

## CRITICAL PERSPECTIVES ON RACE, RACISM AND EDUCATION

The following resource is one element of a larger assessed module called The Reflective Practitioner. The resource is shared with students on the internal communication portal (in our case CANVAS) before the teaching sessions and students record their reflections in a specified diary format.

The teaching which accompanies this pre-teaching reflective diary work also forms part of an element of the Primary PGCE course called Diversity and Equality (see the following papers for an overview of this work: Smith HJ. [Emotional responses to documentary viewing and the potential for transformative teaching](#). *Teaching Education* 2013, **25**(2), 217-238. Smith HJ, Lander V. [Collusion or collision: effects of teacher ethnicity in the teaching of critical whiteness](#). *Race, Ethnicity and Education* 2012, **15**(3), 331-351.)

## CRITICAL PERSPECTIVES ON RACE, RACISM AND EDUCATION

*Session Leader: Professor Heather Smith*

There is no definitive answer to the question ‘how do we ensure racial equality of opportunity and equity of outcome in educational provision?’ Your answer, and indeed your understanding of the question itself, is influenced by a ‘messy’ amalgam of factors. The following readings and subsequent reflective practitioner session are designed to trace and critically reflect upon others’ responses to this question, whilst at the same time, helping you to situate and critically reflect upon your own response. It is critical that before the session you read and make notes on the following discussion questions which are advised to be read in the chronological order they are presented:

### **READING 1: *what is Race and how do we become racialised?***

- Watch the following video: [Race - the Power of an Illusion - YouTube \(Links to an external site.\)](#)

The associated website is also useful if you want to look further into the social concept of race: [https://www.pbs.org/race/001\\_WhatsRace/001\\_00-home.htm](https://www.pbs.org/race/001_WhatsRace/001_00-home.htm) (Links to an external site.)

(Optional) Read this recent article which investigates the racialization of white children: Eleonora Bartoli, Ali Michael, Keisha L. Bentley-Edwards, Howard C. Stevenson, Rachel E. Shor & Shannon E. McClain (2016) Training for colour-blindness: white racial socialisation,

Whiteness and Education, 1:2, 125-136, DOI: 10.1080/23793406.2016.1260634

<https://doi.org/10.1080/23793406.2016.1260634>

### **Reflection:**

**What are some of the key facts about race and racialisation that you have learnt?**

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### **READINGS 2: *Common critiques of multilingualism and multiculturalism***

- Begin by reading the news extracts which in one way or another are critical of 'multiculturalism'. [readings 2 newspaper clippings.docx](#)

**Reflection:**

**Summarise the main objections. What is your reaction to these: do you agree/disagree with some of the arguments presented?**

- Then read a response to arguments against multiculturalism in an article in The Guardian newspaper by Gary Younge [readings2 Gary Younge.doc](#)

**Reflection:**

**Again, summarise his key arguments. Have they influenced your response to the first newspaper extracts?**

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**READINGS 3: *Movements towards anti-racism***

- Read a seminal article by a Black educationist Barry Tronya: Barry Troyna (1987) Beyond Multiculturalism: towards the enactment of anti-racist education in policy, provision and pedagogy , Oxford Review of Education, 13:3, 307-320, DOI: 10.1080/0305498870130306

<https://doi.org/10.1080/0305498870130306>

**Reflection:**

**What were the main objections to a multicultural approach in the education world at that time from a socialist perspective and what is suggested as a way forward?**

- Delve into the new NEU anti-racism charter (you may like to know that the writing of this was lead by an ex-Primary PGCE student of ours!): <https://neu.org.uk/anti-racism-charter> (Links to an external site.)

**Reflection:**

**What are your thoughts? Do you think anti-racist approaches would work in the current political context?**

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#### **READINGS 4: *Modern critiques: the anti anti-racism backlash***

- Read Professor David Gillborn's article: David Gillborn (2019) Hiding in Plain Sight: Understanding and Addressing Whiteness and Color-Blind Ideology in Education, Kappa Delta Pi Record, 55:3, 112-117, DOI: 10.1080/00228958.2019.1622376

<https://doi.org/10.1080/00228958.2019.1622376>

- Read Duxtador's analysis of the equity backlash at: <https://longvieweducation.org/putting-researcheds-equity-backlash-under-the-microscope/> (Links to an external site.)

#### **Reflection:**

**What are some of the critiques surfacing at present and if possible, see if there are any parallels to the earlier critiques of multiculturalism?**

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#### **READING 5: *A way forward for teachers: Looking inwards***

- Read Peggy McIntosh's seminal and widely cited paper, 'White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack'. [White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack \(umbc.edu\)](http://www.umbc.edu/~pintosh/writing/unpacking.html)

#### **Reflection:**

**Do you recognise elements of Peggy's list in your own life experiences? What are some implications of this approach to understanding inequality for education?**

**Have any of the readings up to this point challenged any of your previously held beliefs which have arisen as a result of your experiences as a teacher and learner?**

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#### **READING 6: *Looking inwards and what it means for student teachers (optional)***

- Read the article: R. Patrick Solomona , John P. Portelli , Beverly-Jean Daniel & Arlene Campbell (2005) The discourse of denial: how white teacher candidates construct race, racism and 'white privilege', Race Ethnicity and Education, 8:2, 147-169, DOI: 10.1080/13613320500110519

<https://doi.org/10.1080/13613320500110519>

**Reflection:**

**Are there aspects of the students' discourse that you recognise in yourself?**

**What are the implications for your practice?**

## READINGS 2: MEDIA CLIPPING

### READING 2

#### Daily Mail article: July 2013

##### Parents' fury after schoolchildren living in town popular with eastern European migrants are taught song in Lithuanian

- Pupils at a Wisbech primary school taught song for a singing festival
- Third of children at Peckover Primary are from migrant backgrounds
- Parents claim children in tears because they did not understand song
- 'Inclusive' festival will also see youngsters singing a Polish tune

By [Kerry Mcdermott](#)

**PUBLISHED:** 16:20, 10 July 2013 | **UPDATED:** 16:21, 10 July 2013

Angry parents have launched a protest over a primary school's plans to make their children sing songs in Lithuanian and Polish.

A third of pupils at the Peckover Primary School in Wisbech - a Cambridgeshire town popular with eastern European families - are from migrant backgrounds, but some parents claim their children came home in floods of tears because they did not understand the words to the songs.

Children were being taught the lyrics for an upcoming international singing festival, but mother Clare Eve, 48, who has launched a petition in protest, said: 'The whole school is getting taken over by these cultures and I don't think it's right.'



Anger: Parents including Clare Eve, left, and Tamara Meldrum, right, are protesting against their children being made to sing a song in Lithuanian at their primary school in Wisbech

'Multi-cultural': A third of the students at the Peckover School, which is in a town popular with eastern Europeans, are from migrant families

A total of 23 parents have signed Ms Eve's petition protesting at the content of the 'inclusive' festival, due to take place next week at Peckover's new theatre.

The parents backing the campaign insist their objections to the foreign lyrics are not racist, and say they have a right to complain if their children are upset.

'It's being forced on our children,' Ms Eve said. 'They're only eight-years-old - it's a struggle to learn their own language let alone goodness knows what else.'

'When I saw the song list I could not believe it. My son brought the song list home when he wasn't supposed to,' she claimed.

'The school hadn't actually told anybody the true meaning of what the children were doing.'

'Children don't know what they are singing about but if we complain we are accused of being racist, and yet this isn't the case,' said Ms Eve, who said she was 'all for' children learning languages.

'My little girl goes to German club,' she said.

'If your child is upset then surely you have the right for freedom of speech to voice your opinion.'

'It's happening all the time - at Christmas a nearby infants' school had their nativity play in a foreign language. The parents said it was like being in another country.'

'We don't want that here'

'I wouldn't have objected if all the Lithuanian kids had sung a Lithuanian song and all the Polish kids sung a Polish song. That would have been different,' said the 48-year-old, who has two children, Alfie, nine, and Libby, eight.

Tamara Meldrum, who also has a child at the primary school, said: 'They're not even teaching them what it means, at least that would make some sense, but as it stands the children have no idea why



they are being forced to do it.

Complaints: Tamara's son Adam Meldrum, seen left with his friend Alfie Wakefield, holds up a copy of the Lithuanian song lyrics

Peckover sent a letter home to parents inviting them to the festival, which will also see children don the national dress of countries including Germany and Greece, on July 15.

The headteacher last week asked for parents' support at the 'pioneering' International Singing Festival.

'Not right': Clare Eve said the school was being 'taken over' by other cultures

The letter read: 'We are all very excited to hold this event, which has been made possible by a grant from the Cambridge Culture Project Funding, for which we had managed to secure the funds.

'It will be a wonderful occasion, enabling the children to perform the songs that they have enjoyed learning and singing in English and other languages, representative of children at our school.

'We really hope you will support us in this pioneering event,' it said.

Today the school said pupils had been taught the meaning of the Lithuanian song and that children would not be forced to take part if parents objected.

A spokesperson said: 'The children have spent time learning the words and understanding what they mean with the help of our excellent teaching staff and language and music specialists.

'We have made sure that children understand what they are singing about and that they learn to appreciate other cultures.

'Children have been keen and enthusiastic to take part in this inclusive community event.

'We have made alternative arrangements for pupils of parents not wishing their child to take part in the concert to remain at Peckover Primary school, for the hour during which the concert takes place.'

Inclusive: The primary school said the festival had been organised as part of teaching children to appreciate other cultures

Show Racism the Red Card, an anti-racism educational charity, backed the singing festival.

A spokesman said: 'We believe that there is tremendous value in celebrating multiculturalism and diversity in schools.

'We accept that the Lithuanian language may present a challenge to some young people; however we are sure that the focus of the teachers is to encourage participation rather than linguistic accuracy.'

English will be represented at the singing festival by the song Do Re Mi from The Sound of Music.

Read more: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2359429/Parents-fury-schoolchildren-living-town-popular-eastern-European-migrants-taught-song-Lithuanian.html#ixzz2YgAcUoBE>

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Comments:

You CANNOT force multiculturalism down people's throats. People did NOT ask for this, of course they will be extremely upset or does it not matter if you're English? I speak Spanish, French, German, but because I opted too I was NOT forced. Just in case anyone has forgotten this is BRITAIN we speak



English here and that's what should be focused on as many foreign individuals I have come into contact with do NOT even understand the word, excuse me.

Surely it should be the other way round., the migrant children should be singing in English. They are now living in this country with access to everything paid for therefore they should follow this country's curriculum. There are lots of migrant eastern European children attending a school near to me and when it is school times all the parents chatter away in their own language, not attempting to help their children, consequently more teaching time is needed for these children

What is it with these leftie teachers. Why do they feel the need to suck up to everyone else's culture and at the same time play ours down?

There is no freedom of speech in this country anymore. Unless you toe the PC line you are branded racist. Different views and opinions are not tolerated by the bully boys who are intent on dictating to us what we must think and say. Try living in Aylesbury - schools where up to 22 different languages are spoken. Our country is lost to us.

## READINGS 2: ARTICLE BY GARY YOUNGE

# The multiculturalism the European right fears so much is a fiction - it never existed

**The state never backed cultural difference at the expense of cohesion. What is emerging is people's lived experience**

[Gary Younge - \*The Guardian\*, Monday 14 March 2011](#)

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In this debate there are two types of multiculturalism: one rooted in fact, the other in fiction. The multiculturalism of fact is the lived experience of most people in Europe and the world. Cultures are dynamic, and emerge organically from communities. None exist in isolation or remain static. So the presence of a range of cultures in Britain or anywhere else is not novel, but the norm.

This is not the product of our genius for tolerance as a nation but of constant negotiation. Take the Notting Hill carnival. It emerged as a response to racist attacks after teddy boys went on a "nigger hunting" spree in 1958. Today it is a mainstay of British culture, but it was once viewed as inimical to British culture. "Many observers warned from the outset that mass immigration from poor countries of substantially different culture would generate anomie, alienation, delinquency and worse," argued the Daily Telegraph in 1977.

Its survival has little to do with government policy. Governments can barely clear snow or make the trains run on time. They cannot single-handedly create or thwart culture, let alone multicultures. The French have staked their founding revolutionary creed against the notion of multiculturalism. They are losing. Like it or not - and the state doesn't - it's a multicultural country.

Germany insisted for two generations that it was not an "immigrant country": that didn't mean there were no immigrants there. Not recognising something does not mean that thing does not exist. It merely means you don't see it.

Moreover, these multicultural facts have nothing to do with race, religion or immigration. The Bretons in France, Basques in Spain, Bavarians in Germany and Sicilians in Italy are a few examples of cultural affiliations that thrive independently of the nations they inhabit.

This is the multiculturalism many of us on the left, including Sivanandan, are defending. The right to assert autonomy and cultural difference underpinned by an understanding that national identity is just one among many identities and may well not be the primary one: an affirmation of plurality against calls for assimilation that attempt to first invent and then enforce "British values" and other national orthodoxies.

Then there is the multiculturalism of fiction. This evokes a liberal, state-led policy of encouraging and supporting cultural difference at the expense of national cohesion. It

champions practices, we are told, that have caused segregation, alienation and ghettoisation of racial and religious minorities. This, the argument continues, has laid the basis for an acceptance of abhorrent and barbaric practices, such as honour killings, forced marriages and female genital mutilation, that sacrifice the basic tenets of western, liberal civilisation and universalism at the altar cultural tolerance.

There are several problems with this framing but for now let us just deal with three. First, in most of Europe no such co-ordinated policies ever existed. In many places where "multiculturalism" is currently being read its last rites, it never actually lived in its professed form. "We never had a policy of multiculturalism," explains Mekonnen Mesghena, head of migration and intercultural management at the Heinrich Böll Foundation, responding to [Angela Merkel's claim](#) that the "multikulti" experiment had failed. "We had a policy of denial: denial of immigration and of diversity. Now it's like we are waking up from a long trance."

In Britain, it is similarly difficult to discern precisely what critics are referring to beyond the activities of some local councils. In his most recent speech on the subject, David Cameron did not offer one concrete example.

Second, the trend towards segregation is a myth. Asian Muslims, Sikhs and Hindus all marry outside of their own groups at the same rates as whites. For most ethnic minorities in Britain, roughly half or more of their friends are white while only 20% of those born in Britain have friends only from their own group. So even if the state were promoting separation, it clearly isn't working.

Finally, who, with any credibility, on the left has ever supported the crimes described? Like "on-street grooming", "black-on-black violence" or the "[down-low](#)", such practices are specifically ethnic, racial or religious terms employed to pathologise a specific community in which every transgression is refracted through an ethnic or religious lens. Imagine we invented a term "toff bonking" to describe the infidelities of the upper classes, and then decried the epidemic every time [Boris Johnson](#) was caught in an indiscretion.

That doesn't seek to understate these problems but to recast them. Forced marriages are kidnapping; honour killings are murder. We have laws for these that should be applied without fear or favour. I've yet to hear anyone on the left argue otherwise.

These ostensible liberal dilemmas seek to pit opposition to Islamophobia against support for liberalism as though they are mutually exclusive. But in reality they pose no challenge at all. You don't give antisemitism a pass if it comes from a Muslim any more than one would give Islamophobia a pass if it came from a Jew. If a state forces women to wear a burqa, we should oppose that. And if the state bans women from wearing a burqa, we should oppose that too. Because as feminists and progressives we believe the state has no right to tell women what to wear.

That does not mean there are no problems. But it distorts the reality and misstates the true nature of the threat to national cohesion, which comes not from a fictitious multiculturalism but from the very real economic vandalism wrought by this coalition government. The decimation of public services will reduce the common space - be it schools or community centres - that we all might share, while growing inequalities will provide greater opportunity for scapegoating minorities.

The multiculturalism of fact is rooted in considerable achievements of who we have become. The multiculturalism of fiction is rooted in the fear of what has never been.

