

Article Review

A Synopsis

Peggy McIntosh (1988) in her article entitled “White Privilege and Male Privilege: A Personal Account of Coming to See Correspondence Through Work in Women’s Studies” gives an account of the unearned privileges of the whites and the males in the United States. They have these privileges accorded to them by the society in which they live and wherein they are taught by the same society to be unconscious and unmindful of these privileges. However, this very unawareness or oblivion to the existence of unearned privileges is the very act that makes other people of different color feel oppressed. Peggy McIntosh enumerates with force and deliberation the content of the invisible knapsack that includes 54 unearned male and white special provisions. In so doing, she points out how the very whiteness of a person serves as an invisible protection to each and every moment of his/her life.

B. Personal Reactions

Peggy McIntosh’s article “White Privilege and Male Privilege: A Personal Account of Coming to See Correspondence Through Work in Women’s Studies” is a very useful text in dealing with the issue of racism. The enumeration of small details taken for granted by the privileged whites and males depicts how whites and males even without the intention of benefiting from being white and without them being aware of it, are in the process enjoying the advantages of racism. Although McIntosh seems to make it appear that whites and males are experiencing the same things and that they are uniformed in their experiences, I take it to mean that McIntosh is not referring to individual experiences of people of white color. I rather think that McIntosh is referring to the failure of the system to eradicate the existence of racism in the society. It is not the individual who is at fault for he/she did not choose to have those privileges. However, it helps to

realize how people of other color feel about them and to understand how racism works.

C. Connections to the Theories of Group Dynamics

Key theories of group dynamics include phenomenological field theory, core group theory. Phenomenological field theory refers to a field as a systematic web of relationship. It is a unitary whole wherein everything affects everything else. The effects are to be understood as multiple, mutual and complex that taken together form a unified interactive whole. The group in this sense is a part of that whole and should not be viewed as a closed separate system where events can be studied and understood independent of the whole. Here, group process is the result of interacting forces in the whole field in which the group is a part. Group dynamics then means field dynamics. Under the field theory, the group member's effect is viewed as a factor influencing other factor and in turn influenced by other factors in the whole field in which the group is a part. Here, the field pertains to a field that is continuous in space and time. The field in which the group is a part, and from which every group event emerges, is a continuum. Thus, with the field theory, one cannot with certainty define the boundary between individual group members and the group as a whole. It is a continuous interconnectedness with elements that cannot be isolated one from the other either in time or in space (Fairfield 2004). Core group is another group dynamic key theory that suggests three fundamental purposes driving most decision in real life- practice: (1) to fulfill the perceived desires and needs of a core group of elite people with the core group as the source of the organization's energy and drive; (2) to fulfill a creative imperative with people coming to a group to do something at a larger scale than an individual person could do only by him/herself; and (3) to find out what is the right thing to do (Kleiner 2003). In connection with the message conveyed in the book of Seorgivanni (1999) entitled "Building Community in Schools," the core group theory pertains to the tendency of people to become separated from others in pursuit of their own goals

that must be bridged with the application of field theory wherein each one influences one another in a community.

In connection with the reading material, the field theory confirms that the actions of the group is a factor to the action of others within the field, as the group is part of the whole field. Then, the actions of the whites and males group do influence the other members of the whole field. While in core group theory, this is to say that racism exists as the system creates boundaries to cater to the privileged ones.

Applications:

Group dynamics inside the classroom is a way to address the issue of racism in the classroom. As pointed out by Peggy McIntosh in her article, racism is something that comes out not from the individual person, and not as a flaw of the person, rather it has resulted due to the flaw of the system in the society. Therefore, if one is to expect changes for a better condition, in this case for a condition in which racism does not exist, then the change ought to happen within the system or the society as a whole. The classroom is a society. It is a system that influences another system and that in turn influences others within the boundless field.

It is therefore the role of the education system to address the issue of racism and to do something that would make a difference following the principle that each one of the individual person influences one another, and another, and so on. An educator has a moral obligation, in this sense to move towards the elimination of racism in today's classroom. One strategy is to employ group dynamics in order to bridge the gap amidst different cultures, in a way that each one is to know that they are affecting each other. As Peggy McIntosh explains, the action of a person protected with the ignorance bliss of unconsciously (or deniably) unearned privilege is a kind of action that oppresses others. Group dynamics must be of a kind that will lead to this realization,

and to this sensitivity to the plight of other race and how they could contribute to each one's well-being. This is in keeping with the phenomenological field theory in which each one is made to know that they are important not just within a small group, but in the society as a whole. An educator has to be careful and must see to it that the group dynamics being implemented is not a kind adhering to core group theory, as this tends to create a more individualistic perspective of improvement, a sort of elitism that further contribute to wider racism.

References:

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Kleiner, A. (2003). *Who really matters: the core group theory of power, privilege, and success*. Doubleday, Random House Inc.

Sergiovanni, T. (1999). *Building community in schools*. Jossey-Bass Inc.