







Ways of understanding: Individual Identities

- Understanding the differences between:
 - Me and You
 - Us and Them
- Helps us understand how categories, attitudes, prejudice and inequalities are formed
- On top of this is also where we fall in society
- Individual identities connect to group identities



Understanding Privileged Identities

- As part of a dominant group, identity is constructed as "normal" and the standard by which "others" are measured
- To be "normal" means to not be defined at all, it is simply to "be"
- Practically this means something that I do not think about at all:
 - What does it mean to be able-bodied?
 - What does it mean to be white?



White Racial Identity

- Without understanding what it is to be white, unable to understand what it means to NOT be white
- Most of us who are white might acknowledge that racism/discrimination exists
- Lack the skills to think critically regarding race issues
- Conversation that we never needed to have



Privilege... what is it?

- Often we think of privilege in simply economic terms
- Things members of a dominant group do not have to think about:
 - Gender
 - Religion
 - Physical Ability
 - Sexual Orientation
- Best to think of it as an unearned benefit or advantaged based purely on the nature of identity
- We receive it whether we want it or not, it's just how it is



White fragility

- Most of us who are white are unaware that we are white (or that it matters)
- Raised to think that we do not have a race
- Idea of individual versus systemic privilege
- Understanding of the fact that we are seen as an individual



The Myth of Colorblindness

- Denies the central importance of racial differences in the experiences of people of color
- These are the experiences of discrimination and racism
- Race is a social construct or the meaning that people give to race
- Claiming that we don't see race doesn't change the situation that exists
- To get beyond racism, we must take account of race... there is no other way



Peggy McIntosh – Unpacking the invisible knapsack

- "Invisible package of unearned assets that I can count on cashing in on daily"
- I can if I wish arrange to be in the company of people of my race most of the time
- I can turn on the TV or open the front page of the paper and see people of my race widely represented
- I can choose blemish color or bandages in "flesh" color and have them more or less match my skin



Things that I take for granted:

- I can go to a meeting or event knowing that there will be people who look like me in the same room.
- If I get pulled over by the police, I will likely survive the experience
- When I go shopping with a friend, I won't be followed around the store regardless of how I am dressed
- I can easily buy toys or books with characters who look like me
- I won't be asked to speak for my racial group
- I can go for a run or bike ride without taking ID with me



Idea of Race in American Culture

- Internalized system that shapes all members of society
 - Do whites see themselves as a racial group?
- Often live segregated lives. Places we live, who we spend time with, education system, churches, etc.
- Whites receive little or no authentic information about racism
- Unprepared to think critically or completely about it
- Trivialize other's intelligence and experience – "People just need to"



White Children socialized into colorblindness

- Sometimes we talk a lot about color, but not about race
- Different conversations happen at home in non-white families
- Conversations about race can help children understand and appreciate the differences among people
- "Most of the young white children in our study are helping to rebuild a racist society with their own hands with materials learned from the racial order of the adult world surrounding them." (Van Ausdale & Feagin, 2001)



Case Example:

- Not talking about race can become problematic when children experience homelessness
- What happens when Bill moves from a rural community where everyone looks like him, to an urban school where he is one of a handful of white students?



Billy wants to fit in...

- Mom has moved to escape domestic violence situation
- School and Shelter are both in an urban area
- Billy starts to get in trouble at school
- Social worker at the school does not know Billy is experiencing homelessness
- White shelter staff recognize that Billy is one of the only white students in the school
- Billy wants to fit in with the other students who encourage him to say the n-word on the bus



What we've learned...

- Lot of different perspectives on the situation, and on ways to handle the situation
- Importance of having dialogue around these issues



Dialoguing around race related issues

- For someone who is white, first step is to have a certain amount of comfort as to what it means to be white
- Might need to do some understanding regarding that identity, and the history of what whiteness has been
- Creating dialogue with other white people to begin to feel comfort talking about it



Dialoguing around race related issues

- Being open to cultural differences and experiences
- Develop authentic relationships with people of other races
- Talking about race isn't racist. It's important.



Where whites might begin...

- Be willing to tolerate the discomfort with honest appraisal and discussion of your racial privilege
- Begin to challenge your own racial identity
- Begin to understand people of color's racial realities through authentic interactions
- Take action to address your internalized racism



Where whites might begin...

- Speak up whenever observe racism
 - Overt or subtle
 - Personal or institutional
- Silence is the only privilege that whites can voluntarily relinquish
- The rest remain as a matter of living as a dominant group



Preparing for race conversation

- Create equal status space
- Let students hear you model open minded thinking
- Honor every comment or question about race
- The goal is to create more teachable moments



In the moment... what do I do now?

- Model thinking out loud: "When I hear you ask that question, my first response is..."
- Empathize: "That made me uncomfortable. Did you feel it too?"
- Take your time. "Let's come back to this. It's really important, and I need to think about it."
- Yes, and.
- Affirm the child's comment or question. Instead of saying "Yes, but..." and pointing out the mistake in the child's understanding in the world, and there may be a greater truth and respond as a learner of new ideas.



http://issuu.com/bordercrossers/docs/talking_about_race_with_k-5



Now what... after the moment

- Continue to create space for students to dialogue about race
- Talk to others about what happened
- Process the experience
- Ideas of other ways to handle it
- Be open to continuing learning about dialoguing with students about race



A closing thought...

"If you have come to help me, you are wasting your time. But if you have come because your liberation is bound up in mine, then let us work together."

-Lilla Watson



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