ChinaWhite international workshop 1-2 December 2022
"Researching whiteness in a transnational pandemic context"

Abstracts

Raviv Litman
"'EuroAmerican teachers are our hardware': How private English schools in China maintained their racial ideologies after 2020"

Since 2020, Chinese private education witnessed a significant reduction in non-Chinese teachers living in China because of zero-covid restrictions and concurrent policies restricting private education. I investigated what happened to the racial ideologies of Chinese private English schools after confronting a sellers' market for foreign teachers' labour after 2020. Unsurprisingly, private schools ended up hire more of the foreign teachers who they had previously dismissed as being too racially and linguistically distant from their preferred category of EuroAmericans (a socially constructed group associated with "White Native Speakers"). But in spite of the changing demographics of their teachers, these schools maintained their preferences for EuroAmerican teachers within their institutions by designing classes with EuroAmerican teachers in mind. Classes about Harry Potter, high tea, and American football communicated from schools to parents that their English classes were built for EuroAmerican teachers. In other words, they built preference for EuroAmerican teachers into their schools' orientation. I draw primarily on participant ethnographic data collected between July and August of 2022 while shadowing agents who specialize in hiring foreign teachers in a provincial-level city. While existing literature on race and English teaching primarily focused on studying English teachers, this research adds perspective on the institutional role schools play in constructing racial ideologies in classroom orientation. I argue that schools in this study did ideological work to reify the status of absent EuroAmerican teachers as fitting 'hardware' for their classes.

Shuling Wang
"Feeling Foreign Teachers as Time Bombs: Feeling Fear, Anger and Exhaustion"

Feeling Foreign Teachers as Time Bombs: Feeling Fear, Anger and Exhaustion
This paper looks at how Chinese women teachers construct themselves in relation to foreign teachers and the feelings that dominate their interactions. Chinese women teachers construct foreign teachers they work with as *Dingshi Zhadan* or time bombs, bombs set and left by problematic conditions in the ELT industry. These time bombs trap Chinese teachers who work with abusive and unqualified foreign teachers, leaving them vulnerable to manage these bombs to protect themselves and students from potential dangers. Managing these time bombs produces the shared feelings of fear, anger and exhaustion among Chinese women teachers. These sticky feelings are affects that are shaped by segmented histories of racism and gender regulation, tell the power relations in the industry which give rises to time bombs, and condition the interactions between Chinese women teachers and foreign teachers. Naming, recognizing, and employing these affects when in collaboration with foreign teachers have been a starting point of Chinese women teachers' resistance to the oppressions they face in the industry.
Chinese women teachers feel fear when they read foreign teachers as perpetrators and invaders- powerful time bombs incubated by the industry that upholds whiteness.

Anger is felt towards "zha"(渣) foreign teachers, another type of time bomb that leaves Chinese teachers with burdens to cope with these foreign teachers' incompetency. Exhaustion comes from the responsibility to diffuse these bombs, the emotional labour to "please" foreign teachers and the physical labour to "wipe their butt". The feelings of fear, anger, and exhaustion, rather than merely negative, have the potential to enable Chinese women teachers to see through and reckon with the current racial structure in ELT. This study contributes to exploring whiteness as power structure through Chinese women teachers' dominant emotional responses to white hegemony.

Dr. Eric Henry, Associate Professor, Department of Anthropology, Saint Mary's University, Halifax, Canada
"The Whiteness of English: Raciolinguistic Chronotopes in Contemporary China"
How does a language, in this case a global language such as English, become positioned as the inalienable property of certain types of racially defined subjects? In other words, in the context of Asia's developing modernity, what makes English white? This paper builds upon recent research by linguists and anthropologists analyzing how language constitutes a form of racializing practice. A raciolinguistic approach recognizes that, "languages are perceived as racially embodied and race is perceived as linguistically intelligible" (Rosa 2019, 2). Race is not a simple product of biology, but of acts of culturally mediated perception and interpretation within an overarching indexical order that categorizes people as belonging to one or another racial subjectivity, with a key component of this recognition relying on discursive practices.
In this paper, I examine speech acts in China that draw upon multiple linguistic resources from the local, national, and global levels. An important component of these discursive practices in the context of Asia is the entanglement of racial subjectivities with temporal values. Races are groups of people oriented in multiply contingent ways to ideologies of progress and development, with some racial subjects being more "modern" than others. I explore these issues by drawing upon Bakhtin's (1981) concept of the chronotope: an articulation of social spacetime with language choices. The result is a widespread ideology in China that speech, in its racially determined forms, is a form of temporal practice. Some forms of talk are associated with a sense of pastness, while others appear to emerge out of, and beckon from, the future. Speakers position themselves within a racialized scheme that associates global languages with whiteness, social power and unfettered mobility. Chronotopes therefore appear to offer a key method for connecting race, language and embodied life in contemporary China.
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Miloš Debnár, Ryukoku University/University of Vienna
"Locating the complexity of whiteness in the migration context of Japan"
This presentation aims to unpack the complex meanings of whiteness in the context of Japan and particularly focuses on the experience of whiteness by migrants from different parts of Europe. This paper discusses whiteness as symbolizing "good migrants" (Cranston 2017) and argues that such connotations in the case of Japan are challenging the racial tenets of the East-West division of Europe (Drnovsek-Zorko&Debnar 2021) as well as it suggests the complexity of whiteness as a position of

power that possibly extends beyond the understanding of whiteness as a racialized identity. Japan's response to the global pandemic and recent responses to the Ukrainian war refugee issues demonstrate the contradictory consequences of whiteness that renders migrants as both, primarily excluded migrants or 'foreigners', and as 'good migrants' that are preferred for immigration. Such trends are further demonstrated through an analysis of interviews with European migrants from different parts of the continent. Finally, these interviews which include several individuals who might not be racialized as white, illustrate the shifts in the boundaries of whiteness and white people. Based on these findings, the paper engages in the discussion of whiteness in the non-western context and proposes an understanding of whiteness with particularities in terms of racialization and imagined hierarchies.

Dr. Helena Hof, Senior Research and Teaching Fellow, University of Zurich / Max Planck Institute for the Study of Religious and Ethnic Diversity
"Disentangling Whiteness in contemporary East and Southeast Asia: A new analytical approach"
This presentation seeks to contribute to innovative approaches to research on the multiple and shifting meanings of whiteness in contemporary East and Southeast Asia. It does so by first, differentiating between ascribed whiteness, whose representations might include Westernness, cosmopolitanism, yet also more regionally rooted and contextual forms of symbolic power structures, and self-identified whiteness. The presentation holds that this analytical distinction is necessary in order to capture the different perspectives of those who discursively and through their practices shape different notions of whiteness. In a second step, the presentation attempts to analyze under which circumstances which of these meanings of whiteness are enacted. It distinguishes between different kinds of situations, or 'encounters', in which whiteness matters in Asia. These encounters range from fleeting encounters to regular ones in public space to hierarchical work relationships and intimate private relationships, as well as to notions of whiteness that are invoked through the media and the digital space. The presentation concludes by considering the framing conditions of these different kinds of encounters, including the ways in which they are situational, relational, contextual, and intersectional.
The arguments build on a literature review of theoretical and empirical studies on whiteness and race in Asia as well as on qualitative data obtained in Singapore and Japan since 2014. The presentation also integrates into its analysis of encounters latest accounts of the way whiteness has been unsettled and problematized in East and Southeast Asia since the outset of the Covid-19 pandemic. The objective is to offer a more nuanced understanding of the changing and multiple ways in which whiteness functions, and the forms it can constitute in contemporary Asia, and to develop a conceptual tool that helps decipher the implications of such.

Ed Pulford, University of Manchester
"**War, pandemic and Eurasian boundaries: Chinese views of the Russia-Ukraine 'conflict'**"
Geopolitical turmoil during the COVID-19 pandemic has both exposed and reconfigured global ethno-racial boundaries. This paper focuses on Russia's 2022 invasion of Ukraine to explore shifting geographies of power and their implications for studies of ethnic and racial identity, including whiteness, in Eurasia. The invasion was motivated, according to President Putin, by the idea that Ukraine had no legitimate existence separate from

Russia. This argument had distinctly ethno-national overtones. Putin complained that first Lenin's division of Soviet peoples into 'nations' and later Kyiv's 'derussification' policies had created the fiction of Russian and Ukrainian distinctness. Such ethnicity-rooted thinking adds considerable intrigue to perspectives from China, where officialdom has broadly supported Putin and blamed NATO for the conflict. Justificatory discussions among PRC politicians, establishment scholars and official media – all studied in this paper – are striking both given the war's horrors, and because opposing 'interference in internal affairs' has long been key to PRC foreign policy. These perspectives thus raise questions about how far Chinese thinkers and policymakers accept Putin's ethno-national revisionism. On one hand, PRC actors cannot wholly disavow the Leninist legacy of ethnic categories given its importance to China's own *minzu* system. On the other, Chinese arguments that Russia has legitimate interests in Ukraine might imply agreement that Russians and Ukrainians are somehow 'the same' (and thus that no 'interference in Ukraine's internal affairs' occurred with the invasion). But if so, where might the limits of this sameness lie since presumably not all 'white' European people are included? And if each great power – according to official PRC views – has its own ethno-racial 'interests,' then are prevailing ethno-racial paradigms in e.g. China, Russia or the USA simply completely invalid elsewhere? Answering these questions will illuminate the contours of difference which scholars of whiteness must navigate amid today's ethnic upheaval and pandemic-inscribed divides.

Elena Barabantseva, University of Manchester
The Post-Soviet Migrant Women's Journeys of Escape, Marriage and Search for Self in China
Since the 2000s the Chinese official and popular discourses started referring to Chinese-Russian marriages as a prototype of ideal transnational love. In this paper I look at what lies behind these dominant narratives of 'beautiful and happy' international marriages by discussing the migrant women's perspectives on their migration and marriage journeys from the home countries of the former Soviet Union to China. The upheavals of the post-socialist transitions and their impact on the system of values and social priorities feature prominently in the narratives of escape from family pressures and the pursuit of better life opportunities than those available in their places of origins. I reflect on multi-layered journeys taken by women, including language exchanges, online encounters and the entertainment industry as important contexts and routes of migration. I trace the ways that these stories of cross-border romance and desire signal the shifting balances of power and what the stories reflect about the women's adaptations to their new transnational living shaped by the politics of race and gender.

Ke Ma
"The fragile beautiful: race-making in China's foreign model industry"
Drawing on six-month participatory observation and interviews at a foreign model agency in Shanghai, this article explores how race is enacted in China's whiteness-centered foreign modeling business. Specifically, how race, an organizing principle that homogenizes otherwise diverse populations, takes shape in the foreign model agency's discourses and practices that center upon getting white-looking foreign models to China and selling their looks as commodities to the clients in China. Employing a multi-level analysis, I explore how racial identities and hierarchies are enacted through three mechanisms/apparatuses: the global hierarchy of beauty in the fashion and advertising industry (structural, macro-level), the Chinese state's border restrictions on foreign

nationals (institutional, meso-level), and the popular perceptions of foreign Other vis-a-vis a Chinese self (individual, micro-level). Rather than seeing race/whiteness as a self-evident fact, the article shows that race and whiteness are both differentiated and processual. Since the three mechanisms/apparatuses are at work simultaneously, the kind of race-making within the context of the foreign model business in China can be non-linear and sometimes self-contradictory. Through the analysis, the article also proposes to transcend an essentialist approach to race by focusing more on its dynamic and diverse operations across different geographical, sociopolitical, and cultural contexts.
Keywords: race, racialization, fashion modeling, China, migration, whiteness

John G. Russell, Emeritus Professor, Gifu University
Racial Profiling, E-lines, Cosplay, and the Contentious Discourse of Diversity in Japan
 Japanese constructions of whiteness have been shaped by mainstream media and popular culture, which both reproduce and localize the Western discourse of whiteness. At the same time, the growth of the Internet, social media, and online culture has exposed Japan to contentious debates in the United States (and elsewhere) concerning racial representation, race-bending, and diversity, as well as provided a platform for Japanese to reexamine contemporary Japanese racial aesthetics that internalize, normalize, and idealize globalized Western aesthetic values while simultaneously denying their influence. This paper explores the impact that the discourse of representation and diversity in the United States, black popular culture, and demographic changes, particularly the growth of diasporic African communities in Japan since the 1980s, have had on Japanese perceptions of "whiteness," "blackness," and "Japaneseness."

Christina Kefala
"Under the Skin: 'White' artificial intelligence in China's business sector"
This paper examines an understudied labour force behind China's production of the Artificial Intelligence (AI) industry - to construct racialized robots and tech systems, often marked as distinctly 'white' by their appearance and embodied characteristics. Studies have raised their attention to the racialization of AI machines in western societies, arguing that Whiteness is not seen as merely an AI assistant with a stereotypically white voice or a robot with white features but as the absence of colour, the treatment of white as default (Cave and Dihal 2020). However, no studies exist in Asian contexts on the racialization of AI where white people no longer enjoy structural domination.
Responding to the growing prominence of AI in China, various business fields have supplanted human interaction with AI, further enhancing economic growth, innovation and tech development: they do this through the use of robots, or AI digital humans, who can have extended conversations with users in Chinese and English; promote foreign and local fashion brands and e-commerce platforms, present virtual designs on virtual white-presenting humans; virtual idols with AI-developed characteristics such as speaking English; and English teaching firms can use AI algorithms to curate their courses. This paper provides an ethnographic account of this phenomenon through online interviews with foreign and Chinese entrepreneurs, media analysis on Chinese social media, and archive research to synthesize the data of this study. This work shows how AI has become racialized in China by ascribing them to attributes predominantly

associated with white people. I argue that this reflection of Whiteness illuminates the particularities of white people in the country and also situates these effects within a labour market in which these machines are designed to "serve" China's tech development as skill tech systems relate to race and technology.

James Farrer, Sophia University
"A Historical Perspective on Privilege and Exclusion of Elite Migrants in Shanghai"
In this presentation I look back several decades to discuss how white and Asian expatriates have experienced the city of Shanghai as a space of both privilege and exclusion. In comparing and contrasting their experiences, I consider the role race – particularly the categories of "white," "Asian, and "Japanese" – played, and still may play, in shaping the structures supporting both privilege and exclusion of elite migrants. We cannot understand patterns of privilege and discrimination affecting migrants without a view to the social structures that form and sustain them. These structures are also cultural, and involve historical discourses of race, ethnicity, and nationality circulating both among the host population and among migrants. By social structures, I refer primarily to the institutions that support the activities and identities of some of elite migrants. These include governmental and non-governmental institutions that have long defined expatriate communities in a city such as Shanghai, including consulates, schools, corporations, and migrant-centered clubs, media, and service providers. These in turn, shape a migrant lifeworld characterized by a patchwork of bubble-like enclaves and contact zones in which the host society and other migrants are encountered. In the end, I argue the structures designed by elite migrants to sustain an expatriate society in China and the structures designed by the Chinese state to contain "foreigners" in China work together to support notions of difference based primarily on an insider/outsider dichotomy unique to the socio-political conditions of the PRC. Concepts of "white privilege" from the West thus do not completely capture these dynamics, but neither are they irrelevant to understanding them.

Aurélia M. Ishitsuka, Ecole des hautes études en sciences sociales & Université de Genève
Visiting Scholar, UC Berkeley
"The Ease of the Expat: Whiteness in the Cosmopolitan Enclaves of Shanghai"
In the Euro-American context where it was first coined as a concept, whiteness refers to the privilege of inhabiting the norm. Scholars working on Asia have since complexified this view by showing how, in societies where white Western migrants are a visible minority, whiteness functions as a double-edged sword as it signifies both privilege and precariousness.
Drawing on ethnographic fieldwork conducted among young global professionals in Shanghai between 2015 and 2019, this paper seeks to better our understanding of whiteness in Asia by looking at spaces that are to a large extent separate from the national setting, what has been termed cosmopolitan enclaves. I argue that, while these international areas are less segregated than in the past, Western norms still dominate daily social interactions. It is therefore the local population, rather than the Westerners, who need to adapt. I further demonstrate that despite the growing presence of non-white mobile professionals such as Chinese returnees, the mental image of the expat is still that of a white Western man. This persisting image has two effects. On the one hand, global professionals who are perceived as Asian or Black may experience

misrecognition as their cosmopolitan identity is denied, on the other hand, white migrants are a priori seen as belonging, regardless of their social class.

In the context of an increasing vulnerability felt by foreigners in China as the state tightens control over its population in response to the Covid-19 pandemic, exemplified by the recent Shanghai lockdown, I contend that a spatial approach to the study of whiteness is especially needed. Only by examining how expatriates maintain separate physical and institutional spaces can we understand how many Westerners still enjoy the odd privilege of being at ease in a foreign country.

Shanshan Lan, Associate Professor, University of Amsterdam
"We are no longer wanted here!": How white European migrants talk about race and Covid-19 in China

The outbreak of Covid-19 in China in early 2020 and the Chinese state's draconian zero-Covid policy not only posed serious constraints on the mobility and livelihood of Chinese people in general, but had serious impacts on the daily life experiences of international migrants. Anti-Asian racism in the Western world, coupled with the fear of imported cases from overseas, has triggered a rising tide of nationalism and xenophobia in China. In 2020, black Africans in Guangzhou were reported to be a major target for the local state's Covid-19 containment campaigns. However, anti-foreign sentiment was soon extended to white-looking migrants as well due to the stigmatization of foreign bodies as a source of infection and as the racialized other against whom the Chinse ego is boosted. Based on ethnographic fieldwork in Guangzhou, Shenzhen, and other smaller cities in South China, this paper examines how different groups of white European migrants discuss, reflect on, and make sense of the (ir)relevance of race and whiteness in their Covid-related experiences. I identify three major themes in my participants' narratives: the vulnerable foreigner, the emphasis on nationality and cultural identity, and colour-blind racism. The paper argues that the reconfiguration of whiteness as foreignness in China is marked by a tension between privileges and precariousness. White European migrants' feelings of insecurity and vulnerability as foreigners in China during Covid times provides a good excuse to exempt them from critically reflecting on the legacy of colonialism and white supremacy in a transnational context. By associating race only with black people and by adopting a colour-blind perspective in discussions of racism in China, they tend to reinforce the invisibility and unmarked nature of whiteness as a hegemonic norm that shapes racial knowledge formation in Chinese society.