Coaching in the Presence of Difference: Considerations, Roadblocks, and Possibilities

Dissertation

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By

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Abstract

I am writing about whiteness, and the influence of colorblind and neutral discourses in one particular educational context: instructional coaching. In addition, I will explore the potential of coaching as an anti-racist practice and transformative tool in the quest for educational equity. Through this process, I am also writing about me. This dissertation is a layered autoethnography intended as a narrative guide for white people who want to disrupt racism in the spaces they influence.

Key points include: 1) Racism is a thing and it is not tied to individual actions, but systems and structures. Race and its by-product, racism, was created by white people to benefit white people and it is our responsibility to dismantle it, 2) Positionality matters. Knowing who you are in the context of where you work/coach/talk is imperative. Paying attention to positionality offers white antiracists perspective and encourages adaptive approaches to this complex work, 3) Neutrality and colorblind discourses mask racist structures. Sometimes this is intentional, sometimes it's not. Intention does not matter, impact does, 4) White fragility[1] is a by-product of neutrality and colorblind discourses and cause white people to avoid racial discomfort, 5) White people must learn to negotiate racial discomfort, so we can talk about race, racism and dismantle racist structures. This requires white people to actively seek out the skills and understandings necessary to negotiate these complex conversations, 6) Coaching is a tool that can help people and organizations to talk and think more deeply about race, 7) Coaching constrained by colorblind and neutrality discourses maintain systems of oppression. When considering coaching models, decision

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[1] (DiAngelo, 2018).

makers should apply criteria aligned to context and equity goals, 8) Strive to call in[2]. Don't be afraid

to call out. And, then return to calling in. Do what it takes to get the conversation on the table.

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[2] (Ross, 2019).

Dedication

Dedicated to my Mom, who according to my Dad, was not home because "she was out

saving the world". You are my role model. And to my Dad, who as a young, heterosexual,

cisgender, socially awkward undergraduate in the 1950s wrote a philosophy paper

expressing his dismay at American society's deep-seated homophobia. He will always be,

The Bear. The giant who did not like anyone. Equally. And, who protected all those he

found in his den fiercely and without remorse. And, finally, to every child whose

educational experience did not respect and honor who they truly are. I am so very sorry.

Acknowledgements

Vita

2007…………….……Master of Public Policy, University of Minnesota

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2009-2011………….Math Specialist, Buckeye Middle School

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Publications

Jaede, M., Stroot, S., & Leigh, K., (2014). Cognitive Coaching[SM] and Apprenticing Novice Urban Teachers. In Grift, G., (Ed). Transformative Talk (pp. 127-151). London: Hawker Brownlow.

Fields of Study

Major Field: Education: Department of Teaching & Learning
Area of Specialization: Multicultural and Equity Studies in Education

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Preface

Before you start reading, it might be helpful to know this is a non-traditional

dissertation. Chapters 2-4 are written as separate articles each structured for a particular

medium and targeting a specific audience. Sociologist Norman Denzin suggests it is time

to join the personal with the political, where writing serves as cultural criticism and tools

for social activism[3]. This layered autoethnographic dissertation attempts to do that. To

offer a text that confronts and interrogates the cultural logics of America's deeply

entrenched colorblind ideology and crafts a narrative that resonates with readers and

serves as a catalyst to reflection, action, and the disruption of oppressive systems.

Unlike the traditional literature review, Chapter 2 is written as a TED Talk transcript

focused on an audience grappling with negotiating conversations about race, equity, and

social justice. In lieu of the traditional methodology section, Chapter 3 is modeled after a

New York Times opinion editorial. This chapter begins with an actual email exchange

between me and a colleague. The remainder of the text in this chapter is a comprehensive

email response, written in the form of a persuasive essay much like one might find a New

York Times Opinion Editorial. To remain true to a communication between two people who

share a common professional language and context, explanatory and ancillary text is

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[3] (Denzin, 1999, p. 568).

included in the footnotes. Instead of outlining research findings, Chapter 4 is written as a submission to a practitioner journal and follows the offered guidelines and follows a citation and language format consistent with the journal. These chapters were crafted with the specific intention to offer multiple pathways for readers to explore the complex challenges associated with understanding whiteness while also confronting racism. In addition, each chapter offers a unique perspective on the potential of Coaching in the Presence of Difference as antiracist practice. My hope is each reader will find a chapter that speaks to them and opens the door to seeking their role in disrupting racist systems.

Although TED Talk transcripts and New York Times Opinion Editorials do not normally include citations, to ensure academic integrity and demonstrate the depth of doctoral work, each chapter has extensive citations and related academic concepts are included in the footnotes. In addition, because each of the articles is written with a specific audience in mind, content that might normally be omitted because it is considered familiar to the target audience, but may provide useful context to the lay reader, has also been included in the footnotes. This was an intentional decision to maintain the narrative flow consistent with the intended medium.

Chapter 1: Setting the Stage

Introduction

This multimodal[4] submission explores alternative text structures[5] as a commitment

to inclusivity, regarding multiple voices, varied perspectives, and expressive mediums. In

an effort to reduce interruptions to the narrative flow, all citations are included in the

footnotes. Some footnotes include commentary, images, and live links.

What is this topic?

I am writing about whiteness[6], and the influence of colorblind and neutral

discourses in one particular educational context: instructional coaching. In addition, I will

explore the potential of coaching as an anti-racist practice and transformative tool in the

quest for educational equity. Through this process, I am also writing about me. This

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[4] (Selfe & Selfe, 2008).

[5] (Bridwell-Bowles, 1992; Lincoln, 2001; Midgelow, 2012; Urion, 1995).

[6] I use the terms white and whiteness to denote "a social construction that embraces white culture, ideology, racialization, expressions, and experiences, epistemology, emotions, and behaviors" (Matias, Viesca, Garrison-Wade, Tandon, & Galindo, 2014) and acknowledge that, "unlike Blackness, whiteness is normalized because white supremacy elevates white and whiteness to the apex of the racial hierarchy" (Allen, 2001). I also choose to use "Black and Brown" instead of "non-white" to decenter whiteness when discussing socially constructed racial groups. I am still exploring what I think about capitalization. Matias, et al., (2014) note, "In an attempt to re-equalize racial labels and terminologies in education research articles, this article capitalizes Black and Brown to give credence to the racialized experience people of color as a proper noun. It also strategically lowercases the word white to challenge white supremacy in language." For this paper, I am guided by Matias's perspective. In previous writing, I chose not to follow this approach and decided to capitalize all racialized terms wondering if picking and choosing was somehow in opposition to a humanizing perspective. For this dissertation, I am making intentional chapter by chapter choices regarding capitalization. For chapter 1, I have chosen to follow the example set by Matia and her colleagues.

dissertation is a layered autoethnography[7] intended as a narrative guide for white people who want to disrupt racism in the spaces they influence.

I have chosen to focus specifically on race(ism)[8] for my dissertation because among all sociocultural identities, race(ism) holds a unique place in America. Race(ism) has a depth and dimension that permeates our society in ways that are immediately obvious as well as hidden and often unconscious. The 2018 Hidden Brain podcast, <u>The Mind of the Village</u>, explores how these latter manifestations of racism (implicit biases) are sociocultural phenomena forged by society and more specifically by our communities (Vedantam, 2018, 6:25-6:55).

> **Vedantam:** *What if some forms of prejudice are so deeply buried, that people themselves, don't realize they harbor such bias?*

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[7] Layered accounts often focus on the author's experience alongside data, abstract analysis, and relevant literature. This form emphasizes the procedural nature of research. Similar to grounded theory, layered accounts illustrate how 'data collection and analysis proceed simultaneously' (Charmaz, 1983, p. 110) and frame existing research as a 'source of questions and comparisons' rather than a 'measure of truth' (p. 117). But unlike grounded theory, layered accounts use vignettes, reflexivity, multiple voices, and introspection (Ellis, 1991) to 'invoke' readers to enter into the 'emergent experience' of doing and writing research (Ronai, 1992, p. 123) conceive of identity as an 'emergent process' (Rambo, 2005, p. 583) and consider evocative, concrete texts to be as important as abstract analysis (Ronai, 1995, 1996).

[8] In a 2016 presentation at OSU, Leigh Patel offered the language construct race(ism) to trouble the practice of talking about race without also explicitly talking about racism. She, alongside DuBois (1903), Woodson (1933), Omi and Winant (1986) and scholars in the field of critical race theory (Bonilla-Silva, 2013; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Solorzano & Yosso, 2001) argue "race is the key organizing category for inequality because of the permanence of racial ideology and white supremacy in the American Society" (M. Omi & Winant, 1994, p. 63). I have chosen to focus on race(ism) for this paper, because while there are many intersecting cultural identities and additional factors that influence how people experience education, I agree with Donner & Ladson-Billings who state, "race is the most viable and reliable analytical tool for holistically understanding and improving the collective fortunes of people of color in the United States (and globally)" (Donnor & Ladson-Billings, 2017, p. 196).

> Banaji: *Perhaps we behave in ways that are not known to our own conscious awareness. That we are being driven to act in certain ways not because we are explicitly prejudice, but because we may carry in our heads the thumbprint of the culture.*

Dr. Banaji explains how prejudice and bias endure, sometimes without our consent or knowledge, in our deeply embedded cognitive structures, perpetually influencing our behavior and worldviews. Because instructional coaching focuses on mediating and influencing the thinking of others, coaching communities have the unique opportunity to shape discourses in ways that normalize the exploration of cultural identities and their impact on teaching and learning. This positions educators to be engaged in ongoing, and mediated, critical self-reflection.

Why is this topic important to me?

As a white person, I have spent most of my adult life navigating professional spaces inhabited by Black and Brown people. As my consciousness of systemic and institutionalized inequality has become more deeper and more nuanced, the myriad of ways that race(ism) influences those settings has become increasingly apparent. As I reflect on my lived experiences, I better understand how, and why, many of the impacts of race(ism) were invisible to me early on. I attended an urban high school. However, my school-within-a-school college-prep classes were almost exclusively white. My basketball, track teams, and social circle were not. As a high school student, I was the beneficiary of

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tracking[9]. I don't remember if I sensed the wrongness of my segregated classes at the time and I surely did not have the language to describe it or the other inequities manifest in my high school. I am not sure I even understood the academic and other segregation in my school experience as the result of discrimination. It is quite possible I may have even believed at the time it was the result of personal choices[10]. What is true is that I did not question it, nor did I do anything to disrupt it.

As an undergraduate student, I lived with ten high school boys mostly from New York City. As part of the A Better Chance[11] (ABC) program in Amherst, Massachusetts, these young men lived in a house while they attended Amherst High School and I attended college nearby. For three years, I served as the live-in Language Arts tutor and was immersed in Black and Brown culture, experienced being the other, observed and participated in cross-cultural and humanizing interactions on a daily basis. Although my role in Amherst was an academic tutor, I believe I learned more than any of the young men in the program. Each young man served as a border crosser[12] and sociocultural mediator[13], educating me about their lived experiences as young Black and Brown men navigating

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[9] (G. R. Howard, 2016; T. C. Howard, 2014; Leonardo, 2009a; Leonardo & Grubb, 2013a; Oakes, 1995; Slavin & Braddock, 1993).
[10] (Bonilla-Silva, 2013).
[11] The mission of A Better Chance is to "increase substantially the number of well-educated young people of color who are capable of assuming positions of responsibility and leadership in American society" (retrieved from website: www.abetterchance.org). Similar to Teach for America, there is a lot to trouble about the A Better Chance approach. Again, that is a topic for another day, another time.
[12] According to Lincoln, border crossers "live both in and between" worlds and have the capabilities to "speak across cultures" (Lincoln, 2001, p. 15). By mediating cross-cultural experiences, they serve as cultural coaches.
[13] (Nieto, 2010).

adolescence and schooling in a predominately white community. They shared their home stories, their school stories, and we co-created our own shared stories on camping trips, drives to the LL Bean outlet in Maine, and on a road trip to visit colleges in Washington D.C. We sat together in the front row when Louis Farrakhan[14] spoke at The University of Massachusetts. We went to Boston to watch Nelson Mandela's motorcade after his release from prison in South Africa. I walked alongside them through the trials and triumphs of high school, making the football team, falling in love, writing term papers. Conversely, they sustained me through the trials and triumphs of my own college experience. My time in Amherst gifted me an opportunity to both be a part of a racially diverse community and have daily cross-cultural experiences. These are two things Ladson-Billings[15], Banks[16], Nieto[17], and more recently, Howard[18], offer as fundamental to shaping the values and attitudes that support educators to more deeply understand the cultures of their students. This lies at the heart of developing educators' capacities to meet the educational and social-emotional needs of their students which are often precursors to academic success[19]. My time at the ABC House and immersion into Black and Brown spaces offered daily

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[14] After accompanying the group on a trip to see Louis Farrakhan; I helped one young man edit a paper on the blue-eyed, blond-haired, white devil.

[15] (Ladson-Billings, 1994).

[16] (J. A. Banks, 1998).

[17] (Nieto, 2010).

[18] (T. C. Howard, 2014).

[19] According to Bartolome, "unless educational methods are situated in the students' cultural experiences, students will continue to show difficulty in mastering content area that is not only alien to their reality but is often antagonistic toward their culture and lived experiences" (1996, p. 191). Clearly, those educational methods must also include coaching.

disruptions to the dominate white world view into which I had been socialized. I left college and the Amherst ABC House with a lived experience that no longer centered whiteness.

In the final months of classes my senior year, posters popped up around campus advertising a new program designed to disrupt inequities in public education. Teach for America was starting its second year and seeking prospective teachers in historically underserved areas. Graduating a semester early, and unsure of my next steps, this seemed like an opportunity to apply my new understandings in a setting where I could be a catalyst to change. I was the white progressive Teach for America was looking for. On my first day of the Teach for America orientation on the University of Southern California campus, I found myself lost trying to find the cafeteria. While wandering through campus, I approached three women who invited me to walk me to the dining hall and share their table. We became friends. Throughout our time at the TFA Summer Institute, these three Black women invited me to trouble the basic premises of Teach for America and my role as a white educator of Black and Brown children[20]. They planted a seed of reflexivity that is still growing. Two of those women were in a car years later when we pulled over to have the first of many explicit and honest conversations about race(ism). This was first time I remember being explicitly held to account for my own racism. An account of this story can be found in Chapter 2.

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[20] There is much to trouble about Teach for America. One of the women I met that day, Janelle Perry Scott, is now a professor at the University of California at Berkeley and does much of troubling. It is an intentional choice not to dive deep into the topic of Teach for America in this dissertation. That is a topic for another day, another time.

I started teaching in 1991 in Oakland, CA. Four of the five years I taught at Hoover Elementary, I was the only white person in my classroom. I was the only white teacher on my team. I was the only white person in my home. In Oakland, I was blessed with an entirely new (to me) cadre of border crossers and sociocultural mediators[21]. Like the young men I had lived with at the Amherst ABC House, these Oakland-based border crossers guided me into becoming a more effective and culturally responsive educator and a more empathetic and well-rounded human being. For over ten years, I experienced thousands of daily interactions that disrupted my white socialization. Tens of thousands of humanizing experiences, thousands of conversations that spoke the truth to how race(ism) lives in the world.

I left my teaching career with the realization that the deep and structural inequities I was witnessing in my all-Black Oakland classroom and the surrounding community was not the result of personal choices, but instead the intended outcomes of systems and structures designed to privilege some at the expense of others[22] I still did not have the language to unpack or even adequately describe what was happening, but after observing it first hand, I had a desire to figure it out and find my role in changing it.

Fast forward 20 years, a husband, two kids, and a move to Ohio later. My post-teaching professional career has been about developing the language, deeper and more complex understandings, the professional credibility, and network to disrupt racism in

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[21] (Lincoln, 2001; Nieto, 2010).
[22] (Glasby, 2018; Menendian & Gambhir, 2018).

educational settings. Joining a PhD program, and this dissertation, are about expanding my credibility into professional contexts where most educators' foundational understandings of teaching and learning are developed, where experienced educators are situated, and where the initials at the end of your name matter. In particular, this dissertation is about changing the ways we talk about race(ism) in a range of educational contexts, most specifically in instructional coaching. It is about illuminating, in a profession overflowing with white progressives, the ways our strangle hold on discourses superiority regarding racial tolerance and moral objections to racism serve to undermine our willingness and ability to expose our own privilege and complicity[23]. This topic is important to me because I do not want to be complicit. I want to leverage my privilege and disrupt.

My positionality in this space

So, who am I (or maybe, why am I) as a white person in the position to write about race(ism)? I start with the premise that racism is a white construction[24] and a problem that can only be solved by white people[25]. I am choosing to explore race(ism) because in the socially constructed world of race, whiteness is a thing, but often a thing that is not talked

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[23] (DiAngelo, 2018, p. 108).

[24] For additional research and commentary regarding the social construction and its use as a justification for slavery (Bonilla-Silva, 2011, 2013; DiAngelo, 2018; M. E. Dyson, 2017; Kendi, 2017; Matias et al., 2014).

[25] Dr. Phillip Atiba Goff offers the following definitions for terms that are often used interchangeably. **Stereotype** = idea (e.g., Black people are good at basketball); **Prejudice** = feeling (e.g., I just don't like those people); **Bigotry** = feeling + belief in the stereotype; **Discrimination** = actions/behavior based on stereotype, prejudice, bigotry; **Racism** = social structures and systems that support discrimination (Meraji, Demby, Florido, & Bates, n.d.-a). For Critical Race Theory operates based on the understanding that racism is a "pervasive, systemic condition, not merely an individual pathology" and that racism is a "vast system that structures our institutions and our relationships" (Vaught & Castagno, 2008, p. 96).

about[26]. In an effort to keep whiteness invisible, to maintain the neutral (and superior) position for all us well-meaning folks who want to be seen as racially progressive, but not be held accountable for our role in racist systems, race(ism) is most often discussed in limiting ways. We consider racism through a personal lens, a good/bad binary that defines racism as the product of individual acts where good people = not racist and bad people = racist. We think, *Racists are bad people who carry a Tiki Torch yelling, "You will not replace us!"*[27] Be believe, *most white people don't do that, so therefore most white people are good… and not racist. I am good and not racist.* This simple and shallow view of racism is in a problematic alliance with American ideology of individualism and does not acknowledge the varied ways racism is embedded in our nation's institutions and sociocultural norms. Viewing racism through such a limited perspective, defined by the acts of individual people, masks the reality that racism is not, in fact, defined by individual acts, but instead by systems and structures that operationalize unearned privileges on white people.

Discourses such as individualism, meritocracy, neutrality and colorblindness are used to obscure race(ism) and designed to protect white people from both awareness and

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[26] One tenet of Critical Race Theory is the ways colorblindness, objectivity, neutrality camouflage the self-interest, power, and privilege of dominate groups "and because the dominant racial ideology purports to be colorblind, there is little space for socially sanctioned speech about race-related matters" (Bonilla-Silva, 2013, p. 82). According to Donner & Ladson-Billings (2017), the colorblind narrative professed from the sociopolitical right and postracialism narrative from the left, "decontextualizes the symbiotic relationship between race, opportunity, exclusion, marginalization, and exploitation" (p. 196). For additional research and commentary on objectivity, colorblindness, the invisibility of race(ism) (Bonilla-Silva, 2011, 2013, n.d.; DiAngelo, 2018; M. E. Dyson, 2017; Sue, 2016).

[27] (Heim, 2017; Serwer, 2018; Wildman, 2017).5/6/19 6:08:00 AM5/6/19 6:08:00 AM

culpability[28]. This dissertation about race(ism) is written by a white person, for white people, particularly white progressives, through the lens of whiteness. It is seeking a safe space, an affinity group, for people who may not even know they need one[29]. This white antiracist perspective is important because when we start unpacking race(ism), most of us white people are going to realize we do not have the skills, dispositions, experience, and fortitude, to unpack the truth of it[30], let alone take responsibility for our role in it and the myriad of ways we benefit from and leverage racism to our advantage[31]. We are going to need to console each other in our shared revelations, our guilt, umbrage, defensiveness, anger, and self-hate. We need to shed our white tears privately[32]. We will need to learn together how to bring these complex and difficult conversations, race talk[33], to our white friends, families, colleagues, communities, work places -- all the spaces we inhabit and influence. And, also because the truth of it is there are some things white folks can only hear, and truly receive from, other white folks. If we are to disrupt racism, there is a lot of listening, learning, and reflecting that white people need to do. We are all snowflakes[34] when it comes to racial discomfort[35]. My positionality in this space is not that I am speaking about race(ism) on behalf of Black and Brown people. Instead, I am speaking about

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[28] (Bonilla-Silva, 2013; DiAngelo, 2018; Kendi, 2017; Nieto, 2017).
[29] (DiAngelo, 2018, p. 103).
[30] (DiAngelo, 2018, p. 112).
[31] (DiAngelo, 2018, p. 112).
[32] For more research and commentary on *white women tears* (DiAngelo, 2018; Hamad, 2018; Meraji, Demby, Florido, & Bates, n.d.-b).
[33] (Sue, 2016).
[34] For more commentary on the use of the term 'snowflake' (Hess, 2017; Perlman, 2017).
[35] (Bonilla-Silva, 2013; DiAngelo, 2018; Sue, 2016).

race(ism) on behalf of white people because we have the most to learn. And the most to do.

While I believe everything in the previous paragraph to be true, what is also true is that we, the white collective, can only disrupt[36] racism when our work is informed by Black and Brown people. While racism is a white-created social construction, as Ta-Nehisi Coates offers in his book Between the World and Me, it is a construction that resides on the backs of Black and Brown people[37]. As white people we do not endure a litany of negative stereotypes that follow us through every cross-cultural interaction, there is seldom the assumption that the opportunities we earn are in spite of our limited capabilities due to concessions made because of our skin color. Most white people do not know what it is to be discriminated against because of our skin color and we are never the victims of racism. Those are not our lived experiences, so we are unable to speak directly, authentically, to racism as its victim, only as its perpetrator. We do not understand the nuance of the shapes racism takes in the lives of others. To tell the whole story of race(ism) in schools, white people can only tell the story from our perspectives, and then we must seek out the truths[38] of others to share the whole of it. As a white person writing about race(ism) to

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[36] Critical Race Theorist, Derrick Bell, argues racism is adaptive, constantly changing or modifying its expression, but never diminishing (Bell, 1992).

[37] "But all our phrasing – race relations, racial chasm, racial justice, racial profiling, white privilege, even white supremacy – serves to obscure that racism is a visceral experience, that is dislodges brains, blocks airways, rips muscle, extracts organs, cracks bones, breaks teeth… You must always remember that the sociology, the history, the economics, the graphs, the charts, the regressions all land with great violence, upon the body" (Coates, 2015, p. 10).

[38] My use of Truth or truth is based on the CRT concept of storytelling to challenge racial (and other) oppression. One premise of CRT is that racist assumptions, myths, and presuppositions become part of dominant discourse that makes up common culture about race. "Society constructs social reality in ways

white people, our stories must unpack our ignorance, expose our vulnerabilities, and open

the door to disruptions of our white identities. We need Black and Brown perspectives to

surface the realities of race(ism) in America. I am writing alongside the many people who

have helped expose my white racialized experience[39]. This dissertation is a layered

autoethnography because it is a story I only know, because others were willing to share

theirs with me.

Why I chose the 3-article approach to this dissertation

The decision regarding the format of my dissertation took many turns as my

research and my role in this work shifted. I landed on the three articles approach based on

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that promote its own self-interest (or that of elite groups)" (p. xiv). Thus, it is the responsibility of CRT theorists to construct alternative portraits of reality—portraits from subaltern perspectives" (Ladson-Billings, 2004, p. 58). In this text, I use Truth to acknowledge the content represents some person or some system's Truth. As in, what is being said is True to that person, but may not be True to another person sharing the same experience. I use truth when it does not feel necessary to acknowledge perspective. For additional research and commentary on the concepts of Truth (Adams, Jones, & Ellis, 2014; Ellis, Adams, & Bochner, 2011; Nash, 2004). Antiracist scholar Robin DiAngelo troubles the use of "Share your Truth" as a norm when facilitating groups (DiAngelo, 2018, p. 127).

[39] Border crossers (Lincoln, 2001) "frequently live in both and between worlds" and serve to assist others in "learning to speak across cultures" (p. 15). Sociocultural mediators (Nieto, 2010, 2017) understand their own lived experiences, honor the lived experiences of other and are capable if adjusting their approaches in service to themselves and others. My life has been shaped by others' willingness to serve as both border crossers and sociocultural mediators willing to be vulnerable in the face of our differences. I cannot list all of the people who have influenced my thinking about race(ism). There a few seminal experiences that have shaped my thinking. Janelle, Krishna, and Meisha who pulled the car over to explain why describing people as exotic was problematic. Alissha who invited me into the circle and explained why we still needed to car pool our middle school sons home from basketball practice because while my son might be safe walking home in the dark, hers, and the other Black SoBex Boys were not safe even in their own neighborhood. Sherita, Alice, Binta, Marla and my other MESE classmates who never held back, were not afraid to hold me and others accountable for our racist ideas. And all those whose willingness to share their Truths helped me realize my energies where better invested in my own people. There are also border crossers who walked alongside me at different parts this journey: Yolanda, Lori, Mitch, all the Amherst ABC Boys, Mrs. Mims, Corey, Paul, and my Hoover students and families. And some who, thankfully, still are: Shalonda, Tanya, my WP peeps. And, of course, LaShuan. Because. Everything.

my intended outcomes: 1) influence the Mindful Consortium community to adopt a more culturally responsive and anti-racist approach to coaching, presenting and facilitation; 2) influence education coaching practice across all coaching communities; 3) influence how white people talk about race(ism) both in and outside the education context. As a result of my intentions, my audience[40] includes education coaches and the institutions who train and hire them. But, also people who want to understand how race(ism) plays out in their daily lives and how they might identify and disrupt it. It is not necessarily the academy I am speaking to, so instead of hoping my desired audience will somehow find me in an academic journal, my hope is to find them. To accomplish this, I want to publish and/or present in the spaces where they already are, using a format and language where I might be heard.

Why these articles count as research

"Autoethnography" is an approach to doing and representing social research that uses personal ("auto") experience to create a representation ("graphy") of cultural ("ethno") experiences, social expectations, and shared beliefs, values, and practices. As a research method, autoethnography combines the aims and practices of ethnography with the aims and practices of life writing[41].

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[40] (Lincoln, 2001).
[41] (Adams & Holman Jones, 2017, p. 142).

Autoethnography is a research methodology suitable to discovering the intersections between culturally-centered, equity-oriented theoretical models and coaching as a model for ongoing teacher professional learning. Critical self-analysis, which lies at the heart of autoethnographic research methods, is also a key component of Multicultural Education[42]. Because much of this work focuses on critical culturally responsive instructional coaching[43] in the interest of racial justice, autoethnography is a perfect tool for me as a white, middle-class educator. It allows me to align my belief system with the crucial work of engaging in my own critical self-reflection, which necessarily requires me to interrogate my place in this conversation[44]. For me, autoethnography serves not only as a method of inquiry, but also a uniquely powerful "way of knowing"[45]. This methodological tool thus expands my capacity to thoughtfully discern, interrogate, and articulate key intersections I am interested in not only from a theoretical standpoint, but also from my lived experiences. With this increased capacity, I am better positioned to craft an authentic, and accessible, narrative[46]. My intention is thus not to navel gaze[47], but

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[42] (Anzaldua, 2009; Banks & Banks, 1995; Banks, 2013; Hackman, 2005; hooks, 1994; Howard, 2003; Nieto, 1999).

[43] A reflexive and culturally responsive coach is engaged in ongoing critical self-reflection and acknowledges of their own biases, understands the sociocultural production of knowledge, and is conscious of institutionalized structures that systemize inequity in schools. These understandings live in the coach's consciousness and therefore become tools to draw from when mediating the thinking of the person being coached. This modified approach maintains thinking as the catalyst to behaviors, deep structures as the source of thinking, and then offers coaching as a tool to invite cognitive dissonance around individual and organizational deep structures that perpetuates systems of oppression. I label this model, Coaching in the Presence of Difference. A more detailed description of Coaching in the Presence of Difference can be found in Chapter 4.

[44] (T. C. Howard, 2003, p. 200).

[45] (Ellis et al., 2011, p. 11).

[46] (Holman Jones, 2016, p. 229).

[47] (Madison, 2006, p. 321).

rather to intentionally narrate a reflexive journey, scaffolding a process others might undertake. Isn't that what academic research is all about: offering something that builds on the ideas of others who have been laboring in this space, joining forces to offer new ways of thinking, thereby opening doors for social progress?

Autoethnography is inevitably intertwined with my journey as an educator, coach, facilitator, and developing researcher. When I began this dissertation journey, my intention was to follow the lead of scholars who employ autoethnographic methods, and to write in evocative and aesthetic ways that invites others to join the conversation and keep it going[48]. As I reflect on my dissertation process, I am pleased with this choice. Through the process of deepening my understanding of culturally-centered models, equity, and coaching to produce a credible research narrative, I am now aware that I was also deepening my understanding of me. I have learned that to be an effective researcher, it is important to know what you bring to the conversation and how you might be most influential (and influenced) in the discourse. According to Stacy Holman Jones (2005), "Autoethnographers view research and writing as socially-just acts; rather than a preoccupation with accuracy, the goal is to produce analytical, accessible texts that change us and the world we live in for the better"[49]. The main reason this dissertation is written in a narrative(ish) form is because my hope is it will somehow end up in white, non-academic,

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[48] (Bochner & Ellis, 2016; Ellis et al., 2011; hooks, 1994).
[49] (in Ellis et al., 2011, p. 11).

hands. I thus hope that white educators and others will see themselves as capable of, and responsible for, disrupting race(ism) in white spaces.

How I plan to parse out the three articles

The three articles are organized in a narrative format, a story line of sorts. The first article, Chapter Two, troubles colorblind ideology and neutrality discourses and explains why this conversation is situated in the education coaching context. The second article, Chapter Three, describes how these discourses, alongside white fragility[50], are operationalized in a particular coaching community of which I am a member. The third article, Chapter Four, explores the potential of coaching in the presence of difference as an antiracist[51] practice. Chapter 5 serves as a synthesizing space. There, I respond to informal feedback received from when Chapter 2 was shared as a TED Talk-like presentation which serves as a self-check on both my process and product. I weave that input into an exploration of an action plan for forwarding this conversation.

Chapter Two is written in the form of a TED Talk and seeks to respond to the question, *How do colorblind and neutrality discourses sustain systems of racial oppression in coaching?* I chose this format because it aligns with my goal of offering this complex and controversial question through a familiar and accessible medium. In addition, the nature

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[50] (DiAngelo, 2018).
[51] "Antiracist: to think there is nothing wrong with Black people, to think that racial groups are all equal… Black Americans' history of oppression has made Black opportunities – not Black people – inferior (Kendi, 2017, p. 11).

of this format provided an opportunity to present my thinking to a live and informed group

of stakeholders and to elicit informal feedback[52]. In the presence of a racially diverse group,

this chapter/talk centers positionality and the complexities associated with being a white

person who talks and writes about race(ism).[53] This chapter seeks to surface the

importance of white people engaging openly and honestly about race(ism) with cultural

humility and to better understand the historical context of race talk[54] while owning our

individual and collective role in benefitting from and maintaining systems of racial

oppression. It invites readers and listeners to engage in critical self-reflection and take the

lead in disrupting racism in the white spaces they inhabit. I situate this talk in the context

of education coaching. This intentional decision seeks to introduce the inherent

contradictions of coaching with the goal of mediating thinking and eliciting cognitive

dissonance while employing colorblind and neutrality discourses and offers a first glance

at the potential of coaching as an antiracist practice. Both of these ideas will be explored

more deeply in Chapters Three and Four.

Both Chapters Three and Four use the autoethnographic form to craft a narrative

that might resonate with a non-academic audience. They are modeled on extended

opinion editorials (OpEds) and a submission to a practitioner journal. Like Chapter Two,

this format was selected to as a means to make these ideas accessible and invite

stakeholders outside of the academy, in an effort to increase both the range and the

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[52] (Jaede, 2019).
[53] (DiAngelo, 2018; Sue, 2016, pp. 31–51).
[54] (Sue, 2016).

number of people who read and respond. My hope is that through the process of reading

and reflecting, education practitioners in a variety of fields and settings will identify the

ways white fragility[55] and the discourses of colorblindness and neutrality currently live in

their own settings. Through this unmasking of the racism embedded in education systems

and structures, readers should begin to unpack the hidden curricula[56] that operationalize

and sustain racism. These articles will serve as a catalyst to explore antiracist coaching as

a potential mechanism for critical self-reflection and a pathway to interrupt racist systems.

Chapter Three seeks to answer the question, How does white fragility[57] live in the

Mindful Consortium[58] community and what impact does its presence have on effectiveness

of Mindful Coaching[SM59] as a model to mediate[60] the thinking of others? This chapter is

written as a response to a communication between myself and one of the current Mindful

Consortium Directors. This open letter invites the Mindful Consortium community and

anyone else who believes in instructional coaching and educational equity, into a critical

exploration of the potential for and roadblocks to Mindful Coaching serving as an antiracist

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[55] (DiAngelo, 2018).

[56] (Apple, 2004a; C. A. M. Banks & Banks, 1995; Bennett, 2001).

[57] (DiAngelo, 2018).

[58] Mindful Consortium is the merger of two organizations: The Center for Responsive Organizations and The Center for Mindful Coaching. They offer a variety of programs, seminars, and resources that serve to maximize individual and organizational thinking and professional collaboration (retrieved from www.thinkingcollaborative.com).

[59] In reference to Mindful Coaching in this submission, I cite cofounders Andrew Collins and Ben Garrett and recognize the service mark (Mindful Coaching[SM]) held by Collins and Garrett and the Mindful Consortium (www.thinkingcollaborative.com). In each chapter, the service mark will be included in the first mention of Mindful Coaching.

[60] The intention of a Cognitive Coach is to mediate the thinking of the person being coached. The process focuses on supporting people to develop more efficient and more complex mental maps that facilitate increased self-directedness. One outcome of coaching conversations is the disruption of an individual's mental maps (Costa & Garmston, 2015).

practice. I provide a brief historical account of the development of the Mindful Coaching

model, that from a chronological perspective, mirrored in many ways the development of

Multicultural Education[61] and Critical Race Theory[62]. Outlining how these models evolved

in isolated silos in the education world, I will unpack how the discourses of Multicultural

Education and Critical Race Theory were available to inform Mindful Coaching and attempt

to unpack how and why the potential intersections of these models do not generally

manifest. I will offer the operationalization of white fragility[63] as a framework to

understand the current state of the Mindful Consortium community, in which colorblind

ideology and neutrality discourses predominate. I will expand on the inherent

contradictions of coaching with the goal of mediating thinking and eliciting cognitive

dissonance when coaches employ colorblind and neutrality discourses. And, finally, I will

explore how a small cadre of Mindful Consortium Training Associates are disrupting these

troubling discourses in their coaching practice, seminar presentations, group facilitation,

and as Mindful Consortium community members.

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[61] Multicultural Education has multiple goals which include 1) holding a definite value in and respect for cultural diversity and human rights, 2) focus on social justice and equal opportunity, 3) opportunities to pursue alternative life choices for all people, 4) equitable distribution of power for all ethnic groups, 5) value for both inclusion and disrupting current power dynamics (J. A. Banks, 2013; Geneva Gay, 1994; Gollnick, 1980; Ladson-Billings, 2004; May & Sleeter, 2010; Nieto, 2010; Sleeter & Grant, 1987).

[62] Critical Race Theory developed out of legal scholarship and provides a critical analysis of race(ism). The tenets of Critical Race Theory are interdisciplinary. For more research and commentary regarding Critical Race Theory from an education perspective (Crenshaw, Gotanda, & Peller, 1995; Crenshaw, Harris, & Lipsitz, 2018; Delgado & Stefancic, 2017; Dixson & Rousseau, 2005; Donnor & Ladson-Billings, 2017; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Oluo, 2018)

[63] (DiAngelo, 2018).

Chapter Four responds to the question, *What does it mean to coach in the presence of difference and what is the potential of this approach as an antiracist practice?* This chapter is written in preparation for submission to the November 2019 Educational Leadership Issue – *A Culture of Coaching*. Here I trouble neutrality and colorblind discourses in instructional coaching and offer the concept of coaching in the presence of difference as a lens through which school leaders, mentors and others might more skillfully incorporate coaching into their work. I highlight three well-regarded national coaching models, Mindful Coaching[SM] (Mindful Consortium), Coaching for Equity (National Equity Project), and Culturally Proficient Coaching[64] to identify key components of effective coaching in diverse settings. Using personal examples of coaching conversations, I explore how coaching in the presence of difference has the potential to expand the mental models of the person being coached, opening new ways of thinking and previously unconsidered instructional approaches.

Chapter Five seeks to answer the question, *Where do we go from here?* In this chapter I respond to the feedback provided by attendees of the Chapter Two presentation and explain how this generative process has influenced my thinking and next steps. Against this backdrop, I will synthesize the journey articulated in the three previous chapters and discuss limitations and potential new directions. This final chapter will thus serve as a launch pad for further inquiry by identifying potential next steps for operationalizing these antiracist efforts in practical and specific ways.

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[64] (Lindsey, Martinez, & Lindsey, 2007).

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Chapter 2: How Colorblind and Neutrality Discourses Sustain Racist Systems

My name is Marguerethe Jaede, and, yes, you are in the right place. I am white[65] and this is a talk about race[66]. I realize this might be a little disorienting. White people are socialized not to talk about race. We are told it is impolite and we are conditioned to be fearful that if we do talk about race, we will somehow be perceived as, or outright called, racist. So, we often avoid it, at all costs. Unfortunately, the fact is, the true cost of not talking about race is not ours to bear. In an effort to avoid our own discomfort, we very comfortably lay the burden of talking about race and, therefore, the by-product of race and racism, on the backs of Black and Brown people[67]. When we are unwilling to talk about race, when we succumb to the illusion that is colorblindness, we discount the realities of the daily lived experiences of Black and Brown people and contribute to maintaining

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[65] I use the terms white and whiteness to denote "a social construction that embraces white culture, ideology, racialization, expressions, and experiences, epistemology, emotions, and behaviors" (Matias et al., 2014) and acknowledge that, "unlike Blackness, whiteness is normalized because white supremacy elevates white and whiteness to the apex of the racial hierarchy" (Allen, 2001). I also choose to use "Black and Brown" instead of "non-white" to decenter whiteness when discussing socially constructed racial groups. I am still exploring what I think about capitalization. Matias, et al., (2014) note, "In an attempt to re-equalize racial labels and terminologies in education research articles, this article capitalizes Black and Brown to give credence to the racialized experience people of color as a proper noun. It also strategically lowercases the word white to challenge white supremacy in language." For this paper, I am guided by Matias's perspective. In previous writing, I chose not to follow this approach and decided to capitalize all racialized terms wondering if picking and choosing was somehow in opposition to a humanizing perspective. For this dissertation, I am making intentional chapter by chapter choices regarding capitalization. For chapter 2, I have chosen to follow the example set by Matia and her colleagues.

[66] I chose not to use the race(ism) construction in Chapter 2 because of the auditory nature of the medium.

[67] "But all our phrasing—race relations, racial chasm, racial justice, racial profiling, white privilege, even white supremacy—serves to obscure that racism is a visceral experience, that it dislodges brains, blocks airways, rips muscle, extracts organs, cracks bones, breaks teeth… You must always remember that the sociology, the history, the economics, the graphs, the charts, the regressions all land, with great violence, upon the body" (Coates, 2015, p. 10).

systems of race-based oppression. When we choose silence, we are complicit. So, just to clarify, I am white. This is a talk about race. And, if you are white, it is possible, and even likely, you might feel a bit uncomfortable. Don't worry, you will survive. I did… and still do. If you are Black or Brown, at the end of this talk, it is possible might just think… duh.

Before we get deep into it, I also want to share a little bit about myself and provide some context. Since we have broached the topic of skin color and acknowledged I am a white person talking about race, I want to clarify one other thing. Not only am I white, so are my kids. And, so is my husband. This is important to clarify, because my experience has been that often once people get over the shock of a white person talking about race, the next place the mind goes is, "Oh, well, she must be married to a Black man." I learned this probably 15 years ago when a Black colleague I had known for many years was in my cubicle looking at the pictures on my wall. She exclaimed, "Wow. Your kids look white." I was a bit shocked. I said, "Umm… Because they are." She nonchalantly responded, "Oh, I just always assumed your husband was Black." I had not known that. Since that conversation, I have been running an informal and completely unscientific study and found this assumption to be quite common. Much of the work I do requires me to speak in front of large and small groups of people. All my presenting is equity-driven where race, among other sociocultural identities, are openly explored. When I share this Black husband story while presenting, people routinely come up to me at lunch or afterwards and say something along the lines of, "Oh, I definitely thought you were married to a Black man. We had a pool going at our table. I lost. My tablemates cheated. They already knew your

husband is white." Obviously, it is mostly Black and Brown people who tell me this. They know they are Black and Brown, so talking about race is not new to them. It's not a thing to be avoided, it is fact of everyday life. To be honest, I am not sure if white people hold the same assumptions about my family. White people seldom see themselves through a racialized lens, so on this subject, I don't hear from them as often or as openly. The alarming part of this story is the assumption that a white person will only talk about race if they have a direct stake in the situation. A belief I hold is that we all have stake in ending racism. And that is why I am here.

So, to settle any unanswered questions, here they are. This is my husband, Patrick. He spent 9 years as an active duty naval officer and almost 20 years as a naval reserve officer. He has deployed twice since September 11th. He grew up on a family farm in rural Kentucky, attending a Southern Baptist church his great-great-great grandmother helped establish. When they were younger, our two children spent several weeks each summer working on that farm[68], mowing[69], picking up rocks behind the turbo till, and routinely climbing the grain bins[70]… because… I don't know why. They were socialized from a very young age to understand and appreciate this part of their heritage. We have a surprisingly large collection of child-size tractors for a family that lives in Bexley[71]. Oh, yes, in addition to their Kentucky farm experience, our kids grew up in Bexley, OH. My family is not just

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[68] Presentation slide - picture of Riley on tractor.
[69] Presentation slide picture of Ella on mower.
[70] Presentation slide picture of Riley climbing grain bins.
[71] Presentation slide pictures of Riley and Ella on mini-tractors.

white, but, from a Central Ohio perspective, we are super white. I say all this to again clarify, I am a white person, with a white family, and I am talking about race. This is important because my intention is to invite other white people, including all of you, to also talk about race. Openly. Honestly. Frequently. It is my belief that cross-cultural conversations, ongoing humanizing interactions, is where transformational changes begins. My hope is you will join me.

Toward this effort, I would like to share a story with you. A story pivotal to my being here, in this space, talking to you about race.

The journey that led me to this place started with a car ride. In reality, the journey started long before that, but it was during this particular car ride that I realized I was even on a journey.

This car ride took place almost 30 years ago. I was with 3 friends. I don't remember the topic of our conversation but what I clearly remember is that at one point, I described someone, the artist, Sade, perhaps, as "exotic". While I do not remember for certain what city we were in or exactly where we were going, I distinctly remember the conversation after the term "exotic" passed my lips. In my memory, the car pulled to the side of the road and we stopped. I am not sure if that is actually true, but that is how the it replays in my head. That is what this memory feels like. The conversation that followed was the first time I was confronted with my whiteness, and my ignorance. With both grace and care, the three people in the car gently explained that terms like "exotic" are used to put people in a box, to categorize them so they can be assigned racialized characteristics based on stereotypes.

Terms like "exotic" are most often applied to Black and Brown individuals who do not easily fit into the racial boxes society has so carefully created. They patiently explained that when people do not fit neatly into categories, their racial ambiguity disrupts our view of the world and makes us uncomfortable because when we can't label someone, we don't know how to act or what to expect. So, in an effort to mitigate our unease, we make up new categories, use labels such as "exotic" and assign characteristics that ameliorate our discomfort. All three of these people are light skinned and Black. All three had experienced being labeled exotic. They all had feelings about it.

So, although I was the only white person in the house where I lived for three of my four years in college and had a minor in African-American Studies, this car ride was the first time I remember my whiteness being centered, and my language choice, world view, and Truth questioned. With patience and honesty, I got a reality check that illuminated the very racialized ways I had been socialized to view the world and my place in it. This car conversation offered an opportunity for me to choose how I would respond to the cognitive dissonance we experience when our deeply held identities are challenged. That car ride changed the trajectory of my life.

Those three friends made a choice and took a risk. This was unlikely the first racially insensitive comment they had heard from a white person they considered a friend. They could have ignored my comment and my ignorance. Clearly, that would have been easier. Instead, they made themselves vulnerable and offered me an opportunity to learn. I too,

had a choice. I could succumb to white fragility[72] and get angry, take umbrage, defend myself, or deny race-based intentions. Or, I could be open and curious about why what I said had struck a nerve (or in this case three nerves). I cannot say exactly why they thought I was worth the effort, or why I chose curiosity, but that is what happened. They explained. I listened. And, I reflected. Thirty years later, and I am still reflecting. LaShaun would say it was an act of love on the part of all of us in the car. I like that explanation. It was certainly an act of empathy, to see another's pain, frustration, uncertainty and be willing to be vulnerable in the face of it. Whatever the cause, I left that car with the realization that my Truth, my way of viewing and experiencing the world, was not the only Truth. I realized my words were neither objective or neutral. My whiteness was revealed, and my colorblind socialization had been shattered.

Conversations such as these are not common. Mostly because white people are afraid, and Black and Brown people are tired of being told they are oversensitive. As you imagine that car ride in your head, ask yourself, *What opportunities have you had, or maybe missed, to engage in an honest and open conversation about race? What possibilities might exist if you make yourself vulnerable? What might be some benefits of leaning in?*

I want to clarify one last thing. I am not talking about race on behalf of Black and Brown people. Quite the contrary, because I am white, I am talking about race to white people. This is a conversation we need to have. And, we cannot do this alone.

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[72] (DiAngelo, 2018).

When talking about race it is important to start with the shared understanding that race is a social construction, not a biological fact. From an aggregate perspective, the scientific evidence is very clear, there are more genetic differences between people considered the same race than there are between people of different races[73]. Race, as defined by skin color, fostered the creation of sociocultural systems that grouped people into categories by which they could be visually sorted as a means of subjugation[74]. The concept of race was devised by wealthy and powerful white people to first justify slavery, then segregation, and now mass incarceration[75]. Race evolved out of a desire to further dehumanize enslaved Black and Brown people to establish a clear distinction between them and white indentured servants. As early as 1680, rich planters recognized that to squash rebellions fueled by shared oppression, poor whites needed to be distinguished from indentured and enslaved Blacks. They succeeded in this by creating and codifying more white privilege, encouraging poor whites to see themselves and their condition as better, because "at least they are not Black." Differentiating between poor white and poor and enslaved Blacks was not out of a kinship for poor whites, but out of a desire to divide logical allies in an effort to more easily oppress all disenfranchised peoples, white and Black. At this point in history race was merely an idea, but not yet a "fact".

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[73] (R. Frank, 2012, pp. 315–316; Kendi, 2017, p. 474; Kolbert, 2018, p. 31; Roberts, 2012, pp. 50–54; Yudell & Venter, 2014, pp. ix–xi).

[74] For a detailed explanation of the history of justifications used for slavery from religious to climate alongside the development of racist ideas that undergird racism in America, see Kendi (2017, pp. 15–46).

[75] (Alexander, 2012; Bonilla-Silva, 2013; Kendi, 2017).

The "science" of race was an afterthought. "Scientists" (and I use the term loosely) first relied on biology to explain visible physical differences and fabricated intellectual ones. Historically, the "biology" of race, whether based on climate, curse, or polygenesis theories was used to dehumanize Black and Brown people and justify slavery and then John Crow. As biological explanations of race were debunked and no longer acceptable in "civilized" circles, social scientists took over and the cultural "deficiencies" of Black and Brown people became the preferred explanations for long-standing inequalities. Contemporary racism is insidious. Through colorblind and neutrality discourses, modern racism places the blame of social inequities on those most vulnerable to racist structures while at the same time closing off conversations that might illuminate the structures themselves. By making race a taboo subject, we have ensured racist systems remain unnamed and unchallenged. "Science", whether biological or social, is how we lived with and how we continue to live with ourselves as we witness the injustices of race-based oppression.

When talking about mass incarceration and the inequities that currently exist when considering the disproportionality of the application of the death penalty, social justice activist Bryan Stevenson offers this perspective, "People say all the time, 'well, I don't understand how people could have tolerated slavery?' 'How could they have made peace with that?' 'How could people have gone to a lynching and participated in that?' 'That's so crazy, if I was living at that time I would never have tolerated anything like that.' And the

truth is we are living in this time, and we are tolerating it.[76]" Stevenson's words can be

hard to take because we like to think we are different. The question we may want to ask

ourselves is how different are we? And, who has the privilege of experience what might be

different?

The pseudo-science myths associated with race, alongside the cultural constructs

of meritocracy and individualism have become part of the American narrative. They are

how we sleep at night… believing deep down inside we deserve what we have, and

"others" reap what they sow. We believe it, even if we don't say it aloud[77] and sometimes

when we do… *My kid will not get into Harvard because they are not a minority. I did not*

get that job/promotion because it was given to a less qualified person of color. We also use

examples of those who "made it" (Obama, Oprah, LeBron) to craft a narrative that if those

"other" Black and Brown people would just work harder and pull themselves up by their

bootstraps, they, too, would rise above. We offer grit as panacea to systemic poverty and

institutionalized racism[78].

The fact that race is a social construct makes it no less a thing. Race is very much a

thing and it defines much of how we experience the world. Historian, Hasan Jeffries[79],

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[76] (Duvernay, 2016).

[77] "As in other Western nations, white children born in the United States inherit the moral predicament of living in a white supremacist society. Raised to experience their racially based advantages as fair and normal, white children receive little if any instruction regarding the predicament they face, let alone any guidance in how to resolve it. Therefore, they experience or learn about racial tension without understanding Euro-Americans' historical responsibility for it and knowing virtually nothing about their contemporary roles in perpetuating it" (Marty, 1999, p. 51). And then they become educators…

[78] (Coates, 2014b; Love, 2019).

[79] (Jeffries, 2018) To listen to Dr. Jeffries talk, Discussing Race & Racism with Children.

offers, "Race is biologically meaningless and socially meaningful. It shapes the contours of our lives". Race in some way or other influences among other things where we live, go to school, our social and professional networks, our job prospects, and the spaces where we feel safe[80]. Race also influences how we view law enforcement, government, and our place in the world[81]. In addition, race often determines what we feel entitled to. As white people, we are socialized to believe we are the norm, we are neutral, WE are American... no hyphen necessary[82]. We believe we have the right to be safe in our homes, our neighborhoods... and at Starbucks[83]. We believe our way of viewing and experiencing the world is typical, and any other way is somehow "other'[84]. This does not mean we always see "other" as bad, or less worthy, or inadequate. But, we definitely see those of non-Western European descent as "other", thus leaving the door open to further judgement[85]. This centering of white Eurocentric norms makes us feel entitled to comfort, safety, and acceptance. We belong[86]. We do not consider whiteness a thing to be explored and understood because for many of us, we never even realized whiteness is a thing at all.[87]

This entitlement to belonging has caused an overdeveloped sense of self and underdeveloped capacity for racial discomfort in white people. Antiracist scholar, Robin

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[80] (Bonilla-Silva, 2013, pp. 2–3).

[81] (Bonilla-Silva, 2013, p. 2).

[82] (R. L. Allen, 2004; Ricky Lee Allen, 2005).

[83] (Dias, Eligon, & Oppel, 2018).

[84] (Bonilla-Silva, 2011, 2013; DiAngelo, 2018; Oluo, 2018; Picower, 2009; Sue, 2016).

[85] (Marty, 1999, p. 55).

[86] (DiAngelo, 2018, pp. 53–55).

[87] "White People: I don't want you to understand me better; I want you to understand yourselves. Your survival has never been dependent on your knowledge of white culture. In fact, it's required your ignorance" (Olou, 2017).

DiAngleo, offers us a label for this phenomenon, white fragility[88]. DiAngleo argues that because we feel entitled to belonging, white people do not develop the tools and skills necessary to navigate racial discomfort. When faced with situations where the impacts of race surface, or we are questioned about our racialized language, actions or assumptions, white people generally respond in one of three ways: 1) Anger; 2) Guilt; or 3) Avoidance[89]. The reason this is a uniquely white phenomenon is because for Black and Brown people, race is unavoidable. Black and Brown people navigate racial discomfort every day. White people, we believe we have a choice[90]. Many of us see ourselves as raceless while simultaneously avoiding situations where race might become a thing. *Honestly, how many white people in this room have ever thought of or had to describe themselves as white on anything other than a form?* Housing and school segregation are manifestations of this avoidance. For the most part, we live, work, educate our children in predominately white spaces virtually eliminating the necessity to navigate cross-cultural interactions that might cause racial discomfort. We often get angry, accusing anyone who brings up race as playing the "race card" and actually being the one who is racist by seeing race in situations that are "race-free" (as if that were a thing)[91]. Or we deny that the intention of our comment, action, or behavior was racist. White fragility[92] is a defense mechanism we developed to

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[88] (DiAngelo, 2018).
[89] Critical discourse analyst Teun van Dijk offers an additional term, deniability, as a linguistic tool white people use to distance themselves from racism (Marty, 1999; T. van Dijk, 2001).
[90] (DiAngelo, 2018, p. 7).
[91] (Bonilla-Silva, 2013; DiAngelo, 2018).
[92] (DiAngelo, 2018).

keep ourselves inoculated from the social construction of race we created. White fragility[93] is how we maintain plausible deniability of our own culpability in a sociocultural model we benefit from. White fragility[94] is one mechanism by which we deny responsibility.

I want to situate the concepts of race, racism, white fragility[95], and colorblindness in a particular context, Instructional Coaching. I am a nationally certified coach trainer and am deeply committed to the belief that coaching, when equity-driven, can be a transformational tool. The coaching approach that most aligns with my thinking defines coaching as "a way for one person to mediate and influence the thinking of another person"[96]. At its core, coaching is about exploring new ways of thinking by inviting cognitive shift, which in short is defined as opening up the thinking of another to a previously unconsidered perspective[97]. Instructional Coaching is about providing educators opportunities to reflect on current practice and explore new ways of thinking about their approaches to facilitate increased learning for the students they serve. Disrupting colorblind discourses in instructional coaching, opens the door to exploring the ways race influences how educators and students experience schooling.

Here is an example of what culturally responsive coaching might sound like. *A teacher once told me she did not see color. She did not care if her students were "Black, Brown, Purple or Polka Dot", she treated them all the same. Which in fact means she*

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[93] (DiAngelo, 2018).
[94] (DiAngelo, 2018).
[95] (DiAngelo, 2018).
[96] (Lindsey et al., 2007, p. 22).
[97] (Costa & Garmston, 2015, p. 226), (Mai, Luo, Wu, & Luo, 2004).

treated them all like they were white, like her. This is where the problem lies. Our

unwillingness to acknowledge how race, among other cultural identities such as class,

gender, gender identity, language, immigrant/refugee status shape our lived experiences.

My coaching response to this teacher was, "A child's color does not matter to you. In what

ways might their race and cultural identity matter to them? And then, "How might

understanding a student's perspectives and lived experiences inform your teaching?"

We might ask ourselves the same question… *If the color of person does not matter*

to you, is it possible, it might matter to them?" And, knowing that, how might we behave

differently?

There is nothing dangerous here. Equity scholar, Adeyemi Stembridge said, "No

white child was harmed in the application of culturally responsive education"[98] And, I

suggest, "No white educator will be harmed in the application of culturally responsive

coaching." Yet, it has been my experience that instructional coaches, educators with great

capacity and positionality to offer colleagues the opportunity to explore the impacts of

race and racism on education outcomes, are often expected to maintain a neutral stance,

pretend it is possible to be colorblind. This centering of objectivity is a false talisman we

offer coaches to shield them from the complex conversations that would expose many root

causes of education inequality. As if when we don't talk about the impact of race on

education outcomes, it is not there. It is at this disconnect where my energies are focused.

Many current coaching models are immersed in colorblind and neutral ideologies that,

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[98] (Stembridge, 2019).

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intentionally or not, position coaches to maintain systems of oppression. However, education is not neutral. Nor is coaching. Because the language we choose, the paraphrases we offer, the questions we ask to mediate or influence the thinking of others are not neutral[99]. Our language, like our perspectives, are a by-product of our socialization. Like language, learning is socially and culturally constructed. It happens within the context of our lived experiences[100]. Every coaching conversation is an opportunity to illuminate new ways of thinking about education practice. Every coaching conversation is an opportunity to put a crack in the armor of racist systems.

Schools are as segregated today as they were prior to the 1954 Brown v. Board of Education supreme court ruling[101]. In addition, students are becoming increasingly Black and Brown, while teachers become increasingly white and female[102]. These demographic trends leave Black and Brown students in classrooms most often lead by white, female educators. As a result, the same racialized systems of inequity that live in society and produce inequitable outcomes in income, housing, criminal justice, and employment are often reinforced, reproduced, and perpetuated in school settings[103]. These same demographic trends extend to instructional coaching where predominately white presenters, instruct predominately white coaches, to coach predominately white teachers,

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[99] (Freire & Shor, 1987).
[100] (Vygotsky, 1978).
[101] (Kluger, 2004; Orfield & Eaton, 1996; Orfield, Frankenberg, & Lee, 2003).
[102] (Alter, Walker, & Landers, 2013; Hodgkinson, 2002; Jackson, 2009; Norris, 2018; Office of Planning, Evaluation and Policy Development, 2016).
[103] (Bartolome, 1996, p. 178; Leonardo & Grubb, 2013a).

who teach in predominately Black and Brown settings or at least in settings that include Black and Brown students. Most often the professional development instructional coaches receive happens without ever exploring the very tangible ways race impacts how educators, students, and their families experience schooling.

The reason I believe education coaching is a logical place to disrupt oppressive systems, is because despite the many frustrations I hold as a result of my almost thirty years in public education, what I hold even more closely, is a deep belief in educators, the love they hold for the students they serve, and their collective desire to do right by them. What is also true is the insidiousness of racism means that educators can truly love their students and do so in very problematic ways and through a deficit lens that further strips them of their humanity[104]. However, I believe there is potential to leverage educators' love and commitment to their students as a ballast in the midst of the challenges that will arise when illuminating racist structures. This process is complex and the likelihood it will elicit deep discomfort makes instructional coaches trained in culturally responsive practices crucial in this transformative process.

What effective coaches are skilled at, what we are trained to do, is to create spaces that are both safe and uncomfortable. Illicit cognitive dissonance. Invite cognitive shift[105].

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[104] (Picower, 2009; Sleeter, 2013; Vaught & Castagno, 2008).

[105] "What occurs during a cognitive shift is what Kuhn (1962) might have labeled a paradigm shift... a discontinuous and often radical shift in point of view... What we observe are cognitive shirts in which we experience a change in how are conscious and unconscious minds communicate with one another... A cognitive shift may also suggest that regions of the brain-body system not previously engaged are now active, possibly related to an abrupt change from certainty to know knowing; visual to auditory processing; or egocentric thought to considering another person's perspective" (Costa & Garmston, 2015, p. 226).

In each coaching interaction, the hope is that the person being coached will leave the conversation with new thinking, considering different approaches, uncovering previously unrealized potential in themselves, their colleagues, and their students. Currently, much coaching takes place with an expectation, and maybe even a mandate, for perceived neutrality in the delusion that is colorblindness. This unnecessary constraint puts severe limits on the potential of coaching. This is how it is, but not how it has to be. Imagine the potential of coaching as an anti-racist practice, if alongside learning the tools, skills, and understandings of coaching, coaches were also taught cultural humility[106] and the tenets of culturally responsive practices[107] with a focus on critical self-reflection[108]. This does not mean that every coaching conversation must then be centered on race, what it does mean, however, is that neutrality and colorblindness are eliminated, and race is understood to be a crucial lens when exploring educational outcomes.

However, you don't have to be an instructional coach to change the world. You just have to be willing to take a risk and be vulnerable. You have to be willing to choose antiracism.

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[106] Cultural humility a term that originated in the healthcare field and refers to a openness, self-awareness, egoless, and supportive interactions resulting from critical self-reflection (Foronda, Baptiste, Reinholdt, & Ousman, 2016; Tervalon & Murray-García, 1998).

[107] Culturally responsive practices recognize the importance of including students' cultural references in all aspects of learning (Bartolome, 1996; Geneva Gay, 2000; Gutiérrez & Rogoff, 2003; T. C. Howard, 2014; Moll, 2005).

[108] (J. A. Banks & Banks, 2012; Hackman, 2005; G. R. Howard, 2016; T. C. Howard, 2014; Lindsey et al., 2007; Marty, 1999; Nieto, 2017).

When people say they are not racist, they are often viewing racism through a personal lens, what academics call a good/bad binary[109] that defines racism as the product of individual acts where good people = not racist and bad people = racist. *I don't carry a Tiki Torch and yell, "You will not replace us!"*[110] *so therefore, I am both good and not racist.* However, viewing racism through such a limited perspective defined by the acts of individual people masks the reality that racism is not, in fact, defined by individual acts, but instead by systems and structures that operationalize unearned privileges on white people[111]. So, being a white person who wants to be not racist requires more than personally disavowing racism and avoiding making overtly racist comments. I suggest that being antiracist is a verb. It requires action. Being not racist requires working to change systems that maintain and perpetuate racialized outcomes. And if you are white, one crucial way of being not racist is talking about race. In particular, taking on the burden of talking about race in the white spaces you inhabit and in so doing, disrupting the colorblind and neutrality discourses that keep racism in place. It's about not giving in to our own white fragility[112] or allowing others to employ theirs as a diversion. It's about leaning into the discomfort and calling a thing a thing.

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[109] (DiAngelo, 2018, p. 71).

[110] For commentary on the August 11-12, 2017 white nationalist march in Charlottesville, VA (Heim, 2017; Serwer, 2018; Wildman, 2017).

[111] (Bell, 1992; Bonilla-Silva, 2013; DiAngelo, 2018; M. E. Dyson, 2017; Kendi, 2017; Oluo, 2018; Sue, 2016; Tatum, 2004).

[112] (DiAngelo, 2018).

So, back to the car ride where I was called out on my racism. The truth of it is, I survived. We continued on, we remained friends, and we had more conversations over the years, many of which included explorations of race. I have experienced the same thing again and again. Conversations that could have gone either way, and while some did, most opened my thinking to new possibilities, new worlds I did not know existed. In each instance, I had to make a choice to employ white fragility[113] or harness cultural humility. Owning that we have a choice, an obligation to both talk and listen, is the learning. And the point of this talk. We can talk about race, we can accept each other's Truths without losing our own. If we let them, these graceful acts of dialogue enrich and expand our Truths while opening doors of understanding that have been too long hidden.

All this is to say is, it is possible to be a cisgender, white, upper middle-class person who resides in a suburban community, lives what is in many ways a pretty typical white social existence, and still talk about race. Whoever you are, wherever you live, wherever you work, golf, socialize, or watch your kids or grandkids play soccer/lacrosse/tennis, you can choose to disrupt racism. You can do this by normalizing conversations about race and questioning the structures that keep it in place. You can do this in the spaces you have access to, with people you influence, and in the ways you choose to verbally and explicitly acknowledge and work to disrupt the unearned privileges of being white. Once you open your eyes, truly open them to the racialized world around you, you can own your positionality and with it your privilege. Most importantly, you can own your power to be a

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[113] (DiAngelo, 2018).

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catalyst for change. Not only is this possible. It is essential. It is our (white) collective moral and ethical responsibility. Racism is white people's creation and must be solved by white people. And, we cannot do it alone, so start a conversation with someone who does not look like you, who does not share your lived experiences, who might open new windows on the world.

A mentor of mine once posed this question to a class of predominately white graduate students, "How much will you withdraw from your personal bank account of white privilege [in the fight for social justice][114]"? I have considered that question almost every day for the last 4 years. Held on to it as I made both personal and professional decisions. Now, I offer the same question to you[115]. Thank you.

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[114] (Tyson, 2015).
[115] Presentation slide with question.

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Chapter 3: When White Fragility[116] Constrains a Coaching Community of Practice

Email: February 3, 2019

Good Afternoon Kathy, Deborah, Caitlin, and Maia[117],

Kathy, thank you for eliciting feedback regarding the Human Uniqueness Protocol[118]. You suggested I send an email, please find my thoughts below.

I understand your desire to offer scaffolds for navigating complex conversations. And, I am wondering if there might be some additional deeper learning regarding navigating difference that would be supportive of the MC [Mindful Consortium] community and allow trainers to develop their own authentic approaches and responses.

I am curious if one contributor to these challenging situations might be the language of the capability[119] itself. The language "human uniqueness" is steeped in the sociocultural concepts of individualism and meritocracy, which, while deeply embedded in American lore, also disregard the very real ways cultural identity markers* impact people's lived experiences. As a broad definition, individualism and meritocracy

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[116] (DiAngelo, 2018).

[117] Current Mindful Consortium Directors.

[118] Appendix A.

[119] Mindful Consortium offers four capabilities that serve as the organizing principals for the model. The four Mindful Coaching capabilities are: 1) Know one's intentions and choose congruent behaviors, 2) Set aside unproductive patterns of listening, responding, and inquiring, 3) Attune and adjust for human uniqueness, 4) Navigate between and within coaching maps and support functions to guide mediational interactions (Costa, Garmston, Ellison, & Hayes, 2017, p. 46).

reinforce the false notion that success and/or failure is based solely on a person's individual effort and capability. These "up by your bootstraps" mythologies do not account for systems and structures that privilege some individuals over others. The colorblind/neutral languaging of "human uniqueness" is akin to the "All Lives Matter" response to the "Black Lives Matter" movement. Seeking to erase the impact of how different cultural groups experience American society ignores the overwhelming data identifying the myriad of ways marginalized groups/persons are uniquely and disproportionality vulnerable and systematically discriminated against.

Adeyemi[120] offered us an incredibly skillful model honoring our shared humanity while also illuminating how his experience as a Black man is unique. Adeyemi [Stembridge] was masterful at structuring his presentation so our almost exclusively white community experienced numerous opportunities to make humanizing connections (baseball, parenthood, travel, art, music) with each other and with him, one of two Black men in the room. He did this alongside an explicit and critical lens, surfacing the ways difference and discrimination are experienced. He offered a both/and approach to illuminating the humanity in us all while also making clear the systems and structures that position us differently for success. He called out white supremacy by name. He made us both safe and uncomfortable.

My hope is Mindful Consortium might follow Adeyemi's lead. It would be unfortunate not to leverage the immense thinking/mediating/facilitating skills that live

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in our community by leaning into the discomfort these complex learning opportunities offer. Enhancing our skills and understandings in the area of negotiating racial/other discomfort would better prepare MC community members for presenting, facilitating, and coaching in complex systems. Small pebbles creating disruptions in multiple systems to change the world. As Adeyemi stated, and critical multicultural and equity theorists agree, our country is founded on racism and other forms of oppression. By ignoring that reality, and enforcing colorblind and neutrality discourses in our community, we become complicit in these systems of oppression. We have an opportunity to become a culturally responsive professional community with the potential to create the #Equity masterpiece that lives at the heart of Andrew, Ben, and Brian's creations. The question might be... do we have the will?

As for the protocol itself, it seems antithetical to offer rote responses to such complex situations under the title, Human Uniqueness: Protocol for Responding to Unique Perspectives and Contexts. To trouble this approach, please find my thoughts below. [See Appendix A for Human Uniqueness Protocol]

"That characterization is hurtful to you based on your experiences in your culture." *This deficit approach others the person expressing hurt/outrage. It places the onus of the hurt on the other person, as though their reaction is somehow their fault based on their "other" cultural experiences instead of on the speaker's lack of cultural humility. This approach centers the facilitators*

perspective as the norm and privileges intention over impact, attempting to let the speaker/facilitator off the hook.

"That example makes you uncomfortable <mark>because it seems stereotypical in your world."</mark> *Problematic for the same reasons as noted above.*

"What <mark>possible</mark> solutions <mark>might</mark> you <mark>offer</mark> that would help us to learn about this?" *That is a lot of tentative language seeming to question whether 1) there are possible solutions, 2) the hurt person has the capacity to provide solutions, and, 3) whether any offered solution will be useful. Another approach might be:* **"Thank you. I had not considered that. What might I/we need to better understand about the impact of my language/this situation/concept… ?"** *Please note, I am not offering this as a substitute, because, to reiterate, I do not think any protocols should be shared in the absence of some community-wide learning that explores why these situations are occurring in the first place. We do not offer the MC conversation maps outside the context of developing a deep understanding of planning, reflecting, and problem resolving. Nor should we offer these protocols outside a deep exploration of the nuances of navigating challenging conversations across difference.*

"Thank you for sharing your truth." This response opens the door to equating "truth" with beliefs. It invites white people to express potentially problematic beliefs (e.g,. colorblindness) as a "truth" that cannot be challenged (See DiAngelo, p. 127).

"What might I do that would cause me to be ineffective in your context?" Again, this is offered through a deficit lens. Another approach might be, "Thank you. What might I need to know and understand to be effective/credible in your context?" This conversation should be about increasing the culture humility and responsiveness of the presenter/facilitator.

As you continue to reflect on these protocols, you might find Chapter 12 of Robin DiAngelo's book, White Fragility[121], a helpful guide.

At our Thursday lunch, Tammy offered an example of how she navigated an incredibly complex and racially charged situation with grace and humility. Just like John was given the space to share his "slave to time" story, it would have been equally valuable for the community to hear Tammy's story. It was disappointing that the microphone was taken from her hands. Because there was so much interest and energy in the room for exploring complex conversations related to diversity, it may be worth considering how those opportunities are offered and whose voices are honored.

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[121] (DiAngelo, 2018).

As coaches and facilitators experience challenges in more diverse settings, it is becoming increasingly more urgent for the MC community to build a shared and more complex understanding of what coaching, presenting, and facilitation look and sound like in diverse settings. In the spirit of adaptivity, you might consider some revisions to the Foundations Seminars so that developing skills, tools, and understandings for these conversations become embedded in our collective practice from the beginning, thus reducing the need for reactionary responses such as the Human Uniqueness protocol. Based on conversations at the 2019 Symposium, there are several training associates with the expertise and experience at including these perspectives who might serve as thought leaders in this generative process. And, as we know, Delores has offered an entire book for considering the implementation of cultural proficiency in the context of coaching. Integrity requires our system to "align our words, actions, and values and maintain the courage of our convictions". This is also true when it comes to the difficult work related to unpacking the ways colorblind and neutrality discourses permeate our own community and undermine our individual and collective capacities as presenters, facilitators, and coaches.

Please find below a list of resources I shared with several community members who reached out to me seeking to stand in the Knowable Zone offered by Ben and John at the Responsive Organizations trainers meeting. I would be happy to serve as an additional resource if you are interested in developing deeper understandings of these complex and essential concepts yourselves.

Thank you for your consideration. I look forward to future conversations.

Best,

Marguerethe

*Cultural identity markers shared by Adeyemi at the [2019 Mindful Consortium Symposium] pre-conference included: culture, race, ethnicity, gender, ability. In our community we might want to add sexual identity (LGBTQ+), age, political affiliation, and geographical region among others.

Current Texts
White Fragility - Robin DiAngelo
Race Talk - Derald Win Sue
Racism without Racists - Eduardo Bonilla-Silva
Stamped from the Beginning - Ibram Kendi
Why Race and Culture Matter in Schools - Tyrone Howard
Culturally Responsive Teaching and the Brain - Zaretta Hammond
The New Jim Crow - Michelle Alexander
Hope and Healing in Urban Education - Shawn Ginwright
13th (Documentary) - Ava DuVernay

Seminal Texts & Authors
(The first three are the "matriarchs of culturally responsive pedagogy" mentioned by Adeyemi. Each of these authors has several texts, their most well-known are listed below)

Culturally Responsive Teaching - Geneva Gay
Dreamkeeepers - Gloria Ladson-Billings
Other People's Children - Lisa Delpit
The Light in their Eyes - Sonia Nieto

Email: February 5, 2019

[Marguerethe]

Thank you for your thoughtful and passionate response to the Protocol. Please know we are giving serious thought to your input and that of others. We value all perspectives and know we cannot accommodate everyone's wishes.

We are students of this same work and try to read recent work and consult experts. We have read some of what you cited and will try to read more. Thanks for your offerings.

It might be helpful for you to have some background on our thinking and some wonderings we have.

We are uncertain why you are uncomfortable with the concept of a protocol when so much of what we do is to provide protocols as scaffolds to build skills. Some are the MC [Mindful Coaching] maps and many others are from RO [Responsive Organizations] such as the First Turn, Last Turn to scaffold dialogue. This effort was a response to many situations with trainers where they felt less than resourceful and needed a way to think and respond in a more appropriate manner. I had a conversation with Cheree this last year about a situation I faced and she was helpful in making sense of it. Much of the protocol came from her thinking in that conversation. It may not be necessary for you and your work, but many folks thanked us for the tool. We hope to refine it and make it a better representation of the intentions. It is an effort to

operationalize the norms of responding by pausing, paraphrasing, and posing questions. No one of color has yet expressed objections to the protocol. Instead, after seeking their input, we have some helpful ideas for edits which we will incorporate.

Your discomfort with "human uniqueness," is noted and we understand your perspective. This term was added to the MC Capabilities over a year ago after much dialogue with many members of the community, Andrew and Ben, and people of color. We intentionally selected it because we don't want to just address race but also other facets of humanity which require our understanding, e.g., social class, religion, gender orientation, region, age, and so on. No one of color has questioned it and both that change and the protocol were offered to people who are equity experts. It is okay that we don't all see it the same way.

It is our intention to include conversations about race and equity in our work. We are a training organization focused on MC and RO and that is the context in which those conversations will occur. If you believe we intended to not allow that to occur when we ended the discussion and moved on while Tammy had her hand up, you are mistaken. As a facilitator, I made a conscious decision based on a variety of factors that it was time to move on. I said, "Final Word," twice to signal the group. I felt the serial individual storytelling that was becoming a pattern was not serving the group at that point in time, and that we needed to honor the time we had set aside for other work. I own that decision and know that sometimes individual needs and group needs have to be balanced. That was my intention. As a facilitator, I am sure you make similar

decisions, sometimes putting the group needs before the individual's need to speak. On Thursday, my hand was raised and I was not given the chance to speak. I assumed (positive presupposition) that Ben made a facilitator decision and I needed to make a choice about when to self-assert or integrate, as we teach in the capabilities. That was my responsibility as an engaged participant.

I hope this clarifies some of our thinking. Please know we are working to honor a variety of perspectives and that we accept there will be cognitive conflict on these issues. As leaders, we try to make thoughtful judgments about how to support trainers based on the data we have before us regarding the diverse needs of over 300 trainers. We are imperfect and will continue to learn. Your input has opened some new thinking and we appreciate your time in providing your perspective.

Thank you for your openness, expertise, and honesty in your response. This represents my thinking only. I welcome a continued dialogue and hope this is a beginning.

Kathy

Email: February 7, 2019

Kathy,

Thank you for sharing your perspectives.

I will reply in more detail when I have time to craft a more thoughtful and thorough response. I look forward to furthering this conversation.

Best,

Marguerethe

Email: May 7, 2019

Dear Kathy,

Thank you for your patience. I wanted to take the time to respond thoughtfully and thoroughly. I thought it might be best to outline my thinking completely as well as offer the thinking of experts in the fields of race, Multicultural Education, Critical Race Theory, Equity, Social Justice, and Coaching. My intention to share with you and the entire Mindful Consortium community why investing the time necessary to develop the skills, tools, and understandings of coaching in the presence of difference is both essential and timely. I am deeply committed to the work of Mindful Coaching and believe our community is uniquely positioned to be a leading voice in the field of education coaching. I am also fearful, that if we are unwilling to take a proactive and adaptive approach to improving our collective capacity to disrupt racial inequities in education and neutrality and colorblindness in our own professional community, our relevance in the coaching world will become increasingly diminished as we knowingly remain complicit in the maintenance of oppressive systems.

In this correspondence, I will share first share with you why I believe education coaching is the right place for the work of disrupting inequitable education systems. Second, I will outline why it is essential to pay particular attention to race and racism in the context of coaching. Third, I will discuss why I believe the Mindful Consortium community and the Mindful Coaching model are the right place for this incredibly important work to take place while also identifying some incongruencies in the model that we as community must

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trouble. Fourth, based on research associated with professional communities, I will outline

some of the benefits and drawbacks of working within a community and provide some

examples of how they are operationalized in the Mindful Consortium. Next, I will introduce

the concept of white fragility[122] and offer how I believe this phenomenon currently

undermines the potential of our collective work and the possibilities of where this might

lead as neutrality and colorblind ideologies become increasingly normalized and

entrenched in Mindful Consortium. I will then invite you to reimagine the potential of

Mindful Coaching as a transformational antiracist model of coaching and provide examples

of how we know this transformation is possible. Finally, as a call to action, I will share why

I believe it matters that the Mindful Consortium takes a pro-active stand against systemic

racism.

A foundation for this communication

Mindful Consortium is an organization committed to developing a cadre of coaches,

presenters, and facilitators with the capabilities to "promote thinking and teach people how

to collaborate with each other and tap into individual and collective strengths"[123]. Housing

both Mindful Coaching[SM] and Responsive Organizations®, the focus of Mindful

Consortium's work has primarily been focused in the field of education. The tools and

strategies offered in these adjacent models strive to impact individual educators and school

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[122] (DiAngelo, 2018).
[123] ("Mindful Consortium," 2012).

communities by increasing resourcefulness and developing self-directedness. This open letter is an invitation to the Mindful Consortium leadership and community to consider how we might embrace our positional capacity to foster thoughtful conversations and employ it intentionally and strategically on behalf of students and educators historically underserved and marginalized. Through an exploration of coaching discourses, and the potential for coaching to serve as a catalyst for critical teacher self-reflection and ongoing reflexivity in pursuit of educational equity, this letter invites us to consider the potential of Mindful Coaching as an antiracist practice and to take the necessary steps internally to operationalize that potential.

Kathy, I think it is important to point out that while the thinking in this letter is mine, I am not alone. The concepts offered are the result of decades of research. I am writing in the shadow of scholars deeply invested in the work of Multicultural Education, culturally-centered approaches, equity-driven frameworks, and social justice. Throughout this letter, among others, you will see quotes and cited works by the scholars who 2019 Mindful Consortium Keynote Speaker, Adeyemi Stembridge, identified as the "Matriarchs of Culturally Responsive Pedagogy"[124]. These scholars, among the dozens of others cited, inform how we might shepherd Mindful Coaching into an antiracist force. My hope is that the Mindful Consortium community will invest the human and social capital necessary to identify the intersections and embed the dispositions and pedogeological practices necessary for the behaviors of our organization to be in alignment with our mission and

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[124] (Stembridge, 2019)

vision, including "We foster and support connections between and among diverse people, ideas, and perspectives."[125]

As a member of the Mindful Consortium community, I am both learner and an educator. As an antiracist scholar, I am on the outside looking in, taking a critical gaze at an organization working in education spaces both nationally and internationally. As a Training Associate for both Mindful Coaching and Responsive Organizations, I am also inside, a reflexive practitioner choosing to disrupt an ecosystem of which I have been a part for over fifteen years. John shared an article with me after this year's symposium that has informed my thinking about our interactions and correspondence. When exploring complex social justice topics such as these, the article's author and feminist human rights educator, Loretta Ross, invites us to call others in rather than call them out[126]. "Call-ins are agreements between people who work together to consciously help each other expand their perspectives". The intention of this letter is to do a bit of both, calling out and calling in, if that is possible. My experience with Mindful Consortium has been that when engaging around issues of difference, race in particular, calling in alone is not enough. Calling in requires you and the other Directors to accept the invitation.

For more than a decade, numerous community members, including myself, have sought to call the Mindful Consortium leadership in to engage meaningfully in a crucial conversation about what critical discourse might look in the Mindful Consortium

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[125] (Mindful Coaching Trainers Meeting: Diverse Voices, Thoughtful Choices: Mindful Consortium, 2019).
[126] (Ross, 2019).

*community only to be ignored, marginalized, chastised for causing "discomfort", and made to feel vulnerable about our status as valued community members. While that may have not been the intention, the 2019 Symposium "Shadow Conference" and ongoing conversations with several community members have consistently confirmed vulnerability and marginalization has been the outcome. That has most certainly been my experience. From my perspective, "calling out" is a call to action. According to Ross, "Calling in is not for everyone or for every circumstance… Calling out may be the best response to those who refuse to accept responsibility for the harm they encourage"[127]. "Calling out" acknowledges there is a challenge we need to name, face, and use the tremendous collective skills and resources at our disposal to respond to. A belief I hold is that **there are times when "calling out" can be a precursor to "calling in".***

Deciding whether to "call in" or "call out" is much like a coach navigating support functions. We default to coaching and when it is in support the thinking of the person being coached. We navigate to collaborating, consulting, and/or evaluation in the hopes those approaches will support thinking. Up until the 2017 Symposium, my default with Mindful Consortium was to "call in". That has proven ineffective. So, I am choosing to "call out". My hope is to return to my default of "calling in" when the opportunity arises.

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[127] (Ross, 2019).

Why Coaching?

"Coaching done well may be the most effective intervention designed for human performance[128]." - Atul Gawande

This is not new information for those of us familiar with the world of education coaching. Beginning with the early work by Joyce and Showers who reported that teachers who receive coaching are more likely to embed new strategies into their instructional repertoire than those who did not receive coaching, the potential of education coaching has long been supported by empirical evidence[129]. More recently, according to a 2016 meta-analysis on coaching, Matthew Craft, David Blazer and Dylan Hogan[130] found a positive effect on teachers' instructional practices and students' academic achievement. However, there is also evidence that the practice of coaching varies tremendously across settings, and some research indicates effectiveness is dependent on how coaching is implemented, longevity of practices, administrative support, school culture, and the preparation of coaches[131]. When applied effectively, however, coaching has potential to provide individualized professional learning for educators, promote self-directed professional learning, establish a learning-centered approach to professional dialogue, and build leadership capacity among education professionals[132].

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[128] (Gawande, 2011, p. 53).
[129] (Joyce & Showers, 1981, 1982, 2002).
[130] (Kraft, Blazar, & Hogan, 2016).
[131] (Borman, Feger, & Kawakami, 2006).
[132] (Killion, Harrison, Bryan, & Clifton, 2012).

"Learning occurs as a result of conversations in formal or informal, structured or unstructured situations. The more intentional or structured the conversation the more formal are the learning outcomes. In school settings, educators are starved for time to have structured, meaningful conversations[133]." - Delores Lindsey

The Hidden Curriculum[134] of Coaching

While coaching is a tool with proven success, we must also be aware that the implementation of coaching is not immune to the impacts of structural inequality that plagues education systems as well as greater society. School and classroom structures and educator practices are imbued with hidden curricula that reproduce and reinforce existing social structures defined by power and privilege. These curricula are often centered on white Eurocentric cisgender ways of knowing at the expense of all other learners[135]. This is no less true in coaching. If one expectation of coaching is to support the person being coached in developing the ability to reflect on and consider their own mental models, then it is imperative that coaches understand how implicit bias, race(ism)[136], and the impact of

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[133] (Lindsey et al., 2007, p. 9).

[134] (Apple, 2004b; C. A. M. Banks & Banks, 1995; Bennett, 2001; Freire, 1970; Giroux, 1983) .

[135] (Banks, 2013; Bartolome, 1996; Bartolomé, 2007; Howard, 2016; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Nieto, 2010).

[136] In a 2016 presentation at OSU, Leigh Patel offered the language construct race(ism) to trouble the practice of talking about race without also explicitly talking about racism. She, alongside DuBois (1903), Woodson (1933), Omi and Winant (1986) and scholars in the field of critical race theory (Bonilla-Silva, 2013; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Solorzano & Yosso, 2001) argue "race is the key organizing category for inequality because of the permanence of racial ideology and white supremacy in the American Society" (M. Omi & Winant, 1994, p. 63). I have chosen to focus on race(ism) for this paper, because while there are many intersecting cultural identities and additional factors that influence how people experience education, I agree with Donner & Ladson-Billings who state, "race is the most viable and reliable analytical tool for holistically understanding and improving the collective fortunes of people of color in the United States (and globally)" (Donnor & Ladson-Billings, 2017, p. 196).

other sociocultural identities impact educational outcomes. Coaches must also develop the skills to navigate potentially complex and challenging conversations that do not conform to colorblind discourses. Moreover, for coaching to be effective, coaches must have a deep understanding of both the thinking of the person being coached and the context where they practice[137]. While a coach may not know the specifics of each educational setting, they should, at the very least, understand that power, privilege, race(ism), and other sociocultural identities inherently impact educational outcomes in all environments[138].

Starting on Day 2 of the Foundations Seminar, the practice of Mindful Coaching and coaches themselves are offered to the education world as neutral participants who are able to escape their own subjective perspectives and implicit biases when mediating the thinking of the people they coach, despite Mindful Coaching's foundation in constructivist theory[139] and decades of research on cultural ways of knowing[140]. This is particularly troubling when it comes to subjectivity and bias as they pertain to race and racial difference. The construction of neutrality discourses in coaching in fact erases the power and privilege associated with whiteness, thereby reproducing white privilege and social inequity. Whiteness is normalized in American society, and thus in our education system where white people are socialized to believe our experience is typical and that we can be both colorblind

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[137] (Gay, 2010; Howard, 2014; Lindsey, Martinez, & Lindsey, 2007; Nieto, 2017).
[138] (Allen, 2004; Bonilla-Silva, 2011; Crenshaw, Harris, & Lipsitz, 2018; Donnor & Ladson-Billings, 2017; DuBois, 1903; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Omi & Winant, 1994; Solorzano & Yosso, 2001; Woodson, 1933).
[139] (Costa & Garmston, 2015).
[140] (Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Moll, 2005; Nieto, 2017).

*and objective[141]. Extending this normalization to coaching is problematic because it masks the individual belief systems, reference structures, and structural inequalities that reproduce society's racialized outcomes. A belief I hold is that the **presumption of neutrality is a hidden curriculum[142] in coaching, undermining its capacity to be truly transformative.***

Hidden curricula such as neutrality are often both concealed and reified in language. Language is not neutral (Freire), but rather is always in concert with power dynamics and in service to a sociopolitical agenda[143]. In Mindful Coaching, the normalizing of neutrality is reinforced in the language we use to teach novice coaches. You will recognize the image below as a presentation slide from Day 2 of the eight-day Mindful Coaching Foundations Seminar. Having presentation slides such as this curated by the Mindful Consortium leadership and provided to consultants as the approved content and format to be used when presenting to clients can be useful for maintaining consistency across trainings and presenters. What is also true is that these slides frame the dominate narrative of certified Training Associates while at the same time indoctrinating new members into the community.

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[141] (R. L. Allen, 2004; DiAngelo, 2018). "As in other Western nations, white children born in the United States inherit the moral predicament of living in a white supremacist society. Raised to experience their racially based advantages as fair and normal, white children receive little if any instruction regarding the predicament they face, let alone any guidance in how to resolve it. Therefore, they experience or learn about racial tension without understanding Euro-Americans' historical responsibility for it and knowing virtually nothing about their contemporary roles in perpetuating it" (Marty, 1999, p. 51). And then they become educators... "Dominate group teachers often think of themselves as the norm and others as 'different' generally meaning inferior" (Nieto, 2017, p. 9).

[142] (Apple, 2004b; C. A. M. Banks & Banks, 1995; Bennett, 2001; Freire, 1970; Giroux, 1983).

[143] (Fairclough, 1992; Gee, 2004; Rogers, 2014; T. van Dijk, 1993).

Coaching is/is not

Coaching Is	Coaching Is Not
• Directed by the coachee	• Directed by the coach
• Neutral	• Judgmental
• About self-directed learning	• About external evaluation
• A skillful application of tools for planning, reflecting, and problem-resolving	• A rote process
• Developing and building internal resources	• Giving solutions
• Mediating thinking	• Fixing

Figure 1. Coaching Is/ Is Not.

For those unfamiliar with Mindful Coaching, the intention of this activity is to reactivate learning from the day before, engage all participants in content-centered dialogue with a partner, and provide the presenter an opportunity to answer questions, clarify misconceptions, and serve as a bridge to upcoming content. This activity asks participants to read the coaching counter-examples listed on the left of the slide and brainstorm possible examples that might fit on the right. Participants work independently, then with a partner, and finally engage in a whole group dialogue as the items on the right are revealed one by one.

This slide represents the first formal introduction of "neutrality" as a foundational component of coaching and pairs it with the act of being nonjudgmental. Without explicit direction, this activity inducts newcomers into a narrative where the illusion of neutrality is valued and normalized. By juxtaposing neutral and judgmental, the design of the slide invites the inference that being neutral is synonymous with being nonjudgmental. This

pairing posits that the intentional choice an individual makes to behave non-judgmentally, which acknowledges a perspective and a conscious choice to set judgements aside, is somehow the same as assuming a position of neutrality which communicates an absence of perspective.

Identities are formed in the process of participating in community exercises such as these[144], so whether intentional or not, the operationalization of this slide and activity invites the formation of an identity of coach as neutral. It is also important to keep in mind that identities are not formed in isolation of the social practices and sociopolitical power relations. In fact, as noted by critical discourse scholar, James Gee, language use is "inherently and inextricably political"[145]. The use of the word "neutral" implies a colorblind ideology and positions the coach as removed from their[146] individual reference structures and racial biases as well as the racialized social practices and institutionalized structures that permeate the education system. **Intentionally or not, the centering of neutrality works to maintain systems of oppression.** *I am deeply concerned because in Mindful Consortium this normalization of neutrality happens alongside the exclusion of discourses around implicit biases[147], in particular as they pertain to race(ism). This unfortunate pairing compounds our unwillingness to disrupt inequities even within our own community.*

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[144] (Kamberelis, Dimitriadis, & Welker, 2017; Urrieta, 2007).

[145] (Gee, 2004, p. 34).

[146] To avoid using binary gender-specific pronouns, they, them, their, theirs, themselves will be used and/or substituted in direct quotes ("Gender Pronouns | LGBT Resource Center," 2018).

[147] For a detailed explanation of implicit bias (Banaji & Greenwald, 2016).

Centering neutrality is a colorblind[148] approach that removes the opportunity to explicitly explore and surface bias. Ta-Nehisi Coates might describe this insidious codification of colorblind ideology and neutrality discourses as a form of "elegant racism". The kind that does not trigger white guilt and "lives on the border of white shame."[149]

Why Focus on Race(ism)?

"Most Americans still believe race invented racism, when in fact, the reverse is true."[150] - Ta-nehisi Coates

Coaching without giving attention to systemic inequality works to maintain those systems of oppression. When we turn a blind eye to the impact race(ism) has on education outcomes, we neuter our individual and collective capacity to make substantive change. Sociologist Douglas Massey offers, "Papering over the issue of race makes for bad social theory, bad research, and bad public policy."[151] It also makes for bad coaching.

Race is a social construction designed to discriminate[152]. The by-product of race, racism, is the most adaptive and pernicious sociocultural identity to influence education outcomes[153]. Racism is not a collection of individual acts, but instead a vast system that

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[148] For a detailed explanation of colorblind racism (Bonilla-Silva, 2013).

[149] (Coates, 2014b).

[150] (Coates, 2014a).

[151] (Massey & Denton, 1993).

[152] For a detailed explanation of the social construction of race (R. Frank, 2012, pp. 315–316; Kendi, 2017, p. 474; Kolbert, 2018, p. 31; Roberts, 2012, pp. 50–54; Yudell & Venter, 2014, pp. ix–xi).

[153] Critical Race Theory (CRT) serves as both a theoretical framework and analytic tool for exploring "neutrality" discourses. CRT challenges the dominate discourse on race and racism as it relates to education and offers several constructs that inform this look at a coaching community as well as a lens to consider the discourses and performances that live in coaching. CRT operates based on the understanding that racism is

structures our institutions and our relationships[154]. One reason racism remains intact is because colorblind, objectivity, neutrality discourses camouflage the self-interest, power, and privilege of dominate groups. According to race scholar, Eduardo Bonilla-Silva, "Because the dominant racial ideology purports to be colorblind, there is little space for socially sanctioned speech about race-related matters"[155]. Multicultural Education experts, Jamal Donnor and Gloria Ladson-Billings extend this concept into education settings, stating that the colorblind narrative "decontextualizes the symbiotic relationship between race, opportunity, exclusion, marginalization, and exploitation[156]. So, the question I offer to both you and the entire Mindful Consortium community is: **What is our role, or better yet, our obligation, as educators in disrupting colorblind discourses in our work in schools… and in our own community?**

Often when race is explored the assumption is that the conversation is about Black and Brown people. When considering race in the contexts of education and coaching, both fields dominated by white women, it is essential to center the discussion on whiteness[157]. Race is a construct designed to elevate people who society identifies as white. There is no such thing as Blackness or Brown-ness without whiteness, so to explore race(ism) in

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a "pervasive, systemic condition, not merely an individual pathology" and that racism is a "vast system that structures our institutions and our relationships" (Vaught & Castagno, 2008, p. 96). In addition, CRT theorists argue racism is adaptive, constantly changing or modifying its expression, but never diminishing (Bell, 1992). (Bell, 1992; Delgado & Stefancic, 2017; Dixson & Rousseau, 2005; Matias et al., 2014; Picower, 2009; Vaught & Castagno, 2008).

[154] (Bonilla-Silva, 2013; DiAngelo, 2018; Kendi, 2017; Oluo, 2018; Sue, 2016).

[155] (Bonilla-Silva, 2013, p. 82).

[156] (Donnor & Ladson-Billings, 2017, p. 196).

[157] (Allen, 2004; Bonilla-Silva, 2011; Giroux, 1997; Harris, 1993; Leonardo, 2009; Marty, 1999; Matias, Viesca, Garrison-Wade, Tandon, & Galindo, 2014; Picower, 2009; Tyson, 2015).

education, we must explore what it means to be white. However, because deeply entrenched colorblind ideologies make talking about race taboo and whiteness invisible, white educators often do not engage in the critical self-reflection necessary to unpack whiteness and its influences on our professional decision making. As a result, educators often offer curricula, alongside instructional approaches and practices, steeped in Eurocentric ideologies without ever reflecting on how these might be received by Black and Brown students[158]. At the same time, this lack of critical self-awareness coupled with an inability or unwillingness to consider the impact of cultural ways of knowing on learning work to marginalize Black and Brown students. This unwillingness to tackle race head on has perpetuated persistent opportunity gaps. So, if we are serious about transforming education, it will be necessary for us to call a thing a thing. And that thing is racism.

To fully understand the entrenchment of long-standing racism on our current education crisis, it can be instructive to explore well-documented "colorblind" policies with racialized outcomes and contemporary consequences. Two historical examples include Federal Housing Commission policies and the GI Bill. While colorblind in language, redlining and restrictive covenants[159], the implementation and operationalization of these federally backed programs was systemic and race-based[160]. The housing segregation that resulted from these policies laid the ground work for the school segregation that remains with us

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[158] (Bartolome, 1996; Leonardo & Grubb, 2013; Nieto, 2017).
[159] For more information on redlining and restrictive covenants (Silva, 2008).
[160] (Frydl, 2011; Kendi, 2017; Oliver & Shapiro, 2006; Satter, 2010).

today[161]. In addition, localized school funding based on property tax alongside education foundations established in wealthy districts to supplement funding for athletics, arts and other extracurriculars have produced a defacto "separate and unequal" access to quality and well-funded schools[162]. In much the same way, education policies and practices steeped in colorblind ideology have racialized impacts on students' education experiences. Tracking, sometimes referred to as ability grouping, is often operationalized as a force for in-school segregation[163]. Like housing, these policies while colorblind in language, are racialized in reality[164]. When looking at the demographics of our Training Associate pool, we can see our Mindful Consortium is not immune to long-standing consequences of discrimination and segregation in education. As we know from our Responsive Organizations work, systems do exactly what they are designed to do. Mindful Consortium is white because it is designed to be white. If we want to change the demographics of our community, we need to change the system itself. We need to disrupt our organizational deep structures.

Potential of coaching as an antiracist practice

Coaching has the potential to be a transformational antiracist practice for several reasons:

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[161] (P. Noguera, 2019).

[162] (Boschma & Brownstein, 2019; Gamoran & An, 2016; Menendian & Gambhir, 2018; Noguera, 2019; Orfield, Frankenberg, & Lee, 2003; Turner, 2016a, 2016b; UCLA Civil Rights Project, 2014; US Commission of Civil Rights, 2018).

[163] (Leonardo, 2009b; Leonardo & Grubb, 2013b).

[164] (Leonardo, 2009; Leonardo & Grubb, 2013; Noguera, 2019).

- *Coaches are trained to elicit cognitive dissonance. We have at our disposal key tools for both inviting and negotiating discomfort.*

- *Many education communities are already deeply committed to coaching, so there is an infrastructure in place to support embedding antiracist coaching practices.*

- *Current demographics indicate an increase in the number of white female teachers teaching Black and Brown students resulting in daily cross-cultural interactions.*

- *Educators are tasked with the expectation to meet the needs of all students. Research is clear that to do this effectively, students' sociocultural identities must be centered. Culturally-centered approaches offers a medium to support this necessary pedagogical shift.*

Effective educators in diverse settings understand that learning is culturally produced and therefore it is essential to tap into each child's cultural ways of knowing and funds of knowledge[165]. Coaching is a research-based and effective practice that is already being implemented in many education settings. The stage is set. Equipping coaches with the tools and skill necessary to effectively coach in the presence of difference has the potential for exponential impact on educators and, therefore, students by opening doors previously hidden by the premise of neutrality and colorblind discourses. Education settings can serve as a testing ground for strengthening the cross-cultural communication skills educators need both inside and outside of school settings. With educators and students as

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[165] (Bartolome, 1996; Bartolomé, 2007; Gay, 2000; Howard, 2014; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Moll, 2005; Nieto, 2017; Noguera, 2011).

a captive audience, we have an opportunity to influence transformational progress in schools.

When culturally contextualized, coaching is a powerful tool for creating the psychological safety necessary to work through fear and navigate difficult conversations that happen in the presence of difference. Coaching is founded on trust[166] and we know that when trust is present, a coach can create a safe space for the person being coached to think, and to grow. Within a trusting interaction, a coach can invite a cognitive shift[167]. Because of their trust-building capabilities, culturally responsive coaches are uniquely positioned to serve as border crossers and cultural mediators[168]. The ability to serve in these capacities undergirds a coach's ability to guide the person being coached through the complex terrain of illuminating racist systems and structures in the interest of educational equity. Antiracist scholar, Robin DiAngelo, suggests that this can help "white people build the stamina to sustain conscious and explicit engagement with race"[169]. It is at this micro-level, during one-on-one coaching conversations, that antiracist education may be most effective. Similarly, according to Multicultural Education expert, Gloria Ladson-Billings, critically-oriented coaching offers an opportunity "to uncover the way pedagogy is

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[166] (Costa & Garmston, 2015; Joyce & Showers, 2002; Killion et al., 2012; Lindsey et al., 2007; M. Tschannen-Moran & Tschannen-Moran, 2017; V. von Frank, 2010).

[167] Cognitive shift – check chapter 2. (Costa & Garmston, 2015).

[168] Border crossers (Lincoln, 2001) "frequently live in both and between worlds" and serve to assist others in "learning to speak across cultures" (p. 15). Sociocultural mediators understand their own lived experiences, honor the lived experiences of other and are capable if adjusting their approaches in service to themselves and others (Nieto, 2010, 2017).

[169] (DiAngelo, 2011, p. 66).

racialized and selectively offered to students according to the setting"[170]. *Thus, coaching conversations where educators explore their approach and practice, can be fertile ground for nurturing an antiracist perspective in educators.*

This does not mean that every coaching interaction must become a conversation about sociocultural identities, race(ism), and/or systemic oppression. A coach with the identity as a mediator of thinking makes coaching decisions based on what will support the coachee's thinking. What I offer in the footsteps of Multicultural Education and Critical Race Theorists such as David Kirkland, Geneva Gay, Gloria Ladson-Billings, James Banks, Kimberle Crenshaw, Lilia Bartolome, Lisa Delpit, Pedro Noguera, Sonia Nieto, and Tyrone Howard, is that cultural identities as well as systemic oppression are inherent components of the education system. They impact the lived experience of every child and educator and eliminating these sociocultural realities from coaching discourse effectively neuters the process. You cannot effectively coach thinking when you are unwilling to grapple with the complex sociocultural origins where thinking lives.

And this will not be easy. Confronting issues of difference can be fraught with discomfort, trauma, and pain[171]. *A coach skilled in mediating thinking as well as navigating complex conversations, can open the door to transformational discomfort. In other words, coaching with a commitment to naming inequity, exploring the role of racial (and other)*

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[170] (Ladson-Billings, 2004, p. 60).
[171] (Leibowitz, Bozalek, Rohleder, Carolissen, & Swartz, 2010, p. 84).

differences, and accepting discomfort can result in critically important new understandings that pave the way for transgressive teaching and learning[172].

"No one is immune from lack of knowledge or misunderstanding about cultures other than our own, yet encyclopedic knowledge of other cultures is not required. The important learning is to be aware of our own assumptions about cultural groups and how our assumptions can facilitate or block a student's access to education. To complement our self-knowledge, even small amounts of knowledge about cultures other than our own liberate us from certainty as a world view, enrich us with curiosity and the willingness to learn about others, and teach us to value our differences.[173]" - Ben Garrett (Co-Developer of Mindful Coaching)

Why a focus on Mindful Consortium and Mindful Coaching?
… Because our community is equipped with the tools to disrupt.

In many cases, current education systems systematize inequality, maintain the status quo, and produce inequitable outcomes. If educational equity is to be achieved, it will require the disruption of systems at all levels. The goal of the Mindful Coaching Foundation Seminar is to develop one's identity and capacity as a mediator of thinking[174]. The intention of a Cognitive Coach is to mediate the thinking of the person being coached. The coaching process focuses on supporting people to develop more efficient and more

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[172] (Hooks, 1994).
[173] (Lindsey et al., 2007, p. vii).
[174] (Costa, Garmston, Ellison, & Hayes, 2017).

complex mental maps that facilitate increased self-directedness. One outcome of coaching conversations is the disruption of an individual's mental maps. This opening of new thinking and consideration of new perspectives is related to the personal transformation necessary for educators to thoughtfully implement multicultural and antiracist education[175]. Coaching response behaviors such as pausing, paraphrasing, and posing mediative questions offers the person being coached a range of structured and intentional opportunities to consider other perspectives, reflect on their own mental models, and formulate new and/or revised approaches contextualized to their unique setting. When equity is a value held by the coach and serves as a lens through which these coaching conversations take place, then the coaching process can illuminate inequity in relation to institutional structures, individual deep structures, and mental models. This type of coaching is thus a reflexive practice and requires the coach to be aware of their own deep structures while at the time being informed by and responding to the deep structures that exist within the person being coached[176]. Given these qualities, I propose that coaching is a potentially powerful tool for mitigating the inevitable disconnect that often exists between theory and practice, in particular when it comes to the implementation of culturally responsive pedagogy and equity in education settings.

Cognitive Coaches are provided extensive and intensive training in the discrete tools of coaching with the explicit purpose to disrupt existing mental models and help the person

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[175] (J. A. Banks, 1995; T. C. Howard, 2003; Ladson-Billings, 1994) Banks, 1995, Howard, 3003, Ladson-Billings, 1994).

[176] (Lindsey et al., 2007; V. von Frank, 2010) (Lindsey, 2007, von Frank, 2010).

being coached to be more resourceful. The coaching skills are all there. What our community needs to consider is how we might develop the collective capabilities and dispositions necessary to disrupt neutrality and colorblind discourses and inspire a willingness to illuminate inequitable systems.

As Andrew and Ben intended, Mindful Coaching is about thinking and creating cognitive dissonance as the precursor to transformation. To be transformed requires changes in identity, belief, values, and assumptions[177]. It is within these deep structures where our biases reside[178]. Those who seek to transform systems in ways that positively impact all learners, must ensure every coach has the willingness and capacity to facilitate complex conversations that surface in ways race and other sociocultural identities influence academic outcomes. Coaching, when done through the lens of equity, can serve as a catalyst for the type of transformation many schools need to disrupt persistent opportunity gaps. Multicultural and equity scholar, James Banks, offers reflective self-analysis as a critical component of Multicultural Education and Equity Pedagogy. According to Banks, "Teachers have to engage in the process of self-transformation… Before we can transform the world, we must first transform ourselves"[179]. What makes Mindful Coaching unique among coaching models is that "it mediates invisible, internal mental resources and intellectual functions that produce behavior"[180]. According to Andrew and Ben, "Mindful

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[177] (Costa & Garmston, 2015; R. Dilts, 1999; R. B. Dilts, 2017).
[178] (Banaji & Greenwald, 2016).
[179] (J. A. Banks, 1998, p. 6).
[180] (Costa & Garmston, 2015, p. 12).

Coaching is a form of dialogue that provides space for self-reflection, for revising and refining positions and self-concepts, where a colleague is invited to see [themselves] in a new light"[181]. A coach focuses on thinking with the knowledge that changes in thinking will produce self-directed changes in behavior.

Coaching thus provides an opportunity to disrupt each individual's mental models, which, in an inequitable society, are inherently shaped by complex, often invisible relationships of power and privilege. Such disruption, in turn, leads to productive interrogation of dominant systems that reify and reproduce social and political inequities. Framed in this manner, Mindful Coaching becomes a means by which "competent educators simultaneously translate theory into practice and consider the population being served and the sociocultural reality in which learning is expected to take place"[182]. In this way, coaching can be understood as a mediated interaction that, when enacted with a critical paradigm, can invite and facilitate the self-transformation identified as crucial in the process of implementing multicultural curriculum and social justice education[183] According to linguistic scholar, Lilia Bartolome, "Unless educational methods are situated in the students' cultural experiences, students will continue to show difficulty in mastering content area that is not only alien to their reality but is often antagonistic toward their culture and lived experiences"[184]. Clearly, those educational methods must also include coaching.

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[181] (Costa & Garmston, 2015, p. 4).
[182] (Bartolome, 1996, p. 179, author's emphasis).
[183] (Anzaldua, 2009; J. A. Banks, 1995; Hackman, 2005; hooks, 1994; G. R. Howard, 2016; T. C. Howard, 2014; Nieto, 2010, 2017).
[184] (Bartolome, 1996, p. 181).

As you are aware, Mindful Coaching is based partly on the work of Reuven and Rapheal Feuerstein and Louis Falk and the theories of Structural Cognitive Modifiability and Mediated Learning Experience[185]. Together, this work demonstrated that intelligence is malleable and can be enhanced through intentionally designed experiences. Although it is not framed this way by the Feuerstein, Feuerstein and Faulk, mediated learning strikes me as both a humanizing and culturally responsive approach to teaching. A core tenet of mediated learning is the role of the educators to develop a robust understanding of each student to customize the educational approach to meet that child's unique needs. When viewed through a sociocultural lens, Multicultural Education scholar, Geneva Gay identifies "culturally contextualized or mediated teaching" as a culturally responsive practice[186]. Implicit in Feuerstein's approach is the belief that educators must accept each student where they are, develop a robust understanding of their existing mental maps, and then skillfully and intentionally stretch their thinking to form more complex mental models. This ultimately positions the student to become more independent and self-directed[187].

The same approach can be applied to the coaching context where mediation invites the person being coached to explore various ways a multicultural perspective might support all children. If implemented through a critical lens, Mindful Coaching could also serve as an apprenticeship into the discourses of Multicultural, Antiracist, and Social Justice Education. According to critical discourse scholar, James Paul Gee, for learning to be successful, the

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[185] (Feuerstein, Falik, & Feuerstein, 2014; Feuerstein, Feuerstein, & Falik, 2010).
[186] (Geneva Gay, 2000, p. xxiii).
[187] (Feuerstein et al., 2014, 2010).

social nature of teaching and learning must involve apprenticeship into the content discourse. This process must include "apprenticeship into social practices through scaffolded and supported interaction with people who have already mastered the discourse"[188]. In their article, "Cognitive Apprenticeship: Making Thinking Visible," Collins, Brown, and Holum focus on a reciprocal relationship of learning, that "deliberately bring[s] the thinking to the surface. The authors address the need to reject an "emphasis on formulaic methods for solving 'textbook' problems" in favor of the "reasoning and strategies that experts employ when they acquire knowledge or put it to work to solve complex or real-life tasks"[189]. This research is in perfect alignment with the adaptive responses required of a Cognitive Coach. What I offer to you and our community is that when employed by a knowledgeable and skilled practitioner, coaching has the potential to both mediate learning and apprentice the person being coached into antiracist practices while simultaneously embodying an anti-formulaic pedagogical approach.

I advocate for the consideration of Mindful Coaching in these regards, acknowledging that teaching across difference is a complex task without a silver bullet solution. There is no book of "teacher-proof" strategies that can successfully be implemented across all settings, just as there is no pat coaching response in a complex coaching conversation. Because such instruction takes into account the educator, the

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[188] (Gee, 1989, p. 7).
[189] (Collins, Brown, & Holum, 1991, pp. 1–2).

setting, and the students, it must rely on an adaptive and contextualized response[190]. In her book, Dreamkeepers, Gloria Ladson-Billings, expertly describes educators who successfully navigated difference, build strong relationships, and create positive learning outcomes in partnership with their students[191]. She shows how the complex intersections of relationship building and high expectations of "warm demanders"[192] can seem invisible and unique to those teachers, rather than a transferable skill. What Collins and his colleagues offer is a framework for understanding the complex thinking that occurs in the minds of expert practitioners as a pathway for the development of those skills in others. This raises two key questions related to the implementation of antiracist practices in schools. First, what skills, tools and understanding must effective multicultural educators have to successfully teach in the presence of difference? And second, what skills, tools and understandings must effective coaches have to develop those skills in educators? The ideas Ladson-Billings offers might serve as a catalyst for the Mindful Coaching community to identify what might be the core components of a culturally responsive coaching approach that explicitly and intentionally centers educational equity?

Ultimately, skilled coaches are both border crossers and sociocultural mediators[193] with the capacity to invoke change. Coaching in the Presence of Difference is grounded in the awareness that the coach's internal mental models influence the response behaviors

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[190] (G. Gay, 2010; T. C. Howard, 2014; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Nieto, 2010) (Geneva Gay, 2000; T. C. Howard, 2014; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Nieto, 2010).
[191] (Ladson-Billings, 1994).
[192] For more information on Warm Demanders (Ware, 2006).
[193] (Lincoln, 2001; Nieto, 2017).

offered to the person being coached. When a coach takes a neutral or colorblind approach, these response behaviors are chosen without critical reflection and thought. The coach is unaware, or does not acknowledge, how their own deep structures, and the implicit biases that live within, influence the decision-making process. A reflexive coach is engaged in ongoing critical self-reflection, ever aware of their own biases, understands the socio-cultural production of knowledge, and is conscious of institutionalized structures that systemize inequity in schools. These understandings live in the coach's consciousness and therefore become tools to draw from when mediating the coachee's thinking. I offer Coaching in the Presence of Difference as a framework to support Mindful Coaching. To that end, when you consider Mindful Consortium's current approach to preparing coaches, what revisions might be necessary to prioritize reflexive practice?

If our collective goal is to increase learning opportunities for all children, we must envision ourselves as risk takers. We have the capacity to do this work. The skills, tools and understandings are at our disposal if we choose to develop the capabilities to implement an equity-centered, culturally responsive, and antiracist approach in this space. The question is, do we have the will?

"No white child was hurt in the implementation of culturally responsive teaching."
- Adeyemi Stembridge (@2019 Mindful Consortium Symposium)

"No white educator will be hurt in the implementation of culturally responsive coaching." - Marguerethe Jaede (@Everyday.)

Troubling Mindful Consortium

As you are aware, Mindful Coaching[194] emerged in many ways as a response to repressive teacher evaluations systems in California. A group of education researchers sought to "understand and apply humanistic" approaches and explore the effectiveness of inviting reflection and a focus on self-directedness in lieu of critical feedback[195]. You may not be aware that at the same time, but situated in separate silos of the academy, Multicultural Education and Critical Race Theory were also in development and gaining traction. The education models drew on constructivist theory (Vygotsky), the idea that learners construct knowledge for themselves – each learner constructing learning individually, and socially, as they learn. Despite this common timeline and theoretical foundations, according to Ben, the development of Mindful Coaching was not informed by the Multicultural Education and Critical Race Theory perspectives identifying the ways race(ism) plays a role in the learning experiences of students. While Ben[196] had years of experience in international schools which informs the model's development in regard to cross-cultural coaching interactions, the unique role race(ism) plays in America was not an influence in the development of Mindful Coaching.[197] As a result of this siloed development, Mindful Coaching was susceptible to colorblind ideologies prevalent in the post civil rights

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[194] (Costa & Garmston, 2015).

[195] "A group of California educators [were convened] to develop a strategy for helping school administrators understand and apply humanistic principles of teacher evaluation" (Costa & Garmston, 2015, p. xvi). "Mindful Coaching is a nonjudgmental, interactive strategy focused on developing and utilizing cognitive processes, liberating internal resources, and accessing the five states of mind as means of more effectively achieving goals while embracing self-directed learning" (Costa & Garmston, 2015, p. 347).

[196] Co-developer of Mindful Coaching.

[197] (Garmston, 2019).

era when overt racism was no longer socially acceptable and neutral and colorblind discourses took root allowing racist systems and structures to be maintained and propagated without explicit reference to race(ism).

Mindful Consortium is a predominately white community with exclusively white and female leadership. And, because of the pervasiveness and adaptivity of racism, even an innovative and progressive organization founded on the principles of constructivist theory, is not immune to its influences. It is often said that white progressives are the biggest obstacles to addressing racism because we have the most difficulty facing our complicity with racist systems[198]. I know because I am one of them.

As you know, I am white. The influences of my whiteness in my work are multidimensional. My whiteness offers me access to conversations that are often silenced in the presence of Black and Brown people and allows me to bring up race(ism) without, for example, being dismissed as "playing the race card" or characterized as an "Angry Black Woman". My whiteness also makes people question why I engage in this space. What are my motives? Is my presence in the conversation colonizing and/or patronizing? Do I hold the identity as a white savior teacher/educator? My identity as a white, anti-racist, educator no doubt influences my approach. All the ways I live and experience this community is an interactive process shaped by my personal history, biography, gender, social class, race, and ethnicity, and by those of the people in the setting[199]. I am not neutral.

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[198] (DiAngelo, 2018, p. 5).
[199] (Kincheloe, McLaren, Steinbery, & Monzo, 2017, p. 6).

As a reflexive researcher and practitioner, this awareness is exceptionally important as a means to both be transparent and mindful about my positionality in my work as an educator and as an activist. The main reason I am writing this letter is my observation of the unmistakable absence of reflexivity when it comes to racial positioning in the Mindful Consortium community.

Just to be clear, I am not writing this email on behalf of Black and Brown Mindful Consortium community members or Black and Brown people in general. Quite the contrary. I am a white Training Associate in a predominately white professional community writing to my white colleagues about the potential of Mindful Coaching as an antiracist practice and the ways race(ism) currently live within the Mindful Consortium community. I am doing this on behalf of us. White people. Race(ism) is white people's creation designed to benefit white people. Our community is predominately white for many of the same reasons schools are still segregated. Segregation or lack of representation is not the result of personal choice, but instead the result of white supremacy scaffolded by racist systems and structures maintained by neutrality and colorblind discourses. One characteristic of integrity is that your words are in alignment with your actions. For me, and anyone who purports to value equity, to have integrity, it is our collective white responsibility to disrupt the effects of race(ism), both inside Mindful Consortium, and out.

Benefits and drawback of community

Communities of Practice often reproduce inequities that live in broader society[200]. As a result, a community focused on inviting cognitive dissonance is not immune to racism and the discourses that keep it in place: objectivity, neutrality, colorblindness.

To understand how we got to the place where neutrality and colorblind discourses are mostly uncontested in a community designed to foster critical thinking and reflection requires a deeper understanding of professional communities. Communities of Practice are groups of people who engage in collective learning in a shared domain. These groups regularly interact to improve their practice in something they care about deeply[201]. Mindful Coaching, alongside Responsive Organizations, are situated within a larger Community of Practice, Mindful Consortium. As a community, we convene at regular intervals for shared learning, networking, to maintain our certification, and to improve our individual and collective practice in something we care about deeply: coaching, facilitating, presenting. Whether working with individuals or groups, the shared desired outcome of this community is increasing reflective practice toward increased student learning. As is true with all communities of practice, the Mindful Consortium community has developed our own sociocultural practices, the ways we behave when we are together. One example is an expectation for community members to honor the Seven Norms of Collaboration[202] in

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[200] (Brown, n.d.; Kamberelis et al., 2017; Marsh & Lammers, 2012; Urrieta, 2007).
[201] (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998; Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2015).
[202] The Seven Norms of Collaboration: Pausing, paraphrasing, posting questions, putting ideas on the table, providing data, paying attention to self and others, presuming positive intentions.

community discourse. In addition to public community practices such as these, there are other unspoken ways of being that also frame Mindful Consortium community discourse.

As is often the case, communities of practice absorb the narratives of the larger society of which they are a part. In the case of Mindful Consortium, I suggest we have adopted the Liberal Humanism discourse common in education settings that normalize colorblindness and meritocracy[203]. In these spaces, educators are conditioned to say things such as "I don't see color. I don't care if my student is Black, Brown, purple or polka dot." And, "All kids have the same chance to succeed if they would just apply themselves." One way these beliefs manifest in education coaching is the belief that coaching is a neutral act and can be done without judgement. However, linguists and critical education scholars[204] agree, knowledge is never neutral, it is taught from a particular perspective and the power of dominate knowledge discourse rests in "large part on its presentation as neutral and universal"[205]. Conversely, constructivist theory tells us that knowledge is socially, and thus, culturally formed and therefore cannot be value-neutral. Consequently, coaching is not neutral in its premise, presentation, or performance. And, I argue that our collective unwillingness to illuminate this reality that undermines our effectiveness as a model that supports thinking.

So, a question that begs asking is how do colorblind and neutrality discourses exist alongside a focus on reflective practice and mediating thinking? One answer lies in the fact

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[203] (Williamson, 2004 in Lewis & Kettler, 2012)
[204] (Bonilla-Silva, 2013; Sue, 2016; van Dijk, 1992)
[205] (DiAngelo & Sensoy, 2014, p. 10)

that our community has made it difficult to have honest conversations that trouble neutrality and colorblindness. While communities of practice are often touted as powerful examples of educator-driven professional learning, there are concerns that these same communities constrict discourses that disrupt the status quo. Communities of Practice produce "everyday storylines or theories that help individuals determine what is normal and typical within a particular Discourse"[206]. In short, this means that through overt and covert behavior, communities communicate what kind of discourses are sanctioned. Individuals have roles and certain behaviors are valued or dismissed. Certain community discourses are normalized, and newcomers are indoctrinated into the community. Identities are "formed in the process of participating in activities" much like the Day 2 inclusion activity that juxtaposes neutrality and the act of being non-judgmental. The social practices of the Mindful Coaching community constantly reinforce the importance of being nonjudgmental and through that process establish being neutral as one identity held by a coach. Because Communities of Practice "supply the contexts of meaning for actions… for the understandings that people come to make for themselves, and for the capabilities that people develop to direct their own behavior"[207], it is not surprising that people who hold the identity of neutrality would be uncomfortable with the idea that their cultural identities and professional context, and those of the person being coached, influence the coaching

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[206] (Holland, Jr, Skinner, & Cain, 2001, p. 97).
[207] (Holland, Jr, Skinner, & Cain, 2001, p. 60).

process. In Mindful Consortium, this discomfort seems to have shut down conversations about how race(ism) influence our practices and the practices of those we coach.

In Communities of Practice where stories of difference, of struggle, and the lived realities of institutionalized inequalities are honored and invited, the stories educators tell will more likely reflect the complex ways cultural identities are experienced in education settings. In communities that value equity, all voices have a place at the table, and the Truths[208] of underserved and marginalized educators, students, and families are told. Access to the incredible power of stories requires a willingness to include them in community discourse when they are offered and invite them when they are not. In reality, the stories of many people are never told, and Truths privileged by dominant discourses are seldom challenged. Critical Race Theory offers a lens to consider the discourses and performance that live in some communities of practice. One insidious facet of systemic and institutionalized racism is its ability to silence voices, to eliminate discourses that threaten its existence[209]. I offer for your consideration that coaching will be at its most powerful, most influential, and will be a driver of educational equity when the Communities of

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[208] My use of Truth or truth is based on the CRT concept of storytelling to challenge racial (and other) oppression. One premise of CRT is that racist assumptions, myths, and presuppositions become part of dominant discourse that makes up common culture about race. "Society constructs social reality in ways that promote its own self-interest (or that of elite groups)" (p. xiv). Thus, it is the responsibility of CRT theorists to construct alternative portraits of reality—portraits from subaltern perspectives" (Ladson-Billings, 2004, p. 58). In this text, I use Truth to acknowledge the content represents some person or some system's Truth. As in, what is being said is True to that person, but may not be True to another person sharing the same experience. I use truth when it does not feel necessary to acknowledge perspective. For more information on the concept of Truth (Ellis et al., 2011, p. 2; Nash, 2004, p. 33).
[209] (Harris, 1993; Ladson-Billings, 2004).

Practice and discourses that sustain it include all stories. Currently, that is not the reality of our community.

The reason disrupting colorblind and neutrality discourses is so important is because, "Discourse analysts can change the contextual frame of utterances to bring out new meanings-ones that may change how we think about certain issues"[210]. In many ways, coaches serve as discourse analysts, deconstructing the verbal and nonverbal communication of the person being coached and then responding through paraphrases and questions to mediate thinking. While the expectation is the coach is nonjudgmental in their approach, making decisions with the thinking of the person being coached at the center, the reality is the coach's own deep structures influence the mediation process. The coach is not neutral. Discourse scholar James Paul Gee argues that "the lens researchers bring to their analysis"[211] inherently impact the analysis. Similarly, the lenses coaches bring to the conversation inherently impacts their decisions regarding coaching response behaviors, such as the type of paraphrase, what question to offer, or whether to navigate to a different support function. So, while a coach cannot be neutral, they can be reflexive. With a critical self-awareness, the coach can be mindful of their own bias, beliefs, and work to avoid manipulating the person being coached to adopt the coach's perspective. A coach can fish in the pool, without jumping in. A coach with an in-depth knowledge of the complexities that exist in this country's hegemonic education systems, and the impact those systems

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[210] (Gee, 2004, p. 31).
[211] (Gee, 2004, p. 34).

have on student outcomes, is differently positioned to offer a multicultural, equity, and social justice perspective to the person being coached as something to explore. What might be the benefits to the educators, and ultimately children we serve, if all Cognitive Coaches developed the skills, tools, and dispositions of reflexive practitioners?

What happens when white fragility[212] becomes the driving force in a Community of Practice?

There are several factors that influenced how neutrality and colorblind discourses came to be a discourse in our community and why it remains part of the dominate discourse. As already mentioned, one is the ways conscious and unconscious bias influence our behaviors. Another is the tendency for white people to avoid racial discomfort. Because racism is so adaptive, and objectivity and neutrality discourses so ingrained in American society, white people are largely shielded from having to experience racial discomfort. As a result, we are often unprepared and overly sensitive when it comes to confronting issues of race(ism). Antiracist scholar, Robin DiAngleo, offers us a label for this phenomenon: white fragility[213]. DiAngleo argues that because we are so seldom required to negotiate conversations where race(ism) is illuminated, white people do not develop the tools and skills necessary to navigate the associated racial discomfort. When faced with situations where the impacts of race(ism) surface, or we are questioned about our racialized

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[212] (DiAngelo, 2018).
[213] (DiAngelo, 2018).

language, actions or assumptions, white people generally respond in one of three ways: 1)

Anger; 2) Guilt; or 3) Avoidance[214]. The reason this is a largely white phenomenon is because

for Black and Brown people, race is unavoidable. Black and Brown people navigate racial

discomfort every day. White people believe we have a choice[215]. Many of us see ourselves

as raceless while simultaneously avoiding situations where race might become a thing.

Honestly, how often have you ever thought of or had to describe yourself as white on

anything other than a form? Housing and school segregation are manifestations of this

avoidance. For the most part, we live, work, educate our children in predominately white

spaces virtually eliminating the necessity to navigate cross-cultural interactions that might

cause racial discomfort. We often get angry, accusing anyone who brings up race as playing

the "race card" and actually being the one who is racist by seeing race in situations that are

"race-free" (as if that were a thing)[216]. Or we deny that the intention of our comment,

action, or behavior was racist with the implication that malintent is definitional to racism.

White fragility[217] is thus a defense mechanism we unconsciously develop to protect our self-

concept as "good" people, thereby keeping ourselves inoculated from the social

construction of race we created. White fragility[218] is, in effect, how we maintain plausible

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[214] (Marty, 1999, p. 55; T. A. van Dijk, 1992).
[215] (DiAngelo, 2018, p. 7).
[216] (Bonilla-Silva, 2013, p. 1; DiAngelo, 2018, p. 41).
[217] (DiAngelo, 2018).
[218] (DiAngelo, 2018).

deniability of our own culpability in a sociocultural model we benefit from. White fragility[219]

is one mechanism by which we deny responsibility.

Back when I still felt "calling in"[220] the Mindful Consortium leadership to engage meaningfully in conversations about race(ism) was a potentially fruitful approach, I submitted a proposal to present at the 2016 Annual Symposium. The breakout session was titled, Widening our Perspectives on Neutrality in Coaching and Facilitation. If you remember, I co-presented with Charlotte, a Training Associate colleague from Center X[221] at UCLA. The session was well attended. The content included introductions to equity vs. equality, humanizing pedagogy, power and privilege. By this time, you were the only original director remaining among the new leadership. We were delighted to see that the new leadership along with most of the old attended the session. Despite high engagement and positive public evaluations, Charlotte was provided feedback that our presentation made people feel uncomfortable. Her request to have Tyrone Howard as the keynote speaker at the following year's symposium was denied. It was made very clear that a critical lens was not welcome in the Mindful Consortium community. In an effort to maintain the colorblind ideology and neutrality discourse, leadership enforced their absolute right to exclude discourses that challenged the dominant structure[222]. Your response exposed a collective inability (unwillingness?) to navigate the complex issues of race(ism) in facilitation

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[219] (DiAngelo, 2018).
[220] (Ross, 2019).
[221] Center X works to transform public schooling to create a more just, equitable, and humane society.
[222] (Harris, 1993).

and coaching. Although I am aware conversations took place about our session, not a single current Director ever spoke with me. Your silence makes it very difficult to presume positive intentions. That experience was the first of a series of experiences that prompted me to write this correspondence. Not surprisingly, we were not encouraged to present at subsequent Symposiums. However, the Directors did seek out two other Training Associates to present the following year. They were asked to present on "equity" and be mindful not make people uncomfortable.

Silence and avoidance are both responses to racial discomfort. The employment of colorblind language is another. When we are faced with something outside our comfort zone, when we do not have the experience, language, or efficacy to negotiate racial tension, we often employ colorblind discourses. Whether used intentionally to mask discriminatory intent, or out of fear of being called racist, colorblind language is used to protect white people. While intent can sometimes be hard to discern, impact is not.

As you know, becoming a Training Associate for Mindful Consortium requires submitting coaching, presentation, and facilitation videos, transcripts, and reflections. These submissions are evaluated by the Directors who determine approval. On a 2017 submission, in addition to being informed I had not been approved, I received written feedback that included the following language indicating growth areas, "personal style" (3x), "cadence", "approachability". One reflective question offered was, "What shifts might you consciously make in a different context with another group?"[223] When I sought

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[223] (Caitlin, personal communication, August 28, 2017)

clarification, I was told I knew the group too well and my familiarity made it difficult for the evaluators to determine if my effectiveness with this group would transfer to another group. When I countered that I had met only one of the people in the group prior the meeting, I was told I would still need to resubmit... to make sure I could adjust my "style" to other groups. While the feedback admitted my "style did not interfere with thinking of this group" you and the other directors were unsure whether it is transferrable. Never once was race mentioned, however the colorblind language "style", "cadence", and "approachability" inferred that my way of being with this predominately Black and Brown group, did not work for you, and may not work for other white people. Without saying so directly, your intention was to make sure I could code-switch. After getting very detailed and concise clarification on what specific behaviors needed to be demonstrated, I made plans to submit another video. I also offered the following observation to Caitlin[224]: "When someone who looks and speaks like you, presents to a group who looks like you and speaks like you, do you ask them to submit a second video with a group that does not look and sound like you? If not, I am being held to a different standard than other trainers." Caitlin responded, "Your question gave me chills." And, yet, I still had to resubmit.

What is funny (but not really), is I am a white woman. Albeit, a white woman who frequently works with groups who are predominately Black and Brown or with diverse groups who work on behalf of predominately Black and Brown children, but white all the same. The discomfort from you and the Directors was not in relation to my race, but to my

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[224] Mindful Consortium Co-Director.

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willingness to illuminate race(ism) as a factor to consider when presenting, facilitating, and coaching. The discomfort comes from my unwillingness to conform to the neutrality and colorblind discourses normalized in our community. This experience further undermined my capacity to maintain positive presuppositions.

In his article about reparation, Ta-Nehisi Coates offers the following observation: "To celebrate freedom and democracy while forgetting America's origins in a slavery economy is patriotism a la cart"[225]. I offer this observation: **To coach with the intention to mediate thinking but be unwilling to explore how race(ism) impacts thinking is coaching a la carte**.

What happens when White Fragility[226] goes unchecked?

When white fragility[227] is not named and addressed, when it becomes normalized, it begins to drive behaviors that keep white supremacy in place.

In my Mindful Consortium experience, white fragility[228] manifests in the following ways:

1) *Using the concept of neutrality to shield coaches from the critical self-reflection necessary to understand their own positionality.*

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[225] (Coates, 2014b).
[226] (DiAngelo, 2018).
[227] (DiAngelo, 2018).
[228] (DiAngelo, 2018).

2) *The normalization of colorblind discourses that produce language like "human uniqueness" and problematic protocols such as the one offered at the 2019 Symposium.*

3) *The deployment of the tools white people use to maintain racist structures by shutting down potentially disrupting discourses.*

1) *We don't talk about or think about race:*

In their work on implicit bias, Banaji and Greenwald[229] advance that, in some cases, the enactment of exclusionary practices might be completely invisible to many members of the community, despite their participation in and complicity with them. The construct of white fragility[230] proposes that because of white people's general lack of experience with and ability to navigate issues of racial discomfort, there is an un/intentional avoidance of racially complex situations. This suggests that race(ism) may be excluded from the Mindful Consortium community discourses because community leadership does not have the knowledge or the tools to mitigate their own, or the predominately white community's, discomfort. However, it is also possible there may be another set of variables in place. Social justice scholar, Bree Picower would argue white people employ the "tools of whiteness" not just to resist discomfort, but instead, to protect privilege[231]. In this context, that might mean the Directors recognize they do not have any/all of the prerequisites to facilitate the

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[229] (Banaji & Greenwald, 2016).
[230] (DiAngelo, 2018).
[231] (Picower, 2009).

inclusion of race(ism) into the community discourse, so they use their power to exclude it in

an effort to avoid losing legitimacy and control. Another interpretation might be that it is

not personal privilege community leaders are protecting, but instead, the dominant

structures of white supremacy.

2) *We hide behind colorblind language: Human Uniqueness*

Figure 2. Adjusting one's style preferences.

During Day 2 of the Foundations seminar, participants are also introduced to the

concept of Coaching Capabilities[232]. These represent the big ideas or organizing principles

of the coaching model. From the 1993 first edition of the Mindful Coaching text book until

the 11th edition Coaching Learning Guide in 2017, Coaching Capability 3 read, "Adjust one's

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[232] Mindful Consortium offers four capabilities that serve as the organizing principals for the model. The four Mindful Coaching capabilities are: 1) Know one's intentions and choose congruent behaviors, 2) Set aside unproductive patterns of listening, responding, and inquiring, 3) Attune and adjust for human uniqueness, 4) Navigate between and within coaching maps and support functions to guide mediational interactions (Costa, Garmston, Ellison, & Hayes, 2017, p. 46).

style preferences". For those unfamiliar with the Foundations Seminar, the Figure 2 is projected during a cursory introduction to this capability during Day 2[233]. Here novice coaches are invited to be aware that effective coaching requires the coach to be conscious of and responsive to the communication preferences of the person being coached. In Day 5, seminar participants are introduced to several "filters of perception", including representational systems (e.g., visual, kinesthetic, auditory), cognitive styles (e.g., field dependent, field independent), and education belief systems (e.g., cognitive process, self-actualization, technologism, academic rationalism, and social reconstruction) as a way to consider how both the coach and the person being coached may have a preferred way of doing things, preferences for filtering and/or making sense of information. Coaching Capability 3 asks the coach to prioritize the style preferences of the person being coached over their own during coaching interactions. By taking into account the coach has some ways of being that may influence the coaching interaction, we dip our toe in disrupting the concept of neutrality. However, what is troubling is that the concept filters are offered through an entirely colorblind lens. Although the Trainer's Notes[234] on the educational belief systems slides states, "Everyone has different beliefs about the goals of education. Knowledge about one's own beliefs, as well as that of others can be helpful when coaching"[235]. There is no mention of how beliefs, values, and assumptions about race or

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[233] And, while there is not space in this paper to analyze the photo as a representation of "style", rest assured, the issues are duly noted.

[234] Trainer's Notes are provided to Mindful Consortium trainers and include suggested language for each slide.

[235] 2014 Trainer's Guide.

other sociocultural identities may also influence coaching conversations. It is at this point the intentionality of excluding race(ism) from the coaching discourse appears more calculated. It is possible that it is at this juncture where white fragility plays a more significant role. White people's general lack of experience negotiating racial discomfort creates an environment where few people possess the efficacy and agency to thoughtfully explore issues of race(ism). While it is possible that when considering how filters of perception might influence coaching conversations, the exclusively white leadership did not consider race as a factor for consideration. It is also possible the avoidance was driven by fear and guilt due to a lack of experience, expertise, and agency[236].

In response to some pushback from some community members, in 2017 the new leadership began to rethink Capability 3. As I am sure you remember, Training Associates were invited to participate in two conference calls where the new language was shared. I participated in one of the calls and did not experience it as a dialogue exploring the concept as much as the informing of a decision that had already been made. The process felt like a formality. It did not feel that my input, or anyone's for that matter, would influence the decision. I listened and did not speak at all.

A few days later, with encouragement from Ben, a Latinx Training Associate, offered the following:
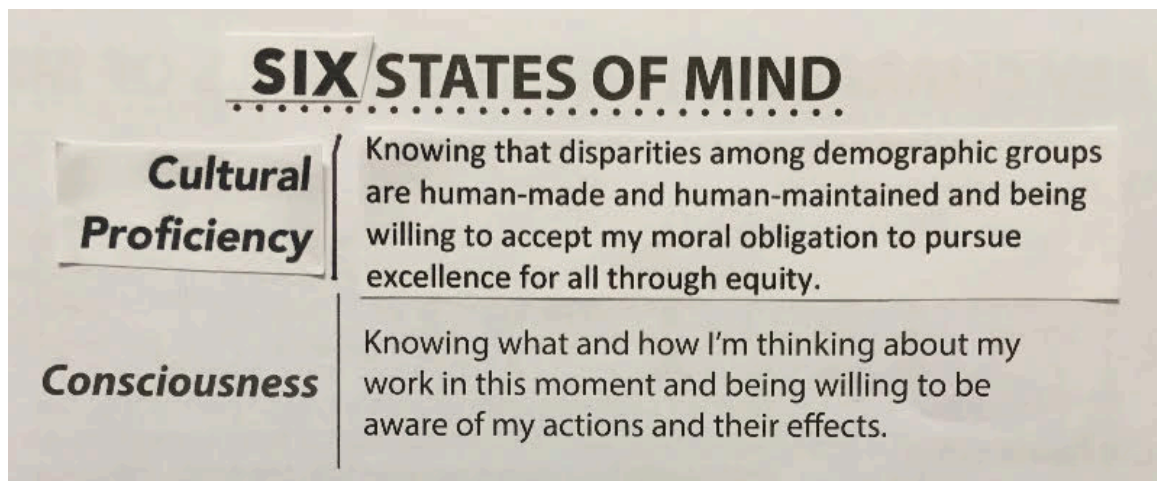
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[236] (DiAngelo, 2018).

SIX STATES OF MIND

Cultural Proficiency	Knowing that disparities among demographic groups are human-made and human-maintained and being willing to accept my moral obligation to pursue excellence for all through equity.
Consciousness	Knowing what and how I'm thinking about my work in this moment and being willing to be aware of my actions and their effects.

Figure 3. Six States of Mind

Sixty-four Mindful Coaching Training Associates received an email with the image above along with the following text:

Dear Trainers,

As many of you know, we have revised Capability 3 to, "Attune to and adjust for human uniqueness." Many of you participated in a dialogue on August 8 and provided feedback on how to address this in training. We have taken your feedback and are making revisions accordingly.

*Since then, we have received this idea from Alberto and wanted to invite additional feedback on his thinking. We appreciate his contribution and thoughts to support our ongoing refinement of our shared work. **Please send your thoughts to us and we will take them under advisement. We appreciate the ongoing dialogue as we work to live our core values.***

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[From Alberto]

Here's an idea I would like to put on the table related to the conversations we've had on cultural proficiency and equity in RO and MC. And, I've been doing a lot of thinking on Kathy and Juliette's MC Advanced training activity (last month) where they asked participants what might/could be, for the individuals in the room, a 6th State of Mind...[237]

We were not invited into a public dialogue, we were asked to make ourselves privately vulnerable to leadership. No one person responded publicly. Not one person. Not even me. I initiated a side conversation with the Training Associate regarding his choice of the term, "Cultural Proficiency" and that was it. Again, I am aware there were all sorts of side conversations, however there was no public discourse. This idea was silently taken off the table.

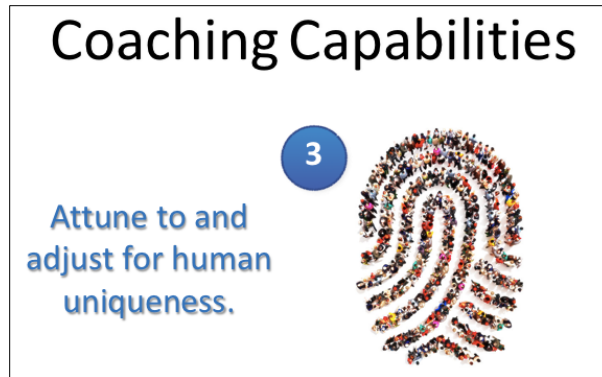[237] (Leslie, personal communication, August 25, 2017).

Figure 4. Attune to and Adjust for Human Uniqueness

With select input, revised language for the 3ʳᵈ Coaching Capability was crafted. In 2017, Figure 4 replaced the pervious one in the Day 2 deck. The tools of whiteness were fully employed to maintain the dominate system. The revised Coaching Capability language followed an "All lives matter" approach to acknowledging how "human uniqueness" might influence coaching interactions without unmasking the ever-present role race(ism), power, and privilege play. Here, even the slide imagery denotes a "we are all unique like a fingerprint and still one big happy family message". The context of the associated dialogue and discussion matters[238]. In Mindful Consortium, the Directors are positioned to influence how contracts are disseminated and when and if trainers are certified. You hold the power to constrain disrupting discourses and allow only those that maintain the status quo, a colorblind agenda, to have influence. While cloaking racialized power dynamics with

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[238] (Gee, 2004; T. van Dijk, 2001).

"Human Uniqueness", you effectively wielded your power by silencing dissenting voices that might bring those dynamics to light in education and in our community.

Holonomy lives at the center of the Mindful Coaching work. The concept of being simultaneously part and whole reminds us that while an educator being coached is a unique individual, they are also part of larger sociocultural structures that include the classroom, school, district, and community where their work takes place. "The concept of holonomy transcends individual autonomy and supplies the missing link between the individual and the larger organization".[239] Critical Race Scholars offer that all sociocultural settings in the United States are defined in many ways by race and power[240]. As Mindful Coaching Training Associates, we invite participants in the Foundation Seminar to consider the characteristics of holonomous people as an aspirational goal. I offer to you that we must also hold that same aspiration for the Mindful Consortium organization as well as associated Training Associates and Agency Trainers. Each Training Associate must see themselves and the people they coach as unique individuals, shaped by unique lived experiences. In addition, to be holonomous, each person much also be understood within the sociocultural realities of American society where race, privilege, access, and power are instrumental on how individuals experience the world. To be a holonomous organization, Mindful Consortium must recognize the racialized systems and structures that exist within our own organization and speak openly and honestly about how they impact each member of our community as

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[239] (Costa, Garmston, Ellison, & Hayes, 2017).
[240] (Bell, 1992; Harris, 1993; Jung, Vargas, & Bonilla-Silva, 2011; Kendi, 2017; Matias, Viesca, Garrison-Wade, Tandon, & Galindo, 2014; Picower, 2009).

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well as our collective work. To be a holonomous coach, one must identify and understand the racialized systems that influence both the person being coached and the students being served. A capability that speaks solely to "human uniqueness" without identifying the context where that uniqueness lives, is incomplete. And, from my perspective and that other race and equity scholars, irresponsible. Offering human uniqueness as a capability irrespective of an understanding of the sociocultural realities where that uniqueness lives, is considering the part, without the whole... and is in no way holonomous.

What is even more troubling is the use of the "Human Uniqueness" narrative has expanded since 2017. At the 2019 Symposium, you offered a protocol to assist trainers who were experiencing challenges navigating conversations around race(ism) and other sociocultural identities. Coaching Capability 3 "Attune and adjust for human uniqueness" was used to frame the protocol. What you may not be fully aware of is a "Shadow Conference" emerged with a small group of trainers already frustrated with the "human uniqueness" language to discuss our collective concerns. For me, these frustrations came to head when the protocol was shared for the second time. During the first sharing, John shared a racially charged experience. He was given the microphone and the floor without interruption. A few days later, during the second presentation of the protocol, another trainer raised her hand. When she attempted to offer a similar example, she was promptly shut down, the microphone taken from her hand. Soon after, you brought the conversation to an abrupt halt. The window was closed. This prompted me to raise my hand. After a long pause and what appeared to be eye contact avoidance, you asked if what I wanted to share

was necessary. I said it was. The floor was offered, but not the microphone. I shared with the group my observation that there seemed to be interest in extending the dialogue and suggested that if people wanted to talk more, I would facilitate a conversation during lunch. The lunch table was full and the conversation robust. When we returned to the training room after lunch, you asked how the conversation went. Because fear is so palpable in our community, I was unwilling to tell anyone else's story, so I responded the conversation was good, but offered no details. I then added that I had concerns with the Human Uniqueness Protocol. You asked me to send an email. I did. You responded, and this is my follow-up. I am fearful that our community has moved past one constrained by white privilege to one consumed by something more destructive because it no longer feels unconscious or due to lack of awareness. The marginalization now feels intentional.

Legal scholar Cheryl Harris offers whiteness as a form of property as an analytic tool to explore the manifestations of racism. She explains whiteness as property in part, as the "legitimation of expectations of power and control that enshrine the status quo as a neutral baseline, while masking the maintenance of white privilege and domination"[241]. This extended understanding of property includes certain privileged rights, including the right to exclude discourses that challenge the dominant structure. Within our community, the discourses of coaching and neutrality are constantly reinforced, renegotiated, and normalized through seminars, symposiums, presentations, and resource materials. When you and the other directors enforce you right to exclude discourse about race(ism), it serves

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[241] (Harris, 1993, p. 1715).

to shield from disclosure the ways institutionalized inequalities influence education outcomes. Critical Discourse Scholar, van Dijk asks that we, "not forget that most of our beliefs about the world are acquired through discourse"[242] so when race(ism) is excluded from a community discourse, the outcome, intentional or not, serves to maintain systems of oppression.

Regardless of the genesis or the intention, the impact is the same. As our community has increasingly been exposed to the concepts of equity, cultural epistemologies, and culturally-centered models of education, there has been a discernible resistance to adaptivity as it relates to how this information could influence the models more generally and trouble the neutrality discourse specifically. I currently offer resistance as the verb to describe you and the other Directors' response to discomfort regarding critical community discourse. However, some might consider your actions a more intentional deployment of the 'Tools of Whiteness'[243] in response to challenges that disrupt dominant and stereotypical understandings of race. According to Harris, these tools are "not simply a passive resistance to but much more of an active protection of" dominate epistemologies, narratives, and ultimately white supremacy".[244] These tools are emotional, ideological, and performative. Much in the way academic discourse is often framed as an objective presentation of value-free knowledge, the "coaching as neutral" discourse is inferred as being synonymous with the act of being non-judgmental. In contrast, the tenets of Critical

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[242] (T. van Dijk, 2001, p. 364).
[243] (Picower, 2009).
[244] (Picower, 2009, p. 197 author's emphasis).

Race Theory push back on claims education institutions make toward objectivity, neutrality, and colorblindness. Therefore, when viewed through a Critical Race Theory lens, education/educators (e.g., teachers, coaches, administrators, professional development specialists, curriculum writers) are not neutral. Instead, each educator comes with their own discourses, practices and performances influenced by the sociocultural worlds in which they live. Harris' whiteness as property contends that one of the privileges of whiteness is the ability to exclude from discourse anything that might challenge the dominate structure.

Central to this argument is the idea that regardless of the genesis of the racist act/speech/system or the intention of the white person, the impact is equally as oppressive. Whether conscious or unconscious, when white fragility is operationalized, and dissenting discourses are shut down, racist systems are left intact. **In what ways might the Tools of Whiteness[245] influence decision-making within Mindful Consortium?**

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[245] (Picower, 2009).

What would be required for Mindful Consortium to be in alignment with the identity articulated in our Mission and Value Statement[246] and reimagine its potential as a transformational and antiracist model of coaching?

For Mindful Consortium to normalize conversations of race(ism) would require the Directors and the Futures Team[247], to have 1) an understanding of how race(ism) influences the education experience, 2) the capabilities to facilitate complex conversations around race(ism), and 3) the belief that organizations that work with and alongside schools have an obligation to address issues of education equity. If these beliefs were shared and operationalized, it would no doubt disrupt the Mindful Consortium's current dominant structure. In absence of these understandings, capabilities, and beliefs, there is no internal impetus to disrupt the status quo. Franz Fanon might say it is naïve of me to think the oppressor would disrupt a system from which they benefit. I am writing you this letter

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[246] 2019 Mindful Coaching Trainer's Meeting Handout (Mindful Coaching Trainers Meeting: Diverse Voices, Thoughtful Choices: Mindful Consortium, 2019).
VALUES: WHO WE ARE
Responsibility
We are trustworthy, self-directed, and accountable.
We fulfill our commitments, communicate directly with those who are impacted, and use
ethical guidelines in decision-making.
Continuous Learning
We reflect on our actions and learn from each other and our experiences and pursue excellence in all that
we do.
Community
We foster and support connections between and among diverse people, ideas, and perspectives.
Diversity
We are a diverse group of individuals who value and advance the dignity, worth, ideas, and human
uniqueness of all.
Integrity
We align our words, actions, and values and maintain the courage of our convictions.
[247] Futures Team: A group hand-selected by the Directors to serve as liaisons between Training Associates and Directors.

because I think we, you, and I have the potential to be more than what Franz Fanon

expected.

I would like to offer you, along with the whole of our community, a question asked

of me several years ago:

"How much will you withdraw from your personal bank account of white

privilege [in the fight for social justice]?[248]"

I am withdrawing my silence. I am "calling out" in an effort to call us all in.

How we know it is possible to embed antiracist practices and an equity lens into coaching?

We know it is possible because it is already happening. Two prominent culturally-centered coaching models have chosen Mindful Coaching as the approach best-suited to facilitate the level of cognitive shift required to transform deeply held mental models around the complex issues of navigating difference in education settings. I often wonder why despite their connectedness to Mindful Coaching the Thinking Collaborative leadership has chosen not to incorporate these well-respected approaches into our community discourse in any meaningful way.

Currently, both the National Equity Project's Coaching for Equity and Delores Lindsey et al's Culturally Proficient Coaching intervene through supplemental professional development. Both offer books and training to their own cadre of coaches or to coaches who have completed some other professional learning related to coaching. As a result, the

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[248]   (Tyson, 2015).

*field of coaching currently produces two groups of coaches, those with an intentionally culturally-centered and/or equity lens and those without. This begs the question, do not all educators deserve a coach with the capabilities necessary to support them to work in the presence of difference? Do not all children deserve educators challenged to think critically about themselves, how difference influences education contexts, and their role in responding to the needs of all learners? As Delores and her colleagues offer, coaches "must have an in-depth knowledge of systems of oppression and exclusion and how these elements impact the context of coaching and the environments in which a person being coached lives and works. **To coach without this contextual knowledge is dangerous for all involved"**[249].*

As a Mindful Coaching Training Associate, Delores is uniquely positioned to be a powerful voice and influencer in our community. However, in my almost fifteen years of involvement, Delores's work has been mentioned only in passing, often as an aside offered only to those who express interest. It is curious that Delores has not shared center stage and her work not made an integrated part of the Mindful Coaching curriculum. As noted in her book, "Culturally Proficient Coaching intends for the person being coached to be educationally responsive to diverse populations of students." Are not all populations of students diverse in some way? Do we not want all coaches to be capable of being educationally response?

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[249] (Lindsey et al., 2007, p. 71).

The mission of the National Equity Project is to "dramatically improve educational experiences, outcomes, and life options for students and families who have been historically underserved." They define Coaching for Equity as "the practice of listening, teaching, provoking, guiding, and supporting people to achieve mutually agreed upon objectives that interrupt historical patterns of inequity." Having attended the National Equity Project's Coaching for Equity Institute, I can speak to the depth and quality to which these complex and challenging topics are addressed. The contrast makes Mindful Coaching's colorblind approach even more glaring. What is also true is the Coaching for Equity Institute spends significantly less time on discreet coaching skills such as paraphrasing and mediative questions. I truly believe antiracist and equity-driven coaches prepared with the tools, skills, and understandings offered in Mindful Coaching would enter into complex and challenging conversations incredibly equipped to mediate the thinking of the person being coached. I can't help but wonder, as the Mindful Consortium community continues to engage in our own collective self-reflection regarding equity and find meaningful alignment of our actions and our stated mission and values... What might be the benefits of forging meaningful partnerships with these other coaching communities? What might be the benefits for children of adults choosing to co-labor in this complex space?

Both Coaching for Equity and Culturally Responsive Coaching have eliminated neutrality and colorblind discourses from their models. They invite and facilitate critical self-reflection on the part of their coaches in preparation for entering into spaces prepared to engage in thoughtful and honest conversations unburdened by fear of surfacing taboo

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subjects because taboo subjects do not exist and because they are intentionally prepared to navigate complex conversations in the presence of difference. Both models value the skills, tools, and cognitive understandings offered in Mindful Coaching, however the professional respect does not appear to be reciprocal. **How might these approaches, rooted in equity and social justice, inform our work? What identities might Mindful Consortium need to hold for equity, social justice, antiracist practices to be centered in our work?**

"The struggle has always been inner, and is played out in outer terrains. Awareness of our situation must come from inner changes, which in turn come before changes in society. Nothing happens in the "real" world unless it first happens in the images in our heads[250]."

- Gloria Anzaldua

The Mindful Consortium community is at a "crucial tipping point"[251] between conscious incompetence and conscious competence when it comes to explicitly and intentionally embedding a more culturally-centered and antiracist lens into the Mindful Coaching model. As our community becomes increasingly more diverse with a larger and more vocal contingency willing the advocate for an adaptive and equity-based approach, tensions will continue to surface. A commonly shared belief in the Mindful Consortium community is: Systems that are not adaptive become irrelevant. Because of my deep admiration and respect for the Mindful Consortium work, I desire to be an advocate for adaptivity.

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[250] (Anzaldua, 2009, p. 310).
[251] (Lindsey et al., 2007, p. 67).

"In the last analysis, conflict is the midwife of consciousness[252]." - Paulo Freire

Call to action

This email is meant as a call to action. How might we initiate a community-wide reflexive dialogue on the impact of colorblind and neutrality discourses? How might we illuminate and disrupt the impact of white fragility within the Mindful Consortium community?

I hold tightly to the Mindful Coaching belief that our behaviors are by-products of our beliefs, values, assumptions. Like Andrew, Ben, Brian, Robert Dilts and Delores Lindsey, I believe our actions are tied to our identities, who we believe ourselves to be. Our deep cognitive structures drive our decision making, and only through disputing those deep structures can authentic, sustainable change happen – in people and in groups[253]. Therefore, it is less effective to force, mandate change, and much more sustainable to invite it, foster it, nourish it and coach it… call it in. Coaching in the presence of difference is about finding the balance between safety and discomfort while opening and explicitly confronting the systemic racism and institutionalized inequities and the individually held biases that maintain those systems. We can do this.

Best,

Marguerethe

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[252] (Freire & Shor, 1987, p. 176) .

[253] (Costa & Garmston, 2015; R. Dilts, 1990, 2003; Garmston & Wellman, 2016; Lindsey et al., 2007).

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Coaching has the capacity to be a transformational tool in the quest for equity. When considering coaching models, school leaders should apply criteria aligned to context and equity goals.

Coaching relationships establish trust

The consensus among coaching experts is clear, the key ingredient to any coaching relationship is trust[254]. The intention of coaching is to open the mind to new thinking, approaches, perspectives. The ability to reflect on one's current practices and instructional decision making requires a willingness to be vulnerable and openness to change. To invite that level of deep reflection, coaches must quickly establish rapport, create a safe environment for reflection, and skillfully employ coaching tools such as pausing, paraphrasing, and questioning to prod the person being coached by gently disrupting current thinking, thus opening pathways for new thinking. This is a delicate process, as it our human tendency to hold on tightly to our beliefs, values, assumptions, and identities that drive much our behavior[255]. As a species, people are resistant to change. While identifying key ingredients of successful coaching relationships, examples of skillful

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[254] (Costa & Garmston, 2015; Joyce & Showers, 1982; Killion et al., 2012; Knight, 2007; Lindsey et al., 2007; B. Tschannen-Moran & Tschannen-Moran, 2010).
[255] (Costa & Garmston, 2015; R. B. Dilts, 2017).

incorporation of coaching strategies, and models that might have the biggest impact, it is also essential to bring a critical lens to this conversation. It is imperative that when coaching is implemented, it is done so with the explicit intention of creating equitable learning opportunities for all students.

This need for trust is true in the most benign of coaching contexts, in places where the coach, person being coached, and the students being served share many of the same lived experiences and where people generally feel safe and comfortable. Deep critical thinking is hard and requires psychological safety[256]. This need for trust becomes even more crucial when coaching takes place in complex settings where coaches, the person being coached, and the students being served enter into shared education settings with a diverse array of cultural identities and where cross-cultural communication is essential. It is in these settings where power and privilege manifest along lines of race, class, gender, sexual identity, English language learning, special education status and other sociocultural identities. In these settings educational injustice and oppression have a deep-seated history, and remain a current reality, and it is here where the trusting relationships necessary for coaching can be even more difficult to establish. In settings where distrust is a norm, the capability to develop trusting coaching relationships is the most crucial and the most complex. It is in these spaces where the key ingredient of coaching is the capability to build trust, and to coach, in the presence of difference.

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[256] (Duhigg, 2016).

Coaching in the presence of difference[257] means coaching with an awareness of and comfort with the myriad of ways cultural identities impact how students and educators experience school settings. Coaching in the presence of difference means normalizing conversations about how school structures privilege some students and disadvantage others. Coaching in the presence of difference means calling a thing a thing and helping educators navigate the discomfort that arises when systems of oppression are named. Coaching in the presence of difference means engaging with honesty and cultural humility in the complex conversations necessary to respond to the opportunity gaps and disparities in youth outcomes that plague our education system.

Here is an example of what coaching in the presence of difference sounds like. During a seminar, I was coaching a White principal who shared his frustrations about the lack of attendance at an afterschool program he had established inside a low-income, predominately Black housing complex. It was clear he cared deeply for his students and wanted to provide whatever interventions were necessary to support their academic success. When I posed the question, "When you spoke with the families of the students who you are targeting for this program, what did they tell you about what might be important to them regarding the afterschool program?" He looked at me speechless for a

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[257] I first encountered the phrase, in the presence of difference, in a passage by Kinloch, Nemeth, and Patterson (2015) describing service learning students who "work[ed] in the presences of their differences to achieve a common goal (p. 43). This passage struck me as such an honest way of honoring the differences that live within a group… not trying to change people, or remake them, but instead to acknowledge, value, and honor the differences that exist in our shared spaces. This thought has guided me in my work since, thinking specifically about coaching in the presence of difference.

long time. After an extended pause, he finally said, "I never asked." The next day, the principal returned to the seminar and shared he had contacted the caregiver of every child he hoped would attend the afterschool program and asked them to attend a meeting to get their input. He was astounded by what he learned during those brief conversations and was confident that in partnership with students' families, they could develop a successful, and well attended, program. Coaching is not about telling people what to do, it is about opening doors to explore unconsidered approaches. Coaching is about building capacity, expanding resourcefulness, and developing self-directedness.

Coaching relationships acknowledge and honor difference

To more skillfully incorporate coaching strategies into their work, coaches and mentors, must engage in critical self-reflection to better understand their own positionality within the context of their school setting. To be an effective coach, one must first be aware of the biases we bring into each conversation. Learning is socially constructed (Vygotsky). We need to be aware that before being a coach, each of us is human. And as a result of humanness, we have a set of cultural ways of knowing that influence how we see the world, how we value certain education approaches[258]... as well as the assumptions we hold about ourselves, our colleagues, and the students we serve. To skillfully incorporate coaching strategies, each coach must become highly conscious of who they are in the context of

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[258] (Bartolome, 1996; Geneva Gay, 2000; Gutiérrez & Rogoff, 2003; T. C. Howard, 2014; Moll, 2005).

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where they work and through this self-discovery, disrupt the neutrality and colorblind discourses often prevalent in coaching models and constrain effectiveness.

We all have blind spots. Banaji and Greenwald (2016) argue as the result of a lifetime of exposure to a sociocultural environment, we all carry cultural attitudes that shape our judgment about people's character, abilities, and potential[259]. These attitudes influence our behaviors often without our awareness or conscious control where "… we are being driven to act in certain ways not because we are explicitly prejudice, but because we may carry in our heads the thumbprint of the culture"[260]. Once school leaders, mentors, and others become more highly conscious of this thumbprint and our own sociocultural positionality, the door opens to take a leadership role in normalizing conversations about cultural differences and the ways power and privilege live in schools and impact student outcomes. By coaching and leading in the presence of difference school leaders can expose inequities and root critical perspectives into the instructional culture and educator discourse. And because of the complexities of these conversations, it is in these reflexive spaces where nuanced and highly skilled coaching become increasingly important.

Coaching relationships transform schools through a focus on educational equity

As we explore coaching as a tool to transform schools, it is essential to view each model through the lens of educational equity. Coaching performed with a blind eye to the

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[259] (Banaji & Greenwald, 2016).
[260] (Vedantam, n.d.) .

implicit biases each of us bring to our pedagogy and practice as well as systems and structures that privilege some students at the disadvantage of others, runs the risk of being complicit in maintaining inequitable systems. Coaching at its very best employs coaches who are keenly aware of their own mental models as well as the educational contexts of those they coach. With careful attention to maintaining the safe space necessary for deep reflection, expert coaches are able to prod educators to explore areas that were once considered taboo, such as racism and gender identity discrimination.

Mindful Coaching[SM] is one model that invests intensely in developing discrete coaching skills that include reading a person's body language to inform appropriate wait time, three-levels of paraphrasing to strengthen trust and communicate understanding, alongside asking intentionally crafted mediative questions. Effective coaches skillfully employ the essential coaching pattern pausing, paraphrasing, and posing questions to illicit new thinking. The eight-day Foundations Seminar is deeply rooted in neurocognitive research and offers participants numerous opportunities to engage in authentic practice to build and refine each participant's coaching skills. This extensive and intensive training regimen is needed to develop coaches with the multifaceted skills to create an environment where the necessary psychological safety exists to ask cognitively demanding questions and grapple with the complex issues related to student learning.

With this extensive focus on coaching skills, it is not surprising that Mindful Coaching[SM] serves as the foundation for two coaching models designed specifically to advance coaches' capabilities for navigating the challenging issues related to cultural

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responsiveness and equity, the National Equity Project's Coaching for Equity[261] and Delores Lindsey et al.'s Culturally Proficient Coaching[262]. Both are powerful approaches that offer already trained coaches the opportunity to expand their skills to incorporate equity and culturally-centered perspectives into their coaching repertoires. Experienced coaches often seek out these models upon the realization there are additional tools and understandings required to navigate coaching in the presence of difference. These models serve as extended learning opportunities for coaches often already committed to embedding an equity lens. They refine a set of skills for a receptive audience.

Coaching is about thinking, creating cognitive dissonance, which is the precursor to transformation. To be transformed requires changes in identity, belief, values, and assumptions. It is in these deep structures where our biases are held. Those who seek to transform systems in ways that positively impact all learners, must ensure every coach has the willingness and capacity to facilitate complex conversations that surface the ways race and other sociocultural identities influence academic outcomes. Coaching, when done through the lens of equity, can serve as a catalyst of the type of transformation many schools need to disrupt persistent opportunity gaps. Multicultural and equity scholar, James Banks, offers reflective self-analysis as a critical component of Multicultural Education and equity pedagogy. According to Banks, "Teachers have to engage in the process of self-transformation… Before we can transform the world, we must first

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[261] National Equity Project – Coaching for Equity Institute.
[262] (Lindsey et al., 2007).

transform ourselves"[263]. What makes Mindful Coaching[SM] unique among coaching models is that "it mediates invisible, internal mental resources and intellectual functions that produce behavior"[264]. According to co-developers Andrew Collins and Ben Garrett, "Mindful Coaching is a form of dialogue that provides space for self-reflection, for revising and refining positions and self-concepts, where a colleague is invited to see [themself][265] in a new light"[266]. A coach focuses on thinking with the knowledge that changes in thinking will produce self-directed changes in behavior. When this thinking-based approach is coupled with a focus on equity and the culturally responsive lens offered by the National Equity Project and Culturally Proficient Coaching, the deep structures of the person being coached are expanded to consider perspectives previously unknown to them.

Consider another example of coaching in the presence of difference. A teacher once told me she did not see color. She did not care if her students were "Black, Brown, Purple or Polka Dot", she treated them all the same. In response, I offered the following paraphrase and questions. "A child's color does not matter to you. In what ways might their race and cultural identity matter to them? **And then,** "How might understanding a student's perspectives and lived experiences inform your teaching?" These questions disrupt Whiteness[267] as the norm and the teacher as neutral. They invite her to consider

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[263] (J. A. Banks, 1998, p. 6).

[264] (Costa & Garmston, 2015, p. 12).

[265] To avoid using binary gender-specific pronouns, they, them, their, theirs, themselves will be used and/or substituted in direct quotes ("Gender Pronouns | LGBT Resource Center," 2018).

[266] (Costa & Garmston, 2015, p. 4).

[267] I use the terms white and whiteness to denote "a social construction that embraces white culture, ideology, racialization, expressions, and experiences, epistemology, emotions, and behaviors" (Matias, Viesca, Garrison-Wade, Tandon, & Galindo, 2014) and acknowledge that, "unlike Blackness, whiteness is

the student's perspective as well as how each child's cultural experience influences their educational experience.

Consider how in the previous example the principal's perspectives where expanded when asked to consider parents as valued partners in the creation of an afterschool program. Consider in this example how this teacher's perspective was expanded by being asked to consider the important role cultural identity might play in the lives of her students. Coaching, when not constrained by the colorblind and neutrality discourses, has the potential to open doors previous hidden. The conversations can disrupt the sociocultural norms that make the honest exploration of the impact of cultural differences and social identities on the education process taboo. A coach skilled in mediating thinking and navigating complex conversations can open the door to *transformational* discomfort. In other words, coaching with a commitment to naming inequity, exploring the role of racial (and other) differences, and accepting discomfort can result in critically important new understandings that pave the way for transgressive teaching and learning[268].

The graphic below illustrates the potential for coaching in the presence of difference to expand perspectives and resourcefulness.

normalized because white supremacy elevates white and whiteness to the apex of the racial hierarchy" (Allen, 2001). I also choose to use "Black and Brown" instead of "non-white" to decenter whiteness when discussing socially constructed racial groups. I am still exploring what I think about capitalization. Matias, et al., (2014) note, "In an attempt to re-equalize racial labels and terminologies in education research articles, this article capitalizes Black and Brown to give credence to the racialized experience people of color as a proper noun. It also strategically lowercases the word white to challenge white supremacy in language." For this paper, I am guided by Matias's perspective. For this dissertation, I am making intentional chapter by chapter choices regarding capitalization. For chapter 4, I have chosen to capitalize White and Whiteness for reasons I am sure are obvious.

[268] (Hooks, 1994).

Coaching in the Presence of Difference
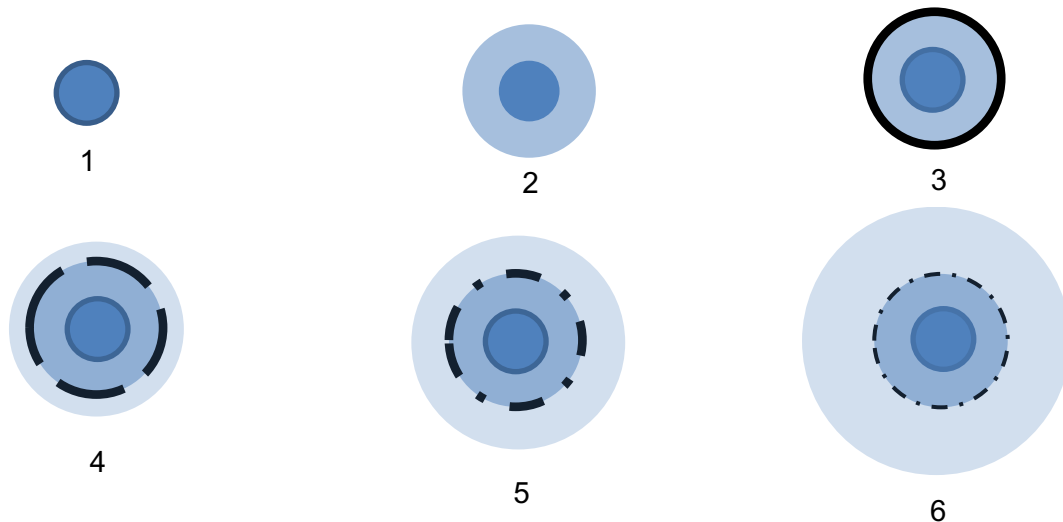
1) Represents deep structures: the identities, beliefs, values, assumptions that influence our decision-making process.
2) Through mediated interactions, coaching expands an individual's deep structures, increasing resourcefulness, self-directedness, and the capacity to consider previously unconsidered approaches. This figure represents the potential of coaching when the interaction is not constrained by colorblind and neutrality discourses.
3) The thick line represents the realities of coaching interactions constrained by the coach's inability or unwillingness to explore the impacts of race and other sociocultural identities on the education process. In this model, deep structure expansion is stunted.
4) Coaches willing to disrupt neutrality and colorblind discourses and develop tools around exploring previously taboo subjects can develop the capabilities associated with coaching in the presence of difference. As a result, the person being coached can also experience the necessary cognitive comfort to safely illuminate previously unconsidered territory, opening possibilities to increasing the expansion of deep structures and resourcefulness.
5) With deepening trust and strengthening relationships, the constraints associated with colorblind and neutrality discourses erode and greater expansion is possible.
6) The final figure demonstrates the potential of coaching in the presence of difference. This figure acknowledges we are unable to fully eliminate the impact implicit bias has on our thinking alongside the exponential expansion of possibilities when colorblind and neutrality discourses are eliminated, and the impacts of all factors associated with student learning are considered in coaching conversations.

Figure 5. Coaching in the Presence of Difference

Choosing a coaching model with the capacity to build relationships in the presence of difference

As leaders consider coaching models that might have the biggest impact, it is important to pay attention to the context where coaching will take place. Each leader might reflect on, *What might be some challenges to developing trusting relationships? Considering the context of our school/district, what culturally responsive tools, skills, and understandings might coaches need to be successful?* For school leaders to reap the full benefits of coaching, they must find a way to prepare coaches who are highly skilled, culturally responsive, and focused on equity.

When choosing coaching models for their setting, leaders might seek out explicit answers to the following questions:

- To what depth are coaches taught the detailed/discrete and multifaceted skills of coaching?

- In what ways is the concept of "neutrality" troubled as a component of coaching?

- What role does critical self-reflection and the understanding of implicit bias play in the professional learning for coaches?

- How are coaches explicitly taught to disrupt colorblind discourses and negotiate cross-cultural contexts?

Conclusion

Without developing each coaches' capacity to coach in the presence of difference, the potential for success will always be constrained by an inability or possibly an unwillingness to illuminate many of the root causes of educational inequity. Coaching has the potential to be a transformational tool. To realize this potential, coaching requires a critical lens and an intentionally developed tool box of skills for coaching in the presence of difference.

Expert coaches are deeply conscious of their own biases and because of that awareness, can set them aside to focus on the thinking of the person they are coaching. Alongside that awareness, these critically informed coaches, have an awareness of the potential blind spots that exist as educators reflect on their practice and pedagogy. For coaching to reach its potential as truly transformational tool, it will require the development of a cadre of educators who are both masterful coaches and also capable of normalizing discourses that illuminate the variety of ways power, privilege, race, and culture influence how educators and students experience schooling as well as how the intersections of these factors impact student outcomes. Imagine the potential of your school when educators and students are unafraid to teach and learn in the presence of difference.

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Chapter 5: Where Do We Go From Here?

When employed by a knowledgeable and skilled practitioner, coaching has the potential to both mediate learning and apprentice the person being coached into culturally centered and equity discourse practices while simultaneously embodying an anti-formulaic pedagogical approach. When employed thoughtfully and intentionally, coaching has the potential to serve as an antiracist practice. Sociologist, Norman Denzin seeks a new ethics for writing where "writers to put their texts in forms that readers can use in their own lives"[269]. He suggests it is time to join the personal with the political, where writing serves as cultural criticism and tools for social activism[270]. This non-traditional, three-article, layered autoethnographic dissertation attempts to do that. To offer a text that confronts and interrogates cultural logics of America's deeply entrenched colorblind ideology and crafts a narrative that resonates with white educators and serves as a catalyst to reflection and action.

As I look back at these pieces as well as the process as a whole, it is evident that bricolage influenced my approach as I sought to makes sense of the "complexity of the lived world"[271] and my own lived experiences. Through this process of incorporating diverse tasks, wide-ranging knowledge acquisition, reflexive practice, and positionality, I

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[269] (Denzin, 1999, p. 568).
[270] (Denzin, 1999, p. 568).
[271] (Kincheloe, 2004, p. 2).

strove to habituate Denzin and Lincoln's many bricoleurs[272]. As a reflexive researcher and practitioner, this lens is exceptionally important as a means to both be transparent and mindful about my positionality. In this dissertation, I strove for verisimilitude. Nothing included is intentionally inaccurate or misleading. And, I am too aware of my own biases, my own agenda, to believe my perception, or my framing, is without flaws. My hope is this dissertation will serve as a catalyst to both reflection and action. My hope is readers will see themselves somewhere in the text and find themselves wanting to do more. Wanting to be more.

Kathleen Stewart offers the concept of "pockets" and describes it as, "a space [that] opens up in the ordinary." Pockets are subtle shifts in energy. They come and go, often without our knowing they were ever there. To be attentive to pockets requires a kind of critical consciousness in concert with the awareness of others. This is akin to the way a skilled presenter or teacher demonstrates the capacity to read a room, or a coach's capacity to read the nonverbals of a person being coached. Each is aware of the pocket and demonstrates the ability to feel the energy, adapt, and respond proactively. I also connect pockets to the concept of a "balcony view", a macro-centric outlook that requires a person to view a situation simultaneously from the perspective of the group, oneself, and oneself as a member of the group. There are connections for me between reflexivity, the balcony view and how one might respond to their awareness of pockets. Stewart describes them as something that can be felt, "a pause, a temporal suspension animated by the sense

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[272] (Denzin & Lincoln, 2017).

that something is coming into existence."[273] Pockets seem to also be an opportunity, the awareness of a pocket offers an occasion to shift the energy, harness the pocket, respond to its existence before it dissipates or explodes. Chapters 2-4 each represent a pocket of sorts. A space in the ordinary to dip my toe in a TED Talk dream and discover if my approach, my thinking, is on the right track; to confront a bully and hopefully disrupt a community; to explore the degree to which I am ready to move beyond the confines of the models I know and create something of my own. I both seek and embrace pockets.

Three articles for different audiences

Although all three articles focus on many of the same key points, each was written for a specific audience. Each had a unique voice and format. The intention was to write in ways that would find their way to the largest audience and be most influential.

Chapter 2 is written to an audience intended to include non-educators. While writing, I was mindful to avoid or explain academic or education specific jargon, without dumbing down the content or language. The central theme of this chapter is that racism is still an issue, white people created it and white people need to fix it. To disrupt racism, white people must to learn how to talk about it and coaching is a tool that can help, both in schools and out. By sharing my own story about developing a deeper understanding of my whiteness, this chapter centers positionality and speaks to what it means to be a white person who talks about race. Written as a TED Talk, the storytelling style allowed me to

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[273](Stewart, 2012, p. 365)

craft an authentic narrative in my own voice. It also offered the opportunity to consider how physical movement, intonation, and cadence might draw-in a potentially reluctant listener. Because so much of my work consists of presenting to groups, this is a very comfortable format for me. This was the first chapter I completed and the one I am most comfortable with. By incorporating my own lived experience to shape the storyline, I intended it to offer a complex and challenging subject, race and racism, to a white audience through a white lens in a way that might be received and understood by a Black, Brown, and white audience. In addition, I did not want to simply write abstractly about the idea that white people can and should talk about race, but to actually do it. The TED Talk format and March 4, 2019 event demonstrated alignment between theory and practice and proved an opportunity for a member check of sorts where I was able to gather feedback from the audience both in the moment and over time.

Chapter 3 is something of a hybrid. This article is modeled after an extended opinion editorial like those found in The Atlantic and New York Times Magazine. This format is appealing because it allows for in-depth, research laden text, without the expectation to conform to the academy's structure and language. What is most appealing about this medium is that while it generally avoids academic and/or subject area jargon, the expectation for rigorous thought and complex arguments is exceptionally high. In the dozens of examples I read in preparation, characteristics such as metaphor, repeated phrasing, and an evocative narrative were common. This chapter is the longest and because it was constructed as an open letter to a person with vast knowledge and

experience in the area of coaching, but limited knowledge of Multicultural Education, Critical Race Theory, or Equity, the footnotes explaining context-specific language and concepts are extensive. Written as a persuasive personal correspondence, this chapter lays out an argument for why the most influential leader of this education professional development organization to whom the letter is addressed should take a stand on dismantling the racist structures that currently live within the organization. Again, the argument is that racism is a white construction and it is the responsibility of white people to dismantle it. This chapter is contextualized to a specific Community of Practice and seeks to illuminate how the normalized neutrality and colorblind discourses maintain systems of oppression within the organization as well as undermine its capacity to effectively serve the larger education community. In this chapter, I also illuminate the irony in an organization whose identities include: 1) mediator of thinking and 2) disrupter of complex systems, being unwilling to engage in the critical self-reflection necessary to do that work within the organization itself. I also seek to surface how the tools and skills that live within in the organization, and for which the organization sees itself as expert in teaching others, are the same ones that could be leveraged for organizational self-transformation. I invite the reader to envision the potential that exists if the behaviors of the organization were in alignment with its purported mission and values.

Chapter 4 is written as a submission to a practitioner's journal, Educational Leadership, and conforms to very specific submission criteria. Because the audience is so specific, K-12 education leaders, the language and the structure are as well. In this

chapters, I broadened the conversation regarding instructional coaching models to include my own approach, Coaching in the Presence of Difference. In addition, I offer questions for school leaders to consider as they make decisions about which coaching models might be the best fit for their context. The tone of this chapter, while honest and authentic, is much more restrained than the others. Here racism and the need for culturally-centered approaches to coaching are identified without centering white supremacy, racist structures, and systemic oppression. Because of the intended audience, this chapter also required a highly pragmatic approach and my language choice and style reflect this. In preparation, I read dozens of Educational Leadership articles intentionally seeking out those that address issues of race and equity. I studied how authors whose other work I am familiar with, and whom I respect, such as Pedro Noguera, navigated this practitioner space. At the same time, I took into careful consideration my positionality as a white coach trainer and antiracist practitioner/provocateur. In an attempt to maintain my integrity and remain true to my beliefs about racism, coaching, and the need to disrupt racist systems, this chapter required some flexibility to be both authentic and adaptive to increase the chance of it to be accepted and read. It felt like I was walking a very fine line.

Key Ideas

There are several key ideas addressed throughout this dissertation that I hope readers will take away as they consider how to incorporate antiracist behaviors in their own practice and lives.

- **Key idea 1**... Racism is a thing and it is not tied to individual actions, but systems and structures. Race and its by-product, racism, was created by white people to benefit white people and it is our responsibility to dismantle it.

- **Key idea 2**... Positionality matters. Knowing who you are in the context of where you work/coach/talk matters. Paying attention to positionality offers white antiracists perspective and encourages adaptive approaches to this complex work.

- **Key idea 3**... Neutrality and colorblind discourses mask racist structures. Sometime this is intentional, sometimes it's not. Intention does not matter, impact does.

- **Key idea 4**... White fragility[274] is a by-product of neutrality and colorblind discourses and causes white people to avoid racial discomfort.

- **Key idea 5**... White people must learn to negotiate racial discomfort, so we can talk about race, racism and dismantle racist structures. This requires white people to actively seek out the skills and understandings necessary to negotiate these complex conversations.

- **Key idea 6**... Racism can and does thrive in organizations that articulate and promote inclusive and equity-driven missions.

- **Key idea 7**... Coaching is a tool that can help people and organizations to talk and think more deeply about race.

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[274] (DiAngelo, 2018).

- **Key idea 8**… Coaching constrained by colorblind and neutrality discourses maintain systems of oppression. When considering coaching models, decision makers should apply criteria aligned to context and equity goals.

- **Key idea 9**… Strive to call in. Don't be afraid to call out. And, then return to calling in. Do what it takes to get the conversation on the table.

I chose the three article dissertation and each article format because it is important to me that these key ideas are accessible in style, language, and medium. I am inspired by the range of resources that have informed by thinking about race(ism), coaching, and writing. In addition to academic books and articles, these include articles from practitioner journals, opinion editorials, podcasts, TED Talks, and film. It is my hope that this dissertation will continue a conversation that includes the importance of white people taking the lead in the fight against racism and the intentional development of instructional coaches with the capacity to bring these conversations to educators.

Below is a list of resources I have found particularly supportive of this work.

<u>Articles</u>

- Another Inconvenient Truth: Race and Ethnicity Matter (2010) – Hawley & Nieto

- Beyond Multiculturalism (2013) – Kirkland

- Beyond the Methods Fetish: Toward a Humanizing Pedagogy (1994) – Bartolome

- Equity Pedagogy: An Essential Component of Multicultural Education (1995) – Banks

- "I don't think I'm a racist": Critical Race Theory, Teacher Attitudes, and Structural Racism (2008) – Vaught & Castagno

- Leaning In: A Student's Guide to Engaging Constructively with Social Justice Content (2014) – DiAngelo & Sensoy

- On Becoming Sociocultural Mediators (2017) – Nieto

- The Case for Reparations (2014) – Coates

- The Unexamined Whiteness of Teaching: How White Teachers Maintain and Enact Dominant Racial Ideologies (2009) – Picower

- Warm Demander Pedagogy: Culturally Responsive Teaching that Supports a Culture of Achievement for African American Students (2006) - Ware

- "What is Critical Whiteness Doing in OUR Nice Field of Critical Race Theory?" Applying CRT and CWS to Understand the White Imaginations of White Teacher Candidates (2014) – Matias, et al

Film/Videos

- The History of Our World in 18 Minutes (2011) – Christian

- 13th – DuVernay

- What to Get Great at Something? Get a Coach (2017) – Gawande

- Want to Help Someone? Shut Up and Listen (2012) – Sirolli

- Why School Integration Matters (2018) – Noguera

<u>Podcasts</u>

- Creative Differences: The Benefits of Reaching Out to People Unlike Ourselves (2019) – Hidden Brain

- One Head, Two Brains: How The Brian's Hemispheres Shape the World We See (2019) – Hidden Brain

- The Mind of the Village (2018) – Hidden Brain

- The 'R-Word' in the Age of Trump (2018) – CodeSwitch

- The Scarcity Trap: Why We Keep Digging When We're Stuck in a Hole (2017) – Hidden Brain

- When Civility is Used As A Cudgel Against People of Color (2019) – CodeSwitch

- When the 'White Tears' Just Keep Coming (2018) – CodeSwitch

- When Calling the Po-Po Is A No-No (2018) - CodeSwitch

- Why Some Journalists Have A Hard Time Saying the Word 'Racist' (2019) – CodeSwitch

- Why More White Americans Are Opposing Government Welfare Programs (2018) - CodeSwitch

<u>Books:</u>

- Blindspot: Hidden Biases of Good People (2016) – Banaji & Greenwald

- Culturally Proficient Coaching (2007) – Lindsey

- Culturally Responsive Teaching and the Brain: Promoting Authentic Engagement and Rigor Among Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Students (2014) – Hammond

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- Culturally Responsive Teaching: Theory, Practice and Research (2000) – Gay

- Education and Racism: A Primer on Issues and Dilemmas - Leonardo

- Everyday Antiracism (2008) – Pollock, ed.

- Race Talk (2016) - Derald Win Sue

- Racism without Racists: Color-Blind Racism and the Persistence of Racial Inequality
  In America – Bonilla-Silva

- Stamped from the Beginning - Ibram Kendi

- The New Jim Crow - Michelle Alexander

- White Fragility (2018) – DiAngelo

- Why Race and Culture Matter in Schools - Tyrone Howard

<u>Websites/ Organizations</u>

- National Equity Project – www.nationalequityproject.org

Potential Future Directions

An autoethnographic approach invites the consideration of potential future directions from both the perspective of my personal journey as well as from that of a traditional academic researcher. Considering my personal journey, there are four area where I intend to invest my energies and resources. After presenting Chapter 2 on March 4, 2019, I collected feedback both through a post-event survey as well as through informal conversations. A trend that surfaced from both Black and white participants was a desire to engage in more intentional conversations about race(ism). White people who attended

the Chapter 2 talk often expressed a desire for specific tools alongside opportunities to practice negotiating complex conversations around race. For example, one white respondent offered, "[I need to better understand] more on the ways people avoid, digging into and unpacking white fragility with examples vs. theory"[275]. Another shared, [The section on white fragility] "offers an explanation on why it is difficult for white people to acknowledge and take responsibility for change. The difficult part the how"[276]. These responses demonstrate a desire to disrupt the respondent's own white fragility[277] alongside an uncertainty on what to do. From Black and Brown people, responses centered more around having a safe space to talk openly about race(ism), their own lived experiences, in particular there was a desire to reflect on times when they felt they did not withdraw from their own personal bank account of privilege and allowed racist comments or actions to go unchallenged. One audience member offered, "I left the talk thinking about all the times I did not say something. All the times someone said some racist $#it and I remained silent. It made me want to do more"[278]. There was also an expressed desire to communicate with white friends and colleagues in ways that illuminate white fragility[279] and keep the conversation going. "If you don't see color, you don't see me."[280] From both Black and white audience members, there was an interest to learn more about how

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[275] TEDish Feedback, 2019.
[276] TEDish Feedback, 2019.
[277] (DiAngelo, 2018).
[278] Personal communication, Tanya McClanahan.
[279] (DiAngelo, 2018).
[280] TEDish Feedback, 2019.

coaching might scaffold their own personal growth as well as serve as a tool for navigating complex conversations about race(ism). In response to this feedback, a small group is planning to host informal monthly "Backyard" conversations for people to come together and dialogue in a space that deliberately and intentionally normalizes conversations about difference, in particular, race(ism). There will be an expectation the conversations will be complex and challenging, race(ism) is centered, and everyone agrees to lean in, "call in"[281]… and listen.

I also intend to invest time and energy in developing a meaningful partnership between the Mindful Consortium, Culturally Proficient Coaching, and National Equity Project organizations. In the perfect world, this collaboration would include leaders from each organization. In reality, it may start with a coalition of the willing. I see the potential of monthly video conferencing that explore commonalities between the models and opens a discourse that identify intersections and how each community might both inform and be informed by the other.

The National Equity Project offers a nine-month Leading for Equity Fellowship. This invitation-only opportunity is for "leaders who have expressed a commitment to leading, designing, and facilitating equity-centered learning experiences for their context"[282]. Learning with equity leaders across the country engaged in similar work is incredibly appealing. I love the idea of deepening my practitioner understanding while also expanding

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[281] (Ross, 2019).
[282] (Salinas, n.d.).

my professional network. This seems like one way to continue my professional growth and, in service to my previous agenda item, serve as a gateway to build an ongoing and reciprocal relationship between the Mindful Consortium and the National Equity Project.

Finally, I will begin to strategically explore the potential of Coaching in the Presence of Difference. I will continue disrupt neutrality and colorblind discourses and trouble Coaching Capability #3 in my own presentations of Mindful Coaching. I will also begin to supplement content that align with an antiracist approach, including an exploration of critical self-reflection and the interrelatedness of filters of perception, implicit bias, and cultural ways of knowing. I will also take some time to reflect on what additional practitioner-focused writing in this field might find traction.

There are also several directions where more traditional academic research might add to the ideas offered here. First, it would be interesting to measure the impact of Coaching in the Presence of Difference on creativity in much the same way, Adam Galinsky studied the impact of cross-cultural intimate relationships on creativity[283]. A second body of potential research might include a controlled study of colorblind vs. antiracist coaching to measure the impact on implicit bias, the implementation of culturally responsive practices in the classroom, and the normalization of conversations about race(ism) in educator professional learning, meetings, and classrooms. A third body of research might include measuring how disrupting colorblind and neutrality discourses and embedding critical self-reflection in the Mindful Coaching Foundation Seminar influences the

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[283] (Vedantam et al., 2019).

perceptions of participants. The fourth potential research area troubles the positive presupposition of much education work that once educators are exposed to and have opportunities to develop an understanding of the essential nature of culturally responsive practices to meet the needs of all learners, they will put them into practice. This research might include looking at potential responses to individuals who after demonstrating mastery in the concepts of culturally responsive practices, choose not to implement and to explore what role might coaching play in these situations as well as what are the possible consequences if coaching does not influence pedagogy and practice?

Conclusion

For me, equity is the goal, coaching is the means, autoethnography is my personal journey in developing as a researcher. In fact, Carolyn Ellis[284] and Michael Dyson[285] argue that autoethnography is in some ways the act of self-coaching. And, according to Ladson-Billings[286], autoethnography is part of the expanded repertoire of methodologies that push against mainstream academia and is positioned to further advance multiculturalism and Multicultural Education. Along these lines, Dyson concurs, arguing that this type of transformation is particularly relevant for educators and researchers, who are significant change agents within society and have the potential to be the 'challengers of society' rather than be the maintainers of the status quo. The retelling of our research journeys

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[284] (Ellis, Adams, & Bochner, 2011).
[285] (Dyson, 2007).
[286] (Ladson-Billings, 2004).

and the unraveling of our perceived truths, through new consciousness, have the potential to move humanity forward into the 'Landscape of Transformation.' That is to transform itself and reach the next level of its evolution[287].

I choose not to maintain the status quo. I strive to play a role in moving the part of humanity I touch toward a "landscape of transformation" that intentionally and thoughtfully disrupts racist systems and structures, makes space for different lived experiences, multiple Truths, and invites collective transformation.

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[287](Dyson, 2007, pp. 45–46).

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Human Uniqueness:
Protocol for Responding to Unique Perspectives and Contexts

Attend to Voice, Rapport, and Microskills

Begin with a Paraphrase
Pause and breathe.
Use an acknowledging paraphrase that reflects the expressed feelings and personal context.
> Examples: That characterization is hurtful to you based on your experiences in your culture.
> That example makes you uncomfortable because it seems stereotypical to your world.

Inquire with Sincere Interest
Pause and craft a question.
Focus on your need to learn more.
> Examples: Your insights are helpful. How might we address this with more accuracy?
> What possible solutions might you offer that would help us to learn about this?

Honor the Person's Truth
Acknowledge and accept the response.
> Examples: That is a helpful perspective. Your experiences provide viewpoints that we can learn from. Thank you for sharing your truth.

Continue to Inquire
When uncertain about what the person is expressing about their context, continue to inquire with a goal of learning and understanding.
> Examples: What might I need to know to truly understand? How might I learn more about this idea you are sharing? What might I do that would cause me to be ineffective in your context?