Three Truths & Three Tries:
Facing & Overcoming Critical Social Bias Challenges at the Micro, Mezzo & Macro Levels

UCSF Graduate Division
February 16 & 18, 2021
Carlos Hoyt, PhD, LICSW
I sit on a man's back, choking him and making him carry me, and yet assure myself and others that I am very sorry for him and wish to ease his lot by all possible means—except by getting off his back. – Leo Tolstoy

This hard, hard work is only worthwhile if it leads to easing the structural, systemic, and interpersonal burdens associated with social bias.
Three Truths

1. Inclusivity requires *re-engineering*

2. *You know race doesn’t exist (I hope), yet you persist in reification and racialization* nonetheless

3. “You don’t tug on Superman’s cape” – If we want people to speak truth to power, we have to *empower* them do so
Safe enough to be brave enough

Patience
Grace
The benefit of the doubt

"I see no reason why I should be consciously wrong today because I was unconsciously wrong yesterday."
– Supreme Court Justice Robert H. Jackson, 1948

Please be mindful of the size of your word bubbles.

Cognitive Dissonance

Resist the arrogance of language privilege, guys.
Arrogance: from Latin, meaning claimed for oneself; to claim something without justification

Kindness mustn’t stifle justice

Some people are born on third base and spend their lives thinking they hit a triple.

It’s OK to not have known.
It’s not OK to use that as an excuse to not grow.

Don’t confuse what you get with what you deserve.

Social standard, Access, Care, Opportunity, Protection...

Delusion of Equality

Some people are positioned at the top of a social hill and believe everyone shares level ground.

* Every figure is the “same size” – has equal worth, equal capacity, and [ought to have] equal rights
Meanings & Methods
Defining micro, mezzo, and macro.

**Micro** – How you, as the unique intersectional individual you are, feel/think about the prompt.

“While we accept certain cultural values as appropriate, as important for our own course of becoming, it is equally true that we are all rebels, deviants, and individualists.” – Gordan Allport

**Mezzo** – How you feel/think about the prompt in terms of your primary social community.

Here you might think of your lab group at UCSF.

**Macro** – How you feel/think about the prompt in terms of the larger structure/institution/system you feel is most relevant for you.

Here you might think of UCSF as an institution situated within and, in important ways, inextricably connected to and interactive with greater macro-level historical, structural, institutional forces.

Participants will be asked to respond to prompts at the micro, mezzo, and macro level. Where “M³” appears in the schedule, it is simply an abbreviation for micro, mezzo, macro.
Sharing your reflective writing with Carlos

To maximize our ability to share our feelings, thoughts, questions, etc. please consider entering your responses to each reflective writing opportunity in this doc. Your entries will be completely anonymous and will be seen by only me.

- Page 2 -
Prelude:

What it’s like to be me.

And what it’s like to be you in response.
This morning, May 26, 2021

after the umpteenth public slaughter of an unarmed black-racialized person by police

and the protests that are following

I find myself on the other side of a threshold.
I wonder what you think of when you think of trees.

I wonder what rope represents to you.
After reading Carlos’s confessionals

M³ - What do you feel?
M³ - What do you think?
M³ - What do you do?

10:20am – Reflective writing – 1.5 minutes

10:22am – Dialogue – 8 minutes

10:32am – Share-out 8 minutes
Inclusivity requires re-engineering

M³ – When are you a giraffe?
M³ - When are you an elephant?
M³ – When are you a carpenter?

10:47am – Dialogue – 8 minutes

10:57am – Share-out 8 minutes
To seek and secure your help in combatting the public health crisis of racism by inoculating the public against the virus of the mind that causes racism: the process and practice of racialization.
Diagnostic Rule-outs

Carlos has his peculiarities but

• He is not a practitioner nor an advocate of a “colorblind” attitude towards race

• He does not believe we live in a “post-race” era

• He has not somehow been spared the indignities and degradations of racism
Key Arguments

1. We (inadvertently? misguidedly? habitually? lazily?) conduct the discourse on race in a manner that affirms and reinforces belief in the false differences that are the basis of racism.

2. We must add preventative *upstream* efforts to our noble but reactive *downstream* endeavors to contend with racism.

3. We must teach about *racialization* (of self and others).

4. We must not only recognize that race is a social construct, we must act accordingly.

5. We can preserve a sense of solidarity, pride, and collective agency in the struggle against oppression without reinforcing and recapitulating the very constructs upon which our oppression is based.
Honoring Differences

Our brains tend to sort, simplify, and rank everything, including personhood.

This or that, good or bad, us or them. It’s hard for us to hold the multiple, intersecting aspects of personhood at once in our minds. Instead, like a prism, we often refract our complex whole selves into narrow categories.

Recognizing the full spectrum of social identity and resisting the tendency to reduce people to one or another restrictive category enables us to think critically and inclusively, engage empathically, reduce social bias, and thrive in an increasingly complex and interconnected world.

Whoever you are, however you are, you are safe here.

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Social Identity Prism

- Family-Ethnicity-Heritage
- Physical Appearance
- Age
- Ability
- Gender
- Sexual Orientation
- Race
- Social Status
- Worldview-Belief System

Race

socially created, scientifically false categories of human differences based on vague and variable mixes of appearance and ancestry.
By now, you have received a statement about the current state of race relations from almost every institution and organization that you are affiliated with.

Like me, you may be asking yourself: Will these statements mean anything? Will these organizations actually do something?

*Universities and scientific organizations are not just expected to say something, but to take action.*
What science can do.
What science must do.
Social Constructs
Not So Easy to Destruct
But Sometimes in Need of Deconstruction

“Listen to me. Gender is a construct, society is a construct, money is a construct. But bedtime is very, very real.”

Taking race out of human genetics and memetics: We can’t achieve one without achieving the other

CS for Racial Literacy: Teaching Race through Cultural Algorithms
Social Constructs
Not So Easy to Destruct
But Sometimes in Need of Deconstruction

Easy to change

Bedtime

Useful

Shaking hands

Harmful

Using binary gender pronouns

Hard to change

Oceans

$$$

RACE
SCIENCE DEFINES YOU BY YOUR DNA.
SOCIETY DEFINES YOU BY THE COLOR OF YOUR SKIN.
The fundamental problem with racism is not that people of one race feel and act on a sense of superiority to and/or animosity towards people of other races.

People certainly do that, and it is a deadly serious and seemingly intractable problem but that’s not the fundamental catalyzing problem.

The fundamental problem with racism is that almost everyone - not only “the racists” - acts as if there are people of one or another race in the first place.
Racism is not about someone being black or someone being white.

We know that no one is black and no one is white.

*Racism is about being adversely racialized by people who harbor lethal delusions about human differences, and being oppressed by systems founded on such delusions.*
Proponents will argue race is a placeholder—a crude marker of variation that might as well be used until better markers (genetic or environmental) for differential responses are identified and cost effective genetic screening technologies become available.

But scientifically, race is a meaningless marker of anything. Pooling people in race silos is akin to zoologists grouping raccoons, tigers and okapis on the basis that they are all stripey.
Racialization: The Technology of Race

1. Select some human characteristics as meaningful signs of racial difference.
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2. Sort into subpopulations based on selected distinctions.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<td><strong>2. Sort</strong></td>
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<td><strong>3. Attribute</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Attribute traits (temperament, talents, behaviors) to racial types.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Step</td>
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<td>4. Essentialize</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Act</td>
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## Process of Racialization Worksheet

**Social identity group:** ____________________________

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<tr>
<th>Steps</th>
<th>How it plays out for this group</th>
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### Process of Racialization Worksheet

**Social identity group:** Airplane Passengers

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<tr>
<td>Select some human characteristics as meaningful signs of racial difference.</td>
<td>Seating status</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sort into factionally homogenized human subpopulations based on selected distinctions.</td>
<td>First class seat holders v Economy class seat holders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attribute traits (temperament, talents, behaviors) to racial types.</td>
<td>Seems to me those <em>classies</em> are calmer, more confident, better-looking, and just plain more appealing than the <em>econers</em>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Essentialize</strong> differences – make them natural, immutable, and hereditary.</td>
<td>Oh, it’s not about money; this is deeper than circumstance. These differences are bone-deep, ancestry-deep, heritable, and immutable.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Act as if racial differences justify unequal treatment.</td>
<td>Why wouldn’t I prefer classies over econers when considering relationships, employment, residence, politics, etc.?</td>
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<td>eyebrow thickness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Earlobe shape</td>
<td>baseball fans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religion</td>
<td>political orientation</td>
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There’s No Scientific Basis for Race—It’s a Made-Up Label

It’s been used to define and separate people for millennia. But the concept of race is not grounded in genetics.
Modern human genetic variation does not structure into phylogenetic subspecies (geographical “races”), nor do the taxa from the most common racial subclassifications of classical anthropology qualify as “races.”
Possible Reactions to Race

**Retentionism** - “We might favor retaining racial categories, pretty much as they are.”

**Revisionism** - “We might seek to transform those categories without removing them entirely.”

**Eliminativism** – “We might seek to eliminate any thought, language, or practices that involve race.”

**Correctivism** - Commitment to counteracting the custom/habit of racialization through self-discipline, education, advocacy, counternarrative, and changes in practice.
You know Race doesn’t exist (I hope), yet you persist in reification and racialization nonetheless

$M^3$ - Are you a literalist-retentionist?
$M^3$ - Are you a seemingly-progressive-revisionist?
$M^3$ - Are you a would-be eliminativist?

11:20am – Reflective writing – 1.5 minutes
11:22am – Dialogue – 8 minutes
11:32am – Share-out – 8 minutes
No accountability
No Justice
Race The concept of race was constructed as a tool to categorize people with the purpose of validating racism. Race has no biological basis. During historical projects such as colonialism and slavery, race was artificially imposed on people in different political positions to create a moral hierarchy used to justify the harm inflicted by inequitable systems, exploitive capitalism, and white supremacy. Although the construct of race is dynamic and evolves with changing social, political, and historical norms, the construct perpetuated the false idea that there are static, innate characteristics that apply to sets of people despite diverse origins, life experiences, and genetic makeups. However, race is distinct from ancestry. Ancestry denotes people’s shared traits based on the genetic similarities of their ancestors and accounts for the complexity of geographic variation and fluidity. While race is socially constructed, the consequences of this social construct are experienced individually and collectively by communities in the form of racism. The effects of racism can be seen in differential outcomes in health, wealth, socioeconomic status, education, and social mobility in the United States.
Speaking truth to power must be made possible, otherwise it is merely a lofty, cynical, cruel, and valueless value.

How do we make it safe for the less powerful to speak truth to the most powerful?
Honoring Differences Channel

A *virtuous* feedback loop for students & teachers
Every adult at BDS wants to know if they do anything that causes you to feel less than fully welcome, seen, heard, empowered, valued, and embraced.

No adult at BDS will ever get mad or make you feel bad if you let them know that something they did made you feel uncomfortable or upset. Instead, they’ll be proud of you and grateful - and they will do everything they can to make things better.
The Honoring Differences Channel

Provides a safe and constant method for you to do two extremely important things about your sense of belonging at BDS

**Thriving**
Letting your teachers know when they do something that makes you feel known, respected, empowered, and happy at BDS or

**Striving**
Letting your teachers know when they do something that makes you feel uncomfortable or upset.
“You don’t tug on Superman’s cape”: If we want people to speak truth to power, we have to empower them do so.

M³ - Do you feel encouraged to express grievance?
M³ - Do feel safe expressing grievance?
M³ - Is there accountability?

11:50am – Whole-group share out

12:00pm – Close and please provide your take-aways & where-from-here’s
Thank you for considering this request for help and call to action

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