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A Duoethnographic Account of Anti-Racism Training in Counselling Pedagogy

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: As authors, we co-facilitate a teaching session on anti-racism as part of a module on ethical and cultural issues on an MA in counselling and psychotherapy in the North of England to a cohort of between 14 and 24 students. We have been ongoingly evaluating and conducting research with the student groups involved to try and improve the teaching session.

Methodology: This article reports on our duoethnographic approach to consider our learning from our pedagogical experience.

Findings: Themes emerged from our conversations using Colaizzi's phenomenological method which were: defences, pedagogies of discomfort, the work, and transformation. We also present an exhaustive description of the anti-racist work involved.

Discussion and Recommendations: We draw out implications and recommendations for an anti-racist pedagogy in counselling education, focusing on each of our responsibility to undertake the deep self-examination and listening to others that this requires.

1 | Introduction

This article welcomes practitioners and researchers at all levels who are interested in a paradigm shift towards decoloniality in research. It focuses on those interested in power-with rather than power-over communities/participants, and re-worlding forms of knowledge-making that are inclusive and exist outside dominant research methodologies. We have based the premises of our anti-racist pedagogic work on our own lived experiences as well as on the last 5 years (Denyer et al. 2022; Whitney et al. 2024). As differently racialised authors, we co-facilitate a teaching session on anti-racism as part of a module on ethical and cultural issues on an MA in counselling and psychotherapy in the North of England to a cohort of between 14 and 24 students. We have been ongoingly evaluating and conducting research with the student groups involved to try and improve the teaching session (Charura and Bushell 2023). As authors involved in a duoethnographic process, and as peers who have taught this anti-racist session, drawing from our pedagogic and clinical practice, we abide by the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC) standards of conduct performance and ethics.

This article draws on the concept of a paradigm shift to decolonising the counselling psychology and psychotherapy curriculum as an expression of the shift in the geopolitics of knowledge in which modern epistemological frameworks for knowing and understanding the world are challenged (Charura and Lago 2021). This is about no longer accepting Eurocentric research approaches, evidence and curricula perspectives as the universal and best ways of understanding the world (Charura and Lago 2021; Mignolo 2011). The theoretical models that we draw on are steeped in postmodern, decolonial antiracist practice, critical race theory and constructivist thinking. Constructivism has been defined as the process by which individuals develop their personal knowledge about reality, and in so doing, create their own reality (Becvar and Becvar 2003). Thus, a social constructivist model in our antiracist training for therapists is based on the assertion that the mutual or shared meaning making between learners is expressed through a system of language and in which we hear, and make sense of, each other's narratives, experiences and worldviews. This process involves mutual deconstruction and reconstruction of meanings that were initially developed in adaptive response to an environment

Summary

- The work of anti-racism is a relentless responsibility for counsellors and psychotherapists.
- This work is an opportunity for both improved self-awareness and more mutual relationships.
- The facilitators of this work (educators) also are responsible for doing their own work and need institutional support for this.

that may no longer serve an adaptive function. We are cognisant of the importance of taking care to find ways of critiquing, as well as finding a place for traditional psychotherapy theories to co-exist where relevant with the post-modern concepts of our narratives, meaning-making and unique worldviews (Russo and Kemmerer 2006).

1.1 | A Note on Language

Given the nature of antiracist and anti-discriminatory training, in which focus is on authenticity and paying critical attention to matters of prejudice, oppression and narratives of trauma and encounters in which we encourage vulnerabilities to be named, it is important we state our position on our use of language. We acknowledge that language evolves and changes quickly, but state that we are committed to using language in that is culturally sensitive, respectful and that facilitates discussion and openness, rather than using language which stigmatises, blames or perpetuates subjugation and oppression of others. We have chosen to use the language of 'oppressed/minoritised groups' and 'privileged/dominant groups' and/or 'white' to discuss white fragility, and 'people who experience racism', who are the 'global majority'.

2 | Method: Our Duoethnographic Approach

Using a duoethnographical approach, supported by pedagogic and psychotherapy theoretical perspectives, this paper demonstrates how a duoethnological encounter can lead to new formulations that offer new perspectives in anti-racism training in counselling education. The duoethnographical approach was first described by Norris and Sawyer in 2003 (Breault 2016; Norris et al. 2012). This approach allowed us to reflect on our joint teaching and research anti-racist practice within counselling and psychotherapy training over the last 5 years (Denyer et al. 2022; Whitney et al. 2024). We met every month for a six month period to discuss our experiences relating to our personal and professional development in engaging with decoloniality orientated communities of practice. We also discussed ways of improving our co-taught sessions in facilitating anti-racist and anti-discriminatory practice in psychotherapy trainees. Thus, this duoethnography method was befitting to our focus on pedagogic approaches, curriculum development, process, decision on key topics for facilitating learning and including trainees in developing the curriculum. The duoethnography process has been adopted elsewhere in the form of 'speaking turns,' reflecting that, through its use of dialogical encounters over time, potent themes can be co-created which influence and impact psychotherapy practice (Charura and Bushell 2023; Charura and Smith 2024; Hills et al. 2023; O'Brien and Charura 2024). We therefore adopted duoethnography as it facilitates collaborative field testing and the bringing together of autoethnography, autobiography, self-study, life history and because of its emphasis on our interacting narratives as the site of pedagogical framework development (Breault 2016).

2.1 | Colaizzi's Phenomenological Method

As a duoethnography method is a dialogic research method, a method of data analysis is also required. We adopted Colaizzi's (1978) phenomenological method, following its seven-step descriptive process:

1. Familiarisation: Firstly, we independently read through all the data.
2. Identifying Significant Statements: We then identified key phrases or quotes that directly relate to our focus of anti-racist pedagogy.
3. Formulating Meanings: We interpreted the underlying meanings of each of the selected statements.
4. Organising into Theme Clusters: We independently grouped the formulated meanings into themes that reflected common patterns.

After this process, we then met a number of times, each meeting lasting up to 1.5 h, and agreed on themes together.

5. Developing an Exhaustive Description: At this point, we wrote a comprehensive narrative that captured the essence of the anti-racist pedagogy based on the themes.
6. Producing the Fundamental Structure: We then distilled this narrative into a concise statement encapsulating the core of our experience facilitating anti-racist education in counselling and psychotherapy.
7. Validation by Participants: As we are the participants, we continued to reflect on the validity, our lived experiences, and more general applicability of our findings.

3 | Themes

From our data (transcripts of discussions), we conceptualised four main themes, as noted in Table 1.

The themes are: defences, pedagogies of discomfort, the work, and transformation. We will describe each of these and their subthemes below.

The theme of defences has three subthemes: shame, professional/organisational defences and preparation for defences. The second main theme of pedagogies of discomfort has subthemes of: responsibility, admissions, differentiation and hermeneutic of trust (blame/responsibility). The third theme, the work has

TABLE 1 | Themes and subthemes.

Theme	Subtheme
Defences (protecting ourselves from painful realisations about the self or how we are situated or perceived)	i. Shame (from being oppressed or oppressor)
	ii. Professional/organisational defences (protecting profession or organisation's public face)
	iii. Preparation for defences (anticipating, normalising and warning in advance)
Pedagogies of discomfort (staying with uncomfortable emotions and perceptions)	i. Responsibility (individual imperative for self-examination)
	ii. Admissions (assessing for readiness to undertake deep self-examination work)
	iii. Differentiation and Hermeneutic of trust (blame/responsibility) (acknowledgement of different positions and stages in work and necessity for trust to do work)
The work (what this anti-racist process involves)	i. Deep Work (deep self-examination and listening to others)
	ii. Pedagogical approaches (ontology and epistemology)
Transformation (deep realisations that translate to practice)	Encounter (not didactic, but dialogical and really meeting the other)

two subthemes of deep work and pedagogical approaches. The final theme of transformation has one subtheme of encounter.

3.1 | Defences

Defences are a part of intra and inter-relating between self and others and serve to protect ourselves from fully experiencing material that might be too painful, raw or cause too much discomfort. Thus, the defence has a function to preserve our self-concept (Rogers 1959). Defences are activated when we feel under threat, which may be apparent physiologically or through emotional dysregulation. The challenge is to become aware, to notice and stay with curiosity and without judgement with what arises in the provocation of these defences, including automatic responses. At the same time, defences can also protect us from colonisation, preserving our autonomy and right to define ourselves. The challenge in this work is to encourage participants to let go of defences enough to learn about ourselves in relation to others, whilst not losing our own experiences.

One of the excerpts we noted from our dialogue relating to defences follows:

***D*:** My experience of the consequences of defences coming up is a removal from a relationship. However it is important to note that being aware of defences is important for the work.... I want the trainees to notice rather than repress the defence A pedagogy of discomfort cannot be without emergence of defences, but ...it's not about not provoking defences, but making sure people don't stay in them.

Defences are contagious; the defences of another are very likely to provoke our own defences, creating a vicious circle of inauthenticity, not listening, blame and increasing rupture. Like judgements, the acknowledgement of defences, rather than trying to not have them, is essential. We aim to facilitate students to move from defence to openness to vulnerability. Yancy (2015b) refers to this process of moving from defences to openness and vulnerability as 'de-suturing', which describes the painful process of noting, acknowledging and problematising the way our automatic thinking, feeling and responding is structured by racism. He describes the common white defence (or fragility; DiAngelo 2019) of 'suturing' racism and white supremacy firmly back in place when faced with attack or criticism and instead advocates for 'complicating the white self' (Yancy 2008) and 'staying in the anguish of being a problem' (Yancy 2015b). He explains: 'I ask that you try to be "un-sutured." If that term brings to mind a state of pain, open flesh, it is meant to do so. After all, it is painful to let go of your "white innocence," to use this letter as a mirror, one that refuses to show you what you want to see, one that demands that you look at the lies that you tell yourself so that you don't feel the weight of responsibility for those who live under the yoke of whiteness, your whiteness' (Yancy 2015b).

3.1.1 | Shame and Defences

Assuming we disagree with systems of inequality and share a belief in the inherent equal value of all, being part of a system that creates inequalities brings discomfort, and likely emotionally intense experiences. Facing our places in systems of oppression and privilege inevitably comes with shame and guilt. Being part of a privileged group or majority group brings an awareness of unearned benefits to oneself at the cost of the pain caused to those who are simultaneously oppressed. It is difficult to work out the level of guilt and how to take up degrees of responsibility when you individually or personally did not set up the system. At the same time, this work involves an increasing awareness of our own introjected prejudices, from living in the oppressive society, which usually conflicts with our ideal selves or the people we think we are or want to be. Dealing with this guilt can result in projection of these difficult feelings onto minoritised people,

who then carry the emotional labour for dealing with all these oppressive systems.

Being part of a minoritised or oppressed group can also induct feelings and experiences of shame and guilt. Carrying the impact of oppression and discrimination means one is already defined as 'other' and 'the problem', but then must both identify the problem and then likely be blamed for bringing it up. Shame arises inherently from being identified as 'other than the norm'. This shame often goes back a long way, with an accumulation of experiences of, for example, microaggressions, and experiences of being othered and experiencing the pain of difference. In addition, experiencing oppression carries with it being the one who 'raises' areas that those from the majority group must see and address. Often, this is a double jeopardy in that not only does one have to carry the impact of oppression and discrimination, but one can feel positioned to be, at the same time, the guardian for appropriate behaviour. The shame is exacerbated by often then having to deal with denial (and explanations and defences for inappropriate behaviour).

Although we are identifying this as shame, the experience may not manifest, or be articulated or understood, as shame. Shame can present as silence, sadness, anger, or even humour as we defend ourselves against shame, so it's not necessarily easy to spot and can often be denied. Shame can be further compounded by feeling shame about shame. Experiences of shame can result in somatisation, with physical responses to the emotional experience that may or may not be identified with the cause in an oppressive experience.

The particular difficulty in dealing with shame is the impact it has on withdrawal from connection. Shame often manifests as a wish to hide, to become invisible. Staying in relationship whilst feeling this demands a high level of self-awareness and shame-tolerance which needs to be developed and practised. Furthermore, being ashamed of feeling shame or feeling like a victim can result in feeling disempowered and silent, further compounding the dynamics of oppression. The challenge here is to be able to experience shame without this resulting in withdrawal from complete worthlessness (self-blame), or externalising through anger, revenge and oppressing the other in turn. We draw here from our duoethnography dialogue in which G. noted:

***G*:** I think shame is a big part of the defences that mean things get stuck and people don't go further with it so I don't know if it's about how to go to discomfort without shame or if there's some way that shame might be inevitable too but that it's how to make it manageable to experience that stuff without it meaning that you as a whole person are written off forever.

Our ability to recognise, acknowledge, stay with and articulate shame is the potential for change in these conversations. G. continued:

> This work involves discomfort... involves hurt... involves shame; there's no way through it and once you're in those positions of feeling discomfort that's where the movement is. So it's... there's something about holding on to... it's like the old therapy motto... no pain no gain. Once you're feeling something, you know something can come out of it.

In our discussion, we asked each other the question: How can we stay with our own shame and articulate our own truths whilst remaining in connection and curious about the other?

***G*:** I think the only way through shame is shared humanity and being able to be exposed in shame to know that it's about the fragility of our flawed humanity that we all share and being able to see that in all of us.

***D responded*:** The deep work we each have to do is to be authentic in facing our own shame and to notice our own defences when they come up. Elsewhere myself and another colleague highlighted that the art of authentic encounter and doing the deep relational work in the arena of facing a different other is in holding the 'poison', and to know it and yet not use it to harm the other. Instead we are to see the health in the venom by recognising it as a manifestation of psychic energy, toned by our own histories.... In this way, the movement of energy that is flowing towards colonising [or oppressing] the other is restrained and placed in the inner vas (vessel) of conscious awareness, where it is held, and worked through (see Charura and Bushell 2023).

3.1.2 | Professional/Organisational Defences

Counselling and psychotherapy as a profession and its education should be well placed for dealing with defences, proclaiming to value self-awareness, self-development and openness. Yet we struggle hugely as a profession to discuss oppression. There is a contradiction between working through own prejudices and expectations that therapists are 'healthier'/'nicer'/'more moral' than the average person. In our continued dialogue, G. noted:

***G*:** And that's the problem that usually when people do their EDI (equity, diversity and inclusion) training they just get taught how to behave as though they're not they're racist they don't get taught that they and the context of the profession is inherently racist and that they need to address that (Charura and Bushell 2023).

Too often, organisational challenges and dynamics suffocate the profession's best attempts to begin to address inequalities. Divisions or groups that are set up within the profession to work on EDI agendas often struggle to survive, dealing with conflict, carrying projections and usually implode.

How specific is this to race or is this experienced across all oppressions? With respect to racism, particular archetypes, fears, assumptions and stigma come into play. Whereas with ableism, the fears are of the poor, sad, afflicted, weak, fragile other (fear of vulnerability is evoked), with racism, the fears are of the savage (evoking fear of attack).

We have a responsibility as educators for dealing with organisational defences and creating space for this important work. We need to be vocal about saying something different from the business-as-usual organisational messages. We actively must contradict rather than ignore these messages which perpetuate the status quo.

3.1.3 | Prepare for Defences

In this anti-racist work, we should expect defences and it is essential to prepare for them and deal with them in the aim of getting beyond them. We prepare for these defences by anticipating and informing participants that they will likely occur. We ask all students to read Yancy's (2015a) letter prior to our session and to post a response on a shared online space. We have found this an effective way to model how to acknowledge and articulate directly including an understanding of the impact of his privilege (in this case, of being socialised as a man). He beautifully models staying with his discomfort, pain and guilt of his own privilege, to move towards taking responsibility for his complicity in this system. In response, students often talk about their own immediate defences and then begin to explore their own racism and their discomfort for taking responsibility for this.

Yancy articulates his prejudice and defences and offers an understanding for others' defences. For example, Yancy says 'What if I told you that I'm sexist? Well, I am. Yes. I said it and I mean just that. I have watched my male students squirm in their seats when I've asked them to identify and talk about their sexism. There are few men, I suspect, who would say that they are sexists, and even fewer would admit that their sexism actually oppresses women. Certainly not publicly, as I've just done. No taking it back now... It means that despite my best intentions, I perpetuate sexism every day of my life. Please don't take this as a confession for which I'm seeking forgiveness. Confessions can be easy, especially when we know that forgiveness is immediately forthcoming.'

Yancy also expresses humility, an essential value to cultivate in this work. At the same time, he expresses his commitment to the ongoing nature of this work which is never over. 'You see, the complicity, the responsibility, the pain that I cause runs deep. And, get this. I refuse to seek shelter; I refuse to live a lie. So, every day of my life I fight against the dominant male narrative, choosing to see women as subjects, not objects. But even as I fight, there are moments of failure. Just because I fight against sexism does not give me clean hands, as it were, at the end of the day; I continue to falter, and I continue to oppress. And even though the ways in which I oppress women is unintentional, this does not free me of being responsible.'

During the teaching session, space and silence can be helpful to encourage all participants to notice and increase self and intersubjective awareness. Silence can also be helpful to prepare the ground for defences to emerge and space to allow a sitting with rather than reacting. Speaking can also help us to speak out and articulate our defences and responses to others and be open to further feedback, processing and encounter. At the same time, whilst in a state of threat, language can be difficult to formulate and space and retreating to a safer place may be necessary to re-establish connection with thought and language.

3.2 | Pedagogies of Discomfort and Psychological Safety

A traditional aim or wish in education has been to create a 'safe' environment for students to express themselves without fear of judgement. We contest this.

***G*:** What is psychological safety? For whom?

***D*:** Discomfort is inherent in the process of discussing and facing some human conditions or experiences of discrimination of oppression of exclusion and of being outside.... Thus if we are to look at these matters we haven't got the privilege of whether we're comfortable or not.

It is not possible to face our experiences of living in a racist society without discomfort. 'It is impossible to make a space safe when you are talking about colonialism, racism, patriarchy, and injustice, as well as the complicated and intertwined nature of our lives and the blurry lines of oppressor and oppressed. In addition, you do not grow politically and intellectually from being safe – you grow from discomfort, dissent, and being challenged' (Falcon et al. 2014 p. 275).

In line with exploring this perspective of pedagogies of discomfort, we draw on Boler and Zembylas (2003 p. 108), who noted: 'As instructors, we hope to participate in and model the creation and sensation of these spaces so that students can create, enter and hold these spaces in their future practice.... A pedagogy of discomfort recognizes and problematizes the deeply embedded emotional dimensions that frame and shape daily habits, routines and unconscious complicity with hegemony. The purpose of attending to emotional habits as part of radical education is to draw attention to the ways in which we enact and embody dominant values and assumptions in our daily habits and routines.'

At the same time, exploration without judgement is essential.

***D*:** I think ultimately pedagogies of discomfort should be in tandem with pedagogies of love and belonging.

Please see O'Brien and Charura's (2024) work on engaging with social justice and integrating pedagogies of discomfort and love in psychotherapy.

This entails being explicit about our pedagogical ontological and epistemological stances with students at the start. Ontologically, our stances are of phenomenology, standpoint theory and social constructionism. We use the epistemologies of social justice, humanity, belonging, deconstruction, decolonising and intra/terconnectedness (Barad 2007; see Proctor 2025). This means in practice that any one individual perspective is always partial; that our aim is to hear as many perspectives and voices as possible. It is through our openness to hear and witness the other with humility, no matter how uncomfortable it feels, that we can see each other's humanity and approach a sense of our inter/intraconnectedness. At the same time, it's a process of going between the internal experiences and the outer creation of these in a double hermeneutic ad infinitum. Together, we can aim to deconstruct the origins of these individual and collective experiences in the internalisation and introjected messages we are all surrounded by. It's about challenging an attitude of blame from individuals for the messages we have internalised, but instead encouraging curiosity and responsibility to need to become more aware and challenge these messages.

This is a dual aim to create a space encouraging people to speak honestly and not respond with judgement, but also a space where challenge is possible and welcomed with curiosity. Holding in

mind that a pedagogy of discomfort as a method focuses on encouraging students to challenge and question the assumptions and beliefs that they have introjected about themselves and different others, we can see how this process can be uncomfortable. The educator's aim is not to make other people uncomfortable, but to illuminate and not avoid difficult questions and processes in relation to this. In the context of our sessions, this included taking an active stance to face the oppressor/coloniser/racist/misogynist/ableist/classist (etc.) in self and in the room rather than speak about these prejudices as things that are outside the classroom. This also involves us as the educators modelling and facilitating this process.

We also bring recognition of the traumatic experiences, historical and continued oppression, as well as discrimination experienced by individuals racialised as Black and oppressed/minoritised communities. We maintain, however, that it is not acceptable that trainees within our psychotherapy training communities be looked to for educating their white peers. Rather, we argue that the deep work to engage with the discomfort of facing one's own prejudice, and everything we have introjected which fosters racist attitudes, be faced by every one of us. This can be through, for example, therapy, personal development work and supervision.

3.2.1 | Responsibility for Own Critical Examination

We agree that this work (examining one's own places in systems of inequality and, particularly in this context, in systems of white supremacy) is essential for all counsellors and therapists. Students and counsellors/therapists are all responsible for doing their own work.

It is a privilege to choose not to do this work or avoid or deny its necessity. It involves facing and experiencing discomfort and defences and staying with them to move beyond them to new expanded understandings. To become a psychotherapist means to take on the responsibility of doing this work; it's not optional. Facilitating this pedagogically as educators involves clarity about the necessity of this work explicitly to students. As part of our duoethnographical dialogue over many months, we discussed responsibility for our own critical examination. This involved us thinking about blackness and D. reflected on his own identity and a pedagogy for Black people, why Black self-love and Race matter (Fanon and Philcox 2008; McKenzie-Mavinga 2009; Morrison 1988).

***D stated*:** I have valued Kirkland's (2021) work which argues that a pedagogy for Black people 'must always peer forward while simultaneously resisting the impulse for erasure, where race gets lost in the muddling stew of pluralism, or what is considered here to be false collectivism. By this, a pedagogy for Black people is about Black people, useful for the social, emotional, intellectual, physical, and political emancipation of not only the bruised Black body but also the tethered Black souls' (Kirkland 2021, p. 60). I am thinking here of myself, and of therapists and trainees from the global majority and whether in our teaching and learning spaces they find pedagogies that resonate with them? and with their experiences? Or whether they find attempts for erasure and projections of failures to support white fragility and silence stares when they dare speak about their experiences of oppression and a need for equity?

We draw on the work of Frantz Fanon's (Fanon, 1952) *Black skin*, *white masks,* and we see his work as central to anti-racist pedagogy as the postcolonial theory and perspectives he offers to critical race provide a foundation on which the psychological effects of colonialism and racism on Black individuals can be illuminated. In particular, we note how it is important for psychotherapeutic educators and trainees to understand how internalisation of inferiority and the desire to assimilate into white culture emerges within racialised and minoritised groups. Fanon's metaphor of the concept of 'white masks' speaks to the 'performative assimilation' that Black individuals adopt in order to navigate white-dominated societies.

Fanon stated that 'Imaginary life cannot be isolated from real life: the concrete objective world is what constantly fuels, enables, legitimates, and founds the imaginary. Imaginary consciousness is certainly unreal, but it drinks from the concrete world' (Fanon 2021, 282). Thus, for us, anti-discriminatory training faces the realities of the concrete world in which student from Black and oppressed/minoritised groups face racism and white students are often complicit and unaware of this.

We argue that without engagement from critical race perspectives, the dominance of Euro/American centric theories within psychology, counselling and psychotherapy training programmes positions learners in a space which can inadvertently perpetuate systemic and theoretical oppression. Anti-racist pedagogy, as we are presenting herein in this paper and from our work, critiques assimilationist approaches to facilitating learning. We are championing psychology and psychotherapy curricula that recognise how identity formation is shaped by systemic oppression, and acknowledges as well as embraces cultural diversity and authenticity. It is important that the classroom is also a space where students who have experienced racism and have internalised idealising whiteness can feel able to speak about their painful experiences of discrimination as well as their Black self-love. Okello and Calhoun (2024), in line with this, note that Black students conceptualise self-love as *affirmations of the Black being*, manifesting as presence, knowing, feeling, seeing, doing, and as being a person of worth.

This approach is central to decolonising the curriculum and framing the discussions on structural racism, resistance, and liberation within the contexts of psychology, counselling and psychotherapy training.

G. reflected on her whiteness and noted:

***G*:** I learned from Layla Saad's 'Me and white supremacy' what it really means to give up white privilege. Prior to reading this, I had thought what do I do with that? Does giving up white privilege mean not enjoying the things that I have, that I can do, because not everyone can have them? Because I'm really good at doing that in life anyway. Like in groups waiting until everybody's in till I can use the time. So, I really struggled with that, so I didn't know what it meant to give up white privilege but it became clear for me that what makes sense for me is not to choose to ignore racism ever. Because I'm too tired, I can't be

bothered, I've had a difficult week. And that made more sense to me; I can run with that.

We considered the interaction of these positions and the importance of us reflecting both positions for our students. G. noted the importance of her attention to dynamics of racist domination and submission and the importance of D.'s voice being prioritised in talking about the impact of racism, whereas her voice was essential to prioritise the responsibility as a white person to challenge white fragility and stay with the discomfort of being privileged in the structure of racism, whilst simultaneously taking care to not centralise the white voice.

3.2.2 | Considerations for Admissions onto Psychotherapy and Counselling Programmes

The willingness to take responsibility for doing this work must be assessed at the admissions stage for counselling education programmes. Are students ready and willing to do their own work on themselves? How can we assess this?

D. reflected on a dialogue he once had with a psychologist colleague who used to support mountaineers who wanted to climb Mount Everest and he remembers this statement form that colleague.... 'We recruit attitude to train for altitude'.

***D*:** I'm not saying you need to be levitating as you come on the training but if you can convey an attitude that is open and that is willing to learn, that is you are aligning with the social values that relay care and empathy, with social justice values and an openness to understand that you have a shadow side and you have stuff to work through, then we can facilitate you training you for altitude I think....

3.2.3 | Differentiation

It is the responsibility of educators for facilitating, scaffolding and giving students space to do the work together. What does this mean in teaching when students all have different starting points situationally, and psychologically. Whose work is being facilitated? The students from dominant or minoritised groups?

***D*:** I always really remember G. your assertion about this should be for everybody for your reflections about the black students looking after the white students and thinking do I need to do this again and this is supposed to be for everyone.

We learned from our experiences that the most obvious work was for white students to become aware of their white fragility and complicate the white self, but the risk was that this was at the expense of the students who experienced racism, who found themselves in the position of educators rather than being able to explore their own experiences of racism. As facilitators, we need to be able to hold space for all of that. We considered whether to begin the session with separate groups for students who experience racism and those who don't and then come together, but so far haven't done this due to the very small numbers of students who experience racism and the limited amount of time for this work. Each year, we consider this issue afresh and recruit feedback from the cohort.

As educators, we expect differentiation in educational discussions as all students will be in different places situationally and with respect to self and societal awareness. It involves facilitating an attitude of curiosity and openness to learn from each other, prioritise lesser heard voices and to stay with difficult experiences and emotions such as shame, guilt and anger. In acknowledging the multiple positionings, it's about promoting an attitude of working together and supporting each other to understand how we are all part of systems without individual blame but with individual and collective responsibility to contribute to a better, fairer system for all.

3.2.4 | Hermeneutic of Trust in Students and Responsibility to Clients

At the same time as emphasising the responsibility of each counsellor in training to do this work and acknowledging the different stages and positions of each student, we also need to manage our sense of urgency about this work (see Baldwin 1989) to try not to provoke more defences. Charura and Bushell (2023) highlighted an excerpt from their duoethnographic dialogue which illuminated the importance of holding the tension between continuing to be patient and trusting that students are on a journey towards understanding and will, in good faith, do the deep work to face their own unconscious biases. Yet, on the other hand, as D. noted: 'we have for too long now asked for more time on this journey towards understanding, and argued that the theory, some of which is oppressive, was written in good faith.... How long will I accept that in this case, trainees throughout our nation who are in the majority (in whichever way e.g., ethnicity, social class, etc.) need more time in their journey, when the fact is they are about to qualify and go into a multi-diverse world. I think the same applies to us all as therapists....' (p. 7) We have to challenge ourselves in holding this tension and consider what is our responsibility... response-ability?

We are aware that how to do this is not just a pedagogical issue about how best to facilitate students' learning, but our responsibility to clients that students should have to do the deep work.

G. highlighted:

> We can create a curriculum to take the horses to the water, but we can't make them drink. We can't make them drink even if they say they are wanting to drink which is tricky. And all we can do is try and create... I guess learning doesn't just happen in a vacuum does it? It's about creating an environment in which people think even if I'm not doing this now, I know where to do this to do more later. So, I guess that's why it matters is to not put people so much further into defence but to move them away from it.

We are aware that if students feel forced to do this work when they are not ready, this can instead result in 'suturing' (Yancy 2015b; see above), where defences are shored up, enabling

people to better do the tick boxes in public to 'prove they are not racist' but taking them further away from the deep work (see Proctor 2022).

***D*:** It's about capacity to hold and stay with the tensions. Because perhaps out of that something emerges.

3.3 | The Work

3.3.1 | Deep Work on Self in Relation to Other

The work, from our perspective, has two main strands: self-examination and listening to the other. The first is the necessary self-examination to understand our own identity in a socio-political context, knowing what has 'seeped into our souls' from our culture. This is deep work which takes deep courage and deep vulnerability. Yancy (2015b) explains the emotional challenge of this work as: 'staying in the anguish of being a problem'.

***D*:** I think it takes deep courage and deep vulnerability. This is why Yancy's letter is so in depth where you can say yes... I am racist... I am misogynistic and it's only when you can get down that path that deep work can begin.

***G*:** Doing your own work ... firstly it's always going a step further in understanding how you are part of this system and how you contribute to that system and how you have contributed historically how it has been and embodied in you; how you've absorbed it and what you do with it now [yeah so this is the seeping into your soul bit that the man was talking about].

The second (concurrent) part of this work is listening to the experiences of people from other parts of the system that we haven't experienced. At the same time as listening, we need to be examining what we are resistant to hearing and why.

***G*:** ...and to ask ourselves why we haven't up till now been open to listening to these voices and what assumptions we've made about what we've not wanted to know [yeah] and that's part of the first bit, that's part of the deep work given our position in that system how has that led to us not hearing stuff, not being interested.

3.3.2 | Pedagogical Approaches

The work is an indwelling of knowledge of self-experiences in one's societal positionings in relation to others. This involves facing defences, reflecting on introjections and societal conditions of worth, and facing one's own pain and wounds from being oppressed and excluded.

***D*:** This is about grappling with the ontology of self.

It includes having the curiosity, openness and willingness to encounter others' voices, taking responsibility in a dynamic ongoing way for one's own attitudes, perceptions, feelings and behaviour towards different others. We are reminded here of our colleague Peter Schmid, who, in writing about dialogical and ethical perspectives on contact and perception, postulated that this means we have a response–ability and are responsible and obliged to give them an answer and to be in solidarity. Schmid further argues that psychotherapy is therefore always simultaneously an individual, social and political way of acting (Schmid 2002).

We maintain that this response-ability is also about what theories we have introjected and accepted as truths. When we begin to do the critical work, we start the process of deconstruction, finding the limitations and exclusions, the distortions and denials in the dominant theories. Critical race theory and decolonising and beyond can be helpful here. It is also about shifting our focus through critical reflexivity and engaging diverse bodies of knowledge, many of which challenge assumptions about racial knowledge, truth and just power, and the rationality in ways that exclude some racialised communities, their bodies of knowledge and lived experience. These, for example, include hearing about experiences or narratives of racism by indigenous methodologies, and narrative frameworks.

***D*:** It's about our epistemology - what bodies of knowledge do I draw from?

We have to ask the question: Do I use my curriculum development or design in ways that influence me to approach learning spaces [including virtual spaces] to encounter others in a way that facilitates inclusive pedagogies? I personally hold both pedagogies of discomfort and pedagogies of love and do not shy away from sharing my own vulnerabilities, prejudices, as well as lived experiences of social injustice. Thus, we are talking about pedagogies of lived experience. This facilitates understanding and engagement with the complex and context-specific nature of living in a racist and discriminatory society, thereby advancing discussions and dialogues of justice and inclusion for those in the class who may have experienced racism and exclusion. Please also see applications of pedagogies of lived experience relating to people with disabilities (Hughes 2023).

We are also talking about relational pedagogies.

***G*:** Relational approaches...relationships with students, learners and with other colleagues umm and my development through that and how I challenge through that and then that fits for me into the piece of our social justice anti oppressive practice. Here, facilitators modelling an anti-oppressive approach to valuing all voices is crucial (Proctor 2019).

This work has been crucial to not do alone, to work together in allyship. This is not only due to the limited perspective of any one person in facilitating this work, but also due to the support to contain and deal with the emotional challenges involved. Working together as trainers racialised in different ways gives us the opportunity to dialogue in preparation from our different perspectives and to model this dialogue during training. We have developed trust in each other over time, knowing when each can challenge from a different position and relying on each other to support challenges.

Over the last 5 years of facilitating anti-racist training, we have learned that through this modelling and sharing how we face our own defences and do the deep and often painful work in ourselves, more emerges in the group. This often includes students opening up about their own vulnerabilities and even voicing

their shame at their own racist ideologies they have introjected from their families of origin or society. They often also voice a desire for change, to act and to stand in solidarity with those with lived experiences of racism.

3.4 | Transformation: Facing Defences and Challenging Complicity With the System

The transformation we are seeking in ourselves and our students, and experience in this work, is that through facing defences, we move towards responsibility for challenging complicity with the system. This move is explicitly towards anti-racist activism and allyship. It is unapologetically political. We encourage our students to critically analyse (which nicely fits with academic priorities), to trouble (Butler 2002), to complicate (Yancy 2015b) and to disrupt their own racialised identities.

3.4.1 | Encounter

This process of self-examination and hearing the other is described by the philosophy of encounter (Buber 1970; Schmid 2019; Proctor 2019).

When defences are acknowledged by the other, named and owned, this calls for us to encounter the other without flinching. Defences being owned is a surprise as we expect a fight or flight in this work. In our teaching, there have been moving examples of this from students:

> I have been silent because I have not known what to say or how to respond to you.

> As a mother, I feel how horrible it is to have to protect a child who is so vulnerable, I can talk about sexuality with my child, but I don't have to do that about race.

> Hearing your experience, I felt sickened but what could I possibly say that could help.

> I felt I haven't the right to say anything as white person.

When we name our conscious awareness of colonisation or oppression of the other, this calls for an authentic response, a call to encounter, a response across difference, to communion and community. It's a place where we share vulnerability, shame and humanity in all our differences. For therapists, this means articulating congruently with cultural humility, openness, honesty and curiosity.

***G*:** but I guess a big part of this is doing it in a curious way to learn and grow from it rather than a self-blaming way. OK so it's kind of trying to notice all the time what do I still not want to hear? Never thinking you've got to a point of 'oh I used to be terrible and now I'm really open' you know or something yeah, so ... always challenging complacency; the minute you're complacent and you think you've got it and you've now become anti racist you know it's time to challenge yourself yeah....

***G*:** ...and it's not doing this work alone... Knowing that you both, that you need to be doing this work with other people for your own protection and in a sense ...and to not take too much responsibility on knowing the emotional load of this work but also because you ... it's an acknowledgement of how limited we all are of approaching this just from our own positions.

3.4.2 | Exhaustive Description of Facilitating Anti-Racist Counselling Education

Doing the work of critically analysing and challenging one's own racialised identity in relation to others is essential work for all counsellors and counselling students. As educators, we must choose students for our programmes based on their demonstrated willingness, readiness and capacity to do this and then facilitate spaces where this work can be done.

We need to be prepared for students to be in a variety of stages of learning and coming from varied positions and experiences in relation to their experiences of racialisation. We need to expect and be prepared for this work to elicit defences and be able to model and explain the purpose of staying with the discomfort, pain and vulnerability that this examination entails, to help 'unsuture' (Yancy 2015b) the trappings of white supremacy. This process is likely to lead through experiences of shame and we need to be alert to stay in connection through this.

We do this work predominantly through encounter, to facilitate the necessary deep work of self-examination and listening to the other, which require courage and vulnerability. To the extent that we are able to do this, we experience transformation with our students facing defences and moving towards responsibility for challenging complicity with the system. This process is never ending and complacency is always to be challenged and replaced with humility as we all continue our journey, ideally as allies whilst acknowledging differences.

3.5 | Limitations

Our work is specific to the UK context of counselling training so is likely to be limited in its applicability to other contexts.

4 | Conclusion

There is never any conclusion to this work, however what we offer are recommendations for pedagogical practice to further the stimulus of the deep work that needs to continue.

4.1 | Reflections and Recommendations for Practice in Counselling and Psychotherapy Education

1. There is an emotional, psychological and physical impact and cost to doing this work. We must continually remind each other that NOT being silent is crucial.

2. We must challenge organisational systems as well as support and stand in solidarity with those doing the work in ways that are not just facilitating a tick box culture.

3. There is a relentlessness to the work. We note the incongruence within the field of what therapy is supposed to do versus the realities of our professional context. That is, as therapists, our response-ability must include taking a social justice stance.

4. The work is dynamic and ongoing. The decolonisation of the psychotherapy profession and theories is not the destination, it is only the first step, and we have to move beyond decolonisation.

5. We take a strength-based approach and recognise that there is also a move from relentlessness to excitement—this is where the work IS!

6. We must dare to risk encounter and getting it wrong and working through that when we do is better than staying silent and being complicit.

7. Recruiting people on the basis of them knowing that choosing to do this work is a responsibility and not an option is essential. Fostering responsibility, not blaming, is key.

8. We emphasise the importance of facilitating space for narratives, counter narratives, and dialogic encounter.

9. In our curriculum design, it is important to take positive action, to be trauma informed and to focus on challenging white fragility and hearing experiences of racism within minoritised trainees/students.

10. It is essential that staff are supported in teaching and doing this work. In our case, working together and co-teaching has been a gift to continually challenge each other but also to hold and contain the groups we have worked with.

11. Work through your own prejudice, shame, and defences and become more comfortable having discussions about race.

12. Hold the tensions between relational pedagogies of discomfort and of love, and do engage with pedagogies of lived experience.

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

Data Availability Statement

The authors have nothing to report.

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