Learning and Unlearning Whiteness

Danielle Chavrimootoo & Ross Dawson
Introductions

Danielle Chavrimootoo

• Inclusive Curriculum Practices Officer
• Ph.D. Student at Lancaster University
• Research Interests around Race, Ethnicity and Gender.
• Senior Lecturer in ITE

D.C.Chavrimootoo@LJMU.ac.uk

Ross Dawson

Senior Lecturer in English
Associate Dean Education
Faculty of Arts Professional and Social Studies
Research:
Representations of Higher Education in Film and Literature
Race in American Culture
Critical Pedagogy
Capitalism and Literature

R.A.Dawson@ljmu.ac.uk
Workshop Aims

• Enhance participants awareness of White Privilege, Critical Whiteness Theory and Critical Race Theory.

• Develop participants understanding of white privilege and considering how white privilege impacts on practice.

• Provide participants with the opportunity to develop anti racist pedagogical strategies.

• Facilitate participant’s development of Anti-Racist Reflexivity.
Activity 1

- The purpose of the “Privilege Walk Activity” is to understand;
- The complexities of privilege
- Privilege is based on being members of particular social groups
- Illuminating privilege can enable individuals to use this to work for social justice

“Any other comments” ?????
The Era of “Whitelash”? 
Critical Race Theory

- There is no biological essence of Race
- Race is socially and historically constructed
- Race is not “ethnicity”
- Colour-blindness is a delusion of white liberalism
- Race is a power relationship
- No-one is outside of race
- Whiteness is the “common sense” of racism
- Experiential counter-narratives needed to enhance the legal and institutional recognition of race and racism.
Whiteness

- Whiteness is **multidimensional, complex, systemic and systematic**
- It is **socially and politically constructed**, and therefore a learned behavior.
- It does not just refer to skin colour but is **ideology** based on beliefs, values, behaviors, habits and attitudes, which result in the unequal distribution of power and privilege based on race.
- It represents a **position of power** where the power holder defines the categories, which means that the power holder decides who is white and who is not.
Whiteness (cont’d)

- It is **relational**. "White" only exists in relation/opposition to other categories/locations in the racial hierarchy produced by whiteness. In defining ‘others,’ whiteness defines itself.
- It is **fluid** - who is considered “white” changes over time
- It is a **state of unconsciousness**: whiteness is often invisible to white people, and this perpetuates a lack of knowledge or understanding of difference which is a root cause of oppression.
- It shapes how white people view themselves and others, and places white people in a **place of structural advantage** where white cultural norms and practices go unnamed and unquestioned
Unpack your knapsack
Activity 2

• Having read through “White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack” by Peggy McIntosh
• Make a list of five activities that you normally do at work.
• Imagine that you woke up one day to find that your "race" had changed to [fill in the blank].
• Going through your lists, and start to analyze how each thing might be different for you were your "race" different.
• How would your workplace be different? What challenges would you have that you didn’t before? What would you have to consider that you hadn’t before?
• In other words, what real differences, does "race" make each day in our lives?
White Privilege: "We'll decide what is racist and what is not racist. We're the deciders of everything."

It's HARD to see RACISM when you're white.

UnfairCampaign.org
Whiteness and Privilege in HE: Students

Representation in Elite Institutions
For example, in 2012 there were more black students at London Metropolitan University than all the Russell Group Universities put together.

Excellence in Degree classification
Percentage of First Class Honours’ degrees by race and gender:
- White men (19.4%)
- White Women (18.3%)
- Black Men (6.9%)
- Black women (5.7%)

Recruitment and Admissions Process
For example in 2013
- 25% of white applicants to Oxford University were successful.
- 6.5% of Bangladeshi and Pakistani applicants
- 14.3% of Black Caribbean applicants
- 13% Black African applicants

From Aiming Higher: Race, Inequality and Diversity in the Academy Runnymede Report 2015
Why Is My Curriculum White?

Rhodes Must Fall
Whiteness and Merit in Higher Education: Staff

- In 2014, there are 60 Black UK Professors (4.1%) compared with 13370 White Professors (11.6% of White academics) ECU 2014
- 68.8% of senior academic managers are white men
- 15.9% of white male academics are employed at professor level
- 2.8% of black and minority ethnic female academics are employed at professor level

- BME Women less likely to occupy senior positions.
- BME staff more likely to be on fixed term contracts
- BME staff receive lower levels of pay.
- BME academic staff more likely to be employed in post 92 institutions.
- BME staff likely to be overlooked for promotion (ECU 2014 cited in Miller 2016)
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Miller (2016) research on BME progression and promotion found, “several participants expressed that white counterparts were like gatekeepers” (p8). To obtain promotion you have to form alliances and impress white colleagues which Miller terms ‘white sanction’.

British academia remains administratively, normatively, habitually and intellectually white (Shilliam 2015 p32). BME academics who enter and progress through the traditional white space of academia are described as space invaders and out of space (Puwar 2004 p1). BME staff are more likely to encounter hyper vigilance (Pilkington 2013)
Whiteness and Teacher Education

Teacher education research portrays White teachers as resistant to discussions about the workings of racism, Whiteness, and White privilege (King, 1991; Marx, 2006; McIntyre, 1997; Solomon, Portelli, Daniel, & Campbell, 2005 cited in Crowley 2016 p 3).

Hyland (2008), whites engage in safe dialogue and avoid discussions of race and racism, therefore perpetuating white privilege.

Predominantly white teacher education faculties impact on:-
1) Curricular content of teacher education programs tends to reflect White sensibilities therefore, race is grossly under theorised in teacher education (Milner, Pearman and Mcgee 2013).
2) Further recruitment of white trainees thus retaining a white teaching workforce.
3) White resistance to (Crowley and Smith 2015) and fatigue from (Flynn 2015) talking about and working with race.

4) When teaching race-related content there is evidence that teacher educators tend to focus on the emotional needs of White students rather than the needs of students of colour (Sleeter 2016).

5) “Trainees respond with either denial, guilt or fear; they also contribute to a deficit view of racialized students in relation to an accepted white “norm”, and position white teachers ‘outside’ of race” (Flintoff et al 2014 p 2).

6) Reinforces the deficit lens teachers use to understand their students (Sleeter 2016).
Activity 2

1. In pairs reflect on an incident you have witnessed or personally encountered of **white privilege in higher education**.

2. How did this make you feel?

3. What do you consider as your personal responsibilities for dismantling white privilege within the Academy?
University Race Equality Statements

• ‘The University is committed to promoting an ethos that safeguards the dignity and well being of everyone … It recognizes that race discrimination, harassment and victimisation may be experienced by all in a number of ways, including day-to-day interaction with colleagues, peers, visitors and staff.’

• ‘The University does not tolerate any form of race discrimination which it recognises is unacceptable, discriminatory and unlawful, and is proactive in ensuring that people, whatever their race, are treated fairly.’
Doing the Document:

Diversity, Equality (and Whiteness)

A good equality and diversity document

= good at race equality

= non-racist

= happy diversity story

Whiteness remains unnamed

“We are all Oxford” Tumblr campaign
Challenge the Everyday Politeness of whiteness and racism

• “Further and higher education institutions are not restricted in the range of issues, ideas and materials they use and have the academic freedom to expose students to a range of thoughts and ideas, however controversial. Even if the content of the curriculum causes offence to students with certain protected characteristics, this will not make it unlawful unless it is delivered in a way which results in harassment or subjects students to discrimination or other detriment.”

(Single Equality Act Guidelines)
Activity 3

• In groups consider how universities develop more equitable conditions for BAME staff and students through the following mechanisms-
  • Admissions and Recruitment
  • The Recruitment of Staff
  • Teaching, Learning and Assessment
Whiteness and Transformative Pedagogy

- Unlearning whiteness through exposure of the effects of whiteness.
- Making white detachment uncomfortable
- Developing a critical vocabulary of race
- Anti-racism is an active practice not a passive tolerance

“I, Too, Am Oxford” Tumblr Campaign
Whiteness and Transformative Pedagogy

- Identifying the everyday privileges of whiteness
- Historicizing the formation of whiteness.
- Including white students in the dynamics of race.
- Challenging whiteness through non-white knowledge.
Reflexive Anti Racism

- Recognise the complexities of whiteness as it intersects with class oppression and privilege
- Anti racism training encourages participants to examine their own experience of race and be aware of their own racial position
- Reflexive Anti Racism allows individuals to take an inventory of their own identity-formation and reflect on its relationship to history and ideology.
- Reflexive individuals are more willing to take risks and view mistakes as part of the learning process (Kowal et al 2013 p 318)
Your further involvement

• Thank you for taking part …
• Any feedback on the workshop you are happy to share?
• Are you happy to complete the post workshop questionnaire?
Reflection and Future

Key Messages

• Demystifying “Whiteness” as critical and reflective part of educational responsibility
• Critical Whiteness as part of staff training in race awareness and institutional practice.
• Critical Whiteness as part of anti-racist pedagogy,
• Foster Reflexive Antiracism
• Naming “whiteness” as part of the Equality Challenge

Future Activities

• Deliver Workshop institutionally & nationally.
• Develop a Critical Whiteness Toolkit for University Practitioners.
• Evaluate workshop effectiveness and further disseminate research findings
• Deliver a webinar for ECU
• Present at the International Higher Education Teaching and Learning Conference


Jensen, Robert (2005) The Heart of Whiteness: Confronting, Race, Racism and White Privilege City Lights
Miller, P (2016) White Sanction Institutional, group and individual interaction in the promotion and progression of black and minority ethnic academics and teachers in England. Power and Education 1 (17) pp 1-17