
Whiteness in Our Classrooms

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<http://bit.ly/NCTM2019Whiteness>

Norms (Working Agreements)

- They are all OUR kids.
- Call each other in, not out. Make space/take space.
- Be brave - take risks in your learning and ask questions.
- Assume positive intent and take responsibility for impact (impact > intent).
- We speak about students, families, and teachers in a way that is respectful and maintains their dignity.
- Expect and accept a lack of closure.

Learning Target

- I can recognize that white spaces are not race-neutral.
- I can define whiteness.
- I can begin to identify how whiteness shows up in our practices and impacts our students and colleagues.

BUILDING COMMUNITY

Let's Mingle!

- Where are you from/Where did you grow up?
 - Describe your K-12 experience.
- Where did you go to college?
 - What was your favorite class? Why?
- Where do you currently work?
 - Describe your most recent successful student learning day? How did you know it was successful?

Grounding in Our Own Experiences

- Stories connect us.
- Stories make us human.
- Our experience is the lens we use to look at and make sense of the world.

Identity

*“The concept of identity is a complex one, shaped by individual characteristics, family dynamics, historical factors, and social and political contexts. **Who I am?** The answer depends in large part on who the world around me says I am. Who do my parents say I am? Who do my peers say I am? What message is reflected back to me in the faces of my teachers, my neighbors, store clerks? What do I learn from the media about myself? How am I represented in the cultural images around me? Or am I missing from the picture all together?”*

~ Dr. Beverly Daniel Tatum

Identifying Our Lens

Select 1 of the experiences that you shared with someone.

How does/did race intersect with that experience?

Seeing Whiteness

“White people: I don’t want you to understand me better; I want you to **understand yourself. Your survival has never depended on your knowledge of white culture. In fact, it has required your ignorance.**” (Ijeoma Oluo, *So You Want to Talk About Race*, 2018)

What is Whiteness?

Constructing a Definition of “Whiteness”

Read an excerpt from “**Why Talk About Whiteness?**” by Emily Chiariello
(*Teaching Tolerance*, 2016)

As you read, be sure to select the following:

- **1 sentence** that **reinforces something that you already know/believe.**
- **1 sentence** that represents **a new idea/new learning for you.**
- **1 sentence** that **challenged you** in some way.

Constructing a Definition of “Whiteness” (cont.)

Table Talk

- Go around the group and **share the sentence that you chose** that reinforced something that you already know/believe. (Just read the sentence. **No discussion yet.**)
- Follow the same process for the the sentences that were **new learning** and that **challenged** you.
- **After everyone has shared all of their sentences, have an open discussion** about why you choose what you did.

Defining Whiteness

Let's ground ourselves in a common definition.

"The component of each and every one of ourselves that **expects assimilation to the dominant culture**"

(Glenn E. Singleton, *Courageous Conversations about Race: A Field Guide for Achieving Equity in Schools*)

"...the **ideology that maintains white supremacy**, valuing one racial group over others."

(Dan Battey, *A Framework for Understanding Whiteness in Mathematics Education*)

Defining Whiteness (cont.)

A few things to keep in mind...

- Whiteness is a **human invention**.
- Whiteness was **invented to preserve power**.
- **Those with power define** the dominant culture, which **creates “the privileged” and “the other.”**
- The dominant culture **influences ALL of us**.

How Does “Whiteness” Show Up?

Whiteness in Our Math Practices

“All teaching is culturally responsive. The question is to whose culture you are responding.” (Zaretta Hammond, Interview on *Cult of Pedagogy* podcast, September 10, 2017)

“In this society, white people are safer, included, and seen by default.”

(“Seeing White Fragility” by RISE District, April 23, 2018)

“What all this means within mathematics education is that an ideology of whiteness operates to devalue, oppress, and discriminate those perceived as ‘less’ or not White.” (Dan Battey, *A Framework for Understanding Whiteness in Mathematics Education*)

Examining Our Practices

Brainstorm some common practices in our classrooms and schools.

- Intervention vs. enrichment/acceleration
- Discipline policies and how they are implemented
- Data discussions and practices
- Special education
- Support for English Language Learners

Examining Our Practices

Reflect on the ways that whiteness influences the practice.

- Is this a practice or is this a high-level result of multiple practices?
- How does this practice represent and maintain the status quo?
- How does this practice privilege the ways of the dominant culture?

Read the excerpt and discuss:

- How does this represent a different lens?
- How does this represent ideas counter to whiteness?

Moving Forward

- Practice **interrogating our experiences**.
How does race impact/influence those experiences?
- Name whiteness- Make the invisible visible.
- Practice interrogating our practices.

Final Thoughts

“Regardless of what it looks like, we need more white teachers who are willing to do the hard work of combatting the subtle racism we bring into our schools while working vociferously to change our own pedagogies and make our schools more racially just places!

If not now, when? If not us, who?” (Jamie Utt, “10 Ways Well-Meaning White Teachers Bring Racism Into Our Schools”, *Everyday Feminism*, 2015)

“People and systems count on our silence to keep us exactly where we are.” (Luvvie Ajayi, TEDWomen Talk: *Get Comfortable with Being Uncomfortable*, 2017)

Thank You!!!

Please feel free to contact us with any questions that you have:

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Works Cited

- [*So You Want to Talk About Race* by Ijeoma Oluo \(Seal Press, 2018\)](#)
- [*Why Talk About Whiteness* by Emily Chiariello \(*Teaching Tolerance*, 2016\)](#)
- [*For White Folks Who Teach in the Hood...and the Rest of Y'all Too: Reality Pedagogy and Urban Education* by Christopher Emdin \(Beacon Press, 2016\)](#)
- [*Courageous Conversations About Race: A Field Guide for Achieving Equity in Schools* by Glenn E. Singleton \(Corwin, 2005\)](#)
- [A Framework for Understanding Whiteness in Mathematics Education by Dan Battey and Luis A. Leyva \(*Journal of Urban Mathematics Education*, December 2016\)](#)
- [*The Cult of Pedagogy Podcast, Episode 78: "Four Misconceptions About Culturally Responsive Teaching"* \(2017\)](#)
- ["Seeing White Fragility" \(RISE District, 2018\)](#)
- [10 Ways Well-Meaning White Teachers Bring Racism Into Our Schools by Jamie Utt \(*Everyday Feminism*, 2015\)](#)
- ["Get Comfortable with Being Uncomfortable" by Luvvie Ajayia \(TEDWomen, 2017\)](#)

- [ADDITIONAL RESOURCES](#)