Colonizer-Colonized Mindset:
Processing Whiteness (as Ideology) Wherever it is Found

The following notes are for reflection and discussion:

1. The United States was formed in a context of power relationships: the **domination** of white European over nonwhite – enslaver/enslaved, European/indigenous, and property-owning/non-owning. See the Doctrine of Discovery – 1493 Papal Bull of Pope Alexander VI. These relationships became the model for US racial norms. These norms indicate who can act out which social roles and who cannot: how to act as dominant/dominator or as subordinate/subordinated (behaviors and nonverbal gestures)—how to look or not look at other people (eye to eye, directed over the other's head, off to the side, or downwards). In these norms, we observe rules of how people of high status are expected to treat people perceived to be of lower status. *See* male behavior to females.

2. Close attention to the historic colonizer-colonized roles and power dynamics, as described in Memmi: *The Colonizer and the Colonized,* is very revealing of how power is used to define intergroup relationships, so that those with power – the colonizer group – may exploit the resources (land, labor) of the less powerful – the colonized group. We see in these dynamics how racism has facilitated the process of conquest, exploitation, enslavement, and how racism has given legal and moral legitimation to what otherwise would have been (or ought to have been) universally condemned.

3. The communication of power relationships is not strange to us. It is a question of who ought to use particular gestures to communicate their social identity, rank, power, relationship, and social distance. Given the legacy of European/Native colonial relations and that of European/enslaved African relations, and the practice and normalization of that legacy—now embedded as standard cultural patterns and expectations — "properly" socialized Euro-Americans assume their colonizer role without reflection, receive the privileges of the colonizer as their proper **entitlement**.

4. From their earliest age, continuing through all life stages, Euro-Americans learn what is expected of them as whites. What is expected is the internalization and embodiment of *whiteness*. *Whiteness* is an ideology expressing "white" European superiority over those understood to be nonwhite. *Whiteness* is **not** the sole providence of Euro-people. The ideology of *whiteness* and the practices attending that ideology can be held and practiced by people from **any** racio-ethnic or ancestry group.

5. *Whiteness* comprises an ethnocentric worldview, beliefs, values, assumptions, interpretations, feeling and action dispositions is based on a working assumption or conviction of European moral, cultural, and "biological" superiority. The awareness of this assumption need not be conscious and is more effective if it is not conscious. Those who hold this assumption are able to embody and perform *whiteness* without awareness or intention. Because *whiteness* is internalized unconsciously, people can consciously disclaim the ideology of *whiteness* while simultaneously behaving in ways that assume the superiority of whites and the right of Euro (white) people, to **dominate** social space and interactions, to set rules of engagement, to apply their Euro (white, Anglo-Saxon) cultural norms as expected and universally appropriate norms. *Whiteness* is manifested in *behavior*—regardless of conscious disclaimers of the ideology. Through careful on-going self-observation and honest critical interrogation, especially in dialogue with others, practitioners of *whiteness* may come to a better awareness of the ways they act in accord with norms and codes of *whiteness*. For an extended explanation, *see*: Joe R. eagin 2013, *The White Racial Frame.*

6. Historically, *whiteness* was developed in the context of colonialism in the era of the Enlightenment. For this reason, the ***colonizer mindset*** describes a way of thinking, valuing, feeling, and behaving that reflects a norm of Euro-white **dominance** over non-white, subordinated peoples.

7. The exercising of the colonizer role is, we would assume, is generally outside the consciousness of the those manifesting it. Practitioners of whiteness find themselves in situations where colonizer behaviors (*whiteness*) are **non**problematic. They act out of this disposition without giving it much thought. What might trigger the more evident manifestations of *whiteness*? Glimpses of *whiteness* in action may be seen in a context where there is a need for a leader to step forward to provide leadership, for someone to speak up on behalf the group at large, to define the situation, to arbitrate in ways reflective of the assumed cultural consensus—that person being the ideal representation of the norms of *rightness*, one whose knowledge best reflects the political interests of those whose opinions count. The social expectation is that a white (male) will step forth to assume the role.

8. When people come into a context where they are expected to act in egalitarian, non-racist ways, if they continue to perceive, feel and interact in their unconscious, habituated ways consistent with the prevailing norms of *whiteness*, they will tend to reproduce the dynamics of colonizer-colonized power relations—whether or not they intend to do so. Unconscious, deep-seated habits of white domination (ways of thinking, perceiving, and acting in accord with "*whiteness*") will come into play in such situations unless they engage in a conscious, intentional interruption of norms rooted in *whiteness* – white perspectives, assumptions and value as the universal norm definitive for what is expected and what ought to be done.

9. *Whiteness* as a way of relating and being in the world continues to exist because it is constantly being recreated in each and every interaction unless directly confronted. When people of color encounter whites manifesting *whiteness* without concern, in contexts that are supposed to be egalitarian, people of color find those contexts no less problematic than any other context where *whiteness*, unchallenged, reigns supreme.

10. Is it possible for white people who wish to engage in an egalitarian dialogue, where all voices have a say, to actually create a context where egalitarian norms will govern the interaction? Might such dialogues and gatherings start with setting some "guidelines" that explicitly address underlying assumptions? —Do the guidelines make sense from the perspective and needs of people of color? What behaviors would facilitate a more egalitarian, open, trustful dialogue? It would be wise to share these guidelines with people of color to react to the guidelines.

11. When white people **reject** the assumption that "white people" equals "*whiteness*," **reject** the notion that to be white **is** to consciously or unconsciously **embrace** the ideology of *whiteness*, **accept** the understanding that "white people" are **not** the problem—that **whiteness** is the problem, and accept the responsibility to work at dismantling the *whiteness* that undergirds the racial hierarchy, some people might call such whites "race traitors." They might be seen as aberrant and disloyal, seen as betrayers of those whose way of life they ought to have embraced and upheld. They betray their "skin" group. They betray those who view "race" as marking an irreconcilable difference and who use the idea of white moral superiority to justify oppression and domination.

12. But what would it mean for whites to violate and repudiate "race norms" as **insiders** of white culture, rather than outsiders of white culture? Is it possible for whites to say to other whites, "As a moral human being, as one who might wish to be in *right relationship* with others, I find "such and such" (manifestation of racism) reprehensible. Our humanity and our moral convictions demand that we act justly. And, when we do not, we fess up to our human and moral failing." In this we are taking a stand—acting out of moral conviction, as we see Martin Luther King, Jr., do in his Letter from Birmingham City Jail. Taking this standpoint, one white person speaks to the other white person from a frame of shared values, history, and symbols reflecting a "liberty and justice" tradition and worldview. Along with the "white racial frame," we, US Americans, have a "liberty

and justice frame" equality at our dispose. Which frame we use is important. The white racial frame need not be the default.

For People of Color:

1. Colonial relationships are relationships of power and hierarchy (superordination and subordination). Here we may understand power as the ability to *be* – that is, free to self-actualize according to one's own ideals and needs in concert with those of the community, free to speak one's truth and express one's feelings. And, we mean the ability to *do* – that is, free to act on behalf of, or to influence the course of events that touch on our interests and well-being. This kind of power is essential for well-being in our society. In what ways am I/we giving away power? In general, what are ways that we might give power away? Accommodating to the status quo of white domination? In instances where power is taken from us, what is our response? What are the ranges of responses open to us?

2. Am I seeing how *whiteness* is operating here? Am I seeing how I might be acceding to the demands of *whiteness* or to the norms and expectations of the colonizer-colonized arrangement?

3. What do we do when we see the colonizer-colonized pattern begin to be enacted? How can we be "agents" of our contexts rather than "targets"? What ideas, convictions, and strategies can we call upon to interrupt or subvert what is taking place? Perhaps some of the "Sleight of Mouth" communication tactics would be helpful in devising ways of challenging taken for granted "folk knowledge," so that that knowledge may be respectfully interrogated and critiqued.

4. How do we use the systems of power to subvert oppressive power? What power resources am I able to identify outside of the traditional sources and ways of exercising power to challenge and subvert operations of destructive, "negative" power?

5. What am I doing to assert control over my situation? To have a place, space, or "locus" of control— to have self-determination?

6. How do I as subject or agent *exercise* control rather than be an *object* of control to forces outside of myself? What is the relationship of "locus of control" and *whiteness* and of being a person of color having subjectivity and agency?

7. We, people of color, are socialized into a sense that we do not and ought not have a *locus of control* – we should have no power over the determination of our lives. We oftentimes allow others to have this locus of control. This could be a discourse on whether the locus of control is centered in the individual or in the community (the collective). If it were, then we would be looking at issues of individual and the collective good. But, here, our concern is about colonialism and *whiteness*, about the way a colonized person internalizes the norms of whiteness (internalized oppression), quietly and tacitly submits to subjugation. Who has that locus of control over the colonized? Where and how do you see that control manifested? By what authority? Where does that authority come from? How is that authority created, legitimated and enforced?

8. It is helpful to learn to identify the "pattern" of *whiteness* as an expression of power, so that we are more astute in recognizing the many daily manifestations in our/others' behaviors. *See* "Tactics and Strategies of White Knowledge" and "Marks of a Colonial Context."

9. The philosopher Louis Althusser has something to say about the internalization and socialization of colonizer-colonized identity in his concept of *interpellation*. Because of the way I've been socialized and the worldview I have internalized, I come to recognize myself through the (racial) representations given to me by my society. In those racial representations (stereotypes and alleged racial character traits) In the mirrored images of Indian-ness, Blackness, Orientalism, Latin-ness, Otherness, I recognize the identity conferred on me by society – now, already internalized as a self definition (See: Augsburg and Feagin 2001: The First R – *How Children Learn Race and Racism*).

And, so when some reference to my identity arises (racial stereotype), I recognize my connection to the reference, as it is a part of me (accepted or rejected). That reference "hails me" – it grabs my stuff – I recognize that in some way the "such in such" of the reference is about me. The reference also reminds me of the power relationships in society; through the reference, I remember, "This is the way the system works. And, here is how I am located in this social system." For example, certain references to "over-sexed" "lazy people" will conjure up images the society holds about "black studs," "black gals," "drunken lazy Indians," "Muslim terrorists," or about the poor, welfare addicted underclass – "They are their worse enemy. They are the cause of their oppressed circumstances." If I am a black or First Nation man or woman, hearing such a phrase, I may feel "hailed" – this is about YOU! This is meant for your hearing!

10. What is it that is being "hailed" in me as a colonized person in particular social and institutional contexts? "Civilized"? "Deserving"? "Hard working"? "Articulate"? What is it saying about me – about something that is within me? Or, that I fear may be in me? How do I relate to these and other racial stereotypes? Might my level of performance be affected by "stereotype threat"? (See: Claude Steele, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=failylROnrY) Are any particular stereotypes calling forth *something* so very deep, and unconscious and odious, that I "just must kill" or "shrink away" from challenge? ...Perhaps, thinking that, somehow, I'm implicated in representations – that I embody the stereotype. This *something* comes from having been colonized – socialized into a way of conceiving of myself in respect to a history and a system of relationships created in the context of a colonial/racist, domination social system.

For Whites:

1. How did certain aspects of *whiteness* come to form my personality? How do I express the parts of my personality that are most informed by *whiteness*? What does that look like? Who can help me to identify it?

2. I learned the power associated with *whiteness* so that in cross-racial communication, I can act like a *white* person without any conscious thought or effort. I learned the behaviors of acting like a white person by being around other white people. In this, we are saying that certain of us in US society learn white culture, others learn Native American Culture, or African American culture, and so forth. Learning a culture is a good thing. All humans learn a culture. Men and women learn the male or female culture. Associated with culture is the knowledge of how to act appropriately according to the norms of the culture. The challenge is to be able to see how/in what ways the white culture I express is infected by racism. To see how my white culture is formed in a racial context where I have acquired "white racial knowledge" that allows me to act in as a "dominator" – as one who ought to define, rule and own as entitlement. As one who ought to exercise power over the Other. Power is communicated through cultural behaviors. *See* Socratic hand-out regarding communicating power through non-verbals. *See* "Tactics and Strategies of White Knowledge." What of these knowledge or communication patterns am I using?

3. How do I observe my own assertion of rightness? (I know how to do things. I am doing things the right way, or in a good way. In meetings, I speak out and dominate air-time without concern for others. In these and other ways I communicate "entitlement.")

4. In what contexts is this behavior not triggered in me? When do I not act in the ways described above? (For example, in what contexts do I most often find myself acting deferentially? To whom do I act deferentially – what role does positional power, class status, gender, and such, play?) Given my socialization into a "white identity," my assumption of dominator-power may be triggered simply by the assumed demands of the context (stimulus-response). Consider the discussion of Louis Althusser's notion of *interpellation*. *See* #9 above. I have some recognition of what is demanded of me as a "well socialized white," even though it may fall outside of any immediate awareness of just exactly what I have learned. Because of what I have learned,

although I may be unconscious of the specifics, I have a near-reflex response to the demands of the situations, the demands for me to perform *whiteness*. I somehow have identified particular culturally appropriate responses required of me (but these culturally "appropriate" responses may be racist responses). I consciously establish some correlations to guide my split-of-the-moment response (equating particular social identities with culturally appropriate responses). This comes from cultural conditioning. It is automatic; almost non-reflective.

5. In some context, if People of Color are identifying some power dynamics that are happening that speak to them of *whiteness* in action, what might they be seeing? In intercultural communication, one doesn't always know what's happening in the situation – not understanding what one is sensing – but one needs to say, "There is something that is happening here. I don't know what it is, but there is some disturbance here." Those embodying or performing "*whiteness*" usually are not attentive to their "white" performance. Those acting out of a dominator role do not generally need to attend to how their dominance is impacting others. Nor do they need to pay attention to the environment, even though verbal and non-verbal cues may clearly be present. Those **impacted** by *whiteness* are most apt to notice the ways in which *whiteness* is entering the context.

6. What happens if whites consciously note: "People of Color are seeing something. I don't know what it is. ...They may even be able to tell me – I can ask them. I can also find out what people do who are assuming dominance in a situation – I can learn what those behaviors are, and then I can try to see in what ways I have engaged in those behaviors." It will take some **humility** and a lot of self-monitoring to see this.

7. When we (whites) find we have created discomfort, we can screen our minds, "What could I possibly have done just now, that could possibly have caused these (non-verbal) responses? What are the possible interpretations of my behavior right now? If I were a Person of Color concerned about *whiteness*, what manifestations of whiteness might the Persons of Color have seen just now?"

8. *Whiteness* is much about non-verbal assertions of power.

9. *Whiteness* is much about the structure of interactions – who speaks first, interrupts, uses air-time without conscious awareness, etc., a sense of who "ought" to be in charge and receive deference, communication patterns that take white speech, intonation, nonverbals, and grammar patterns as the norm and measure of acceptability, the maintenance of white comfort rule of what truths can be articulated.

10. *Whiteness* is also about "persona" and tone – about certain aspects of our identity that come out in the feeling, "attitude" and intonation we assume.

11. What is that particular white persona doing that establishes distance or affinity in social interactions? What social role am I, as a white person, assuming? What does that role entitle me to say or do? In what ways are we, whites, assuming the *white role* (the role of racial entitlement) given in the US racial hierarchy?

12. Persona is a projection of self, a projection of self-image – how we project ourselves in a particular situation.

13. (Herb's analogy of critique for his "teacher" persona in a CPE (student in a clinical pastor education) context — talking to others as though he is the instructor, they the student. The teacher persona is problematic in an egalitarian context. Being a "teacher" – displayed in mannerisms, tone of voice, authoritative gestures – is deeply embedded in Herb's sense of self. Not to take on that persona requires conscious attention.) Our point: We are generally **un**aware of the persona we have assumed, the persona we are projecting, and how that will be received. But we can practice becoming aware of it. We can check and monitor: What is the persona I am enacting at this moment?

14. This white persona is something we have received, been inculcated into, and, now as a cultural ideal, consciously and unconsciously cultivate and embody. When we bring it with us into cross-cultural (cross-racial) contexts, it may cause difficulty to others. The white persona (as true with any persona) includes a repertoire we can pull from – accessories of titles and degrees; showcase of clothing, auto, and home; manners, tastes, smells, polish, speech affectations; affiliations and memberships that give credibility to our persona.

15. Persona is the Greek word for "mask." Our persona includes a script, an emotional state, staging, costumes, props, and supporting characters, all of which can be called upon in as character need arises.

ASDIC Metamorphosis 2010/2018