

Module Four and Five Reflection

Dysconscious racism seems to have been first defined by Joyce King (1991). In her studies on racism, King found that racism can exist on a conscious level, it can exist in an unconscious level (or perhaps better put, subconscious level), but a dysconscious level is defined as a distorted version of reality that insulates self-fulfilling prophecies and allows for White Privilege. So, in the author's own words dysconscious racism is overt and explicit racism used to paint a picture of what a person is not. This is important because some definitions of culture include land where something is cultivated, in this case what is cultivated is self-identity. Using this definition, one can also use things that are not cultivated to indicate what type of identity they have. On the superficial level this is skin color, but it may also include religion, written and verbal languages, sexual orientation, country of origin, age expectations, gender roles, and others. Philip Jackson's "Hidden Curriculum" indicates that all students are hungry for power and praise (affirmation) this means that to be the apex student, one has to successfully and consistently maintain access to these two things. Much like research on English Language Learners (ELLs) and how adoption of ELL programs threatens the majority culture, access to classes in which power and prestige is increased is fiercely guarded because of concepts like White Privilege – that is – if access were equitable and power and prestige was shared, there would be no purposeful privilege, simply access for all or perhaps access for the best of all, regardless of demographic factors. In one of the author's experiences in trying to address the Achievement Gap at a Southeastern Washington State high school a team of teacher-leaders examined certain elements of dysconscious racism within their school. It was apparent that certain structures existed simply as status quo or as routine and that they had not been updated simply because "that's the way it's always been." For example, the team noticed that Mexican-Americans were underrepresented in associated student body offices, extracurricular activities, interscholastic teams, and high prestige classifications like Advanced Placement (AP) or College Preparatory (CP) classes. Simple analyses indicated that these students simply did not want to be involved, but when polled it was found that these students were not involved for a several reasons, motivation to be involved was just one of those explanations.

Analysis of how power and prestige play out in the classroom Richert (2012) describes several factors that teachers face in urban settings. In a multicultural society, one of the most difficult challenges is to be culturally ambiguous; after all, the teacher has a culture too. Teacher-student relationships, teacher style, and even curriculum emphases are all important concepts to acknowledge when trying to create equitability in a classroom. Over emphasis of one culture might alienate others. Avoiding a culture or minimizing it might ostracize members of that culture. Engaging in Jackson's delay, ignore, suspend tactic will create mistrust between the student and the teacher that can easily be blamed on culture even though that may not be the case. Teachers of all students, not just those in the inner-city as Richert highlights must skillfully use tactics and look for opportunities to recognize a multitude of cultures and all of the different aspects of culture -- racial, religious, ethnic, sexual orientation, gender identity, and countless others. Basically stated, if a student can blame lack of access to power, prestige, and eventually wealth on culture then a purposefully ignorant person will.

One way to address cultural conflict is to institute the colorblind perspective. The colorblind perspective indicates that teachers and other adults should treat students as students with no culture or to minimize the culture of a student. The researcher disagrees with this approach. Teachers do not create ELL programs, they do not code people as migrant, they do not adopt curriculums, they simply supervise,

implement, instruct, and assess students. Skilled teachers use differing techniques for planning and delivery in order to reach more students and some are even careful with saying biased things, but there is no way to teach multi-cultural education by pretending different cultures are not there and not valuable. Essentially, educators need to recognize that students want prestige and power, these concepts are truly colorblind in their existence; but, may assume a certain color-bias in the practice of attaining them. Instead of saying culture is not relevant or does not exist, educators should create a school culture and even classroom culture of empowerment. Teachers and administrators can then recognize that only by defining new layers of culture based on learning and achieving which are a part of the students dominate and overarching culture.

Knowledge as a social construction is powerful because it gets beyond primal reaction or animal instinct. This instinct, depending on one's belief, is rooted either in evolution or what it is to be a human. So, the friend versus foe instinct gives humans the ability to decide who aligns more closely to him or her, if he or she take the converse, it encourages individuals or (some would argue) requires individuals to identify anyone who looks or acts different than self as enemy. As humans, individuals can avoid relying on instinct because he or she are able to think and to avoid gut reactions. So, if the friend versus foe instinct actually exists individuals can say that dysconscious racism may be part of that concept – a reality that does not exist or that has been analyzed poorly – inasmuch as day to day life for most humans is not a kill or be killed situation. One paradigm that might be argued as being parallel to kill or be killed is access to experiences attached to status, power, and eventually wealth. If this is the case, then by defining what types of cultures are expected to have access to certain experiences cultures and subcultures are also building mechanisms that create exclusivity to these experiences. It is possible to say a team only wants the best athletes on the football team, but then the student-athlete is required to pay \$350 for football camp, \$250 for individual football gear (cleats, gloves, undergarments), spirit packs for \$100, and \$500 in fundraising. Even though communities say and often believe everyone can try out for football, by the time student-athletes are Sophomores or Juniors a team has an idea of who the best is simply by who made all of the financial commitments. A similar paradigm can be used for AP classes and mastery of the English Language. It is obvious that to be successful in AP classes a student needs above average to excellent skills in the English language (reading, writing, speaking, and listening). A student can develop these skills by being in high capability English classes (often called Honors). Tracking for these classes tends to occur in the late elementary or in the middle grades. By the time students are juniors the honors kids and the others are often separated into two distinct groups of students. A different analysis of language might show that the lowest performing students are in ELL classes or bi-lingual classes and that they are in that class because they are low performing. The author has taught bi-lingual classes and can say that these students are as intelligent as any similar age-level class of students, but as early as 7th grade their paths to higher education are stymied because it's hard for these students to test out of their reading enrichment and/or intervention classes, most of these students will probably be left behind by a structure that placed the student there during their 6th to 8th year in public education. When all of the opportunities for resume-building in college occur, these students are left without motivation, credentials, or invitation to participate. The vicious cycle continues for many of these students in their lives after high school and for the children of these students.

Lesbian, Gay, Bi-Sexual, Transsexual, and Queer (LGBTQ) community seems to be a new thing in schools. As a trained historian, the author views things a bit different. Homosexual figures have been relevant to history since the study of history began. For much of the 20th century being identified as homosexual or involved in a lifestyle that might lead to behaviors termed as “odd” has been taboo for both students and teachers. Above all, one of the biggest thing that needs to be challenged is that LGBTQ people are not purposely acting in a way to be perceived as “abnormal” nor are they trying to disrupt the

“norms” of the people they are around or society they are in. Sure, there may be homosexuals who challenge people in an abrasive manner, but many multimedia portrayals and educational support material have indicated, many members of the LGBTQ community does not need to speak for, be judged by, or affiliated with these people because of commonalities in lifestyle nor affiliations with an acronym. Some people find it “easy” to exist within microaggressions towards people who live differently than them, this is probably based on the concept of privilege. Because one group needs not be concerned with how society feels about them or systems of accountability that do not exist for popular sentiment, it is okay for the dominant group, under the insulation of the tyranny of the majority to broadcast their views on others, make judgements about the choices and behaviors of others, and to extrapolate differences to the point of hatred. When confronted about this, a historian may tell the story of the Spartans and Thermopylae and the brave stand made by the Spartan-led Greeks. At the apex of the story as the Persians are about to overrun the Spartans, the historian asks the listener, “What if I told you that most Spartans were at least bi-sexual by today’s definition?” If subgroups as an entire group can focus on the achievements for the greater good while mentioning matter-of-fact knowledge most reasonable people can at least tolerate a different lifestyle than their own.

This was a rather large module to dissect. The class discussed more information about White Privilege, students ingested what it must feel like to live in a reality that is not shared by everyone and that the privilege we see as “normal” is “abnormal” because it has to be veiled in explanation. All of these subtle ways of excusing racism fit into categories of microaggressions because they do not let us discuss how and why an oppressed person feels the way they do. American society laughs at talk of reparations, it can call heartfelt movies or plays uncomfortable, many heterosexual Americans have heard music by gay artists and some people even say the lyrics are beautiful, but..., essentially, Americans say they appreciate certain things simply because they know that it is better if they say they do. This is the epitome of multicultural education, not to say being multicultural is okay because teachers are teaching it, it’s to define objectives, to stick to those objectives, to reflect on strengths and weaknesses for continued improvement, and to truly learn the complexities that create the collective identity of a multicultural society.

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