RACIAL SENSITIVITY
From Awareness To Action

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Setting the Tone

• Race and Racism: exceptionally sensitive subjects. Some discomfort is normal – please stay engaged.
• Listen to understand, not to react or refute
• Racial bias awareness – first step
• Important: Commit to taking action
• Not a legal compliance/HR/EOAA training
• Racial bias in society: is a given
• Focus: how do we address systemic racism? Need to move from acknowledging the problem to taking ownership of it
Like so many of you, I’m pained by these recent tragedies. And I’m exhausted by a heartbreak that never seems to stop. Right now it’s George, Breonna, and Ahmaud. Before that it was Eric, Sandra, and Michael. It just goes on, and on, and on. Race and racism is a reality that so many of us grow up learning to just deal with. But if we ever hope to move past it, it can’t just be on people of color to deal with it....
It’s up to all of us—Black, White, everyone—no matter how well-meaning we think we might be, to do the honest, uncomfortable work of rooting it out. It starts with self-examination and listening to those whose lives are different from our own. It ends with justice, compassion, and empathy that manifests in our lives and on our streets. I pray we all have the strength for that journey, just as I pray for the souls and the families of those who were taken from us.”

~Michelle Obama
Academia

- Rigid hierarchical structure
- Opaque decision-making processes; legal orientation
- Leadership: almost entirely White, mostly male
- Elements of power, privilege: dominant groups control the outcome(s) for marginalized groups
- Staggering levels of harassment, second only to the military
- Systemic racism/bias: deeply entrenched in all our processes and procedures
- System designed to protect the people in power
- Very few incidents rise to the top. Tip of the iceberg.
Overt Vs. Covert Racism

**Overt Racism (Socially Unacceptable)**

- KKK
- The N-Word
- Swastikas

**Lynching**

**Hate crimes**

**Racial Slurs**

**10%**

**Mass Incarceration**

**Racial Profiling**

**Police Brutality**

**Presumption of Guilt**

**Implicit bias**

**Redlining**

**Housing Discrimination**

**Hiring Discrimination based on name**

**Racist jokes**

**90%**

**Covert Racism (Socially acceptable)**

© Richard Villodas 2017
Deeply entrenched biases against Blacks in academia
Grieving and frustrated: Black scientists call out racism in the wake of police killings

By Nell Gluckman | JUNE 03, 2020
Key terms and concepts
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- **BIPOC**: Black, Indigenous, and People of Color
- **Black, Native/Indigenous**: large scale/mass trauma and oppression by White people
- **Other POC**: different challenges
  - Asians: perpetual foreigner
  - Hispanic/Latinx: More fluid concept of race
Key terms and concepts

- White Privilege
- White Fragility
- White Comfort
- Colorblind Racism
- Whitesplaining
- Racism Denial

Combined with Implicit Bias:

- Affinity Bias
- Stereotype Threat
- Microaggressions
- Intersectionality
White Privilege

- White Privilege: Systemic advantage/benefit resulting from being White. Examples (Peggy McIntosh):
  - I can go shopping alone most of the time, pretty well assured that I will not be followed or harassed.
  - When I am told about our national heritage or about “civilization” I am shown that people of my color made it what it is.
  - Whether I use checks, credit cards, or cash, I can count on my skin color not to work against the appearance of financial reliability.
White Fragility + White Comfort

• White Fragility: discomfort felt by White people when presented with information on racial injustice. Resentment at possibly being perceived as racist.

• White Comfort: entitlement to an absence of discomfort when talking about race. Wanting to shut down a conversation/ refusing to engage.
Colorblind Racism + Whitesplaining

- Colorblind Racism: “I don’t see color”; “We’re all human”
- Well-intentioned but denies racial reality
- Whitesplaining: Explaining something about racism to a BIPOC, usually perceived as condescending.
  - “I’m sure there’s another explanation”; “Maybe you’re just mistaken”
- Amounts to dismissal or outright denial of racism
Affinity Bias

• Affinity Bias: Very powerful bias, rooted in natural instinct. Easy to perpetuate. “Feels natural”

• Instinctive tendency to prefer people like ourselves

• Babies as young as 6 months – 1 year old show preference for own race

• Not so much about who we harm as whom we try to help

• Not limited to race; can be professional/ personal affiliations; kinship; informal networks

• Mostly White leadership in academia: combination of affinity bias + systemic racism
“Frankly, Dinsdale, we like the look of you”
Racial Stereotypes

- Blacks: “lacking academic brilliance”; “violent”
- Latino/a: “emotional”; “cleaning staff”
- Asians: “perpetual foreigners”; “model minority”
- Native Americans: “gambling”; “uncivilized”
- Absence of stereotyping: example of White privilege
Mass Shootings in the US

Number of mass shootings in the United States between 1982 and December 2019, by shooter's race and ethnicity

- White: 64
- Black: 19
- Latino: 10
- Asian: 8
- Other: 5
- Unknown/unclear: 6
- Native American: 3
Intersectionality

• Coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw
• Multiple marginalized identities = most disadvantaged within society
• Hierarchy within groups:
  • Feminist movement – mostly benefitted White women rather than women of color
  • LGBTQ+ movement – benefited White gay/lesbians
• Different realities: Cisgender, gender conforming, White gay man vs. Black transgender woman
“In 2019 at least 26* transgender or gender nonconforming people were fatally shot or killed by other violent means”

* very likely undercounted

“91% of them were Black women”

~Human Rights Campaign
Reni Eddo Lodge: Intersectionality
“Why I stopped talking to White people about race”

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1SynR1NYcpo
Microaggressions

- Can be intentional or unintentional
- Usually conveys negative meaning, even if well-intentioned, e.g., expressing surprise when BIPOC does well at something
- Checking wallet when a BIPOC passes by
- Following BIPOC around in a store
- Questioning financial reliability of BIPOC
- Not wanting to sit next to BIPOC in a bus/ train/ plane
Examples of Racism
Example 1

• Brent Staples: Black graduate student in Chicago’s Hyde Park in the 1970s.

• Noticed that people avoided him, felt threatened by him. Ladies clutched purses tightly, people crossed the street when they saw him.

• Removed himself from the stereotype.

• Microaggression + Stereotype threat + White comfort

Pic: Brent Staples
Example 2

**‘PATTERN’ OF DISCRIMINATION**

The Ferguson Police Department disproportionately targeted African-Americans for traffic stops, minor infractions and use of force, according to a Justice Department civil rights investigation. The population of Ferguson, Missouri, is 67% African-American.

- **85%**
  - African-Americans accounted for 85% of vehicle stops

- **93%**
  - 93% of people arrested in Ferguson were African-American

- **88%**
  - African-Americans were subjects in 88% of cases involving use of force by police

**SOURCE:** U.S. Justice Department, 2012-2014

Stereotype Threat + Affinity Bias + Systemic Racism

**THE EARTH INSTITUTE**
**COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY**
Example 3

Stereotype Threat + Systemic Racism

Pic: Univ. Missouri
Trigger Warning: The following slide contains information on violence.
George Washington University President:

“What if the majority of the students agreed to shoot all of the black people here? Do I say, ‘Ah, well, the majority voted?’ No.”

Systemic Racism + Microaggression+ Anti Blackness

Pic: George Washington Univ
Common examples in academia

- Potential vs. Actual accomplishment
- “Wouldn’t clear a regular search; maybe we could do a diversity hire?”
- “We shouldn’t look at race or gender; we should just look at merit”
- Double jeopardy – extra scrutiny; “prove it again”
- “Race had nothing to do with it”
- “I want to be neutral here”
Key terms and concepts

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- White Comfort
- Colorblind Racism
- Racism Denial
- Whitesplaining
- White Privilege
- Affinity Bias
- Stereotype Threat
- Microaggressions
- Intersectionality

- All these happen around us simultaneously!
Combined effect? Enormous

“What’s the matter? It’s the same distance!”
Why is this so hard to fix?
Why is this so hard to fix?

• Different lived realities. White people are far less likely to believe/acknowledge racial inequity than BIPOC.
• E.g., Male faculty in STEM tend be more skeptical of gender bias research/evidence than others
• Fundamental disconnect between how BIPOC and White people view race
  • BIPOC: integral part of identity
  • White: incidental
Why is this so hard to fix?

- US College Presidents Survey 2019: Only 25% felt that race relations on US college campuses in general were good.
- 81% felt that race relations on their own campus were good or excellent.
- Shifting the problem: individual, institutional.
- University leadership: More than 80% White.
- People in power – limited understanding of or perceived importance of race/race relations.
- Diversity, equity, inclusion (DEI) work: often not prioritized by dominant groups.
Why is it so hard to talk about racism?
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Why is it so hard to talk about racism?

• Sensitive subject – fear of being implicated
• “Racist” – ultimate insult for White people
• White people: conditioned not to talk about race. Knee-jerk discomfort.
• Fields with dominant White majority: Dismissal of racism
Race Experiment: Talking About Race

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YX-i11lGj5w
Why is it so hard to talk about racism?

- Notion of "Whiteness" has evolved over time
- Italians, Irish, Jewish, Greek – all “became” White
- Each of these groups has known discrimination/oppression
- Marginalized identities extend beyond race (religion, national origin, sexual/gender identity)
- You can still have White privilege while facing other challenges/oppression
- Racism: contradicts concept of meritocracy
Why is it so hard to talk about racism?

- White privilege most associated with: straight, cis-gender, White, Christian (usually male)
- Also the default image of an American. Whiteness = Americanness = Goodness
- Most other groups hyphenated or qualified: African-American, Jewish-American, Muslim-American, LGBTQ
- Anti-darkness/ anti-blackness usually prevails
Why is it so hard to talk about racism?
Why is it so hard to talk about racism?

• Hispanic/Latinx: Language vs geographic region. Significant overlap.
• Race: more fluid concept than “Black” or “White”
• Mixed ancestry: Indigenous, White, Black
• US census: 48% Hispanics identified as White; 2% as Black; 6% as two+ races; 42% as “some other race”
• “Some other race” category: 97% identified as Latinx
• Whiteness: indicator of social and economic status
• Higher income, educated, citizen: more likely to identify as White
Racism, Anti-Blackness, Anti-Darkness

- Racism rooted in anti-blackness; anti-darkness
- Stereotypical Black features = longer criminal sentences
- Lighter skin = more lenient prison sentence

Pic: Thinkstock
Anti-Darkness Bias/ Light Skin Preference
Systemic Racism vs. Prejudice

- Racism: systemic advantage based on race
- Distinguish between individual prejudice vs. systemic racism, i.e. disproportionate advantages that some groups (e.g., Whites) have over others

- Prejudice: happens across ALL groups, not just dominant groups/Whites. Research documents that marginalized groups/BIPOC also hold prejudices.

- Even within marginalized groups: Blacks vs Asians vs Hispanics; even within own groups
Picnic in the park?

- Ijeoma Oluo: Black, queer, female author – “So you want to talk about race”
- Raised in Seattle – mostly White environment
- Found Facebook group for people of color, felt like she finally found people she could relate to
- Went for a picnic in the park
- Everyone having a lovely time until...
Examples closer home...
Closer Home...

- Our own academic communities, racism rampant
- BIPOC don’t feel comfortable discussing race with White colleagues.
- Some overt examples:
  - Faculty House:
  - Security guard(s):
  - Climbing stairs:
  - Conference:
- More subtle examples – numerous, everyday. Don’t rise to the tip of the iceberg, but damaging all the same.
Closer Home...

- Subtle but pervasive, damaging, repeated examples:
- Asked, “Are you lost?”
- Asked, “Do you have an appointment?”
- Biracial person told, “You’re not really Black”
- Black person made a suggestion during a group meeting; was ignored. White person made same suggestion - was acknowledged/praised.
- Black individuals frequently mistaken for each other
- “I feel othered here. Like I don’t belong here but just a space I am occupying”
Robin DiAngelo
“Debunking common myths about racism”

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wjHg65JORi8
So what can we do?
So what can we do?

• Needs to be addressed on three levels:
  • Individual level
  • Departmental/unit/center level
  • Institutional level
So what can we do?

- Individual level:
- Accept that we are not objective, but subjective and not free from bias.
- Separate one’s identity as White person from identity as good person
- Racism: systemic advantage, not a character defect
- Do a reality check with yourself: what have you actually done to combat racism?
So what can we do?

- Individual level:
- Black community (especially Black women) hit by double whammy of Covid and social/racial injustice.
- How are we showing up for our BIPOC colleagues? Are we supporting them in a meaningful way?
- How do we talk about racism in a way that makes BIPOC feel seen and heard?
- Black Lives Matter vs. All Lives Matter
So what can we do?

• Individual level:
  • Look below the surface, into the deeper layers to better understand context
  • Generational gap – give people the benefit of the doubt
  • When invited to speak on a panel, ask for the panel composition and ask how many BIPOC are on it. Ask to know what efforts were made to invite BIPOC.
So what can we do?

• Individual level:
  
  • Talk to colleagues about race. If you’re uncomfortable, start with talking to people of your own race.
  
  • Acknowledge your implicit biases and try to consciously work on them. This is an ongoing process.
  
  • Avoid putting minorities on the spot. Just like there is no single White opinion on race, there is no single Black or Native or Latinx or Asian opinion on race.
Move from fear to learning to growth zone

- **Fear Zone**
  - I identify how I may unknowingly benefit from Racism.
  - I recognize racism is a present & current problem.
  - I deny racism is a problem.
  - I avoid hard questions.
  - I sit with my discomfort.
  - I speak out when I see Racism in action.
  - I talk to others who look & think like me.
  - I am vulnerable about my own biases & knowledge gaps.
  - I listen to others who think & look differently than me.
  - I surround myself with others who think & look differently than me.

- **Learning Zone**
  - I seek out questions that make me uncomfortable.
  - I understand my own privilege in ignoring racism.
  - I educate myself about race & structural racism.
  - I educate my peers how Racism harms our profession.
  - I strive to be comfortable.
  - I listen to others who think & look differently than me.
  - I yield positions of power to those otherwise marginalized.

- **Growth Zone**
  - I promote & advocate for policies & leaders that are Anti-Racist.
  - I understand my own privilege in ignoring racism.
  - I don’t let mistakes deter me from being better.
  - www.SurgeryRedesign.com
So what can we do?

• Departmental/unit/center level:
• Develop DEI action plan
• Do a salary equity study – share results with unit
• Invite students, postdocs, junior staff, admin to the table
• Diversity advocates on search committees
• Real acknowledgement of DEI work:
  • Revise promotion criteria to include DEI work. Main focus on publications; funding; classes taught; student evaluations; etc.
  • Compensation for DEI work wherever possible
So what can we do?

- Departmental/unit/center level:
  - Make a list of all the activities of your office/unit. How to incorporate anti-racism in each of those activities?
  - Education/outreach; interacting with donors; group meetings; assigning tasks; inviting speakers; organizing events
  - EI survey results – use to kickstart DEI efforts at your unit/center
  - Very close link between academic affairs and DEI
So what can we do?

• Institutional level:
• Appoint BIPOC to leadership positions
• Very senior leadership in most universities (e.g., President’s cabinet) almost entirely White. Need to acknowledge racial identities, not ignore them.
• Offices like OGC; EOAA; HR; Title IX: typically operate from a legal compliance standpoint. You should aim to rise above it and prioritize morality and antiracism.
• Remember: recent incidents are a symbol for and trigger of a much deeper pain, of old and new wounds
WHITE FRAGILITY
WHY IT'S SO HARD FOR WHITE PEOPLE TO TALK ABOUT RACISM
ROBIN DIANGELO
FOREWORD BY MICHAEL ERIC DYSON

SO YOU WANT TO TALK ABOUT RACISM
IJEOMA OLUO

RACISTS RACISM
COLOR-BLIND RACISM AND THE PERSISTENCE OF RACIAL INEQUALITY IN AMERICA
EDUARDO BONILLA-SILVA
READ BY SEAN CRISDEN

WHISTLING VIVALDI AND OTHER CLUES TO HOW STEREOTYPES AFFECT US
CLAUDE M. STEELE

BLINDSPOT
HIDDEN BIASES OF GOOD PEOPLE
MAHZARIN R. BANAJI
ANTHONY G. GREENWALD

RACE TALK AND THE CONSPIRACY OF SILENCE
DERALD WING SUE
UNDERSTANDING AND FACILITATING DIFFICULT DIALOGUES ON RACE
WILEY
Take the Implicit Association Test:
https://implicit.harvard.edu
White Silence
White Silence

• White silence: sensitive and deeply painful subject

• White people typically unaware how painful the subject is

• Perceived by BIPOC as lack of caring from White people and/or complicity in White supremacy

Pic: Usagag.com
“History will have to record that the greatest tragedy of this period of social transition was not the strident clamor of the bad people, but the appalling silence of the good people.”

—Martin Luther King, Jr., “Stride Toward Freedom: The Montgomery Story” (1958)
Thank You

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