

The Construction and Perpetuation of Whiteness

By: Shawna CARROLL

Abstract

White privilege is a prevalent phenomenon in Canadian society. One of the most discouraging aspects of this phenomenon is that white privilege and Whiteness ideology are not discussed sufficiently, which means the mentality and way society is functioning will continue to favour Whiteness ideology. This paper will explain exactly what Whiteness ideology is, where it stems from, and how it has been and continues to be constructed within the family, society, and the education system. Then, the paper will focus on ways to deconstruct Whiteness ideology in these areas, especially in the Canadian education system. Through autobiographical and secondary research, I will challenge the way in which Canadian society functions today.

Introduction: Identity and Whiteness

Whiteness is more than a race; the word Whiteness is about a dominant culture, class and group in society. The construction of Whiteness was created during colonialism. White Europeans colonized many countries, insisting that the country's culture become 'civilized' and assimilate to their European values (Marx, 2006). This white, European race has become raceless

throughout history, stemming from colonialism, at the same time as putting down ‘the other,’ which refers to those who are not white. Although colonization in Canada happened more than two centuries ago, we still see its affects today. The domination of ‘the other’ by white people still exists in Canadian modern day society, which I will explain through personal, autobiographical experiences, as well as secondary research. I find the autobiographical anecdotes show how a white person can be affected by Whiteness and perpetuate the ideology without even knowing it.

Identity is a very complex notion and has many forces shaping and changing it. The identity of a person will change depending on the context (i.e., with peers, parents, teachers, employers, etc.), and throughout history (Ship, 2001). A person’s identity is constructed depending on how they view their own ethnicity, race, culture, language, class, gender and sexual orientation, and how others view these markers of identity as well. Thus, a person’s identity is not only ‘developed’ by oneself, but can be imposed on them.

Rivière explains that it is “impossible to reduce any one person to a fixed identity (or set of identities)... [and] to do so erases the historical, socio-cultural and *temporal* context of identities” (2006, p. 214, emphasis in original); however, Canadian society does this regularly. In a modern society, grouping people and placing them into a certain pre-made category (i.e., ‘foreign’), allows the society to impose identities from above to simplify their own world (Brubaker, 2004). Whether the category is ‘foreign,’ ‘Asian,’ ‘gay’ or ‘Muslim,’ Canadians impose these stereotypical identities to allow themselves to neatly categorize people. An example of this is shown by Stanley’s study (2006), which showed that some believe that European Americans assume that all “dark skinned people” are alike and of one origin (p. 718).

It is obvious that the same skin colour does not mean the same culture or country of origin, but many believe this to be true or do not think about it critically.

One identity that has become more than just an identity and more of an ideology is that of Whiteness. This paper will analyze Whiteness as an identity and ideology and will explain how identity is related to power relations and domination within school and society as a whole (LeCourt, 2004). This paper will also explain how Whiteness is constructed through the family, school and society as well as explain ways to deconstruct Whiteness ideologies, bringing more equality and justice to Canadian citizens who are not white and do not fit into the Whiteness category, especially within the school system.

The idea of Whiteness was first created to describe race. Race was a social construction imposed by a dominant group (Stanley, 2006), and has been used as a means to benefit white people for decades. The idea that the white race is dominant and inherently “civilized, good, and upstanding,” is compared to ‘the other,’ which is seen as opposite and inferior to this (Marx, 2006, p. 46, 49). Whiteness is seen as a socio-cultural privilege by ‘the other’ (Rivière, 2006) and the white majority continues to maintain its position over other cultural groups (Kamali, 2000) by maintaining these ideals and perpetuating the idea of Whiteness. Therefore, Whiteness will be difficult to deconstruct because those that benefit from Whiteness ideology may not want to hand over this power to ‘the other.’

However, Whiteness has become more than a dominant race. It is about the social construction of a dominant group in society. Whiteness is a part of identity construction, but now symbolizes that which is superior, dominant and ideal, not just what is ‘white.’ Whiteness has been “deeply marked by... socio-cultural privilege... race and gender privilege” (Rivière, 2006, p. 214) and continues to symbolize ‘goodness.’ Although Whiteness depicts power for all, it is still

the white race that benefits most from this ideology. Even if white people are not the ‘majority’ in an area, the ‘hegemony of Whiteness’ is still existent across the globe and is always benefitting the white race (Knight, 2008).

Many people are living this “white experience” in Canada, but may not recognize their racial identity as dominating ‘the other’ (Giroux, 1997, p.380). Many white people perceive Whiteness as the normal experience and become ‘raceless’ in the multicultural society of Canada (Marx, 2006). Becoming raceless means that a person does not notice their race or culture and that their own race and culture may be the dominant one in society. These people see themselves as raceless, but anyone who is not white does have a race and may be seen as ‘the other.’ This is familiar as I was raised in a very European dominated neighbourhood in Southern Ontario. With only a handful of students at my elementary and secondary schools who were not white, I was truly living in a white world, without a race or cultural framework. This is dangerous, as people are perpetuating the idea of what is ‘good’ (which is Whiteness) and may not even realize it. Whiteness as an identity and ideology is perpetuated daily through the family life, society as a whole, and of course, the Canadian schooling system.

The Construction and Perpetuation of Whiteness within the Family

Family is one area in society where Whiteness is constructed and perpetuated. As Whiteness is seen as the dominating ideal, a family may or may not want to discuss who has control over society’s modes of social, cultural, political and economic production (Rivière, 2006). As a young girl, growing up in a white household, I never once questioned my white

identity or white cultural values. Not discussing the reality of Whiteness may perpetuate the inequalities further, as many white people see themselves as raceless (Marx, 2006). If children and youth do not think critically about the position they have in society and the reality of Whiteness in society, Whiteness ideology will continuously overpower our institutions, including our schools. Being raised in a home that perpetuates the idea of Whiteness will help to maintain an uncritical and unequal society.

Class plays a large role in the construction of a family or person's identity, especially in a modern, capitalist society (Allahar, 2006). A family's class, as well as how they view their own and other's classes, will instil values in the children and youth of the family and can help to perpetuate Whiteness ideology. A family's language is also important in constructing and perpetuating the idea of Whiteness, as English represents Whiteness. It is not a coincidence that English is the world's dominant language and the language of business (Dicker, 2003). Again, the family needs to teach critical thinking skills so that the children and youth of the family will not perpetuate Whiteness ideology.

Canadian society is seen as multicultural, but many people still face racism and discrimination today (Sleeter, 1993; Shadd, 2001; Satzewich & Liodakis, 2007; Knight, 2008). Families should prepare their children for these hardships, but parents should also teach their children about Whiteness and how to become critical thinkers. In Canada, if someone is not white, they are likely to be questioned about their Canadian identity or family's identity (Shadd, 2001). Many are asked, but "where are you really from?", assuming that they themselves were born elsewhere or their parents or grandparents were not born in Canada because they are not white (Shadd, 2001, p.15). This type of question denies people of their "birthright... heritage, and... long-standing place in the Canadian mosaic" (Shadd, 2001, p. 15).

The Construction and Perpetuation of Whiteness in Society

There are many ways in which Whiteness is perpetuated in Canadian society. These include through the family, through the schooling system (which will be discussed in the next section), through global relations, Americanization, the English language and the media. The domination of Whiteness has been perpetuated as subordinated groups are assimilated into normalization practices, which construct and perpetuate Whiteness ideals. Canadian society allows this domination to occur, as the dominant group controls the “social, cultural, political and... economic production” (Rivière, 2006, p. 56). The dominant group makes their practices, attitudes and behaviours seem ‘normal’ (Rivière, 2006); therefore, the society continues to foster and perpetuate these ideals. This creates a situation where the white majority continues to maintain its position over other non-white groups in Canada (Rivière, 2006) and Whiteness ideology continues to spread and dominate.

In Canada, white citizens of European ancestry are able to ‘choose’ their identity more than someone who is not part of the majority white population, who are reminded of their otherness frequently (Waters, 2006). I notice this on a regular basis when family, friends, coworkers, and even post-secondary instructors tell stories of people, and only mention the subjects’ race if they are not white, as if this changes the entire story. The reality is, white people can decide what European country to identify with depending on the situation, or they can identify simply as Canadian, whereas non-white people are forced to either generalize their country of origin or cannot have Canadian ancestry without being questioned due to their non-white skin. For example, throughout my high school and undergraduate career, I was able to say I was Irish on St. Patrick’s day and British when we spoke about Canadian history; however, a

good friend of mine was constantly told that she must be Indian, not Canadian, because of her skin colour and facial features, even though she felt no connection to Indian culture. In schools, white students may find their ethnicity to be symbolic because it is voluntary, while non-white students may believe their ethnicity or identity is strong because they are able to find commonalities among their group and see themselves as “different from” and “opposed to whites” (Waters, 2006, p. 141). This is unfortunate, as this “us versus them” attitude continues to be prevalent in Canadian society today.

Some deny that racism and discrimination still occurs, but Satzewich & Liodakis (2007) found that racism does still exist in Canada. In a study they conducted, white people were offered a job three times more often than black people, when applying to the same position, with the same credentials. This study shows that there is still discrimination today and there is much racial profiling and stereotyping, which often affects non-white people negatively. Racial profiling can become a self-fulfilling prophecy (Satzewich & Liodakis, 2007), as police officers surround minority communities and arrest those in that area, instead of ‘making rounds’ in an all-white community. As long as this cycle of inequality continues, Whiteness will remain intact and those who do not fit into the Whiteness ideology will be negatively affected. This means that schools need to help educate about these issues, to help prevent and uncover discrimination.

Racism goes beyond the borders of Canada, as seen in the following story of stereotyping. When travelling to Botswana in 2008, I was seen as ‘the other’ because I was white. The prevailing assumption was that I was rich and American because of the colour of my skin. This shows that stereotyping affects all, but has a much more negative effect on those who do not conform to Whiteness. “Stereotyping can help show how we are all implicated in the oppression and marginalization of others” (Rivière, 2006, p. 188). Stereotyping works both

ways. When travelling to Botswana, we had our ideas and expectations of ‘the other’ before we met anyone. We assumed that because one third of the population was infected with HIV or AIDS, we would see sick people and poverty everywhere. Once we arrived, we realized this was not the case. Before people spoke to us, they also had their assumptions and stereotypes about us; however, these were mostly extinguished once they got to know us. In our globalized society today, I truly believe that “everyone is implicated... [by] ... racism” (Rivière, 2006, p. 215).

Another way in which society perpetuates Whiteness is through ‘whitespeak.’ Whitespeak is the euphemizing of white racism through coded speech (Knight, 2008), where “what is *not* said—or the absences in language... is often far more revealing than what *is* said” (Moon, 1999, p. 188, emphasis in original). For example, “the words *put down* or *discriminated against* are used as opposed to *oppressed* or *marginalized*” (Knight, 2008, p. 102, emphasis in original). Other examples include affirmative action, immigrants, separate (versus segregated), and so on (Knight, 2008). This whitespeak hopes to change white domination into something more “harmless or sanitized,” which allows white people to be overtly racist, but in a coded fashion (Moon, 1999, p. 188). Having this coded speech allows the domination of Whiteness to continue, as people continue to stereotype and degrade ‘the other,’ especially in schools.

The Construction and Perpetuation of Whiteness in Schooling

The education system continues to maintain Whiteness ideology, which has preserved social inequalities throughout history (Marx, 2004). The perpetuation of Whiteness lies not only in teacher and administrator’s ideals, but also in the curriculum. Today’s curriculum was created decades ago by white Europeans and has only been altered and added to since. The Ministry of

Education needs to recreate the entire curriculum so that it represents our entire Canadian population, not just the Whiteness in it. Currently, there are curriculum units about multiculturalism, such as the ‘Traditions and Celebrations’ unit in Grade 2 (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2004); however, the curriculum itself is not multicultural. The curriculum needs to be developed with all the cultures in Canada in mind and have the real history of Canada, including Aboriginal, African and Asian history, as they have been here as long as, if not longer, than many European immigrants with the history of the slave trade and railroad in mind.

Through the curriculum and teacher practices, the idea of a superior white race and culture are perpetuated. These ideas of Whiteness are considered ‘normal’ in comparison to ‘the other’ (Rivière, 2006), and teachers may compare these on purpose to maintain their superiority. “White teachers’ constructions and understandings of race are based on their vested interests in justifying and maintaining their privileged positions within unequal relations of power” (Rivière, 2006, p. 225). Whether this is conscious or unconscious, Whiteness ideology is shown throughout the Ontario schooling system, without critical analysis or questioning by many.

Even as many teachers try to foster the idea of multiculturalism and equality within their classroom, a typical multiculturalism approach in schools “perpetuates a ‘foods and festivals’ approach... a superficial approach to student inclusion” (Gérin-Lajoie, 2008a, p.18). During these events, ‘the other’ is compared to what is normal, or white. Not only does this comparison occur in many classrooms, but some teachers essentialize ‘non-western’ cultures. This reduces the idea of a complex culture into a simplistic, two-dimensional representation of a culture and their cultural practices may even be used as a ‘fad’ to liven up white culture (Rivière, 2006). By treating non-white cultures in this way, it helps make Whiteness even more ideal, as it takes on a more superior, all-knowing form.

Although teachers may believe they are helping their students better understand multiculturalism and diversity in their classes with this ‘foods and festivals’ approach, they are actually perpetuating Whiteness and may be making the situation worse. This is due to the fact that many stereotypes of non-white cultures are propagated through old images of “non-white cultures” shown at the ‘foods and festivals’ events (Knight, 2008, p. 96). These festivals not only essentialize ‘the other’ as explained previously, but they also contradict how many immigrant families actually live(d) and their actual values (Knight, 2008). These simplistic views of cultures will help students stereotype ‘the other’ and perpetuate Whiteness ideals.

Another way that many teachers help to perpetuate the idea of Whiteness is by associating English skill with intelligence and sophistication (Marx, 2006). For students who are learning English as a second language at school, some teachers equate their lack of knowledge in English as a lack of knowledge in all subjects. This is a poor and unfortunate assumption. If these students were able to learn the material in their own language, it is very possible that a much different outcome would occur. Teachers may also view students who have different dialects of English to be less intelligent. Standard English, which is used in schools today, is rated the highest in our society, while other forms of English, such as Black English are rated lower, or less important and sophisticated (Dicker, 2003). Although many English dialects are in fact very intellectual, teachers view it as lower class and poor English, as it does not conform to Whiteness (Dicker, 2003). This further shows the power Whiteness has over Canadian schooling and society.

The entire schooling system including the curriculum and teaching staff perpetuates Whiteness, and the students are beginning to notice. Satzewich and Liodakis (2007) found that “there is a skin colour hierarchy when it comes to student perceptions of differential treatment

within schools in Toronto” (p. 167), where white students are treated the best and black students are treated the worst. As schools are a place where “identities are made, unmade, and contested” (Yon, 2000, p.31), it is difficult to comprehend what our future will look like if the domination of Whiteness ideology continues.

Deconstructing Whiteness Through Schooling and Society

Canadian society is becoming more diverse with many more ethnicities and languages appearing, as evident in the 2006 census, which concluded there are more than 200 ethnic origins and 100 languages in Canada (Statistics Canada, 2006). As Canadian society grows and becomes more diverse, it becomes even more important and evident that the education system and society needs to change their way of thinking. In order for the Whiteness ideology to be deconstructed, Canadian society needs to *want* to change and create genuine ways to fight the dominant ideal as a collective. The problem does not only lie within teachers, or administrators, but also parents, students and the Canadian society as a whole.

Canadians need to examine “the values, assumptions, and beliefs” of their society and should understand how “society wants to produce and valorize... its schools and the means by which these identities are produced and conferred” (Harper, 1997, p. 203). As discussed before, Whiteness is the dominant ideology in Canadian schools today, but it can be deconstructed with the help of teachers, administrators, the government, students and parents. If these groups of people work together to create a more just schooling system, I believe that Whiteness would no longer be the dominant ideology in Canadian schools.

One of the ways we can deconstruct the ideology of Whiteness is through pre-service and in-service teacher training. Teachers need to become aware of their beliefs and practices, and the possible racism that informs those beliefs (Rivière, 2006). As these beliefs may influence their students' beliefs, teachers should become critical practitioners so that they are not perpetuating the dominant Whiteness ideology.

Pre-service teacher education programs should have discussions about Whiteness and should train teachers to properly teach in a diverse classroom, without the underlying Whiteness ideology. In my pre-service experiences, I was completely unaware of the impacts of Whiteness ideology and how I was perpetuating white privilege through my teaching. The pre-service teaching programs in Canada need to have a diverse faculty, which grapples with the issues of racism and Whiteness in an authentic way. This means that the faculty need to ensure their students are aware of the effects of Whiteness ideology, how they perpetuate it, are affected by it, and how they can deconstruct it, especially being in a powerful position such as a teacher. Teachers and administration should also attend conferences and workshops “on issues of colonialism, slavery, racism, and whiteness” (Knight, 2008, p. 105-6). In my eight years of volunteer and work experience as a teacher and teacher candidate, I was never involved with, invited to, or told about a single workshop focusing on these issues. Instead, workshops were focused on teaching literacy, numeracy, and technology (in a system drowning in Whiteness ideology). Through diverse workshops and training opportunities, all teachers could question their race and their role in an oppressive system.

Furthermore, through this training, teachers should learn to no longer essentialize ‘the other.’ Although the Canadian school system invites and celebrates ‘differences,’ these celebrations tend “to make all differences relative” (Harper, 1997, p.200). Teachers need to think

critically about what they are teaching and how often they are comparing ‘the other’ to Whiteness and normality. When teachers essentialize ‘the other,’ they may believe they understand a minority student’s situation, but they never point “to any of the historical and present conditions that have and continue to structure [their] situation” (Knight, 2008, p. 103). Before entering the classroom, teachers need to understand truly where all of their students come from, the hardships they have faced and the hardships they continue to face because of the dominant Whiteness ideology in Canadian society.

The Canadian schooling system should not be colour-blind and teachers should not treat everyone equal, as everyone’s experiences are not equal. Each person comes from a different past and a different set of hardships that may require different teaching techniques and support to overcome. When differences are silenced, social inequalities will persist and the dominant group will continue to maintain their power (Jacquet, 2008). It is important that teachers “consider difference, but to do so by historicizing, contextualizing, and politicizing it, especially as it relates to racialized groups in Canada” (Knight, 2008, p. 91). Teachers, and society as a whole, need to understand why students may be poor, disadvantaged, or ‘dysfunctional.’ Teachers may point to classism because it is easier to understand (Knight, 2008), but is this the actual reality? I believe it is not. Poverty has a non-white, female face (Knight, 2008), which is caused by Whiteness and capitalist ideologies. Teachers need to discuss these issues with their students and work together to help understand how and why it is happening and to find solutions on a broader level.

Teachers should educate themselves not only on his/her students’ artistic, religious or food preferences of their culture, but also their ethics and social practices, such as their belief of eye contact as a positive or negative action (Harper, 1997). It is important that teachers bring

more than superficial cultural information to their classes. They should delve into the cultures that are represented in the classroom and have the class learn and experience these ideas together (Harper, 1997). All Canadian students should feel comfortable in their class and all students should learn to respect and understand each others' cultural differences. Teachers and students need to work together to make this possible by being open to experiencing and learning about the world.

Through consistent pre-service and in-service training, teachers should learn to become transformative educators. "Transformative educators critically understand, interpret, and postulate the different worlds of others and themselves, and incorporate an intellectuality that transcends 'into, through, and beyond'; their practice is always culturally responsive and critically conscious" (Young, 2007, p. 124). Teachers should learn to become culturally aware, transformative and critically think about the curriculum and resources they are using.

Teacher training is a proactive step that will assist in the deconstruction of Whiteness within the Canadian schooling system, but teachers' attitudes and beliefs still may not change and they have a big influence on the way educators teach. Teachers need to learn how to empower their students and allow their schools to "become sites of possibility, not sites of disenfranchisement" (Gérin-Lajoie, 2008c), and then Whiteness could be on its way to being deconstructed. We need to ensure that this information is being disseminated, whether teachers believe there are problems of discrimination in their school or not (Knight, 2008).

A teacher's "cultural, racial, and ethnic dispositions can enhance or inhibit the academic achievement of underrepresented groups" (Young, 2007, p. 112). Teachers will need training to ensure that they do all they can to enhance the academic achievement of all learners in their

classroom. This can be difficult, as some students may identify more with teachers that are the same race as them. This means that Canada needs to have a more diverse teaching force.

Through my experience in teacher's college and my teaching practicum placements in Ontario, over 80 percent of the teachers (including pre-service teachers) I came into contact with were white females, the majority of them being Christian. This is not representative of our Canadian population.

A teacher's racial identity does matter and can affect the teacher's beliefs and pre-conceived notions of 'the other' (Sleeter, 1993; Rivière, 2006). As explained previously, many teachers in Canada are white. This is a great disadvantage for Canadian students, non-white and white alike, as these teachers are likely to have an implicit or explicit idea of their Whiteness and the inferiority of 'the other' (Rivière, 2006). These teachers may implicitly or explicitly teach these values to his/her students. Teachers need to be aware that this happens and learn ways to prevent their Whiteness ideology of coming through in their teaching.

I agree with Sleeter (1993) when he explained that a "predominantly white teaching force in a racist and multicultural society is not good for anyone... if we wish to have schools reverse rather than reproduce racism" (Sleeter, 1993, p. 163). If our Canadian society is going to change, the teaching force needs to become more representative of the Canadian population. This means that we need to look into the reasons why schools are still controlled by white people. As long as schools continue to be ruled by Whiteness, the education system will not become less racist (Sleeter, 1993).

More research needs to be done on the subject of Whiteness in education. If the majority of people in pre-service teaching programs are white females, as stated previously, we need to

find out why it is in fact this way, which will help us begin the process of changing it. Are non-white students not interested, are they discouraged by society to get into the profession of teaching, or do they not have the same opportunities as white females? I believe it is the latter that affects the enrolment of non-white students in pre-service teacher education programs, as shown with many examples of the powerfulness of Whiteness ideology and the lack of inclusiveness in schools. This means there needs to be more opportunities for non-white students to attend university and teacher's college, which may mean an increase availability of minority scholarships and bursaries. However, if Whiteness ideology was truly deconstructed in our society and children were taught, and more importantly shown, that they are equal regardless of their race, culture, religion, or gender, perhaps more non-white students would be opting for a post-secondary education.

Schools should be agents of change, not the reproduction of society, which they now are. Schools are reproducing racism instead of reversing it (Sleeter, 1993). Teachers need to be culturally self-aware and be critically conscious and responsive (Young, 2007). The ideas teachers disseminate to their students can have a large impact. Therefore, teachers should also be a "social and moral agent, a transformative intellectual, and a cultural worker (Young, 2007, p. 111), as explained previously as a 'transformative educator.'

A teacher's frame of mind can really help break down the barriers of Whiteness. If teachers could become transformative educators who think critically about their teaching practice, we would be able to start deconstructing the idea of Whiteness within Canadian schools. However, many teachers do not see or understand the domination in their schools and continue to oppress 'the other' (Young, 2007). This is why it is so important to ensure teachers are being trained to become critical of their place in society.

Yet, it cannot just be the teachers' responsibility to deconstruct Whiteness ideology. The entire Canadian education system needs to change. There is a need for a more anti-racist education framework in the Canadian education system (Gérin-Lajoie, 2008b), as opposed to our multicultural framework today. "Anti-racism education.... examining the ways in which racist ideology and individual actions become entrenched and (consciously) supported in institutional structures" (Jacquet, 2008, p.60), looks at the schools as an oppressor, with teachers and administration being the vehicle to drive the message of oppression to the students. There is not enough recognition that this is occurring in schools, so teachers and society as a whole need to admit that Whiteness does prevail in the Canadian schooling system today. Only when Canadians admit that there is a problem, can we find solutions as a collective.

The oppression of 'the other' will continue until the curriculum has been recreated. Currently, the curriculum has multiculturalism units, as discussed earlier, but the curriculum itself is not multicultural. Ethnic diversity is only discussed at the "margins of the curriculum... [so] ... the identities produced will be viewed as marginalized and exotic" (Harper, 1997, p. 200). Cultural diversity needs to be fully integrated into the curriculum. This means that the teaching materials (i.e. Eurocentric text books), resources, teaching styles, teachers' beliefs and schools' beliefs must all become culturally diverse and responsive to the many cultures in Canadian schools (Banks, 2004).

As explained previously, teachers cannot only celebrate differences, they also need to genuinely learn about their students' cultures. Teachers should examine these differences and ask themselves why it is a difference and how that difference is treated (Harper, 1997). Educators must start to critically question their practices and ideas of difference. They should ask what difference means to them, what this difference is different from, and who it is different from

(Jacquet, 2008). Teachers may soon realize that they often compare ‘the other’ to the dominant group and ideology, which is Whiteness. This creates an “us versus them” mentality that is pervasive in our education system. Teachers need to talk about prejudices and stereotyping to investigate deep into the issues of our society, admit that they are there, why they are there, and have students help find solutions.

The most powerful change that needs to occur to deconstruct Whiteness is within Canadian society. Many Canadians display racist behaviour and do not even know it. People need to think critically about what is happening in our society and realize that there is dysconscious racism everywhere, including Canadian organizations, schools and the government. We need to stop this dysconscious racism, which “implicitly accepts the norms and privileges of the White dominant culture” (Young, 2007, p. 113). Not only this, but we need to make it unacceptable for people, organizations, and especially the media to benefit from stereotyping. It should become socially unacceptable to stereotype and discriminate at any time. This should be talked about at all school levels, including elementary, secondary, and post-secondary classrooms.

A difficult part of deconstructing Whiteness is accepting that it is in fact an issue in ‘Multicultural Canada.’ However, the entire government and its policies are “based on a denial of institutionalized discrimination” (Rivière, 2006, p. 227). We, as a proactive society, need to move past this point, realize that it is occurring, and find solutions to stop it from happening further. If we continue to ignore these issues, not only will Whiteness continue, but those who struggle for justice will continue to struggle and their efforts will be undermined (Harper, 1997). These injustices need to be solved and Canadians need to understand power relations and examine the prejudices and discrimination within our society (Gérin-Lajoie, 2008a).

The Canadian government needs to redirect its attention from assessment and accountability to equity policies, as first enacted by the NDP with the Anti-Racism Secretariat, which was later shut down by the Conservatives (Gérin-Lajoie, 2008a). The government should also recreate their policies, so they are not influenced by discrimination. The Multiculturalism Policy of Canada needs to be rewritten. It was created with Whiteness ideals and continues to perpetuate Whiteness as the dominant group in Canadian society. One way to ensure equality and to end racism is to ensure that multiracial coalitions are in fact multiracial, where “white people participate but do not dominate” (Sleeter, 1993, p. 176). If the government itself cannot create policies that are free from racism, then how can schools and teachers break free from the dominant Whiteness ideology and truly deliver a critical, anti-racist education?

Finally, if we can help deconstruct Whiteness at a school and societal level, then perhaps families will teach their children new ideals that help deconstruct Whiteness even further. However, Canada is far away from this. We need to stop acting as if immigrants are a burden to Canadian society and embrace the change in culture. In multicultural Canada today there is no excuse for racism and discrimination. Canadians need to stop assuming ethnocultural diversity is referring to non-white citizens (Knight, 2008). There should be no assumption that if someone is not white, their ancestors are not from Canada and vice-versa.

Conclusion

Much needs to happen in Canadian schools and society before Whiteness can begin to be deconstructed. Whiteness ideology affects all Canadians and unfortunately affects non-white citizens in a negative way. Since Whiteness is constructed and perpetuated through the family,

government, society and schooling system, it must be deconstructed through these areas as well. An important place to start the deconstruction of Whiteness is with children and youth, as they are Canada's future. This means that educators have a very important job in their hands, in many different ways.

Student diversity is still seen as a new phenomenon in our society, but should be the reality of all teachers across Canada (Gérin-Lajoie, 2008c). If teachers continue to see student diversity as a new event and as something that can be 'fixed' with assimilation, Whiteness will not be deconstructed. Students who do not conform to Whiteness are seen as "problems" (Gérin-Lajoie, 2008c), which is detrimental to the multicultural Canadian society. Teachers need to understand that if their minority students are struggling, it is likely due to the lack of inclusive school policies and society (Gérin-Lajoie, 2008c), as opposed to individual challenges, such as class explained previously.

In order for Whiteness to be deconstructed, teachers and administrators need to act as agents of change; however, the real agents of change should in fact be the students. Educators need to help instil values into their students that allow them to become global citizens, who strive for a just society. Canadian students should become conscious and critical of the current state of society (Gérin-Lajoie, 2008c), in order for Canada to become a just and equitable society, with policies that are actually multicultural and speak of all cultures in Canada. "Issues of diversity, equity, and social justice in education should concern every one of us" (Gérin-Lajoie, 2008c, p. 194), in order for Canada to become what it says it is, a truly just multicultural society.

Shawna Carroll is an instructor at Conestoga College and a Ph.D. student at the University of Toronto, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education. She is interested in researching and teaching about current issues such as anti-racism education, various forms of oppression in Canadian schools and white privilege with a concentration on homophobia. Her current research interests include the impact of queer literature on youth identity. She is very interested in humanitarian work and global issues, which has enabled her to travel to Thailand, Cambodia, and Botswana, Africa. During her travels she helped to create a documentary for youth in Canada to understand the AIDS pandemic in Botswana.

Email: shawnamariecarroll@gmail.com

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