Understanding White privilege in Higher Education...

Dr Jason Arday, University of Roehampton
Ayo Olatunji, BME Sabbatical Officer UCL Student Union
Tuesday 10th April 2018
BME Attainment Conference
University College London (UCL)
Aims of Workshop Session…

• To understand the concept of **White Privilege within a higher education context**…

• To explore the **landscape of racial inequality within the Academy**, in relation to Whiteness…

• To consider thinking about ways forward… What can be done to **dismantle the racism and inequality within higher education**…?
A Thought… Is there a slight contradiction…?

• ‘Despite the lofty ideals of universities, they do no better… and are in fact doing worse… than other institutions in British society when it comes to race equality.’

• Why is this the case…?

• Why is racial inequality and a lack of diversification a reoccurring theme within the Academy…?

(David Lammy, MP, Chair of APPG on Race and Community, 2015).
The Elephant in the Room...

• Why do we find talking about race uncomfortable…?

• Does this challenge our own views and opinions on race, equality, diversity and inequality within our society…?

• Does this perhaps encourage us to reflect on our own racial disposition…?
Is there a privilege associated with being White…?

• In your own opinion what are the privileges of being White…?

• Does being White provide individuals with advantages potentially over people of colour…?

• Do you think the concept of Whiteness is a useful vehicle in understanding the nuances of institutionalised racism and racial inequality…?

• Conversely, are reactions to Whiteness purely subjective and situated within a discourse of hyper-sensitivity…?
Privilege…

- The conception of **White privilege** refers to the ‘invisible package of unearned assets’ and the plethora of opportunities and benefits that are obligatory simply based on the principle of being White (McIntosh, 1992, p. 48).

- This conception provides a platform for us to begin to **understand the landscape inequity and normativity within the Academy**…

- Do we **recognise** this or **challenge this** within our institutions…?
Querying the landscape of Higher Education...?

• Why do think there is a dearth of BME academics within Higher Education nationally...?

• Why is there a paucity of BME leaders within Higher Education...?

• How do we potentially disrupt this culture of inequity (if we believe it exists)...?

• How could universities better diversify academic staff workforces...?
Why is this a reoccurring theme…?

- For professional and support roles, the overall average pay gap between black and white staff in 2015-16 was 7.3 per cent... rising to 12.6 per cent for senior administrative posts...

- Among academics, **black staff were paid 12.6 per cent** less than their white colleagues, while for academics of **Asian ethnicity, the gap was 10.4 per cent**...

- This is not reflected in the recruitment of academic staff, particularly when focusing on the lowly percentage of **BME academics which constitute 7.8 per cent of the total population** (Alexander and Arday; 2015; Bhopal et al., 2014; HEFCE, 2012; ECU, 2014).

- Nationally, there are just **96 BME staff at Professorial level**...

Understanding Normative Whiteness…

• The challenging of normative **Whiteness is paramount** in dismantling the **cycle of inequality that permeates society**…

• **Stovall (2006) explains** that the **presence of academics of colour powerfully threatens and disrupts normative canons** by challenging elitist binaries of the Academy whilst developing boarder debates concerning what we perceive to be legitimate knowledge…

• Race remains a problematic issue for some **White academics to confront**… (Ahmed, 2012; Gillborn, 2008)…

• … Particularly when having to acknowledge that their **privilege can sometimes** contribute towards **maintaining cycles of inequality** with regards to the **paucity of diversification within the Academy** (Gillborn, 2008; Kincheloe and Steinberg, 1997; Roediger, 1994).
Challenging dominant cultures...

• How does the hegemony of Whiteness inform racial dynamics within the Academy…?

• What can higher educations do programatically, structurally and interpersonally to disrupt and transform normative Whiteness…?

• How can an integration of Whiteness inform and shape higher education policy, practice and research…?
Moving forward: Changing the landscape of inequality…

• What can we do within our institutions to create more inclusive cultures which advocate greater diversification…?

• How may you attempt to challenge the normative orthodoxy of Whiteness within your own institutions…?

• What recruitment interventions are already in place within your institutions to create greater diversification regarding academic staff…?
References...


References...


- **Solorzano, D. & Yosso, T. J. (2002)** Critical Race Methodology: Counter-storytelling as an analytical framework for education research, *Qualitative Inquiry*, 8, 1, 23-44.

