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More Than Men in White Sheets: Seven Concepts Critical to the Teaching of Racism as Systemic Inequality

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Most college students tend to view racism as individual bias and prejudice and lack an understanding of the broader systemic nature of the problem. The purpose of this article is to examine how to help undergraduate students move from viewing racism as individual bigotry to recognizing its complex nature as a systemic phenomenon that pervades every aspect of United States society. Seven concepts are presented as necessary ingredients for any college course that seeks to address systemic racism. The seven critical concepts are: race as a social construction; dominant and subordinated groups; levels of racism; white privilege; internalized racism; multiple social group memberships; and historical inequality. The discussion of each concept includes a description, brief historical context, and an example of how the concept can be taught in the college classroom.

Whenever I teach a class or workshop about racism, invariably a student will comment that racism "hardly ever happens," is a "thing of the past," or is caused by "a few racist people." From these encounters I have concluded that most college students define racism very simply, focusing almost exclusively on individual acts of racial bias and hatred. A literature review reveals that many other higher education professors who teach about racism also encounter students who view racism as individual bias or hostility and lack a clear understanding of the broader systemic nature of the problem (Bidell, Lee, Bouchle, Ward, & Brass, 1994; Bonilla-Silva & Forman, 2000; Goodman, 2001; Sleeter, 1995; Smith, 1998; Tatum, 1992).

Although college students' lack of understanding of the complexity of racism is disappointing, it is not surprising. Students' socialization gives them little alternative but to see racism as individual prejudice or hostile actions between people of different races. High school history classes have taught them that the Civil Rights Movement made race-based discrimination illegal in this country. Their personal experiences have taught them that Whites, Blacks, Asians, and Latino Americans can dine in the same restaurants, attend the same schools, and work in the same businesses. With this "evidence," they come to the conclusion that racism is no longer institutionalized, and if racism exists at all, it is in the hearts and minds of a small group of bigoted men who parade around in white sheets (Bonilla-Silva & Forman, 2000; Feagin, 2001).

The purpose of this article is to examine how higher education social justice educators can help undergraduate students move from viewing racism as individual bigotry to recognizing its complex nature as a systemic phenomenon that pervades every aspect of United States society. The shift from conceptualizing racism as an individual phenomenon to seeing it as a systemic problem is particularly challenging because the notion of racism as systemic is in direct contrast to many students' core values and assumptions that America is built on the principles of hard work and merit (Goodman, 2001; Nieto, 2000; Smith, 1998; Tatum, 1997). White students in particular tend to believe that all Americans are seen and treated as individuals and that any individual who works hard will be rewarded through a fair and just society (Bonilla-Silva, 2001; Brown et al., 2003; Feagin, 2001; Smith, 1998). Most white Americans also do not see slavery, legal segregation, or contemporary racism as aspects of an American *system* of racism. They see them, instead, as brief incidents that unfortunately were "tacked on to a great nation for a short time" (Feagin, 2001, p. 16). Racism is seen as a blemish on American history that, with the exception of a few "bad" individuals, has essentially been eradicated (Feagin, 2001). Many students hold so tightly to a view of racism as an "incident" in history and to beliefs in meritocracy that it is very hard for them to see that racism can be anything more than random acts of thoughtlessness and hatred.

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Although racism does include individual acts of prejudice, this is simply one dimension within what Patricia Hill Collins (1993) calls an "interlocking system." This system of inequality is deeply embedded in the institutions as well as the cultural ideology of our society (Bell, 1997; Nieto, 1995; O'Donnell, 1998; Tatum, 1992; Wellman, 1993). Feagin (2001) defines *systemic racism* as the combination of "a diverse assortment of racist practices; the unjustly gained economic and political power of whites; the continuing resource inequalities; and the white-racist ideologies, attitudes, and institutions created to preserve white advantages and power" (p. 16).

Most college students have not previously studied the concept of racism as institutionalized, let alone as a far-reaching systemic phenomenon as described by Feagin (2001; see also Bidell et al., 1994; Bonilla-Silva & Forman, 2000; Sleeter, 1995; Wellman, 1993). The key is the shift from teaching about racism as primarily an individual or even institutionalized phenomenon to one that is embedded in American culture, in individuals, and in our systems of education, justice, business, health care, and government. Students need to understand that American racism is a "centuries-long, deep lying, institutionalized, and systemic" phenomenon (Feagin, 2001, p. 16) that cannot be understood in individual terms alone (Bell, 1997).

This article is an attempt to outline the critical concepts needed to help students understand the complex and systemic nature of racism. Seven specific concepts are briefly outlined, making clear the role that each concept plays in helping students understand the complexity of racism. For each concept I have included a description, brief historical context, and an example of how the concept can be taught in the classroom. It should be noted that the categories are separated here for ease of discussion. In reality, the concepts overlap significantly; for example, the concepts of "the levels of racism" and "historical inequality" should not be taught separately. For students to fully understand institutionalized racism, the instructor must include an exploration of the history of institutionalized racism along with present-day forms of institutionalized racism.

METHOD

To learn how higher education professors teach about racism I reviewed college textbooks, teaching journals, teacher training materials, and other sources in which college instructors wrote about their classroom experiences with teaching about racism (Fox, 2001; Goodman, 2001; Tatum, 1992). The literature is drawn primarily from the fields of sociology, education, and social psychology. Because I am focusing on teaching about racism as a systemic phenomenon, I did not include literature that focuses on interpersonal issues, such as teaching people to appreciate cultural differences and to work and communicate more effectively with people across racial lines (Gudykunst, 1998; Okun, Fried, & Okun, 1999). Although a great deal can be learned from this body of literature, it is outside the scope of this article.

The selection of literature and my discussion of it are guided by my training within the field of Social Justice Education and the corresponding conceptual lenses that I bring to this review. Those familiar with social justice education and multicultural education will recognize most, if not all, of the terminology used in the titles. I apply a social construction lens that recognizes that human social categories, including race, have been created and manipulated over time to reflect the belief systems and to accommodate the needs of socially powerful groups (Omi & Winant, 1986; A. Smedley, 1999). I also rely on a social oppression lens, which assumes that the statuses assigned to socially constructed categorizations are maintained through systems of power and privilege (Bell, 1997; Hardiman & Jackson, 1997; Young, 1990). Finally, I acknowledge that my discussion is limited to a white/black, non-immigrant, U.S. racial paradigm. While recognizing that there are profound limitations to this paradigm, I have made this choice consciously and thoughtfully. There are limitations to how much one can discuss in one article. I agree with Feagin (2001) that "white-on-black" racism represents the "archetype" of racial oppression in North America and has played the central role in the creation and evolution of systemic racism for almost 400 years.

A set of seven concepts emerged from the literatures. I have labeled these concepts: race as a social construction; the levels of racism; dominant and subordinated groups; white privilege; internalized racism; multiple social group memberships; and historical inequality. The terminology that I use to label these concepts is not new. See the Appendix for a summary of the suggested strategies and tools for teaching each of the seven concepts.

SEVEN CONCEPTS CENTRAL TO TEACHING ABOUT RACISM

Race as a Social Construction

For most of U.S. history, the concept of race has been viewed, taught, and enforced as a set of inherent biological characteristics used as a critical means of classifying human beings (Haney-Lopez, 1995). While it is still a powerful form of classification, most scholars no longer view race as a true biological entity, but instead as a socially constructed one (Feagin & Feagin, 1996; Haney-Lopez, 1995; Omi & Winant, 1986; A. Smedley, 1999). Omi and Winant contend that the meaning of race has changed dramatically over time to express specific social relationships that have been defined by social, political, and economic processes and institutions within a specific context of history. They use the term "racial formation" to describe the ways that racial categories have

been "created, inhabited, transformed, and destroyed" (p. 55) over time.

Audrey Smedley (1999) explains the history of the formation of the concept of race. She contends that race as a worldview is a relatively recent concept that originated in the United States during the 16th through the 19th centuries. She argues that it coincided with colonization by Western European countries and the creation of the only system of slavery with an exclusively racial rationale.

A. Smedley (1999) outlines five basic ideological premises that together formed the paradigmatic view of race in North America by the early years of the 19th century. This worldview professed that human beings could be classified into discrete biological categories; that these categories could be ranked in relation to each other; that the outer physical characteristics of different groups were indicative of inner realities; that all of these characteristics, as well as the social rank ascribed to them, were inheritable; and finally, that each distinct group was deemed so by nature or by God. The belief in biological differences led to a view of "essential" differences between the groups—differences that were seen as fundamental and immutable (Jones, 1998). Creating a ranking of racial classifications based on these "differences" allowed justification of colonization and slavery (Feagin & Feagin, 1996; A. Smedley, 1999). However, as powerful as the concept of race has been in global history, no distinct biological reality has ever been determined using sound scientific procedures, and most social scientists today view race as a socially constructed phenomemon that gives social meaning to a set of physiological attributes (Feagin & Feagin, 1996; Haney-Lopez, 1995; Omi & Winant, 1986, A. Smedley, 1999).

A powerful legacy of this early stratification is a continuing widespread belief in racial categories based on unalterable biological differences, a belief held by most students when they enter college classrooms and one that is reinforced by the way racial categories are used by instructors. Emphasizing to students that race has been reinvented throughout U.S. history to promote a position of economic, political, and social dominance for white Americans is central to teaching about racism (Andersen, 1999; M. Blumer & Solomos, 1999; Wijeyesinghe, Griffin, & Love, 1997). Although the evolution of the concept of race is indeed complicated, instructors can use historical references to demonstrate the social creation of race through economic, legal, and "scientific" forces and effectively challenge the student's view of race as a biological reality (MacDonald-Dennis, 2002).

Economic. A timeline provides students with numerous examples of how race has been socially constructed throughout U.S. history. For example, an explanation of "Bacon's Rebellion" of 1676 can be used as one way to demonstrate the economic influence on the development of the concept of race. After the rebellion, during which black and white indentured servants joined forces to fight against aristocratic control of resources, a number of laws were enacted that shifted the system of indentured servitude toward one of permanent slavery for Blacks (Feagin, 2001; Takaki, 1993; Zinn, 1995). A powerful result of this separation, was the creation of "a sort of consciousness of kind that eventuated in the formation of the *white race*" (A. Smedley, 1999, p. 109). Poor Europeans began to identify with wealthy Europeans through the bond of "whiteness." By dividing laborers along color lines, class affiliation was reduced and an affinity across whiteness (across all European ethnic groups) was created—a situation that has persisted ever since (Feagin, 2001; Pharr, 1996).

Legal. An explanation of various historical court decisions lays bare how the U.S. legal system has been central to the process of defining race (Banks & Eberhardt, 1998). For example, in 1909 Asian Indians were declared to be non-white by U.S. courts, while in 1910 and 1913, they were declared white; then non-white again in 1917; white in 1919 and 1920; and non-white after 1923 (Obach, 1999). In addition, within the rule of hypodescent (used for much of the nation's history to determine one's status as black or white), individual states used different measurements to determine legal status. Some states required only 1/32 of "black blood" to make a person black, others required 1/8 and still others as much as 1/4 (Banks & Eberhardt, 1998). There are countless other examples in which U.S. courts and other institutions changed racial designations to fit the needs of society. These examples can cause students to question the inherent biological status of race when they show how racial designations have been manipulated through time.

"Scientific." A third way to talk about the social construction of race is to address the fact that there is no scientific basis for racial classification. Although the pseudo-science of the 19th and 20th centuries resulted in a hierarchy of "races" with white Aryans on the top, it is now clear that this "science" simply reflected the social, political, and economic needs of the time (A. Smedley, 1999). The key is to show students that categorizing humans according to genes that govern skin color, hair texture, and facial features reflects the significance given to those attributes by *humans*, not by nature. The instructor's role is to challenge students to think about why racial classification persists if modern genetic science tells us that there are no distinct biological/genetic differences between the currently designated racial groups (Haney-Lopez, 1995; Omi & Winant, 1986). In addition, we need to challenge students to see how these racial classifications currently, just as they have in the past, provide a means for the continued justification of subordination of people of color (Feagin, 2001). The Public Broadcasting Service sponsored a video series, *Race: The Power of an Illusion* (Alderman, 2003a), and has a website (Alderman, 2003b) that provide excellent resources for teaching about the social construction of race. The

video can be shown in class and students can access the website to retrieve online activities, quizzes, and several timelines outlining relevant historical information.

The Interconnected Levels of Racism: Individual, Institutional, and Cultural

Most students walk into the classroom with some awareness of racism at the individual level; the individual level is certainly the easiest level for students to understand. As defined by Wijeyesinghe et al. (1997), individual racism entails, "the beliefs, attitudes, and actions of individuals that support or perpetuate racism" (p. 89).

There are many readily available examples of racism at the individual level, ranging from the daily occurrence of racial epithets and jokes directed at people of color by white individuals or groups of individuals, to the senseless brutal murder of a person of color by white people. It includes the actions of any white person who refuses to hire, serve, or provide equal and appropriate treatment for any person of color because of his or her race. This form of racism is clear-cut, tangible, and very few people would contend that this does not exist.

Understanding racism at the institutional level is a bit more complicated. Institutions can be defined broadly to include any organization that "influences social norms . . . [and] covertly or overtly controls the allocation of resources to individuals and social groups" (p. 93). Thus institutions include the justice system, schools, media, banks, business, health care, governmental bodies, as well as family units, religious organizations, and civic groups. Helping students to see how racism is firmly embedded in every institution within our society is key to their ability to see racism as more than simply individual race prejudice. Kwame Ture (formerly known as Stokely Carmichael) and Charles Hamilton are two people credited with expanding our understanding of racism through the introduction of the concept of "institutional racism" (Feagin, 2001; Feagin & Feagin, 1996; Mason, 1999). Their 1967 book *Black Power* moved the focus beyond individual bigotry and onto the larger systems of society. According to Carmichael and Hamilton, institutional racism leads dominant group members to subordinate others whether or not they intend to or have any knowledge that they are doing so. Racism is part of a system that is larger than individuals and operates with and without conscious support. Wijeyesinghe et al. (1997) define institutional racism as "the network of institutional structures, policies and practices that create advantages and benefits for whites, and discrimination, oppression, and disadvantage for people from targeted groups" (p. 93).

To help make the concept of institutional racism concrete for students, it is important to use statistics and clear factual examples of the current disparities found in a wide range of institutional settings. While there are countless examples of *past* institutional racism (for example, denial of citizenship based on race, Japanese American internment camps, and Jim Crow segregation laws), it is very important to concentrate on *current* examples so that students can see that racism is still very much a part of every aspect of our institutions.

Several excellent examples exist in the enforcement of laws related to illegal drug use and distribution. Government studies show that while Blacks make up only about 15–20% of drug users in the U.S., they account for one-half to two-thirds of all those arrested for drug offenses nationwide—with even higher percentages in large cites (Duster, 1995). In addition, there is a remarkable racial difference in sentencing for drug use. For example, possession with intent to distribute five grams of powder cocaine can bring a sentence between one and three years. On the other hand, possession with the intent to distribute five grams of crack cocaine leads to a mandatory minimum five-year sentence (Coyle, 2002). These sentencing guidelines do not seem to have anything to do with race until we consider that Whites are more likely to use and distribute powder cocaine, while Blacks are more likely to use and distribute crack cocaine (Duster, 1995). These examples show students that Blacks and Whites are not treated equally under the law even though the laws do not appear at first to have a racial bias. This information will hopefully cause students to question other seemingly race-neutral polices to search for underlying discrimination.

Perhaps the most effective reading to teach about current institutionalized racism is Chapter 1 in George Lipsitz's (1998) *The Possessive Investment in Whiteness*. This chapter provides a devastating critique of institutional racism within housing, health care, and the justice system. Additional examples can be drawn from education (Brown et al., 2003; Kozol, 1992), employment (Hacker, 1995; Steinberg, 1995), the home mortgage market (Oliver & Shapiro, 1997), reproductive rights (Roberts, 1997), and health care (Lipsitz, 1998; B. Smedley, Stith, & Nelson, 2003).

In addition to individual and institutional racism, the third level of racism is cultural racism. Bell (1997) describes cultural racism as unconscious attitudes and behaviors based on a white cultural norm. This norm is quietly embedded in our language, cultural practices and traditions, standards of beauty, conceptions of time, and notions of good and bad, while being presumed to be neutral and inclusive. This form, sometimes referred to as "societal" (Griffin, 1997a) or "ideological" (Feagin, 2001; Wellman, 1993) appears to be the hardest for students to understand. One reason it is hard to pinpoint is that as Americans, we are so surrounded by "American" culture that it is very hard for us to see that American culture is actually a refection of *white* American culture. The dominant group of any society dictates cultural norms, including views of philosophy, morality, and

even science (Goodman, 2001). Dominant culture dictates what is "good, bad, just, natural, desirable, and possible" (Charlton, 1998, p. 51). Feagin (2001) sees racist ideology as a prominent piece of the dominant cultural norm that has been "critical to maintaining the subordination of black Americans and other people of color" (p. 32). Most Americans are indoctrinated (Feagin, 2001) or socialized (Harro, 2000) into this racist ideology from childhood, thus creating a self-perpetuating system of racism. It is critical for students to see that dominant cultural norms are not neutral, but instead project an invisible, yet powerful, bias toward supporting white superiority.

Tatum (1997) compares the invisibility of cultural racism to "smog in the air." Whether we can see it or not, we are continuously breathing in messages that "affirm the assumed superiority of whites and assumed inferiority of people or color" (p. 6). For example, the literature, visual arts, music, and dance of Europeans and European Americans is viewed as superior and more sophisticated than that of other groups (Goodman, 2001). Similarly, white (male and middle-class) norms of speech and dress mark the standard of appropriateness in business, educational, and civic organizations. Standards of beauty for women are based on the white norms of fine blond hair, fair skin, and blue eyes (Griffin, 1997b). Even the holidays that are given full recognition in United States culture reflect European American centrality (for example, Thanksgiving, Columbus Day, and Christmas), while those representing other cultures receive little attention (for example, Chinese New Year, Juneteenth, and Three Kings Day) (Griffin, 1997b).

To explore cultural racism in the classroom, students can examine various aspects of "American" culture and think about who is reflected in them (Griffin, 1997b). As part of this exercise, ask students to think about how Americans use the word "classic". For example, the definition of the word classic generally means "serving as a standard of excellence" (Merriam-Webster, 1991, p. 95), but in common usage, the label of "classical" has been given to one specific style of music. Additionally, literature in a list of classics reflects the writing of white males of European descent.

Finally, it is important to help students see that the individual, institutional, and cultural levels of racism are interconnected. Although they can be defined separately, they do not necessarily exist separate from one another, but instead combine to create a web that continuously reinforces each of the three levels. To illustrate this for students, take almost any example of racism and show how it is influenced by at least two of the three different levels. For example, the following illustrates the inextricable connection between institutional racism and cultural racism. Duster (1995) cites studies showing that retail establishments were far more likely to discriminate against black youths than were manufacturing establishments. Whites were more than four times as likely to

be fully employed in the service sector. Researchers attribute the preponderance of this discrepancy to cultural racism in the form of expectations in the service sector that dictate a preference for white norms of appearance, dress, and speech. While high school education rates are about equivalent between black and white youth, unemployment rates are not. The gap will widen as the manufacturing sector of the U.S. is expected to shrink and the service sector is expected to grow. In this example the incidence of institutionalized racism within hiring in the retail versus the manufacturing sectors is directly related to cultural racism that dictates a preference for white cultural norms. What may seem to be individual or even institutionalized acts of racism or racial prejudice must also be understood as linked to a well-developed racist ideology that has been at the center of dominant American culture for generations (Feagin, 2001).

Dominant and Subordinated Groups

One of the primary ways to help students recognize the systemic nature of racism is through an explication of the concept of dominant and subordinated statuses. Whites in the United States experience a system of racial advantage that creates hierarchical relationships in which they, as the dominant group, experience privileges or benefits because of the subordinated position of people of color (Bell, 1997; Brown et al., 2003; Feagin, Vera, & Batur, 2001; Goodman, 2001; Operario & Fiske, 1998; Wildman & Davis, 2000). This system of Whites as dominant and people of color as subordinated has become so ingrained in our society that it is virtually invisible to most students. The hegemonic acceptance of dominant/subordinated relationships creates a commonsense reality where white supremacy is unconsciously seen as part of the natural order of things (Bell, 1997; H. Blumer, 1958; Bonilla-Silva, 2003; Feagin et al., 2001; Young, 1990). Both dominant and subordinate group members internalize the idea of the system as normal and correct and thus help to perpetuate it (Bell, 1997; Goodman, 2001). White supremacy is thus supported by an invisible notion of white as the "defined norm" that is backed up by access to both economic and institutional power (Jones, 1998; Pharr, 1988).

Introducing a framework that has placed Whites in the dominant position and people of color as subordinated often leads students to question who can be called "racist." Because most students come into class viewing racism as individual prejudice and bigotry, it makes sense to them that anyone can be "racist" and anyone can experience "racism" directed at them. Many scholars, however, use the term "racist" or "racism" to describe only the actions of Whites, while using the terms, "racial hatred," and "racial bias" for actions practiced by any other ethnic group (Feagin & Feagin, 1996; Fox, 2001; Goodman, 2001; Operario & Fiske, 1998; Tatum, 1997).

For example, Tatum explains that while any person can hold negative racial prejudices and engage in discriminatory behavior against any other person, she reserves the term "racist" for actions by white people or dominant institutions against people of color. While prejudice from both people of color and white people is problematic, it is important to distinguish the power differential in the two. Specifically she says:

> People of color are not racist because they do not systematically benefit from racism. And equally important, there is not systemic cultural and institutional support or sanction for the racial bigotry of people of color. In my view, reserving the term racist only for behaviors committed by Whites in the context of a White dominated society is a way of acknowledging the ever-present power differential afforded Whites by the culture and institutions that make up the system of advantage and continue to reinforce notions of white superiority. (p. 10)

Tatum's (1997) practice points to the important distinction between the concepts of discrimination and oppression. Racism is defined as a form of oppression, and it must be made clear that while white people may experience discrimination based on their race, white people as a whole, in American society, do not experience oppression (racism) based their race. This is because Whites can experience discrimination at the individual level, and in rare cases at the institutional level (Pincus, 2000), but because the nature of *cultural* racism places White as the cultural "norm," white people do not experience racism at the cultural level. It is the combination of all three levels working together over a period of time that results in oppression. The term racism, then, refers only to oppression based on race, not discrimination based on race. Although some authors prefer to point to the distinction between individual prejudice and institutionalized discrimination as critical (Nieto, 2000), using Tatum's distinction makes clear to students that racism is not something that white people experience (similarly to the way that men do not experience sexism and heterosexuals do not experience heterosexism). This is a critical distinction, and while it may not be clear to students at first, reinforcement of this concept with numerous examples of current and historical racism at the institutional and cultural levels can lead them to a greater understanding of the systemic nature of racism.

Also important to this discussion is the distinction between passive and active forms of racism. Active racism involves actions that have the stated goal of perpetuating the system of racism, while passive racism is any action, belief, or attitude that contributes to the perpetuation of racism without the conscious consent of the individual (Wijeyesinghe et al., 1997). This is an important distinction, particularly for white students, as they grapple with this new way of conceptualizing racism and the roles of dominant and subordinated groups.

Tatum (1997) uses the wonderfully descriptive analogy of an airport moving-walkway to illustrate the differences between active and passive racism. On such a moving-walkway, we have a choice to walk while on the walkway or simply to stand and let the walkway carry us. The person who walks on the walkway is analogous to a person who is engaged in active racism. The person simply standing on the walkway is analogous to most people in our society who are simply standing still, but who will eventually arrive at the same destination as the person who is actively racist. The system (walkway) continues to support oppression (move) whether we actively contribute to the atmosphere of racism or simply stand by (walk or stand). In addition, the only way to move in the opposite direction is to turn around and walk twice as fast as the walkway is going. So, because this walkway is always moving, to be antiracist, we must work twice as hard to work against the system.

So far, this basic analysis of dominant and subordinated groups has been limited to the categorization of Whites as dominant and people of color as subordinated. Students do need to understand that there are certainly gradations of both "dominant" and "subordinated." These are not monolithic experiences, but instead are impacted in complex ways by an individual's multiple social group memberships. Understanding the intersection of an individual's various social groups, such as class, gender, and sexual orientation, leads us to recognize that not all white people experience racial "dominance" to the same degree, and likewise, not all people of color experience racial "subordination" to the same degree (Tatum, 1997). This issue is critical and is discussed further in the section titled "Multiple Social Group Memberships."

Internalized Racism

In addition to understanding how racism resides within our institutions and culture, it is important for students to understand how racism has become internalized within the human psyche (Bell, 1997; Fox, 2001; Hardiman & Jackson, 1997; Wijeyesinghe et al., 1997). Internalized racism is usually characterized as the self-doubt, anxiety, and even hatred (Fox, 2001) that subordinated groups hold of members of their own group and is the result of the subordinated group believing in and acting out the stereotypes held by the dominant group (Wijeyesinghe et al., 1997). This psychologically-based concept was perhaps first presented by Albert Memmi (1965). Although he does not use the specific term "internalized oppression," he describes the dangers of the psychological process by which the colonized individual begins to believe the colonizer's perception of him. He says, in part, "this mythical and degrading portrait ends up being accepted and lived with to a certain extent by the colonized. It thus acquires a certain amount of reality and contributes to the true portrait of the colonized" (p. 87).

Memmi's description points to the reason this concept is sometimes referred to as a "self-fulfilling prophecy" (Khan, 1999). The oppressed person not only comes to believe the expectations that the dominant group holds but also incorporates that image into the "true portrait" of himself or herself. In other words, the subordinated group members act on the perceived notions and then live up to (or down to) the expectations of the dominant group.

Internalized racism plays a major conceptual role in racial identity development theory. Within Hardiman and Jackson's (1997) theory of "Social Identity Development," the acceptance stage for subordinated groups reflects internalization and acceptance of messages about the inferiority of their group. In their nigrescence theory, Cross and Fhagen-Smith (2001) report that internalized racism among black children is expressed through the belief of negative and misleading information about Blacks, negative judgments on dark skin and African physical features, and personal self-loathing or racial self-hatred.

Suzanne Pharr (1988) considers internalized oppression to be a "common element of oppression" (p. 60). She contends that within every form of oppression, subordinated group members may internalize their role, which leads to a weakening of self-esteem and can result in depression and self-abuse. Sometimes the self-degradation brought on by internalized oppression may be acted out as "horizontal hostility," in which members of subordinated groups disrespect or become hostile toward members of their own or other oppressed groups (Pharr, 1988). Internalized subordination has dire consequences, including convincing a subordinated group to accept their oppression and therefore not resist it. Internalized subordination is a powerful force in the maintenance of systemic oppression.

One way to demonstrate internalized subordination is through the use of the classic video recording "A Class Divided" (Peters, 1985). In this video, third-grade teacher Jane Elliot divides her class into two groups according to their eye-color. The children are then told that the brown-eyed children are not as smart as the blue-eyed children. Within a few hours the brown-eyed children performed very poorly on a class assignment—worse than they ever had before. This video is a dramatic example of the self-fulfilling prophecy concept. It provides a jump-start for a class discussion focusing on the experiences of these children and then generalizing to a variety of situations.

While most authors speak of internalized racism strictly in terms of how subordinated group members internalize their subordination (Fox, 2001; Khan, 1999; Pharr, 1988; Smith, 1998), some examine how racism also is internalized by members of the dominant group (Goodman, 2001; Hardiman & Jackson, 1997; Wijeyesinghe et al., 1997). Hardiman and Jackson (1997) write of internalized dominance as the ways in which

dominant group members have learned to express their feelings of "entitlement and privilege" (p. 21). For example a white person may take for granted that she will be safe, respected, and trusted in daily interactions with people she does not know (McIntosh, 1995). While keeping in mind that an individual white person's level of internalized entitlement is impacted by that individual's other social group memberships (that is, gender, class, sexual orientation, and other social identities), white people experience the same socialization process that reinforces the inferiority of people of color and the superiority of white people (Harro, 2000). Internalized dominance seems to be both harder to describe and harder for students to recognize. Returning to the notion of the dominant group as the defined norm, it appears to be difficult to recognize a sense of entitlement as anything other than the natural order of things.

Although it does not address all issues of entitlement, the "Class Divided" (Peters, 1985) video can be used to show internalized dominance. The children who are told they are smarter and better than the other children perform better on the academic test than they ever had before. They internalized that they are competent and able to achieve.

It is important that *both* internalized subordination and internalized dominance are addressed. Helping students to recognize how racism is internalized in their own lives, whether they experience a dominant or subordinated status, is one more way to help them to see how racism occurs as part of a larger system. When internalized racism is framed only from the perspective of subordination, white students are able to separate themselves from the issue of racism. By examining internalized dominance, it is reiterated for students that the system of racism is something that impacts every member of society.

White Privilege

Although it is important to teach about racism from both a perspective of exclusion and privilege, traditional teaching tends to focus primarily on how people of color are disadvantaged without a thorough analysis of how Whites are advantaged by the same system (Bidell et al., 1994; Derman-Sparks & Phillips, 1997; Fritschner, 2001; Goodman, 2001; Tatum, 1997; Wellman, 1993). Fritschner explains that this is because race is often described using the "absence/presence" approach, which suggests that Whites are not a race, and so they are not affected by race and racism. Fritschner suggests that race, instead, must be taught from a "relational" approach that directs attention toward racial relationships with emphasis on both advantages and disadvantages. To do this, teaching must move past an understanding of racism as simply the ways in which people of color experience discrimination and must also focus on how white people experience

subtle, yet powerful, institutional practices that work to their advantage (Goodman, 2001; Pence & Fields, 1999).

Although stressing the concept of white privilege may be considered a fundamental part of teaching about racism, it is not always easy to convey, particularly to white students. Peggy McIntosh (1995) describes white privilege as an "invisible package of unearned assets" (p. 94) that white people are taught *not* to recognize. Most white people do not see their privilege; they simply see themselves as "normal" and tend to believe that all others experience the same opportunities they do (Goodman, 2001). Educators can make visible to both white students and to students of color the many subtle and unconscious ways that white people experience privilege. One reason white privilege is so "invisible" is that white superiority has become fully entrenched in our overall culture. A sense of racial superiority is part of the life lessons that white children learn and bring with them to adulthood (Feagin & Feagin, 1996). These lessons are a result of an environment where white people are separated from people of color and absorb socializing messages about the superiority of Whites from the media, schools, and the family (Feagin & Feagin, 1996; Harro, 2000). McIntosh writes, "Whites are taught to think of their lives as morally neutral, normative, and average, and also ideal" (p. 96).

The concept of cultural racism suggests that the cultural norms of the dominant group are adopted as the norms for all of society (Feagin, 2001; Goodman, 2001; Tatum, 1997). Along with being associated with what is considered "normal," Goodman (2001) also believes that dominant groups are associated with what is considered "superior." These conscious and unconscious lessons of superiority result in an unconscious sense of entitlement. This sense of entitlement parallels with a belief in meritocracy. Many authors point to a belief in the United States as a meritocratic society as a primary block to students' recognition of white privilege (Bonilla-Silva & Forman, 2000; Goodman, 2001; McIntosh, 1995; Sleeter, 1995; Smith, 1998). Accepting the presence of white privilege means giving up a belief in the myth of meritocracy and accepting that individual effort is not necessarily what determines one's success (McIntosh, 1995). This idea is contrary to the socializing messages that most students, particularly white students, have received all of their lives.

Because this myth of meritocracy is so ingrained and white privilege so invisible, federal interventions designed to benefit people of color, such as affirmative action, are seen by most white people as an unfair advantage (Nieto, 1998; Wijeyesinghe et al., 1997). Teaching about white privilege can help students to see that although overt forms of discrimination are no longer legally sanctioned, the presence of an invasive system of white privilege still creates an un-level playing field,

and measures such as affirmation action are, in fact, reasonable and necessary (Pence & Fields, 1999).

Because white privilege is taken for granted, many students will not recognize it unless it is expressly brought to their attention through class material. Reading the classic article by Peggy McIntosh, "White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack," which originally appeared in 1988, is still possibly the single most effective way to help students understand the rudimentary nature of white privilege. McIntosh (1995) provides a concrete list of everyday examples that students can see exhibited in real life.

Goodman (2001) elaborates on McIntosh's argument, presenting students with a more thorough discussion of how privilege is hidden within a sense of superiority and entitlement and how and why individuals resist seeing themselves as privileged. An additional benefit of Goodman's chapter is that she presents the issue of privilege as it is attached to all dominant status groups (that is, males, heterosexuals, able-bodied, and so on) and discusses how privilege is mediated based on an individual's multiple social group memberships. This allows students to make a personal connection with the issue of privilege, whether or not they are white. So while McIntosh's (1995) article provides specific and concrete examples of white privilege, Goodman's chapter gives a broader picture of the overall concept of privilege. The combination of the two provides an excellent foundation for students' written reflection and subsequent class discussion of the topic of white privilege.

The recognition of white privilege is indeed a turning point, particularly for white students, in their ability to understand racism and is possibly the most powerful component in their learning about racism. Likewise, students of color can gain a label for the phenomenon they have sensed all their lives—having the concept both acknowledged and defined provides an important sense of validation.

Multiple Social Group Memberships

To fully understand racism, one must recognize that the structure of racism lives within an interlocking system of intersecting hierarchies based on race, ethnicity, class, age, gender, sexual orientation, ability status, nationality, and religion. Therefore, to gain a full view of the impact of race within an individual's life, students must learn to consider how race intersects with other social group memberships and subsequently, other forms of oppression (Collins, 1993; Goodman, 2001; Tatum, 1997)

For many years, race was spoken of as an isolated concept (Mason, 1999). Within the field of sociology, black women, feminists, lesbians, and others from marginalized groups have been credited with bringing the concepts of multiple social group memberships and identities into the theoretical literature (Allen & Chung,

2001; Bell, 1997; Mason, 1999). The concept of multiple social group memberships recognizes that each individual belongs to many different social groups, all of which have an impact on their identity.

Today, many authors consider the intersection of multiple social group memberships on a person's experience with racism (Allen & Chung, 2001; Bell, 1997; Goodman, 2001; Tatum, 1997). Additionally, many recognize that these hierarchies materialize in such a way that causes individuals to simultaneously experience both dominant and subordinated statuses (Bell, 1997; Tatum, 1997). Each person's experience with racism is heightened or buffered by their other social group memberships. For example, a white poor or working-class woman may experience white skin privilege, however her gender and class status reduce her access to social, political, and economic power. Likewise, a wealthy Latino business executive may experience the impact of racism much less directly than a poor Latina fieldworker. The concept of power and privilege becomes more complicated when we recognize that each individual holds "multiple and crosscutting social group memberships" (Bell, 1997, p. 5). Smith (1998) contends that the intersection of identities can be used as an important teaching tool. For example, he believes that one reason it is often easier for white women to gain an understanding of racism than it is for white men is the connection they can make via sexism.

It is important to start early in the semester with a thorough exploration of the concepts of social groups and multiple social group memberships. Beverly Tatum (1997) provides a clear overview of how social group memberships interact with one another within systems of oppression. After defining the concepts, students can apply them to their own lives by writing a response to Tatum's chapter in which they must identify their own social group memberships and whether they are in the dominant or the subordinated status for each. They can then reflect on the impact of these memberships on their identity through addressing questions in writing and via class discussions that include, "Which of these memberships are you most aware of on a daily basis? Why? In what ways?" and "Which of these memberships provide benefits, access, or advancement? In what ways?" Through this exercise students have the chance to clarify their own identity by talking about their social group memberships with others. They also have the opportunity to hear how other people think and feel about their own social group memberships. The sharing of these stories and experiences serves to help a class coalesce through personal disclosure and expand each student's awareness of how multiple social group memberships impact people in unique ways.

This activity encourages white students to think about how their membership in the "white group" impacts their identity; for many, this will be the first time they have reflected on this aspect of their identity. For students of color, this activity is a way to recognize their own experience with privilege as it plays out in aspects of their identity other than race. We all tend to be more aware of those social group memberships that place us in a subordinated status than we are of those that place us in the dominant status (Tatum, 1997). Therefore, it is likely that many students of color have not focused as much on the privileges they receive from their dominant group statuses (for example, male, middle-class, or heterosexual) as they have on their subordinated status within racism. Examining aspects of their identity other than race also can provide a clearer understanding of the mechanics of racism. For example, men of color may understand for the first time the invisibility of white privilege when it is compared to the invisibility of their own male privilege. This comparison provides men of color with both a chance to reflect on their own understanding of sexism, and a deeper understanding of just how invisible white privilege can be to white people.

The exploration of multiple social group memberships and identities is a valuable teaching tool, and it is impossible to fully address racism without also addressing the concept of multiple social group memberships. Students need to see that racism plays out differently in each of our lives, based on the combination of our many different social groups.

Historical Inequality

Understanding history is central to an ability to understand ourselves and the world in which we live. History is a valuable tool that social justice educators can and should use as a foundation upon which to construct the current realities of oppression. Unfortunately, as Loewen (1995) discovered in his extensive study of history education, high school textbook treatment of the subject of racism is inadequate. None of the books he reviewed explains or documents racism thoroughly, and some do not address the topic at all. He believes that the books "underplay white racism . . . [and in doing so,] the very essence of what we have inherited from slavery is the idea that it is appropriate, even natural, for whites to be on top, blacks on the bottom" (p. 144).

What are the implications for social justice educators if students come into the classroom with a limited understanding of United States history? Most students likely take an "ahistorical" view of current racial situations, and from that vantage point, it is easy to see how they come to the conclusion that an affirmative action policy is "reverse discrimination," and that anything that provides a hand-up to people of color is an "unfair advantage." Events like slavery, the displacement and genocide of Native Americans, and even Jim Crow segregation seem like ancient history, and with little or no understanding of these events, students cannot see a connection between those events and current reality.

History can be studied as a way to understand the current situation of all racial groups. For example, a powerful tool is to present a timeline of federal policies that have assisted white Americans to accumulate wealth, and those that have impeded African Americans' accumulation of wealth. This information explains the current drastic wealth inequities between black and white Americans. Currently, middle-class black American households possess only 15 cents for every dollar of wealth owned by middle-class white American households (Oliver & Shapiro, 1997). As an explanation for this discrepancy, most students think of slavery but no other historical incidents or policies that have inhibited the accumulation of wealth by black Americans. Using Oliver and Shapiro's (1997) concept, "the racialization of state policy" (p. 37), there are numerous other examples of ways that federal policies have prohibited the accumulation of wealth by people of color (for example, the Naturalization Act of 1790, Indian removal and reservation policies, Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo [1848], Jim Crow segregation, and Japanese American internment). In addition, because it is impossible to see the whole picture of racism by looking only at discrimination against people of color, it is important also to focus on the number of federal programs that have helped white Americans accumulate wealth. A series of programs designed to stimulate the U.S. economy, as well as to raise social class status (for example, the Homestead Act of 1862, National Housing Act [1934], and the G.I. Bill [Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944] were available either exclusively or disproportionately to Whites.

When a history that has systemically and continuously advantaged one group over all others is revealed, current affirmative action policies take on an entirely new appearance for students (Bell, 1997; O'Donnell, 1998). Also, through a review of past federal policies, students begin to see that the U.S. has often taken actions to help a segment of society with the central purpose of supporting the greater good through economic prosperity for its citizens.

In addition to understanding how current economics reflect the legacy of oppression, a historical review can help students see that oppressive circumstances can change through the concerted efforts of committed individuals (Bell, 1997; Moulder, 1997; Tatum, 1994). Many social justice educators teach about the history of racism by focusing on facets of oppression and too often leave out the historical examples of resistance and liberation. Most students have no personal experience with social change movements. If stories of resistance are absent from classrooms, students may feel powerless to act against racism. The study of the history of racism should include readings, speakers, and videos representing both white people and people of color involved in working toward change (Moulder, 1997; Tatum, 1994).

Finally, it is important to note that one major component of cultural racism is the simple fact that history taught in public school systems has always been written by the dominant group (Loewen, 1995; Panayi, 1999). Therefore, it has been used as a tool to support the hegemony of white supremacy. Knowles (1999) asserts that this kind of history is one in which the past is reconstructed and "sanitized" through "selective acts of historical forgetting" (p. 48). According to Loewen (1995) this sanitized history is the kind found in most high school and college textbooks in which America is portrayed as the "hero" of the story and therefore cast in a positive light. Because of this, it is not just important that history is taught, it is also important *which* history is taught (Knowles, 1999). The texts *A Different Mirror: A History of Multicultural America* (Takaki, 1993), *A People's History of the United States* (Zinn, 1995), and *The Unsteady March: The rise and Decline of Racial Equality in America* (Klinkner, 1999), are excellent examples of non-sanitized versions of history.

It is not surprising that most students arrive to class with a firm belief in the fundamental fairness of U.S. society. Centuries of "historical forgetting" have taught them that the United States is a place where anyone who works hard can get ahead. Therefore, it is crucial to share with them a history that makes clear the ways that past events and policies have directly shaped the social reality of today.

CONCLUSION

I have outlined seven concepts that are key tools to help educators teach about the systemic nature of racism. These seven concepts are fundamental ingredients for any course that seeks to address racism as a complex social phenomenon. Certainly there are additional concepts and information that bring value to a racism curriculum; however, the seven concepts discussed here cover the fundamental issues needed to help students move their perspective of racism from primarily an individual issue to one of systemic inequality.

Because most college students have not previously studied the concept of racism as a systemic phenomenon, social justice educators are challenged to expand students' views of racism to encompass its complexity. Explicating the complexity of racism and framing it in the context of a system of advantage for white people (Tatum, 1997; Wellman, 1993) is what distinguishes social justice education from much of the work in fields that frame racial groups as part of the "race problem," rather than racism as the maintenance of power by Whites (Feagin, 2001). A focus on *justice* necessitates an examination of racism as ideology, as relationships, as profound continuing inequities in all social institutions, and as a central player in every moment of United States history from the earliest

European colonists onward (Bonilla-Silva, 2001; Feagin, 2001).

One of the most insidious aspects of contemporary racism is its ability to remain camouflaged in everyday practices, policies, notions, and ideas (Bonilla-Silva, 2003; Goodman, 2001; Tatum, 1997). Americans of all ages and racial groups continue to believe in the myth of meritocracy, to blame the victims for their circumstances, and to reserve the label of "racist" exclusively for those misguided souls parading around in white sheets. The true nature of racism continues to be well hidden within society and within college curricula. Because of this, educators need to be vigilant in helping students unearth the complexity of racism. Racism should be seen not as an artifact of American history but as a current social reality that impacts virtually every aspect of students' current lives.

NOTE

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APPENDIX

Concept	Teaching strategy	Teaching Tool
Race as a social construction	Present examples showing how economic, legal, and "scientific" forces have created race as a means to promote a position of dominance for white Americans.	Website and video series: Alderman (2003a, 2003b) *Race: The Power of an Illusion* (Part 1) http://www.pbs.org/race/000_General/000_00-Home.htm
Interconnected levels of racism	Provide concrete examples of institutionalized racism in housing, health care, education, judicial system, etc.	Reading: Lipsitz (1998) *The Possessive Investment in Whiteness: How White People Profit from Identity Politics*. (Chapter 1: The Possessive Investment in Whiteness)
	Have students recognize cultural racism through an exploration of dominant U.S. cultural norms	Reading: Goodman (2001) *Promoting Diversity and Social Justice: Educating People from Privileged Groups*. (Chapter 2: About Privileged Groups)
Dominant and subordinated groups	Make clear that white Americans do not experience racial oppression through an explanation of the differences between the concepts of discrimination and oppression, as well as by examining the history of systemic racism in the U.S.	Reading: Feagin (2001) *Racist America: Roots, Current Realities and Future Reparations*. (Chapter 1: Systemic Racism)
		Reading: Tatum (1997) *Why are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?* (Chapter 1: Defining Racism)
Internalized racism	Help students recognize the ways that the ideology of racism has become integrated in their everyday lives either in the form of internalized dominance or internalized subordination.	Video: Peters (1985). *A Class Divided*
White privilege	Make visible for students the often hidden, concrete benefits and psychological freedoms, that go with being white in a society infused with racism.	Reading: Goodman (2001) *Promoting Diversity and Social Justice: Educating People from Privileged Groups*. (Chapter 2: About Privileged Groups)
		Reading: McIntosh (1995) White Privilege and Male Privilege. In Collins and Anderson (Eds.), *Race, Class and Gender: An Anthology*.
Multiple social group memberships	Have students begin to investigate and understand their own multiple identities through writing and reflecting on their identities and listening to the stories of others.	Reading: Tatum (1997) *Why are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?* (Chapter 2: The Complexity of Identity)
Historical inequality	Present a timeline of federal policies that have assisted white Americans to accumulate wealth and those that have impeded African Americans' accumulation of wealth	Reading: Oliver & Shaprio (1997) *Black Wealth/White Wealth*. (Chapter 2: A Sociology of Wealth and Racial Inequality)
		Website and video Series: Alderman (2003a, 2003b) *Race: The Power of an Illusion*. (Parts 2 & 3)