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Article in *American Psychologist* · December 2004

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Whiteness and Ethnocentric Monoculturalism: Making the “Invisible” Visible

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Whiteness and ethnocentric monoculturalism are powerful and entrenched determinants of worldview. Because they are invisible and operate outside the level of conscious

Editor's Note

Derald Wing Sue received the Award for Distinguished Career Contributions to Education and Training in Psychology. Award winners are invited to deliver an award address at the APA's annual convention. A version of this award address was delivered at the 112th annual meeting, held July 28–August 1, 2004, in Honolulu, Hawaii. Articles based on award addresses are reviewed, but they differ from unsolicited articles in that they are expressions of the winners' reflections on their work and their views of the field.

awareness, they can be detrimental to people of color, women, and other marginalized groups in society. Both define a reality that gives advantages to White Euro American males while disadvantaging others. Although most Americans believe in equality and fairness, the inability to deconstruct these 2 concepts allows society to continue unjust actions and arrangements toward minority groups. Making the "invisible" visible is the major challenge to liberating individuals and society from the continued oppression of others.

The American Psychological Association's "Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct" (APA, 2002) states explicitly that psychologists must attend to cultural, individual, and role differences related to age, gender, race, ethnicity, and national origin if they are to provide appropriate services to a culturally diverse population. In 2002, the APA took an historic step when the Council of Representatives endorsed the "Guidelines on Multicultural Education, Training, Research, Practice, and Organizational Change for Psychologists" (APA, 2003).¹ Whereas these multicultural guidelines pertain primarily to racial/ethnic minority groups, it is among several major documents (APA, 1993, 2000; Sue et al., 1982, 1998) that has challenged the profession of psychology as being culture-bound and potentially biased toward racial/ethnic minorities, women, and gay men and lesbians.

Given that there is increasing recognition of the potentially biased nature of the science of human behavior and that there are calls to attend to important sociodemographic variables, I have often wondered why psychologists as a group continue to ignore these important dimensions of the human condition in practice, research, education, and training (Sue, 2001; Sue, Bingham, Porché-Burke, & Vasquez, 1999). What makes some psychologists so reluctant or resistant to implementing multiculturalism in their research and practice? Why have APA accreditation criteria not been used more firmly to enforce multicultural standards? I realize that these are strong allegations that may not be shared by the majority of psychologists—and therein lies the problem.

The racial/cultural reality or worldview of many persons of color differs from that of their White colleagues and perhaps from that of the profession at large (Guthrie, 1997). Although White colleagues perceive positive change and movement by the profession in becoming more multicultural (Fowers & Richardson, 1996), people of color continue to see "cultural malpractice" and the growing obsolescence of psychology (Hall, 1997; Sue et al., 1999).

What accounts for this major difference in worldview? Are the majority of psychologists resistant to change because they are simply bigots, racists, sexists, and homophobes? Do they intentionally mean to ignore the concerns

of people of color? Isn't the profession of psychology supposed to be dedicated to improving the lives and life conditions of the people whom psychologists hope to serve? If so, why has it been so hard to get colleagues to understand and change the field and psychological practice?

The Invisibility of Whiteness: A Clue to the Problem

Strangely enough, it has been through my study of racism and "Whiteness" that I have gained clues to the problem (Sue, 2003; Sue et al., 1999). I have come to realize that most of my colleagues are well-intentioned and truly believe in equal access and opportunity for all but have great difficulty freeing themselves from their cultural conditioning (Dovidio & Gaertner, 2000; Hodson, Dovidio, & Gaertner, 2002; Sue, 1999). They are, in essence, trapped in a Euro American worldview that only allows them to see the world from one perspective. To challenge that worldview as being only partially accurate, to entertain the notion that it may represent a false illusion, and to realize that it may have resulted in injustice to others make seeing an alternative reality frightening and difficult. Although using the terms *Whiteness* and *Whites* may perpetuate the inaccurate notion that these terms describe a racial group (Jones, 1997), little doubt exists that skin color in this society exposes people to different experiences. Being a White person means something quite different from being a person of color (Sue, 2003). I use one particular example here to illustrate how Whiteness and its invisibility serve as a default standard that makes it difficult to see how it may unfairly intrude into the lives of racial/ethnic minority groups (Fine, Weiss, Powell, & Wong, 1997).

The Color-Blind Phenomenon

Commonly known as the "Race Information Ban," Proposition 54 on the 2003 ballot in California attempted to forbid the government from collecting demographic information on the basis of race, ethnicity, color, or national origin in public education, employment, and contracting. The polls taken at that time showed that the initiative, under the guise of moving the United States to a color-blind society that facilitates antidiscrimination, was supported by a majority of California voters. From my perspective, I saw this proposition as potentially dangerous, with devastating consequences for people of color. Rather than preventing disparities, it would prove to have precisely the opposite effect—lessening the ability to monitor inequities and encouraging greater discrimination. As others have warned, banning racial and ethnic statistics would blind people to real, meaningful differences that exist between groups in educational opportunities, civil rights protections, race-specific medical conditions, and so forth. Agencies, for exam-

¹ See www.apa.org/pi/multiculturalguidelines.pdf

ple, would be unable to determine and rectify health care disparities and racial/ethnic disease patterns important for medical treatments ("Health Disparities Report at Center of Controversy," 2004; Jones, 1997; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2001, 2003). Worse yet, it would undermine accountability for civil rights violations such as hate crimes, discrimination in the workplace, and biased racial profiling. I was concerned that despite the defeat of Proposition 54, so many misguided voters supported the legislation.

After some 35 years of work on diversity and multiculturalism, I continue to be baffled by how difficult it is for many White Americans to see the false promises of the "color-blind society." When I testified before President Clinton's Race Advisory Board in 1997 and participated in a congressional briefing on the myth of a color-blind society, for example, I tried to point out how it had a detrimental impact on racial minorities and White Americans (President's Initiative on Race, 1998). Some White Americans who watched and listened to my testimony on C-SPAN reacted with considerable anger and defensiveness. One person accused me of being a racist of a different color and of supporting "preferential treatment" for minorities, whereas others made actual threats on my life. The reactions of White viewers made me realize that I had pushed powerful buttons in their psyche that aroused strong and negative emotions to my message. Since that testimony, I have often asked myself why some viewers reacted so strongly. Why were they so upset that they needed to threaten me in such a vehement fashion? What was the source of their anger? What raw nerve had I touched? Could it be that I challenged their view of the United States as a fair and just society? More important, could it be that they saw my testimony as potentially truthful about their own biases and prejudices?

Masking Disparities

Martin Luther King once advocated judging people not by the color of their skin but by their internal character. On the surface, such a statement from a renowned civil rights advocate seems to reinforce the concept of a color-blind society as an answer to discrimination and prejudice. Unfortunately, many proponents of this concept have failed to understand the context of King's statement and/or have co-opted it for their own ends. For all groups to have equal access and opportunity assumes that a level playing field exists and that everyone, regardless of race, ethnicity or national origin, has an equal chance of success. Although many White Americans may believe that discrimination has been minimized or even eliminated, research clearly indicates that equity currently does not exist in U.S. society (Crosby, Iyer, Clayton, & Downing, 2003; Jones, 1997).

Let me use some statistics to illustrate my point. If one compares the distribution of White Euro American men in certain high-level positions with that of other groups, some very puzzling disparities appear. For example, White men occupy approximately 80% of tenured positions in higher education and 92% of the Forbes 400 executive/CEO-level positions; they constitute 80% of the House of Representatives, 84% of the U.S. Senate, 99% of athletic team owners, and 100% of U.S. Presidents (Sue, 2003). These statistics are even more disturbing when one sees that White men comprise only 33% of the U.S. population! Where, I ask, are the persons of color, and where are the women? If one assumes that people of color and women are equally capable and qualified, the disparity can only be caused by an uneven playing field favoring White men. Ironically, these statistics would not even exist to gauge civil rights progress if society were, indeed, color blind.

In my research on the causes and effects of bias and discrimination, I have come to realize that color blindness uses "Whiteness" to mimic the norms of fairness, justice, and equality by "whiting" out differences. It is a default key that perpetuates the belief in sameness and equality. In essence, color blindness is really a denial of differences. A denial of differences is really a denial of the unfair power imbalance that exists in society. A denial of power imbalance allows Whites to deny their unearned privilege and advantage in society. And by couching racial discrimination in the rhetoric of equal treatment and opportunity, White Americans perpetuate the false illusion that equality exists and that they serve no role in the oppression of others (Dyer, 2002).

In my work on racism awareness training, I have come to realize that many of my White students pretend not to see color because, whether consciously or unconsciously, they are motivated by the need to appear unbiased and by fears that what they say or do may appear racist (Rothenberg, 2002). Whether knowingly or not, color blindness allows Whites to deny the experiential reality of minorities by minimizing the effects of racism and discrimination in their day-to-day lives. It further allows many Whites to deny how they benefit from their own Whiteness and how their Whiteness intrudes upon persons of color.

I have often heard, for example, White teachers express resentment toward African American students who engage in Black cultural expressions in the classroom. Black students are frequently admonished to "leave your cultural baggage at home and don't bring it into the classroom." Many educators possess little awareness that they also bring their own Whiteness into the classroom and operate from a predominantly White ethnocentric perspective. I wonder how they would respond if they were to be asked, "Why don't you leave your White cultural baggage at home when teaching?"

Several years ago, during my sabbatical, I field tested a study on "The Invisibility of Whiteness" (Sue, 2003). I would approach White strangers in the middle of downtown San Francisco and ask them the following question: "What does it mean to be White?" Their responses were interesting, to say the least. Many respondents did not seem to understand my question, seemed to become annoyed, or said they had never thought about it. When asked "why," the most prevalent response was, "It's not important to me or it doesn't affect my life." Others, however, became quite irritated, angry, and defensive. They seemed to believe that I was accusing them of being racist or bigoted, and they found the question offensive. A significant number of respondents denied being White by saying "I'm not White; I'm [Irish], [Italian], [Jewish], [German]. . . ." It was obviously easier for them to acknowledge their ethnicity than their skin color.

Perpetuating the Illusion of Fairness

From my interviews, I concluded that White respondents would rather not think about their Whiteness, are uncomfortable or react negatively to being labeled White, deny its importance in affecting their lives, and seem to believe that they are unjustifiably accused of being bigoted by virtue of being White. Those who were most uncomfortable with the question generally ended the conversation with statements like "people are people," "we are all Americans," or "we are all the same under the skin." It was clear that their discomfort led them to desire eliminating racial differences from the conversation or diluting them. To persons of color, "Whiteness" is most visible when it is denied, evokes puzzlement or negative reactions, or is equated with normalcy. Few people of color react negatively when asked what it means to be Black, Asian American, Latino, or a member of their race. Most could readily inform the questioner about what it means to be a person of color.

It appears that the denial or mystification of White Euro Americans regarding the issue of Whiteness has a significant underlying reason. Whiteness is transparent precisely because of its everyday occurrence. It represents institutional normality, and White people are taught to think of their lives as morally neutral, average, and ideal. As a person of color, however, I do not find Whiteness to be invisible because I do not fit many of the normative qualities that make Whiteness invisible.

The deception of Whiteness as a universal identity has a monumental hidden meaning—that is, being a human being is being White! Elsewhere, I have stated that the invisible veil of Whiteness inundates the definitions of such expressions as "human being," being "just a person," and being an "American." The speaker is usually saying something like this: "Differences are divisive, so let's avoid acknowledging them and seek out our commonalities. I'm uncom-

fortable with racial differences, so let's pretend they don't exist."

It suddenly dawned on me that the invisibility of Whiteness is motivated by the denial of the advantages associated with being White or what some now call "White privilege." White privilege can be defined as the unearned advantages and benefits that accrue to White people by virtue of a system normed on the experiences, values, and perceptions of their group (McIntosh, 2002; Sue, 2003). Because of its invisibility, White privilege is seen as a source of strength, and it provides Euro Americans with permission to deny its existence and use it to treat persons of color unfairly. I realized the insidious and seductive nature of White privilege on White Euro Americans. The benefits that accrue to them by virtue of their Whiteness serve to keep them satisfied and enlist their unwitting complicity in maintaining unjust social arrangements.

The Invisibility of Ethnocentric Monoculturalism

It was the recognition of the invisibility of Whiteness that provided the clue to another form of invisibility that may be much more damaging and problematic: *ethnocentric monoculturalism*. This is a term used to describe the invisible veil of a worldview that keeps White Euro Americans from recognizing the ethnocentric basis of their beliefs, values, and assumptions (Sue et al., 1999; Sue & Sue, 2003). Because of its lack of visibility, it is a worldview that is imposed on all culturally diverse groups in this society. Although Whiteness is not identical to ethnocentric monoculturalism, the psychological dynamics related to the denial of differences—that is, equating it with normalcy and not understanding how it intrudes on the life experiences of those who do not share its worldview—are similar. Ethnocentric monoculturalism shares features of what Wrenn (1962, 1985) called "cultural encapsulation" and Jones (1972, 1997) called "cultural racism." It is characterized by five major attributes that potentially result in cultural oppression (Sue et al., 1998; Sue & Sue, 2003).

Belief in Superiority, "Choseness," and Entitlement

Ethnocentric monoculturalism creates a strong belief in the superiority of one group's cultural heritage, history, values, language, beliefs, religion, traditions, and arts and crafts. The collective sense of superiority leads to a sense of "choseness" and entitlement that has been described as a dangerous belief that may lead to conflict with out groups (Eidelson & Eidelson, 2003). In the United States, this component of ethnocentric monoculturalism is manifested in the value of individualism, the Protestant work ethic, capitalism, the desirability of certain physical features (blond hair, blue eyes, and fair skin), monotheism (Christianity), monolingualism (English), and a written tradition (Katz, 1985). People who possess or adhere to these characteristics are often allowed easier access to the rewards of

the society; their validation in society makes them feel special, chosen, and entitled. Their “superior” status in society also makes them prone to believing that their definitions of problems and solutions are the right ones. In many respects, the belief in individual or group superiority often results in an inability to empathize or understand the viewpoints or experiences of other individuals who are different from them (Eidelson & Eidelson, 2003; Hanna, Talley, & Guindon, 2000; Keltner & Robinson, 1996).

In the field of psychology, the belief in superiority is often translated into an inflexible assumption of possessing the absolute truth that defines the profession. Some psychologists of color, for example, point out that the original definition of *psychology* arose from African–Egyptian civilization and was considered the study of the “soul or spirit” rather than the mind or behavior (Parham, 2002). Yet it is a strong Western belief that the latter definition is more valid and scientific (Parham, White, & Ajamu, 1999). Likewise, in the West, scientific empiricism is considered a superior means of asking and answering questions about the human condition (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2001). Western science remains skeptical of non-Western and indigenous methods that relate to spirituality in ascribing causation.

Definitions of appropriate and therapeutic behavior on the part of clinicians are also manifested in the profession’s code of ethics and standards of practice. These form the basis of accreditation and licensure criteria. It is interesting that framing some of these guidelines into therapeutic taboos (truths) is very revealing about the reality of Western mental health. In the field of clinical practice, for example, therapists are admonished generally not to (a) self-disclose their thoughts and feelings, (b) give advice and suggestions, (c) engage in dual role relationships, (d) accept gifts from clients, and (e) barter services (APA, 2002; Sue & Sue, 2003). These taboos are grounded in beliefs that the therapeutic relationship should not foster dependency, should be free of potential conflicts of interest, and should maintain the objectivity of the helping professional. Although I have obviously simplified the complexity of these guidelines, the question I ask is this: What if other culturally diverse groups consider these behaviors or alternative roles to be qualities of the helping relationship? Indeed, work on indigenous healing and explorations on culture-specific therapeutic approaches indicate precisely this fact (Parham, 2002; Sue & Sue, 2003).

Belief in the Inferiority of Other Groups

History is replete with examples of Western attempts to civilize the “heathens,” have them adopt a single-god concept, and bring a Western way of life to “less developed” and “primitive” cultures (Hanna et al., 2000). Behind these actions and descriptors are intrinsic beliefs of not only the superiority of one group but the inferiority of the customs,

norms, traditions, religions, and lifestyles of other groups (Jones, 1997). Such a determination of inferiority or even pathology is strongly linked to differences from the mainstream culture. Elsewhere, we (Sue & Sue, 2003), concluded the following about the inferiority component of ethnocentric monoculturalism:

Other societies or groups may be perceived as less developed, uncivilized, primitive, or even pathological. The group’s lifestyles or ways of doing things are considered inferior. Physical characteristics such as dark complexion, black hair, and brown eyes; cultural characteristics such as belief in non-Christian religions (Islam, Confucianism, polytheism, etc.), collectivism, present time orientation, and the importance of shared wealth; and linguistic characteristics such as bilingualism, non-standard English, speaking with an accent, use of nonverbal and contextual communications, and reliance on the oral tradition are usually seen as less desirable by the society. (p. 70)

This perception means that people of color, for example, are prone to being seen as less qualified, less capable, unintelligent, inarticulate, unmotivated, lazy, and as coming from broken homes. Little doubt exists that the perception of inferiority can be translated into unequal access and opportunities in education, career options, employment, hiring practices, housing, and so on. In mental health practice, it may mean pathologizing the lifestyles or cultural values of clients who do not share characteristics of the mainstream.

The Power to Define Reality

In truth, all major groups and societies are ethnocentric. They believe strongly in the superiority of their own group and the inferiority of other groups. Anyone who has spent significant time in China and Japan, for example, has been exposed to the Asian cultural belief that the Chinese or Japanese come from a superior culture and history (Chu, 1991; Gao, 1991). The distinguishing characteristic between ethnocentrism and ethnocentric monoculturalism, however, is power—one group’s ability to impose its reality and beliefs upon another group (Sue, 2001). Although power is often associated with economic and military might, I submit that true power resides in a group’s ability to define and impose that reality upon others.

Several years ago, a Native American colleague asked an audience, “Who owns history?” The answer to that question is precisely answered by the title of Robert Guthrie’s book, *Even the Rat Was White* (Guthrie, 1976, 1997). The extreme bias in knowledge construction from a Euro American perspective means that the history taught to children is at best incomplete, and at worst, inaccurate and distorted (Banks, 2004). When children are told, for example, that “Columbus discovered America,” teachers are not only perpetuating an ethnocentric illusion of superiority for the mainstream group but are engaging in cultural oppression of Native Americans. Native American children who

are told this falsehood know a different reality (Columbus was lost and thought he had discovered the continent of India). This reality, however, is tested further when teachers give a “true/false” test with the statement, “Columbus discovered America.” To answer “true” means the youngster actually believes the statement or “sells out.” To answer “false” is to get the answer wrong. The Native American student is caught in a catch-22.

In conclusion, it appears that the group who “owns” history also controls the gateway to knowledge construction, truth and falsity, problem definition, what constitutes normality and abnormality, and ultimately, the nature of reality. When those in the social sciences use terms and concepts for racial/ethnic minorities like “genetically inferior,” “culturally deficient,” or “culturally deprived” (Hernstein & Murray, 1994; Riessman, 1962), they set in motion a whole set of interlocking systems grounded in a false reality that is detrimental to persons of color; it privileges one group and oppresses another (Samuda, 1998).

Manifestation in Institutions

Although institutional structures, programs, policies, and practices are developed to regularize procedures, increase efficiency of operation, and allow for fairness in application, they often contribute to inequities and oppression. Laws, public policy, rules, and regulations endorsed by American society have a long history of bias and discrimination. They are often overt, intentional, and obvious—for example, (a) the Constitutional provision defining Blacks as three fifths of a man; (b) the “separate but equal doctrine” in *Plessy v. Ferguson*; (c) laws forbidding Native Americans to practice their religions; and (d) laws forbidding Asians to own land. Institutional racism continues to this day in the form of criteria (high membership fees and select attributes) to exclude certain “undesirable” groups in private clubs and organizations, real estate associations, and bank lending practices (Jones, 1997; Sue, 2003).

More damaging, however, are the insidious and invisible programs and policies that represent ethnocentric values and beliefs. Because most institutional systems are monocultural in nature, they represent a potential source of cultural oppression for racial/ethnic minorities and women. Standard operating procedures demand compliance and a way of operation that may deny equal access and opportunity (Sue, 1995). Performance appraisal systems, for example, often use criteria for hiring, retention, and promotion that are culture-bound. Some time back, a major multinational corporation contacted me about doing leadership training for Asian American employees whom they believed lacked managerial skills. Apparently, in a survey conducted by the company, Asian Pacific Americans expressed unhappiness with their status in the company, felt they were not being promoted when they were otherwise qualified, and many indicated that they intended to leave

the company and seek employment elsewhere. Because the company valued the technical competence of the Asian American workforce and knew that replacement costs in rehiring and training would be great, the solution they proposed was assertiveness training. Because of my work with Asian Americans, I immediately suspected that the company might be operating from stereotypes—that is, that Asian Americans are good in math and sciences but poor in “people skills,” make poor leaders, and are relatively passive and nonverbal (Sue, 1999). I was able to get the company to acknowledge several observations: (a) The definition of a good leader among traditional Asian societies is an individual who is subtle and able to work behind the scenes to obtain group consensus, (b) the criteria used by the company for managerial positions were primarily Western and masculine in orientation (competitive, dominating, and aggressive), and (c) the criteria were not predictive of leadership effectiveness for many Asian Americans (Levinson, 1994). In Asian societies, effectiveness of a leader is judged by team productivity instead of individual achievement. Thus, Asian American employees were being denied promotions on the basis of criteria that were unrelated to their productivity. I am sad to say that although the company has acknowledged these conclusions, it has not changed its performance appraisal criteria.

Institutional bias is often reflected in management systems, communication systems, chain-of-command systems, and performance appraisal systems (promotion and tenure in academia). In academia, for example, a university often mirrors the nature of race and gender relations in the wider society. The university culture may create culture conflicts for students, staff, and faculty of color, leading to alienation, loss of productivity, and problems with retention, graduation, and promotion.

The Invisible Veil

The fourth-century Chinese sage Chang-Tsu often asserted that “how we view the world is not only about what we see, but about what we do not see.” What Americans consciously see and what they are explicitly taught are grounded in basic democratic ideals of equality, justice, fairness, respect, and dignity for the worth of all citizens. These are taught to Americans through the Bill of Rights, the U.S. Constitution, and the Declaration of Independence. What one does not see is the invisible veil of personal and institutional injustice that operates outside the level of conscious awareness (Dovidio & Gaertner, 2000; Sue, 2001). The invisible veil is a product of cultural conditioning; individuals are taught not only the prejudices and biases of society but also the many myths that serve to guide the interpretation of events. Three of these are (a) the myth of meritocracy (the cream of the crop will rise to the top), (b) the myth of equal opportunity (everyone has a chance to

succeed in this society), and (c) the myth of fair treatment (equal treatment is fair treatment).

The myth of meritocracy operates from the dictum that there is a strong relationship between ability, effort, and success. Those who are successful in life are more competent, capable, intelligent, and motivated. Those who fail to achieve in society are less capable, intelligent, and motivated. The myth of equal opportunity assumes that everyone encounters the same obstacles in life and that the playing field is a level one. Thus, everyone has an equal chance to succeed or enjoy the fruits of their labor. The myth of fair treatment equates equal treatment with fairness, whereas differential treatment is considered discriminatory or preferential. All three often act in unison to mask disparities and inequities and to allow actions that oppress groups that are not in the mainstream. I use several examples to illustrate this invisible dynamic.

During President George W. Bush's first run for presidency, syndicated columnist Molly Ivins noted something along the lines of "George Bush was born on third base and believes he hit a triple." The ultimate illusion of meritocracy allows people to believe that their favored position in life is the result of superior aptitude and hard work rather than privilege and favoritism. Using the baseball analogy, one can say that many people of color and women work equally hard or harder and are equally qualified or more so but seldom make it even to the batter's box. The illusion that the field is level and wide open—that merit alone is all that is needed—denies the reality of persons of color and women. It dismisses or dilutes the importance of individual, institutional, and cultural racism that places barriers in the way of achievement for these groups. Furthermore, the belief that "you are the master of your own fate" unfairly blames people of color for their inability to achieve more in this society.

Likewise, the backlash against affirmative action is in part due to the public's perception that equal access and opportunity already exist and that any treatment that uses "race" as one criterion is discrimination because it gives advantages to people of color (Crosby et al., 2003). It is harder for White Americans to see, however, that affirmative action already exists for White males (à la George W. Bush). The affirmative action example also challenges another myth or illusion—that equal treatment is fair treatment, whereas differential treatment is preferential treatment. There is a common belief that if everyone is treated the same, racial or gender discrimination is not possible. Many organizations' standard operating procedures are developed to apply equally to everyone, thereby avoiding charges of discrimination. What is less visible, however, is that equal treatment can be discriminatory treatment, and differential treatment is not necessarily preferential. Earlier, I used the example of performance appraisal systems to indicate how such a system discriminated against Asian

Americans by keeping them from being promoted. Institutions often claim that they do not discriminate because they use the same standards to hire, retain, or promote their employees. Institutions of higher education make a similar claim: If students obtain above a certain grade point average or Scholastic Aptitude Test standard, they can gain admission. The problem is that such "equal" treatment has unfavorable outcomes highly correlated with the racial and gender identity of employees and students.

It is difficult for the majority culture to understand that marginalized groups are not necessarily asking for equal treatment. Rather, they desire equal access and opportunity. Ironically, achieving that end often dictates differential treatment. The blind application of a single policy or standard by institutions may not only be unfair but oppressive as well.

Conclusion

Whiteness and ethnocentric monoculturalism, culturally conditioned in all individuals from the moment of birth, maintain their power through their invisibility. On a personal level, people are conditioned and rewarded for remaining unaware and oblivious of how their beliefs and actions may unfairly oppress people of color, women, and other groups in society. On an institutional level, people fail to recognize how standard operating procedures serve to deny equal access and opportunities for some while providing advantages and benefits for others. If the profession of psychology and society in general truly value diversity and multiculturalism, and if this is to be a nation that achieves the democratic ideals it professes, then the very difficult process of deconstructing Whiteness and ethnocentric monoculturalism must begin. To do so, however, requires us to realize that our reality is only one of many others. The monocultural curriculum of psychology that reflects only one perspective must be deconstructed and reconstructed to include a multicultural perspective (Banks, 2004). Formal education is one of the primary mechanisms by which misinformation and biases are transmitted to children. Multicultural educators have made clear the revolutionary steps that need to be undertaken in kindergarten through Grade 12 and in higher education to achieve this end (Banks, 2004; Gay, 2004; Ladson-Billings, 2004).

For the profession of psychology, this means realizing that explanations of human behavior may be culture-bound and potentially limited in inapplicability to an increasingly diverse population. It means realizing that the knowledge base comes from only one perspective and that there is a great need to develop a truly multicultural psychology that recognizes important dimensions of the human condition such as race, culture, ethnicity, gender, religion, sexual orientation, and other sociodemographic variables. A psychology that does not recognize and practice diversity is a psychology that is truly bankrupt in understanding the totality

of the human condition. It will forever perpetuate a false reality that provides advantages for certain groups while disadvantaging and oppressing others. As long as the invisible is not visible, the profession of psychology may continue to operate from monocultural theories and practices that deny the rights and privileges due to all individuals and groups.

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