UNDERSTANDING THE IMPACT OF WHITE PRIVILEGE

Peggy McIntosh, Associate Director of the Wellesley College Center for Research on Women, describes white privilege as ‘an invisible package of unearned assets, which I can count on cashing in each day, but about which I was ‘meant’ to remain oblivious. White privilege is like an invisible weightless knapsack of special provisions, maps, passports, code books, visas, clothes, tools, and blank checks’ (McIntosh, 1989).

White privilege results from identifiable racial hierarchy that creates a system of social advantages or ‘special rights’ for whites based primarily on race rather than merit. Whiteness in and of itself confers both real and perceived powers that are not conferred on people of colour on the same basis.

Manifestations of white privilege - e.g. having little fear about ignoring the perspectives and powers of other races - need to be approached not as unproblematic, but interrogated and calculated as moments in a regime of power and knowledge that advance particular race or community interests over others, thus, perpetuating inequities.

INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION WEEKLY

Word of the Week

Anam Cara

(Gaelic expression)
In the Celtic tradition, there is a beautiful understanding of love and friendship, an idea of soul-love; the old Gaelic term for this is anam cara.

Anam’ is the Gaelic word for soul and ‘cara’ is the word for friend. In the Celtic world, anam cara thus refers to a ‘soul friend’, someone to whom you reveal the hidden intimacies of your life.
The concept of the 8 White Identities has been developed by Barnor Hesse, an Associate Professor of African American Studies, Political Science and Sociology at Northwestern University. According to Hesse, ‘there is a regime of whiteness, and there are action-oriented white identities’. He breaks these down into eight, from White Supremacist to White Abolitionist.

How can we all become White Abolitionists willing to step in the way of racism when possible? How can we begin to work against systems of oppression, rather than seeing racism as individual actions? Finally, how can we raise awareness about injustice and abuse and contribute to reforming damaging structures that make abuse more likely?

According to Hesse, the process of embodying anti-racism begins with examining our own identities. A newly defined sense of self can help energise our efforts to confront racism and oppression in daily life and consistently express anti-racist behaviours and attitudes.

**Embodied Anti-Racism: Recognising Your Own Identity**

**White Supremacist**
- Clearly marked white society that preserves, names and values white superiority
- Wouldn’t change a white supremacist; desires non-whiteness because it’s interesting, pleasurable; seeks to control the consumption and appropriation of non-whiteness; fascination with culture

**White Voyeurism**
- May critique supremacy, but a deep investment in questions of fairness/equality
- Sympathetic to a set of issues but only privately; won’t speak/act in solidarity publicly because benefitting through whiteness in public

**White Benefit**
- Some exposure of whiteness takes place, but as a way of being accountable to POC after; seek validation from POC

**White Critical**
- Take on board critiques of whiteness and invest in exposing white regime; refuses to be complicit with the regime

**White Traitor**
- Actively refuses complicity; names what’s going on; intention is to subvert white authority and tell the truth at whatever cost

**White Abolitionist**
- Changing institutions, dismantling whiteness, and not allowing whiteness to reassert itself

**EMBODIED ANTI-RACISM: RECOGNISING YOUR OWN IDENTITY**

Source: Barnor Hesse, ‘The 8 White Identities’

Word of the Week

**Ya’aburnee**

(Arabic noun) This probably lies somewhere between romantic and morbid, and is perhaps the most beautiful yet disturbing way of letting someone know that you’d quite like them to stick around for a while.

Meaning ‘you bury me’, ya’aburnee stands for one’s hope that they will die before another person, as it would be too difficult living without them.
The Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS) is a theoretical framework used for describing how individuals experience difference and develop intercultural competence. DMIS suggests that as one’s experience of cultural differences and commonalities becomes more sophisticated, one’s potential competence in intercultural interactions increases.

The model consists of five orientations: Denial, Defense, Minimisation, Acceptance, and Adaptation. Each orientation indicates a particular worldview structure with certain attitudes and behaviours vis-à-vis cultural differences associated with each configuration.

Changes in worldview structures generate new issues to be resolved in intercultural encounters and the resolution of these issues activates the emergence of the next orientation. Are you willing to develop your intercultural competence and, by doing so, examine the ways you are responding to and engaging with cultural differences?

**Ethnocentrism**
The experience of one’s own culture as ‘central to reality’. Beliefs and behaviours that people receive in their primary socialisation are unquestioned.

**Ethnorelativism**
The experience of one’s own beliefs and behaviours as just one organisation of reality among many viable possibilities.

**INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION WEEKLY**

**ETHNOCENTRISM**

The experience of one’s own culture as ‘central to reality’. Beliefs and behaviours that people receive in their primary socialisation are unquestioned.

**ETHNORELATIVISM**

The experience of one’s own beliefs and behaviours as just one organisation of reality among many viable possibilities.

**DEVELOPING INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE THROUGH DMIS**

Source: Milton J. Bennett, ‘Towards Ethnorelativism’

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**WORD OF THE WEEK**

**Boketto**

(Japanese noun) Boketto stands for ‘gazing vacantly into the distance without really thinking about anything specific’.

It’s nice that the Japanese think so highly of thinking about nothing much at all that they actually gave it a name.

With the overcrowded and hurried lives we often lead, it can refresh the mind to go wandering, with no destination in particular.