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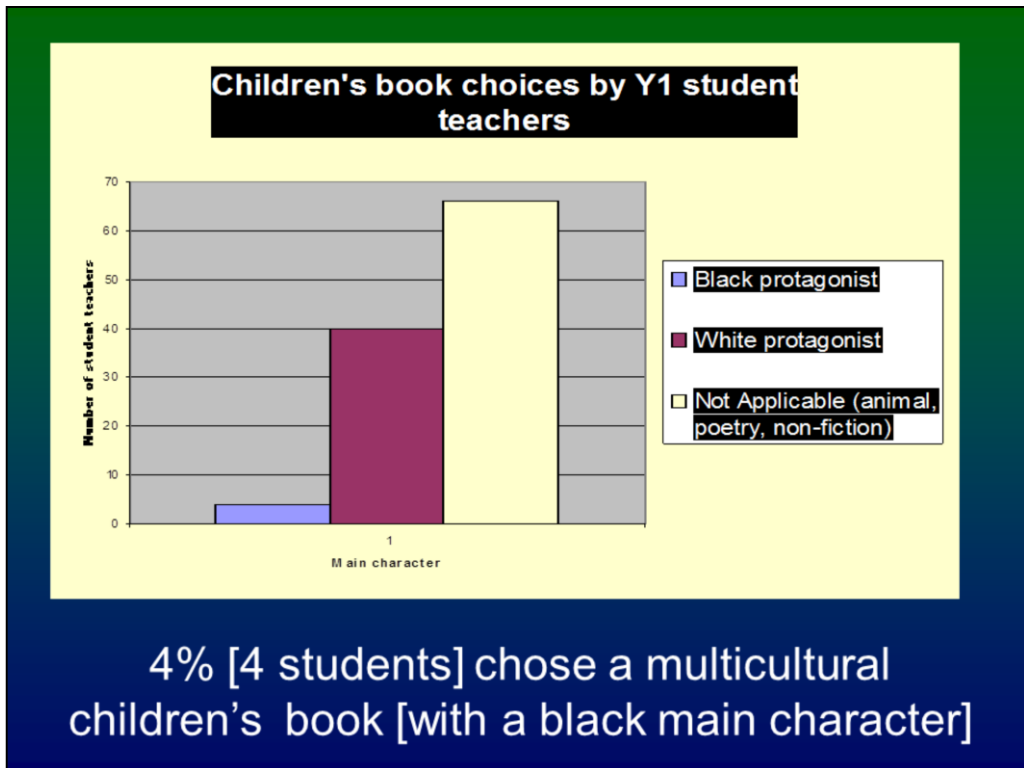
# Enquiring into student teachers' attitudes towards cultural diversity

Diane Warner  
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QTS 4 - English

**Diane Warner**, Lancaster, Educ. Faculty. Today's presentation is from part of MA which used methodology of Practitioner Research. Double focus on developing as a teacher/lecturer in HE and seeking a deeper understanding of the students with whom I work.

Came to teach at UoC 5 years ago, also trained here, so aware of the ethnic & cultural make-up. Current figures show 92% of the student pop. Is White [2007/8] The Whitest HEI in the new Northern universities which have FT ITE courses [Edge Hill, Bolton].

My study seeks to explore an aspect of this whiteness.



The research grew out of an action of 1<sup>st</sup> years on the 4-year primary teaching degree – in an English assignment they were required to choose and justify teaching a children's book. This is what I found over 2 years of marking. From this I developed a hypothesis from which to work.

## The hypothesis

- *White student teachers, new to Initial Teacher Education, are likely to automatically choose books for use in the primary classroom which portray 'white privilege' assumptions (Dyer, 2000; Frankenberg, 2000; Solomon et al, 2005;) and values, because they bring into play their own cultural and ethnic perceptions and views, and unwittingly apply them as norms.*

# Research objectives

- investigate how white student teachers, of a UK heritage, perceive multicultural children's books as part of their developing pedagogical understanding;
- examine social factors which cause a cultural blindness, in white student teachers, towards multicultural educational issues;
- relate the perceptions and attitudes of these students to the role of Initial Teacher Education and my role as a lecturer.

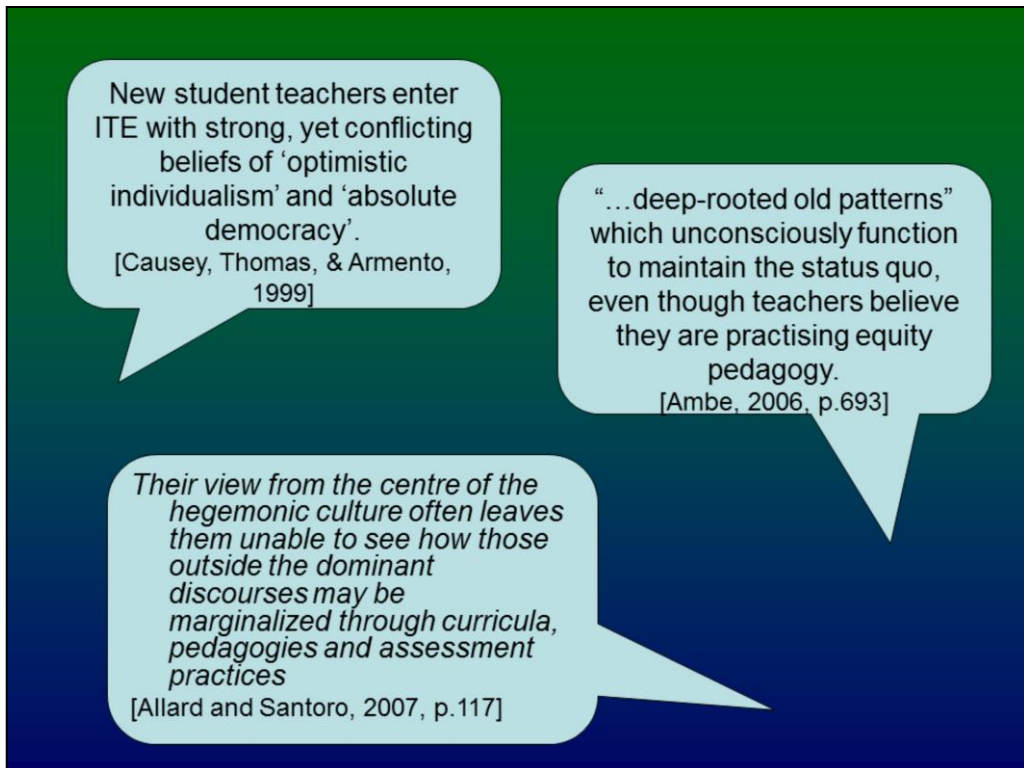
Today's presentation focuses on the second bullet point.

## 'dysconscious racism' [King, 2004]

- suggests that the separate lives, lived by white student teachers, from their minority ethnic pupils, means they are not able to relate to and teach them adequately.
- Their “conscious [good] intentions”, which articulate a discourse of equality, are subsumed into a prevailing, underlying ethic, of what they know and feel safe within.
- *Dysconsciouness is an uncritical habit of mind (includes perceptions, attitudes, assumptions and beliefs) that justifies inequity and exploitation by accepting the existing order of things as given...is a form of racism that tacitly accepts dominant white norms and privileges.. ( p.73)*

Bullet 1: Separateness

Bullet 2: Safety of the known is a significant driving force



Some underlying theoretical points.

*...deep-rooted old patterns...*

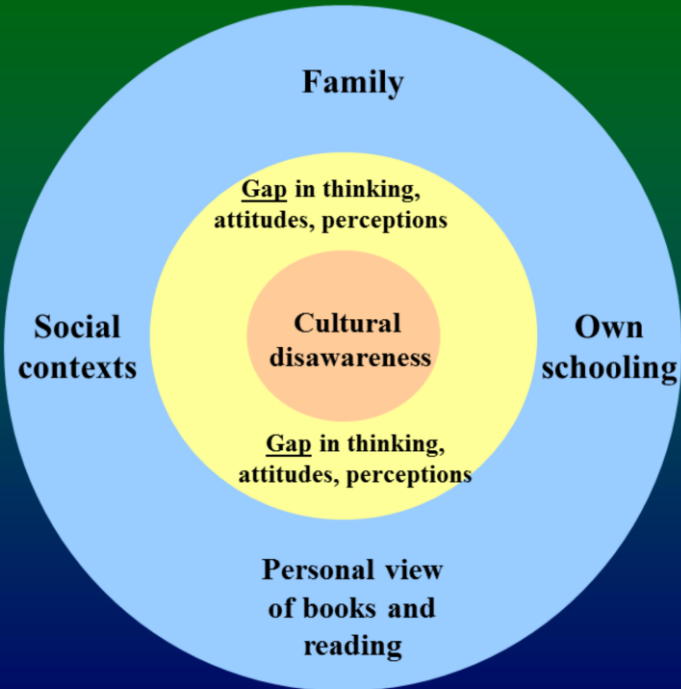
[Ambe]

62% had never heard of any of the listed well-known minority ethnic authors and their books, and only 1% had used a multicultural book in the classroom, in their two years of ITE experience.



## 'Cultural Disawareness'

A vacant space of culturally knowing about themselves or others...they do not discern or engage with multicultural issues... done in an automatic and pre-conditioned manner [p.43]



Handouts: Questions arising from some of the stories?

Cultural disawareness is “like wearing blinkers which actually point inwards, forming an acute angle of non-awareness. The wearer is locked into a single way of knowing and being, consequently causing a separation.” [Warner, 2008, p.48]

2 slides to conclude

## Some findings...

- the cultural background of beginning teachers does have a significant effect on the way they perceive multicultural issues;
- Their 'cultural disawareness' is woven into the newness of the ITE experience; producing an unsureness and a consequent 'treading carefully' within known bounds.