**TEACHING RACE IN WHITE SPACES (ORLD 5199)**

**September 20th & 21st, 2019**

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**Guest Co-Facilitator: Bryana French**

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7. George Yancy Dear White America <https://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2015/12/24/dear-white-america/>
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9. “Teaching Our Own Racism: Incorporating Personal Narratives of Whiteness into Anti-Racist Practice.” Stephen Brookfield. *Adult Learning* Vol. 25, # 3, 2014. <http://www.stephenbrookfield.com/writings>
10. “Repressive Tolerance and the Management of Diversity.” Stephen Brookfield. In, V. Wang (Ed.) *Critical Theory and Transformative Learning*. Hershey, PA: IGI/Information Age Publishing (2018). <http://www.stephenbrookfield.com/writings>

1. “Killing White Innocence” Review of *Backlash: What Happens When We Talk Honestly About Race in America* by George Yancy. <https://www.tikkun.org/newsite/killing-white-innocence> 98
2. “Toward a Psychological Framework of Radical Healing in Communities of Color” Bryana French, Jioni Lewis, Della Mosley, Hector Adames, Nayeli Chavez-Diuenas, Grace Chen and Helen Neville. 2019. *The Counseling Psychologist*, 43/7, pp. 1-33. [https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/0011000019843506#](https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/0011000019843506)
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**Overview**

This is a two-day workshop that explores the process of teaching about race and racism in multiple higher and adult educational contexts, corporations, communities, organizations and social movements. It is aimed particularly at practitioners who work mostly with white members of predominantly white settings. White educators, trainers, counselors, leaders and teachers often hold a color blind view of the world and profess themselves to be anti-racist, yet lack an awareness of their own white racial identity. The course examines the complex dynamics of working to unmask white supremacy in such settings. It considers pedagogical dynamics such as using autobiographical disclosure, sequencing exposure to increasingly contentious racial issues, creating conversational protocols to discuss race, preparing students for ‘brave space’ (rather than safe space) environments and how to respond to expressions of anger, hurt and pain. The importance of the leaders or teacher’s own racial identity, and the need for multiracial teaching teams to model difficult conversations will also be emphasized. Finally, the course will explore how to move people from individualized to structural ways of thinking about race as a way of ‘normalizing’ the analysis of race and racism.

The course will be draw on participants’ own experiences of working through racial issues in classrooms, organizations and communities. The official instructor who is a white male will use himself as a case study of how a white supremacist world confers unearned advantages and legitimizes a white epistemology of knowledge construction. The course will be co-facilitated by Dr. Bryana French who will draw on her experience of how a female person of color negotiates a white supremacist world. Having two instructors who represent very different positionalities allows for a modeling of critical dialogue across difference.

**Approach**

This is conducted as a two-day workshop running from 9.00.am – 4.00.pm. on two consecutive days. We will begin by examining central concepts of race, racism, and white supremacy and explore the ways in which participants engage with these.

Four themes will permeate the workshop:

* How to scaffold the activities we find most helpful in teaching race in white contexts in which resistance to, or confusion about, examining race is the norm
* How to build community as a condition of race-based work so we can build brave spaces in which we commit to speaking and hearing truth
* How leaders, teachers and facilitators can model their own public commitment to race work as a pre-condition of asking students and peers to do this work
* How to deal with resistance and push back and pay attention to personal sustainability and self/other care as a condition of this work

Time will be split between presentations, private reading, small group activities & whole workshop conversation. The first day ends with the administration of the Critical Incident Questionnaire (CIQ), a tool that collects anonymous responses to the first day’s activities. We start the 2nd day by reporting out the CIQ results for Day (1) and explaining how these affect what we do on day two. The workshop will end with a review of the 1 credit assignment for those who need further clarification.

**Texts, Readings and Resources**

**Required Course Text**

Brookfield, S.D. and Associates (2019). *Teaching Race: Helping Students Unmask and Challenge Racism.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

**Pre-Reading**

Before the workshop please read whichever of the following chapters most coincide with your interests. We will try to consider all these topics during the two days:

For an overview of approaches to teaching race in white spaces - Chapter 1

**Scaffolding Activities & Exercises to Take People Deeper into an Analysis of Race**

    \* For different exercises and approaches used to teach whites about whiteness – Chapter 2, Chapter 3 & Chapter 11

    \*  For an introduction to brave space technology - Chapter 4

    \*  For a description of discussion based exercises – read Chapter 10

**On How to Build Community**

    \*  For specific examples of building community – Chapter 8, Chapter 9

    \*  On balancing trust while challenging people – Chapter 6, Chapter 7

**On the Role of Modeling**

    \*  On how to unearth positionality – read Chapter 5, Chapter 12

    \*  On using digital storytelling – read Chapter 13

    \* On modeling learning from making mistakes in anti-racist pedagogy – Chapter 14, Chapter 15

**OTHER RESOURCES**

[**Workshop Packet**](https://tc.instructure.com/courses/10044/files/598913/download?wrap=1)

[**Bryana French et. al. Towards a Psychological Framework of Radical Healing**](https://tc.instructure.com/courses/10044/files/598912/download?wrap=1)

[**Teaching Race book pdf**](https://tc.instructure.com/courses/10044/files/598911/download?wrap=1)

[**Stephen Brookfield's Open Access Website** (Links to an external site.)](http://www.stephenbrookfield.com/)

[**Stephen Brookfield Writings on Race** (Links to an external site.)](http://www.stephenbrookfield.com/writings)

**SUPPLEMENTARY READING**

Applebaum, B. *Being White, Being Good: White Complicity, White Moral Responsibility, and Social Justice Pedagogy*. Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books, 2010.

Bell, L. A. 2010. *Storytelling for Social Justice: Connecting Narrative and the Arts in Antiracist Teaching*. New York: Routledge.

Delgado R. and Stephanic, J. *Critical Race Theory: An Introduction*. NYU Press: New York, 2012.

DiAngelo, RE. *White Fragility: Why it’s so Hard for White People to Talk About Race*. Boston: Beacon Press, 2018.

Emdin, C. *For White Folks Who Teach in the Hood… and the Rest of Y’all Too: Reality Pedagogy and Urban Education*. Boston: Beacon Press, 207.

Feagin, J. *The White Racial Frame: Centuries of Racial Framing and Counter-Framing*. New York: Routledge, 2013 (2nd. Ed.).

Fox, H. *“When Race Breaks Out”: Conversations About Race and Racism in College Classrooms.* New York: Peter Lang, 2009.

Grande, S. *Red Pedagogy*. New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2004.

Sheared, V., Johnson-Bailey, J. Colin, S.A.J. Jr., Peterson, E. & Brookfield, S.D. (Eds.). 2010. *Handbook of Race and Adult Education: A Resource for Dialogue on Racism.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Sue, D. W. *Race Talk and the Conspiracy of Silence: Understanding and Facilitating Difficult Dialogues on Race*.Hoboken: Wiley, 2015.

Sullivan, S. *Good White People: The Problem with Middle-Class White Anti-Racism*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2014.

Yancy, G. *Backlash: What Happens When We Talk Honestly About Race in America*. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2018.

**Assignment**

Your assignment should be a reflection on the relevance and meaning of the ideas discussed and activities practiced in the workshop. You can speak from your perspective as someone learning about the process of teaching in white spaces, or from the perspective of someone who practices teaching about race in white spaces. Your readings, viewings and small and large group discussions should have provided good material for you.

You can write a relatively traditional paper if you wish to do so. A typical assignment length is five-pages double spaced. Alternately, instead of a written piece you could produce a creative representation of an idea or practice you encountered in the workshop that intrigued you. This could be a poem, piece of music, drawing, collage, soundscape, graphic, or whatever else that occurs. Please provide a brief narrative (1-2 paragraphs) explaining what you were hoping to convey or accomplish with your creation.

**If you wish to take this workshop for a letter grade, please then please complete the “Change of Grade” form provided.**

**Criteria for Assessment**

There will be no final examination. You will be evaluated on the following:

Class Participation 50%: The Grading Rubric is Provided Below

Final Paper 50%: The Criteria are Given Below

THIS CLASS IS RUN AS A PASS FAIL COURSE WITH PASS AS ACCEPTABLE FOR GRADUATE WORK AND FAIL AS UNACCEPTABLE FOR GRADUATE

**If you wish to take this workshop for a letter grade please then please complete the “Change of Grade” form provided, get me to sign it, and then take it to the Registrar’s office for approval.**

**CRITERIA FOR GRADING FINAL PAPER IF YOU CHOOSE A LETTER GRADE**

**A: Excellent work**, well above the level expected of graduate study.  Is clearly communicated, shows comprehensive knowledge and understanding of relevant information and concepts, and demonstrates rigorous and extensive critical analysis of the merits of the field’s scholarship and the candidate’s own ideas.

**B: Good work expected of graduate level students**. Is clearly communicated, shows selected knowledge and understanding of relevant information and concepts, and demonstrates partial critical analysis of the merits of the field’s scholarship and the candidate’s own ideas.

**C: Average level work below what is expected of graduate level students.** Is not communicated clearly, shows gaps in understanding of relevant information and concepts, and lacks critical analysis of the merits of the field’s scholarship and the candidate’s own ideas.

**D:  Poor work well below what is expected of graduate level students.** Is difficult to understand, shows little or no understanding of relevant information and concepts, and demonstrates no critical analysis of the merits of the field’s scholarship and the candidate’s own ideas.

In some cases minus (-) or plus (+) will be added to make further distinctions.

**Class Participation Grading Rubric**

50% of your grade for this class is based on your participation in class discussion and activities.  Participating in discussion does not necessarily mean talking a lot or showing everyone else that you know or have studied a lot.  Good discussion participation involves people trying to build on, and synthesize, comments from others, and on showing appreciation for others’ contributions.  It also involves inviting others to say more about what they are thinking.  Some of the most helpful things you can do are call for a quiet interlude, bring a new resource to the classroom, or post an observation on line.  So there are multiple ways quieter learners can participate.

Below are some specific behavioral examples of good participation in discussion:-

Ask a question or make a comment that shows interest in what another person says

Ask a question or make a comment that encourages another person to elaborate on something they have already said

Bring in a resource (a reading, web link, video) not covered in the syllabus but adds new information/perspectives to our learning

Make a comment that underscores the link between two people's contributions & make this link explicit in your comment

Use body language (in only a slightly exaggerated way) to show interest in what different speakers are saying

Post a comment on the course chat room that summarizes our conversations so far and/or suggests new directions and questions to be explored in the future

Make a comment (online if this is appropriate) indicating that you found another person's ideas interesting or useful.  Be specific as to why this was the case

Contribute something that builds on, or springs from, what someone else has said.  Be explicit about the way you are building on the other's thoughts

Make a comment on the CIQ that prompts us to examine discussion dynamics

When you think it's appropriate, ask the group for a moment's silence to slow the pace of conversation to give you, and others, time to think

Make a comment that at least partly paraphrases a point someone has already made

Make a summary observation that takes into account several people's contributions & that touches on a recurring theme in the discussion (online if you like)

Ask a cause and effect question, e.g.: "can you explain why you think it's true that if these things are in place such and such a thing will occur?"

Find a way to express appreciation for the enlightenment you have gained from the discussion. Try to be specific about what it was that helped you understand something better.  Again this can be done online if preferred.

## HOW TO GET YOUR ASSIGNMENTS TO ME

**E-Mail**: Send it to sdbrookfield@stthomas.edu by the due date of October 28th. Let me know if you need an acknowledgment of receipt.

PLEASE NOTE – THIS IS ***NOT*** MY COLUMBIA E-Mail ADDRESS. DO NOT SEND IT THERE!

**Snail Mail**: Send it postmarked by the due date of October 28th, 2019 to:-

**Stephen Brookfield, 695 Lincoln Avenue, St. Paul, Minnesota 55105-3534**

If you would like an acknowledgment that I have received your assignment, then let me know that when you send it to me. I will be receiving assignments from three different TC workshops on the same day, so won’t acknowledge receipt unless asked to do so.

I am happy to provide a written evaluation of your assignment. If you would like one then please send it to me via snail mail (**Stephen Brookfield, 695 Lincoln Avenue, St. Paul, Minnesota 55105-3534**) and include a self-addressed envelope where I can return

it to. No need for you to put on stamps – I can cover that.

**Racial/Cultural Identity Development Model**

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| --- | --- |
| **Stage 1: Conformity** | Unequivocal preference for dominant cultural values and White Americans over their own culture.  |
| **Stage 2: Dissonance** | Denial of racism begins to break down and begins to question *conformity* beliefs |
| **Stage 3: Resistance and Immersion** | Endorse minority-held views completely and reject values of dominant society and culture. |
| **Stage 4: Introspection** | Positive and proactive self-definition and uncomfortable with rigidity from *Immersion* stage  |
| **Stage 5: Integrative Awareness** | Inner security, appreciates own culture and U.S. culture |

*Sources:* Sue, D. W. & Sue, D. (2016) *Counseling the Culturally Diverse* (7th Ed). Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

**White Racial Identity Development Descriptive Model**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Naiveté Phase** | Racially neutral and naive curiosity about race |
| **Conformity phase** | Ethnocentric attitudes and beliefs, assumes universality of values and norms, lack of racial awareness and relies on racial stereotypes |
| **Dissonance** | Forced to deal with inconsistencies and face denial of racial biases and prejudices |
| **Resistance and Immersion** | Begin to question and challenge own racism and that of others in society |
| **Introspective** | Change from unconditional acceptance of White identity to a rejection of Whiteness. Introspective reformulation of what it means to be White, no longer denying participation in White privilege |
| **Integrative Awareness** | Understanding the self as a racial/cultural being, aware of sociopolitical influences of racism, appreciating racial and cultural diversity, becoming committed toward eradicating oppression |
| **Commitment to antiracist action** | Characterized by social action and commitment to eradicating oppression |

*Source:* Sue, D. W. & Sue, D. (2016) *Counseling the Culturally Diverse* (7th Ed). Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, Inc. **Transforming White Consciousness – White Epistemology, Ontology & Axiology**

Doug Paxton

(In, V. Sheared, J. Johnson-Bailey, S.A.J. Colin, E. Peterson & S. Brookfield (Eds). HANDBOOK OF RACE & ADULT EDUCATION: RESOURCES FOR DIALOGUE. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2010).

This chapter explores the water in which I swim as a white man in the United States. I begin with the idea that in order to transform the consciousness that creates racism, the structure of that consciousness must also be examined. I explore white consciousness as a system of thought, or white paradigm, with an identifiable ontology, epistemology, methodology, and axiology. Building upon the foundation of critical race theory (Delgado, 1995), I see the white paradigm as a broader phenomenon than white racism, impacting all aspects of how white people know about and behave in the world. I begin by telling a story about my experience with race at work. I then consider white consciousness from a theoretical perspective before concluding by applying the theoretical perspective back to my own story.

Ten years ago I began to learn new things about an old subject—racism. Prior to that time, I thought of myself as a “good white person” who was, naturally, against prejudice. I believed I was on the “right” side of issues, a defender of those who are marginalized in our society. Two parallel life experiences—my role at work, and my role as a student in graduate school—conspired to shake the foundations of what I knew about myself, and racism, creating a “perfect storm” for learning.

Both my workplace and graduate school saw themselves as socially progressive institutions, and were going through significant change as they sought to become more diverse and build a culture more welcoming to people of diverse racial backgrounds. Both organizations had historically consisted predominantly of white people in positions of organizational leadership. Valuing diversity made sense to me as a gay man, who had experienced the negative impacts of being different in America.

What increasingly caught my attention in the spring of 1998 was the heightened disenchantment that many people of color—at work and school—expressed as a direct consequence of what each institution was doing to address diversity issues. Both concerned and naïve about race, I listened as people of color told me about their experiences.

Our business trade association was dedicated to promoting corporate social responsibility, and cared about creating an inclusive environment at work. In response to an academic assignment, I created a diversity task force at work using action research to guide our process. Our organization had made prior efforts to better “walk its talk” on the subject of racism and diversity. Paradoxically, the more attention we paid to race, the worse people felt about the situation. People of color learned that their white colleagues knew less about race than they expected, and white people felt uncomfortable about how little they really knew about the racial lives of their colleagues of color. The more I heard, the more I realized that a racial reality gap existed between people of color and white people, which led to the idea to create the diversity task force. With the CEO’s blessing, the task force was charged with exploring and evaluating the diversity climate at our organization. The timing of the task force was ideal, given the sobering news that 8 of 11 departing employees from the prior year were people of color.

The task force itself was quite diverse, and split its time between self-study—exploring the racial and cultural dynamics between members of the task force, and organizational study—conducting an all-staff survey on how people felt about working at the organization. I was the sole member of the senior management team on the task force.

Several months later, the task force presented findings to the senior management team, which indicated that we had a problem. According to a majority of our staff, we did not have a welcoming climate where people of diverse racial backgrounds could flourish. The predominantly white senior management team reacted defensively. Feeling a surge of righteous indignation, and knowing that no one else on the task force had the institutional position to challenge the top leaders, I gave an impassioned plea on behalf of the survey results and our recommendations for future work. It was the first time that I had spoken out publicly and directly on behalf of people of color and against racism, and taken an uncompromising stand against white people, in the form of the senior management team. I was angry, reacting to what I saw as the entrenched interests of the organization’s leadership and the system that maintained the status quo. This moment of challenging my colleagues, who undoubtedly also saw themselves as “good white people,” was a watershed event in my professional life. I could for the first time detect the systemic resistance and denial pushing back against me, affirming what colleagues of color had been trying to explain to me. The experience of being a member of the task force was galvanizing for me, as issues of race seemed to arise in many areas of my life.

On the face of it, my story may seem unproblematic, a personal account of resistance in the face of entrenched racism. While I am glad I took this stand, my actions are not without contradiction. In fact, they illustrate the elements of, and limits to, the very paradigm of Whiteness I wish to elaborate.

### A WHITE PARADIGM

It… is to history that we owe our frames of reference, our identities.… People who imagine that history flatters them … are impaled on their history like a butterfly on a pin and become incapable of seeing or changing themselves…. and they suffer enormously from the resulting personal incoherence. (Baldwin, 1998, p. 321)

In 1962, white author and educator Thomas Kuhn published *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, where he popularized the use of the word paradigm. According to Kuhn, a paradigm is not simply the current theory in fashion. A paradigm is the complete pattern of thought in which a particular worldview rests. Kuhn makes the point that until a new paradigm is understood, all science and conventional wisdom work to justify and defend the existing paradigm. Using the components of a worldview or paradigm identified by white authors Yvonna Lincoln and Egon Guba (2000), I explore the idea of a white paradigm, as a functioning worldview, with its own ontology, epistemology, methodology and axiology.

A few disclaimers are in order. I do not mean to conflate Western consciousness with white consciousness, though I do imagine they share similar roots and parallel ways of making meaning of the world. I also acknowledge that feminists might well comment that numerous qualities I attribute to whiteness represent patriarchal behaviors of domination. I concur, and believe there is something about white skin privilege that white women share with me across the divide of gender. I also imagine that the white paradigm is not exclusive to white people. Perhaps it is more accurate to refer to whiteness as the paradigm of the dominant culture, thereby explaining how people of color could also share such a paradigmatic orientation.

### Ontology – The Nature of Reality

### *Ontology* is the study of the form and nature of reality. White ontology springs from our history of deterministic, reductionist, rational and objective ways of verifying what is real. Essentially and, admittedly over-simplistically, white people have come to believe the "real" world can be understood largely through the positivist application of science and hypothesis testing. We believe that time is linear, with past and future components that encourage us to reify "progress" as superior. We see logic and facts as synonymous with the truth. Knowledge and reality are largely assumed to be generalizable and universal—i.e., not situated within a particular context. As white educator and author Peter Reason (1994, p. 11) explains, “Western consciousness is characteristically dualist…. the very notion of an individual self is at the root of our difficulties because it creates an ontology… in which the knower is detached from the world, rather than implicate within it.”

### Epistemology – System of Knowing

*Epistemology*describes not just the way of knowing, but the system of knowing. How do white people know what they know? Elements in European-American systems of knowing include: individualism, competition, positivism, rationality, logic and objectivity; scientism; and dualism. Ani boils the European epistemological mode down to this: "Rob the universe of its richness, deny the significance of the symbolic, simplify phenomena until it becomes mere object, and you have a knowable quantity. Here begins and ends the European epistemological mode" (1994, p. 29). The emerging popularity of Eastern and Indigenous spiritual traditions in Western society may well signal that many white people hunger to go beyond the limitations of white epistemology and search for fulfillment with more diverse and expanded epistemologies. White educator and author Richard Tarnas frames the epistemological challenge of our time in a way that is consistent with Ani’s view, without making an explicit connection to whiteness.

[W]e need to radically expand our ways of knowing, our epistemology…. to move beyond the very narrow empiricism and rationalism that were characteristic of the Enlightenment and still dominate mainstream science today. We need to draw on … the wider epistemologies of the heart.” (Tarnas, 2002, p. 9)

Ani (1994) and Tarnas (2002) each allude to what is missing in the white epistemological view with terms like “richness of the universe” and “wider epistemologies of the heart.” The white mind has shifted its consciousness from its original, more indigenous worldview, causing us to view the world as an object that is devoid of meaning and spirit. Malidoma Patrice Somé describes how difficult it was for him to move beyond the Western, literate consciousness that separated him from his African, indigenous roots.

It was interesting to see the reaction of villagers who observed what literacy had done to me…. what I learned from my white teachers was considered poisonous, and even dangerous…. [and] made me prone to doubt, incapable of trust, and subject to dangerous emotions such as anger and impatience…. Because of the Western consciousness … and its grandiose notions of superiority, I was slow to accept… intrusion from an indigenous worldview…. My Western-trained mind regarded [indigenous knowledge]… with hostile intention and therefore would fight against it with patriotic pride. I realize now that what I thought was my civilized mind was in fact a rather narrow mind. (Somé, 1998, p. 8)

How can we facilitate the epistemological shift to a worldview that is not the opposite of dualism but transcends dualism? White systems theorist and author Gregory Bateson (1972) explained that being aware of the absence of a more expanded way of knowing is rare, “In the case of epistemological propositions, error is not easily detected and is not very quickly punished…. Epistemological error is often reinforced and therefore self-validating. You can get along all right in spite of the fact that you entertain at rather deep levels of the mind premises, which are simply false” (pp. 479-480).

### Methodology – Gathering Information

*Methodology*asks, how are data gathered for creating knowledge? White methodology is about how we discover and engage with the world to collect information and knowledge. The scientific process remains a central methodology of white culture, where hypothesis testing for quantitative results by objective and dispassionate researchers is the expected and reliable norm for finding answers that contribute to “valid” knowledge. The search for immutable laws, which apply cause-and-effect understanding that is then generalized to larger populations, has long been bedrock for white methodology.

In many areas of white culture, there is emphasis on: direct verbal and written communication; content/task over process/relationship; time-controlled adherence to agenda versus spontaneity; and considerable discomfort about non-cognitive ways of being, e.g., our bodies, artistic expression, etc. These methodological traits of whiteness are often taken for granted as universal, and play an important role in screening and narrowing what is considered legitimate data for the white system of knowing.

### Axiology – Ethics and Values

*Axiology* is the study of values and ethics—the realm where human societies make meaning of life’s mysteries and question what is intrinsically valuable. White axiology represents how ethics and values are postured in relationship to the basic beliefs of European-American culture—the white paradigm described above. When the Aristotelian value of knowledge itself as intrinsically worthwhile becomes the default value in white culture, we get, “the modern propensity to educate the intellect in damaging dissociation from feeling, imagination, and action” (Heron & Reason 1997, p. 287). This split was promoted by revolutions in European thought led by thinkers like Aristotle, Copernicus, Descartes and Darwin, who made the values and mystery implicit in religion increasingly irrelevant to the ongoing scientific revolution (Tarnas 2002). This revolution was pivotal for liberation from the limitations of religious and feudal societies; over time this compartmentalization has become foundational to how we see ourselves in the world and how we prioritize what is important in our lives. Appreciation for our ancestors and awe/connection to the natural world are two indigenous values that get less attention and priority in white culture, at what cost?

As a product of white culture, it is difficult to see science as one belief system among many. Applying objectivity and rationality to the unknown reduces our level of uncertainty and discomfort. We assume that this removes us—through the application of reason—from the messy and value-laden arena of using religion and spirituality to address the unknown. White axiology is, then, less about what constitutes our values and more about what our values are disconnected from—broader and multiple ways of knowing.

It is the white worldview—ontology, epistemology, methodology and axiology—coupled with the often unconscious universalization of white norms and values and the broad positions of power we hold in society, which makes white consciousness simultaneously invisible and dominating.

##### RETURNING TO MY STORY

Reflecting back on my own story, I find many ways that illuminate how whiteness was operating within me, even as I challenged the racial status quo in my organization.

The very language I used in telling my story exposes my whiteness. When confronting senior management, I claimed to have been speaking “on behalf of people of color.” The paternalistic superiority was undisguised. What would it have meant to have spoken on behalf of white people? How might that stand have shifted the dynamics in the meeting?

The individualism wrought from the white ontology and epistemology described above left me unable to see myself as part of a white community of learners. In effect, I had separated myself from other white people in the organization, and was unable to move from the perspective of an irate white do-gooder to question what *we* do, as a predominantly white senior management team, to create a more thriving and diverse organizational culture? As a white guy, living in the “we” is not something that comes easily to me, and it helped me understand Somé’s feedback from his indigenous elders, who were worried about his focus on ego and the emotions of anger and impatience that came with the Western worldview that had trained him. It took working in groups with other white people on the subject of whiteness (Paxton, 2003) to help me see how far I was away from the more community-oriented *sister* and *brother* so easily traded among African- Americans.

The dualism of my worldview was clearly evident. I saw the office situation entirely in black and white. I do see the helpful necessity for righteous anger at times, where the force of an emotion can help promote a breakthrough or direction for inquiry. However, in my meeting with the senior leaders of the organization, my dualistic approach served to harden our positions of opposition, not see one another as comrades in a shared struggle. Another casualty of my dualism was the staff who did not fit neatly into the black and white frames I brought to the struggle. One Asian/Pacific Islander on the staff later explained that she felt more invisible than ever during my showdown with management. In the polarizing atmosphere I helped to foster in the wake of our task force recommendations, how effective had I actually been as an advocate for change? Where was my heart and compassion, for self and others?

In terms of the white paradigm, the self represented by my story is deeply embedded within the mindset of rightness, superiority and maintaining a precarious and over-active ego. I have become more aware of how much my identity and ego are fueled by the need to be right, and see this as connected to my whiteness. The content of how I defined “right”—in concert with the voices of people of color in the organization—may be laudable. However, I have to ask myself, “Was I able to exert my rational thinking and education in service of relationship or more towards being superior and ‘right?’” White author and educator Edgar Schein links being right with one’s identity: “In order to feel… anxiety or guilt, we must accept the disconfirming data as valid and relevant. What … prevents us from doing so … is a second kind of anxiety which we can call ‘learning anxiety,’ … if we admit to ourselves and others that something is wrong or imperfect, we will lose our effectiveness, our self-esteem and maybe even our identity” (Schein, 1995, p. 5). Schein’s insight may help explain why the emotional stakes felt so high during this period for the white people in the organization. For a progressive *good* white person’s identity and self-image, getting racism “right” was fundamental and imperative. I believe this left all of us in a fragile state where learning anxiety was high. Without the multitude of fronts that were pulling me to confront my racial consciousness, I would easily have retreated in the face of such anxiety. I had remarkable support for examining my whiteness, from colleagues at both school and work.

Over the years, I have slowly learned to appreciate how diversity was something we were trying to “fix,” so that we could move on to whatever was next on our relentless agendas. We were unwilling and unprepared to simply sit with the truth of where we were as an organization in terms of racism. I had an opportunity to provide a different frame, one that allowed us to honor the painful steps we were taking while acknowledging that we were not going to fix things. Perhaps we could have learned to practice better together, and make more space for our inevitable mistakes, through a strengthening of our relationships.

One antidote to my individualism was the community that supported me through this entire story—my multicultural cohort from graduate school. Our group had been meeting together for two years and bore steady witness to the unfolding events in my workplace, encouraging me to stay in a mode of inquiry and, significantly, stay present to my emotions. I had the good fortune to be surrounded by other white students and faculty who were struggling to address issues of race, privilege and dominance.

In the end, it finally dawned on me that what needed to happen throughout the organization was what happened within our diversity task force. We needed an ongoing relational group experience of exploring race and its associated dynamics. Action research met us epistemologically where we were, and allowed for a communal opening to something new.

#### CHAPTER SUMMARY: WHITENESS AND THE DILEMMA OF TRANSFORMATION

The dualism I associate with my whiteness is still with me today as I write the final words to this chapter. I fear I have done a better job of being critical of the white paradigm, without providing much of a holistic or relational view of European-Americans as a people. I have alluded to transformation of consciousness with little mention of strategies that could better support a dialogue about race. I have described these strategies elsewhere (Paxton, 2003), which include: forming community to explore whiteness; engaging affect and emotions more fully; increasing the capacity to hold paradox and ambiguity; honoring and utilizing more ways of knowing; and being more fully present to one another’s experiences. The European-American Collaborative for Challenging Whiteness presents another strategy in this volume—critical humility—which supports and encourages dialogue about race by white people.

Ultimately, healing racism may provide a painful but remarkable opportunity for white people to engage as individuals—and as a people—in transformation that brings greater congruence between our values/intentions for social justice and our actions in the world. Expanding my consciousness about my racial position, has paradoxically opened my heart and taught me about compassion and humility. As one white woman who attended a focus group about my dissertation put it, “Here [in the themes about whiteness] are the emotional patterns I’ve been living with my whole life because of how I was acculturated. And, they’re wrecking my life. They’re keeping me from loving people; they’re keeping me from accepting love from other people” (Paxton, 2003). Engaging in a dialogue about race is not just an exercise in white shame and guilt. A dialogue on race can help us heal our humanity and relationship with the world. How can love hold its rightful place in this dialogue when I am distracted by an overburden of rationality, dualism, scientism, narrow emotions and intellectual rigor? What if the consciousness that allows racism to prevail in white culture is also responsible for how we treat one another, other countries and the natural world? These other manifestations of the white paradigm raise the stakes for us to better understand the paradigmatic water in which we swim.

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**Thinking Structurally - The Brain Fart**

**© Stephen D. Brookfield, March 2019**

*I was running what I thought was an effective student discussion one day in a university graduate class that was overwhelmingly white and mostly female. I considered it to be effective because it seemed that everybody was participating in roughly equal measure.*

*About thirty minutes into the class I raised a particular issue and asked everyone to contribute their thinking on the topic. A couple of students hesitantly ventured their initial thoughts and I practiced my usual waiting time until eventually everyone had spoken. The contributions were focused and thoughtful and I was pleased by the way the students had brought a variety of perspectives to the issue.*

*I began summarizing the main themes that I thought had emerged from the comments and I started to differentiate the contradictory views that I felt had been expressed.*

*Suddenly a white woman participant, Jenn, raised her hand.*

*“Excuse me, we haven’t heard from Mia” she said.*

*Mia was a young Asian American woman and the thought that I had overlooked her was immediately embarrassing to me.*

*“I’m really sorry about that Mia,” I said. “I don’t know how that happened. My apologies, I don’t know how I missed you. Can we hear from you what you’re thinking about?”*

*Mia made her contribution and shortly afterwards we took a mid-point break.*

*I was still bothered and feeling embarrassed by my not noticing that Mia hadn’t spoken and as I brewed up some tea in my office close to the classroom I started to go over what had just happened.*

*It became obvious to me almost immediately that what had happened was a classic example of a microaggression. Microaggressions occur when members of the dominant culture act unwittingly in ways that diminish, demean and marginalize members of minority groups. They’re so subtle that the receivers are often left wondering ‘did that really happen?’ or ‘am I making too much of something that was just a simple moment of forgetfulness?’*

*When challenged on their actions, those committing microaggressions usually respond by saying the person identifying the aggression is being too sensitive, making a mountain out of a molehill, or just misunderstanding what was said or meant. Members of the dominant culture then usually jump in to excuse and explain away the aggression, saying that it was a slip of the tongue, came out the wrong way, and that no harm was meant. This is often accompanied by character witness testimonials of how the aggressor doesn’t have a racist bone in their body, is a good person, and cares for all students.*

*The class resumed after break and I began by speaking about what had happened when I had overlooked Mia.*

*“I want to thank Jenn for bringing to my attention the fact that I completely overlooked Mia in class. What you’ve just witnessed is a classic example of a racial microaggression. I had no intent to exclude Mia from the discussion and no awareness of that happening. Yet when I thanked you all for contributing and began to summarize your comments I completely overlooked a woman of color. Microaggressions are the small acts of exclusion that whites often enact against people of color without any awareness that this is happening. They’re not deliberate or intentional, they just happen with no wish to harm someone else. But that’s what happened when I didn’t notice that Miy hadn’t spoken and I went into my summary.”*

*Almost immediately the only white male member of the group, John, spoke up.*

*“You know Dr. Brookfield I think you’re being way too hard on yourself. You just had a forgetful moment. Not every action has to do with race. Sometimes you’re just tired. You just had a brain fart. I don’t think you should blame yourself. If we take this to the extreme we’re never going to be able to do or say anything without being thought of as racist.”*

*I thought it was beautifully ironic that John’s response captured a dynamic of microaggressions that I hadn’t previously talked about. His comments illustrated precisely how members of the dominant culture jump in to save others who they feel are being unjustly accused. I, not Mia, had been the one to name my own microaggression and yet John had felt compelled to jump in and save me from myself.*

*I told John that he had just exemplified a very predictable dynamic that happens of whites trying to excuse other whites who are called on their microaggressions.*

*John was offended by my comments. “Well, it’s obvious I can’t say anything in this course without being called a racist!” he exclaimed. “This is clearly not a safe space for me so I’m just going to shut up.”*

*Just then Mia spoke up.*

*“This is not the first time this has happened to me,” she said, her voice quavering. “In every class I’ve been in at this institution I feel I’ve been systematically ignored. It’s like people don’t see me or think I’m in the room.”*

**Thinking Structurally – Coding *The Brain Fart***

**Instructions to Participants**

Read the story carefully and then make some notes by yourself about your responses to the three questions below:-

* What events or actions in the story demonstrate the presence of white supremacy as an ideology or set of practices?
* How is the specific location of the story affected by wider structures, systems and forces?
* Whose interests inside and outside the specific location of the story are served or harmed by what is described?

**What events or actions in the story demonstrate the presence of white supremacy as both an ideology or set of practices?**

Since the story is about a racial microaggression it’s pretty predictable that people will point out how Stephen’s forgetting to include Mia is an example of white supremacy in action. They’ll also recognize that Jenn’s interruption represented a challenge both to white supremacy and patriarchy. Stephen’s initial apology when reacting to Jenn’s pointing out his passing over Mia will be interpreted as a typically white blindness to the effect of one’s actions. At this point people may cite the notion of white fragility (DiAngelo, 2018).

John’s intervention to excuse and save Stephen is also cited as an example of white supremacy at play. By excusing Stephen’s overlooking of Mia, John is trying to advance the idea that race had little significance in the situation, and that this was a one-off event and not any form of systemic exclusion. John’s announcing that he now doesn’t feel safe in the course and that he’s going to withdraw from subsequent conversations is also an exemplar of whiteness. As we point out in chapter 2 whites, unlike people of color, are able to choose when they wish to engage with race. Again, white fragility (DiAngelo, 2018) will probably be mentioned.

**How is the specific location of the story affected by wider structures, systems and forces?**

The story takes place in a specific classroom and it is easy to assume that this constitutes more or less a self-contained universe. But in the small groups participants often start to dig deeper.

*The college* – the first point of analysis is usually the college. People ask about the college’s mission statement, its funding and the health of student enrolments. They will ask about the degree to which the class itself exemplifies or contradicts the mission statement. The two of us usually mention the influence of market forces. Both of us teach in private institutions so the logic of capitalism is clearly at play. Our institutions are tuition driven and it’s clear that an overwhelming concern of leadership is to attract the maximum number of students.

We ask people to ponder what influence, if any, that concern might have on the conduct of the class. Has Stephen created a problem by making a white male student decide he doesn’t wish to participate any more in the course? Could this lead to him dropping out and the subsequent loss of tuition revenue? What will be the financial consequences of Stephen’s naming and teaching about microaggressions? If communities of color become aware of this work would it cause more students of color to apply to the university? Or, would this work be opposed by alumni as too radical and not in keeping with the university’s traditions and identity?

It’s likely that we’ll then ask participants to consider how traditions are shaped and institutional identities defined. This will bring into play the levers and influences behind the scenes such as the Board of Trustees. People tend to think that power in colleges resides in the senior leadership team comprised of the President, Provost, and Dean’s Council. In fact, the body ultimately responsible for setting policy, defining goals and assessing compliance with the mission is the Board of Trustees.

Knowing this we get people to go to the college’s web site and look up the composition of the board. What kind of occupations or interests are represented in the board’s membership? Typically, board members are recruited who can ensure the financial stability of the college by attracting possible donors. Hence, many of them hold prominent positions as CEO’s or CFO’s in major corporations, banks and investment firms. We suggest that participants employ online search engines to find out about the racial mix of the board and ask what it means for the direction of the university to be set and monitored by a group composed of mostly white, business representatives.

*The program or department* – sometimes we suggest to participants that the analysis could be taken to an ever more local level, that of the particular department or program offering the course. To what degree are the individuals who make up this unit committed to uncovering and challenging racism? Given that the first stage in employee performance appraisals is situated at the department and program level, what implications will this kind of teaching have for those instructors up for reappointment, third year review, tenure or promotion? We then ask about the criteria used to assess people. Are teachers assessed for the extent to which they make students feel productively uncomfortable? Are assessments connected to student evaluations of teaching? If the latter, who designs the forms and what specific items do they contain?

Student evaluation of teaching forms often measure things such as a teacher’s clarity of explanations, the frequency and depth of feedback provided, and an instructor’s openness to questions. It’s rare to find a form that probes the degree to which students were discomforted, troubled or deeply challenged. We ask people to consider what the criteria for instructor assessment and the items on evaluation forms tell us about the wider forces at work. This brings us again to the ‘students as customers’ orientation of so many non-profit institutions that ironically find themselves operating with a for-profit capitalist logic of needing to attract paying customers. We may also get into the problematic nature of assigning numerical scores to teachers’ performance. Given what we know about the complexity of teaching and learning, especially when it involves questions of racial identity, people wonder how the merits of pedagogic work can be accurately represented by assigning a score on a Likert scale of 1 – 5.

**Whose interests inside and outside the specific location of the story are served or most harmed by the events described?**

Here we’re asking participants to shift their frame of analysis from someone who is listening to a description of local events to someone who is considering asymmetries of power. In terms of the specific events of the story people often say that it’s obvious that Mia’s interests are served because she got the opportunity to contribute, and that John’s interests are harmed because he felt Stephen had silenced him.

When this analysis is expressed we usually ask participants to go back and read the story again. We explain that we want them to think about the framing of this story within a system of white supremacy and we emphasize that, like all dominant ideologies, white supremacy is designed to be self-sustaining. In other words, it’s set up to keep white power and white normativity in place and viewed as the natural state of things. White supremacy protects itself by appearing to be unremarkable, a form of common sense. For us this suggests a reading of the story that’s directly opposite to the one just described.

Sometimes the reminder of the construct of white supremacy means that people now talk about Mia and John in different ways. Mia is now seen as someone who has a history of being silenced by omission. People quote the fact that she tells the class that being overlooked is her typical experience at the university and now present the story as one that illustrates the continuing power of white supremacy.

John’s situation is now seen as more complicated. Although people still argue that he has been harmed by Stephen’s intervention and they acknowledge his feeling that he is now in an unsafe environment, his decision to remove himself from the discussion is now sometimes positioned as an act of white privilege. John is privileged because he can simply turn away from the reality of race and choose not to think about what it means in a racist world. He has been granted the option of denying reality without much harm accruing to him. This, of course, is the direct opposite to the experience of people of color who are robbed of the choice of ignoring the realities of racism and white supremacy.

**Ideology Critique – Diversifying the Curriculum**

This exercise is drawn from critical theory’s emphasis on learning to critique systems and practices for the ways in which they enshrine dominant ideology. There is a desire to identify structural silences and omissions, ways of thinking about the oppressive actions of systems that are ignored or excluded.

In ideology critique we take a common organizational, movement or community practice that has been designed to be helpful and empowering and examine it for the ways different people in the organization, movement or community experience it contrarily. The intent is to invert our normal thinking about the apparently obvious benefit and common sense logic of institutional ways of functioning and to see them instead as structured to preserve hierarchies of power. Ideology critique is intended to help participants to understand the blind spots in their own decision-making, and to help organizations understand better how their structures and systems regularly exclude certain voices and perspectives.

Facilitators begin by presenting a typical action or event that is intended to promote effectiveness or realize the organizational mission statement. Participants are then asked to do the following on their own.

* Describe the practice and attribute meaning and significance to it in terms of the accepted, dominant view. What is it intended to achieve? What’s the reasoning used to justify its utility?
* Examine that view for internal inconsistencies, paradoxes and contradictions.
* Identify what is being omitted from the dominant view. What are its structured silences and absences. What views, perspectives and experiences are unrepresented in your framing of the practice or action? Why do you think these have been missed?
* Decide who benefits from the dominant practice and who is most disadvantaged by it.
* How could the practice/action be re-invented to be fairer, more inclusive or more justified by your mission?

The practice we are examining is the decision by a college to diversify the curriculum.

Faced with the realization that demographic changes mean that students entering higher education will come from more and more diverse racial groups, many colleges have attempted to broaden the core curriculum to include more authors of color and to introduce modules dealing with race. They want to demonstrate that they are non-racist and supportive to students of color. Along with this initiative goes an effort to recruit more faculty of color. The institution then announces their new diversity initiative to the world as evidence of their responsiveness to communities of color and their commitment to inclusion.

*Describe the practice and attribute meaning and significance to it in terms of the accepted, dominant view. What is it intended to achieve? What’s the reasoning used to justify its utility?*

The dominant view is that including more authors of color will make white students more racially aware and will result in students of color feeling that their lives and experiences are represented and valued on campus. This will lead to lower attrition rates for students of color and help white students develop an appreciation for the contributions of scholars of color. As a result the campus climate will become friendlier and welcoming for students of color and white students will be helped to develop an anti-racist identity.

*Examine that view for internal inconsistencies, paradoxes and contradictions*.

One possible inconsistency concerns the way that authors of color and modules are positioned. If students see them as add-ons, rather than comprising a permanently altered center, then this initiative will be seen as a temporary band-aid covering a far deeper structural and cultural problem. Also, if the curriculum is presented with a smorgasbord approach so students can pick and choose which authors to read and which modules to study, we could quickly end up with students of color volunteering to study authors of color and race-based topics, while white students stick with the Eurocentric canon. This will potentially re-segregate the curriculum.

There is also the possible contradiction that while the curriculum is emphasizing difference and divergence, the teaching methods and assessment rubrics remain unaltered. So, whilst this curricular reform is meant to celebrate different ways of experiencing the world, it is taught in ways that privilege text over oral communication and words over images. Traditions of oral storytelling and collectivity prized by some cultures may well not be reflected in how students’ learning is evaluated. Sharing ideas might be interpreted as plagiarism and there will be no opportunity to present group, rather than individually completed, assignments.

Finally we have to ask who will teach these new courses? Asking instructors who have little knowledge or training in this area can backfire horribly, leaving students of color feeling exposed and unprotected. Without experience in leading contentious discussions, teachers could end up doing more harm than good and legitimizing the racist views of some white students.

*Identify what is being omitted from the dominant view. What are its structured silences and absences? What views, perspectives and experiences are unrepresented in the practice or action? Why do you think these have been missed?*

Much will depend on who chooses the nature of these curricular changes. If white committee members choose the authors of color and design the modules dealing with race, then the authentic experiences of people of color are missing. This white view of which authors of color are acceptable and how units dealing with race shall be framed can lead to the exclusion of radical scholarship that challenges the foundations of the academy and calls out white supremacy.

The reason why radical scholarship and contentious modules are not included is to protect the interests of the white members of the institution. They wish to demonstrate their multicultural commitment without being called to personal account.

*Decide who benefits from the dominant practice and who is most disadvantaged by it*.

If ‘softer’ authors of color are chosen, if race-based modules are designed to celebrate individual diversity rather than delve into structural racism, and if students can choose from a smorgasbord of options (thus allowing white students to omit reading radical authors of color or studying racism) those who benefit from this practice are whites. Members of the board of trustees and the senior leadership team can issue news announcements that highlight the curricular changes as evidence of their racial responsiveness. Faculty who teach in these kinds of courses can escape examining their own personal learned racism or naming the racist policies of the institution. If enrolments increase and attrition decreases then the board of trustees can claim to be managing the institution’s financials prudently.

Most disadvantaged are the students of color that this institutional effort is officially designed to serve. They will have been served a false bill of goods and will experience a counterfeit anti-racist effort; one that looks as though it’s tackling the problem seriously but in fact is designed to keep things exactly the same.

If, however, the authors of color chosen directly address systemic racism, and if the new race-based modules focus on how white supremacy is learned, disseminated and positioned as a common sense and obvious way of interpreting the world, then the interests of people of color are served. Also, if the word gets out and about in communities of color that the university is serious about tackling racism then the institution will benefit by attracting increased numbers of applicants of color and producing testimonials from alumni that speak to its genuine anti-racist identity.

Most disadvantaged will be members of the institution who think that race isn’t a problem, or who hold white supremacist views and wish to keep students of color off campus.

*How could the practice/action be re-invented to be fairer, more inclusive or more justified by your mission?*

Here participants will usually propose a number of options. One is to make sure that there is a high representation of students and faculty of color on committees charged with designing and implementing any curricular changes. This will ensure that diversifying the curriculum is not a showcase meant to deflect criticism without instituting any serious institutional reappraisal. Another might be to invite members of communities of color that the institution serves to suggest topics that would be at the center of the new race-based modules. These individuals could also serve on an oversight committee charged with making sure the institution sticks to its commitment to combat racism. Ensuring a built in mechanism to monitor how the initiative is going, and to share those results with the community, usually features as an important accountability mechanism.

1

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