Embedding anti-racism in the teaching, learning and assessment of the Community Development and Youth Work programme: Lessons learned to date.

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Abstract

The Black Lives Matter movement has placed a spotlight on racism, not just as a global phenomenon but as a feature of Irish society. Research conducted with Community Development and Youth Work students on the TU Dublin Blanchardstown campus found that some had encountered racism on placement and felt ill-equipped to deal with it. As a group of white lecturers working with diverse students, we sought and received funding to conduct a project during the academic year 2020/21 which aimed to embed anti-racism in the teaching, learning and assessment of that programme. An action-research methodology using a mixed-methods approach was employed, and focus groups, surveys and reflections were used to gather the evidence base. Following an overview of the theoretical framework underpinning the work, this article charts the journey to achieve the proposed objectives: namely, to change the programme content/delivery, to increase the racial literacy and reflective practice of lecturers in terms of anti-racism, and to enable students to identify racism and empower them to respond to it. The article concludes with an analysis of some lessons learned and emerging issues from the ongoing work.

Keywords: anti-racism; Irish higher education; whiteness; community development; youth work; practice education

Introduction

The Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement regained international prominence following the killing of George Floyd in 2020. While the world was caught in the grip of the COVID-19 pandemic, the BLM protests highlighted "the pandemic of racism" (Joseph & Michael, 2021, p.6) as both a global phenomenon and a pervasive feature of Irish society (see for example Walsh, 2017; McGinnity et al., 2017; Michael, 2021). Of note in the 2020 protests was the degree to which the structural or systemic aspects of racism were at the forefront of national and international conversations (Joseph and Michael, 2021; Kendi, 2020).

Third-level institutions and practice education settings are a microcosm of Irish society, and therefore are also sites where racism is experienced and/or witnessed by students. If we acknowledge the systemic nature of racism, as Meaney Sartori and Nwanze argue (2021, p.81), we cannot "ignore the uncomfortable fact of the presence of racisms in HEIs". While there is ample research evidencing this in the UK (Bhopal, 2018; Akel, 2019; Boliver, 2018), with some notable exceptions, there is a dearth of Irish research on experiences of racism in the higher education sector (Darby, 2020; Poole, 2019). In the aftermath of the BLM protests, black students in Ireland shared their experiences of racism, both on placement and on campus, reporting that Irish HEIs did not prepare them to deal with this (Adeleye et al., 2020). With regard to our own programme, Community Development and Youth Work (CDYW) in TU Dublin, Poole (2019) found that some students witnessed racism on placement but did not feel equipped to respond. Partly in response to these findings we were awarded IMPACT funding in partnership with TU Dublin's directorate of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) to embed anti-racism in CDYW teaching and learning. In this article we outline the context within which we embarked on this work. We then outline the methodological and theoretical frameworks which supported our work on the three project objectives – changing programme content; increasing racial literacy; and improving staff and student skills in identifying and addressing racism. We detail the specific activities

undertaken and we conclude with an analysis of some emerging issues from this work that require further consideration.

Context

Inward migration has had a significant impact on Irish society, particularly since the beginning of the twenty-first century. Historically a country of emigration, Ireland experienced increased levels of inward migration between 1996 and 2008 before the recession hit. Immigration has continued since, although at a reduced level initially (CSO, 2021). The resulting extent of national, ethnic and religious diversity in Ireland is notable, with people from 200 different countries of origin living here (CSO, 2017). While diversity is a reality of Irish society in 2021, it is not a new phenomenon (Murray and Urban, 2011). However, the scale of immigration experienced since the mid-1990s, and the range of ethnic diversity is new. While a rise in the incidence of racism is being reported in Irish society (see Michael 2021), similarly, racism is not a new phenomenon, nor indeed can it be exclusively traced to increased migration of the recent decades. Rather, racism is and has been a persistent feature in Irish society (McVeigh, 1992). The experience of Travellers or the discriminatory treatment of mixed-race children in Mother and Baby Homes are just two examples (Joyce, 2018; CERD, 2019; Cox, 2021). The impact of the changing demographics is evident across Irish society, including the domain of higher education and community-development/youth-work settings. Community development and youth work in Ireland take place in increasingly diverse cultural contexts. This requires practitioners to have the skills, knowledge and value base not only to work from an intercultural perspective but also to recognise the reality of racism, the impact of racism and racial discrimination on both the individuals and the communities that they work with and feel empowered to respond to it (NYCI, 2018).

The CDYW programme is endorsed dually, by the All-Ireland Endorsement Body for Community Work Education and Training (AIEB) and the North–South Education and Training Standards Committee for Youth Work (NSETS). The mission of this practice-based programme is to educate future community development and youth workers to become "agents of change". Anti-racism is very much in keeping with the values of upholding human rights, equality and anti-discrimination which are central to community development and youth work practice education and training (AIEB, 2016; NSETS, 2013). Although a full dataset is not available, the CDYW student cohort is much more diverse than the staff cohort which is currently all "White Irish" or "White Other".[1] The CDYW programme is delivered on the TU Dublin Blanchardstown campus in northwest Dublin, an area where 37% of the population is recorded as non "White Irish" (CSO, 2016). Furthermore, Blanchardstown is in the county of Fingal which is home to the second highest number of migrants nationwide (CSO, 2016). The student population on campus reflects the diversity of the local area; however relevant data is only available in terms of nationality (not ethnicity). Indeed, across Irish HEIs there are significant data gaps in student and staff ethnicity profiles and records of experiences of racism in higher education (Ní Chonaill, 2021; RIA, 2020; Athena Swan Intersectionality WG, 2020). Several measures have been introduced to address this situation, including the addition of a question on ethnicity for the first time on StudentSurvey.ie in 2022; the requirement to send nationality and ethnicity staff data to the HEA since 2020; and the first national survey on Race Equality in the Higher Education Sector in 2021 (Kempny & Michael, 2022). As Ní Chonaill (2021) argues, data (both quantitative and qualitative) is necessary to comprehend the racial inequalities experienced by students and staff at an individual and structural level, and thereby to inform action and practice.

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[1] These categories are based on the CSO 2022 census categories.

Methodology

The project had three core objectives:

1. Embed anti-racism in the CDYW programme modules

2. Increase the racial literacy of staff and develop their reflective practice with regards to anti-racism

3. Support students to identify racism and empower them to respond to it

We adopted an action-research methodology to evaluate the degree to which we achieved these objectives. We sought to go beyond outlining or critiquing social practices and instead to "reconstruct" and "transform" them (Somekh, 2005, p.1). As Denscombe (2010) argues, the action research tradition makes "closer ties between social theory and the solving of immediate social problems", namely racism in this instance. A mixed-methods approach was selected, and data was collected using a combination of focus groups, surveys and reflections in the academic years 2020–21 and 2021–22. Short quantitative surveys were designed and sent to staff and students who completed anti-racism training as part of the project. A focus group was conducted with year 4 students in 2021 which focused on informing and evaluating the actions of the project. Reflections on engaging with the project activities were gathered from students in years 2, 3 and 4, and from lecturers. This quantitative and qualitative data was used to evidence the impact of the project, to evaluate the efficacy of project activities, to modify and improve them and to develop further project actions as necessary (Stringer, 2013).

Ethical approval was obtained from the Ethics Committee of the TU Dublin Blanchardstown campus, and data collection was conducted according to standard ethical protocols. All research participants were provided with as much information as needed to make an informed decision about whether they wished to participate. An information sheet detailed the purpose and rationale of the research, its overall aim, what participation in the

research entailed and how the information would be used (written project report and future publications), and how data would be collected in keeping with the Data Protection legislation and the General Data Protection Regulations (May 2018). The surveys were filled out anonymously and focus-group participants gave written consent. All identifiable information was removed from the data before transcription and the data were analysed thematically (Braun & Clarke, 2006). (As data collection is ongoing, we draw only on data gathered during the 2020–21 academic year in this article.)

Theoretical framework

To achieve each of our objectives we needed to significantly develop staff and student racial literacy and embed this development as an ongoing practice within the CDYW programme. In service of this we drew predominantly on Guinier's (2004) work. As she outlines, racial literacy relies on "the engagement between action and thought, between experimentation and feedback … it is about learning rather than knowing" (2004, pp.114–5). In keeping with the community-development and youth-work partnership approach, lecturers and students on the project collaboratively developed and co-created their racial literacy as an ongoing process. Racial literacy has become increasingly employed as a framework for combatting racism (Sealey-Ruiz, 2021). As Rolón-Dow, Ewing Flynn and Mead (2020, p.14) outline, the conception of "literacy" is very apt to developing racial literacy since it is "ongoing" with no "end point". A lecturer or student's own experiences, including their racial and ethnic identity, impacts literacy which comprises a collection of skills, in addition to denoting "a stance: a willingness to learn, ask questions, think critically". Guinier's definition of racial literacy is informed by Critical Race Theory (CRT). She underlines the necessity to be more literate about racism's "ever-present structure" in society (2004, p.100). This echoes one of the fundamental tenets of CRT, namely the "centrality of racism" as a permanent, pervasive

and ordinary part of everyday life (Rollock & Gillborn, 2011, p.2; Brookfield & Hess, 2021, p.30).

Lentin (2020) argues that race and racism need to be examined in tandem with each other given their contingent nature. While race is conceptualised as a socially constructed category of difference, it produces very real social consequences (Bonilla-Silva, 2014; Garner, 2017; Joseph, 2020). Indeed, Kendi (2019, p.243) advocates moving beyond the social construct conceptualisation, defining race and racism as "power constructs of the modern world". Racial literacy highlights the connection "between race and power" (Guinier, 2004, p.115). The hierarchy created by race operates not just on an individual but also on a collective level, advantaging some groups and disadvantaging others (Joseph, 2020; Bhopal, 2018). Race impacts not just beliefs and prejudices but also a person's position on the hierarchy, their life chances and outcomes, their interpersonal relationships and indeed, on a broader level, institutions and social structures (Joseph, 2020). While often regarded as limited to the expression of individual prejudice, racism (often written in the plural as racisms) comprises a far more complex, multifaceted phenomenon (Garner, 2017). Echoing CRT, Guinier (2004) and Yancy (2019) amongst others underline the structural dimension of racism.

Joseph (2020) argues for the need to centre race in the Irish context. In her research on social work education, Pulliam (2017, p.419) alludes to the "resistance to centering race", but argues "without this centering, race quickly gets abandoned as a concern because it is a much riskier concept to introduce into any debate or topic of discussion". While centring race, racial literacy does not just restrict its focus to race but adopts an intersectional approach as developed by Crenshaw (1989) and supported by CRT, namely an acknowledgement of the multidimensional nature of identity and oppressions. While acknowledging the "complexity of personal and social identity formation" on an individual

level (Pulliam, 2017, p.415), on a systemic level racial literacy considers how race intersects with other systems of oppression shaped, for example, by class, gender, sexuality and disability (Guinier, 2004; Lentin, 2020). Hence the development of racial literacy entails the consideration of multiple and interlocking oppressions while retaining a focus on race and avoiding the formation of "identity silos" (Pulliam 2017).

One of the key components of racial literacy outlined by Sealey-Ruiz (2021) is engagement in critical conversations around race and racism. Racism is learned (van Dijk, 2000) and higher education institutions offer an opportunity to host critical conversations among staff and within classrooms. These can contribute to an unlearning of racist beliefs, stereotypes and ideas, reflections on biases, microaggressions, and behaviours, and learning about the historical, structural and institutional dimensions of racism. As part of the anti-racism project, "brave spaces" as opposed to safe spaces were created, as "authentic learning about social justice often requires the very qualities of risk, difficulty and controversy that are defined as incompatible with safety" (Aaro & Clemens, 2013, p.139). Furthermore, the inevitable power and privilege differential in any classroom, not just between the lecturer and the students but also within the student group, was considered (Pawlowski, 2019). These spaces were created within classrooms and on the programme to have critical and difficult conversations concerning race, racism, and responses. Building on Guinier's conceptualisation of racial literacy, Stevenson (2014) explores the psychological dimensions of race and racism and underlines "the emotionality of race work" which manifested itself it these spaces.

Finally, racial literacy involves not only the capacity to "examine and discuss", race and racism, but also to "challenge, and take anti-racist action" (Sealey-Ruiz, 2021). Anti-racism encompasses actively opposing racism (Kendi, 2019). Anti-racism as a call for social change and action is very much in keeping with the principles of community development

and youth work. Action was required by both lecturers and students as part of the CDYW anti-racism project.

Developing racial literacy among staff

During the academic year 2020–21, the CDYW staff reflective-practice sessions, which are run twice a year, were given over to the anti-racism project. In October 2020 the Irish Network Against Racism (INAR) delivered an anti-racism workshop to lecturers entitled "Building an inclusive third-level institution. Responding to racism in a college setting". The workshop covered definitions of the historical, structural, institutional and individual dimensions of racism, the impact of racism on an individual and societal level and how to challenge racism in university contexts (INAR, 2020). Staff deliberated on their responses to scenarios which described racism encountered in placement settings and on campus, based on the lived experiences of students. While lecturers did not necessarily start with the same level of racial literacy, depending on their subject area, personal and professional experiences, the workshop offered an opportunity to develop it. Based on the ten survey replies submitted by participants following the workshop, the main theme was that a key learning was the need for lecturing staff to take action. Lecturers noted the following: "importance of reflection, unlearning and relearning, challenging our own practices"; "We need to do something/challenge racism at any level and also we need to consider our assessments/how we assess/look at our marking schemes"; and the need "to model good anti-racism in our practice".

While the anti-racism workshop went some way towards meeting objective 2 of the overall project, it also served as a preparation for the mapping exercise which was subsequently conducted in service of objective 1. Lecturers recorded current anti-racist work, identifying where addressing racism featured as part of module content, class discussions or

an assessment in their modules. This module-mapping identified gaps and it also served as a starting point for lectures to reflect on embedding anti-racism more explicitly in their modules and practice.

To assist staff in further embedding anti-racism in their modules, we based the January 2021 workshop on Kolb's (1984) experiential learning model. We incorporated four phases to the session:

1. Identifying how we currently address racism

2. Developing a clear rationale and motivation for building on current activities

3. Alignment with educational/professional values and standards

4. Intentional new actions with students across the programme

Figure 1

Reflective Practice Process based on Kolb's (1984) model
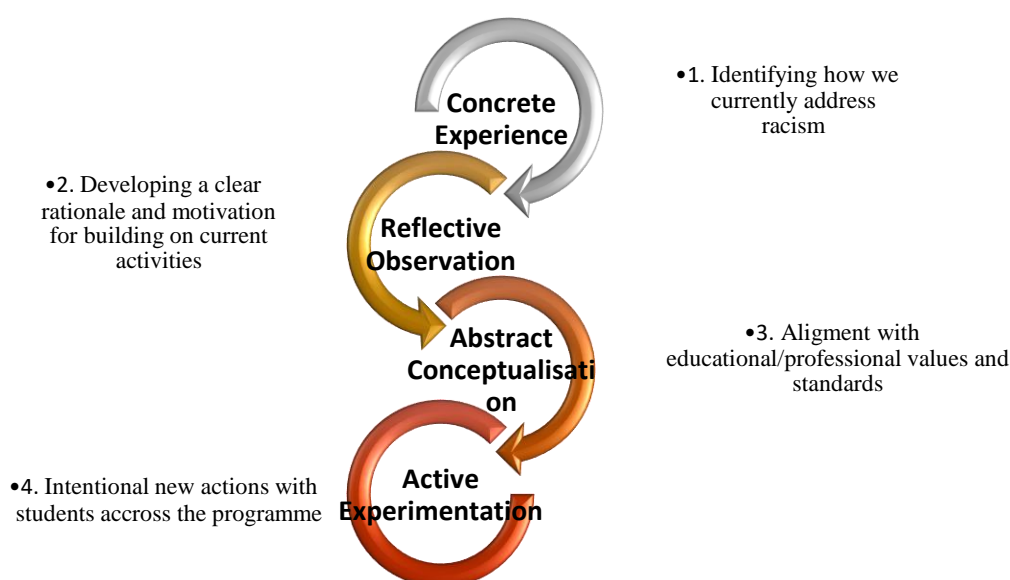
Reflective practice goes beyond a reflective process; rather, it constitutes a complex process that requires high levels of conscious thought as well as a commitment to making changes based on new understandings of how to practice (York-Barr et al., 2005). The starting point

for change is the self, with practitioners critically analysing their behaviour and thinking to facilitate implementing change. Three key questions were discussed by staff in break-out rooms as part of a critical conversation on race and racism: (1) How are we currently addressing racism or being anti-racist on the project? (2) Why are we engaging in this project? and (3) What do we want to achieve, what can we achieve? Staff discussions centred on the omnipresent nature of racism, the intersection of race with other systems of oppression (especially social class, given the context of community development and youth work), and the need to consider the structural and institutional as well as the individual dimensions of racism. As one CDYW lecturer underlined, staff collectively identified a need for an overt anti-racist message in the programme: "we are moving from the space of being 'not racist' but being anti-racist where there is an intention, a voice, it is explicit around how we are thinking and behaving on the programme".

The final part of Kolb's model, active experimentation, invited staff to build on the workshop and commit to one intentional new action with students across the programme, namely to introduce one change regarding anti-racism. Actions taken by lecturers are described in more detail in the project report (Ní Chonaill et al., 2021) and in the next section, but they can be summarised as follows: new content was introduced to modules; new and diverse texts, perspectives or voices were included; and assessments were modified to embed anti-racism. While these went towards meeting objective 1, they also contributed to meeting objectives 2 and 3 as is evidenced in the following staff reflection:

> I believe the actions taken are relevant to the module learning outcomes while contributing to the students' understanding of racism and racial justice. Furthermore, the actions will support students to consider the impact and the responsibilities they have and will have in their professional work. For me, as a lecturer, I think it is valuable to reflect on the module content, to think critically about the resources

provided to students, to question have I provided students with a diverse range of resources, citing authors from diverse backgrounds. Additionally, I have expanded my knowledge on racial inequalities and what it means to be anti-racist, which will support my teaching across modules on the Community Development and Youth Work, and Social Care programmes.

Developing the racial literacy of students

Year 1 students

First-year students were introduced to relevant terminology around diversity, racism, anti-racism and ethnicity to begin the acquisition of a shared understanding of the concepts, as well as common literacy in the area in the "Principles of Community Development" and "Irish Culture and Society" modules. An emphasis was placed on Travellers and ethnic minorities in "Introduction to Addictive Behaviours". Anti-racism was also incorporated into assessment for the "Facilitation and Group Work" module which included a case study involving racist comments being dismissed.

Year 2 and year 3 students

The focus for second- and third-year students was on anti-racism pre-placement workshops, detailed below. The year 3 students were also involved in a year-long intercultural online virtual learning exchange with Langara University in Canada to develop intercultural competency. Staff and students learned from the year 3 students, who chose racism as one of the themes for the "Afri Hedge School" human-rights conference they organised in November 2020 (with Direct Provision activist Donnah Vuma as a guest speaker). Students delivered presentations on racism and the origins of the BLM movement. New texts, materials and perspectives were introduced in the "Social Psychology" module, students were

exposed to the pioneering work of black psychologists and carried out self-reflection regarding bias. In terms of assessment, the text selected to be analysed thematically for the year 3 "Research Methods and Practice" module comprised extracts from the *Make Minority a Priority* report (Walsh, 2017) which documents experiences of minority ethnic young people growing up in Ireland.

Year 4 students

Fourth-year students engaged in a global class entitled "Change the Story, Change the World" where they were encouraged to consider the power of stories or narratives – whose stories get retold and whose are never told? This is evidenced in one student's reflection: "Throughout Bobby's [CEO of Development Perspectives] talk, he emphasized the power that comes from storytelling, and he encouraged us to be receptive to alternative views as this will help to support us in changing the narrative and the world". In the "Sustainable Development" module racism was explored more explicitly in the context of theUnited Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In the context of Covid-19, the structural nature of racial inequalities was highlighted.

Whole-programme activities

An anti-racism project webinar was organised in March 2021 where CDYW staff and students had a further opportunity to develop their racial literacy. The Irish human-rights campaigner Caoimhe Butterly inspired and challenged those present to act and seek change, in addition to giving voice to displaced people seeking refuge in Europe. The powerful stories shared through videos highlighted the stark reality of people living in the Moria refugee camp on Lesbos. Their counternarratives gave witness to the camps, not just as sites of suffering, but also places of community and creativity, where sport, yoga and the arts are employed to

combat the legal and institutional barriers. An extract from one student's reflection on the key learning from the talk underlines this: "another key aspect within Caoimhe's talk was the importance of viewing refugees as capable human beings who are resilient and tenacious, as sometimes we tend to undermine their abilities, and this can lead to further oppression".

In the second half of the webinar, staff and year 1 and year 2 students learned from year 4 students who, as part of their "Advocacy" module, took the audience on a guided journey through their personal and professional learning on racism and racial inequalities. They traced their journey from first year to fourth year, referring to many of the core elements of racial literacy discussed earlier (namely, the omnipresence of racism in society and its multifaceted nature, with a particular emphasis on the structural aspect). They also gave advice and suggested actions. The students facilitated small group discussions in breakout rooms on racial inequality at TU Dublin and the output was presented to the Race Equity Working Group to inform the TU Dublin Action Plan on Race Equity.

Placement supports

The module-mapping exercise, the staff reflective practice session and the findings from the year 4 focus groups corroborated the gap identified in Poole's (2019) research where students did not feel equipped to challenge racism on placement. To address this, anti-racism workshops were delivered by two external partners (the Irish Network Against Racism (INAR) and Léargas) as part of the year 2 and year 3 pre-placement workshops in February 2021. Second- and third-year students complete two block placements in the second semester. The following student quotes taken from their fieldwork portfolios recognise the knowledge gained from the workshops: "I was able to learn more and become more confident in working in an intercultural setting" (year 2, female student); "I feel I have a deeper understanding of

the different levels of discrimination and have an in-depth training on how to address racism in a work setting, not just a youth work setting" (year 2, female student). A new workshop on resources for community and youth workers was designed and delivered internally to year 3 students. In the final workshop, students developed responses in small groups to scenarios of racism experienced in community development and youth work settings, based on lived experiences. Then, the students collectively participated in creating an Anti-Racism Charter to demonstrate their commitment to anti-racism.

Addressing the structural and institutional dimensions of racism

The CDYW programme team partnered with the EDI Directorate throughout the project and we emphasised the importance of advancing structural and institutional change throughout. Students in years 3 and 4 of the programme developed and submitted responses to the *White Paper on Ending Direct Provision* and the TU Dublin *Draft Action Plan for an Intercultural University* with a focus on race equity. Contributions to policy are in keeping with Kendi's view of anti-racism where the power is in policies (2019).

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Lessons learnt and emerging issues

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Over the course of the academic year 2020–21 the CDYW programme team embarked on an anti-racism journey. The fundamentals of the anti-racist approach adopted included the creation of spaces on the programme for critical conversations among staff and students, and for critical reflection on anti-racism in teaching, community development and youth work practices. There was movement beyond discussions, and numerous examples of anti-racist action were taken across the programme. The team was awarded a TU Dublin Le Chéile award in September 2021 and the work is ongoing. In 2021–22 we developed an anti-racism

placement resource which is currently being piloted, and we have continued to engage in reflective practice and to further embed anti-racism in the programme modules.

In line with findings in the broader literature, we very much recognise that we are still at the starting point of this work. As Rolón-Dow, Ewing Flynn and Mead (2020) stress, developing literacy is always "ongoing", and the development of racial literacy and anti-racism are "life-long journeys" (Brookfield, 2019). Transformative learning is a slow process, and as Brookfield and Hess (2021, p.31) outline, it "takes a long time to happen and typically occurs incrementally", and thus requires the allocated time necessary. Based on our experiences in 2020–21 our key lessons learned are as follows:

1. The need to continue to embed anti-racism in the CDYW programme modules through *intentional scaffolding,* and the *length of time* this takes

2. The continued need to increase the racial literacy of staff and develop their reflective practice with regard to anti-racism, with a particular emphasis on *understanding how whiteness functions*

3. While supporting students to identify racism and empower them to respond to it, the need to *advance structural and institutional change* with regard to report and support processes

Intentional scaffolding and the time required

Understanding racism as structural is a key element of Guinier's framework, but the move to "structural thinking is complex, difficult and takes time" (Brookfield and Hess, 2021, p.34). Hence, it is important to be realistic about what can be achieved in terms of year 1 and 2 students and recognise the journey that students and lecturers also must travel. Anti-racism as a journey in a similar vein to the development of structural thinking, is complex and difficult, particularly given the "emotionality of race work" (Stevenson, 2014), and takes time. Anti-

racism needs to be embedded in a programme from day one, with learning developed incrementally over time (Brookfield and Hess 2021). The year 4 student focus group participants recognised the need to embed the content on race and racism throughout the whole programme saying it "should be put in place in first year… like even if it was just a basic introduction or, you know, covering aspects of it, building up the knowledge and understanding, so that when you get to fourth year you can kind of go into that more, I don't know, more indepth'. Another student concurred with this developmental learning process:

> Yeah, I would have loved to have it [Combatting Racism module] from first year, and then work our way up to like four to where we're learning the more advanced stuff there. I feel like a lot of people would actually benefit from first year, they're going into placement that you have that kind of knowledge, and you're more aware … and so people like myself [ethnic minority], I was quite annoyed because it's something that I would have loved to learn in first year, and then let it develop and kind of talk about the more serious actions in fourth year.

This is in line with the broader literature. Sealey-Ruiz (2021) advocates for an integrated approach across the programme and teaching methods so that students can "develop a deeper understanding and discourse that can propel them to action" which is one of the ultimate aims of racial-literacy development. Rolón-Dow, Ewing Flynn and Mead (2020, p.15) "strongly advocate for integrating a racial literacy approach in courses throughout teacher education", in their professional context. They describe being "frustrated by the lack of depth that one course could provide". Sealey-Ruiz (2021), also referring to teacher education, concurs, acknowledging the insufficiency of a single "diversity course". Rather, what is required are "opportunities for repeated, robust and deep engagement with the concepts, vocabulary, skills and dispositions that will promote their racial literacy" (Rolón-Dow et al., 2020, p.15). The space created in individual modules, in workshops delivered, but also at programme level

through webinars organised, has presented some opportunities to have critical conversations but requires far more coherent and systematic development.

Furthermore, the complexity of these concepts needs to be considered (Harris, 2021). The development of critical analytical skills around race, racism and racial identity are higher order thinking skills on Bloom's taxonomy that arguably develop later in a programme of study. What was initiated with the module mapping and the reflective practice on the anti-racism project is the first step in a process of "scaffolding" the learning (Brookfield, 2019), and a whole-programme approach from year one is something the team is now working on. A remapping of the programme modules to incrementally develop racial literacy from years 1 to 4 is now required.

Whiteness and white privilege

Lecturers and students were at different starting points in terms of their racial literacy at the beginning of this project. In our staff and student discussions, whiteness and white privilege were frequently used interchangeably and both staff and students found it difficult to clearly and consistently differentiate between how whiteness functions at a systemic level and white privilege at the individual level. It became clear to us that a clear differentiation between the two was necessary in developing racial literacy. In practice they are of course deeply interlinked, but the distinction could assist staff and students to better clarify how each of the dimensions of racism (historical, structural, institutional, individual) are perpetuated.

We now use the term whiteness to describe a set of cultural norms, assumptions and practices which establish being white as the norm. Historically considered as "racially unmarked" or "racially invisible", white people were thus in a position to assume power as "the norm" and define "Others" in racial terms. Whiteness is thus a socio-historical structure of power (Brookfield, 2019; Yancy, 2019) and its invisibility needs to be challenged. In the western

world racisms operate by privileging whiteness and by engendering advantages and disadvantages related to it (Garner, 2017; Joseph, 2020). We stress that all white people do not gain equal benefit from whiteness – as a set of cultural norms, assumptions and practices – because other norms are also operative in local contexts. For example, a long history of discrimination and a whole range of norms shape the experiences of Irish Travellers and their relations with the settled majority in Ireland today. We use white privilege to describe the range of experiences of racism that white people do not experience at a more individual level. White privilege does not mean that one's life is not without many challenges; rather, it means that the challenges experienced are not founded on forms of harm and discrimination based on skin colour. They could be based on prejudices about nomadic peoples though, and this is particularly pertinent in the Irish context.

Over the course of the project, we thus recognised that an essential component of racial literacy for white staff and students is considering how being white constitutes a racialised identity (Brookfield & Hess, 2021) and next gaining an understanding of how whiteness, as a socio-historical structure, shapes our experiences. Furthermore, we needed to consider how we do not benefit equally from whiteness. For example, in Ireland a Traveller may be initially racialised as white but once they say their name they may be categorised as a member of the Traveller community and subject to racism based on that membership. Raising staff and student awareness of how the parameters of whiteness evolved over time and are continually evolving is useful.

We have identified that we need to be much more explicit in communicating with students, and indeed lecturers, how we are all racialised, and how theoretical concepts provide a language with which we can identify processes of racialisation and how racism is perpetuated. This would assist both staff and students to identify the enablers and barriers to building "brave spaces". For example, we have learnt that careful consideration of our

"sphere of influence" as lecturers (Tatum, 2021) and recognition of the "power" of our racialised identity as white lecturers within the classroom(Brookfield & Hess, 2021), along with the differences in terms of our positionalities and lived experiences as opposed to some of our students, is necessary before we can deconstruct, reconstruct and transform our practices. Referring to the power of narratives alluded to earlier, whose voices are heard in our classroom? Which students see themselves reflected in our curriculum, the texts or material we choose? As argued earlier, centring race, including being white as a racialised identity, is a key component of developing racial literacy, while also acknowledging how race intersects with other systems of oppression and "provides the basis for creating community coalitions" within our classrooms and on campus (Pulliam, 2017, p.419). Anti-racism work constitutes deeply coalition work (Dabiri, 2020).

Advancing structural and institutional change

As part of our project to embed anti-racism in the CDYW programme we were clear that we needed to historicise processes of racialisation, to equip staff and students with the skills to identify how racism is perpetuated at structural, institutional and individual levels and to address it at each of those levels. Our programme does not operate in isolation from university systems, structures and the supports provided. Even at programme level it became clear to us that this project will be constantly evolving, and it will take at least three to four years to substantially embed content in such a manner that it will not all be lost if key staff leave. We have become far more aware of the degree to which we can and cannot change, given how we are embedded in wider university systems. For example, the fact that the changes implemented are still in process and not yet coherent and robust across the whole programme caused frustration among some students and some staff members. At an institutional level there are also significant differences in awareness levels and supports

among our placement partners and between various functions in TU Dublin. As such we have identified that in addition to stating that this work is ongoing with no "end point" we also need to better communicate the length of time structural and institutional change takes so that staff and students do not lose heart. However, as lecturers and "agents of change" we can continue to advocate for better supports and work in conjunction with the EDI Directorate to ensure the voices of students who experience racism on campus and placement are heard, and that adequate responses developed.

Conclusion

The work of embedding anti-racism in the CDYW programme is very much at the early stages. A whole-programme approach, with the learning developed incrementally, is required. Racial-literacy development takes time and there is no quick-fix solution. It involves deep understanding of difficult, complex, and emotive topics, and transformative learning and structural thinking which are slow processes. In addition to creating spaces for critical conversations and reflection on race, whiteness also needs to be centred in discussions around racism in the Irish context. Critical reflection by staff on their racial identity is necessary to inform actions to transform practice. At an institutional level, higher education institutions also have a role to play to prepare and support students to respond both personally and professionally to the major societal challenge of racism.

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