

Ethnic diversity and racism criminology essay

[Law](#), [Criminology](#)



Part 1 – To be completed by the student

Student id number:

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Date:

(11/12/2012)

(Make sure that your student id number is also included on the front page or in in the headers of your assignment)Module code:

SC6003

Module title:

Ethnic Diversity and Racism

Marking tutor (usually your seminar leader):

Andy Smart

Question number/title of assignment:

Critically evaluate Gillborn's (2008) claim that 'whiteness' is a multi-faceted form of domination.

DeclarationClick on all the check boxes to confirm☑Except where properly indicated/referenced, the work I am submitting in this assignment is my own work and has not been submitted for assessment in another module.☑My work complies with University policies regarding plagiarism, cheating and collusion.

Part 2 – To be completed by staff

Assessment criteria for this assignment

Very good

Good

Fair

Adequate

Inadequate

1. Accurately describe and understand key concepts and theories
2. Apply and evaluate key concepts and theories
3. Present a clearly structured argument that is balanced and coherent
4. Follow academic conventions in your writing

Strengths:

Areas for improvement:

Provisional

mark:

Critically evaluate Gillborn's (2008) claim that 'whiteness' is a multi-faceted form of domination

'Whiteness' is a multi-faceted form of domination. However, 'white' has largely been a missing and unquestioned category in comparison to other racial classifications up until the 1990's (Mason, 2000: 17). Where social scientists began interrogating what white racialised identities meant paying close attention to the ways that they are racialised actors rather than neutral observers, and the complexities of the positions they hold (Garner, 2010:

117). AnaLouise Keating defines 'whiteness' as an unjust social system and a resistance to change, with the denial of accountability, with violence, with hypocrisy, and with ignorance of other cultures, (2000: 427). 'Whiteness' focuses on the issues around the maintenance of 'white' identity, power and privilege (Manglitz, 2003: 120). To critically evaluate Gillborn's claim, 'whiteness' as a form of supremacy will be discussed. However, as white supremacy is embedded in the broader debate of 'whiteness', these studies need to be considered further. An aspect of whiteness studies is white privilege. White privilege reflects and reinforces the system of white supremacy and as a result this aspect also needs to be explored (Monahan, 2011). However, white supremacy goes beyond white privilege and is thought to be understood through a language of power and domination (Gillborn, 2006: 319). It is supremacy that is multi-faceted, 'white' control over power and material resources can be both visible and invisible, conscious and unconscious, everywhere and nowhere (Kolchin, 2002: 160). All these areas will be discussed in order to evaluate Gillborn's claim that 'whiteness' is a multi-faceted form of domination.

Whiteness Studies

Traced back to the United States (US) and the work of W. E. B. Du Bois (1935), it has only been in the last twenty years that a field of whiteness studies have emerged (Jeyasingham, 2012: 670). From the 1990s, there has been increasing attention to 'whiteness' particularly in the US and the United Kingdom, where writings from a range of disciplines have focused on 'whiteness' as an analytical problem (ibid). Whiteness studies offer a new way of thinking about race inequalities as they focus on the social construction of

people identified as 'white' with changes in meaning attributed to historical and political contexts (Preston, 2007; Manglitz, 2003: 122). Whiteness studies characterise 'whiteness' in three ways. First, as race privilege and domination, secondly, as a standpoint, a place from which white people can look at themselves, others and society and thirdly, as a set of cultural practices that is left unacknowledged (Frankenberg, 1997: 1). 'Whiteness' is an invisible racial position but its invisibility is dependent on one's perspective (Garner, 2006: 269). They live in a 'WhiteWorld', they only see the world, and 'whiteness' is invisible to them (Gillborn, 2008: 162). Therefore, whites have the power of being 'normal', 'white people are just people...other colours are something else' (Dyer, 1997: 1). As a result, whiteness studies seek to reveal 'whiteness' and make 'whiteness' strange (ibid: 10). By attempting to expose and make visible the ways in which 'whiteness' operates as the norm against which 'others' are viewed and judged (Manglitz, 2003: 122). As well as unveiling the political and social mechanisms through which 'whiteness' is maintained and used to mark its power and privilege (ibid). In recent years, however, whiteness studies have come under scrutiny. Especially over, who is white, or not white? Gillborn (2008: 167) argues that 'white' is neither a unifying characteristic nor 'endlessly malleable'. With measurement based on dividing 'white' from 'non-white' as well as biological indicators. This includes the 'one-drop' rule, where a person with any African ancestry is measured not as white but black (Kolchin, 2002: 158). However, there is no logic in labelling people, and in some places they are not so labelled (ibid). For example, in some countries, 'blacks' perceive themselves as 'white', and 'whites' are perceived as 'white'.

others' (ibid). Leading Bhopal and Donaldson (1998) to argue for the abandonment of categories such as 'white' because they do not capture ethnicity (Tutton, 2007: 559). This can lead to whiteness studies reifying 'whiteness'. By studying the racial identity 'white' it may seem to be a homogenous group recognised as having biological links (Garner, 2007: 8). Kolchin (2002: 170) agrees that in viewing whiteness as an independent group, writers can start to reify 'whiteness' and lose sight of its constructed nature. In perceiving 'whiteness' as dominating, it can lead to the ignorance of other forms of oppression, exploitation and power as well as the lived experiences of those perceived as non-white (ibid). Whiteness studies as a result have a problem of definition. As 'whiteness' is socially constructed it can be a rather elusive concept (Anderson, 2003: 28). As Ian Haney-López (2006, xxi) notes 'whiteness is contingent, changeable, inconstant, and ultimately social'. A main concern is whether by studying 'whiteness' there may be a risk of re-centring it, by providing another forum that could end up being a celebration of 'whiteness' (Shome, 2000: 370). Zeus Leonardo agrees that there is a danger of creating another way of foregrounding the white voice (Preston, 2010: 802). However, the dangers of not examining 'whiteness' are just as great as the risk of examining 'whiteness' may pose (Shome, 2000: 370). The issue perhaps is less a matter of whether 'whiteness' should be examined or not, and more of how 'whiteness' should be studied and for what political end (ibid).

White Privilege

Whiteness studies have explored the role of 'whiteness' further as a site of privilege. White privilege refers to an understanding of the ways in which

white people enjoy countless advantages in their daily lives (Gillborn, 2008: 35). White privileges are gained through the virtue of being constructed as 'white' which occurs through the valuation of 'white' skin colour (Leonardo, 2004: 137). It obscures domination because the situation is described as almost happening without the knowledge of whites (ibid: 138). It is unintended, unconscious and invisible (Monahan, 2011). Privileges are invisible to white people but very visible to 'others' (Garner, 2007: 46). Peggy McIntosh (1988) has helped in providing whiteness studies with an understanding of the taken-for-granted, daily aspects of white privilege with a list of fifty privileges whites enjoy. She came to see white privilege as an invisible package of unearned assets which whites count on each day, but to which they remain oblivious (McIntosh, 1988: 165). White privilege is like an invisible weightless knapsack of special provisions, maps, passports, codebooks, visas, clothes, tools and blank checks, (ibid). Privileges include the convenience of matching one's skin colour with bandages to easily buying posters, greeting cards and toys that feature people of one's race (ibid: 167). McIntosh argues that white people need to understand and be conscious of white privilege so that it can be dismantled to bring about equal social relations (Hyttén, 2001: 439). However, white privilege implies that white people are passive and unaware recipients of privileges (Jeyasingham, 2012: 674). Yet, white people can be active agents in an unequal racialised society and are aware of their privileges and status in society (ibid). As Hartmann et al. (2009: 418), found whites actually do see the structural ways in which they have been advantaged by race and the magnitude of these are less significant than was previously anticipated. By making '

whiteness' visible to 'whites', feelings of guilt and blame may also arise. However, why should white people be responsible for the privileges they have? By placing blame on those who are identified as white it can be inappropriate when what is happening is due to historical or political conditions. This blame can also lead to the further re-centring of 'whiteness' with 'whites' creating another voice to dominate society impeding the creation of racial equality (Apple, 1998: xi). Nevertheless, white privilege does focus attention away from depictions of violence and domination directed to non-white people, instead examining aspects of everyday life; in doing so, it allows consideration of the invisible ways in which power usually operates (Jeyasingham, 2012: 672). However, whiteness is rendering itself more visible and becoming less invisible as a form of normality; it is moving away from privilege towards 'whiteness' as a form of supremacy (Hughey, 2010: 1291).

White Supremacy

Gillborn (2008: 162) develops McIntosh's ideas on white privilege but argues that it is not strong enough and that both the invisible and visible ways power operates need to be considered. He argues that 'whiteness' is not simply about privilege, 'whiteness' is an exercise of power which goes beyond this and can only be understood through the language of power and domination, namely white supremacy (ibid). White supremacy refers to the political, cultural and economic systems that dominate and control the everyday actions and policies that shape the world in the interests of white people, consciously and unconsciously (Gillborn, 2006: 320; Ansley, 1997: 592). It places unearned power and privilege on 'whites' while placing

disprivilege and disempowerment on those who are 'othered' (Allen, 2001: 476). For Gillborn, it is a type of supremacy that is multi-faceted. At one moment harsh and aggressive but at the next moment subtle and hidden – written through the fabric of what counts as 'normality', (Gillborn, 2008: 162). White supremacy is both invisible and visible. In Gillborn's book *Racism and Education: Coincidence or Conspiracy?* this is investigated further. Gillborn argues that the racial status of whites is systematically ignored because it is embedded in subtle and hidden aspects of the fabric of normality (Gillborn, 2008: 163). Whites are invisible because they are 'normalising' guiding attention away from it (Garner, 2007: 43). Gillborn cites Charles Mills (2008: 164) who said that there are patterns of seeing and not knowing of structured white ignorance, motivated inattention, historical amnesia and moral rationalisation. White people lack awareness of 'whiteness' as a construction and the advantages they hold including their own role in sustaining and playing out the inequalities at the heart of 'whiteness' (Gillborn, 2008: 170). This ignorance is systematic, embedded and a routinely reproduced structural issue, with politics and policy reproducing these benefits almost without the knowledge of whites (Gillborn, 2008). However, if whites are systematically ignored this runs the risk of supremacy homogenising all white people together as being in positions of power and privilege (Cole, 2009: 31). Masking the vast number of poor white people in the UK (ibid). Nevertheless, everyday privileges and policies that work in favour of whites do remain invisible, such as, that in education and the criminal justice system until someone makes it visible (Garner, 2007). White supremacy, at times, can also be harsh and aggressive. This move

from invisible to visible is understood as a move from 'whiteness' as an everyday privilege to being characterised as an historical period (Garner, 2007: 39). Gillborn argues that white people, to an extent, are aware of their racial status and use this to control and exclude people of colour. Threats to white racial domination are typically met with disproportionate brutality on non-white people to protect and reinforce the unequal distribution of power (Mills cited in Gillborn, 2008: 164). White people know, even though they will not admit it, that they will never be mistaken for a terrorist and for them it is a price worth paying knowing that the price will be paid by 'Others' (Gillborn, 2008: 165). This was particularly visible after the 7/7 bombings. Gillborn argued that with the perceived threats to their white supremacy, white people found expression in political discourse with a rise of disproportionate targeting of ethnic minority Britons including the death of an innocent man (ibid). The priority was to return white lives back to normal as quickly as possible, with the distress of 'non-whites' not being a threat to this version of normality (ibid). However, Gillborn only seems to place race at the centre of his analysis, ignoring the gendered and class-based analyses (Cole, 2009: 114). For example, the majority of ethnic minority Britons that were disproportionately identified were male (Moeckli, 2008). Yet, Gillborn argues that class and gendered explanations are not sufficient enough to account for the domination of 'whiteness' (Winchester University, 2012). For Gillborn, supremacy is a form of conspiracy. Conspiracy refers to dominating practices within the social system that work to reinforce white privilege and legitimate racial policies and practices towards 'Others' (Reynolds et al., 2009: 359). Gillborn argues that white people will take part in conspiracies,

whether they want to or not, and all white people will directly benefit from it (Crofts, 2012). However, the idea of conspiracy is difficult for some people to get their heads around and can lead to the feelings of guilt arising for those white people who do not want to be a part of it, also creating a culture of paranoia (ibid). White supremacy as a conspiracy should be abandoned and be described in a more advanced and historical way (ibid). Gillborn argues that white supremacy should eventually replace the concept of racism, because it tends to only focus on overt racist practices (Cole, 2009: 113). Racism ignores the covert forms of racial practices which he believes is captured in his explanation of white supremacy as multi-faceted (Gillborn, 2005: 491). However, this can lead to conceptual inflation and deflation. Conceptual inflation refers to a concept redefined to refer to a wider range of phenomena, such as overt and covert racist practices (Miles and Brown, 2003: 58). Conceptual deflation refers to a concept redefined entirely on a particular phenomenon such as exclusively focusing on 'white' (ibid: 74). White supremacy then risks limiting the explanatory power of racism, with a need to understand the diversity of the phenomenon into which it refers (ibid: 86) White supremacy also does not take into account 'non-colour coded' racism which involves racism between whites, as well as other forms. Cole (2009: 38) proposes that white supremacy should be for academic use only and that 'racialisation', a more expansive definition of racism, should be utilised.

Evaluation

By exploring the different aspects of whiteness studies, 'whiteness' can be seen as a multi-faceted form of domination. However, there have been

criticisms. 'Whiteness' can be a slippery and elusive concept, with many questions on who is white (Anderson, 2003: 23). How can 'whiteness' dominate if we do not know what constitutes a 'white' person? Additionally, race tends to ignore class as a multi-faceted form of domination, such as the upper class (Cole, 2009: 114). The upper class are also given unearned power and privilege with the working classes disprivileged and disempowered (Allen, 2001: 476). However, it can be seen throughout whiteness studies, white privilege and supremacy that 'whiteness' is a multi-faceted form of domination, dominating the invisible and visible aspects as well as the subtle and aggressive. Whiteness studies theorise 'whiteness' as being invisible only for those who are identified as white (Garner, 2007: 46). Yet, for those positioned outside of this norm, 'whiteness' may not be regarded as invisible but visible (Byrne, 2006: 25). In white privilege, the day-to-day privileges that are placed on whites are invisible (McIntosh, 1988: 165). For those who do not inhabit 'whiteness', these privileges are visible leaving 'others' disprivileged and disempowered (ibid). However, Gillborn claimed that it was white supremacy that was multi-faceted and distinguished between subtle and hidden, and harsh and aggressive aspects. White supremacy is subtle and hidden in day-to-day life as the category of 'white' is largely ignored (Gillborn, 2008: 163). Yet, it can also be harsh and aggressive due to the power that it uses when their supremacy is threatened (ibid: 165). However, it is not just white supremacy that is multi-faceted, whiteness studies as a whole is multi-faceted. In examining whiteness studies, white privilege and supremacy, questions of visibility and invisibility are central, and cannot be analysed without reference to power (Byrne,

2006: 25). David Goldberg (1997: 82) elaborates and describes visibility and invisibility to be dynamic, fluid and ever-changing as a process of power. 'Whiteness' is notoriously multi-faceted, even contradictory field and is a complicated theoretical construct (Hartmann, 2009: 419). Multi-faceted in both its meanings and uses, 'whiteness' can be rendered visible or invisible (ibid).

Conclusion

To conclude, Gillborn's claim that 'whiteness' is a multi-faceted form of domination has been critically evaluated in relation to the broader debate of whiteness studies, white privilege and supremacy. From this, it can be seen that 'whiteness' is a multi-faceted form of domination, and can be both invisible and visible, and subtle and aggressive. 'Whiteness' can dominate invisibly through the 'normal' everyday privileges and advantages but can also dominate visibly through the harsh and aggressive acts of disproportionate brutality. This theme has developed throughout whiteness studies and in the areas of white privilege and supremacy. 'Whiteness' is a fluid identity that is both invisible and visible, so as a social construct, 'whiteness' is a complicated and multi-faceted form of domination, always shifting and changing depending on its historical and political contexts, showing durability and power (Hartmann et al., 2009: 419). In recognising that 'whiteness' is complex and multi-faceted, a more thorough analysis can be conducted on its sources, methods and consequences (Braden, 2011: 24).

Word Count: 2, 748