

White Superiority/White Supremacy: Breaking Barriers?

Virginia Lea

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Presentation for UW-Stout:

Me & White Supremacy

BREAKING BARRIERS?

- Surmounting barriers to social justice in U.S. education must go through a recognition that beliefs in white superiority/supremacy held by many white people and internalized by some people of color are systemic and deeply entrenched.



This Presentation.....

- Definitions of race and white superiority
- Origins (Wise; Dunbar-Ortiz)
- Scientific Racism: Research
- Stories
- The Way Forward: “Interconnecting dialogical strategies”

WHAT IS RACE?

- **“Race” is an idea, a fiction that elites cultivated, ascribed to biology, and...embedded in law in the seventeenth century to serve their economic and political interests (Herbes-Sommers, Strain & Llewellyn Smith, 2003).**
- **“Race,” as Whiteness, gave people different access to opportunities and resources; “race,” as racism, has resulted in those who did not fall into the Whiteness club, being subjected to a lesser status, a subordinate reality, and often to being forced to accept unmentionable violence to their Black and Brown bodies (Coates, 2015).**
- **“Race” is a modern social invention and legal concept used by the oligarchy in the United States and elsewhere to rationalize inequalities under colonialism, slavery and capitalism, representing them as normal, natural, and common sense (Haney Lopez, 2006; Harris, 1993; Lea, Lund, & Carr, 2018)**

WHAT ARE “RACE,” RACISM AND WHITENESS?

“RACE”

Is a social construct, created to justify slavery and colonialism.

“Race” has become normal, natural and common sense.

“Race” is a double-sided coin.

Racism



Racism is unearned oppression

Whiteness



Whiteness is unearned privilege

DEFINITION OF WHITE SUPERIORITY

- The erroneous, violent, and racist idea that people with white or white passing skin are superior to and therefore deserve to dominate over people with brown or black skin (Saad, 2020, p.230)



ORIGINS

Tim Wise on the History of Whiteness Superiority:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y9-96xMLvkc&feature=related>

SCIENTIFIC RACISM & WHITE SUPERIORITY/ SUPREMACY

- “Scientific racism is the pseudoscientific belief that there is a biological basis for the historical divisions of people into distinct racial groups” (Lea, 2020).
- The United States was born out of scientific racism. As has been suggested, the wealth of most of the “founding fathers” came from the system of chattel slavery—an economic system that required the cooperation of “free,” often poor colonial whites (Memmi, 1991) to keep Africans in a condition of enslavement in perpetuity.
- Jefferson “advance(d) it therefore as a suspicion only, that the blacks, whether originally a distinct race, or made distinct by time and circumstances, are inferior to the whites in the endowments both of body and mind” (Jefferson, 1787).

WHITE SUPERIORITY, COLONIALISM AND THE AMERICAN CASTE SYSTEM

- The United States is “a settler society that has not come to terms with its past.” (Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz, 2020--*An Indigenous People's History of the United States*)
- The United States’ “unrelenting wars of conquest and ethnic cleansing over three centuries” led to the construction of “an American identity...what D.H. Lawrence called, “the myth of the essential white American.” (Grenier, 2005, 222, in Dunbar-Ortiz, 2020)

WHITE SUPERIORITY THROUGHOUT UNITED STATES' HISTORY

- In the 1920s and 1930s, during the Jim Crow era, the eugenics movement grew out of notions of scientific racism and economic insecurity.
- Eugenics is the science of improving a human population by controlled breeding to increase the occurrence of desirable heritable characteristics, which were associated with people of northern European descent.
- Eugenics was also popularized by major figures like President Woodrow Wilson, who had the first showing of the racist film, *Birth of a Nation* that glorified the Ku Klux Klan, in the White House in 1915.
- The American eugenics movement was a major influence on Nazi Germany's eugenic and racial ideology.

WHITE SUPERIORITY THROUGHOUT UNITED STATES' HISTORY

- According to Isabel Wilkerson's in her new book, *Caste: The origins of our discontents* (2020), the specific caste beliefs that sustained social and cultural divisions in India and Nazi Germany also governed the United States social system..
- In the early 1960s, Noam Chomsky's research told us that people in the United States government at that time, like Hans Jurgен Morgenthau, supported the official, sanitized, ideological version of U.S. history, advocated by Noah Webster, that Morgenthau called "reality."
- So, the current inequities in the United States have been shaped by a hidden racialized caste system or a rigid and once immutable social class hierarchy. Yet, the official version of history in schools has largely reflected the sanitized version of U.S. history.

CONSEQUENCES:
**RACIAL BIAS IN PAIN ASSESSMENT AND TREATMENT
RECOMMENDATIONS, AND FALSE BELIEFS ABOUT BIOLOGICAL
DIFFERENCES BETWEEN BLACKS AND WHITES**

- Cultural hegemony is the process whereby people in positions of power persuade those in lesser positions that the norms, values and interests that serve the elite are normal, natural, and common sense.
- Hegemonic tools are numerous and include the ideological tool of “race” (Lea, 2014).
- Research Article: “A substantial number of white laypeople and medical students and residents hold false beliefs about biological differences between blacks and whites...(Research) provides evidence that (these) false beliefs are associated with racial disparities in pain assessment and treatment recommendations” (Hoffman, Trawalter, Axt, & Oliver, 2016, April 19, PNAS April 19, 2016 113 (16) 4296-4301).

PART 2

- Most of us don't see ourselves as racist or capable of racist acts.
- Yet, race is not just about “interpersonal acts of meanness.” Racism and whiteness are embedded in culture and social socio-economic structure, including micro and macro policy and law.
- In fact, many of us still see the social system as benign. We have internalized “the lie,” as Baldwin describe the story of U.S history that has been told.

THE ADAPTIVE UNCONSCIOUS MIND

- Additionally, our behavior often demonstrates our latent racism (and other biases, even if we are unaware/unconscious of holding them).
- Research has clearly shown patterns of racist (and classist) behavior based in stereotypes that cannot be reduced to individual idiosyncrasy.
- Stereotypes are distorted truths, rigid generalizations, based on pre-judgements. Stereotypes are learned and hard to change
- Stereotype threat: Students have 50% less success in tests when asked to identify or are reminded of their race at the start of the test. (Steele, 1997--Research continues to this day) *Implications?*
- Associations of black sounding names with stereotypes. People with white-sounding means have a 50% more call back for job interviews. *Implications? Explicit bias in spite of general desire to hire BIPOC.*

THE COLOR LINE

- In 1899, W.E.B. Du Bois, wrote, “In all walks of life the Negro is liable to meet some objection to his presence or some discourteous treatment; and the ties of friendship or memory seldom are strong enough to hold across the color line.”
- In his book, *The Souls of Black Folks* (1903), Du Bois wrote, “The problem of the twentieth century is the problem of the color line.” How much have things changed?
- We need to recognize that the Wages of Whiteness are great. (See David Roediger’s book, *The Wages of Whiteness*, written in 1993, and Hari Kundru’s 2020, New York Times essay.)
- See also the “1619 Project” of *The New York Times*, created by Nikole Hannah-Jones, which owes much to Roediger’s understanding of whiteness.
https://archive.org/details/1619project/full_issue_of_the_1619_project
- In her book, *Learning to be White*, Thandeka illustrates how white people learn how to respect the color line from a young age, without being explicitly told to do so.

**WHERE DOES WHITE
SUPREMACY/SUPERIORITY
COME FROM?
(THANDEKA, *BECOMING WHITE*)**

<http://www.cnn.com/videos/bestoftv/2012/04/03/ac-pkg-doll-test-part-one.cnn>





STORY 1

Some White people's sense of white superiority starts early.....



Where does the sense of white superiority of individual white folks come from?

- Learning to be white/ learning to be racist
- Implicit bias embedded systemically, ubiquitously in culture (family, media, religion, law, policy, school policies, curriculum, pedagogies, assessments) and social structure
- Unlike many Black parents, most white parents do not directly prepare their children to relate positively to a racialized, racist world



WHITE SUPERIORITY & IDENTITY

How Can We Gain More Insights Into Our Identities, And How We Think, Feel, Believe And Act In The World?

- **Where do our identities come from?**

(Stuart Hall, 1993)





STORY 1:

Reflections



WHITE SUPERIORITY & IDENTITY

According to James Baldwin,

- White people are seeking to hold on to their identity, cultivated through the historical lie;
- Black people, on the other hand seek to develop an identity outside of white supremacy and oppression.



SHANKAR VEDANTUM: THE HIDDEN BRAIN WHITE SUPREMACIST OFTEN HIDE THEIR BIASES FROM THEMSELVES



The Mind Of The Village: Understanding Our Implicit Biases

June 20, 2020 • This week on *Hidden Brain*, research about prejudices so deeply buried, we often doubt their existence. We'll begin with police shootings of unarmed Black men. We also look at how biases affect judges.

<https://www.npr.org/series/423302056/hidden-brain>

STORY 2: THE DEEPLY HIDDEN PREJUDICES OF SOME TEACHERS

- Marcus (not his real name) was a 10th grade, African American high school student in a northern California high school. The school population was about 38% Black, 35% Filipino, 10 % LatinX, and smaller percentages of White and Native students...

Reflections:

- Marcus understood how to teach students so they felt respected, so that they found school learning meaningful. When we asked him how we should teach Social Studies, Marcus described critical, culturally responsive and sustaining practice. He was treated as a troublemaker by many of his teachers but he was actually an extraordinary young teacher...

THE ASSOCIATION OF HISTORICAL TRAUMA WITH BIPOC EXPERIENCES OF WHITE SUPREMACY / SUPERIORITY IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS (SEE BUTLER, *HEALING JUSTICE*)

- BIPOC students very often experience horrific, white supremacy-linked, dominant cultural stereotypes (distorted truths/rigid generalizations) when they enter school even though their behavior, at least initially, reflects a valid cultural worldview.
- The verve, expressive individualism and movement of some Black students (Asa Hilliard) are often seen as reflecting a potential for aggression, violence, and threatening behavior.
- BIPOC students responses to such stereotyping include dropping out of school, and/or challenging their teachers in order to hold on to a modicum of self-respect.
- My daughters' stories/Jennifer's story--Examples of cyclical, cultural hegemony leading to internalized white supremacy/superiority. (Chelli & Mayana)

WHITE SUPREMACY CAN PRESENT ITSELF AS NORMAL SCHOOL AND OTHER INSTITUTIONAL PRACTICE AND LEAD TO TRAUMA

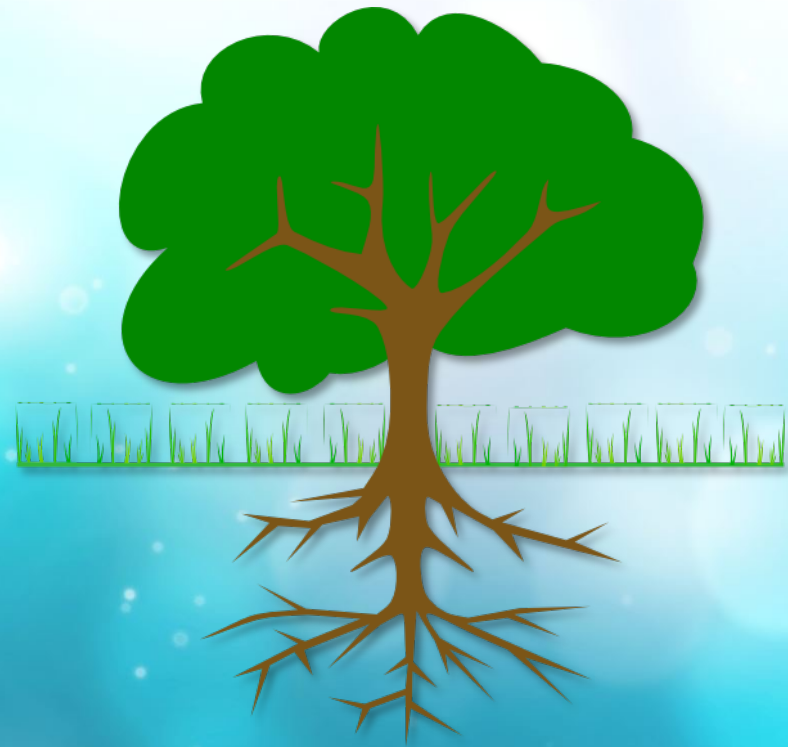
- How do people experience historical trauma
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sjJUQ1odh0g>
- Healing Justice: A film by Shakti Butler
- https://login.ezproxy.lib.uwstout.edu/login?url=https://search.alexanderstreet.com/view/work/bibliographic_entity%7Cvideo_work%7Cmind-mhs-eO37EKarwO?account_id=9255&usage_group_id=109031

BREAKING THE SCHOOL-TO-PRISON PIPELINE

- *Michelle Alexander (2010); Ta-Nehisi Coates (2018)*
- The pipeline begins in classrooms, disproportionately affecting BIPOC.
- Nationally, black students in public schools are suspended or expelled at nearly three times the rate of white students (*Chicago Tribune* analysis of U.S. Department of Education data).
- Nationwide, almost 100,000 children and teens are in custody. Black youths are vastly overrepresented in this population; they are held in custody at four times the rate of white youths (National Council on Crime and Delinquency).
- Cultural hegemony plays a huge role in white supremacy and educational inequities

WHAT IS CULTURAL HEGEMONY?

- The process whereby people in positions of power persuade those in lesser positions that the norms, values and interests, including laws and policies that serve the elite are normal, natural, and common sense.
- For example, the biological fiction of “race” is a hegemonic tool, used to divide and rule population BIPOC/people of color
- Race still divides us and shapes differential experiences in schools today



“BETWEEN THE WORLD & ME” – TA NEHISI COATES

“I came to see the street and the school as arms of the same beast. One enjoyed the official power of the state while the other enjoyed its implicit sanction. But fear and violence were the weaponry of both. Fail in the streets and the crews would catch you slipping and take your body; Fail in the schools and you would be suspended and sent back to those same streets, where they would take your body. And I began to see these two arms in relation—those who failed in the schools justified their destruction in the streets. The society could say, ‘He should have stayed in school and then wash its hands of him.’”

Cultural Hegemony

- Is the process whereby elites “manufacture consent” for their agenda (*Chomsky, 1993*).
- People are unaware that control is being exerted over them. Those in power expend huge efforts to conceal the origins of their power and influence.
- The effectiveness of modern cultural hegemonic strategies may explain in large measure why a more equitable society has not been realized in the U.S. through the efforts of civil rights, social, and educational activists.

WHY IS SOCIAL CHANGE SO HARD TO ACHIEVE? SOME THOUGHTS!

- **The U.S. is the most capitalist that depends on individual commitment to their own interests.**
- **Young people learn to be individualistic, self-interested...**
- **People of color (BIPOC) and poor people have been undervalued for centuries, and social change that benefits BIPOC and poor people has little value for too many white people and people who have bought into white supremacy—resulting in significant historical trauma as we have explored...**

STATEMENT OF NEED!

- We need to challenge “the necrophilic grip of hegemonic schooling” (Darder, 2015, p. 82)

STRATEGIES TO TRANSFORM “THE NECROPHILIC GRIP OF HEGEMONIC SCHOOLING” AND WHITE SUPREMACY

- Cultural Responsive & Sustaining pedagogies
- Critical Questioning
- Life Histories/Cultural Portfolios
- Masks
- Perspective Adjusting: Building Connections Across Ethnicities
- Connecting IDI with the real world
- And much more....

WHAT ARE THE CHARACTERISTICS OF CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE TEACHERS? (RYCHLY & GRAVES)

- Ability to respond to the needs of ALL of the students in the classroom;
- Demonstrate caring and empathy (high expectations);
- Reflective about their beliefs about other cultures (confront the stereotypes we embody);
- Reflective about own cultural frames of reference (world views);
- Knowledgeable about other cultures (learning styles, language, everyday practices, historical experiences, etc.)
- Engage in Scaffolding and working with students in their Zones of Proximal development (ZPDs) - Vygotsky

CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE “CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT” STRATEGIES

- *Recognition of One’s Own Cultural Lens and Biases*
- *Knowledge of Students’ Cultural Backgrounds*
- *Awareness of the Broader, Social, Economic and Political Context*
- *Ability and Willingness to Use Culturally Appropriate Management Strategies*
- *Commitment to Building Caring Classroom Communities*

CULTURALLY SUSTAINING PEDAGOGY?

- “Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy seeks to perpetuate and foster—to sustain—linguistic, literate, and cultural pluralism as part of the democratic project of schooling” (Django Paris. 2012, p. 93).
- Culturally sustaining pedagogy exists wherever education sustains the worldviews and cultural practices of communities who have been and continue to be damaged and erased through schooling. So, CSP explicitly calls for schooling to be a site for sustaining—rather than eradicating—the cultural ways of being of communities of color.

EVEN QUESTIONING IN EDUCATION IS GOVERNED BY WHAT WORKS FOR THE SYSTEM, REPRODUCING WHITE SUPERIORITY/SUPREMACY

1. (Reproductive/hegemonic) How do we fix students so they can be successful in the existing system?
2. (Transformative) How do we transform the schooling system so that students can feel invited and included to engage in critical educational practices for social justice?
3. (Counter-hegemonic) What are the stories that persuade students & faculty to NOT question the inequities in the educational system/to accept the status quo?



TRANSFORMING HARMFUL IDENTITIES THROUGH LIFE HISTORIES

**What are your life stories as you see them?
(With an awareness of cultural hegemony)**

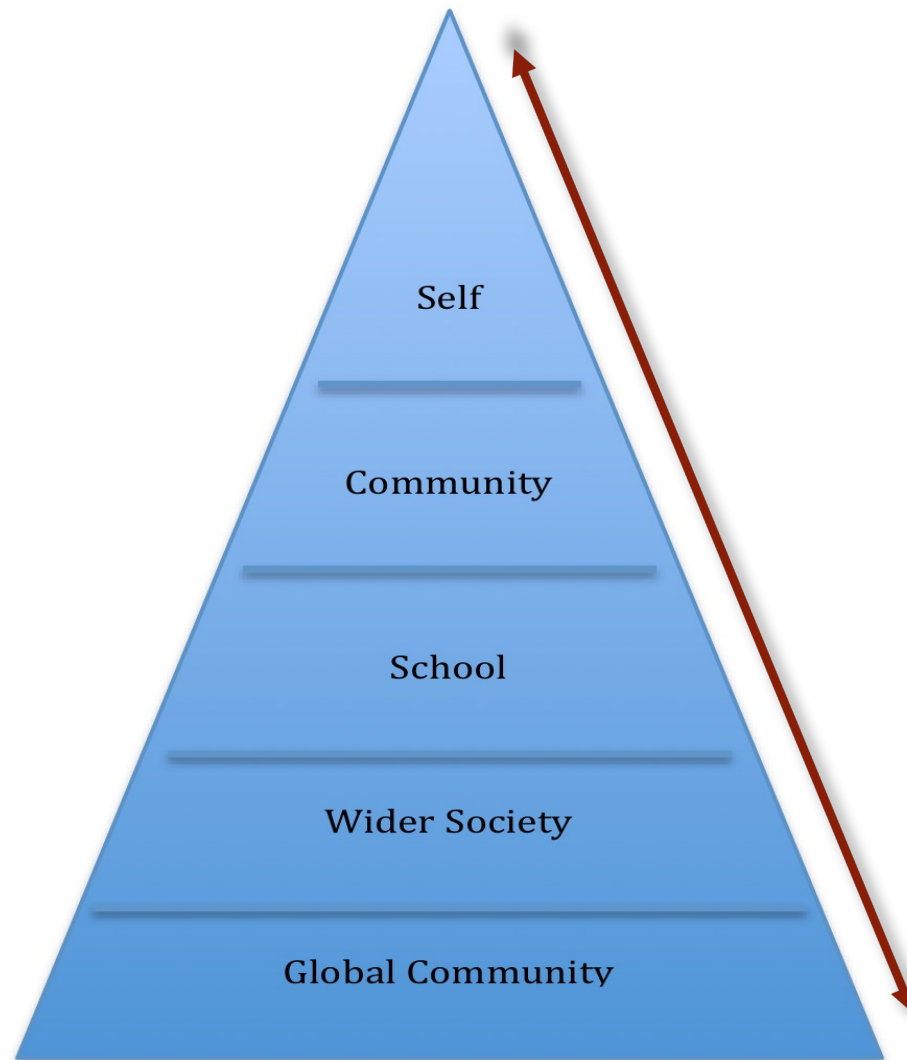
**Look critically at the
contexts of the literacy
events/narratives/
discourses and
archival information
of your life. What do
they tell you about
your own life
story(ies)?**

**Life history:
Embedded in
a system of
social and
cultural
narratives**

**What has been
the impact of
other people's
ideas on your life
story(ies)?**

Addressing White Superiority: Preparing teachers to enact “interconnecting dialogical strategies,”

Model for Developing Critical Cultural Consciousness



CONNECTING IDI WITH THE REAL WORLD

Intercultural Development
Continuum (IDI)
Phyllis Braxton, 2016

Sonia Nieto, 1994



- **Affirmation, Solidarity & Critique**
- **Respect**
- **Acceptance**
- **Tolerance**
- **Monoculturalism**

CONCLUSION

- **There is a huge need for all of us to surmount barriers to social justice in U.S. education through the development of critical multicultural, counter-racist, “dialogical interconnecting strategies”, including**
 - **recognizing our own investment in (soft) white superiority/supremacy--personal and institutional biases and stereotypes;**
 - **recognizing how we have been shaped by hegemonic discourses;**
 - **researching strategies that will help us to better understand the types of white supremacist narratives and school practices and structures that we consider normal but reproduce inequities;**
 - **becoming better aware of the questions we ask since different kinds of questions lead to related responses;**
 - **asking critical questions and engage in critical practices that will lead to social action for social justice. And so much more.....**

QUESTIONS

- How do you think and/or feel that a sense of white superiority plays out, consciously or unconsciously, in your educational practice and that of our institution?
- What are some of the “**dialogical interconnecting strategies**” we should implement to address systemic, white supremacist, cultural hegemonic barriers?