change processes to assess how organisations function in tackling discrimination and endorsing diversity. Organisations may draw on various means, including functions to increase their accountability (e.g. through governance, leadership, plans and policies; operational processes and practices; training and communications; and auditing and reporting); diversity training programmes; development and provision of resources and skill-based programmes; and, potentially, role modelling to the organisation's wider constituency (Paradies et al., 2009: 53–63).

Through these practices, organisations may enact anti-racism in everyday life. They align with theorising on everyday anti-racism in organisations, which looks, for example, at experiences of implementing initiatives 'on the ground' (Aquino, 2020). In reviewing everyday anti-racism, Aquino (2016, 2020) discusses how it is practised in organisations (including Australian organisations and institutions) and considers current debates in this nascent field. For example, doing anti-racism raises challenges related to power and disadvantage in organisations, as particularly pertinent to the status of whiteness or perspectives on whiteness, which can influence power dynamics and culture in an organisation (Flintoff et al., 2015; Grimes, 2002). Aquino (2020) also notes that the literature challenges the 'institutional/individual binary' (p. 222), arguing that people are the main actors in an institution and that institutions do not exist independent of people. Pollock (2006) points to the complexity and challenges surrounding anti-racism and argues that anti-racism as a practice is 'complex, conflict ridden, and deeply consequential' (p. 4). Given this complexity, and since different organisations may require tailor-made approach(es), a one-size-fits-all approach to anti-racism may not work.

Diversity training is an aspect of anti-racism that is popular in organisational settings and has emerged as part of an organisation's corporate social responsibility (CSR). With its purpose of promoting positive intergroup relations, reducing prejudice and discrimination, and educating how to work together effectively (Lindsey et al., 2015), diversity training may create awareness about issues affecting racial minorities. However, because of tokenism, lack of explicit attention to racism and their implied message that racism is addressed in organisations, there are mixed findings about the benefits of diversity training to reducing prejudice and discrimination (e.g. Ahmed, 2012; Bezrukova et al., 2012; Dobbin and Kalev, 2016; Noon, 2018). Thus, a focus of anti-racism on diversity and inclusion limits organisations to peripheral conversations that fail to address deeper institutional and structural issues (Hassen et al., 2021).

Indeed, there are some fundamental limits to anti-racism within organisational settings. Organisations may have diversity training that superficially gives an appearance of commitment to equity and inclusiveness (Hassen et al., 2021). It may be a thing that organisations discuss or encourage staff to apply. Ahmed (2012) argues that the language of diversity and inclusion at the institutional or organisational level can be used to maintain the status quo by signalling that racism has been addressed through such training or policy statements indicating the organisation's commitment to equity and diversity. This is often the case when the notion of equity is secondary to the central organisational ethos, such as the profit motive, organisational image and prestige.

One way to make anti-racism integral within organisations, which may increase its success in reducing prejudice and enhancing cultural diversity and intercultural contact, is by addressing it at an organisational level (Hassen et al., 2021), and seeking to inculcate it as a core value. Elevating anti-racism to a core value implies an acknowledgement that racism is a problem in society at large, and a readiness to identify and counter it in one's organisation. It renders racial equity a pivotal ethos that guides organisational policy, governance and practice, while raising the bar of expected behaviours and attitudes. This may not raise acceptance of diversity as a visceral reaction, but it should reclaim its value from tokenism.

A core value of anti-racism requires organisational restructuring at a fundamental level and can increase the likelihood that organisations will introduce mechanisms and measurable indicators to monitor and address racism regularly. It makes anti-racism an everyday process (Aquino, 2020), where individuals and groups engage, reflect, and actively pursue greater equity and racial justice (Bennett and Keating, 2008). By moving organisational commitment to anti-racism from peripheral discussions about diversity and inclusion to a core value, it is possible to achieve deeper and sustainable institutional transformation (Hassen et al., 2021).

Organisational development may hold unique promise in transforming anti-racism to a core value in organisations. This aligns with concerns, which we share, about neglecting structural forms and layers of racism and the racialised nature of organisations in the Global North (Miller, 2021; Ray, 2019), and calls for a deeper commitment to anti-racism. Because of its multi-dimensionality, organisational development appears particularly well-placed to address racism in complex institutions.

An organisational development approach to anti-racism also aligns with what is known as 'systems change theory' – an approach that applies a holistic perspective to solve complex problems in organisations (Burke, 2017). Addressing the complexity of structural racism may require systemic and multi-level changes that affect the entire organisation (Griffith et al., 2007). Some scholars have advocated a systems change approach to anti-racism, which includes direct focus on organisational values. For instance, Came and Griffith (2018) discuss system change as an intervention strategy in tackling racism systematically across multiple levels. One of its key aspects is critically examining five aspects of a system: '1) core values and assumptions; 2) social and organisational context and consequences; 3) the relationship among monitoring and evaluation methods; 4) the relationship among explanations of the problem; and 5) actions to achieve health and social equity' (p. 185). The first and fifth are particularly relevant in the current discussion.

To our knowledge, a core-value approach to anti-racism in organisational setting has not been widely implemented. However, there are also some instances where anti-racism interventions have been empirically tested and found effective (e.g. in reducing racial prejudice) whose conception closely aligns with our approach (in education, Paluck and Green, 2009; in healthcare, Came and Griffith, 2018; Hassen et al., 2021; in community, Ferdinand et al., 2017). For example, limited evaluation of organisational development approach has shown promising results thus far, with the application of systemic change in a New Zealand local healthcare organisation achieving some equity gains between Māori and non-Māori (Came and McCreanor, 2015). A range of effective practices that organisations deploy, including, for example, work across multiple levels, careful planning and adequate resourcing, transparency, and collaboration with affected groups (see further discussion in Ben et al., 2020; Hassen et al., 2021). From these emerging findings and given evidence of how it has worked in other contexts, it is reasonable to infer that a core-value approach would be effective for anti-racism.

4. Anti-racism as a core value in organisational settings

Organisational core values are principles embedded in the organisation's culture and philosophy that influence individual and institutional behaviour within and outside the organisation (Cambra-Fierro et al., 2008; Kabanoff and Daly, 2002). Fitzgerald and Desjardins (2004) conceptualise them as 'the collective beliefs about what the entire enterprise stands for, takes pride in, and holds of intrinsic worth' (p. 124). Empirical evidence suggests that organisational core values can influence the policy and practices and guide the decision-making process within organisations (Brăinianu and Bălănescu, 2008) and outside such organisations (Cambra-Fierro et al., 2008).

Studies indicate that a strong relationship exists between organisational core values, and the revenues and reputation of the firm (Barchiesi and La Bella, 2014; Yoganathan et al., 2018). Barchiesi and La Bella (2014) analysed top 50 most admired global companies from 2009 to 2013 and concluded that ethical behaviours and a concern for people can benefit organisations by helping them maintain a strong competitive advantage. Indeed, organisations have also social responsibilities beyond underlying economic values, among which are the ethical principles of racial equity and justice. Fitzgerald and Desjardins (2004) have found that organisational values boost the satisfaction, commitment and performance outcomes of employees.

One way to achieve racial equity and justice may be through a whole organisation approach to anti-racism, focusing on core values. This approach can be expected to reduce racial prejudice through greater focus on people and human relationship building (Byrd and Sparkman, 2022; Came and Griffith, 2018; Hassen et al., 2021). The human relations perspective 'promotes positive relations by improving one's ability to recognise and deal with biases, prejudices, and discrimination personally and socially' (Byrd and Sparkman, 2022: 89).

The idea of elevating anti-racism to a level of core value in organisations whereby individuals engage in agentic and proactive pursuit of racial equity differs from a focus on anti-racism to facilitate profit-making and from approaches that focus on promoting diversity and inclusion. In this holistic framing, anti-racism is a key driving factor that organises the way of thinking, acting, being within and running businesses. In this vein, Kendi (2019) argues that 'to be anti-racist is a radical choice in the face of [a historical trend of avoidance], requiring a radical reorientation of our consciousness' (p. 23). To challenge racism in all its manifestations, one has to undergo conscious decisions and commitments to critically reflect on prevailing thoughts, discourses, actions and policies directly or indirectly producing or sustaining racial inequities. Kendi (2019) likens the endeavour to fighting addiction in that 'being an anti-racist requires persistent self-awareness, constant self-criticism, and regular self-examination' (p. 23).

Supporting a radical reorientation of anti-racism, Bonnett (2000: 107) suggests that within anti-racist praxis radicalism can be equated to 'social critique', and 'constructed as something that "questions", "deconstructs" and generally "challenges" the presence of racism within society'. The focus of radical anti-racist critique aims to expose 'the racist nature of existing social practices' (Bonnett, 2000: 109). This suggests that anti-racism can elevate the process of sense making or meaning making, and in so doing effective anti-racism praxis may aim at a shift in the way everyday racism is confronted at the organisational level. Widely cited examples of radical anti-racism put into practice within political, revolutionary struggles include scholar-activists seeking to dismantle systems of oppression such as US slavery and French colonialism, e.g., Du Bois and Fanon, or historical entanglements between anti-racism and Marxism (and anti-capitalism) (Bhattacharyya et al., 2020: 5; Bonnett, 2000: 107–109).

Bhattacharyya et al. (2020) encourage us to further retrieve other histories of anti-racist thought and activism. They seek to re-centre the 'forgotten' agency of people who have experienced slavery and colonisation, and to provide alternatives to kinds of anti-racism that 'privilege liberal state and institutional approaches over more radical ones' (Bhattacharyya et al., 2020: 2), thus reminding us that radical anti-racisms tend to be at odds with more 'established' or 'mainstream' approaches and structures of power.

Another example used in Bonnett (2000) and others (e.g. Aquino, 2020), which more closely aligns with our discussion of organisations, is radical anti-racism in education. Here, Bonnett (2000: 109–111) draws, as an example, on Godfrey Brandt's guidelines for teachers to create new syllabuses and learning experiences that develop students' critical abilities. Applications of CRT in education (e.g. Gillborn, 2006; Morrison et al., 2019), and everyday anti-racism in schools (e.g. Pollock, 2006) chart other alternative approaches to anti-racism praxis.

In organisations, the inculcation of anti-racism in a holistic manner may require changes in the prioritisation of organisational values. This may vary across organisations (public or private, for-profit or not-for-profit), given that values differentiate organisations (see Barchiesi and La Bella, 2014). As such, different organisations are likely to have different core values as they operate in different settings and contexts and have different cultural and philosophical dispositions.

For example, it can be argued that private companies exist to create products for their customers and obtain return for their shareholders. So, beyond the broad financial gains associated with curbing racism (Elias and Paradies, 2016), it is also possible that a for-profit organisation may consider

adopting anti-racism as a core value to obtain a 'license to operate' and this can be considered a CSR practice that is good for business (van Dijk et al., 2012). On the contrary, non-profit organisations have mainly social purposes such as contribution towards equality, social justice and human rights. Thus, incorporating anti-racism as a core value would align with their objectives and may not be challenging to implement. Similarly, public organisations exist for the common good of society, thus they can be mandated to implement anti-racism action plans through Acts of parliament or other legislative instruments.

Generally, the elevation of anti-racism to core organisational value entails a radical recalibration of organisational values and their alignment with anti-racism, through critical re-examination of organisational visions and missions (Hassen et al., 2021; Olayiwola et al., 2020). To enact such reconfiguration of values, some organisational values may need to change if they directly or indirectly contradict or hinder notions of equity and social justice. Recent anti-racism protests (Black Lives Matter) during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, for example, have propelled many organisations to evaluate their values and policies (Leigh and Melwani, 2019; Sabatello et al., 2021). This and similar factors may engender further reprioritisation and reframing of key strategic objectives and goals to reflect the newly integrated organisational values.

The integration of anti-racism with other organisational values may begin by questioning existing core values through the lens of anti-racism. This may start with conversations across the organisation to problematise and address racism. It could also start with full buy-in and active support and funding by the leadership and governance structures (Hassen et al., 2021). Then, anti-racism as a method and practice may further be institutionalised and internalised as an operational guide for actions within the organisation.

As indicated earlier, the management literature suggests that organisational core values influence policies and practices within a given organisation (Brăinianu and Bălănescu, 2008; Cambra-Fierro et al., 2008). Thus, including anti-racism as a core value, at the minimum, may aim at shaping the policies and practices of the organisation and influence individuals to act differently within and outside the organisation. Recently, Ali et al. (2021) proposed several actionable strategies including adopting inclusive ethics and codes of conduct, and holding people accountable, with the goal of embedding anti-racism as a core value in Geoscience organisations. In simple terms, the articulation of anti-racism as a core value could reflect what the organisation believes needs to change and what it is doing to seek that change transparently (Ali et al., 2021).

So far, we have shown that a holistic approach that targets core organisational values may be a starting point for a critical anti-racist endeavour at the organisational level. Our argument highlights that effectively dismantling racism may require 'whole of organisation' initiatives that envision changes in ways that are systemic, multi-level and interconnected, while embedding anti-racism as a core value within organisations (Came and Griffith, 2018; Hassen et al., 2021; Paluck and Green, 2009). Interventions that target and effect such changes in organisational values would be expected to impact on outcomes since organisational values that align with employee values may increase employee satisfaction, commitment and performance outcomes (Fitzgerald and Desjardins, 2004; van Dijk et al., 2012), and given anti-racism is important for racial minority workers.

The effectiveness of anti-racism strategies is related, among other things, to the types of racism they seek to address. We argue that an effective approach to eradicate institutional and systemic racism in organisations requires fundamental changes, starting at the level of institutions' core values. This requires strategic vision and intention, understanding that dismantling structural racism involves restructuring the distribution of power and decision-making which anticipates fundamentally changes in the core organisational culture and institutional structures (Carter, 2020; Livingston, 2020).

When an organisation decides to inculcate anti-racism as a core value, it is committing to restructuring itself. This means that it will endeavour to dismantle any structure or system that prevents racial minorities from having equitable access to power, resources and privileges within the organisation. Instead of accepting the ongoing systemic disparity, an anti-racist organisation would challenge its status quo, dismantle power differentials, address racist attitudes/behaviours directly and ensure strategies to prevent racism from occurring. In the Australian context, such changes would involve confronting the culture and structure that produces gross underrepresentation of Indigenous and non-white Australians in positions of power and privilege. This would be followed with the strategic deployment of structures against racism in future.

Moreover, change in values is likely to require endorsement and support from management, and studies indicate that engaging managers and leaders to partake in change processes is paramount to making anti-racism interventions effective in organisations (Hassen et al., 2021). Endorsement by leaders is also critical if the organisation is to consider and address the possible impact of racism on policies and practices that they themselves oversee, including in crucial areas such as hiring and promotions.

For example, Ben et al. (2020) emphasise that to be effective, anti-racism interventions (not just focused on organisational development) should involve a management group, and that strong support from organisational leaders and champions has been considered crucial for programme effectiveness (see also Paradies et al., 2009), whereas changing values is also important for effective anti-racism because of the ways that values can generate and affect anti-racist norms. Norms constitute shared awareness about socially appropriate behaviour in society (Chung and Rimal, 2016), and the cultivation of anti-racist norms has been an effective practice in anti-racism (e.g. Ben et al., 2020; Nelson et al., 2011). As a core value, anti-racism may derive from prosocial, prescriptive (anti-racist) norms about actions that should be done, as well as prescriptive norms about racism as unacceptable. Ivarsflaten et al. (2010) have shown that such anti-racism norms exist and can be meaningfully measured in a Western European context.

To draw on examples of effective anti-racism more broadly, promoting anti-racism as a prescriptive norm has been recommended in the context of effective communications campaigns (Donovan and Vlais, 2006), while transforming group norms has been considered important to the ability of intergroup contact to reduce prejudice (Dovidio et al., 2017). Another study argues that anti-racist norms can also increase possibilities for bystander anti-racism to be effective, while, contrarily, underdeveloped social norms may inhibit bystander anti-racism (Nelson et al., 2011). Nelson et al. (2011: 279) further highlight the significance of leadership in setting social norms, suggesting that local leadership and role modelling of bystander action may be required in order to set such norms, for example, in relation to responsibility. However, a key question of interest is whether bystander anti-racism only inhibits public expressions of racism or whether underlying beliefs are changed. Czopp et al. (2006) argue that even if bystander action only changes public behaviour, this nonetheless 'may have beneficial consequences by creating norms of egalitarianism and instigating self-regulatory processes' (p. 784).

5. Conclusion

Racism is an everyday reality existing as a system of oppression and inequity across societies. It also occurs in organisations affecting both people's wellbeing and business bottom lines by eroding and undermining peoples' capacity to work and function effectively. In this article, we critically reviewed the limitations of several conventional anti-racism practices. We argued that much anti-racism efforts in organisations remain peripheral to their goals and values. This neglects the fact that organisations remain racialised entities, often perpetuating and legitimating inequities in

power, resources and privileges. Thus, we proposed a radical approach to tackle racism in organisations by elevating anti-racism into a core value.

Research indicates that core values guide policies and practices and are critical for the healthy performance of organisations (Brăinianu and Bălănescu, 2008; Fitzgerald and Desjardins, 2004). In addition to fostering cohesion within organisations, they strongly impact employee satisfaction, commitment and performance, providing strong competitiveness for organisations (Fitzgerald and Desjardins, 2004). Thus, addressing fundamental values offers a compelling reason to tackle social issues in workplaces and prevent harm towards people, for example, by enacting and taking appropriate measures to tackle racial discrimination and injustice (Came and Griffith, 2018; Fine et al., 2020; O'Leary and Weathington, 2006; Patel, 2022). Likewise, inculcating anti-racism as a core value can have positive impact on organisational performance, since anti-racism as social justice aligns with employee values (Byrd and Sparkman, 2022; Hassen et al., 2021). This would imply a recognition of the racialised foundation of the organisations and the enactment of effective anti-racist interventions.

One way this can be implemented is through organisational development as a systemic, holistic, committed, multi-level anti-racism approach that can effectively tackle structural and institutional racism. This calibrates anti-racism to function as a core value guiding everyday activity and relations in a business or organisation. This may involve provision of organisational anti-racism policy as a direction, supported by the commitment of resources for effectual implementation. Drawing on the understanding of organisations as racialised institutions, we have argued why incorporating everyday anti-racism praxis at whole of organisation level may have deeper impact in confronting systemic and institutional racism.

In this article, we argued for a mixed approach that recognises first the importance of the core-values (social justice) case, and then the business case. We prioritise values over business because a core-values approach is sustainable, people-focused, emphasises equity, and aligns with organisational CSR. A business case remains important for obvious reasons such as the centrality for organisations of value creation, performance and feasibility. We also recognise that the business-case for anti-racism may be particularly convincing to decision makers in many organisations, whose support of anti-racism would be critical for it to succeed (e.g. Hassen et al., 2021). The business case and moral/values case could be reconciled through a focus on human relationship (Byrd and Sparkman, 2022) and organisational context (Tomlinson and Schwabenland, 2010). For example, Byrd and Sparkman (2022) suggest an approach that integrates business opportunity and social justice by focusing on a human relations aspect of the value of diversity. We are aware that more work is needed to provide conclusive evidence on which interventions work best (Bertrand and Duflo, 2017; Paluck et al., 2021).

While calling for a mixed approach, we prioritise a value-first approach to addressing inequity over a business case for several reasons. First, as others have argued in calling for gender diversity and inclusion, 'the business-case approach makes striving for equality seem discretionary; just one of many things an organisation could do to increase its performance or competitive advantage' (Fine and Sojo, 2019: 515). Economic arguments only go so far where a social issue is so fundamentally about ethics as with racism. Second, the widespread critique of links between neoliberal logics and racism (e.g. Davis, 2007; Kundnani, 2021) calls at the very least for wariness in appealing to business motivations in arguing for anti-racism. In addition, a values-based approach to anti-racism can potentially address the limitations posed by neoliberal culpability in the perpetuation of racism.

Third, based on the limited empirical findings (e.g. Came and Griffith, 2018; Hassen et al., 2021) and evidence in other areas, a core value-based approach may have a good chance of bringing racial equity in organisations. Since core values serve as guidelines for behaviour within

organisations, it is reasonable to expect positive outcome from values that foster social justice (Fine and Sojo, 2019). Fourth, unlike the business case, anti-racism as a core-value places employees (and their interests) at the centre as stakeholders. In this sense, a core value–based approach involves human perspectives into enacting anti-racism that transcend organisations and business and are first and foremost about ethics. Finally, the holistic nature of the approach we propose requires involving all stakeholders, and inviting a reflection and possible re-configuration of existing values, policies and practices, within organisations. As such, it also goes against more tokenistic interventions that centre exclusively on diversity. Given this breadth, its implications may extend beyond organisations and impact society in general.

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