



Making the “Invisible” Visible: Exploring White Awareness & Facilitation

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As informed by 24 research project participants and
hundreds of others.

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Why are we always getting told to go and talk about racism in the parking lot after the meeting? Why is race always a side dish and never the main course?

-Nonviolence training workshop participant (not a participant in this study)

INTRODUCTION

A series of life experiences, many of them as a student, educator and facilitator over 25 years, lead me in 2007 to ask myself the question:

How does my unconsciousness about my white social conditioning and white privilege impact my ability to be a GREAT facilitator?

While continuing to engage in my own self-reflective process, I also began to engage twenty-four others, knowledgeable and experienced in the fields of whiteness, diversity and facilitation, in conversations about their thoughts on the ways they have seen white social conditioning impact group facilitation. Some of the findings of this study are presented in this packet and accompanying workshop presentation.

What do I mean by White Social Conditioning?

The core values of white culture permeate and dominate our institutions. None of us today created this system, however it is in place and we need to do very little to keep it going. Interrupting this system takes energy, effort, will, commitment, skillfulness, collaboration and allyship, love...

Some examples of white cultural values include:

- An emphasis on the individual;
- Who we are and our worth are defined by what we do and how much money we make;
- The wisdom of “experts” with formal credentials;
- Emotions should not be expressed, and much more...

I recognize, that since I was born, I have been “trained” to be white - to see white as the norm and desirable, and others as “different” and less desirable.

White Privilege

The unearned benefits, rights, or advantages, a person receives simply for having “white” skin. White Privilege can also provide immunity or exemption from certain burdens or liabilities (e.g. *while I experience risk and discomfort when I bring issues of white privilege into workshop settings, I have not experienced the same kind of retaliation I have witnessed and heard people of color have experienced in introducing this topic*). (Peggy McIntosh and others)

White privilege is not a judgment against white people as much as simply a cultural and institutional analysis. It is not about placing blame, but recognizing it creates opportunities for change.

“Race shapes every experience we have, but we, as white people, are not always clear about that.” - Frances Kendall

Another View of Privilege

Nanci Luna Jiménez in her article “The Hidden Costs of Privilege” describes how what many of us have come to call “privileges” instead should be considered human rights that everyone should have access to, rather than “special rights” for a few (as the word “privilege” implies).

She also points out there are costs of this so-called “privilege,” including isolation and disconnection (from self and others) to those who are granted access to these “privileges” by virtue of membership in particular non-target groups.

People who are the targets of oppression also encounter loss as they respond to pressure to assimilate in hopes of gaining access to these human rights we would all be afforded in a truly equitable society.

Ms. Luna Jiménez reframes a popular view of privilege as not about special benefits limited to those with power, but in fact about loss for everyone in one way or another. By viewing them as losses, she suggests that we not only have a different perspective but also motivation for eliminating power imbalances and its resulting discrimination.

METHODOLOGY AND THEMES

A series of one-on-one interviews were held with 24 people who have devoted much of their professional and personal lives to creating a more equitable world. They have particular insight and expertise in the areas of white social conditioning, privilege, diversity, and facilitation. After reviewing notes and audio recordings of the interviews, I identified four major themes from their responses, which were verified with the participants. The themes are:

- Examples of what white social conditioning & white privilege look like in facilitation
- Established facilitation practices examined through the lenses of white social conditioning and white privilege
- Preventions and interventions for facilitating difficult diversity-related moments
- Strategies for increasing personal awareness and facilitative capacity to support groups

THEME 1: EXAMPLES OF HOW WHITE PRIVILEGE AND/OR WHITE SOCIAL CONDITIONING SHOW UP IN FACILITATION

The following is a list of examples I heard from participants in this study, and from my own experience, of some of the ways white privilege and white social conditioning show up in facilitation. I clustered them into categories, based on my perspective.

As with any list of experiences, these examples may not come from white social conditioning alone. Other mitigating factors are no doubt also at play, such as other isms related to class, religion, gender, disability, sexual orientation, language, etc., personality styles, and other factors. The list is not intended to be exhaustive, nor a set of “absolutes.” However, it has been helpful for me to be honest with myself and acknowledge that at some point I have enacted most, if not all of these examples, and that they emanate at least in part from my white social conditioning. I hold this truth with gentleness and with an understanding of a larger system at play, not with a desire to chastise myself or others. Seeing these aspects of my conditioning in myself is what opens a door for me to continue to gain deeper awareness as a facilitator. This is a lifelong journey I continue to explore, stumble in, and get inspired by over and over.

Each title in bold describes one way that being immersed in the dominant white culture can shape and influence group facilitation. Under each title is a list of examples from participants. Ideas in italics are direct quotes from participants.

Assuming We All Experience the World the Same, and Have the Same Access to Power

- The tendency to minimize differences, “We’re all basically the same.” *“If I ignore differences, I don’t have to look at myself, my assumptions, or my biases. I don’t have to change. I can focus on getting others to change, to be more like me.”* And from another participant, *“It’s tiring to not have that difference known.”*
- What seems like a benign question or task to me, can be difficult/more complicated for someone else (e.g. the story of your name, a communication exercise). White social conditioning can keep us unaware and insensitive of the impact a question, instruction, or exercise may have on someone.
- Making assumptions of others’ common experience, “When you were growing up and you ate macaroni and cheese...”
- Making assumptions about why those not speaking are not speaking; assuming everyone has equal access to speaking and being heard.
- Not seeing how race is related to an issue being discussed
- Relying on my good intentions to absolve me of responsibility for an unintended yet also unwelcome outcome
- “Assuming we all have equal access to power benefits those with the most privilege.”

Feeling Entitled, Protecting My Image

- Expecting to be seen as an individual, to be given the benefit of the doubt, or that I “deserve” to be here (wherever “here” is).
- Being used to having control, credibility, authority, decision making power, resource allocation power
- Not being judged, or my credibility questioned because of my race
- Expecting people of color to educate me or the group about race

- Relying on or buying into the “expert” model, and therefore separating myself from the group
- Fear of admitting I don’t know something, because I’m supposed to be the expert
- White social conditioning creates a desire to look good, to be seen as a good person. This creates a fear of making a mistake, being wrong, and admitting I was wrong, because we have been told it is not possible to be wrong and still be a “good person.”
- Sitting back and judging others, creating a distance between self and others
- Not seeing how my individual words, behaviors, perspectives and actions are informed by, and connected to, a larger, social/institutional level of racism; When I am challenged or called on something, I take it totally personally at the expense of being able to address the larger social/institutional issue.
- Hearing observations made about the social/institutional level of racism only on the personal level, denying the truth in it by defending myself “I never did that...”

Wanting to Contain Emotion and Conflict

- Flattening my own emotions, not connecting with my own pain of oppression, or the pain of others’
- Being uncomfortable when emotional intensity & conflict are expressed
- Perceiving emotion as “unprofessional” and disregarding it as a source of information.
- Putting a “cap” on how much emotion is permitted. *“When was the last time that when talking about something that really hurt you or others, you were expected to tone it down to an emotionally-contained manner... as if it was something to be calmly talking over a cup of tea?”*
- Having a desire to fix or quickly resolve conflict, and acting prematurely on it.
- Perceiving or labeling any expressed emotion or direct communication as “confrontational” or “angry” and therefore not acceptable in the group.
- Not understanding, ignoring or dismissing one’s sense of urgency and passion for social justice as expressed through emotional intensity
- Viewing conflict as only an interpersonal issue, rather than also a group and social issue
- Confusing a “need for safety” with a “desire for comfort”
- *“A culture of (alleged) niceness surrounds white privilege.”* When emotion and conflict surface, it can be shut down if the facilitator isn’t comfortable with the discomfort.

Being Time, Task and Agenda Driven

- Deciding for the group there is/isn’t time for a conversation about a racial issue
- Staying with the agenda after a critical issue has come up
- Dismissing issues about race as “not what we are here to talk about”
- Discomfort with silence, filling silence
- Rapid pacing, rapid rhythm of meetings, a strong orientation to time, starting meetings “on time”. *“I’m a time keeper and that’s as white as hell.”*
- Discounting the power of story telling as a method for “getting work done”
- Higher value placed on task, lower value placed on relationship and process
- Higher value placed on the future than on the present moment or the past.
- Higher value place on linear, scientific, “rational” thinking and processes, than on abstract, creative, intuitive, big picture, circular... processes

Drawing from Predominantly/Exclusively White Perspectives

- The quotes, examples, music, hypothetical names, historical markers, metaphors, facilitation models, pictures, I use or draw from.
- Choosing venues in predominantly/exclusively white neighborhoods for multiracial groups
- Valuing the separation of personal and professional; valuing individual participation over family participation (e.g. who comes to the meeting, who enjoys the meeting/conference accommodations).

Getting Caught in the “Good White Person” Trap

- Saving, rescuing, feeling pity for people of color, not wanting to just be “good” but to be the “Super Hero who will always maintain the top ranking place...” while still expecting appreciation.
- Wanting to be the one to “empower” others without recognizing this implies I have the power and will dole it out to others (controlling resources)
- Rephrasing what a participant said to make it more politically correct
- Looking for quick fixes or “patches” to complex diversity issues (e.g. invite “one of each” to speak on a panel about their experiences of being a member of x group, “get more people of color,” “create a scholarship”)
- Wanting to create a multicultural environment but not recognizing how cultural appropriation (the complex and contested issue where dominant group members use practices, artifacts, etc. from marginalized cultural groups) can create an unwelcoming environment
- Thinking I am being inclusive by asking a person of color to speak “as a person of color” about an issue, while white participants can speak as individuals. *“I feel my color is on display, rather than me having the opportunity to give what I want to give.”*
- Judging or distancing myself from other white people who I perceive “don’t get it.”
- Staying silent or inactive out of the fear of doing it “wrong”

Having My View of What is Happening in the Group Limited by White Social Conditioning and White Privilege

- The questions I ask/don’t think to ask, or feel uncomfortable asking. For example, Not asking myself “How is race a factor in this interaction?”
- What I do/don’t notice (e.g. patterns of racial participation, who holds power--formal and informal--in the group, who makes decisions and how?)
- Being unaware of “elephants in the room” and/or unskillful in naming them or inquiring about them
- Not trusting the group’s wisdom and capacity to work with difficulty, so I separate and disconnect myself as the facilitator

Using only White Cultural Values to Determine What is Considered:

- Disruptive” or “disrespectful” behavior
- A “professional” attitude, behavior, dress...
- A “positive attitude”
- On/off topic
- The “right” or “normal” way to communicate or behave

THEME 2: Established Facilitation Practices Examined through the Lens of White Social Conditioning: “Safe Space,” “Neutral Facilitator,”

On “Safe Space”

“Everyone needs to be safe. Privilege is how much safety you think you have a right to. (AND) The universe is not a safe place.” - Rita Shimmin

We often confuse “safety” with “comfort”.

“People need to feel held, cared for, nurtured in the work, but not too comfortable.” -Swan Keyes (not a participant)

Reframing “safe space” to creating a “courageous space,” “brave space,” or “trustworthy” space.

How do we create a space that is safe enough to take risks, make mistakes, forgive ourselves and others, and learn and grow?

On the “Neutral Facilitator”

“My role is neutral, my thoughts can’t be. Hopefully my actions are.” - Dan Duster

“The ‘neutral facilitator’ is a cultural illusion.” – Gabriela Melano

“...*individualism* and *ethnocentrism* are perhaps the strongest in the USA than any other place I have lived (different parts of the Americas, Europe, and Asia), and thus (profess) the strongest allegation of ‘objectivity’ or ‘neutrality.’ Since in the US, White Unitedstatesians continue to hold the majority of rank and power, there is nothing like having those 'at the top', who tend to be oblivious to the realities of those of us below, defining reality for all of us!”

After sharing the statement above, this participant expressed the dilemma many people of color whose emotional cap is more expansive than what white cultural typically allows, when she asked, “Do you think it is too strong? See? This is a pattern- I state something that I believe is (rightfully) emotionally charged and I am concerned about being ‘too strong’ ... Whites tend to not like it, and take it as if it was a personal attack. I doubt that I am the only one experiencing these types of interpersonal power dynamics when addressing diversity matters. Having been raised in a culture where intellectual debate does not need to be toned down to avoid hurting feelings, you can imagine just how frustrating this is.”

On Transparency

How do we acknowledge that the risks of being transparent are different for us across our different identities – both as participants and as facilitators? One facilitator’s transparency may be seen as courageous, while another’s affirms the questions participants had of their credibility in the first place.

On Brainstorming

How might white history, white culture, white social conditioning shape the ideas that quickly come to mind?

On Community Building Activities

Asking participants to talk about themselves in front of the group: “Is there space for humbleness?”

How do risk and vulnerability vary across racial lines?

THEME 3: Preventions & Interventions

Preventions:

Radical Trust (based on the work of Robert Horton and Rita Shimmin)

- 90% of working in a group is Radical Trust (radical trust in the basic goodness of oneself and others)
- 10% is knowing what to do when the trust doesn't work. Facilitation training usually addresses this 10%.
- 90% of facilitation is inner work and working with relationships. Groups are a combination of individuals and relationships.
- If a person works on themselves, and all their inner parts, wanted and unwanted, this self awareness can be applied to working with a group.

Group Agreements

Creating agreements that open up the process, rather than react only to the past or anticipated distress.

“So that at the end of the meeting we can say it was a (insert values) respectful, inclusive... what agreements do we need to make so it is more likely we will achieve this outcome?”

“We might say something, perhaps unintentionally, that is hurtful to another. Is there an agreement we might make to help us in those moments?” e.g. Ouch/Oops, Others?

Recognizing the cultural values, life experiences and power dynamics inherent in agreements like “speak one at a time,” “respect,” “agree to disagree,” “don't take things personally,” “assume good intentions,” “no attacks.”

Making transparent “Client”/Consultant Agreements

“Here are some of the principles I operate by”

Agenda Design

Making “space” in the agenda to support what comes up

Preparing the Space

Navigating the dilemma of creating a multiculturally welcoming space while not practicing “cultural appropriation” (e.g. invite participants to help create space).

Self Awareness

Being aware of how my verbal and non-verbal communication sets a tone, and sends a message about what kinds of expression, emotion, energy, or intensity are “acceptable” to the group.

Interventions

Notice/Check-in

“I noticed... What do you think is happening here?”

“What are you experiencing right now?”

“I'm noticing some tension, only a few are talking. Let's go around so you can say what is up for you, passing is always an option... As the rest of us listen, notice what comes up

you. Notice what you are feeling as you hear a range of views.”

“What has been left unsaid?”

“When did you feel uncomfortable, but didn’t speak about it?”

Acknowledge

“I heard you say...”

Invite to Define

“Sometimes that word is hard for some to hear, can you tell us what you mean by that?”

Build Connections

“We all do this... let’s look at how we can all use this in our roles as...”

Get Permission

“Do I have your permission to explore with you both your intentions as well as what might be the unintended impact...Let’s all do this together...”

Explore possibilities with curiosity

“Who sees this from another angle?”

“Let’s find out what happened...”

“Start with a whisper”

Give the group an opportunity with a “softer” prompt to engage in the issue.

Demonstrate and support allyship from a place of solidarity, not pity

Follow up (during breaks, provide/explore opportunities for groups to continue conversations outside the meeting)

Build Group Capacity

To intervene and to be intervened with

Tease out Feelings

Especially related to intent and impact

Take a breath, sit with the feelings

Invite the group to as well

Recognize the desire to “move on” prematurely

Shift from the desire to show people how they are wrong to understanding where they are coming from. “Meeting people where they are, not where you want them to be.”

THEME 4: Increasing My Awareness and Capacity

Practice compassion for self & others

Do the inner work necessary to expand capacity to hold intensity, discomfort, emotion, conflict, & not-knowing

Own the diversity I do bring, own all my parts.

Shift my frame of reference.

Practice cultural humility

Hold the agenda along with an openness for what else arises

Notice my assumptions, judgments, triggers, privilege, & stereotypes every day, and be curious about them

Read, talk, track, study, listen, listen, listen, reflect

Hold a beginner's mind...

“You don't get it. I don't get it. Nobody gets it. How could we?” - Rita Shimmin

“Inexperience can unveil something so basic and profound.” - Barbara MacKay

“Returning to Beginner's Mind” - Robert Horton

Articulate “Competencies” or “Capacities” that are Important for Facilitators

Several participants spoke of particular capacities and competencies they felt were important for effective facilitators, especially related to understanding power dynamics in groups. Some of those competencies include:

- Holds the agenda, desired outcomes along with an openness to what else arises
- Asks questions that support the group in noticing power dynamics
- Has the capacity to see and bring up power dynamics
- Supports participants in exploring issues on multiple levels (moving beyond taking things personally)
- Helps the group become more aware of themselves and their dynamics.
- Demonstrates self awareness, and self reflection, on the ways identity, power and privilege impact their facilitation
- Demonstrates awareness of own feelings and effectively engages group in feeling and exploring theirs.
- Supports a group that experiences tension, conflict, passion, and a range of intense feelings
- Demonstrates deep, deep, deep listening, with awareness of assumptions, biases, values, judgments...
- Facilitates the collective cultural work of an organization
- Stumbles, falls down, makes mistakes, holds self accountable, models (self) forgiveness
- Is aware of what they don't know about their own and other cultural groups, and seeks out learning.

Tracking Exercise

Adapted from the Tracking Exercise of Robert A. Horton

The goals of the Tracking Exercise are:

- To experience the tool of tracking,
- See what can be learned from the process of tracking,
- And how it can help us understand our white training,
- To continue to build our self-reflective capacity to look at our beliefs, assumptions, perspectives, and behavior through the lens of white social conditioning, while holding it in the context of our, basic human decency or basic goodness.

1. Bring to mind a facilitation experience involving race (in content, interacting with someone of a different race from you). Visualize the situation clearly.

- How did it begin?
- What did you say? What did you hear?
- What did you do? What did you see others do?
- What smells were present?
- Was touch involved? If so, how?
- Was taste involved? If so, how?
- What was the pace of the interaction, fast, slow...?
- What did you feel in your body?
- How did you move?
- What emotions did you feel?
- Was there anything else you remember now about the setting, the interaction?

2. Quickly write down what you noticed.

3. Tracking in pairs

a. Person doing the tracking briefly describes the situation.

b. Instructions for Questioner: Your role is just to ask the questions and let the speaker share. The purpose of this exercise is for sharing and reflection, rather than dialogue among group members.

Questioner asks:

- What did you notice that you hadn't noticed before in this memory?
- What other isms, or differences in rank were present?
- What role did white racial conditioning and/or white privilege play in this situation?

4. Large Group Discussion

- What was challenging?
- Did you find yourself wanting to be the "Good White Person"?
- To the listener, did you notice yourself having any reactions – fixing, offering advice, distancing, judging, wanting them to feel better...
- How have you worked with this situation before?
- The more one does tracking, the more rigorous the questions can become, and more in depth we can see.

FACILITATION PREPARATION

Reflecting on Power and Privilege

This worksheet was developed to assist facilitation teams in preparing to co-facilitate Action Planning sessions. It can be adapted for individual or co-facilitation use, in many contexts.

Reflecting on Myself (to be shared with co-facilitator(s))

Part I: My knowledge and experience related to the work of the group

1. How much previous knowledge and/or experience do I have with this organization/group, or the work the organization/group does?
2. How might my knowledge and experience be an asset for me as a facilitator?
3. How might my knowledge or experience provide challenges for me to be mindful of before, during and after the facilitation?

Part II: Preparation for diversity in the room

1. Based on what I know about the participants, in what ways am I similar to and different from people in the group (e.g. in terms of age, class background, race, language, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, citizenship status, education experience, formal education, etc.)?

What are some things I want to be mindful of before, during and after the facilitation in light of those similarities and differences (e.g. Are the processes, meeting space, and materials screened for bias, inclusive, relevant and accessible to all participants?)?

2. What differences in social power exist between facilitators, participants, and between facilitators and participants? For example, if I am a young person, and a majority of the participants are older than me, what impact might that have? Or if I am white and some/many/most of the participants are persons of color, what impact might that have? (e.g. What assumptions might I have about people in the group?), or if I am heterosexual and my co-facilitator is gay, what privileges in facilitation might I have access to that he is denied?

What do I want to be mindful of before, during and after the facilitation as a result of these power differences?

3. What is a fear or an apprehension that I have as I anticipate facilitating with this group? With this co-facilitator?
4. What are some differences or deficiencies I have? Do I need to acknowledge any of these to the group, to my co-facilitator?
5. How can I draw from my experiences and personal awareness to turn those deficiencies around?
6. What can I trust in myself that will enable me to serve this group responsibly and sensitively?

Reflecting on Our Team of Facilitators:

1. What diversity does our facilitation team bring (e.g. in terms of age, class background, race, language, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, citizenship status, education, etc.) to the experience of the group we will be working with?
2. What are some of the ways our team is missing diversity that the group may hold? In light of this, what do we want to be mindful of as a team as we facilitate?
3. What do I want my co-facilitator to be mindful of, to best support me?
4. What does my co-facilitator want me to be mindful of, to best support them?

Developed by Kathleen Rice, Ph.D., CTF, and Dennis Jennings, CTF

FROM PERSPECTIVES OUTSIDE THIS STUDY FOR ADDITIONAL REFLECTION

Asking Questions without Awareness of Potential Impact

Not long ago, I was invited to give a guest lecture on working with diverse ethnic groups to students in a course on counseling psychology. As part of my job as multicultural coordinator at the university's counseling center, I train counseling supervisors and provide therapy, so the lecture topic obviously fit my areas of expertise. After my talk, the professor asked if I could share with the students something about the development of my ethnic identity as a Latina. I felt that I was being asked to sum up what it was like to be Mexican. Because my presentation had not covered Latino psychology or working with the Latino population per se, I was caught off guard. I asked the professor to repeat the question, just to give myself time to think. **Was I really supposed to share, on demand, personal experiences that had shaped me?** I found myself wondering whether one of my white colleagues would ever hear: "In the time we have left, I wonder if you could tell us a bit about when you came to grips with your white privilege or racism?" My first thought was to observe that asking the question exemplified white privilege... Because my lecture had focused on the development of racial identity, rather than Latino values, I suspected that the professor was not asking me to talk about my culture as much as about my experience -- and rage. Here was one of those cases in which members of minority groups are not treated the same as whites, who are seldom asked to bare their souls in the interest of educating people from a different ethnic group. **Dr. Elizabeth Reyes, "Who's Culture Is It Anyway?" Chronicle of Higher Education Editorial**

The Impact of Not Seeing, Not Hearing

When those who have the power to name and to socially construct reality choose not to see you or hear you . . . when someone with the authority of a teacher, say, describes the world and you are not in it, there is a moment of psychic disequilibrium, as if you looked in the mirror and saw nothing. (It takes some strength of soul—and not just individual strength but collective understanding—to resist this void, this non-being, into which you are thrust, and to stand up, demanding to be seen and heard. **-Adrienne Rich**

Reframing "The Enemy" or Perhaps What Some Label "The Difficult Participant"

I would further advise you not to take on other people's enemies. Most damage that others do to us is out of fear, humiliation and pain. Those feelings occur in all of us, not just in those of us who profess a certain religious or racial devotion. We must learn actually not to have enemies, but only confused adversaries who are ourselves in disguise. **– Alice Walker in Open Letter to Barack Obama from Alice Walker**

On the "Neutral Facilitator"

"Facilitation does not occur on a neutral stage, but in the real world of hierarchical power relations...we bring our positions in the hierarchies that order the world, including those based on race, gender, class..." **-Juanita Johnson-Bailey & Ronald M. Cervero**

On "Safety"

Perspective I: Parker Palmer describes six paradoxical tensions that need to be built into learning spaces in his book The Courage to Teach. One of them is that learning spaces need to be hospitable – 'inviting as well as open, safe and trustworthy as well as free'. When exploring we need "places to rest , places to find nourishment, even places to seek shelter when one feels overexposed. But if

we feel too safe, then we may stay on the surface of things. Space also needs to be charged so that we may know the risks involved in looking at the deeper things of life. “No special effects are required to create this charge... We only need fence the space, fill it with topics of significance, and refuse to let anyone evade or trivialize them.” -**From [Infed.org/thinkers](http://infed.org/thinkers) on Parker J. Palmer, and from Courage to Teach, Parker Palmer.**

Perspective II: I think I've figured out what it is I hate about those "racial dialogue" groups that seem to be springing up across the country nowadays...it's the part where the dialogue facilitator says something to the effect of: "We want this to be a safe space, where everyone feels free to express their views without fear of being shouted down or ridiculed for their beliefs."

Although it isn't usually made explicit, this admonition about the importance of safety is almost always really about making white people feel safe. After all, people of color rarely feel safe discussing race amongst members of the dominant group, and it's pretty unlikely that a simple sentence calling for civility would change that.

Black and brown folks know that race is a touchy subject, and yet they engage in race dialogue (whether formal or informal) as a matter of survival: they have to do it, safe or not, because the alternative is to continue neglecting an issue that is far too important to their everyday lives.

The whites in these dialogue groups, on the other hand, are often tentative to a point that is almost farcical. Nervous, afraid of saying the wrong thing, and convinced that people of color will yell at them for a slip of the tongue, whites often remain in a shell when racial dialogues begin.

This is one of the reasons that facilitators often go out of their way to create "safety." They are hoping that whites will participate more honestly if only they can be guaranteed that black people won't attack them for their ignorance.

Such a concern is, of course, preposterous, coming as it does from members of the most powerful group on the planet. I mean really now, do we, as whites believe there is any group on Earth that is safer than we are? Do we honestly think that people of color are in a position to jump our asses in a controlled workshop setting? What do we think they're going to do? Knife us for God's sakes? -- **Tim Wise, No Such Space as Safe <http://www.zmag.org/zspace/commentaries/1999>, and Author of White Like Me: Reflections on Race from a Privileged Son.**

See Also: Arao, (B) and Lonardo, K. confronting the Paradox of Safety in Social Justice Education. New York University. <http://www.nyu.edu/residential.education/pdfs/ppt.safe.space.pdf>.

On Ego, Authority and Control

In my experience, one of the reasons that we struggle to be effective in our anti-racist work is because of the way our egos get in the way. My own ego has been a problem and I've seen how it gets in the way in organizations and communities where we don't want to really explore different ways of holding power because of our attachment to self-image and a sense of our own importance (and the idea that we are indispensable). Our egos matter and getting them out of the way matters precisely because one powerful manifestation of white supremacy culture is to be so attached to our egos that we can't serve the community or ourselves well. - **Tema Okun, “From White Racist to White Anti-Racist.”**

On Intention and Impact

In response to Attorney General Eric Holder's speech to Justice Department employees urging the country to engage in difficult conversations about race:

...the reality is that because we have such wildly different perspectives on why racial disparities exist, and because they continue to exist long after explicit racism has been outlawed, discussion of racial issues requires a high degree of tolerance for conflict, both intellectual and emotional. In my work reporting on the lives of everyday people and the institutions that shape their lives, I can see how our current rules and structures continue to produce disparities, even when no one intends that outcome. Understanding how the structures work - which has little to do with whether individuals intend to be racist - helps to lower the heat level significantly when these conversations do take place. - **Rinku, Sen, President & Executive Director, Applied Research Center**

RESOURCES ON WHITE SOCIAL CONDITIONING AND WHITE PRIVILEGE

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National/International Training Opportunities

- VISIONS. 4-day institute to increase multicultural skillfulness: <http://www.visions-inc.org/>
- Stir Fry Seminars (Unlearning racism, sexism, heterosexism, film resources, consultant services, etc.): <http://www.stirfryseminars.com/>
- The UNtraining: UNtraining white liberal racism. <http://www.untraining.org/>

Education-Focused Diversity Work

- National Association for Multicultural Education (focus is K-12: <http://www.nameorg.org/>)
- Diversity Web: Diversity and Democracy Resource Hub for Higher Education <http://www.diversityweb.org/>
- Race Talks: Education about multiculturalism in law school and other settings: <http://www.racetalks.org/indexfla.html>

Intergroup Dialogue

- <http://www.igr.umich.edu/>
- <http://depts.washington.edu/sswwweb/idea/welcome.html>

Organizational Development Resources

- California Tomorrow (great resources on integrating values of diversity and equity into strategic planning to develop a consistent, long-term commitment) <http://www.californiatomorrow.org/>

Identity Related Web Sites – there are thousands available – a google search will bring up many sites related to specific cultural groups as well as various -isms. Using key words such as “religious oppression” or “gender empowerment” with any identity will bring up a variety of sites.

Race and Pop Culture

- <http://www.racialicious.com/>
- <http://newdemographic.com>

Addressing White Privilege

- <http://www.whiteprivilege.com/>
- <http://whitepriv.blogspot.com/>
- <http://colours.mahost.org/org/maleprivilege.html>
- <http://allywork.solidaritydesign.net/>
- <http://witnessingwhiteness.com/>
- Center for Study of White American Culture: A Multicultural Organization www.euroamerican.org

The Catalyst Project: <http://www.collectiveliberation.org/>

AWARE-LA, Awareness of White Anti-Racists Everywhere – Los Angeles: www.awarela.org/

Paul Kivel: www.paulkivel.com/

Lauren Kucera: www.antiracism.com

Challenging White Supremacy: www.cwsworkshop.org

Tim Wise: www.timwise.org/

White Anti-Racists Community Action Network: www.wacan.org/

Y-Step Youth Stepping Toward Addressing Racism: www.ystep.org/

Vignettes for Racial Diversity Training: <http://www.learningdiversity.com/>

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I would like to express my deep gratitude for the “content experts” who contributed to this study:

Cathy Avila-Linn

Annie Bentz

Janet Carter

Shoshanna Cogan

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Robert Horton

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Dennis Jennings

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Nancy Lee

Barbara MacKay

Debian Marty

Tim McMahan

Gabriela Melano

Tania Mitchell

Caren Ohlson

Catherine Orland

Rita Shimmin

Bethhtina Woodridge

Meg Yardley

Odin Zackman

Vidya Iyengar