WHITE PRIVILEGE & WHITE FAMILIES: A PRIMER ON INTERSECTIONALITY, REFLEXIVITY, AND SHIFTING THE CENTER

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The Problem

- White Privilege → "invisible" systematic privileging of some (white majority culture) at the expense of the rest
- Socially structured and regulated—not an individual problem, no one person to blame
- Any systemic privilege → Unearned advantage
- Social inequality

- How do we unpack this together?

From Othering to Connecting

- Who has experienced marginalization?
- Who has been othered, dominated, marginalized?
  - What social characteristics or social location variables have led to being othered?
  - See matrix of privilege, domination, and oppression (next slide)
- Who has experienced institutional betrayal and trauma?
- What does this feel like, look like?

Intersecting Axes of Privilege, Domination, and Opression

Adapted from Kathryn Pauly Morgan, "Describing the Emperor's New Clothes: Three Myths of Educational (In)Equalty."
The Gender Question in Education: Theory, Pedagogy & Politics, Ann Diller et al., Boulder, CO: Westview, 1996.
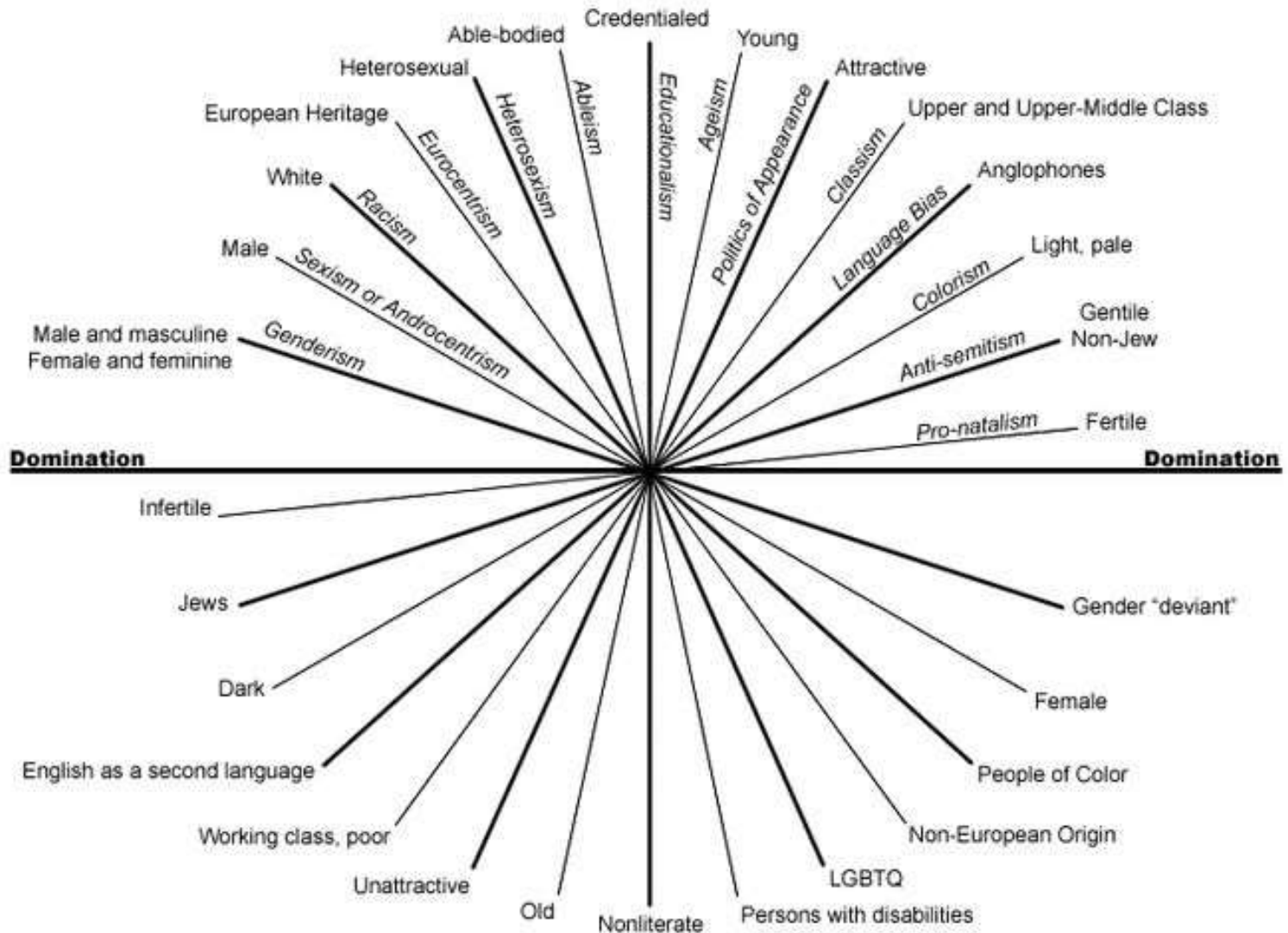
Our Collective Work

- Seeing and acknowledging intersectionalities of privilege, domination, and oppression
- Recognizing our connectedness
- Shifting the center
- Challenging existing frameworks
- Processing—Developing reflexive praxis
- Building a collective response—Partnerships!
- Taking "ecosystemic" action

The Work: Shifting the Center

- Shifting the center is critical to studying the intersections of race, class, and gender (among other variables) in ways that transform existing social arrangements

- It means including voices that have been unheard or silenced because those voices were from the nondominant group or were marginalized in our social world

- Knowledge and understanding of our society has been constructed by those in power…because they have had the most access to systems of education and communication

- Our justice-based work includes reconstructing what we know to include those perspectives and lived experiences that have not been heard or understood or have been silenced and marginalized…

The Work: Challenging Existing Frameworks

Frameworks of Diversity, Difference and Multiculturalism (Anderson & Hill Collins, 2012)

- Diversity = implies that understanding race, class, and gender/sexuality is simply a matter of recognizing the plurality of views and experiences in society

- R/C/G → benign categories that foster diverse experiences

- Ignores systems of POWER that produce, reproduce and sustain social inequalities

Frameworks of Diversity, Difference and Multiculturalism

- Difference = fosters comparative thinking, but comparative thinking alone can leave intact the power relations that create R/C/G relations
  - Who is the comparison group of "normals"
  - Comparison group = stigmatizes those who are labeled as "different"
- Deficit based approach
- Fosters dichotomous "either/or" thinking
- Those who are different routinely form the subordinate side of the dichotomy

(Anderson & Hill Collins, 2012)

Frameworks of Diversity, Difference and Multiculturalism

- Difference also foster "additive model" thinking
  - terms like "double" or "triple" jeopardy…
    - within this logic, poor African American women seemingly experience a triple oppression of R/C/G
  - produces a hierarchy of difference that reinstalls those who are additively privileged at the top and those who are additively oppressed at the bottom
  - While experiences of R/C/G do add up, we must understand the ways in which different configurations of R/C/G affect individual/group experiences…

(Anderson & Hill Collins, 2012)

Frameworks of Diversity, Difference and Multiculturalism

- Multiculturalism = focuses thinking on cultural experiences alone (Anderson & Hill Collins, 2012)
  - However, we must consider different cultures within the broader social structural contexts…
  - Understand how one's culture is situated in larger systems of power and privilege
  - Rather than thinking comparatively across cultures → **think "relationally"**
    - Relational thinking involves seeing the interrelationships within/among diverse groups
    - Untangling the workings of social systems that shape experiences of different people and groups…while seeing commonalities and connections

Race, Class & Gender: Fundamental Axes of Society

- R/C/G are linked experiences…no one of which is more important than the others

- Each is socially constructed

  - Groups constructed as binary opposites: Black/White, rich/poor, man/woman, thereby creating the **otherness** we all experience

Race, Class & Gender: Fundamental Axes of Society

- R/C/G: categories of individual and group identity but they are also social structures
  - R/C/G not just about identity but also about **group location in a system of stratification and institutional forms**
  - critical to study social patterns in the labor market, health care, education, family structures, institutions (govt), media...
- R/C/G are not fixed categories.
  - B/C they are social constructions, change over time.
  - **BUT this means social change is possible!**

NEW FRAME: Intersectionality

- Can utilize a matrix of domination to analyze R/C/G (Anderson & Hill Collins, 2012)
  - Matrix posits multiple interlocking levels of domination that stem from the societal configuration of R/C/G relations
  - Structural pattern affects individual consciousness, group interaction, and group access to institutional power and privileges
- **Emphasis is on social structures…and individual change agency**

Intersectionality Framework

- Studying interconnections among R/C/G within a context of structural power helps understand group experiences (Crenshaw, 1989)

- The intersections of R/C/G as institutional systems have had a special impact on US historically and to the present

  - Historically, the capitalist class have routinely privileged or penalized groups on the basis of race or gender/sexuality

  - These categories have been important sources of prejudice and <u>have been consistently codified in US laws</u>

    - Abolitionist movement, trade unionism, women's suffrage, the civil rights movement all exemplify how US has been shaped by R/C/G systems…

Intersectionality Framework

Intersectionality aims to transform knowledge so that it is more inclusive, comprehensive, complex and fair, thereby fostering social justice and equality

Recognizes that our lives are structured and regulated by social systems….

See: http://socialdifference.columbia.edu/files/socialdiff/projects/Article__ Mapping_the_Margins_by_Kimblere_Crenshaw.pdf

White Privilege

- The social construction and institutionalization of R/C/G → White privilege and supremacy
  - **Unearned Privilege …skin color privilege… Unearned entitlement…Unearned advantage…Unearned domination**
- Myth of Meritocracy= the myth that the system distributes resources—especially wealth and income—according to the merit of individuals, irrespective of R/C/G...
  - The myth that democratic choice is equally available to all
  - Assumes systems are fair/just…If you fail, individual failing…

(McNamee & Miller, 2009)

Intersecting Axes of Privilege, Domination, and Opression

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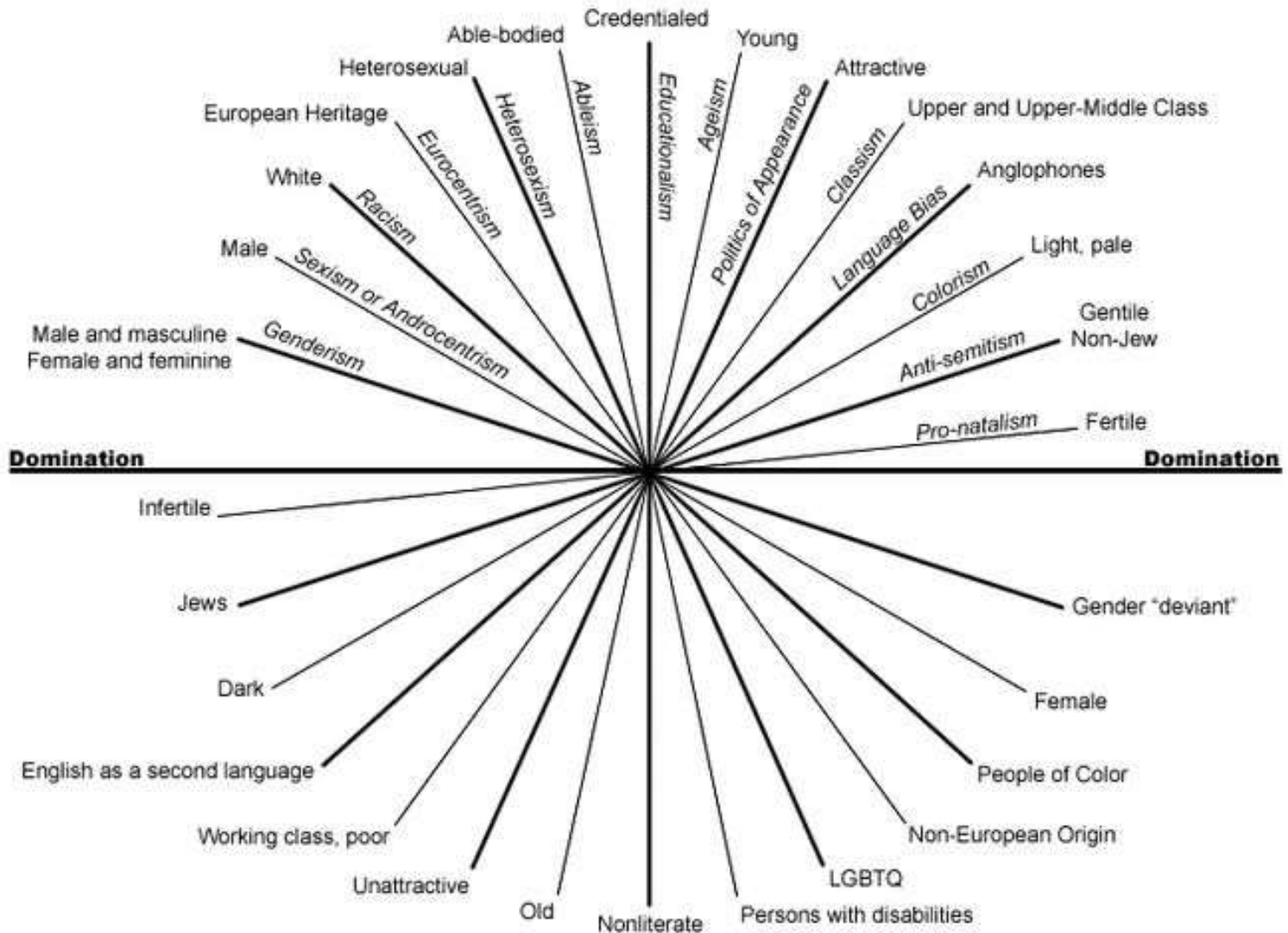
From Othering to Connecting

- Failure to recognize White privilege allows members of the majority culture to "other" and marginalize individuals/groups
    - Rich history: e.g., Women's Movement…
- Recognizing social location within the matrix of domination → allows us to build connections and common cause

Intersectionality and Reflexivity

- Examining social location based on R/C/G
  - Situating self/others within social structural systems of power and privilege
- Recognizing "standpoint epistemology"
- Deconstructing "knowings"
- Seeing "stuckness"…getting unstuck…

The Work: Critical Self-Reflexivity

- Reflexive process: 'Expert' knowledge about reality questioned
  - Objectivism = assumes development of value-free knowledge and practice possible
  - Objective knowledge = the 'rational' standard against which all other forms of knowledge and practice are judged
  - Our view of reality and explanations/accuracy of that reality taken for granted as the "right" way of knowing

- Reflexivity questions existence of objective reality/knowledge
  - Recognizes that we construct the world and our knowledge of the world based on majority theoretical assumptions
  - These assumptions have a major influence on intellectual/social practice → form the basis for defining, judging, and valuing others

Defining Reflexivity

- **Reflexivity is not reflection**

- Reflection (Cunliffe & Jun, 2005):

"This means an objective observer reflecting on a situation to understand what is really going on and to develop theories to explain that reality. In this way, calculative thinking aims at closure and categorization as a means of understanding objects and situations—a form of thinking that does not question the assumptions underlying actions."

Defining Reflexivity

- **Reflexivity is not reflection**
- Reflexivity (Cunliffe & Jun, 2005):

"This does not mean developing an accurate description of reality, rather emptying ourselves of acceptable ways of thinking and opening ourselves to other possibilities. In particular, it means engaging in the reflexive act of questioning the basis of our thinking, surfacing the taken-for-granted rules underlying organizational decisions, and examining critically our own practices and ways of relating with others."

Critical Self-Reflexivity

- Pollner (1991) describes radical reflexivity as "an 'unsettling,' i.e., an insecurity regarding the basic assumptions, discourse and practices used in describing reality"

- Reflexivity incorporates a critical examination of past and present, of what passes as 'good' knowledge and practice, and how this influences our ways of knowing/practicing

Critical Self-Reflexivity

- Self-reflexivity: the process of exercising critical consciousness

- It is a process that depends on the idea of a transforming self, continuously emerging and changing as we interact with others, the environment, and the public

- Self-reflexivity is a "dialogue with the self" about its fundamental assumptions and values

- Through this radical process of critiquing our beliefs and ideologies we remain open to change

(Pollner, 1991)

On Reflexivity (Cunliffe & Jun, 2005)

- Our reflexive practice =
  - recognizes the ambivalence in our lives
  - questions social constructions and how we construct our ways of being in the world
- "Critical approaches to reflexivity draw from critical theory, poststructural, and postmodern commitments to open debate on the philosophical and ideological suppositions underlying texts and to problematize language, truth claims, and universal explanations."
- "Critical reflexivity means unsettling the assumptions underlying theoretical, moral, and ideological positions as a basis for thinking more critically about academic, organizational, and social policies and practice."

On Reflexivity (Cunliffe & Jun, 2005)

- Process of transforming the self, changing systems
- Dialogue with self about fundamental assumptions, values, ways of interacting and knowing.
- Ethical implications
- Postmodern and poststructural approaches focus on a critique of language, knowledge, ideology, power
  - Question hegemonic practices and policies…and their intended and unintended consequences…
  - Critique of othering and oppositional logic
    - Good versus evil, male versus female, black versus white, organization versus disorganization

The Work: Cultural Humility

- **Cultural humility** is one construct for understanding and developing a process-oriented approach to competency. Hook, Davis, Owen, Worthington and Utsey (2013) conceptualize cultural humility as the "ability to maintain an interpersonal stance that is other-oriented (or open to the other) in relation to aspects of cultural identity that are most important to the [person]" (p. 2).

- Commit **to self-evaluation and self-critique** (Tervalon & Murray-Garcia, 1998).

- Desire to **fix power imbalances** where none ought to exist (Tervalon & Murray-Garcia, 1998).

- D**evelop partnerships with people and groups who advocate for others**(Tervalon & Murray-Garcia, 1998).

- http://www.apa.org/pi/families/resources/newsletter/2013/08/cultural-humility.aspx

The Work: Redressing White Privilege

- Acknowledge White Privilege exists and is a problem in need of a solution

- Engage the self in a reflexive process of transformation
  - Locate self on Matrix of Domination and Privilege
  - Locate structural inequalities that perpetuate WP

- Reconstruct knowledge

- ****Seek to change self/systems of power/privilege rather than seek to change those marginalized and oppressed by systems of power****

From Challenge → To Opportunity

Being Stuck: Getting unstuck

- Guilt, shame, judgment: Create Gracious Space

- Criticism: Generate compassion, empathy, and cultural humility

- Power: Share power and develop mutuality

- Control: Allow for vulnerability; Lead by being led

- Aloneness and disconnection: **Build bridges, foster partnerships, seek help, grow supports, connect, be an ally, take action**

- Status quo: You must be the change you wish to see in the world –Ghandi

Resources

CREATE: Gracious Space

http://www.ethicalleadership.org/gracious-space.html

WATCH: Chimamanda Adichie

https://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda_adichie_the_danger_of_a_single_story?language=en

LISTEN: "Seeing White" Podcast

http://podcast.cdsporch.org/seeing-white/

Resources

□ Implicit Bias

http://kirwaninstitute.osu.edu/research/understanding-implicit-bias/

http://kirwaninstitute.osu.edu/the-dos-and-donts-of-talking-to-kids-of-color-about-white-supremacy/

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