

Reflections on achieving anti-racism in organisations: The role of human resource management scholars and practitioners

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Abstract

In this article, I reflect on the role of human resource management (HRM [I acknowledge that HRM scholarship encompasses a wide range of researchers employing varying analytical and methodological lenses and that publish in an eclectic mix of journals within and outside the human resource management domain. However, although I draw from other journals and academies for illustrative purposes, this article focuses on the two journals that are most widely respected in the field (Human Resource Management Journal and Human Resource Management)] in the treatment of race and racism in organisations. I argue that the combined negative impacts of the brutal murder of George Floyd before a social media watching world and the strong evidence of negative racially disproportionate impacts of the coronavirus pandemic contributed to a collective moral outrage and provided an unprecedented catalyst and opportunity to tackle institutional racism. I provide a review of research interests to argue that HRM scholars and the business practitioners they commonly inform have not grasped this opportunity fully, in that the treatment of race remains inadequate and informed by an erroneous view of

Abbreviations: BBC, British Broadcasting Corporation; COVID-19, Coronavirus disease 2019; EDI, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion; HRM, Human Resource Management; HRMJ, Human Resource Management Journal; N.H.S, National Health Service; O.N.S, Office for National Statistics; U.K, United Kingdom; U.S.A, United States of America.

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race as neutral and irrelevant in influencing organisational outcomes. I contend that this presents a danger that racism will continue to thrive. I argue that grasping this opportunity fully requires a rethinking of the approaches commonly adopted by HRM scholars and practitioners to acknowledge and embrace fully the significance of race (and anti-racism) in influencing organisational outcomes. I call for a reconsideration of key constructs, especially those that are implicated in racism (such as organisational culture and culture change) so that anti-racism is at the centre of HRM conceptualisations and organisational processes.

KEYWORDS

anti-racism, human resource management, race, racism

1 | INTRODUCTION

Within a relatively short space of time, a series of major events in society elevated the issue of racial inequality from the fringes of special interest to mainstream academic and societal discourse. In particular, the killing of George Floyd by a law enforcement officer in the U.S.A. and the emergence of data portraying the racially disproportionate negative impacts of the coronavirus pandemic in many Western societies, but especially in the U.K. (see Ogbonna, 2020) and U.S.A (see Deaton, 2020), dominated the news in multimedia outlets. The ubiquity of these different but related incidents helped to awaken the consciousness of the general public in the U.K. and around the world to the deleterious impacts of racial discrimination and heightened calls for concerted action to eradicate racism. Equally, the momentum gathered by the associated Black Lives Matter protests helped to maintain interest on racial discrimination in general and encouraged many organisations to think about their responses to longstanding racial injustices (see Farah, 2022).

As part of their reactions to the sustained attacks on their historic inaction in eradicating racism, several organisations made public statements asserting their support for the ideals of equality, and a few embarked on initiatives that signalled their allyship to the course of race equality. For example, 309 (or 61.8%) of Fortune 500 companies made formal statements of support for racial justice in the aftermath of the killing of George Floyd in U.S.A (see Corrington et al., 2022). Likewise, some Human Resource Management (HRM) affiliated journals commissioned special issues and standalone papers that explored aspects of inequality and disadvantage in organisations broadly defined (e.g. Amis et al., 2020; Bapuji et al., 2020; Nkomo, 2020). Interestingly, while these introspections have been critical and well-received, there have been insufficient attempts to uncover and focus on ways of eliminating the barriers that may be impeding unfairly the progress of individuals from racial and ethnic minority backgrounds. Arguably, progress on eradicating racism has been slow and unambitious in ways that signal a faltering of the momentum and a potential derailing of the dividends from the global protests and calls for action arising from the twin events that exposed the consequences of pernicious racism in 2020.

In this article, I explore the treatment of race and racism in HRM by examining the contributions of HRM scholars and practitioners in uncovering and dismantling the barriers that may be impeding racial equality in organisations. Specifically, I explore the treatment of race and racism in HRM from 1990 to mid-2024, with a particular focus on the responses of HRM scholarship to the public outrage that followed the deleterious

consequences of the twin events of 2020 and the pledges by many academies, organisations and institutions to eradicate racism. To achieve this aim, I reflect on three inter-linked problematics on race discrimination and the organisational contexts in which discrimination occur and in relation to the ways in which these could be transformed to eradicate racism. The first is the persistence of racism in organisations and the inadequate attention devoted to the issue of racism by both HRM scholars and practitioners. Specifically, although researchers have lamented the neglect of diversity, equality and fairness in management research in general (e.g. Amis et al., 2020; Bapuji et al., 2020; Cooke, 2003; Dar et al., 2021), race has been particularly overlooked in HRM research and theorising (see also recent review by Triana et al., 2021). I integrate insights from the literature and organisational practices to argue that the events of 2020 provided unprecedented catalysts for scholars and managers to rethink fundamentally the role of race and racism in understanding organisations and in influencing the outcomes that are derived from such social systems.

The second imperative is whether a greater recognition of the centrality of race in organisations requires a different approach to dealing with the pernicious institutional racism that major investigations posit as prevalent in the U.K., for example, the Metropolitan Police (Casey, 2023; Macpherson, 1999), higher education institutions (e.g. EHRC, 2019) and at societal level (e.g. Ogbonna, 2020). Put differently, acknowledging the magnitude of the problem of racism requires a commensurate level of action to deal with it. It will be argued that eradicating institutional racism requires HRM scholars and practitioners to promote bold actions in organisations that are pivoted on anti-racism. In this regard, the article will emphasise the importance of centralising anti-racist ideology both in theorising about work and in managing human resources.

The third concern is on how organisations can implement anti-racism and whether the embeddedness of race in organisation cultures (see Bishop & Glynn, 1999; Doane, 2017) is such that culture change is required to achieve anti-racism, and if so how such change should be conceptualised. These understandings introduce a conundrum wherein culture change is presented as both the assumed culprit (a source of the promotion and perpetuation of racial inequality) and the potential solution (the key to implementing anti-racism), a factor which is complicated by the chorus of scholarly voices warning of the general difficulties and perils of planned culture change (e.g. Neville & Schneider, 2021; Ogbonna & Harris, 2002). This article will propose approaches to implementing cultural transformation that may help in the drive to embed anti-racism.

The importance and usefulness of this article are derived from two related factors. Firstly, as the academy which is responsible for knowledge creation and dissemination on the interface between people and organisations, it is important to understand how HRM scholars are responding to racism which has been identified as one the most 'wicked' and intractable problems of contemporary society (see Came & Griffith, 2018). In this regard, this article provides a critical lens to the responses of the HRM academy especially to the widespread societal shock and dismay that followed the twin examples that revealed the deleterious impacts of racism in 2020. It argues that HRM scholars have not responded to the defining revelations of the perniciousness of racialised injustices by devoting more attention to race and racial discrimination in their work. Consequently, the article provides an important 'call for action' for HRM scholars and practitioners to pay more attention to race and racism and to lead the development of theories and practices that will help to foster genuine inclusion and unleash the full talents and potentials of racial minorities in organisations. Secondly, the article provides an important and clarion call for HRM to embrace anti-racism as the preferred approach to achieving racial equality. This approach is positioned as a necessary response to the finding that racism is institutionalised (see Casey, 2023; EHRC, 2019; Macpherson, 1999; Ogbonna, 2020). This approach is in stark contrast to traditional approaches in HRM which have failed to make meaningful improvements in the lives of people from racial minority backgrounds.

The article begins with a review of the literature on the ways in which race and racism have been explored by HRM scholars with particular emphasis on the period following the coronavirus pandemic and the brutal murder of George Floyd in 2020. These two events ushered a new era in the understanding of the role of race in influencing organisational and societal outcomes. However, as the review of HRM scholarly activities following the pandemic shows, there has been a limited commitment to undertake research that may lead to the eradication of racism and

there has been a slow pace of change in ways that signal a real danger of losing the momentum generated by the aforementioned events. The possible reasons for the limited commitment of HRM scholarship on race and racism are discussed to complete the review. The position of HRM scholarship is juxtaposed with managerial practice through an overview to show that race and racism have remained important in work organisation but that the impacts have been largely overlooked, marginalised and even denied. An argument for the significance and centrality of race and racism is presented through a discussion of research emerging from allied and different academies on the role of racialisation in organisations and society. This leads to a proposition that eradicating racism requires a different approach from that which has prevailed in HRM hitherto. An argument is forwarded that an approach that is based on anti-racism is most pertinent in this regard and should be embraced by HRM scholars seeking to incorporate the role of race and racism in their work, as well as by managers with serious intention of addressing the problem of institutional racism. The final section of the article is a 'call for action'. It discusses the ways in which HRM scholars can lead the drive to anti-racism and highlights the potential role of HRM practitioners in this process. It provides an example of a popular organisational practice (managing culture) to illustrate the ways in which this can be addressed within an anti-racist approach.

2 | THE TREATMENT OF RACE AND RACISM IN HRM RESEARCH AND PRACTICE

Prior to a review of the treatment of race and racism in HRM, it is necessary to clarify the scope of this article. Firstly, it is important to note that the issues under discussion are not peculiar to HRM scholarship but are equally applicable to organisation and management research. In this regard, the neglect of race and racism in management and organisation research has been highlighted in other contexts (see Cooke, 2003; Cox, 2004; Cox & Nkomo, 1990). Secondly, it is necessary to note that racism is not the only factor that could explain labour market disadvantages and that scholars have identified other factors which may help to account for some of the difficulties that racial and ethnic minorities encounter in society and organisations. These factors include higher levels of poverty and deprivation and lower levels of access to human capital, social capital and cultural capital (see discussion in Ogbonna, 2019). However, while these factors could potentially impact both the white majority and racial minorities, the consequences are more likely to be profound for racial minorities because of the additional burden of racism. It is for this and other reasons that scholars have called for intersectional analyses to capture the full extent of the interaction of socio-demographic factors with race to produce outcomes (see Crenshaw, 1989).

Finally, it is useful to clarify the key constructs that are used in this article. In keeping with contemporary understanding, race is defined in this article as a socio-political construct, a human-invented system of classification for the purposes of social stratification and control (see Acker, 2006; Omi & Winant, 2014); racism (or racial discrimination) refers to the unequal treatment of people based on their race. Institutional racism denotes racially discriminating practices that are embedded in institutional policies and cultural norms in ways that become taken-for-granted and expressed through structures, systems, processes and behaviours (see Clair & Denis, 2015). Racialisation is the process of constructing racial meaning and racial categories as well as assigning relative values and significance to the categories (see Murji & Solomos, 2005), while anti-racism is an active, ongoing process of actively eliminating the effects of racialisation (see Bonilla-Silva, 2006; Ray, 2019). Finally, culture refers to the values, beliefs and assumptions that are shared by a given group and that help them to respond appropriately to their environment (see Schein, 1985). Managing culture in organisations is the conscious attempts of managers to direct culture to a desired direction.

2.1 | The treatment of race and racism in HRM research

To help in understanding the treatment of race and racism in the HRM academy, it is useful to review the research contributions that have explored race and racism since 1990. I chose this timeline to coincide with the launch of

HRM Journal and to be able to provide a suitable contrast across the decades leading to the COVID-19 pandemic and the pledge by many institutions and academies to do more to understand and eliminate racial barriers. The review presented here is based on database searches of the two leading journals in the field of HRM, *HRMJ* and *HRM*. The searches covered articles published in the journals between January 1990 and June 2024 with the keywords of race and racism in the titles. I included 'ethnic minorities' in the searches to ensure that I did not omit articles that were primarily on race as the terms 'ethnic minority' and 'race' are sometimes used interchangeably. A search of the *HRMJ* database uncovered a total of 26 articles and a search of the *HRM* database revealed a total of 29 articles. However, a review of these articles revealed that only 13 articles in *HRMJ* and 11 articles in *HRM* were substantially devoted to race, thereby reducing the total number of articles that were published on race and racism in these two flagship HRM journals since 1990 to 24. Table 1 provides illustrative summaries of the articles reviewed.

Table 1 shows that of the 24 articles that were devoted substantially to race and racism in two of the flagship journals in HRM, three were published between 1990 and 1999, while seven were published in the period between 2000 and 2009. This compares with the six that were published between 2010 and 2019 and the eight that have been published since the pandemic in 2020 to the first six months of 2024. It is possible to separate research contributions on race in HRM and *HRMJ* over the past 33 and one half years into three broad and loosely approximate categories. The first and most prominent category comprises the series of studies that were designed to test race discrimination in organisations (for example Bendick Jr. et al., 1991; Noon, 1993; Derous & Ryan, 2019), as well as how this discrimination is manifested (see Cocchiara et al., 2014; Oikelome & Healy, 2007; Sabat et al., 2021). While there are hints of optimism in some studies (e.g. Corrington et al., 2022; Hoque & Noon, 1999), the preponderance of articles point to the continuation of racial discrimination in work organisations (see Bendick Jr. et al., 1991; Goldberg & Allen, 2008) and the pernicious effects of such racism (e.g. Sabat et al., 2021).

The second category of research publications can be categorised loosely as studies that adopt equality, diversity and inclusion approaches to different degrees in their conceptualisations. These include research contributions that explore the benefits of equality, diversity and inclusion of racial and ethnic minority individuals (e.g. Umeh et al., 2023) and businesses (Ram et al., 2023). Other contributions explore the effects of diversity on organisational outcomes (see Richard et al., 2013) as well as the difficulties of achieving diversity in organisations (see Noon & Ogbonna, 2021). Some research contributions are more critical of the diversity, equality and inclusion approaches. For example, Harris and Ogbonna (2023) demonstrate that organisational policies and practices which purport to present a fair playing field (EDI) were indirectly working against racial and ethnic minority employees in that they did not account for the impacts of pre-existing racialised power and institutional racism on organisational outcomes (see also Ray, 2019).

The final category of studies explore the impacts of race/ethnicity in combination with other variables. For example, a number of publications focus on race and politics, with the most notable being the recent study of the negative effects of Trump-supporting managers on the inclusiveness of black employees in the U.S.A (see Rice et al., 2024). However, most of the studies in this category commonly combine race/ethnicity and gender in discussions of the intersected nature of racial discrimination (see Hwang & Hoque, 2023; Kamenou & Fearfull, 2006; Syed & Murray, 2009; Tung, 2008).

Interestingly, it is the absence of studies that exclusively focus on the role of race and racism in influencing organisational and societal outcomes especially since the twin incidents of 2020 that represents the most worrying omission in these two flagship HRM journals. Specifically, it is surprising that only eight articles have been published on race and racism in these two journals since 2020. This is especially startling given the widespread acceptance by many academies that concerted efforts were required from institutions and organisations to address the problems of racism (e.g. Bapuji et al., 2020; Buchannan et al., 2021). Equally worrying is that none of the articles reviewed (especially those published after the pandemic) address the neglect of race as an important organising principle in organisations. The reasons for the relative lack of interest on race and racism in HRM research and theorising are numerous but I highlight the three that are especially pertinent to this article below.

TABLE 1 Race and racism research in HRM and HRMJ since 1990.

Authors and year	Article title	Journal	Country of study	Methodology and key theoretical Themes	Key findings
Rice et al. (2024)	'Politics and race in the workplace: Understanding how and when trump-supporting managers hinder black employees from thriving at work'	HRMJ	U.S.A.	Quantitative study of the effects of right-wing populism on equity, diversity and inclusion. Drawing from social information processing theory, the study explored the ways in which Trump-supporting managers impacted on the perceptions of inclusion by black employees.	Trump-supporting managers were evaluated lower on inclusive leadership when compared with those managers that opposed Trump. That is, being a Trump-supporting manager was perceived as consistent with being anti-black. Such environments were found to reduce the capacity of black employees to thrive.
Harris and Ogbonna (2023)	'Equal opportunities but unequal mentoring? The perceptions of mentoring by black and minority ethnic academics in the U.K. university sector'	HRMJ	U.K.	Qualitative study of the role of mentoring in promoting equality and inclusion. Drawing from the literature on mentoring and relational demography, the study explored the perceptions of mentoring by black and minority ethnic academics.	The lived experiences of black and minority ethnic academics suggest that mentoring does not work for them in the ways in which it works for white academics. The university context, the mentoring approaches adopted and the racial dissimilarity with their white mentors were perceived as combining to disadvantage black and ethnic minority career aspirants.
Hwang and Hoque (2023)	'Gender-ethnicity intersectional variation in work-family dynamics: Family interference with work, guilt, and job satisfaction'	HRM	U.K.	Quantitative research into work-family conflict. Drawing from a mix of literature, the study presented an intersectional analysis of the impact of family interference with work and job satisfaction involving solicitors from four social groups.	The findings suggest a high level of association between family interference with work and job-related guilt, with such job-related guilt mediating the relationship between family interference with work and job satisfaction.
Umeh, Cornelius and James (2023)	'Exploring equality, diversity, and inclusion in multi-ethnic settings: A context-sensitive approach'	HRMJ	Nigeria	Qualitative study of the EDI experiences of employees in two Nigerian banks. Drawing from intersectional understanding, the study explored the lived experiences of diversity of employees from multi-ethnic backgrounds in the banking sector in a different national context.	The findings suggest that the successful application of EDI policies are contingent upon the ethnocultural dynamics of the context. Such contexts are influenced by a myriad of factors which includes the meanings and interpretations of employees and their managers.

TABLE 1 (Continued)

Authors and year	Article title	Journal	Country of study	Methodology and key theoretical Themes	Key findings
Corrington, Fa-Kaji, Hebl, Stewart and Alao (2022)	'The impact of organisational statements of support for the black community in the wake of a racial mega-threat on organisational attraction and revenue'	HRM	U.S.A.	Quantitative research into the responses of prospective and current employees to statements publicly supporting the black community following race-related mega-threats. Drawing from signalling and Pygmalion theories, the study explored employee perceptions of organisations through their support for the black community in periods of mega-threats such as the murder of George Floyd and the black lives matter movement.	The findings suggest that organisational responses to racial mega-threats matter. They can influence prospective and current employee attraction to the organisation thereby playing a potential role in influencing the financial performance of the organisation.
Ram, McCarthy, Green, Scully (2022)	'Towards a more inclusive human resource community: Engaging ethnic minority microbusinesses in human resource development programmes targeted at more productive methods of operating'	HRMJ	U.K.	Action research adopting a variety of methods of data-gathering leading to two case studies. Drawing from models of HR and employment in small firms, the study explored the role of ethnic minority microbusinesses to understand the collaborative processes that can enhance their operations.	The findings suggest that ethnic minority microbusinesses can play an important role in organisational learning and development. The study argues for a greater integration of topics that are outside the mainstream to extend HR insights and understanding.
Noon and Ogbonna (2021)	'Controlling management to deliver diversity and inclusion: Prospects and limits'	HRMJ	U.K.	Qualitative study of a large services organisation with publicly stated commitment on diversity. Drawing from agency theory, the study explored the difficulties of controlling the discretion of managers in relation to delivering (race and gender) diversity objectives.	The findings suggest that controlling managers to deliver (race and gender) diversity objectives is a difficult task that is influenced by agency issues. That is, this difficulty is accentuated by the varying individual objectives of managers and their differing interests on diversity concerns. There is no current method of regulating these to guarantee compliance.

(Continues)

TABLE 1 (Continued)

Authors and year	Article title	Journal	Country of study	Methodology and key theoretical Themes	Key findings
Sabat et al. (2021)	'Pygmalion in the pipeline: How managers' perceptions influence racial differences in turnover'	HRM	U.S.A.	Quantitative research involving employees across four time periods. The study drew from Pygmalion theory to explore the expectations of employee efficacy by leaders and the impact on individual employee internalised expectations of their own efficacy.	The findings suggest that stereotype influenced leader bias in the perception of the effectiveness of ethnic minorities can be accompanied by ineffective supervision which may have the effect of reducing the self-efficacy of the ethnic minorities in ways that can become self-fulfilling. This could also increase the turnover intentions of ethnic minority employees.
Derous and Ryan (2019)	'When your resume is (not) turning you down: Modelling ethnic bias in resume screening'	HRMJ	Review based	Review based study leading to the presentation of a three-stage model integrating theoretical explanations of resume screening to ethnic discrimination.	Identified gap in the literature on ethnic discrimination in hiring and discussed mechanisms of bias in decision-making, the ways of moderating such biases and improving the efficacy of resume screening.
Ogbonna (2019)	'The uneasy alliance of organisational culture and equal opportunities for ethnic minority groups: A British example'	HRMJ	U.K.	Review based provocation paper. Drawing on post-colonial, cultural and social capital theories, the paper explored the role of intra-organisational factors in the discrimination of ethnic minorities in the labour market.	The paper suggests that popular organisational interventions (such as culture management) are conceptualised and implemented in ways that disadvantage people from racial and ethnic minority backgrounds. It calls for greater understanding of the processes through which discrimination occur and a reconsideration of the ways in which theories are conceptualised and implemented.

TABLE 1 (Continued)

Authors and year	Article title	Journal	Country of study	Methodology and key theoretical Themes	Key findings
Breland et al. (2017)	'The effect of applicant political skill on the race dissimilarity-recruiter recommendations relationship'	HRMJ	U.S.A.	Quantitative study involving recruiters at a university in the U.S.A. Drawing from the literature on employment interviews, race dissimilarity, perceptions of fit and political influence, the study explored the effects of 'fit' in interviewing processes.	The study introduced political influence compatibility as a mediator between race dissimilarity and the decisions of hiring recruiters. The study argued that having moderate levels of political skills can help racial minorities to reverse the negative effects of disadvantages in employment interviews.
Cocchiara et al. (2014)	'Sounding 'different': The role of sociolinguistic cues in evaluating job candidates'	HRM	U.S.A.	Literature review based paper leading to a propositional inventory. Drawing on resource based view and theories of modern racism, the study explored the ways in which linguistic cues impact on discrimination in employment and the mechanisms through which such discrimination occur.	The findings suggest that decision-maker linguistic bias and the negative stereotypes they hold are likely to reduce organisational diversity and impact negatively on organisational performance.
Richard et al. (2013)	'The link between diversity and equality management practice bundles and racial diversity in the managerial ranks: Does firm size matter'	HRM	U.S.A.	Quantitative study using panel data. Drawing on theories of strategic human resource management and resource based view of the firm, the study explored the effectiveness of diversity and equality management practices in influencing racial diversity.	The findings suggest that diversity and equality management practices can impact on racial diversity but that the effect can be variable depending on the size of the firm. Diversity and equality management practices are more likely to be effective in promoting racial diversity in smaller firms.
Syed and Murray (2009)	'Combating the English language deficit: The labour market experiences of migrant women in Australia'	HRMJ	Australia	A qualitative study of migrant women in Australia. Drawing from critical race theories and post-colonial understanding, the study explored the links between gender, race, ethnicity and other dimensions of identity	The findings suggest that employment and career opportunities of migrant women from ethnic minority backgrounds in Australia are not only shaped by their knowledge, skills and abilities but are also influenced by their intersecting identity considerations and challenges embedded

(Continues)

TABLE 1 (Continued)

Authors and year	Article title	Journal	Country of study	Methodology and key theoretical Themes	Key findings
Goldberg and Allen (2008)	'Black and white and read all over: Race differences in reactions to recruitment web sites'	HRM	U.S.A.	in understanding the career trajectory of migrant women in a host country. Quantitative study of randomly selected people assigned to navigate specific websites. Drawing from signalling theory, the study explored the influence of race on job-seekers responses to web-based advertising.	within the macro-national, meso-organisational and micro-individual levels. The findings suggest that the race of an applicant plays a major role in influencing the applicant's engagement and responses to the design of particular web sites as well as their attitude towards particular organisations.
Murrell, Blake-Beard, Porter Jr. and Williamson (2008)	'Interorganisational formal mentoring: Breaking the concrete ceiling sometimes requires support from the outside'	HRM	U.S.A.	Longitudinal, multi-method study comprising interviews, surveys and focus group analyses. Drawing on mentoring literature, the study explored formal mentoring relationships across organisational boundaries.	The findings suggest that executive career aspirants from African American backgrounds benefitted from interorganisational mentoring programmes that involved racially demographically similar mentors. This also helps to explain the role of mentoring in potentially transcending the boundaries of the career-seeker's organisation.
Tung (2008)	'Do race and gender matter in international assignments to/from Asia Pacific? An exploratory study of attitudes among Chinese and Korean executives'	HRM	China South Korea	Scenario-based profile evaluation involving MBA students. Drawing from theorise of discrimination, the study explored the role of gender and race in international assignments with particular emphasis on China and South Korea.	The findings suggest that while China is known for its traditional attitudes, race and gender emerged to be less salient (in contrast with South Korea) in influencing decision-makers in relation to selection for executive positions.
Williamson et al. (2008)	'The effect of explanations on prospective applicants' reactions to firm diversity practices'	HRM	U.S.A.	Quantitative study of students at three universities supplemented by qualitative data. Drawing from literature on recruitment, marketing and diversity, the study	The findings suggest that race is a key moderator of prospective applicants' attraction to diversity messages of prospective organisations. This perception is also heavily influenced by the applicants'

TABLE 1 (Continued)

Authors and year	Article title	Journal	Country of study	Methodology and key theoretical Themes	Key findings
Oikelome and Healy (2007)	'Second-class doctors? The impact of a professional career structure on the employment conditions of overseas- and U.K.-qualified doctors'	HRMJ	U.K.	explored the influences of diversity practices on organisational attractiveness. Quantitative study of the career experiences of Staff and associate Specialists in the medical profession in the U.K. Drawing from the literature on equal opportunities and institutional racism, the study explored the role of specific career structures in promoting and embedding racism.	previous experience of discrimination in organisations. The findings suggest that overseas qualified doctors experience systemic racism and disadvantage in comparison with their U.K. qualified counterparts. Such racism was reflected in the career structures and adverse conditions of employment.
Kamenou and Fearfull (2006)	'Ethnic minority women: A lost voice in HRM'	HRMJ	U.K.	Qualitative interview-based study of 26 participants. Drawing from multiple theories linked to identity and discrimination, the study explored the experiences of ethnic minority women in organisations.	The findings suggest that ethnic minority women experience additional labour market disadvantages that arise from the pressures to fit into environments and activities that typically conflict with their own values.
Strauss and Connerley (2003)	'Demographics, personality, contact and universal-diverse orientation: An exploratory examination'	HRM	U.S.A.	Quantitative study of university students in the Eastern parts of U.S.A. Drawing from a range of psychological theories, the study explored the relationships between race, gender, agreeableness, openness to experience, contact and attitude towards diversity (measured through universal-diverse orientation).	The findings suggest associations between race, agreeableness and openness and attitude towards diversity. The study argues that organisations should consider selecting people on the basis of agreeableness as agreeable people are more likely to be positive about diversity and that this helps to reduce the levels of discrimination against women and racial minorities.
Hoque and Noon (1999)	'Racial discrimination in speculative applications: New optimism 6 years on?'	HRMJ	U.K.	Quantitative study designed to test racial discrimination in the labour market.	The findings suggest that top companies were less likely to discriminate against applicants from ethnic minority

(Continues)

TABLE 1 (Continued)

Authors and year	Article title	Journal	Country of study	Methodology and key theoretical Themes	Key findings
Noon (1993)	'Racial discrimination in speculative application: Evidence from U.K.'s top 100 firms'	HRMJ	U.K.	Drawing from theories of labour market discrimination, the study sought to replicate a previous study of speculative applications by career aspirants Noon (1993). A quantitative study of the discriminatory practices of the top 100 U.K. firms. Drawing from a review of the literature on discrimination and inequality, the study presents the findings of an investigation into the equality of opportunity practices of top U.K. firms.	backgrounds in comparison with the findings of the original study in 1993. The study found evidence of discrimination against the candidates that were identifiable (through their names) from ethnic minority backgrounds.
Bendick, Jr., Jackson, Reinoso and Hodges (1991)	'Discrimination against Latino job applicants: A controlled experiment'	HRM	U.S.A.	A quantitative study involving controlled experiment of job seekers. Drawing from research into employment discrimination, the study involved employment testing of matched fictitious sample of white and Latino career aspirants.	The findings suggest that Latino job seekers in the area studied experienced discrimination 22.4% of the times they applied for jobs. This discrimination was more likely to impact Latino males, with the average Latino male applicant being twice as likely to experience discrimination in comparison with their white counterparts.

2.2 | The limits of EDI approaches in addressing racism

Equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) approaches have been important sources of knowledge and interest in exploring racial discrimination in HRM scholarship (for example, Richard et al., 2013; Noon & Ogbonna, 2021; Umeh et al., 2023). However, it is arguable that the ways in which these approaches have been deployed in HRM scholarship have also played a role in undermining the status of and interest into race and racism. By subsuming race and ethnicity alongside other socio-demographic characteristics or 'diversities' to the understanding diverse interests in organisations, EDI approaches are criticised for the way they treat race a neutral variable, alongside a host of other neutral variables. The argument is that these approaches fail to account for the multiple peculiarities that distinguish race as both intractable and particularly pernicious source of discrimination (see Buckner et al., 2021), or to embrace the centrality of race in influencing outcomes in HRM.

To put the above discussion in context, a number of scholars have highlighted the pivotal position of race as a marker of identity and one which is key to forming perceptions of similarity and dissimilarity (see Ashforth & Mael, 1989). Others have built on this line of reasoning by positioning racism as a stronger predictor of individual discriminatory behaviour than other bases of identity (see Jones et al., 2017), yet EDI approaches commonly fail to make these distinctions. Indeed, it has been argued that in celebrating individual differences, EDI approaches have generally stayed silent on the inherent problems associated with the individual components that make up these categories (see Hartmann, 2015) and have been particularly mute on the way race loses out in competition with other diversities (e.g. Bereni et al., 2020; Bhopal & Henderson, 2021). One example of how this plays out in practice can be seen in a recent report in which U.K. universities admitted to routinely adopting policies which favour dealing with sexual harassment in contrast to dealing with racism, even when racism has been identified as more deeply embedded and damaging in such institutions (see Universities UK, 2019). Indeed, by advocating individual attributes as the bases of identity distinctions, EDI approaches are potentially undermining the specific cases of in-born or natural characteristics (see Roberson, 2019) such as gender (see Kirton & Greene, 2010) but especially race (e.g. Bereni et al., 2020; Thomas, 2018). Others have argued that by not paying attention to historically racialised power relations, EDI approaches are failing to uncover the attitudinal bases of prejudice and the ways in which these influence the normative processes that underpin interactions and outcomes (see Dobbin & Kalev, 2016). Overlooking race in decision-making in a racialised society is tantamount to endorsing a 'colour-blind' approach which is another important explanatory factor to which I turn.

2.3 | HRM and colour-blindness

An example of an approach that minimises the unfairness of racial discrimination and which has been discussed in fields such as sociology and education but which is relatively overlooked in HRM research is 'colour-blind' racism. Specifically, researchers in these fields have highlighted the tendency for people in positions of power and influence (typically white managers and academics for our purpose) to view race as irrelevant in influencing individual and organisational outcomes, thereby adopting a 'colour-blind' philosophy in their treatment of race (see Bonnila-Silva, 2006; Ray, 2019). Although it is seemingly idealistic to adopt a position that suggests that we live in a post racial society, scholars have argued that this has enabled the dominant racial group (in this case whites) to engage in behaviours which may appear neutral but which have the implication of generating outcomes that are racially prejudicial (see Bonilla-Silva, 2021).

While the dangers of colour-blind philosophy for racial equity have not been addressed in HRM scholarship, it is possible to draw examples from other academies to see the potential effects of this. For example, there are extensive studies in education research that show the damaging effects of this ideology on the education of young racial and ethnic minority people (e.g. Flintoff & Dowling, 2019). One example of the ubiquity and potentially damaging impact of colour-blind ideology can be seen in how this played out in the recent denial of racism by the

editors of one of the world's most prestigious medical journals (Journal of American Medical Association). The editors rejected the idea that institutional racism existed in the medical profession simply on the basis of their belief that doctors were colour-blind (see Gravlee, 2021). Such racism denial in the face ample evidence of racism in the medical profession (e.g. Sjoding et al., 2020) provides an insight into how colour-blindness can promote and perpetuate existing racialised order. This also points to the potential that editors and reviewers who adopt this ideology may be contributing to the maintenance of racialisation (the status quo) regardless of the official EDI policies of journals.

2.4 | Implicit bias and stigmatisation

The final reason offered in this article for the relative lack of attention to race and racism in HRM scholarship is potentially more profound and is related to the impact of the implicit bias and stigmatisation that may be associated with scholars and papers that explore issues of race and racism. Researchers have already highlighted the nature of bias that may exist against academics from racial minority backgrounds (e.g. Bhopal, 2022; Harris & Ogbonna, 2023). For example, there is a common expectation that academics from racial minority backgrounds will teach and research diversity topics. It is perhaps for this and other reasons that diversity topics are commonly perceived as lacking rigour and prestige, with such work frequently undervalued in academies (see King et al., 2018; Turner & Myers, 2008).

A recent contribution by Ng (2024) presents empirical evidence derived from citation analysis of 46,930 papers published in 29 management industrial organisational journals (including HRM journals) to argue that diversity research (including race) are significantly cited less than papers in other areas. This results in the marginalisation of diversity research leading to lower scholarly impact of diversity scholars. This also has the tendency to contribute to the potential for 'stigma by association' wherein reviewers associate papers on diversity (for example articles on race and racism) with academics from already stigmatised racial minority backgrounds, thereby undermining the chances of acceptance and or the scholarly impacts of such contributions. Overall, the low acceptance and low citation rates of such papers can act as disincentives to aspiring academics, thereby reducing the supply of scholarly works and stifling the development of theories that may help to explain racism (see Ng, 2024).

Although Ng's (2024) study explored diversity papers widely defined, it seems likely that the findings will be even more applicable to race. This is because of the low numbers of racial minorities that occupy senior positions, ergo, decision-makers in journals either as editorial board members or as editors. These findings are consistent with research contributions which document the disadvantages that racial minority academics experience in other areas of the academic labour process (see Harris & Ogbonna, 2023), with some viewing such treatment as part of the wider attempts of excluding or marginalising racial minority academics to protect existing racialised power balance in institutions (see Bhopal, 2022).

This article has so far presented evidence to show that there is limited scholarly interest on race and racism in HRM and it has offered some possible reasons for this. It is necessary to gauge the extent to which the current position of race scholarship is reflected in the treatment of race in organisations. What follows is a brief overview of the state of race and racism in organisations and society with emphasis on the U.K.

2.5 | Continuing impacts of racism in society and organisations

While space restrictions preclude a full discussion of how organisational and societal practices and outcomes are racialised, it is useful to highlight some of the headline indicators of this racialisation. For example, official U.K. Government statistics indicate that people from racial and ethnic minority backgrounds are typically twice (and sometimes thrice) as likely to be unemployed as their white counterparts, with current rates at 3% for white ethnic

majority and 9% and 7% for Bangladeshi and black groups respectively (see ONS, 2024). Individuals from racial and ethnic minority backgrounds who find themselves in work are less likely to be promoted to senior levels, with data suggesting that only 7% of FTSE 100 directors are British racial minorities (see Tyler, 2024 - The Parker Report). Similarly, racial and ethnic minority workers are likely to be paid less than their white counterparts for performing the same roles, with findings that black doctors typically earn £10,000 less than white doctors, and that black nurses commonly earn £2700 less than their white counterparts providing instructive illustrations (see Blanchard, 2018). A survey by The GMB union found that racial and ethnic minority workers in the public sector in London commonly take home an average of 37% less than their white counterparts (GMB, 2024). Indeed, estimates by Resolution Foundation suggest that the pay gap between racial and ethnic minority groups and their white counterparts could be a staggering £3.2bn (Henehan & Rose, 2018).

Racialised anomalies are also evident in outcomes in other areas of life. For example, in healthcare, black women are up to four times more likely to die in childbirth, and Asian women up to two times more likely to die than white women (see Mundasad, 2021). Evidence also suggests that diseases which predominantly affect people from racial and ethnic minority backgrounds (such as sickle cell anaemia) receive less funding and interventions in comparison with diseases which affect white ethnic groups predominantly (see Lay, 2021). Racialised treatment has also been evident in the official responses to the coronavirus pandemic in that while studies revealed that age and race/ethnicity were the key risk factors of dying from COVID-19, age (but not race/ethnicity) was prioritised for vaccination following the discovery of a vaccine (see Public Health England, 2021). In law and order, statistics reveal that racial and ethnic minorities are over-represented in the criminal justice system, with race and ethnicity increasing the odds of receiving custodial sentence as well as the time served (ONS, 2022).

Interestingly, these developments have continued despite the understanding that eradicating racism is not only beneficial to racial and ethnic minorities; other groups in society are just as likely to derive benefits from this. For example, a government-sponsored study by McGregor-Smith (2017) concluded that the total cost of denying racial and ethnic minority workers full participation in the U.K. economy is a bewildering £32bn annually. This huge sum could impact positively on the lives of everyone in society. A different study by Henley Business School also concluded that organisations which have targeted measures to improve racial equality commonly outperform those that do not have such measures with an average of 58% higher revenues (see McCulloch, 2021).

The brief review above demonstrates that race and racism continue to be defining characteristics of many aspects of society and work organisations. These issues were not previously viewed as important in that there was a 'silence around race' (see Ogbonna, 2019). However, as I discuss in what follows, the pandemic and the killing of George Floyd laid the pernicious effects of racism bare and prompted organisations and institutions to act.

2.6 | 2020: A year of reckoning for race and racism

The racialised outcomes highlighted in this article have been evident in organisations and societies in different guises for several generations and have, in many respects, become taken-for-granted as aspects of reality. However, the injustices they represent were elevated to a new and wider level of consciousness by two important events in 2020 which shone light on the egregious nature and consequences of racism and encouraged debates on the actions that were required to eradicate such racism. The first was the brutal killing of a black man, George Floyd, by a policeman in the U.S.A (see New York Times, 2021). The savage nature of this murder by a seemingly uncaring white policeman, who seemed oblivious to Floyd's pain and pleadings for mercy, provided a glimpse of the institutionalised nature of racialised policing in America but one which reverberated across the world. The graphic and horrific nature of this murder was met with incongruity and moral outrage by predominantly (but not exclusively) young social media users who joined part of the largest race protests since the civil rights movements. Arguably, these protests were as profound as the civil rights movement but were marked by wider participation

around the world and across racial divide, with people from white ethnic background matching alongside people from racial and ethnic minority backgrounds in solidarity for racial justice (see Guzman, 2020).

The second factor that contributed to the heightened level of race consciousness was the emergence of data which revealed the disproportionate impacts of the coronavirus pandemic on people from racial and ethnic minority backgrounds in 2020. Early statistics suggested that black people, for example, were up to four times more likely to die from the pandemic than their white counterparts (see Booth & Caelainn, 2020). Initial attempts to explain this anomaly pointed to variables that were presented as commonly associated with people from racial and ethnic minority backgrounds such as higher levels of exposure to contexts where the virus was likely to be prevalent, higher levels of housing over-crowding, higher incidents of comorbidities that were associated with risks of dying from the disease. However, these reports also highlighted the likelihood that 'unexplained factors' were playing a crucial role in the disproportionate outcomes (see Patel et al., 2020). Later analyses found inconclusive evidence on the influence of the aforementioned health and economic related factors and assigned higher weighting to the 'unexplained factors' (e.g. Ravi, 2020). Further, a BBC Television investigation revealed that while 44% of the medical doctors working in the U.K. NHS were from racial and ethnic minority backgrounds, a staggering 95% of the medical doctors that died from the pandemic at the time were from racial and ethnic minority groups (BBC, 2021), suggesting that social class, occupation, income or education levels do not shield people from the health effects of racism (see Simons et al., 2018).

A wider investigation into the racially disproportionate outcomes from COVID-19 commissioned by the Welsh Government linked the 'unexplained factors' to the effects of pre-existing structural and institutional racism (see Ogbonna, 2020). Further evidence which may help to illustrate the finding of institutional racism arises from the medical diagnostic equipment (pulse oximetry) which played a major role in triaging patients to prioritise emergency treatment during the pandemic. Pulse oximetry was designed for white skin and was essentially 'racially biased' (see Sjoding et al., 2020). However, clinicians relied on the potentially inaccurate readings and failed to prioritise gravely ill racial minorities for treatment that might have saved their lives. In this regard, the COVID-19 experience suggests that being from racial and ethnic minority backgrounds exposed individuals to pernicious racism which either killed them directly (for example, by not receiving appropriate treatment or by being more likely to be put on the frontline of the disease without appropriate protective equipment), or which killed them indirectly, through the enhanced stress and anxiety levels induced by racism, and which weakened their immune responses and their capacity to cope with the virus (see Wakeel & Njoku, 2021). The significant role of stress and anxiety in racism is illustrated by emerging research contributions which link repeated exposure to racism to post traumatic stress disorder, illustrating that victims of racism can suffer premature ageing and even early death (see Williams et al., 2019).

The killing of George Floyd and the disproportionate outcomes from the coronavirus pandemic in 2020 shone light on the consequences of racism and led to widespread calls for concerted actions to eradicate it. The remaining parts of this article will discuss the nature of the change that is required to achieve this objective as well the integral role that HRM scholarship can play in this process.

3 | TIME FOR CHANGE: TIME FOR ANTI-RACISM

It is arguable that the events of 2020 presented an unprecedented opportunity to address historic racial disparities and injustices. However, while there have been some examples of allyship through scholarship and in the actions of some managers and organisations, these have been largely sporadic, and have not been sufficiently strong to address such complex and intractable problem of institutional racism in organisations and society. It is also arguable that the likelihood of generating anti-racism in the current context is restricted because HRM scholars, and especially managers, are continuing to work within their traditional frameworks and orthodoxies which have, in

many respects, served to reproduce existing racialised orders, and which have already proved ineffectual in changing the dynamics of racism (see also Bonilla-Silva, 2022).

Acknowledging the magnitude of racism is an acceptance that previous approaches have failed and that eradicating such racism requires radical action. Such approach, anti-racism, is defined as 'actively identifying and eradicating the systems, structures and processes that produce radically differential outcomes for ethnic minority groups' (Anti-Racist Wales Action Plan, 2022, p. 10) and is required for a number of reasons. Firstly, while there has been no shortage of reports on the magnitude of racism that people from racial and ethnic minority backgrounds experience, and although there have been several recommendations for addressing such racism (for example, Parker, 2016, Beech et al., 2017; McGregor-Smith, 2017), there has been little or no sustained interventions to eradicate racism. Equality and diversity scholars have identified this as the perennial 'implementation gap' problem which is ubiquitous in managing diversity in general (e.g. Kirton et al., 2016; Noon & Ogbonna, 2021). This gap is particularly pertinent in relation to racism, and it is likely to persist unless there is radical action in ways that differ significantly from the present and the past.

A Second concern is that organisations have traditionally relied on EDI approaches to deal with racism and these have not been effective in eradicating institutional racism. As discussed earlier, these approaches are, at best, neutral in the ways they are conceived and implemented, but they fail to recognise how racialised power structures in society skew outcomes. Further, by accepting the status quo, these approaches have, by implication, shifted both the burden and blame for racism to the victims by creating a framework that purports to be fair to all but without recognising the impacts of historic and racialised institutional advantages and disadvantages. These approaches may even have the effect undermining anti-racism by projecting a veneer of equity and justice that, in reality, conceals the unfairness of the actual practices (see also Ahmed, 2009; Elias et al., 2023). Thus, it is arguable that these approaches have indirectly contributed to the legitimisation of institutionalised racism such that disproportionate outcomes are more likely to be explained in relation to deficiencies of individuals (for example, human capital, social capital or other factors) rather than by the micro and macro structures of racism that often undermine the individual agencies of racial and ethnic minorities (see also Treitler, 2015).

A final reason why a different approach is required is linked to the way in which racism is traditionally understood in organisations and society. Common understanding of racism is typically dichotomous, with individuals generally viewed as either 'racists' or 'non-racists'. This has made it difficult to appreciate the full dynamics of racism in that this understanding has, by default, presented non-racism as the opposite of racism and as the position that eradicates institutional racism. This approach has been unsuccessful because while non-racism is positive in intention, it merely denotes a state of mind in a way that may help to reduce psychological discomfort, but is commonly passive in orientation (see also Elias et al., 2023). Furthermore, non-racists are known to be susceptible to negative stereotypes of racial and ethnic minorities which are developed in young ages. These stereotypes can become parts of an individual's 'world view' or 'predictive schema' that help them to navigate life. They can be activated in situations of uncertainty or anxiety (Brief & Barsky, 2000; Page, 2007) in ways that are often explained as unconscious bias.

It is thus necessary to extend understanding of racism to reflect a continuum (rather than a dichotomy), to include the breadth of individual dispositions and proclivities to engage in racial discrimination, from racist to non-racist and, crucially, to anti-racist. This will help to show that an anti-racist position is the only position that can help to eradicate racism. This is because, unlike the passive nature of non-racism, anti-racism is an active, ongoing process of introspection and *action* to eliminate the effects of racialisation (see Bonilla-Silva, 2006; Elias et al., 2023; Ray, 2019). Thus, this position suggests that it is only by being anti-racist that individuals can avoid racism in a society where racism is institutionalised.

4 | ACHIEVING ANTI-RACISM: IMPLICATIONS FOR HRM

The forgoing discussions raises a number of implications in relation to how HRM scholars and practitioners can deal with race and in their preparedness to encourage and lead the magnitude of change that is required to eliminate racism. In this final section, I highlight some of these implications and I reflect on the ways in which HRM scholars and practitioners can take advantage of the opportunity presented by the appalling events described earlier to lead theoretical debates and organisational practices on race and anti-racism. Space restrictions are such that extended illustrations of research or practice in each of the HRM research areas cannot be provided. Instead, I draw examples from a popular HRM topic, organisational culture, which I highlighted earlier as important in understanding both the maintenance and perpetuation of racism in organisations, and in playing a potential role in driving the required change to promote and embed anti-racism.

A key implication arising from the foregoing discussion is that HRM scholars should do more to integrate and interrogate the role of race in their theorising. While many HRM scholars derive their theoretical imperatives on how societies and organisations are structured from Marxist analyses of capital and social class, there is a strong and emerging view outside traditional HRM academies that race is just as fundamental to understanding the social structures and divisions within societies (e.g. Omi & Winant, 2014; Ray, 2019). However, it is arguable that there is no more relevant academy than HRM to lead the debates and development of theories of racialisation in organisations and to develop understandings of how such racialisation impact outcomes in organisations. Such undertaking will help to incorporate the dynamics of racism into mainstream theorising in HRM rather than the peripheral position racism occupies currently, and will encourage fuller insights and understandings of the ways in which race is central to organising work and managing people. This will also provide nuanced illumination of the manifestations and consequences of race discrimination and the drive towards anti-racism.

4.1 | Beyond discrimination and victimhood

One example of how HRM scholars can lead debates on anti-racism in organisations is derived from the criticism that existing understanding of racism in society is incomplete because of the over-reliance on 'acts of discrimination' to uncover the range and pervasiveness of racism (see Bonilla-Silva, 2021; Ray, 2019). Linked to this is the tendency of HRM scholars to view studies of 'race' and 'racism' as solely about researching people from racial and ethnic minority backgrounds, with most of the research contributions focussing on racial and ethnic minorities as victims of discrimination rather than exploring the role of white people as perpetrators of racism (see also Christian et al., 2019). These suggest that much insights in HRM research may be incomplete because the few HRM scholars that work in this area generally focus on identifying direct and indirect acts of discrimination experienced by racial and ethnic minorities (for example, Kamenou & Fearfull, 2006; Harris & Ogbonna, 2023) with limited accounts of the dynamics of white racism and behaviours.

HRM scholars should explore the everyday behaviours and actions of white organisational members (as a racially dominant group), to understand how, even those who do not engage directly in racially discriminatory actions, may be complicit in maintaining racism. This requires studying white workers across all levels (from executives to the shopfloor) to understand their everyday behaviours and interactions, and how these may contribute to racialised orders and outcomes. Examples include exploring the level of interaction white workers and managers choose to develop with racial and ethnic minority colleagues, how they (white workers) choose to exercise their individual employee discretions in everyday interactions and their managerial discretionary powers, their knowledge and interest in the cultures of their racial and ethnic minority colleagues, the choices white managers and executives make regarding who they help, mentor, coach or sponsor, the stereotypes they hold about different racial and ethnic groups and their willingness to challenge them, the racial and ethnic profiles of the people they choose to interact with outside of work. The emerging insights from these introspections will help to develop

understanding of how, through what may appear to be innocuous everyday behaviours, many white people are contributing to the maintenance of social systems that perpetuate racism (see also Bonilla-Silva, 2021; Christian et al., 2019; Parker & Grimes, 2009). Overall, developing fuller insights into racial discrimination and tackling racism requires not only an understanding of the experiences of the victims of racism as is currently the case in HRM research, but also requires knowledge of the motives, rationales and actions of all the other parties that are implicated in this process (including the perpetrators, the bystanders and those who are responsible for managing the systems and processes that continue to produce racialised outcomes). Generating insights into these actions (and inactions) will help to develop theoretical and practical explanations of how and why racism has persisted in organisations and will help to show why an alternative solution that is built on anti-racism is required.

4.2 | Revisiting theories

The call for HRM scholars to lead the debates on race and racism in organisations suggests the need for many theoretical constructs and their applications to be revisited. Space restrictions limit the discussion in this area to one example, organisational culture, which was highlighted previously as critical in racialisation. The argument that racism is embedded in organisational cultures and in the ways organisations manage their cultures (see Doane, 2017; Ogbonna, 2019) suggests that the traditional conceptualisation of culture as shared values, beliefs and assumptions should be revisited to uncover the potential unfairness that arises from the commingling of organisational and societal values. This is because beliefs, values and assumptions which are deeply rooted in societal traditions and which are more easily accessible to those with ancestral heritage are commonly presented as neutral. This can generate systemic disadvantages to racial and ethnic minorities for whom some of these values, beliefs and assumptions may be alien. Practices associated with the generation of strong cultures may also result in organisational routines that undermine diversity (such as the appointment of like-minded people) while purporting to support it. Interestingly, similar concerns have also been advanced in EDI research, with Green and Kirton (2009) finding that the actions of diversity personnel are often constrained by the cultures of their organisations.

The level and approaches through which culture change is promoted and maintained are also important elements which should be scrutinised. Research contributions that explore whether organisational culture change should target deeper levels of culture or what Schein (1985) refers to as the essence of culture, or whether they should focus on behaviours (e.g. Christensen & Gordon, 1999) have already begun in HRM. These debates should be extended in relation to race and racism for three reasons. The first is that racism is manifested through normative action (see Bonilla-Silva, 2006) and it is the collective actions that support the racialisation (behaviours) which arise from these norms that have accounted for the persistence of racial prejudice in organisations. As values, beliefs and assumptions are commonly invisible, changing behaviours (which are more accessible) may be a more realistic and effective approach in managing culture, and one which may have a longer term impact in combating racism.

The second reason is that organisations have more control over the behaviours of individuals and groups since the essence of the employment contract is the organisation's undertaking to remunerate employees in return for specified behaviours. Put differently, organisations pay people for their behaviours, they do not pay for their 'hearts and minds' (read values, beliefs and assumptions) although organisations and their managers commonly expect that 'hearts and minds' will become part of the package especially where the psychological contract is strong.

Finally, behavioural change is important in this regard because previous examples of such intractable social changes in history have been achieved only through behavioural change. Examples include equal pay for men and women, and the positive outcomes arising from the linking of gender equality to the income of institutions (for example, Athena Swan - see Bernard, 2017). Although these changes have not ushered full gender equality, they have gone a long way to improving the organisational outcomes on gender equality in ways that might not have occurred had the emphasis been on generating change through encouraging men (who benefitted exclusively from such inequality) voluntarily to change their hearts and minds. Another supporting argument arising from

organisational culture research is that changing behaviours commonly have longer-term implications of changing deeper levels of culture through influencing the ways beliefs, values and assumptions are interpreted and rationalised (see Chatman & O'Reilly, 2016).

An anti-racist approach will require a re-positioning of constructs such as organisational culture and culture change in ways that recognise that some theories have strong racial undertones which should be surfaced and scrutinised. This may include adopting an approach that pays equal regard to the deep fabrics of culture (values, beliefs and basic underlying assumptions) alongside the manifestations of culture, the behavioural norms that play such pivotal role in the habituation and production of racialised order (see also Bonilla-Silva, 2021). This is not to suggest that scholars should re-define constructs such as culture that are already well established; instead, it requires extending theorising to centralise the potential harm that may arise when culture and related constructs are presented as neutral without an articulation of how access to resources that arise from these constructs are typically predicated on racialised order in society.

4.3 | Practical implications

A number of practical implications arise from the foregoing discussions. The first is in relation to what these may mean for achieving anti-racism within managing diversity/identity approaches (such as EDI). As many organisations have focussed on these approaches, it will be difficult to dismiss them entirely in any attempt to promote anti-racism. However, it is necessary to re-think the managing diversity approach to recognise that the issues of race and racism are not only deep rooted in the history of many Western societies (see Nkomo et al., 2019), but are also intractable, problematic and largely unpopular to the extent that they are likely to be marginalised in competition with other identity concerns (see Bereni et al., 2020; Bhopal & Henderson, 2021). This means that organisations wishing to eradicate racism must go beyond professing their credentials for equality, diversity and inclusion to emphasise anti-racism as part of their central initiative to promote the behaviours and (in the longer term) values that are essential for generating the normative processes that embed anti-racism.

Another implication arises from the conduciveness of internal organisational structures for whichever group of people are mandated to lead the delivery of anti-racism. The difficulties that diversity managers have in achieving EDI have been well rehearsed (see Bereni et al., 2020; Green & Kirton, 2009) and some of these have already been highlighted in this article. These suggest that an alternative approach is required to implement anti-racism. This should involve placing the mandate to implement anti-racism in the hands of senior managers and executives with power and influence. Making the achievement of anti-racism part of the key performance (and reward) indicators of senior managers and executives will ensure that anti-racism becomes part of the core organisational values and one that will, over time, be embedded in organisational cultures (see also Elias et al., 2023).

At a practical academic level, HRM researchers will benefit from collaborating with scholars in research areas which are more advanced in exploring issues of race and ethnicity in society. A search of the relevant research databases on racism reveals interesting contributions from sociology, education, psychology and health science academics. HRM researchers have commonly not collaborated sufficiently with researchers in other fields in studying race and this restricts knowledge into the dynamics of racism in organisations. Arguably, research contributions in fields allied to HRM are making important inroads in developing theoretical explanations for the processes, manifestations and dynamics of many aspects of racialisation in society. Indeed, while race research in many of these fields are not immune from criticism (for example, in the case of sociology, see Bonilla-Silva & Baiocchi, 2001, and in psychology, see Roberts et al., 2020), it remains the case that HRM scholars are the least advanced in race research and are likely to benefit from the substantially more critical attention that other fields devote to theorising race and racism. One example is to link into the growing tradition of critical race scholarship in these fields, for example, sociology (see, Ray, 2019; Bonilla-Silva, 2021), education (e.g. Bhopal, 2022) and health sciences (e.g. Colen et al., 2018), each of which is making significant theoretical advances into the dynamics and

consequences of racialisation in different facets of society. Collaborative research with scholars in these fields will generate new theoretical insights and new practical solutions as HRM scholars combine their knowledge and expertise of the intricate and complex nature of management, employment and organisations with the insights developed from societal level analyses undertaken within these fields. HRM theories will be enhanced by the development of nuanced understanding of how racially influenced privileges develop and are converted to organisational resources.

5 | CONCLUDING COMMENTS

In this article, I have argued that the current treatment of race in HRM scholarship and practice has been inadequate and that what little that has been has, at best, been informed by an erroneous view of race as neutral and irrelevant in influencing organisational outcomes. I contended that this situation presents an incomplete conceptualisation and understanding of the role of race and racialisation, and I argued that HRM scholars and practitioners should use their privileged interfacing position to play a central role in promoting the understanding of the centrality of race and racism in organisations, and in leading the efforts to eradicate racism. I offered suggestions on how this could be achieved by HRM scholars through their own theorising and/or in collaboration with researchers in other fields which are already more advanced in researching different facets of racialisation. In conclusion, it is sensible to argue that recent developments in society have unleashed 'the race genie from the bottle' and it is increasingly evident that the days in which silence was the acceptable way of dealing with race and racism are over. However, what is debateable is whether we can move beyond the superficial allyship that we have observed in many organisations and institutions to sustained action in eliminating institutional racism. HRM scholars and practitioners have a major role to play in this process by centralising race and racism in their discourses and practices and by encouraging meaningful changes in the drive to anti-racism. However, this requires a more serious attempt to grasp the opportunity fully to lead in this direction. Without establishing the appropriate credentials on race and anti-racism, HRM scholarship risks losing more credibility in this area and will be following rather than leading.

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The author declare no conflict of interest.

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