Whiteness in Leadership and Organizations:
Partial Slides from the Presentation June 13, 2019

Teresa J. Rothausen, Ph.D.

Professor of Management
Susan E. Heckler Endowed Chair in Principled Leadership
John Ireland Scholar
Opus College of Business
University of St. Thomas-Minnesota
&
Harvard Divinity School
Studying Moral and Ethical Development of Leaders Across Wisdom Traditions

© Teresa J. Rothausen
The air around us is our water…
and so are the social systems…

…and so is how we think about leadership in our organizations, and how organizations are managed.
I googled “pictures of leaders”
Who gets messages they can be a leader?
I googled "pictures of superheros"
Why I cried through the fight scenes in 'Wonder Woman'

By MEREDITH WOERNER

JUN 05, 2017 | 4:00 AM
Black Superheroes Matter: Why a 'Black Panther' Movie Is Revolutionary

How Marvel’s investment in a stand-alone movie for Wakanda’s king signals a new era for black superheroes – and superhero movies at large

By Tre Johnson
Fish did not discover water. In fact, because they are completely immersed in it, they live unaware of its existence. Similarly, when a conduct is normalized by a dominant cultural environment, it becomes invisible.

Marshall McLuhan
HUMAN DIVERSITY IN OUR CULTURE

This “race” is not biologically real.

This is a model of diversity. The model depicts dimensions of human diversity in organizations/workplaces.

Each dimension had categories.

Each category acquires meaning within specific contexts.

A social identity consists of our intersections (or combinations) of categories, which are often core to self.

This “race” has been socially constructed and affects us 24/7.

Treatment is conscious and subconscious, and can come from unexamined white privilege and whiteness.

Social identities impact how people are treated in society in patterned ways.

This “race” is

- Black / African American
- Asian / Asian American
- **White** / European American
- Native American
- Biracial
- Multiracial

- Hispanic
- Non-Hispanic

- Black / African American
- Asian / Asian American
- **White** / European American
- Native American
- Biracial
- Multiracial

• Hispanic
• Non-Hispanic

- Black / African American
- Asian / Asian American
- **White** / European American
- Native American
- Biracial
- Multiracial

• Hispanic
• Non-Hispanic

This “race” is not biologically real.

This is a model of diversity. The model depicts dimensions of human diversity in organizations/workplaces.

Each dimension had categories.

Each category acquires meaning within specific contexts.

A social identity consists of our intersections (or combinations) of categories, which are often core to self.
So…what is “Whiteness”? Part 1

Classic list of how white people enjoy privilege in America (These are “in our knapsack”; Peggy McIntosh; 1st 11 of 50)

1. I can if I wish arrange to be in the company of people of my race most of the time.
2. I can avoid spending time with people whom I was trained to mistrust and who have learned to mistrust my kind or me.
3. If I should need to move, I can be pretty sure of renting or purchasing housing in an area which I can afford and in which I would want to live.
4. I can be pretty sure that my neighbors in such a location will be neutral or pleasant to me.
5. I can go shopping alone most of the time, pretty well assured that I will not be followed or harassed.
6. I can turn on the television or open to the front page of the paper and see people of my race widely represented.
7. When I am told about our national heritage or about "civilization," I am shown that people of my color made it what it is.
8. I can be sure that my children will be given curricular materials that testify to the existence of their race.
9. If I want to, I can be pretty sure of finding a publisher for this piece on white privilege.
10. I can be pretty sure of having my voice heard in a group in which I am the only member of my race.
11. I can be casual about whether or not to listen to another person's voice in a group in which s/he is the only member of his/her race.
How did it come to be?  I. Legislated / Ruled

Just a few examples (from an article that lists more than 100):
• Naturalization Act of 1790: Citizenship restricted to “free Whites.”
• Civilization Act of 1819: Assimilates First Nation peoples and systematically attempts to destroy culture.
• Indian Removal Act of 1830: Claims lands east of Mississippi.
• 1864 13th Amendment abolishes slavery
• 1866 Civil Rights Act
• 1878/1882 supreme court rules Chinese Americans cannot have citizenship / Chinese Exclusion Act
• 1923 supreme court rules Japanese man is not White despite having skin lighter than many Whites
How did it come to be? 2. Violence on our behalf, excused or ignored or condoned

Just a few examples (from an article that lists over 100):

- 1849: The Hounds, a white vigilante group in San Francisco, attacks a Chilean mining community, raping women, burning houses, and murdering two men.
- 1859: White abolitionist John Brown leads raid on Harper’s Ferry arsenal to get weapons for arming slaves to resist; tried for treason and hanged.
- 1871: White mob in Los Angeles attacks Chinese community, killing 19 and destroying the community. 1882-1990: 3,011 recorded lynchings of African Americans in the south and north.
- 1913: Jewish man accused of rape of White girl lynched in Georgia.
- 1955: 14 year old Emmett Till is kidnapped, brutally beaten, shot and killed for allegedly whistling at a White woman.
- 1965 Bloody Sunday voting rights activists whipped and clubbed.
How *did it come to be?* 3. Misinformation as “History”

Just one example:

Whitewashing Black History
How did it come to be? 4. History, Stories, and Myths → Leadership

ZEUS

How much stronger and more innovative would a diverse leadership team be?
Who gets messages they can be in a “leadership role”?
So…what is “Whiteness”? Part II

“A term to capture all of the dynamics that go into being defined and/or perceived as white and that create and reinforce white people as inherently superior through society’s norms, traditions, and institutions. Whiteness grants material, (social), and psychological advantages that are often invisible and taken for granted by whites.”

DiAngelo (2016: 356 (my adaptation))
And some related terms

**White Identity**
To be socialized as a white person, enact whiteness by implicitly and explicitly upholding racism and white supremacy, and participate in the rewards of being perceived as white.

**White Solidarity**
The unspoken agreement between whites to maintain silence, not challenge each other, keep each other comfortable, and generally maintain the racists status quo and protect white privilege.

DiAngelo (2016: 356)
Whiteness / White Identity / White Solidarity / White Fragility:
It’s a lot

How do you feel?
What are some common (conscious and unconscious) responses of White people in hearing about and dealing with racism?

### 7 Stages of Grief
(Modified Kubler-Ross Model)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Shock*</td>
<td>Initial paralysis at hearing the bad news.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denial</td>
<td>Trying to avoid the inevitable.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anger</td>
<td>Frustrated outpouring of bottled-up emotion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bargaining</td>
<td>Seeking in vain for a way out.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Depression</td>
<td>Final realization of the inevitable.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Testing*</td>
<td>Seeking realistic solutions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acceptance</td>
<td>Finally finding the way forward.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* This model is extended slightly from the original Kubler-Ross model, which does not explicitly include the Shock and Testing stages. These stages however are often useful to understand and to facilitate change.
What are some common (conscious and unconscious) responses of White people in hearing about and dealing with racism?

- Denial
- Superiority (let me help them be more like us)
- Entitlement (I’ve worked hard for what I have)
- Focus on own oppression (but that’s happened to me too)
- Empathic bias (oh you poor things!)
- Prove intentions (expect accolades or but I’m a good white person!)
- Blame the victim (if you didn’t do x or y…)
- Resist (passive or active)

- Discomfort
- Fear
- Guilt
- Shame
- Shock
- Empathy (be aware pitfalls)
- Confusion (cognitive dissonance)
- Regret
- Helplessness
“What can white people / leaders do?”

• First comes Self- and Other- AWARENESS, for example:
  • Identity, personal privilege and benefit from racism, purging guilt
  • Oppression and unconscious complicity
  • Education, education, education (check your sources)
  • Start to notice and wonder about race and racial differences in treatment

• Next comes LISTENING and FACILITATING, for example:
  • Don’t ask questions. Just listen (this creates a space for the work of dismantling whiteness).
  • Don’t question people of color, or expect them to educate or explain things to you
  • Create spaces for deep listening, then keep relatively quiet while reflecting

• SPEAKING and ACTING maybe necessary before the above two, but mostly after, for example:
  • Tell your own story, especially to white people
  • Show up and shut up (I mean this in the nicest way!)
  • Create more space for voices that are not being heard (but don’t speak for)
What can organizations do?

Change the environment for white people and leaders
• Development that requires being in the minority in a different culture without barriers to interaction
• Development that requires a profound understanding that others have the solutions or answers that you need to be successful
• Corporate social responsibility that requires relationships (not service and money → social justice not charity!)
• More cross-functional and cross-social-identity task forces
• Requirement to work on an inclusion or diversity task force
• More cross-social-identity mentoring
• Retain more “evolved” elders in organizations
• Start with leaders living diverse lives

Support/encourage new practices
• Integrate your life within itself (work-faith-home-sport-art-nature)
• Diversify your life (at work, neighborhood, sports teams, faith community, types of art participation)
• Get out of your comfort zone MUCH more
• Add intentions / goals and reflection bookending diversity experiences.
• Get feedback on your championing of inclusion and show you want more feedback by how you receive it
• Educate yourself (don’t ask people of color to do it FOR you!). Learn what you don’t know.
• New relationships

Audit leaders professional, civic, religious, sports / teams, and hobbies worlds for diversity
MYTHS (AND REALITIES) OF LEADERSHIP

OUR CURRENT MYTHS

1. Leadership is a role
2. “Good” leaders get people to do things
3. Leadership is about leaders
4. People are leaders or not
5. We choose to be unbiased leaders
6. The environment and organization define reality
7. There is a leadership shortage
8. As a leader, I need to achieve my vision

WISER* REALITIES

1. Leadership is intentional influence for impact
2. “Good” leaders are whole: both effective and ethical
3. Leadership is inclusive of environments, followers, and leaders
4. Our environment tells us whether we are included as leaders
5. I can only be an inclusive leader by managing my biases
6. Leaders change environments through soulful intention
7. Any shortfall is in our myths (images) of leadership
8. We achieve a more lasting vision relationally through discomfort

WISeR = Whole, Inclusive, Soulful, Relational

wiserleadership@gmail.com