Articles:

Working for the White People

Jilpia JONES – is a Walmadjari woman from the Great Sandy Desert, who was removed from her mother, country and mob when she was 5 years of age, to Queensland. She returned when working with the late Fred Hollows and found her mother and mob. She obtained her nursing in general, midwifery, and eye nursing from Moorefield Eye Hospital, London, and her Arts Degree from the Australian National University.

In 1807 Governor King wrote a memo to brief his successor Bligh, explaining why he had been unwilling to force the Aborigines to work: “I had ever considered them [the Aborigines] the real proprietors of the soil’. While colonial ideas about lack of Aboriginal land ownership became entrenched, a hunger for land and wealth, coupled with the perceived need to ‘protect’ and ‘control’ Aborigines, meant that the unwillingness to force them to work quickly disappeared. I want to show how Aboriginal employment in the south Kimberleys had some unique features, not the least of which are people who in my lifetime endured the complexities involved in working for the white man for the first time. Eventually, however, events have come full circle and many have survived to use their skills and to work their own reclaimed land in their own terms.

From Whiteness to Whitefella: Challenging White Race Power in Australia

Michelle CAREY – is a PhD Candidate at Murdoch University, Western Australia.

The purpose of this short article is to join the exploration of opening up a ‘third space’ for discussing whiteness in the Australian context. I maintain that the exercise of white power in this country is sustained by the theft of a/Aboriginality as much as it is the theft of Aboriginal land. In post-Mabo Australian society, the appropriation of a/Aboriginality works to maintain the myth of terra nullius, and as such, is an expression of white, neo-colonial power relations. The crux of my argument is that in order to deal with white race supremacism as it manifests here, ‘white’ Australian need to re-conceive them/ourselves as ‘non-Indigenous’ – both in relationship to Aboriginal people and in relationship to the land we occupy as members of an invader society.
The Repetition of Race in Reconciling Australia

Sandra PHELPS – is currently a researcher and lecturer at University of Sydney.

The central argument presented in this paper is that current discourses of reconciliation in Australia evoke anxieties that reveal ongoing conditions of national insecurity and hysteria. The approach employed herein concerns psychoanalytic texts of identity formation, and analysis of neurosis within Australian nationalist discourse, to explore meanings attached to notions of reconciliation, and further, to reveal certain repressions inherent within these reconciliation movements. The aims of this paper are threefold: firstly, to outline the historical situations that are referred to in this analysis; secondly, to address arguments from Australian authors Haydie Gooder and Jane Jacobs who also draw on psychoanalysis in their discussion of Australian national neurosis, and in their critique of reconciliation in Australia; thirdly, to apply post colonial and psychoanalytic texts to offer an alternative reading of the reconciliation process and Australian nationalism. Before I move on to this analysis I will briefly outline the historical situations that I refer to throughout my paper.

Ghassan’s Gran and My Mother: Strategic Whiteness Among Aboriginal Australian and Immigrant “Others”

Dennis McDERMONT – Indigenous Health Unit, School of Public Health and Community Medicine, Faculty of Medicine, UNSW, Sydney.

Beirut-born Australian cultural theorist Ghassan Hage finds an unexpected linkage between the ‘anti-intellectual’ views and range of worries of his grandmother and the ‘White-and-very-worried-about-the-nation’ backlash most graphically embodied in Pauline Hanson and her One Nation movement. Such linkage is replicable both within this author’s family experience and the wider Aboriginal community. Self-constructions of ‘Whiteness’ by non-Anglo ‘others’ involves conscious or unconscious pursuance of strategies involving consonance with views Hage characterizes as ‘fantasies of white supremacy in a multicultural society’. Potential exists for significant personal and social costs to be incurred Larbalestier’s ‘imagined space of ‘white Australia’,’ her core of (White) Australian identity, can only be occupied by ‘others’ through significant behavioural self-censoring and cognitive morphing. Read estimates 100,000 Australians of Aboriginal descent either are denied or deny their Aboriginality.

This paper postulates the existence of a phenomenon of ‘strategic Whiteness’. It articulates modes through which ‘others’ pursue such a strategy and explores the complexity of the possible consequences for health and well-being.

Mixed Metaphors: Other Mothers, Dangerous Daughters and the Rhetoric of Child Removal in Burma, Australia and Indochina

Penny EDWARDS – is a Research Fellow at the Centre for Cross-Cultural Research, Australian National University.

In 1927, in Alice Springs, Australia, a Police Sergeant named Robert Stott penned the following assessment of ‘the half-caste female’, a term he applied to the daughters of white fathers and Aboriginal mothers: {She} is more lustful than her full-blooded sister. This does
not in any manner apply to the Male Half-Caste.” Stott’s damning portrait was written in the confidential world of police communiqués. Two years later, in the French Colonial Protectorate of Cochinchina (now southern Vietnam), the British playwright and performer Noël Coward whiled away the hours in a ‘pleasant little café and brothel combined’ in Saigon during his first grand tour of Asia. On his return to London, in December 1929, Coward turned his memories to music in what he described as a ‘reasonably successful’ song, Half-Caste Woman. …

Stott’s impressions were written for private record in the Northern Territory, and Coward’s for public consumption in the Metropole. Across the oceans, in British Burma, as an aspiring writer in the Indian Imperial Police was making his own mental notes about women of mixed descent, for future publication. Published in 1934, George Orwell’s Burmese Days bridged the worlds of colonial police experience and Vaudeville theatricality in its depiction of an outpost of empire in its dying days. The atmosphere of moral decay in Orwell’s novel is emphasised by portraits of white men preying upon sexually voracious women of mixed descent whom he, like Stott, terms ‘Half-Castes’ or ‘Eurasian tarts’.

Towards an Inclusive Early Childhood Agenda

Terri LIBESMAN – is a Senior Lecturer in Law, University of Technology, Sydney.

The National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from their families found that child welfare and juvenile justice departments are failing Indigenous families across the country. They specifically noted that if interventions into Indigenous families were to bring some benefit, they needed to be completely overhauled. Subsequent research into the NSW Department of Community Services found that while many Indigenous children are trapped in circumstances where they experience traumatic events a ‘normal’ part of their daily lives, the Department demonstrated little awareness of the intergenerational effects of trauma, and in many cases abandoned any real commitment to assisting these children.

Dumb Places

Katrina SCHLUNKE – Senior Lecturer in Cultural Studies, University of Technology, Sydney.

This paper is concerned with a very violent incident that was carried out by the perpetrators of the Myall Creek Massacre after that massacre in 1838 and when the party was still on their killing spree. I apologise for the particular distress writing about such things may cause for the Wirrayaraay peoples, for other Indigenous peoples and for women in particular, but also for others who may have experienced direct violence. It is very understandable that you would not want to read again the detail of such events. I do not see my decision to write about such things at all straightforward and I remain anxious about my ability to tread a path between ideas of testimony, wanting to write it differently and wanting to expand what writing can do for a hopeful post-colonialism.

I tell the story with the desire to make language, time and place stutter through it and I turn to the senses to try and keep us there within that moment where a body thought agonises. I hope that such stories change our worlds.
Disrupting the Normativity of Whiteness with Teacher Education Students: Challenges and Possibilities

Nado AVELING – lectures in Education at Murdoch University with responsibilities for teaching undergraduate and graduate courses in social justice studies. Her more recent research has focused on the use of auto/biographical narratives to deconstruct the normativity of ‘whiteness’ and the social construction of gendered and racialised subjectivities.

In this paper I want to reflect on the ways in which I work with teacher education students to assist them to read the cultural codes through which they/we have constructed their/our own narratives and histories and to identify problematic areas when doing this work. I want to focus in particular on ‘story-telling’, a teaching strategy that seeks to make visible how whiteness functions as a historical and social construction. I conclude with the contention that becoming aware of our own racial positioning is not quite enough if whiteness studies are to progress the work of ‘understanding and dismantling racism’.

Am I Still White? Dealing with the Colour Trouble

Anna RASTAS – Department of Sociology and Social Psychology, Tampere University, Finland.

As a researcher studying racism in the everyday life of ‘non-white’ children in Finland, I need to understand the meaning of whiteness in Finnish society. As a ‘white’ researcher studying experiences of ‘non-white’ people, I also need to be aware of the possible limitations to my understanding of ‘non-white’ people’s reality. In order to better understand the different workings of whiteness in Finnish society and in my ongoing research, I contrast common ideas and assumptions of whiteness with my own experiences as a ‘white’ mother of ‘non-white’ children, and with the ways I have been perceived by other people, as demonstrated in the data of my research. I suggest that a critical stance towards ‘colour-talk’ is the only way to avoid fatal leaning on the racist ideas embedded in all those concepts, including ‘white(ness), that arise from the discourse of ‘race’. This paper focuses on what might be called the ‘colour trouble’. It hopes to expose how a sense of belonging or not belonging is manifest in a colouring discourse that is aimed at distinguishing those who belong from those who don’t.

Shades of White: Finnish Missionaries and Their ‘Heathens’ in Namibia

Olli LÖYTTY – a PhD candidate in the Department of Finnish Literature, University of Turku.

I feel like a social anthropologist studying his own tribe. I belong to an ethnic group called Omuhongi. Originally, the Omuhongis come from Finland but have migrated in small but steady numbers to Ovamboland in the northern part of present Namibia.

‘Omuhongi’ is an Oshiwambo word for a white missionary. As the missionaries of Ovamboland were for many decades mostly Finns, the word can be translated to refer to a Finnish missionary. I am, by the accident of birth, an Omuhongi. There is, of course, no such tribe as Omuhongis. I have invented the concept in order to approach the colonial setting from a somewhat unusual angle. As I have studied postcolonial research and theory, I have
found it increasingly difficult to identify myself, or the Finnish missionaries in Ovamboland in general, with the ‘Whites’ or ‘Europeans’ in Africa of the colonial history.

The objective of this article is to reflect on the ‘shades of white’ of the Finnish missionaries both in the colonial context and in contrast to the ‘heathens’ of Ovamboland. Firstly, I discuss some of the representations of the Finns in Ovamboland as portrayed by other Europeans as well as by Finns themselves. The primary sources include popular and academic texts. I will analyse a few references to Finnish missionaries in a travelogue published in South Africa and in History of the Church in Africa.

Secondly, I consider the representations of heathenism as a mirror, telling more of the observers than the people named and described as heathens by the missionaries. For this purpose, I will analyse some exemplary Finnish missionary texts of the 1930-1960s.

Verunsicherung (Uncertainty) as Method: Research on White(ness), Feminism and Psychology in Germany

Martina TIBBERGER – is a Visiting Scholar at the Women’s Studies Department, University of California at Berkeley, and working on her PhD project “Constructions of Whiteness and Otherness in German and US-American feminist discourses under conditions of neo-colonial migration.

This paper discusses methodological challenges of a psychological research on whiteness at the intersection of race and gender in Germany. Since most scientists who develop methods for qualitative empirical research in Western academia are white and usually not interested in realizing the meaning of their whiteness within the system of race and within research on racism I suspect that their methods run the risk of functioning in service of white people’s defence against the subject matter – whiteness – rather than aiding in an acquisition of knowledge about it. By focusing on violent expressions of racism, which are called Fremdenfeindlichkeit (hostility towards strangers), the social science in Germany support a collective immunization against the knowledge of the history of whiteness as a history of seizure. Such approaches are motivated by fear and uncertainty, and I will suggest taking that uncertainty not only as a starting point of investigation into the heavily veiled history of whiteness, but also as a method itself.

‘Men are Tougher, Bigger and They Don’t Act Real Girlie’: Indigenous Boys Defining and Interrogating Masculinities

Wayne MARTINO – Senior Lecturer, School of Education, Murdoch University.
and Maria PALLOT-CHIAROLLI – Senior Lecturer, School of Health and Social Development, Deakin University.

Debates about boys and their constitution as disadvantaged subjects continue to rage in Australia, North America and the United Kingdom, with the media playing a major role in promulgating a feminist backlash politics. However, driving this rhetoric is a normalising tendency to construct all boys as a homogenous group who are suffering as a result of the attention and resources committed to girls through feminist interventions in educational policy and practice. In fact, school boys have emerged as mono-cultural, hetero-sexualised white subjects within a policy and educational social context set by the dictates of the Right agenda, fuelled by the media and men’s rights’ advocates.
Within this context, the perspectives of Indigenous boys and their experiences of schooling are silenced or erased. In light of this polemic, this paper presents our research with Indigenous boys in schools. We aim to provide a more nuanced analysis of the social and racialised practices of masculinity in these boys’ lives at school. Hence our aim is to draw attention to the problematics of a normalising logic that drives the constitution of boys as a homogenous group, without paying heed to the interweaving of gender with other social variable such as indigeneity, geographical location, socio-economic status, sexuality and a historical analysis of the impact of colonisation on Indigenous peoples.