Walter Hines Page Scholarship:
Creating a Framework for Mutual and Productive Communication about Race in Education

Introduction:

"The way to stop discrimination on the basis of race is to speak openly and candidly on the subject of race" – Hon. Sonia Sotomayor, US Supreme Court Justice (2014)

With the opportunity to spend two weeks in the USA to research one aspect of communication in education, it made sense for me to explore the role of communication in challenging racism from within schools. As educators, we strive to equip our pupils as best we can with the tools to navigate this complicated world, but many of us still struggle to engage in difficult classroom conversations about race. Yet, effective communication is arguably the most important tool for challenging racism on a regular basis.

Despite my involvement in anti-racist activism in the UK, I still faced obstacles when trying to discuss race in various settings. When talking about race to family, friends, colleagues and pupils, it is not uncommon for me to notice that we start off from dissimilar definitions of racism, especially when our racial identities differ. Very often, such attempts at conversations lead to confusion, anxiety, defensiveness, anger and, in worst case scenarios, tears. Such explosive outcomes can make it hard to imagine what meaningful conversations about race could look like.

Therefore, I framed my research around the following question:

How do some American educational institutions create the right conditions for mutual, productive communication about race?

Productive communication should lead to positive outcomes, from a better understanding of oneself and of others' experiences, to a solid plan of action to reduce racism. Mutual communication implies that all participants start from some form of common ground. This research question lead me to the design of a framework for effective racial discourse, based on four conditions: acknowledging emotions, valuing shared humanity, building relationships and creating safe spaces.

Background to the Question:

The first things that come to mind when discussing race and racism in the UK tend to be explosive headlines about celebrities or politicians uttering racial slurs and perhaps racial hate crimes that increased by 58% in the week following the Brexit vote. Commonly, racism is discussed as a series of isolated incidents caused by ill-intentioned individuals. Many in the UK would agree that those isolated acts are a problem, but few consider racism to be a more endemic, insidious and systemic issue that is the on-going product of a long British history of white supremacy (Elkins, 2005; Tharoor, 2017). Even fewer people consider white privilege and how it may have benefitted or disadvantaged their lives in the UK, based on the colour of their skin (Bhopal, 2017).

It is not unusual for alarm bells to start ringing and heart rates to start increasing after such uncomfortable statements are uttered. Responses often include distrust and disbelief:

Where is your evidence?

There was no KKK in the UK – how can there be white supremacy?

Poverty is the problem, how can there be privilege based on race?

Too often, conversations about race are side-tracked by intentions (did they intend to cause harm?) and competing oppressions (social class, gender, xenophobia, etc.). Racial barriers and experiences of racism are also frequently dismissed, as modern legislation – like the 2010 Equality Act – is meant to protect racialised minorities in the supposedly post-racial UK. Moreover, colour-blindness is pervasive in many people's minds and in policy. The advocates of colour-blindness assume that if people do not see colour, they will treat everyone equally, especially if they are well-intentioned. It becomes problematic as implicit bias is rarely considered – the fact that people are not entirely aware of the prejudice which subtly influences their actions. This is demonstrated by the controversial anti-terrorism Prevent strategy that requires educators in the UK to report any pupils they suspect to have terrorist proclivities (Miah, 2013). Unsurprisingly, this has led to many racist and Islamophobic incidents (Dean, 2017; Ferguson, 2017; Ameli & Merali, 2015).

Most of my anti-racist education has come from American literature since there is a plethora of American experts on race (Crenshaw, Gotander, Peller & Thomas, 1995). It has been more challenging to research race in the UK, although there is a growing body of academic literature (Young, 2016; Gillborn, 2006; Macpherson, 1999) and attention by policy makers (Scottish Executive, 2017; Scottish Executive, 2000). From my understanding, racial discourse in policy

and in schools tends to be a re-active process, taking action only when something bad happens. But what about becoming pro-active? In the UK, it has been hard for me to imagine what pro-active, meaningful racial discourse could look like in its more mature stages of development. Going to the US was the perfect opportunity to explore anti-racism and racial discourse as a pro-active, creative process. The trip allowed me to envision a framework to nurture positive racial discourse with pupils.

Methodology:

I planned to research this issue believing that the best way an educator can prepare for difficult conversations about race is to start from oneself. So I arranged to attend training to challenge and push my understanding of racism to better comprehend how racial dialogue works.

It was clear to me that productive conversations about race could not be observed spontaneously in a classroom within the timeframe of two weeks, since discussions about race may require time to become productive. Instead, observing curriculum and the various spaces created for those conversations in a school seemed more realistic. I quickly realised that conversations about race do not only happen inside the classroom and the ones happening outside the classroom may be just as important in creating the right conditions for difficult discussions with pupils. Productive communication would probably necessitate the whole community to be on board, not just a single teacher working with one class. For those reasons, I planned to interview experts, practitioners, pupils and parents in an authentic way, using my own experiences of anti-racist education to guide my questions. I made sure to ask everyone what they believed to be the most important aspect of communication when discussing race and I collated all their responses to design a framework.

Most of the schools and conferences that I attended were initially selected through Google searches and responses to my enquiries. It must be noted that a lot of the schools that welcomed my research in New York City (NYC) were private and well-funded, consequently able to invest in ground-breaking practices. Considering that NYC is the most racially segregated city in the USA, segregated schools would experience different problems according to access to funding and racial makeup. Moreover, the racial landscape in NYC is unique – it is the most racially diverse, yet segregated, city I had ever experienced – and this means certain practices work better in this city than in others.

The Pacific Educational Group (PEG) was the first organisation to get back to me and they advised me to stay in NYC for the most relevant schools and visit Philadelphia for their annual summit. With 26 years of experience, PEG is an organisation committed to preparing educators for courageous conversations about race – a necessity for achieving racial equity as it has the potential of uncovering personal and institutional biases that prevent pupils from achieving their full potential. "Courageous Conversation" is their protocol for effectively engaging, sustaining and deepening interracial dialogue. In Philadelphia, their 16-hour training, "Beyond Diversity", introduced me to this protocol; it transformed my understanding of racial dialogue, giving me an excellent framework to analyse the forms of communication in the schools I later visited.

The Centre for Culture, Race and Equity (CCRE) at the Bank Street College of Education was the second establishment to invite me to NYC. Bank Street College is a private education institution which includes a graduate school and an independent school for children. The CCRE works with educators and community members, helping adults shift their beliefs and behaviours to build environments where children of all backgrounds can thrive. I was welcomed by the Deputy Director, Takiema Bunche-Smith, whom I interviewed with the Executive Director, Veronica Benavides, and the Project Manager, Maried Rivera Nieves.

Bunche-Smith encouraged me to attend the Little Chairs Big Differences (LCBD) conference. LCBD is a collective of early childhood educators who are committed to creating race conscious, inclusive classrooms. At their annual conference in Brooklyn, I met many educators and parents and I attended two workshops: "Black Lives Matter – Racial Justice in Early Education" and "Raising Race Conscious Children".

The first school I visited was the Little Red Schoolhouse and Elizabeth Irwin High School (LREI). LREI is a progressive independent primary and secondary school in Manhattan committed to racial equity and to reflecting the religious, ethnic and racial diversity of NYC through its enrolment of pupils and its curriculum. The Director of Equity and Community, Dr Sandra Chapman, welcomed me and arranged for me to observe lessons and interview staff members, including the primary school principal, Elena Jaime, the staff coordinator, Cari Kosins, as well as four pupil representatives of various affinity groups such as the Asian Student Group, the Black Student Union and the Gender and Sexuality Alliance.

At the LCBD conference, I met Sharina Gordon, an associate of the office of Identity, Culture and Institutional Equity (ICIE) at Horace Mann School, who also welcomed me to her school. Located in the Bronx, Horace Mann is an independent multicultural school, from nursery to secondary, and it is committed to inclusion by recognising, respecting and valuing difference.

The ICIE was founded eight years ago following the demands of the Black Parents Union and the recommendations from a school inspection. I interviewed a member of the Asian Student Group who gave me a tour of the school and all the staff members of the ICIE – the Director, Patricia Zuroski, the Co-Director, John Gentile, and the two Associates, Candice Powell-Caldwell and Sharina Gordon.

The third school I visited was suggested by Bunche-Smith, as a parent in that school, particularly for the inspiring curriculum development that encouraged pupils to engage in racial discourse. The Maths and Science Exploratory School (MS447) is a public middle school in Brooklyn and three English, Language and Arts (ELA) teachers – Cara Haft, Nicole Watler and Jess Saunders – took the time to explain their unit, "Power, Choice and Voice", to me.

The last school to welcome me was the Community Roots Charter School in Brooklyn which was opened in 2006 with the idea of being intentionally inclusive and racially, economically diverse in the segregated landscape of NYC. I interviewed the Director of Community, Sahba Rohani, who also gave me a tour of the school.

Finally, I separately interviewed the Research and Evaluation Manager at the Center for Racial Justice in Education (CRJE), Tito Soto-Carrion. Formerly known as Border Crossers, the CRJE started when pupils of colour and white pupils came together to try to bridge interracial communication gaps. Now consisting of 6 full-time staff and 40 trainers (including teachers, principals, consultants and retired educators) in NYC, the CRJE is an organisation committed to training educators to dismantle patterns of racism in schools and communities.

Results:

While this research focuses on preparing pupils to challenge racism through communication, a lot of it inevitably touches upon empowering educators and families who cannot support pupils in racial discourse unless they themselves make crucial, introspective transformations. In order to answer my research question, I asked educators, parents and pupils what they thought were the most important aspects of communication for productive conversations about race. While each response was incredibly valuable on its own, I collated these findings and broke them down into a more concise framework with four conditions, fit for the purpose of this dissertation: acknowledging emotions, valuing shared humanity, building relationships and creating safe spaces.

1. ACKNOWLEDGING EMOTIONS

As mentioned earlier in my anecdotal experiences, conversations about race tend to cause discomfort. Acknowledging that racial discourse is emotional for all is an empowering step forward for more productive communication. Dr Sandra Chapman identified this feature as the most important:

> *"Race is an emotional topic and we must create spaces where this emotion can exist. When we stifle or encourage people to be stoic about race in education, we make it an intellectual exercise. We need students and adults to feel the emotions in their heart, not just process things in their brains, in order for people to be motivated to create change in their communities."*

Similarly, a pupil at LREI expressed the value in checking our feelings behind the things we say as they may come from places of discomfort. Once we are aware of our emotions, we can start exploring the reasons behind our discomfort. In fact, leaning into discomfort is one of the four agreements of the Courageous Conversation protocol and it is one of the conversation guidelines used by staff and pupils at LREI, Horace Mann and Community Roots. According to an adaptive leadership model for racial equity provided at the PEG training, if we always remain in our comfort zone in racial discourse, we are probably leaving a lot unsaid, avoiding challenging ideas and not reaching a zone of productivity. When we lean into discomfort, asking ourselves why we feel certain ways, we are more likely to learn and challenge each other.

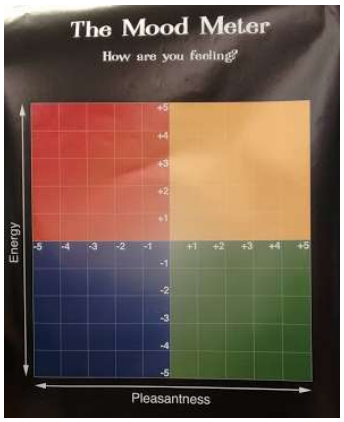

Figure 1: Horace Mann Classroom Poster

Figure 2: Community Roots Drawing

However, if we lean too far into our discomfort, we risk exceeding our tolerance limit, becoming unproductive in our communication. For white people, this discomfort is known as white fragility (DiAngelo, 2018) and, for John Gentile from the ICIE, it is to be expected in many conversations. White fragility can cause participants in racial discourse to disengage and stifle

further discussion. Becoming aware of this fragility can enable participants to lean into discomfort at a reasonable level, while leaving space for participants to remove themselves from conversations when the emotions become over-whelming.

"Emotional labour" is a term that often came up to describe the discomfort required to engage in racial discourse. For people of colour, and some race-conscious white people, a significant feature before starting a conversation about race is assessing whether the emotional labour required for a productive conversation is worth it. According to Sharina Gordon from the ICIE and two pupils from LREI, understanding where the other person is coming from and how willing they are to listen are important in assessing whether the amount of emotional labour is worth it. If a person is unwilling to listen, or unable to listen at certain point in time, perhaps we are better off saving our time and energy for future, more fruitful conversations. This is valuable advice, as long as we do not use it to constantly remain in our comfort zone, and thus become unproductive in racial discourse.

2. VALUING OUR SHARED HUMANITY

Valuing the state of being human – imperfect, vulnerable, diverse, constantly changing and growing – is a powerful tool in racial discourse.

- **Growing**

One of the recurring ideas I observed during my visit was that we, especially as educators, should always adopt a growth mindset and make ourselves vulnerable and honest enough to learn. Nicole Watler from MS447, Candice Powell-Caldwell and John Gentile from the ICIE conveyed that when we begin to view racial discourse as a skill to be learned, we become brave enough to make mistakes, to practise more regularly and progress. Just as maths is a skill that requires time and practice to improve, communication about race is a skill that requires time and persistence for success.

Figure 3: Growth Mindset Classroom Art at LREI

- **Vulnerable**

The state of vulnerability and honesty was a recurring theme. Cari Kosins from LREI expressed that white people are often too scared of making mistakes, so they paralyse and do not progress. People of colour may also paralyse because they are scared of the consequences of discussing race. Kosins believes that we should all be honest, let ourselves be vulnerable and model it for pupils in schools. Tito Soto-Carrion from the CRJE agreed that teachers silencing themselves in classrooms when they are ignorant about racial matters stifles communication. Soto-Carrion emphasised that it is good to let pupils know about your ignorance in these matters, as long as you portray yourself as a collaborative learner who wants to find out and who needs pupils' support in the process. Admitting that we do not know all the answers, explained Soto-Carrion, truly humanises the teacher.

- **Diverse**

Every human being experiences life differently. In terms of race, white people and people of colour will have very different racial life experiences. The third agreement of the Courageous Conversation protocol requires participants in racial dialogue to "speak their truth" since we can only be the experts of our personal narratives. Sharing anecdotal experiences is a valuable tool both in conversations and research, asserted Patricia Zuroski from the ICIE, since it can change systems and policies, creating a fairer society.

Moreover, if only white people are sharing their experiences in a conversation, the conversation will be unbalanced. Therefore, having multiple, diverse perspectives ensures a more holistic, truthful conversation. Multiple perspectives were identified as a crucial feature of meaningful racial discourse by PEG and by LREI and Horace Mann pupils. To the MS447 teachers, in predominantly white schools these multiple perspectives can be achieved through a race conscious curriculum, using well-rounded characters of colour in literature and media for example. There needs to be multiple voices of colour in a curriculum, otherwise there is room for racial stereotypes and prejudice to form.

3. BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS

Valuing our shared humanity paves the path for building relationships – an essential feature of racial discourse according to Takiema Bunche-Smith from the CCRE and Elena Jaime from the LREI. Both highlighted that a shared investment in building or maintaining a relationship creates a level of trust that promotes meaningful communication about race. Jaime asserted that we can only move forward once we realise we are all in this together. If we do not build relationships through our efforts in discussing race, people become disengaged and resentful. Veronica Benavides from the CCRE questioned whether communication about race can ever be mutual since we all come from different understandings and experiences; therefore, building honest relationships between families, pupils and educators may be a key tool in bridging those communication gaps.

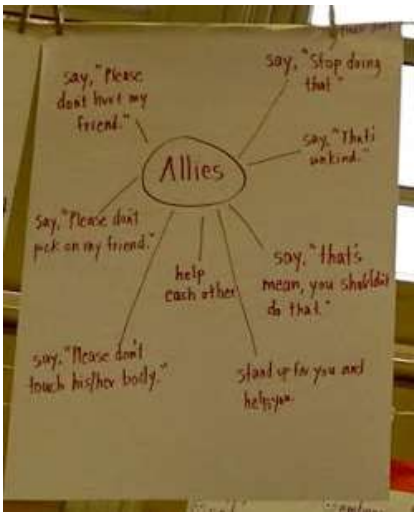

Figure 4: Community Roots Classroom Poster

These thoughts were echoed by a pupil at the Horace Mann who believed that respect should underpin every conversation. Instead of pointing fingers and "calling someone out", she asserted that we should "call someone in" and invite them to have conversations built on trust and compassion. This equally resonates with Soto-Carrion's notions of teacher-pupil collaboration and Kosins' emphasis on vulnerability and honesty in communication.

The Community Roots Charter School and LREI nurture strong relationships with families. Both schools organise various intimate events with families to develop a sense of trust and shared humanity, while acknowledging and learning more about cultural diversity. Such initiatives allow educators, parents and children to learn collaboratively and communicate more effectively about race.

One meaningful pupil, parent and teacher relationship led to the development of a new unit on "Power, Choice and Voice". As a response to pupil and parental complaints that *To Kill a Mockingbird* by the white author, Harper Lee, was not a balanced representation of black characters, displaying no agency in the novel, ELA teachers at MS447 decided to select texts that offered multiple voices of colour. Their unit demonstrated the importance of teachers

Figure 5: Example of the Texts Studied in the "Power, Choice and Voice" Unit at MS447

listening and respecting pupil and parental voices; it also allowed pupils to lead fruitful discussions about race and perceive themselves as collaborative learners alongside their teachers.

Finally, pupil, parent and staff affinity groups are another empowering tool that I observed at LREI and Horace Mann. Groups such as the Black Student Group and the Asian Student Group strengthen relationships between pupils and ensures that their voices are heard. It is noteworthy that a pupil at Horace Mann identified inclusion (many *voices* of different racial backgrounds), rather than just diversity (many *faces* of different racial backgrounds), to be a crucial aspect of productive racial discourse.

4. CREATING SAFE SPACES

Mutual, productive conversations about race in educational settings can only happen when safe spaces are created within schools. By "safe space", I mean a space where emotions can be explored (as mentioned earlier by Chapman), where others can grow with you and where there is persistence.

Figure 6: LREI Classroom Poster

- **Conversation Guidelines and Agreements**

For Sahba Rohani from Community Roots, setting up guidelines is necessary for a safe space. Such conversation guidelines are explicitly shared with families, pupils and staff. Examples of these include "What is said here stays here; what is learned here goes out" and "Work hard to understand others' perspectives." Such guidelines echo many of the conversation guidelines present at LREI and Horace Mann. They demonstrate that *what* you say matters less than *how* you say it – a point stressed by PEG. This highlights the importance of having an explicit framework for racial discourse.

Creating Brave Spaces for Ourselves & Others

Attend to personal anecdotal evidence but also look at broader societal patterns.	Its ok to have and share evidence about something you experienced, But also look at bigger patterns in society (especially when they are different than your personal experiences).
It's ok for us all to be at different places with the things we discuss today.	It's ok for us all to understand less or more than others.
Notice your own defensive reactions and attempt to use these reactions as entry points for gaining deeper self-knowledge.	Notice your own protective instincts and use your instincts to help you understand yourself more and improve your defensive mind. Think what about yourself made you do what you did or think what you thought.
Show respect for one another's beliefs, values, and experiences. Strive for humility.	Show respect for another's feelings and personal stuff. Ex: of striving for humility – you win a game and instead of bragging about it, you say, "good game" or "the score didn't really matter."

Figure 7: LREI Conversation Guidelines for Fifth Graders, Based on the Teaching Tolerance Social Justice Standards.

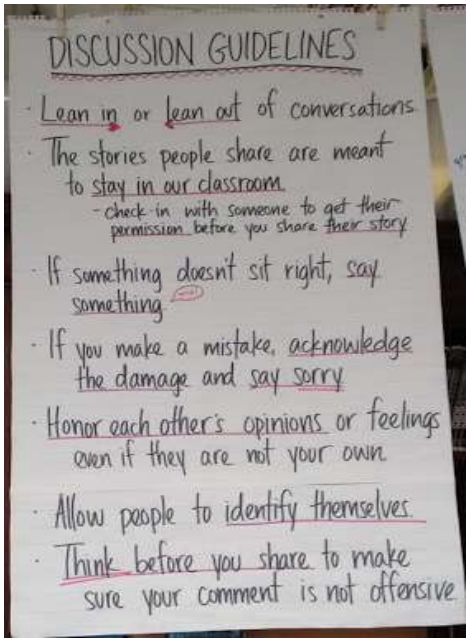

Figure 8: Community Roots Classroom Poster

Figure 9: Courageous Conversation Guidelines Presented at the PEG Annual Summit in Philadelphia

- **Modelling and Normalising**

Figure 10: Community Roots Classroom Drawing

Having a safe space where pupils can grow with you in a classroom requires teachers to model and normalise racial discourse. According to Soto-Carrion, conversations about race are too often left till the last moment when a negative racial experience has taken place in schools. This encourages pupils to perceive race as a negative, painful thing that should rarely be discussed. However, Soto-Carrion believes that if we encourage pupils to engage in racial discourse earlier on and in a positive way, we can normalise these conversations and make sure that pupils are prepared and race conscious for the future.

Figure 11: Community Roots Classroom Poster

Another significant feature of a safe space modelled in the classroom is seeing and naming race, so as to avoid the harmful colour-blind approach mentioned earlier. At the LCBD conference, it was often suggested that pretending not to see race increases racial prejudice from a very young age. Instead, as Soto-Carrion and Kosins agreed, modelling naming race in the classroom is vital. As educators, we can normalise naming our own racial identity – "as a white man" for example – which effectively communicates that seeing race is natural and pupils are not "being bad" for seeing race too. At Community Roots, children are taught from a very young age a wide range of vocabulary to discuss skin colour and not to be afraid of naming racial features.

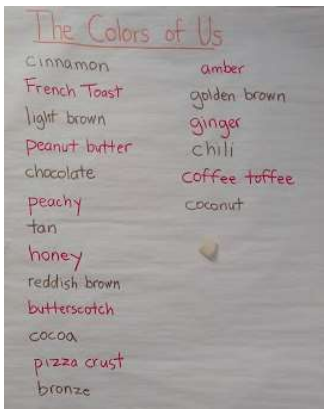

Figure 12: Community Roots Classroom Poster

- **Race Conscious Curriculum**

Figure13: LREI Growth Mindset Book and Handmade Paper Brain

Safe spaces for racial discourse require a whole-school approach and explicit decisions by school leaders to embed these at every level. At LREI, all the curriculum is developed, and all the administrative decisions are made, with a racial lens. For example, one lesson I observed at the primary school centred on the role of a growth mindset in combatting identity stereotypes. Moreover, primary school pupils worked on a colonial museum with three different perspectives: Native Americans, enslaved Africans and European colonisers – giving each narrative equal weight. For Soto-Carrion, understanding who we are and where we come from, historically, allows us to comprehend the strong racial implications still present today. I quickly realised the power of a racial lens in education in ensuring that no voice is muted and no group is dehumanised (as is often the case in representations of people of colour in Western curricula). Such curriculum developments nurtures safe spaces for pupils to develop their understandings about race in a constructive manner, equipping them with the tools for more fruitful racial discourse.

- **Persistence**

Finally, a space for persistence and consistency is needed in order to have successful results from racial discourse. Ultimately, school leaders need to be persistent and consistent in their desire for racial equity to actually make a difference. Rohani, Powell-Caldwell and Gordon agreed that in order to progress in racial justice, we need to have conversations about race over and over again. It takes time and persistence to learn. Racial discourse for justice and equity is a lifetime work and there will never be a quick fix. This was echoed by the community agreements at the BLM workshop and by the fourth Courageous Conversation agreement: expect/accept non-closure. Racism cannot be solved overnight, so we need to accept that it requires long-term engagement with no single, simple solution.

Having structures in place, such as affinity groups and school equity departments, facilitates persistence and consistency in racial communication, while encouraging pupils to never give up hope. At LREI and Horace Mann, affinity groups have opportunities to organise whole-school conferences to engage in racial discourse, while regular, thorough in-service training for educators ensures regular racial dialogue. Yet, in spite of such initiatives, some pupils at both

schools told me they could spot which educators did not take social justice issues seriously from the conversations they had about race. Therefore, persistence, as well as the will, for racial equity is essential for productive racial discourse. As the pupils from LREI put it, having constant communication is indispensable; people should wear the metaphorical "woke" (race conscious) badge every day, not just when they feel like it.

Discussion:

Based on my two-week research project, acknowledging emotions, valuing shared humanity, building relationships and creating safe spaces are the main conditions used by some American institutions for mutual, productive communication about race. The exact level of productivity achieved by such a framework is difficult to measure, but there is reliable American research to support a correlation between racial discourse and increased pupil attainment (Singleton & Linto, 2016), as well as an increased ability to dispel stereotypes, less fear of differences, increased compassion and a greater awareness of whiteness in particular (Wing Sue, 2015). Moreover, anti-bias frameworks such as the Teaching Tolerance Social Justice Standards promote conscious, proactive racial dialogue and race conscious curricula in the US (Teaching Tolerance, 2016). Finally, the value of a race conscious classroom has well been documented (DiAngelo, 2010; Picower, 2009; Delgado & Stefancic, 1997; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995).

- **Modern Accepted Pedagogy in the UK**

There are several underlying concepts in this framework for meaningful racial discourse that resonate well with modern accepted pedagogy in the UK, thus making this framework more justifiable and applicable to the country. The first pedagogical concept is Carol Dweck's growth mindset (2006) which is explicitly taught to pupils and to educators in many British schools and teacher training courses. The growth mindset helps educators and pupils to improve their practice of racial discourse. It encourages persistence and a sense of shared humanity as explored in the results section.

Furthermore, reflective practice is a valued pedagogical concept and it supports many of the ideas behind this framework. Reflective practice would encourage educators, as well as pupils through active learning, to assess themselves and their emotions during lessons – during a conversation about race for example. Critical reflective practice encourages teachers to detect

underlying assumptions when they are reflecting on their practice by consulting multiple perspectives, especially in theoretical literature (Brookfield, 1995). This mirrors the importance of seeking multiple perspectives (either in person or in literature) for more balanced racial discourse.

Cooperative learning, as opposed to hierarchical teaching, is another respected pedagogy across the UK. Cooperative learning promotes positive social interdependence in a classroom (Sharan, 2010) and it reflects the importance of building relationships and creating safe spaces for meaningful racial discourse. It encourages both pupils and educators to view themselves as collaborators who need each other's help to learn through racial dialogue. It also dispels the hierarchical perception of the teacher as the sole expert on race in the classroom, a recurrent idea conveyed by interviewees in the US. In addition, cooperative learning, and any effective learning for that matter, requires educators to model in the classroom for positive results (Gilles & Boyle, 2010). Modelling was yet another feature of productive racial discourse identified in the results section.

Finally, creating safe spaces, acknowledging emotions and valuing shared humanity are favoured by modern pedagogy and educational policy in the UK. For example in Scotland, *Getting It Right for Every Child* (GIRFEC; 2017) requires educators to ensure that pupils' identities are valued and not disadvantaged for any reason. While educators tend to focus on learning disabilities and poverty, racial and cultural identities are technically other identities that necessitate attention and may require extra support. Thanks to GIRFEC, educators already pay close attention to pupils' emotions, they focus on creating safe spaces for all and they strive to differentiate according to pupil needs while emphasising a sense of shared humanity (i.e. some pupils may learn differently but that does not mean they are inferior). Hence, educators practising such principles of inclusion should be more prepared for implementing the conditions outlined in the results section.

- **Challenges and Possible Solutions**

Naming race and becoming race conscious are challenging tasks in a colour-blind society; a lot of British anti-racist literature documents these obstacles (Akala, 2018; Hirsch, 2018; Eddo-Lodge, 2017). While these obstacles are present in the UK as well as the US, it seems that building relationships and safe spaces could ensure more trust and encouragement to consider new forms of racial discourse for beginners who are unfamiliar with the somewhat daunting conceptions of

race as endemic based on Critical Race Theory. Moreover, valuing shared humanity can provide a reassuring framework that many colour-blind advocates may be more open too, as they often fear that racial discourse causes division.

Within the UK, locations like London and Birmingham will be more similar to NYC, where there is more racial diversity in the population, compared to locations like the Highlands and Orkney Islands, where there is hardly any racial diversity. In fact, racialised minorities account for 14% of the overall British population and only 3% in Scotland specifically – much less than in the US. Therefore, some of the conditions for meaningful racial discourse – like diversity with multiple perspectives – can be quite challenging in the UK. However, solutions were offered notably through curriculum. Considering recent movements in the UK for a more diverse curriculum, through programmes like Black History Month, it is not impossible to pave a path for more, and better, racial discourse.

The condition of creating safe spaces exposed the need for persistence as race is too complex to solve in two weeks with a single solution. It was highlighted that single solutions and quick fixes never work in the long term. Consequently, the results of this research will not work on their own as a single solution applicable to all contexts in the US and the UK. Complementing one's understanding of the suggested framework alongside other research and perspectives is necessary. Nevertheless, spreading the knowledge gained from these two weeks may have the potential to influence further research, teaching practice and perhaps even policy.

Conclusion:

It has been an honour becoming a Walter Hines Page scholar and I am eternally grateful to the ESU and the NASUWT for sponsoring my trip, as well as all the people who helped me with my research in the US. I never imagined that two weeks in the USA could transform so drastically my own perception of racial dialogue and inspire me to pursue more vigorously my anti-racism quest in education. I have since practised racial discourse more consciously amongst my peers and done my best to facilitate racial dialogue with my pupils in school. At times it proved to be fruitful and other times it was incomplete – naturally, it required more time to become productive. I equally shared with my school the possible measures we can take to encourage positive racial dialogue and promote inclusion; the discussions with senior management are on-going.

Outside of school, I have started spreading my research through the Scottish Trade Union Congress by facilitating a workshop on "Power and Privilege" for Black and Minority Ethnic workers. A Scottish anti-capitalist site named Conter also published my opinion article, "Saying the R-Word". I intend to publish more writing and I hope to organise more workshops for leaders, educators and pupils. Having realised how much I still have to learn about racial dialogue and anti-racist education, reading all the literature suggested by the interviewees and pursuing further academic research in this area are definite goals. Working more closely with local groups to develop community relationships and more safe spaces for productive racial dialogue is another long-term goal. Finally, having been blessed by excellent hosts in American schools and organisations, I will keep in touch with them to maintain relationships and continue sharing knowledge. I would like to warmly thank them all for giving me the opportunity to realise this exciting research.

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