What Do We Tell the Teachers?
– teacher educators as agents of change, 2004

Lecture for a conference at the University of London Institute of Education, convened by the Department for Children, Schools and Families

What Lewin did

'What Lewin did with the housewives,' reflects a specialist in the study of personal and organisational change, 'was to help them to change their standard of what was an acceptable meat, so that kidneys, liver, etc. became cognitively redefined as acceptable to buy and serve.' He adds: 'This process is fundamental to any change if one wants it to last.' Key elements in the overall change process, he says, include not only semantic redefinition, cognitive broadening and changing standards of judgment — all clearly present, he points out, in Lewin's housewives — but also disconfirmation, unfreezing, unlearning, survival. The end anxiety, conversation with significant others, scanning, and trial-and-error learning. is of the process is the utopia (temporary, presumably) of personal and relational refreezing'.[1]

The language of change theory is enough to freeze, to petrify, anyone. Most of it accepts conventional gender roles, social class differences and business imperatives as unproblematic; and its paradigm case studies are typically drawn from projects such as selling meat to housewives — projects that would be considered by, for example, teacher educators as relatively insignificant in the overall field of human endeavour. How *dare* a lecture on race equality issues in education start with the trivia of a marketing campaign?

Well for a start, the unfriendly language of change theory reminds us that the world itself is frequently unfriendly, even to teacher educators. And it can help delineate what teacher educators need to do, or anyway what they need to think about, if they are to be what the title of this talk implies they are or could and should be, agents of change.

Change, note, not improvement. More recent authors than Kurt Lewin do not refer to agents of change but to *quality improvement champions*. Well, if there are people here today who are actual or wannabee quality improvement champions, that's OK. But basically this lecture is not for quality improvement champions. It's for revolutionaries, albeit of the velvet, rather than the vulgar, tendency.

Necessarily, in the time available, the lecture cannot be about what to *do*. It can, however, be about what to think about. It is going to name and comment briefly on the following: personal change theory; political correctness; racisms; teachers' expectations; race equality; the whole ITT curriculum; Asian and black students and teachers; personal change theory revisited.

Personal change theory

In the United States the *problématique* with which we are concerned today has been stated as follows: 'How do we prepare white European females to become teachers in a society where half their learners are not female and an increasing proportion are not white European?'[2] Part of the answer is that they need to surface, examine and unlearn many of the assumptions they have grown up with about whiteness and not-whiteness and to see that both teaching and learning are political acts. Without such personal and intellectual work, which incidentally is a collective enterprise not merely an individual one, ITT may

send young people out from college into schools no more sensitive and thoughtful, but considerably more dangerous, than when their initial training began.

For a range of reasons and in a range of ways we may be uncomfortable with that particular formulation of the *problématique.* But the principal point being made here is that the most significant work of teacher educators as agents of change is their role in helping trainees to change. Change as individuals, change as a generation. That, in the jargon of management studies, is their core business, their primary task. It is their experience and success in this primary task that gives them legitimacy and credibility when engaging in other tasks, for example their work in continuing professional development and in research, and as lobbyists, advocates and pressure groups in the various forums and arenas in which they find or place themselves.

Yes, but change *from* what *to* what? The '*from* what' question is considered in the next three sections of the lecture, respectively entitled *political correctness*, *racisms* and *teacher expectations*. The '*to* what' question is considered under the heading of *race equality.*

Political correctness

In 1995 the research director at Conservative Central Office recalled the strategies used by his party in the general election campaign of 1992:

> Immigration, an issue which we raised successfully in 1992 and again
> in the 1994 Euro-elections campaign, played particularly well in the
> tabloids and has more potential to hurt. Then there is the 'loony left'
> and political correctness. Voters can't define it, but they don't like it
> and Labour councils are the arch exponents.[3]

Labour councils are not, in the demonology of their political rivals, or alas in reality, what they used to be. Of political correctness, however, it is still the case that 'voters can't define it, but they don't like it.' A couple of years ago a columnist on the *Sun* had a go at defining it, or anyway the strand of political correctness known as multiculturalism:

> Multiculturalism means always having to say you're sorry…
> Multiculturalism means celebrating Diwali but banning Christmas,
> multiculturalism means tolerating a mosque named after Saddam
> Hussein in the middle of the second biggest city but banning the Union
> Jack on the ground that it is 'offensive' to minorities … Multiculturalism

means worshipping all cultures and traditions other than those of the
majority … Multiculturalism means denigrating our ancestors'
achievements and making children ashamed of their country's past …
Multiculturalism is nothing less than a ruthless concentrated assault on
the glue that binds our society together.[4]

'They can't define it but they don't like it.' What needs defining, in the first instance, is *fear* of political correctness – policorrectophobia, an unhappy word to refer to unhappy feelings of disorientation and anxiety. People preparing to be teachers need support in seeing, defining and facing down policorrectophobia and in dealing with it. This will necessarily mean understanding what multiculturalism is and isn't, and what racism is.

Or, more accurately, what racisms are.

Racisms

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As is well known, there is a single human race and terms such as *racial group*, *race equality* and *race relations* are therefore always in danger of being misleading particularly when they are enshrined in legislation. The term *race* does, however, invaluably allude to racism.

The United Nations World Conference Against Racism (WCAR) in 2001 summarised its concerns with the phrase 'racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance'. The equivalent phrase used by the Council of Europe is 'racism, xenophobia, antisemitism and intolerance'. Both phrases are cumbersome, but valuably signal that there is a complex cluster of matters to be addressed: the single word 'racism', as customarily used, does not encompass them all. In effect the WCAR argued that the term racism should be expanded to refer to a wide range of intolerance, not just to intolerance where the principal markers of assumed difference are to do with physical appearance and skin colour. For example, the term should encompass patterns of prejudice and discrimination such as antisemitism and sectarianism, where the markers of supposed difference are religious and cultural rather than to do with physical appearance. It is widely acknowledged that antisemitism is a form of racism and in Northern Ireland sectarianism is sometimes referred to as a form of racism. There are clear similarities between antisemitism, sectarianism and Islamophobia, and between these and other forms of intolerance. The plural term 'racisms' is sometimes used to evoke this point.[5]

Racism takes different forms according to who is attacked, what the markers of so-called difference are conceived and constructed to be, and what the dynamics, functions and consequences are. Anti-Black, anti-Asian, anti-Muslim, anti-Irish racism, anti-Jewish, anti-Gypsy racism have obvious similarities with each other but each also has its specificities. You do not necessarily deal with one of them by dealing with another. In the last ten years, there has emerged in Britain, and throughout western Europe, a set of phenomena known as anti-refugee racism or, in a phrase valuably coined by Sivanandan and his colleagues at the Institute of Race Relations, xeno-racism.[6]

Xeno-racism is directed at 'those who, displaced and dispossessed by globalisation, are being thrown up on Europe's shores'.[7] It gets its energy and support from the millions of white Europeans who also are displaced and dispossessed by, amongst other things, global forces over which they have no control. Their employment prospects are threatened and so is the sense of cultural and national identity with which they grew up. Contemporary history for them, as crystallised daily in the grey, grumpy grizzling of the tabloid press, and is one damn alarming and disorienting thing after another.

Xeno-racism is not the same as, but nevertheless exists in the most vicious of vicious circles with, anti-Muslim racism. The latter is also, self-evidently, interwoven with the Manichean clash of civilisations thesis that has been so influential in *soi-disant* western

cultures and societies over the last decade.[8] Both find support in the suburbs or the countryside as easily as in the recruiting grounds of the BNP and the NF. It was in the *Sunday Telegraph*, not in BNP or NF leaflets, that the following sentiments were expressed in July 2004:

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It is the black heart of Islam, not its black face, to which millions object.[9]

All Muslims, like all dogs, share certain characteristics. A dog is not the same animal as a cat just because both species are comprised of different breeds. An extreme Christian believes that the Garden of Eden really existed; an extreme Muslim flies planes into buildings – there's a big difference.[10]

A further fundamental distinction we must make is between street racism and institutional racism. With regard to the latter, it was said that 'we told Macpherson and Macpherson told the world.' The Stephen Lawrence Inquiry report may be contrasted in this connection with the Rampton report almost twenty years earlier: 'We told Rampton, Rampton told the world and Rampton was immediately sacked'. It is unfortunate, however, that relatively few people in the education system have actually read, let alone engaged with, what Macpherson actually said about institutional racism. All they know is Macpherson's definition ('collective failure … professional and appropriate service …'). But the definition does not make adequate sense unless one has read and indeed studied the lengthy discussion which precedes it in the report itself, and out of which it emerges.

A point often neglected is that Macpherson placed great emphasis on occupational culture – the norms, assumptions, mental images, expectations, etc, that constitute so-called common sense. Such norms are powerfully influential through silences and absences (what people *don't* talk and think about) as well as explicit. The 'groupthink' of teachers and student teachers has to be addressed. This involves, centrally, looking at teachers' expectations.

Teacher expectations

A lot of unfreezing and unlearning, as change theorists call it, is required. A hell of a lot. For somehow the whole mental map that teachers fall back on at times of stress, with its continua of *more able/less able* and *cooperative/challenging* has to be examined and altered.[11]

Greengrocers who may happen to be present at this conference know that the apostrophe in the phrase teachers' expectations comes between the N and the S of expectations. Teacher educators who are here, however, know that it comes after the S of teachers. This is not only because we are thinking of more than one teacher, though we are, but also and principally because we are thinking of a collective possession, not the possession of various separate individuals. The mental map is the default position of an elephant in every staffroom, it's part of the repeating pattern in every staffroom's wallpaper, an ingredient in a staffroom's groupthink, and is sustained and re-constructed daily at break times in casual chat and conversation. The most recent attempt to refer to it is in the report published a few weeks ago by the London Development Agency.[12]

The LDA report has its place in a long line of official reports and statements, all saying much the same. Most of them, including the LDA's, were denounced by teachers' unions within hours of being published, long before there could have been any careful thought. All were basically ignored by officialdom.

1969:   'Children of West Indian parents, the largest of all the immigrant groups, have been a source of bafflement, embarrassment and despair in the education system… They have often presented problems which the average teacher is not equipped to understand, let alone overcome.' (*Colour and Citizenship*, E J B Rose et al.)[13]

1971   'The school system fails to accommodate the new Black generation of British children, and the education system is a powerful way to deny the Black child self-empowerment and identity.' (Bernard Coard, *How the West Indian child is made educationally sub-normal in the British education system*.')[14]

1981   'It has been repeatedly pointed out to us that low expectations of the academic ability of West Indian pupils by teachers can often prove a self-fulfilling prophecy.' (Rampton Report)[15]

1999   'In many LEAs there is uncertainty which verges on helplessness about what are effective strategies to improvement of some groups. There is, for instance, a worrying ignorance, generally, about how to raise the attainment of Black Caribbean boys.' (Ofsted, *Raising the Attainment of Minority Ethnic Pupils*.)[16]

2002   [Why do only 17 percent of African-Caribbean boys in Birmingham get five A–C grades?… Why are so many African-Caribbean young males in prison?] 'Some of the reasons I hear from the children and they are saying, "Teachers do not care about us". There are low teacher expectations of pupils in schools, definitely.' (Education and Skills Select Committee.) however, that relatively few people in the education system have actually read, let alone engaged with, what Macpherson actually said about institutional racism. All they know is Macpherson's definition ('collective failure … professional and appropriate service …').

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I hope I may be excused if I illustrate the problems with a little anecdote. Recently I had occasion to give a talk about teacher expectations to an audience of secondary deputy headteachers. At the end of the talk one of those present came up to me and said there was something I needed to know. 'Your talk,' he said, 'was seriously out of date.' My heart sank. He had presumably sussed out that I had no recent or relevant experience of education. 'Twenty years ago you would have been right – a lot of teachers did have low expectations of black boys. I did myself, I admit it. But no longer. Nowadays I have high expectations. The problem is that many of the boys I teach are so thick I can't get this into their heads.'

Race equality

The phrase race equality is often used as a shorthand answer to the second part of the question posed earlier: '*from* what *to* what?' There are two sets of problems. One set is to do with the word *race*. The other set is to do with the word *equality*. Otherwise, the phrase is basically OK.

Equality is not an absolute value – it's not sufficient on its own. It must be accompanied and qualified by two other values. If it is not so accompanied it cannot in fact be achieved. The other two values are recognition of diversity and social cohesion. The philosophical arguments have been treated at length elsewhere.[20] There isn't room, in this brief presentation, to discuss them in any detail. Suffice to say that we cannot begin to tackle any kind of racism unless we have a broader and richer vocabulary at our disposal than is customarily deployed by the race relations industry. Particularly obviously, anti-Muslim racism – Islamophobia – cannot be adequately addressed without placing recognition of difference and social cohesion on an equal footing with equality.[21] The *Sun* columnist quoted earlier claimed that the three values cannot go together – multiculturalism, he said, is 'nothing less than a ruthless concentrated assault on the glue that binds our society together'. We have reply that no, recognition of difference and social glue are not inherently inimical and that on the contrary they need each other.

Discussions of political philosophy may seem rather abstract, a far cry from the practical everyday life of ITT. In reality, however, they are what schools and classrooms and ITT are all about, all the time. They are the story of the professional life of everyone at this

conference. How to hold a balance between treating people equally (and in that sense, all the same) while also recognising the unique identity, experiences and life-stories of each, and of the communities to which they belong, and at the same time striving to maintain a sense of a common stake in the well-being of the school community and the ITT community – this is the job of every teacher and teacher educator. The three go together like, in that famous traditional metaphor, the three legs of a three-legged stool. Take any one of them away and you have lost the use of the other two as well.

The three values are beautifully crystallised in Langston Hughes' poem *Theme for English B*, written in 1951. The voice in the poem is that of a 22-year-old African-American student at (we imagine, in the context of today's conference) a teacher training institution. He attends a class called English B and is the only not-white person in it. He

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The three values are beautifully crystallised in Langston Hughes' poem *Theme for English B*, written in 1951. The voice in the poem is that of a 22-year-old African-American student at (we imagine, in the context of today's conference) a teacher training institution. He attends a class called English B and is the only not-white person in it. He lives in Harlem. One day the class is given an assignment which involves the students writing about themselves. (The instructor said, Go home and write/ a page tonight./And let that page come out of you…/Then, it will be true.) The student stresses that in a range of ways he is the same as everybody else – there is a shared humanity, and equality therefore is a fundamental human value:

> Well, I like to eat, sleep, drink, and be in love.
> I like to work, read, learn, and understand life.
> I like a pipe for a Christmas present,
> or records …Bessie, bop, or Bach.
> I guess being colored doesn't make me NOT like
> the same things other folks like who are other races.

But shared humanity is not the full story. Being not-white in a society organised around assumptions of white superiority is an inescapable part of his being. The home in Harlem he goes to from college each evening, and where this evening he is writing his 'theme for English B', is different from the homes of his fellow students.

> So will my page be colored that I write?
> Being me, it will not be white.

But diversity too is not the full story. There is also 'the glue that binds our society together'. Significantly, in the context of this conference, the glue is experienced in the personal encounter between learner and teacher, student and tutor, trainee and lecturer:

> But it will be
> a part of you, instructor.
> You are white…
> yet a part of me, as I am a part of you.
> That's American.
> …
> As I learn from you,
> I guess you learn from me…
> although you're older…and white…
> and somewhat more free.
>
> This is my page for English B.

The content of the curriculum

In summer 1988, when the Education Reform Act came on to the statute book, the then secretary of state wrote to the recently established National Curriculum Council and instructed it 'to take into account the ethnic and cultural diversity of British society and the importance of promoting equal opportunity for all pupils, regardless of ethnic origin or gender' in all it did. [22]

The NCC set up a working party and produced multicultural guidelines for the national curriculum. These were shredded a few days after they had been completed, however, and never saw the light of day. This was, allegedly, because senior staff at the NCC had a vivid recollection of what had happened to Anthony Rampton a few years earlier and were shrewdly mindful of their personal career prospects. Be that as it may, the reason the NCC gave for not publishing the guidelines showed the bureaucratic mind at its most brilliantly inventive: 'We are not publishing the guidelines because multicultural education is too important for there to be a separate publication about it

It is, of course, true that multiculturalism and antiracism have to permeate the whole curriculum – the hidden curriculum as well as the explicit. But it essential to clarify and establish what it is we wish to permeate the whole curriculum *with*. In the words of curriculum theorists of the 1960s, we have to ask: 'What's the big idea?' This task of clarification was touched on in a DfES publication issued in May 2004.[23] It proposed six big ideas and named them as:

- o   shared humanity: similarity, sameness and universality

- o   difference and diversity: contrasting stories and interpretations

- o   interdependence: borrowing, mingling and mutual influence

- o   excellence everywhere

- o   identity and belonging

- o   race, ethnicity and justice.

Against this background it is important to note here today the two intertwining issues of (a) recruiting and (b) retaining students of Asian, African and African-Caribbean heritages. There is not time to go into details. Suffice to say that the research mentioned above on estimates also included a survey of teacher attitudes. It was found that teachers of 'minority' heritages had a stronger commitment to giving something back to society than did white teachers. This should be recognised and built on in ITT. It will involve focused attention to the issues raised by the Langston Hughes poem quoted earlier. As it were, one of the key tasks for ITT is to help 'minority' students write their page for English B.

Personal change theory revisited

However, *all* students need to write their page for English B. This will involve them in, to quote again the writer with whom this lecture began, 'a profound psychological dynamic process that involves painful unlearning without loss of ego identity and difficult relearning as one cognitively attempts to restructure one's thoughts, perceptions, feelings, and attitudes.' Throughout the process they need to be *robust* not *fragile* learners, and to develop skills *of resilience, resourcefulness, reflectiveness* and *reciprocity*.[27]

According to personal change theory, students will not develop those skills, and will not be able to bear the pain of unfreezing and unlearning, without conversations with significant others.

Significant others come in various sizes and shapes and in various locations and circumstances. They include, in the context of today's conference, teacher educators. Herein, indeed, lies the dignity of the labour in which most people at this conference are professionally engaged.

Policorrectophobia, racisms, expectations, staffroom cultures; equality, difference and glue; the whole ITT curriculum; Asian and black students and teachers; unfreezing, unlearning and re-learning
Teacher educators as agents of change, I salute you, I have high expectations of you, you see.

This is my page for English B.

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Background and references

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[15]   Page13 of *West Indian Children in our Schools* and passim.

[16]   Page 8, paragraph 22, of *Raising the Attainment of Minority Ethnic Pupils*, Ofsted 1999.

[17]   Hansard for 17 September 2002. The person giving evidence was Sandra Oliver, Birmingham Partnership for Change.

[18]   Paragraph 3.17 of *Aiming High*, Department for Education and Skills.

[19]   London Development Agency, op cit (note 12), p.7.

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[21]   For substantial discussion of this point see *Islamophobia: issues, challenges and action*, published by Trentham Books in May 2004.

[22]   There is a full account in a chapter by Sally Tomlinson in King, Anna and Michael Reiss, eds, *The Multicultural Dimension of the National Curriculum*, Falmer Press, 1993.

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