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Faculty of Color and Collective Memory Work: An Examination of Intersectionality, Privilege, and Marginalization

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Abstract

As a means of highlighting new possibilities for interrupting White privilege, and supporting and honoring critical community building among faculty of Color in teacher education programs, this paper offers the theoretical and methodological resources of collective memory work as a tool for interrogating teacher education's entanglements in the complex, yet normalized, processes of White privilege. This paper, written by three faculty members of Color, aims to provide hope for an escape from the construction of hierarchies, taxonomies, and White/non-White binaries that establish and enforce arbitrary boundaries that prevent people from different racialized groups from working together to disrupt White privilege and oppression.

Keywords: collective memory work, faculty of color, intersectionality, marginalization, othering

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Understanding how the intersection of oppression operates across interlocking differences has long been a question of significant interest for educators and activists interested in disrupting White privilege (Cabrera, 2014). For instance, recent developments in using the critical race theory (CRT) principle of intersectionality have renewed interest in explaining how African American women, an identity category that the authors problematize in this paper, experience White privilege (Brewer, 2016). While considerable scholarly literature exists on women of Color and the intersection of oppressions, particularly regarding race with gender, little work exists on other intersections and commonalities of oppression related to different dimensions of identity (Crenshaw, 1989).

Current Knowledge

What is known about the intersection of race, teacher educators, and the education system is still minimal. The faculty remains mostly White, despite calls for diversifying the professorate (Guillaume & Apodaca, 2020). For faculty of Color, existing in overwhelmingly White spaces contributes to experiences of feeling marginalized and tokenized. The marginalization is also manifested in different acts of discrimination, such as those discussed in this paper (Stanley, 2006). However, despite the difficulties under which they labor, research shows that faculty of Color use a range of innovative pedagogies and collaborative learning approaches to their courses (Umbach, 2006). Faculty of Color also tend to interact more with students than White faculty (Umbach, 2006). Although often unrecognized by promotion and tenure committees, an essential aspect of the work of faculty of Color includes working with students of Color in ways that honor and respect student cultural knowledge and experiences (Cole, McGowan, & Zerquera, 2017). Research has found that in teacher education, this unpaid labor forms an important and necessary element for retaining undergraduate students of Color (Vasquez, 2019). These findings indicate a relationship between race and faculty, but none use an intersectional approach to investigate the individual and collective experiences of Black, Indigenous, and Persons of Color (BIPOC) faculty with the education system.

Project Synthesis

This research project emerged gradually after three new tenure-track faculty of Color in a teacher education program at a historically White university shared their personal and professional commitments to social justice with each other. Inspired by commonalities, they formed a writing group for mutual support, compassion, and intellectual possibilities for new ways of theorizing (Yosso, 2013). As originally envisioned by the three teacher education faculty members, a Chicano man, an African American woman, and a Black woman from Jamaica, the writing group was imagined as a counter-space where the three colleagues could find the necessary spiritual, emotional, and intellectual support for their respective scholarly and activist work (West, 2019). After a few meetings, however, the writing group transformed into a space for community building around the analyses of intersecting oppressions related to gender, race, and immigrant status in teacher education.

While collectively working together, they began to ask themselves: How can teacher educators, committed to revealing and disrupting White privilege and oppression, engage in critical community

building across a range of personal and social identity differences? One first step requires making visible and theorizing commonalities and links among oppressions across different identities and lived experiences (Crenshaw, 1989; Gillborn, 2015). In short, theorizing how people from disparate racialized groups experience White supremacy requires recognizing, acknowledging, and discussing interlocking and intersecting oppressions (Bebout, 2016). And to uncover and theorize about these commonalities requires a narrative approach to disentangle the nuances, multiple layers, and similarities among the different experiences. More specifically, as a means of highlighting new possibilities for interrupting White privilege and supporting and honoring critical community building among faculty of Color in teacher education programs, this paper proposes theoretical and methodological resources of collective memory work as a tool for interrogating teacher education's entanglements in the complex, yet normalized, processes of White privilege (Johnson, Kivel, & Cousineau, 2018).

Collective Memory Work

Feminist scholars originally developed *collective memory work* (CMW) as a research method for examining women's marginalized and under-theorized social realities (Johnson, Kivel, & Cousineau, 2018). As a method for research and critical community building, CMW draws on assumptions and procedures from a range of related self-study research traditions and consciousness-raising approaches (Bamberg, 2006). Collective memory work goes beyond other self-study methods by extending, complicating, and complementing methods such as duoethnography, collaborative autoethnography, and narrative inquiry (Higgins, Morton, & Wolkenhauer, 2018; Ngunjiri, Hernandez, & Chang, 2010). Unlike these related approaches, which also draw on narratives as units of analysis and action, participants, activists, and community members using CMW collaborate as researchers within a collective to theorize their memories (Clift & Clift, 2017). This collective dimension, rather than working in isolation or in pairs, which could unintentionally reproduce binaries, distinguishes CMW from other methods for examining how White privilege harms people from racialized groups. This collaborative aspect of CMW provides necessary counter-spaces and distinctive methodological advantages for theorizing and representing complex identities and examining social processes connected to intersecting oppressions that typically lack analyses.

This paper aims to provide hope for an escape from the construction of hierarchies, taxonomies, and White/non-White binaries that establish and enforce arbitrary boundaries that prevent people from different racialized groups from working together to disrupt White privilege and oppression. The three authors, teacher educators at a *predominantly* White institution (PWI), argue that institutionally legitimized and hegemonically enforced affinity groupings or "diversity" categories reproduce and maintain White privilege by blunting attempts at critical community building and solidarity work for racial justice (Berrey, 2015). By expanding our understanding of the advantages of using collective memory work to theorize the intersection of oppressions, this paper provides a number of significant implications for the work of disrupting White privilege.

Method

Design Overview

In terms of research design, the three-part procedure for this CMW examination combined personal narratives with a conceptual analysis of the intersecting themes followed by writing collectively. First, the participants drafted an individual narrative. Second, the researchers-participants analyzed each others' narratives using textual analyses. After agreeing on the findings that emerged from the narratives, they worked collectively to write the analyses and conclusion. This final step, writing analyses collectively, provides opportunities for new theorizations and is what differentiates CMW from similar methods.

For the study, the researchers chose a CMW approach to make visible the connections that faculty of Color share in common. This approach assumes that only by engaging with other faculty of Color in a group effort can we illuminate individual silos and move toward a path of coalition building (Hamm, 2018). Since CMW involves the analyses of a group of narratives, by necessity, it is a much more flexible approach than other narrative approaches such as autoethnography. Through collective theorizing of the participants' education memories across different school spaces, the researchers sought to show how memories can help faculty of Color make sense of their struggles while also recognizing their accomplishments. By examining these memories, they also sought to recast them as teaching and learning opportunities for other faculty of Color. According to Hamm, *collective memory work* "is an educational alternative, something tangible, offering the promise of practical experience and self-determined investigative learning" (2018, p. 118).

Researchers-Participants

The researchers of this study volunteered as the participants due to their involvement in a writing group. They consisted of three tenure track faculty in teacher education between their late forties to early fifties: a Chicano cis-gendered male with nine years in higher education; an African American cis-gendered female with 13 years in higher education; and an Afro-Caribbean cis-gendered female with seven years in higher education. Their prior relationship and subjective experiences established credibility in each other's understandings of the phenomena under examination and provided the data necessary for the study. It was understood that the purpose of the study was to use narratives to identify themes within and between their educational experiences as BIPOC. No other persons were recruited to participate. The research site for the study was a midsize predominately White institution in the midwest. The participants wrote the individual narratives before they gathered as a group. The formal data collection, analysis, and collective writing process occurred over multiple scheduled meetings on the campus.

Data-Collection

The participants constructed and recorded personal memories related to education in the form of brief written narratives. Following the principles associated with the CMW method, which encourage fluidness, the authors wrote these narratives using the third-person narrative standpoint and pseudonyms. The three faculty narratives provided the first level of data collected for the study (see Narratives

below). The second level of data included the emergence of themes within and between the narratives during the writing group meeting. All three participants met on campus for the meeting, where they disentangled, engaged with, and discussed the commonalities and differences in their respective narratives. As they deconstructed the narratives, the participants identified recurring themes and meanings regarding their experiences with education. No others were present as the levels of data were gathered.

Narratives

X

"Don't rock the boat." As a Chicano man in a tenure track position in teacher education, still an anomaly, and a former elementary teacher and student in urban Los Angeles, X's personal experiences with deculturalization in schools involve a range of dimensions. As a youth, he attended public schools typically considered just another stop along the school to prison pipeline, as some teachers would say menacingly (Yosso, 2013). Having avoided the pitfalls of urban schools, one of X's main intellectual commitments includes identifying how teacher education reproduces deficit narratives about people of Color by normalizing and protecting Whiteness (Bernal, 2002). As imagined by X, engaging in this work means confronting the primacy of Euro-centered epistemologies in teacher education, hence X's interest in the narratives of BIPOC faculty. Prior to his current academic appointment, he taught elementary education methods and foundation courses at two universities. The narrative that follows, written in the third person, highlights X's experiences as a hyper-visible Brown man working under the White gaze in primarily White spaces in academia (Orelus, 2013).

Upon completing an undergraduate liberal arts degree, X decided that teaching would be a space in which to intervene in the production of deficit narratives about BIPOC children. After teaching elementary school for several years, X thought that working in higher education and training new teachers might provide an opportunity for him to share some of his personal and professional knowledge. This knowledge includes the experience of attending dreadful urban schools throughout his K-12 education. Naively perhaps, X believed that teacher education programs, especially those professing to work for social justice, would be interested in merging theory with practice. For this reason, after completing a doctoral degree, X was excited to join the faculty at one such teacher education program. X always approached his teaching in a manner that he thought adhered to the social norms of academia. For instance, he always wore a dress shirt and blazer, even when his White colleges still dressed like graduate students. Unfortunately, X learned that many of the claims for social justice and equity simply function to check the boxes of diversity.

For instance, soon after a rash of overtly racist attacks against students and faculty on campus (a different university), X organized a faculty training session on normalized racism in teacher education. X approached this meeting in a spirit of goodwill and collegiality as an opportunity to initiate necessary conversations in the department, including the need for decolonizing pedagogies that confront the primacy of Whiteness (Dei, 2008). During the faculty meeting, X introduced different frameworks for examining racism, including critical race theory (Bell, 1979). This particular framework, which he presented using the

type of intellectually detached style favored by academia, highlighted decolonizing principles and first-person knowledge of the way racism operates on campus. X was able to draw from his experiences as a former teacher to illustrate abstract concepts, such as Whiteness as property (Harris, 1993).

X's colleagues responded with venom and hate, which he found perplexing at the time. For example, one faculty member sarcastically stated, "There's an MLK way of doing things and a Malcolm X way." This faculty member was articulating his view of decolonizing perspectives, which challenge the status quo, as a shady form of knowledge. This type of resistance happened more than once during the same meeting with the effect of silencing the discussion. The faculty members who repeated the statement "Don't rock the boat" always prefaced their comments by highlighting their progressive credentials through comments such as "I have Black friends, and they don't think like that." A sentiment repeated by several faculty members at subsequent meetings involved iterations of "We all came on different ships, but now we're in the same boat." The unrelenting drive toward normalizing sameness and inclusion became a way of emphasizing and highlighting the need for everyone to assimilate. X was targeted for calling attention to the racism in the department by having comments such as "Don't stick out" directed at him in the hallways between classes. As mentioned earlier, X did attempt to assimilate into the culture of academia by following what he thought were the norms of intellectual inquiry.

Some of the related comments repeated during that and subsequent meetings or encounters in the halls included assertions about the inevitability of progress and social justice in U.S. schools. For instance, faculty articulated this idea through statements such as: "This does not matter because in fifty years we're all going to be Brown anyway." When X asked the faculty member who made this comment to explain or elaborate, this person ignored X. Verbal resistance of this type became a regular pattern along with audible sighs, eye-rolling, raised eyebrows, and shrugs. All forms of epistemic violence, along with the glare of the White gaze, are designed to silence, intimidate, and maintain social arrangements with the faculty of Color seen as tokens (Vasquez, 2021).

Interestingly, according to one self-described liberal faculty member, the language of anti-racism and Whiteness produce discomfort for faculty. Ridiculously, one faculty member added that White women are "also victims of racism." This last point generated much agreement and head nodding among faculty, yet no one explained exactly how White women could be construed as victims of racism. Instead, the conversation shifted to students with disabilities: "It's not about race since special need kids are also victims." The faculty ignored X's comments about confronting systemic racism or the ongoing effects of oppression and colonialism on people of Color. Overall, despite the stated purpose of the meeting, faculty dismissed X as "too focused on race" and subjected him to much harassment and othering (Spivak, 1988). Over the next few weeks, faculty asked, always informally, why he was so concerned about "something that isn't there" and so invested in "radical" theories. Despite using his repertoire of skills, faculty members in the department refused to consider or discuss the possibility that everyday discourses may play masking and perpetuating various forms of racism. Again, all this after a series of racial hate crimes reported on campus.

Lynn

"Black girl from Cleveland…monitor her." Shakespeare wrote, "Past is prologue." Our everyday experiences contribute to the formation of self. Self-identity, self-confidence, and self-actualization can be viewed in response to our encounters and the meaning we derive from them. Crawford et al. (1992) recognize this, stating that "Significant events…and the way they are subsequently constructed, play an important part in the construction of self" (p. 37). Utilizing memories to understand our roles, actions and perceptions can offer insight into our choice of vocations and our work towards social justice and equity. Haug and Carter (1987), credited as one of the developers of collective memory work, tell us, "Everything remembered constitutes a relevant trace [of ourself]…because it is remembered for the formation of identity" (p. 50).

Lynn's narrative explores memories of her schooling, teaching in the K-12 setting, as well as her work in higher education, each of which contributed to shaping her identity as an educator committed to quality urban teacher preparation; equity and access for students of Color in urban schools; and education as social justice. The memories demonstrate how people of Color frequently experience microaggressions (Sue et al., 2007) throughout their matriculation through the American educational system and that these instances of deficit perspectives (Dudley-Marling, 2007) do not dissipate with the obtainment of terminal degrees.

Lynn's earliest memory of school is being taken to a massively large gym for an assessment prior to being enrolled in Head Start. Once inside, Lynn was asked a series of questions, "Have you ever seen a book before? Do people in your family read to you? How many books do you have at home?" To each question, Lynn responded, "Yes, I have lots of books at home. My mom and grandma read to me." In response, the questioner asked, "Are you sure?"

Throughout middle and high school, most of Lynn's teachers were African American in an urban school district. She performed well academically and was often selected for enrichment educational opportunities. During high school, her mother intentionally relocated to a predominantly White school district so that Lynn and her brother could receive what she perceived as better education. Once enrolled in the new high school, Lynn was not placed in the honors track as she had previously been in at her old school. When Lynn asked her school counselor why she was no longer in honors, she was told, "Her grades did not call for those classes." At the time of her transfer, Lynn had a GPA of 3.95 and was in the top 5% of her class. Feeling bored and disconnected became the new existence for Lynn. The teachers at the new school often mispronounced her name or asked her to use her middle name when they called upon her. Lynn frequently asked her mother to move back to the city to go to a school where she felt "cared for" and "like a real student."

The microaggressions continued at the same high school; all sophomores were given a list of possible career options that their guidance counselor and teachers believed would be good to consider. Excited that the list would confirm her dream of being a lawyer, Lynn received a list of the following occupations in rank order: 1. Secretary, 2. Seamstress, 3. Short-order cook, and 4. Housekeeper. For Lynn, this list confirmed the low expectations that her teachers held for her. It was after receiving this list that Lynn's mother moved the family back to the city. Lynn left the school in tears

and refused to go to school the following day.

Acceptance and admission to college as a first-generation student was an accomplishment that Lynn knew would change her life trajectory (Hébert, 2018; Dennis, Phinney & Chuateco, 2005). Yet, subsequently finding out that her admission's file included a note stating, "Black girl from Cleveland, may require intervention, monitor her," was a sobering statement, which brought the realization that admission did not mean full acceptance on the level Lynn thought.

Even in preservice teacher courses, Lynn was not exempt from marginalization. With the intention of being fully recognized, Lynn questioned her professor when he stated, "Teachers should not see color; they should only see students." Lynn's reply of "Then you miss seeing me at all because I am a Black student" was met with visible anger and raised voice of her professor, stating, "Race has nothing to do with schools, and you need to learn that now." Although Lynn previously had all A's on the course exams and no absences, she received a B for the course. When questioned on the final grade, the professor indicated that Lynn has "The wrong attitude about the teaching profession."

In Lynn's first years of teaching, she taught in high-poverty schools, primarily serving African American students. She taught with several new and veteran teachers who demonstrated in action and verbally indicated that they did not believe poor students and students of Color deserved their best teaching efforts:

- "Why are you going all out for these kids? Girl, don't waste your time or money", African-American mentor teacher;
- "These children are not capable of doing well in my class," White veteran teacher;
- "If you ever met the parents, you would know why this kid will never be successful," White veteran teacher;
- "I took this job, but I'm just waiting to be called by another district. This is not where I want to be. I can't work with these kids", new teacher (White), who had difficulty all year and took a job in another district halfway through the school year and leaving the class with multiple subs for the remainder of the year;
- "You don't have to do much here; I have used the same lesson plans for years. These kids don't even understand half the material, so it doesn't matter. I just changed the date and handed it to the principal," African-American veteran teacher;
- "Why did you choose to teach in this district? You should teach White kids in the suburbs. They are smarter and easier to teach, apply with me," White second year teacher; and
- "You spend too much time here, aren't you scared of this neighborhood? We are in the hood," White new teacher.

As a teacher education professor, Lynn fully expected, hopefully and naively, to be received respectfully and viewed as an expert in the profession. While true in some aspects, this ideal was frequently contradicted, particularly by students who have had few, if any, teachers of Color. Memory work snapshots illustrate this point: while standing in the classroom writing her

name on the board, being asked, "Do you know where Dr. Lynn is?"; "I did not expect you to be Black, you don't sound Black on the phone"; and "Where did you get this information from, I have doubts about this." These snapshots indicate the disbelief and inability to reconcile Black with knowledge and authority (West, 2001). Recently, students in Lynn's class were overheard while completing course evaluations, openly asking, "Why did we get the Black one?"

Tigress

"This land was made for you and me…Where do I fit in?" Marcus Garvey, a Jamaican politician and historian, said, "If you have no confidence in self, you are twice defeated in the race of life." Armed with this quote as an integral part of her character, a student of Garveyism, a thread of her Afro-Caribbean cultural background, steeped in the works of Wole Soyinka and Chinua Achebe—great African writers. An avid lover of the Harlem Renaissance and as an immigrant with great expectations, Tigress sought to explore the American culture. Eighteen years ago, Tigress migrated from her beloved island home Jamaica to a midwestern state full of love and passion for exploring a new life. With the giddy feelings of newly wedded bliss, the world felt like her oyster, and possibilities were seen as limitless in the heartland of America. Tigress' confidence was cemented on a foundation built on a solid British Caribbean education background, an amazing educational experience as an educator in high schools in Jamaica, and significant contributions to her Jamaican educational and cultural legacy.

Advocacy was at the heart of her success, so it was so easy to choose an urban school system to work in, refusing to accept offers from suburbia. The need to connect with her people, African Americans, and enrich one's value of their culture created a sense of excitement and belonging with this small pocket of minoritized people in this midwestern state. However, the persistent structural racism at the societal level affected the dynamics of Tigress' life as a Black immigrant in America (Cohen, 1999). First, her academic credentials were thoroughly scrutinized to measure up to the standards of her new home. The humiliation was palpable as her White superiors fielded questions about her education and teaching experience, clearly attacking immigrant education. The White administrators interrogated her, a systemic extension of ICE (Dowling & Inda, 2013), about her status, an attempt to belittle and extinguish her fire and desire to teach her urban students. Tigress shared her complex ethnic identities and familial histories rooted in Caribbean, European, African, and American legacies, hoping to be accepted in an inclusive society. However, she was doubly othered in this space based on her Blackness and foreignness (Louis et al., 2020).

Unbeknownst to Tigress were the harsh realities of cross-cultural relations she would face as she navigated systems of oppression, domination, and discrimination with different racial and social groups in her midwestern city. Differences along the lines of class and culture can create intraracial tensions about norms, expectations, and behavior (Cohen, 2004). History demonstrates that American society, in many instances, is anti-foreign and anti-immigrant toward specific groups. Whereas the White immigrant will have assimilated by the second or third generation, Jamaican immigrants of Color cannot. Tigress was shut out by the people she thought looked like her and would embrace her "educated self" or persona in the struggling urban

school. You see, Tigress' arrival, a Jamaican immigrant of Color, to an urban school in the mid-west brought tension not only with her White counterparts but between her and her African American peers, students and parents. This tension amongst us Black people was a glaring reminder of White structures lasting divisive tactics, which haunt African Americans and Black immigrants (Awokoya & Clark, 2008).

Many questioned her language skills, "Is English your first language?" They spoke in slow tones to ask her basic questions for fear she would not understand them. She was ridiculed by her students, who had questions about her culture. "Do you live in huts? Do you see monkeys walking on the streets?" The parents verbally assaulted her. "Go back to Africa! Comb your nappy hair!" Tigress' dreadlocks confirmed her worst fears. Many assumed she smoked weed and listened only to Bob Marley all day long. Tigress was even gifted a customized apron with the map of Africa, Jamaica nestled in its new geographical location in Africa, displaced by her people (Jennings, 2010). It was a constant battle. Tigress soon realized assimilation and acceptance into mainstream American society were fraught with challenges. Her Black counterparts marginalized her. Crenshaw's work on identity politics where "intragroup differences are often ignored" gives a voice to minoritized groups within society.

Tigress' confidence grew as she sought to prove how valuable she could be to her students' success. Notably, she wrote the disciplinary system for the school, which was received well by most, but her White counterparts dissected the words and grammar, boldly underlining the errors in British English not aligned to Webster's English standards for Americans. Tigress used these experiences to educate her peers on American history, a hidden gem to many who failed to recognize the similarities between Afro-Caribbean experiences and that of a Black educated immigrant woman. Tigress, too, though, Afro-Caribbean was a part of the conflict and struggle of African Americans. It was a Black against Black issue that she sought to disrupt. Cohen (1999) has developed the concept of *secondary marginalization* to describe how the more privileged members of a marginalized group can take over from the dominant group the function of policing the behavior of less privileged members within the marginalized group. The White majority viewed Tigress as the "angry Black woman" and her African American peers as the "Black imposter," caught in the crosshairs of cultural fusion.

Findings

During our sharing, exploring, and analysis of the narratives, we realized that even though we represent different identities: a Jamaican woman, a Chicano male, and an African American female, our experiences represent powerful intersectionalities that provide a unique perspective. This perspective, one not typically discussed in teacher education, illuminates the process of schooling and crystalizes the myriad of difficulties experienced by faculty of Color at the university level. Hill-Collins and Bilge (2016) tell us that intersectionality can be used as a "heuristic analytic tool" (p. 2) to identify, exam and "solve problems" (p. 2). Utilizing the CMW model to recall, process, and analyze through intersectionality, we identified themes in our intersectionalities that reflect our collective experiences and offer insight into behaviors, practices, and policies that demonstrate the marginalization we as people of Color have endured. This paper constitutes the first time these three

authors have ever attempted to link their particular experience with White privilege to other faculty of Color. In itself, the social isolation of faculty of Color, also constitutes a theme that requires more examination.

Between the Narratives

The stereotypes and biases of cultures within American society are common themes explored in all the narratives. In short, White American is considered the gold standard or the normative, and the others, in this case, X, a Chicano male, Lynn, an African American woman, and Tigress, an Afro-Caribbean woman, exist in opposition to the dominant White society. In other words, they were all considered outsiders. For example, as a first-generation college graduate from a working-class Chicano family, X expected that his college students would have many questions for him, and they did. From his narrative, his presence was a surprise to students and colleagues. It was also evident that faculty positioned X as an outsider who did not belong in higher education. His role was primarily to bring legitimacy to the body of work around "diversity," but his presence remained that of an outsider where perpetual systemic biases against Chicano culture dominated students and faculty concept of him. This pervading theme of being the other or outsider is also evident in Lynn's narrative as she was given a list of possible career options that her guidance counselor and teachers believed would be good for her to consider. Lynn received a list of the following occupations in rank order: 1. Secretary, 2. Seamstress, 3. Short-order cook, and 4. Housekeeper. Lynn's narrative reflects the White hegemonic stereotypes and biases, where suppression and dominance of the African American race continue, even now, outside the constraints of slavery. While Lynn aspired to achieve a terminal degree, which she eventually accomplished, her education path was rife with constant reminders that she was Black and not honored in honor programs or academia. Tigress' narrative revealed that as an Afro-Caribbean immigrant woman, she soon realized assimilation and acceptance into mainstream American society were fraught with challenges. Unlike X and Lynn, both Americans raised in the American culture; Tigress expected the outsider label as a normal part of her social reality. No matter how much she contributed and improved intellectually, she suffered systemic oppression and biases which sought to strip her of her humanity to more easily exclude her from the White and Black American cultures. The intersectionality of these three different faculty of Color's narratives further reveals the constitutive nature of identity shaped by White dominance as it continues to perpetuate ideas, stereotypes, and biases around cultures and nationalism, shutting out the outsiders. As Love (2019) articulated, our complicated identities cannot be discussed or examined in isolation from one another.

Persistent racism affected all three faculty of Color at different times in their lives. Lynn's teacher's color blindness is symbolic of his dismissal of her, a Black student, as a human being as her presence was discounted in his classroom. X also experienced this color blindness, wherein his narrative, his credentials erased his race as he was now accepted into the dominant White society. While Tigress continues to be an outsider, her often scrutinized credentials brought some legitimacy to her acceptance in the dominant society. These three faculty of Color were able to break through the hard-hitting policies and systemic structures to assimilate into the dominant society to an extent. As Wynter (2015) stated, the west has brought the whole human species into its

hegemonic, now purely secular model of being human. The interlocking systems of oppression (Collins, 2013) worked against Tigress as cross-cultural and intercultural relations excluded her from societal inclusion on all levels. While people of Color expect to be marginalized by the dominant White society, it is even more challenging to be secondarily marginalized within one's race, which Tigress experienced. This is evidence that White dominant society continues to win the war against race and being human as they have influenced their subjected minoritized people to further exclude their immigrants or less advantaged people through intra-racial conflicts. Both Lynn and Tigress simultaneously were Black imposters, angry Black women while their White counterparts, as X pointed out in his narrative, were "victims of racism." This is inherently troubling as women of Color experiences cannot be equated to their White counterparts, whose Whiteness will always give them legitimacy, and the struggles will always be there for women of Color because of their melanin. The complex convergence of oppression faced by these faculty of Color is stark. Through an intersectional lens, we can address these issues of social injustice and disrupt the perpetuation of White hegemonic inequities amongst ourselves and in the professional practice of education.

Within the Narratives

X's experiences in teacher education and schools overall have been harmful and painful. Little regard has been shown to his intellectual trajectory, teaching expertise, or humanity. The demand that he "not make trouble" not only diminished his academic training but also invalidates the knowledge he carries as a result of his social location and lived experiences as a Chicano man and former teacher. Despite X's willingness to clarify his teaching and research interest in critical race theory, peers in his department failed to engage with his concerns as a means of silencing him. Moreover, X's peers did not care at all about his professional commitments to anti-racist pedagogies or his questioning of Euro-centric epistemologies. Given the current moment for racial justice, as well as the academy's commitment to becoming anti-racist, it is no wonder that faculty of Color feel battered and exhausted (Dumas, 2016). Describing X as "rocking the boat" constitutes a type of violence that seeks to force him to see himself as an "Other" in higher education. Powell and Menendian (2016) define *othering* "as a set of dynamics, processes, and structures that engender marginality and persistent inequality across any of the full range of human differences based on group identities" (p. 13). "Dimensions of othering include, but are not limited to, religion, sex, race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status (class), disability, sexual orientation, and skin tone" (p. 17). In short, X is an Other who does not belong in the academy. This othering goes beyond bullying and places an immense burden on X to establish and defend his humanity (Wynter, 2015). This in itself constitutes a form of punishment for X's difference rather than merely intimidation or harassment.

Lynn's snippets of memory demonstrate the perniciousness of matriculating through the American educational system for African Americans. While Lynn has always tried to maintain a hopeful perspective, knowing that she has benefitted from positive educational opportunities from childhood to professional life, she also has had to contend with the constant presence of racism and marginalization. Frequently as a student and an educator, Lynn experienced the *silencing* hooks (1994) identified as an

insidious part of schools: Schools as spaces where teachers were complicit in maintaining power structures and authority while simultaneously denying the potential of those they consider, Other. For Lynn, she met this othering with a determination to persist and excel. Through identifying these collective memories, it becomes evident to Lynn why she selected teaching as a career path and why her focus has always been on supporting students, who, like her, faced oppression and low expectations despite their ability to excel and drive to achieve. For Lynn, collective memory work (CMW) uncovered touchpoints that confirmed and reinforced her commitment to ensuring equity and access in education for students of Color. Additionally, the CMW helped Lynn to appreciate further the solidarity emerging between herself and her colleagues. By uncovering the nexus of experiences, there came a recognition of the importance of collectivism in supporting one another in a space that is unhealthy for the psyche (Martin et al., 2019) and frustrating professionally (Diggs et al., 2009).

Tigress' narrative embodies themes of displacement, double and intersectional othering of Black immigrants who dare to partake in the American dream (Gerstle, 2017). The constant interrogation of her identity with Whiteness at the center dictating who she ought to be diminishes her experiences and knowledge to educate in Black and White spaces. As a Black immigrant, displaced among her Black race, racialized, and discriminated from within and without, the suppressionist's White colonial systems manifested itself in her new world (Jennings, 2010). The need to disrupt the status quo becomes more urgent as Tigress' entrance into this racial space will not translate into Whiteness, in that she will continue to embrace her immigrant self as she appreciates others. The collective memory work further magnified the trap of White dominance to demean and demoralize Black peoples, stoking flames of divisiveness. However, Tigress's affinity with her colleagues of Color in the academy was strengthened through this work. With a surety of identity, Tigress navigated the cultural landscape emerging as a principal and then becoming a university professor. While the system was designed to exclude or mute her voice, Tigress fought for her foothold and situated herself in a body of work in education, diversity, anti-racist, abolitionist teaching, and culturally responsive pedagogy, intentionally disrupting and decolonizing the old order with a new paradigm shift, this land is our land.

The three narratives provided conclusive experiences of the researchers' decentering Whiteness in White spaces, affirming their identities although othered, giving voice to minoritized and racialized people who have contributed and will continue to disrupt hegemonic inequities actively.

Discussion

It has been over 30 years since McIntosh (1988) unpacked her invisible knapsack and opened a much-needed discussion on privilege and accountability. Yet, in these passing years, the use and expectation of privilege have not abated. Privilege and the perspective that people of Color are less than their counterparts remains evident in school settings (Matias & Zembylas, 2014; Milner, 2012). The themes and experiences shared in the three narratives provide evidence that even as people of Color obtain terminal degrees and become experts in their respective fields, their credentials and knowledge will remain in dispute or be positioned as subpar.

Persistent in building coalitions to achieve their respective goals, people of Color remain marginalized, challenging normative standards before achieving tenure, which entails questioning the dominant narrative of post-racial progress. By obscuring the histories of struggle over racism, colonialism, and justice, dominant institutions reproduce and institutionalize the racial hierarchies they profess not to recognize. By symbolically erasing our connections, intersecting identities, and subjugated knowledge from the department, and by silencing the questions and challenges to racist policies and everyday practices, higher education tacitly maintains and reproduces existing forms of inequality and injustice (Bonilla-Silva, 2006).

The significance of the work lies within the context of our country and the shifting demographics of the population. In the abundance of cultures, identities, and traditions, the default setting for schools cannot continue to be White. The centering of Whiteness as the normative standard is unacceptable in a nation crying out for justice. Resetting the center becomes imperative if the goal is to manifest pluralism instead of the hypocrisy currently endured. In addition, this work is valuable in working with teacher candidates who work with students of Color; children are also susceptible to being harmed by teachers who hold strong biases against them, given their racial, class, gender, and family backgrounds (Cooper, 2001).

With all this in mind, it is never easy to openly share and discuss the intersection of identities and oppressions from a critical perspective that challenges and disrupts the master script that faculty of Color must "stay in their lane." The risk is even greater for faculty of Color who draw on various theoretical approaches that question the western logic, symbolic violence, and othering that link immigrant status to different forms of oppression. For example, even though X speaks English and is a "native" born American, he is still subjected to the same language policing as Tigress. What links Tigress and X ultimately is that neither can ever count as fully American or even as fully human in an academic space where the normative standards always privilege Euro-centered logic. This risk of finding common ground among faculty of Color involves upsetting the standard pathways that have been established for different members of different marginalized groups. This challenge to the boxes that divide faculty of Color in many ways makes visible the normative logic of individualism.

Implications

All of the authors experienced marginalization and comments directed at them indicating that their ways of collaborating and learning (Lynn, Tigress & X); speaking, "Is English your first language?" (Tigress & X) and teaching experiences (Lynn, Tigress & X) were viewed as outside of the normative hegemonic standards (Apple, 1998). Therefore their life experiences, work, and professional credentials were frequently challenged and scrutinized. Faculty of Color experiences are often examined (Vargas, 1999 & 2002; Turner & Myers, 2000; Stanley, 2006). What has not been fully explored and what this work intends to do is utilize the memory work framework to identify and understand the impact of the collective episodic incidents on faculty and find the nexus that exists. Privilege and power continue to dominate spaces where minoritized people operate under the constraints of oppression that they learn to navigate but not necessarily accept as a permanent state of being (Wynter, 2015).

Regardless of the social class, educational level, or gender, faculty of Color encounter and absorb micro-aggressions and micro-invalidations regularly. Therefore, it becomes imperative that the faculty of Color form coalitions that validate, support, and counteract the epistemic violence in spaces in which they seek to learn, work, and succeed. Constructing the memory work narratives and their subsequent analysis permits the identification of intersectionality that uncovers the connectedness amongst faculty. This connectedness enables the development of relationships and solidarity that is necessary for faculty coalition building. Coalition building works to counter the "divide and conquer" strategies that institutions deploy to neutralize the voices of faculty of Color. A shift in practice to decolonizing higher education is imperative. Thus, we have come to the following implications about ways to move forward in interrupting how normative standards and marginalization manifest themselves in spaces. These conclusions require more than acknowledgment; they require actionable steps:

1. Honoring your cultural heritage and identity by decentering Whiteness (Hitchcock & Flint, 2015; Paris & Alim, 2014; Schmidt, 2018). We have an obligation to remember and value the culture, beingness, and intellectual traditions of people of Color.
2. Accountability and responsibility to ourselves, students, profession, and society (Hammond, 2015; Ladson-Billings, 2009). Importance of sharing our narratives to empower candidates and help create spaces where oppression will be recognized and confronted (Milner, 2007).
3. Disrupt the dominant constructs that seek to dehumanize and invalidate the ways of being and knowing (Kendi, 2019). This disruption requires one to embody and operationalize the counter-narrative (Milner, 2005).
4. Faculty of Color should intentionally seek spaces, such as conferences and organizations that support networking and scholarship of BIPOC, which enables them to avoid falling into the trap of working in silos and feeling alone in the academy (Louis et al., 2016; Martin et al., 2019).
5. Universities should strongly consider cluster hires of BIPOC to increase representation, but more importantly, it enables the development of solidarity building amongst faculty of Color (Diggs et al., 2009; Pittman, 2012).

Directions for Future Work

These mainstream diversity practices, which we call *stay in your lane diversity*, obscure the multiple ways education sites remain implicated in reproducing racial, gender, and linguistic oppressions by essentializing and normalizing "basic" categories that rest on racist Euro-centered logic. Rushton (2004) offered that "Lived experiences can be translated into rich narrative stories useful for both teaching and research" (p. 62). The narratives of faculty of Color can help shed light on the negative impact deficit-minded educators and navigating America's historically racially-biased educational system has on Black, Latino, immigrant, and other marginalized groups. These voices can and should be used to correct the intentional negative framing, microaggressions, and inequitable opportunities and outcomes experienced by many.

Future directions for this work should include the creation of a framework applying memory work to investigate multiple aspects of identity to unsettle current informal and formal structures that continue to marginalize and limit the potential of people of Color.

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Understanding & Dismantling Privilege

The Official Journal of The White Privilege Conference

Easier Said Than Done: Undoing Hearing Privilege in Deaf Studies

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Abstract

Although Deaf Studies has made a significant contribution to research on oppression, there has been little attempt at sensitizing hearing students to issues of power and privilege within the field. A major reason for this lapse is the manifestation and maintenance of hearing privilege within Deaf Studies. Most Deaf Studies courses tend to discuss oppression as problems affecting deaf people, thereby neglecting to explore the advantages of hearing-abled people due to that oppression. The workings of hearing privilege are rarely problematized in Deaf Studies teaching and research because it is invisible, normalized, and structurally embedded. In this study, the author argues for the importance of incorporating the concepts of both oppression and hearing privilege into Deaf Studies programs. If there is an expectation to study oppression, then hearing students and academics of Deaf Studies need to be prepared to explore the concept of hearing privilege. The author discusses and reflects upon his experiences of delivering social justice workshops to hearing people within the field of Deaf Studies. He contends that bringing hearing privilege into debate within Deaf Studies can enable hearing people to become aware of their privilege and take responsibility for challenging inequality.

Keywords: hearing privilege, Deaf studies, deaf people, hearing people, hearingness, audism

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A workshop series inspired this essay that I designed, implemented, and facilitated in Ireland and the United Kingdom (UK) during a ten-year period between 2009 and 2019. The workshop sessions were conducted as part of my social justice research project on deaf people and the intersections of oppression. The primary motivations were to engage the hearing students, graduates, and academics of Deaf Studies in discussions about audism and oppression within the field of Deaf Studies.[i] Readers might question my decision to focus almost exclusively on those who can hear, or *hearing people*, as the workshop series participants. As scholars have noted, Deaf Studies is dominated and controlled by hearing academics who appear to exhibit an unwillingness to acknowledge the benefits, advantages, and rewards they gain as a result of their status as hearing people and the disadvantages faced by deaf people (Kusters, De Meulder, & O'Brien, 2017). From that perspective, I adopted a critical approach that opened a line of questioning power dynamics at structural and interpersonal levels. Participants were encouraged to engage in self-reflection, delve deeply into their social identities and negotiate their privileges, successes, insecurities, and challenges within the field of Deaf Studies. My intention was to enable participants to identify systems of oppression—audism and oralism—that lead to the marginalization of deaf people. *Audism* refers to a set of assumptions and practices that promote the unequal treatment of deaf people on the basis of hearing (dis)ability (Bauman, 2004).

In my effort to infuse critical discussion to the workshop sessions, I came across Peggy McIntosh's (1989) seminal article on *White privilege*, a term she conceptualized to describe "an invisible package of unearned assets that [she] can count on cashing in each day, but about which [she is] meant to remain oblivious" (p. 291). In her paper, McIntosh presents a personal account of her experience as a White woman, in which she observes that "[W]hites are carefully taught not to recognize [W]hite privilege, as males are taught not to recognize male privilege" (p. 1). She provides a list of advantages and benefits that are handed to her because of her skin color. For example, she can be confident in finding a publisher for a piece on White privilege, or she can speak in public to a powerful male group without her race being called into question. *Privilege* refers to a condition that "confers dominance, gives permission to control, because of one's race or sex" (McIntosh, 2014, p. 36).

Many scholars have extended McIntosh's theories to a study of *male privilege* (Noble & Pease, 2011) in relation to sexism and *heterosexual privilege* (Case & Stewart, 2010) in the context of homophobia. Furthermore, ability privilege has gained traction in Disability Studies research (Shea, 2014; Wolbring, 2014; Bialka & Morro, 2017). Disability Studies scholars conceptualize *ability privilege* as conditions that confer advantages to people who exhibit certain abilities (Wolbring, 2014). Yet, such work has rarely considered the advantages hearing people enjoy because of systems of inequality that disadvantage deaf people. There is, therefore, a need for a new vocabulary to discuss ability privilege relevant to audiological identities.

I submit that examining hearing privilege offers a more useful way of problematizing hearing dominance (Bauman, 2004). Rather than seeing hearing dominance in terms of deaf people's disadvantage and powerlessness, Deaf Studies need to shine a spotlight on hearing people's advantage and powerfulness as

contributing factors in the oppression of deaf people. In this essay, I define *hearing privilege* as the unearned advantages, benefits, and entitlements reserved for hearing people that are not based on talent or effort but rather on (hearing) ability status and their membership to the "normal" social group. My aim in writing this essay is to focus attention on Deaf Studies as a central site of hearing privilege and oppression. In line with McIntosh's *Invisible Knapsack of Privilege* exercises, I intend to construct a list of advantages that hearing people enjoy based on their relevance to what has been described in the literature and workshop discussions (see Appendix). The discussion is not meant to point a finger of blame or instill feelings of guilt or shame in hearing people but rather to raise awareness about hearing privilege and provide them with a deeper understanding of the oppression system that affects deaf people. I hope the discussion will generate new theories in Deaf Studies and new insights into finding ways to promote social justice.

This essay also demonstrates the value of teaching and learning about hearing privilege in Deaf Studies. In doing so, I develop my argument in four stages. First, I briefly describe the history and development of Deaf Studies as an academic discipline and discuss its evolution, conceptual frameworks, Deaf scholarship, and the role of hearing academics in the field (Kusters et al., 2017). Second, I discuss the disadvantages faced by deaf people. Third, I explore the hidden processes of hearing privilege via an examination of hearingness (Krentz, 2008) and hearing hegemony (Kusters et al., 2017; Ladd, 2003)—both concepts help explain the complex dynamics of oppression and privilege. Finally, I offer insight into my experience delivering the workshop sessions and discuss the participants' thoughts and views about hearing privilege. From these deliberations, I present a list of advantages and benefits granted to hearing people.

Deaf Studies: An Emerged Field

Deaf Studies stand as an established academic field encompassing a wide range of higher education courses, modules, and programs on sign language, sign language interpreting, sign language teaching, Deaf culture, Deaf education, Deaf history, Deaf art, and Deaf literature (Kusters et al., 2017). Such programs have been developed in many countries, including the United States, United Kingdom, Australia, Germany, Ireland, New Zealand, and South Africa (Murray, 2017). Although Deaf Studies scholarship has grown exponentially over the last 30 years, little has been attempted to describe Deaf Studies with a formal definition. There appears to be some ambiguity around what precisely Deaf Studies means as a concept. The term is often used to characterize sign language studies, interpreting, and teaching. The diverse range of courses makes it difficult for scholars to come up with a more coherent definition. One hypothesis offered to explain this difficulty is that researchers may be reluctant to restrict it to a single academic category (O'Brien, 2017). Some scholars define *Deaf Studies* as denoting a study of the language, culture, and community of deaf people (Sutton-Spence & West, 2011; Cooper et al., 2012). Others such as O'Brien (2017) see Deaf Studies as being concerned with "all research performed on or with signing (visual or tactile) [D]eaf communities and individuals who identify with those communities" (p. 57). For Kusters et al. (2017), Deaf Studies entail "the study of anything linked to deaf people, including research in neuropsychology, theoretical sign linguistics, [D]eaf education, language

acquisition, and sign language interpretation" (p. 3).

The varied definitions of Deaf Studies seem to be reflective of the different intellectual strands in the field. Indeed, Deaf Studies may be many things to many people, but the common denominator is deaf people. Just as Black Studies focuses on Black people and the Black experience (Karenga, 2009), one might justifiably argue that Deaf Studies is predominantly concerned with deaf people and the Deaf experience. Several researchers have supported this perspective. Ladd (2003), for example, maintains that Deaf Studies should be about teaching and learning about the human condition. In other words, the Deaf experience must be central to all inquiry from which to study human experience. From that perspective, the mission of Deaf Studies is to teach and learn about deaf people's contribution to society and humanity, previously denied in the history textbooks. Deaf people's history has been invisible in the history books and the history of all histories, be they mainstream or fringe history. The writing of history is often an unconscious decision in which the history of deaf persons is not featured in mainstream history books. Writers who can hear favor the stories of hearing-abled people. Deaf people do not fit into the idea of what is history. The purpose of Deaf Studies is to fill this gap by telling the story of deaf people and all that they have done, endured, and encountered in social, cultural, educational, and political life.

Perhaps more significant than the focus of Deaf Studies is what scholars feel is the reason for it. Kusters et al. (2017) argue that we need Deaf Studies to increase awareness of the history of identity politics rooted in the Deaf experience. Woodward (1972) capitalized the term *Deaf* to denote a positive cultural, American Sign Language identity when the dominant medical view of deaf people sought to understand them in terms of perceived deficiencies, dysfunctions, problems, needs, and limitations. Hearing professionals who hold a pathological view of deaf people tend to use the lowercase *deaf*, which describes an audiological condition of hearing loss. Woodward (1972) shifted the focus from dominant audiological labels to a frame of reference in which Deaf culture is considered valid and formed the basis for teaching and learning about deaf people. Deaf with the capital letter "D" was conceptualized as a political identifier similar to Black with the capital letter "B" referring to the collective identity of Black people (Karenga, 1988).

Ladd (2003) argues that Deaf Studies was not established to promote academic careers but to generate new knowledge and ways to theorize about deaf people, their language, culture, and communities. This stands in stark contrast to studies in Deaf education dominated by the medical model of disability, which upholds the values and behaviors of hearing people as standard and focuses on how deaf people deviate from that norm (O'Connell, 2017). Ladd maintains that Deaf Studies scholarship must contribute towards the liberation of deaf people. There needs to be data that uncovers significant patterns of oppression which affect deaf people's position in society. There needs to be information that reveals the extent to which deaf people have endured and continue to endure oppression from hearing people. Deaf Studies need to produce content that demands an understanding of power relations and structural and systematic oppression. Perhaps more importantly, research and material should unpack the invisible knapsack (McIntosh, 1989) of privilege that

contributes to the disadvantage of deaf people.

It is important to note that my argument is not meant to be a definitive concept of Deaf Studies. I merely provide a set of ideas about the field to generate debate about what it should be about. This debate should be a prerequisite to setting goals and targets for developing teaching and research programs. On that basis, it is useful to provide a backdrop of the origin and development of Deaf Studies as an academic field. However, a detailed and comprehensive rendering of its history worldwide is beyond the scope of this research. It has already been chartered by Murray (2017), Kusters et al. (2017), and O'Brien (2017). It is worth consulting the work of these authors to gain an insight into the field's foundation and paradigm. In this paper, I will instead present a historical overview to provide the basis for understanding how Deaf Studies gained impetus from Deaf activism to form an academic subject and establish itself as an academic area in its own right. The context of the discussion will focus on the United States, where the idea of Deaf Studies originated, and the United Kingdom (UK), where the first Deaf Studies center was established in Europe.

Deaf Studies: Historical Context

It is probably difficult to identify the exact date for the beginning of Deaf Studies as an academic discipline, but Murray (2017) brings its evolution in the United States into sharp focus. From his account, we can discern that Deaf Studies emerged from often difficult and frustrating journeys. We can see that deaf people have struggled to bring their knowledge and experience of Deaf culture and American Sign Language (ASL) to the academic community. They have struggled in the face of the dominance and power of hearing academics and professionals who formulate negative and oftentimes inaccurate explanations about them as a social group (Lane, 1992, 2008). It has been argued that the dominative processes of oralism are at the crux of the disadvantages experienced by deaf people. *Oralism* which means "of the mouth," denotes an educational ideology asserting the belief that spoken language is superior to sign language (O'Connell & Deegan, 2014). Oralism involved training deaf children to acquire spoken language by developing skills in speech, lipreading, and residual hearing (O'Connell, 2015). In oralism, two principle themes stand out – one is the prohibition of sign language in the classroom, often enforced by the teacher through the physical punishment of deaf children, and the other is the removal of deaf teachers from teaching deaf children (Anglin-Jaffe, 2020). The threatened existential status of sign language in deaf education provided the impetus for academic activists to preserve ASL through linguistic research and the establishment of Deaf Studies.

Deaf Studies in the United States

The term *Deaf Studies* first entered public discourse in 1971 when the deaf executive director of the National Association of the Deaf (NAD), Frederick C. Schreiber, called for the establishment of a new program of Deaf Studies (Bauman, 2008). Schreiber justified his argument with an analogy to Black Studies and Jewish Studies:

> If deaf people are to get ahead in our time, they must have a better image of themselves and their capabilities. They need concrete examples of what deaf people have already done so they can

> project for themselves a brighter future. If we can have Black studies, Jewish studies, why not Deaf [S]tudies? (Bauman, 2008, p. 7)

However, even before that date, there were isolated examples of linguistic research projects which laid the groundwork for Deaf Studies in the United States. As early as the 1960s, William Stokoe (hearing) and his team of deaf researchers Dorothy Casterline and Carl Cronenberg published their linguistic research findings, which confirmed the status of ASL as a bona fide language containing all the linguistic markers necessary for human languages to function (Stokoe et al., 1965). This landmark study provided the necessary stream for the setting up of the Linguistic Research Laboratory (LRL) at Gallaudet University in 1971 and the *Sign Language Studies* journal a year later. Gallaudet University is currently the only fully established "deaf university" globally, where most courses are provided through ASL. Although a number of Deaf Studies courses were provided at Gallaudet during the 1970s and 1980s, they were developed more as subject areas and modules than complete degree programs (Bauman, 2008).

In 1981, Boston University became the first higher education institution in the United States to establish a Deaf Studies department. A similar department was founded at California State University, Northridge, two years later. In 1985, Bristol Community College in Massachusetts began providing Deaf Studies diploma courses before expanding to undergraduate and postgraduate degree programs in the late 1990s. The delay with setting up a Deaf Studies unit at Gallaudet University resulted from a prolonged struggle with the university system, which, according to Murray (2017), attempted to undermine the development of ASL research, including the LRL unit. The dominance of the pathological view of deaf people had such a powerful influence that many attempts to set up a Deaf Studies program were thwarted. The background to this struggle needs to be understood in the context of the university's history—an example of how hearing privilege is played out.

Gallaudet University

From its foundation in 1864 to the late 1980s, hearing people have assumed presidents, vice-presidents, deans, and other top administrative positions at Gallaudet University (Christiansen & Barnartt, 1995). As a result, deaf faculty and academics were forced to work in a paradoxical situation in which they were subordinate to hearing academics occupying the central administrative positions in a hearing-controlled deaf-focused university environment. This form of hearing hegemony (Ladd, 2003) guaranteed the dominant position of hearing faculty members and the subordination of deaf academics (Kusters et al., 2017). The privileges enjoyed by faculty members were emphasized by the continuing exclusion of deaf people from the top administrative positions in the university (Murray, 2017). Until the late 1980s, no deaf person had ever been appointed university president, and many deaf faculty members have struggled to find their place in the only higher education where courses are delivered through the medium of ASL (Sacks, 1990).

The closure of the ASL linguistic lab at Gallaudet during the mid-1980s coincided with the growing rumblings of discontent emerging through a new generation of deaf students calling for a deaf president. Not for the first time, students encountered

resistance from the university's top echelons, especially from administrators who thought that only hearing people should occupy the top university positions (Sacks, 1990). This level of paternalism was never more emphasized when the ongoing hearing president resigned in 1987 and was replaced by a hearing candidate the following spring. It happened even though the other two qualified candidates were deaf. The Board of Trustees had followed a long line of choosing hearing candidates and a group of Deaf activists reacted by barricading the university campus. All the entry points into the university were shut until the board accepted their demand for the resignation of the new president and the election of a deaf candidate (Sacks, 1990). The *Deaf President Now!* (DPN) movement spurred a wave of negative publicity for the university and a growing fear that deaf people really meant business (Christiansen & Barnartt, 1995). The Board of Trustees and administrators eventually acquiesced to the demands, and within 24 hrs, a deaf candidate was elected to replace the hearing candidate to become Gallaudet's first deaf president. A Deaf Studies department was established within six years, and a graduate program of Deaf Studies and ASL was rolled out eight years later (Murray, 2017). The political root of *Deaf President Now!* inspired by the mission of Deaf Studies, and a deaf academic was hired as head of the department (Bauman, 2008).

Deaf Studies in the United Kingdom

Kusters et al. (2017) trace the history of Deaf Studies in the United Kingdom (UK) back to 1986 when the Centre for Deaf Studies (CDS) was established at the University of Bristol. Before that date, researchers had been conducting British Sign Language (BSL) research at the university. The BSL research unit was nestled in the university's social science department. The researchers were awarded funding to develop a BSL research project (Brennan & Colville, 1979). This led to the establishment of the Deaf Studies Trust in 1984 and the founding of CDS two years later. The founding members of CDS included deaf and hearing academics and teachers, some of whom had no connection with the British Deaf community. Over the years, the balance in the membership shifted to include a higher proportion of hearing individuals due to the increase in the number of hearing students.

Furthermore, the university appointed a hearing professor as CDS director to mobilize the program. The appointment of a hearing academic as a leader might appear inconsequential, but it forms a pattern of hearing domination in Deaf Studies (Kusters et al., 2017). The original hearing lecturers at CDS held PhD degrees in academic disciplines and specialized areas of knowledge outside of Deaf Studies. By contrast, deaf lecturers of Deaf Studies did not have PhD degrees but had specialized knowledge of BSL and Deaf culture.

The earlier research ideas of the BSL research team influenced the development of diploma courses in BSL interpreting and BSL teaching. The diploma courses flourished in the 1980s and, by the 1990s, undergraduate programs were introduced. This made it possible for students to study for complete degrees in Deaf Studies. In the same year, *Deaf Worlds: International Journal of Deaf Studies* was established to provide a platform for debate on social, cultural, historical, political, linguistic, anthropological, and psychological issues in the field of Deaf Studies. Hearing scholars as established academics in the field made up the majority of the journal's editors. Unfortunately, the articles were never

digitized, which means that online access to published work is unavailable. *Deaf Worlds* stayed active for several years until 2008, when the editorial team disbanded apparently with no explanation for its closure.

In the late 1990s, several postgraduate courses in Deaf Studies became available at CDS, including a doctoral research program. By the turn of the 21st century, a major milestone was reached when a deaf student was awarded a PhD in Deaf Studies. The appointment of a deaf academic to the position of director of CDS was another significant achievement. The CDS operated as the flagship of international Deaf Studies research, producing new knowledge and theories that have stood the test of time. Amongst the most valuable theoretical work to emerge was Ladd's (2003) thesis on Deafhood. Ladd coined the term *Deafhood* to describe the ontological experience of being deaf in the social world. In line with Woodward (1972), the capitalized word denotes a political identity with the suffix –*hood* added to capture the essence of the Deaf experience. The Deafhood concept continues to be widely debated in international research. Indeed, it has had such a remarkable influence on the field of Deaf Studies that many scholars have drawn inspiration from Ladd's work.

The expansion of CDS can be seen in the wide range of modules offered on BSL teaching, sociolinguistics of BSL, BSL interpreting, Deaf education, sign bilingualism, Deafhood, Deaf history, and Deaf community and society (O'Brien & Emery, 2014). Such courses were established despite underfunding, opposition and prejudice, and intense and prolonged struggles with the system. CDS faced many obstacles towards its development and expansion. In many cases, this involved a struggle for power and autonomy, sometimes having to justify their position within the academy or fight for survival. CDS survived for as long as possible until 2013, when funding cuts forced its closure.

Hearing Hegemony in Deaf Studies

Implicit in Deaf Studies research is the notion of the institution as predominantly hearing (Gulliver, 2015). To understand how hearing dominance manifests itself in the field of Deaf Studies, scholars have used Gramsci's concept of hegemony (O'Brien & Emery, 2014; Gulliver, 2015; Kusters et al., 2017). The word *hegemony* describes the way dominance is manifest through consensus built within an institutional system that rewards the interests, intentions, and efforts of dominant members of the social class (Gramsci, 1971). For examples of hearing hegemony, Kusters et al. (2017) suggest we look at how official gatekeepers of academic journals and publications work to limit the academic contributions of deaf scholars. For example, O'Brien and Emery (2014) note a stark under-representation of deaf academics in Deaf Studies, particularly in the area of research and publishing. Hearing hegemony manifests through dominance in research and publications. To a large extent, research in Deaf Studies has been closely tied to academic journals that publish work in the field of Deaf Studies and Deaf Education, Sign Language Studies, and Sign Language Interpreting Studies. Academic journals play a crucial role in creating knowledge within the field of Deaf Studies and the career advancement of deaf and hearing researchers. Journal editors and editorial boards play important roles as gatekeepers of knowledge within the field, setting research priorities and making decisions that advance scholars into roles as reviewers and editors.

According to Kusters et al. (2017), hearing academics dominate the editorial boards and editorial leadership teams in academic journals that publish papers on Deaf-related issues. The authors note the underrepresentation of deaf people in the editorial boards of leading Deaf education journals. Deaf academics comprise approximately 2% of editorial team members, and this imbalance in editorial roles has implications for Deaf Studies (Bauman, 2008). For instance, evidence suggests that a lack of equality can create bias in the review process (Konrad, 2008). It may also indicate to deaf researchers that their work will not be published or that their submissions are not welcome. Deaf scholars who submit their manuscripts to such journals are more likely to have their work screened by hearing reviewers and hearing editors who make specific decisions on what will be published. They may face difficulties since their approach to research problems is often presented from the Deaf perspective. As a result, deaf scholars may find their work rejected because it does not conform to the conventional way of thinking.

O'Brien and Emery (2014) argue that hearing academics have been more successful than deaf scholars in navigating their way up the academic career ladder into higher and more prestigious jobs due to their work in Deaf Studies. As discussed elsewhere, the appointment of a hearing academic to the position of director lends itself to a contradiction. This paradox extends to how Deaf Studies is "largely populated, organized, researched, and taught by hearing scholars" (Sutton-Spence & West, 2011, p. 244). Just as it seems odd for a Women's Studies center to be directed by male faculty, it is equally strange for hearing academics to direct Deaf Studies. Yet, deaf faculty members work under the direction of hearing academics, knowing that they earn their living from an oppressive hearing institution (Ladd, 2003).

The underrepresentation of deaf scholars noted by Kusters et al. (2017) can be attributed to systems of inequality that allow hearing people to gain advantages in their academic careers—hearing people begin their academic career from the point of being undergraduate students of Sign Language, Deaf Education, and Sign Language Interpreting. They then progress towards a postgraduate degree, including a PhD. After one or two postdoc appointments, they are hired as lecturers or professors. Baker-Shenk and Kyle (1990) note that hearing researchers have successfully secured research funding to work on Deaf community projects in which they work as lead investigators. Sometimes they hire deaf people as research assistants who undertake the bulk of the research labor (O'Brien, 2020).

In some cases, hearing researchers are hired to assist the lead researchers as part of an all-hearing research team (e.g., Leeson & Venturi, 2017). The rewards are then granted to the lead investigator who publishes the findings in peer-reviewed academic journals. In their position as lead academics, they have the means to travel and present papers at high-profile conferences and return home with enhanced reputations in the field of Deaf Studies.

Kusters et al. (2017) noted the consistent exclusion of deaf scholars from research and publication opportunities. They found that hearing scholars of Deaf Studies were more inclined to recruit in the research hearing academics in the field or non-specialist hearing academics from outside the discipline (Gulliver, 2015). For instance, Young and Temple's (2014) work on Deaf Studies research brings together a hearing

Deaf Studies faculty member (Young) with another hearing faculty member (Temple) who is skilled in research methods but not in Deaf Studies. Similarly, Leeson and Saaed (2012) are co-authors, one of which is a Deaf Studies academic who can hear (Leeson) and the other, who can also hear (Saaed), is skilled in linguistics but not in Deaf Studies. The choice of authors appears to privilege a second author skilled in hearing-world academic knowledge rather than one skilled in Deaf-world knowledge. This potentially also tells a story about the envisaged audience for the books they publish and about hearing academics' privilege in shaping their work for unmarked consumption rather than challenging by example. This kind of hearing-as-normal positioning has been defined by Bauman (2004) as audism. The decision to recruit an all-hearing research team may be determined by a desire to associate only with those most likely to have considerable influence in enhancing their academic reputation. The net effect is that deaf people are denied opportunities to become part of the academic network that produces and monitors knowledge in Deaf Studies. The result is a ceiling on their academic achievement tied not to their talent or capabilities but to the privileges granted to hearing academics both within and outside Deaf Studies.

Hearingness as a Social Institution: Deaf People's Disadvantage

Audism

Bauman (2004) uses the term *audism* as an explanatory framework for explaining how and why deaf people experience disadvantages in everyday life. While most scholars see audism as a problem affecting deaf people's disadvantage, few have interrogated the processes by which this is done and the advantages that hearing people gain (Bauman, 2008). Audism is embedded within social institutions (e.g., family, school, employment, higher education) and cultural norms of society; many of these practices are habituated and unconscious (Eckert & Rowley, 2013). Many of the injustices that deaf people experience result from audism and the attitudes and practices of people going about their daily lives unaware of how their assumptions of superiority impact their lives (Lane, 1992). Deaf people's disadvantage also stems from the fact that they live as a minority group within a majority hearing population where they are likely to be judged, stereotyped, and labeled by others (Bauman, 2004). Bauman estimates that hearing people represent 99% of the world's population, with deaf people making up a minuscule of the total number. As such, hearing people dominate the social institutions in which they set forth ideologies that provide the foundation of culture (Krentz, 2008). Their dominance is mirrored in all the major institutions in the world where decisions are made, laws created, legislation enacted, policies implemented, and labels assigned. For example, in higher education institutions, hearing people develop the criteria for defining success, reward system, the distribution of resources, and institutional goals (Kusters et al., 2017). They control the colleges and universities worldwide and act as gatekeepers to a wide range of job opportunities, resources, and funding.

Hearingness

In recent times, the topic of *hearingness* has emerged as a new conceptual framework in Deaf Studies scholarship to describe a set of normative values, beliefs, attitudes that uphold hearing ability as the standard of acceptability against which others are judged, contrasted, or evaluated (Kentz,

2008, p. 66; Sutton-Spence & West, 2011). Hearingness is embedded in social institutions comprising an invisible belief system of ideologies, attitudes, and actions of audism. It is directly connected to institutionalized power and privileges that benefit those who can hear and speak. Kendall (2013, p. 108) offers a covert example of this concept, who observes how university environments are built for hearing people without a thought given to the cultural needs of deaf people—such as, audio public announcement systems are assembled in ways that benefit hearing people. Kendall identifies several advantages granted to her as a hearing person: She can communicate with all those who are hearing, talk around those who are deaf by speaking to other hearing people and the interpreters for the deaf; she can publish papers in the English language, which is the second language of deaf people, an issue that she does not have to deal with herself.

The concept of hearingness provides a valuable lens to understand better its function in the oppression of deaf people (Sutton-Spence & West, 2011). Some examples of hearingness in practice can be gleaned from Deaf Studies literature. One example is school programs that operate a policy of oralism in which harmful practices were inflicted upon deaf children (Anglin-Jaffe, 2020). Such programs are determined, in large part, through structures that privilege hearing norms (e.g., speaking, listening, hearing, and talking). Deaf children were subjected to various forms of physical punishment for using sign language (McDonnell & Saunders, 1993). This practice was carried out to ensure deaf children conformed to hearing norms. Some students were beaten, mocked, and fined money, while others were suspended from class. Some of the more extreme forms of punishment and control include the practice of tying the children's hands behind their backs or forcing them to sit on their hands (McDonnell & Saunders, 1993; Ladd, 2003). Such powerful forms of domination were designed to prevent signing but had much broader implications for education and future careers.

Many deaf people experienced literacy problems in school, which, in turn, contributed to their disadvantage in the employment market, especially when competing with educated hearing people (Woodcock, Rohan, & Campbell, 2007). Since hearing ability is normalized in social institutions (e.g., employment) as standards against which others are judged, deaf people's disadvantage is further increased. A significant number are engaged in more labor-intensive work, less well paid, and less secure than hearing people (Woodcock et al., 2007). Ferndale (2018) argues that most deaf students struggle at the university level because courses often require a high level of English literacy. The attitudinal and environmental barriers exacerbate such problems that deaf people face in their daily lives. As Playforth (2004) observes, social institutions are constructed in ways that allow information to be communicated through auditory channels that require hearing ability. In such an environment, hearing people have the advantage in making choices and decisions about public services or participating in conversation, debate, or discussion, an advantage that is routinely denied deaf people.

Invisibility of Hearing Privilege

Hearing people have privilege because social institutions are organized to grant privileges based on audiological identity (Bauman, 2004; Tuccoli, 2008; Kendall, 2013). Johnson (2001) maintains that privilege is a feature of social systems or

social institutions rather than individuals. Whether or not people have privilege depends on the social institution with which they live and work and the social category they are associated with. When deaf and hearing people work in the same social institution operating an audist culture, hearing people stand to benefit from the structures and processes perpetuating inequality. Hearing people may not have asked for such privileges, but they receive them nonetheless. This happens because social institutions are constructed in ways that confer power to them. McIntosh (2014) names this advantage an *invisible knapsack of privilege*. Advantages associated with hearing privilege can be cashed in daily: from choosing academic jobs to applying for research funding, accessing research opportunities, attending international conference events, and publishing work (Napier & Leeson, 2015). By exercising their entitlements to such opportunities, hearing academics can easily ignore or choose not to see how deaf academics are denied the same opportunities. By partnering with other hearing researchers and authors, they help maintain the established order in social institutions.

In a study conducted at Gallaudet University, Tuccoli (2008) found that most hearing people seem unaware of their privileges and how their choices, decisions, and actions have effectively denied deaf people a range of academic opportunities. As McIntosh (1989) points out, privilege is invisible to those who have it. Privilege structures the social world in ways that allow its mechanism to remain invisible to those who benefit from them (Bailey, 1998). Members of the privileged social group have an *unmarked status* which refers to an invisible identity that is unnoticed by the privileged themselves (Rosenblum & Travis, 1996, p. 142; Flood & Pease, 2005; Johnson, 2001). By the same token, hearing people have an unmarked status because their identity remains invisible (Krentz, 2008). It rarely gets talked about as a significant social category. Hearing identity is unmarked, seen as the norm, a common-sense norm. Hearing people go through life unaware that they have a hearing identity until they encounter deaf people (Bauman, 2009).

The *invisibility* of hearingness means that hearing people rarely notice that they are culturally hearing. *Culturally hearing* in the sense that listening and speaking are normal ways of communicating with people. As Krentz (2008) points out, "hearingness" is not even a word—an unnamed social category. When there is no word for it, we cannot conceptualize or meditate on it. Nor can we question it. This invisibility makes it less likely for hearing people to be noticed. It is easier to maintain the myth that audism is a problem for deaf people and not hearing people. Being invisible makes hearing people powerful as a social group. It facilitates their smooth entry and mobility into positions of power. They can, for instance, apply for jobs without fear of being identified as different than the social and cultural hearing norms of the company or business. Johnson (2001) argues that invisibility can be reinforced through denial of the existence of privilege. When privilege is pointed out to them, members of the privileged group tend to react with anger or dismay. For Johnson, the privilege does not necessarily lead to positive outcomes in life or bring happiness, and fulfillment can often provoke denial or resistance. Some hearing people may be willing to acknowledge that deaf people are disadvantaged and discriminated against but may be less willing to recognize that they are advantaged or privileged because of it (Tuccoli, 2008; Mole, 2018). It may be easier for them to

recognize audism when someone is excluded because of their hearing (dis)ability, but it is much harder to acknowledge that they have advantages due to audism.

Privilege Awareness Workshops

To combat against audism and challenge hearing privilege in Deaf Studies, I found it necessary to develop and facilitate workshops about deaf people and the intersections of oppression. Between 2009 and 2019, I began with several short roundtable discussions on the topics before organizing two major workshop sessions. The workshops, which informed this essay, involved a maximum of 15 participants. Each session lasted for one day. The background of the participants was diverse on a number of dimensions. Participants in Workshop #1 were hearing sign language interpreters and Deaf service providers. In Workshop #2, participants include a mixture of hearing lecturers, researchers, sign language interpreters, and students of Deaf Studies. Hearing people were purposefully selected for the opportunity to learn about hearing privilege. A small number of deaf people participated in both workshops, and the gender demographic was 70% female and 30% male. The workshop discussions were conducted in BSL and Irish Sign Language (ISL). Seats were arranged in a semi-circular format so that participants could see each other signing. The questions I had uppermost in my mind were: *Are hearing participants consciously aware of their privileged position as hearing people? Are they willing to acknowledge that privilege?*

Session Structure

The workshop sessions began with a discussion that mapped out the different domains of social identities tied to group membership based on gender, race, sexuality, and ability. The aim was to encourage participants to reflect on how these domains intersect and position themselves in relation to dominant and subordinate social identity groups. I hoped to create an atmosphere in which participants willingly engaged in *critical dialogue* (Freire, 1970)—that is, reflection and action—on the different forms of oppression perpetuated by sexism, racism, homophobia, and audism (or ableism). One of the theoretical paradigms that informed this early part of the discussion drew upon Crenshaw's (1989) theory of intersectionality. Crenshaw used the metaphor of intersecting roads to describe how racial and gender discrimination interconnect with one another. The road metaphor was adopted to explain how a subordinate social group might navigate the main crossings where the sexism road crosses with the racism road and meet at the intersection. Crenshaw coined the term "intersectionality," which has been used ever since to explain this phenomenon.

I asked students to reflect upon their social identities and link them with the type of inequality or disadvantage associated with that particular social identity group. I wanted the participants to reflect on *positionality*, which refers to standpoints that shape how we make sense of the world (Flood & Pease, 2005). Positionality and the intersections of oppression formed the backdrop of the workshop. I asked participants to consider the binary terms of "deaf" and "hearing" and then asked them to think about the point at which they became "hearing" aware. Some of them said they were born hearing. I explained that Bauman (2004) had not realized he had a hearing identity until he met deaf people. I explained my position as a deaf teacher—my social

identity denotes me as a member of the subordinate social group relative to hearing people. I emphasized that my intention was not to point a finger of blame on hearing people but to raise awareness about the invisibility of hearing privilege and hearingness.

When I introduced the concept of hearingness (Sutton-Spence & West, 2011), I immediately sensed a change in the room's atmosphere. In both workshops, the reaction was the same. Some people expressed annoyance about the topic of hearing identity. I realized that this was an indication of resistance. Goodman (2015) defines *resistance* as the "inability or unwillingness to engage in critical self-reflection and to re-evaluate currently held views" (p. 63). Goodman argues that students become resistant when they feel threatened by uncomfortable topics that "can turn people's world upside down" (p. 63). I noticed that participants were unsettled by discussions on hearing identity and hearingness because such topics put the spotlight on hearing people. Other participants reacted by retreating into silence.

Writing about the challenges she faced as a Black teacher, Ladson-Billings (1996) noticed that White students engage in silence as a form of resistance when discussing racism. According to the author, some students use silence as "a weapon or way to defy the legitimacy of the teacher and/or knowledge" (p. 82). I noticed that some participants used silence to let me know they were unwilling to discuss hearingness and hearing identity. There may have been an element of fear about saying something offensive or being misunderstood by others in the room. For example, one participant caught up with me after the end of Workshop #2 and said, "Sorry, I didn't say much. I don't want my reputation damaged by something I said today. I work here, so I have to watch my back." Fear of being called an oppressor or going against the grain of established thinking can be an uncomfortable experience for hearing people (Sutton-Spence & West, 2011).

In order to encourage participants to look into how audism results in advantages for hearing people, I had to provide factual data and video clips of deaf people sharing stories. I explained the history of oppression of deaf people using quotes extracted from my research data (O'Connell & Deegan, 2014; O'Connell, 2017). I also provided examples of how deaf academics were consistently excluded from research and publication opportunities. I mentioned a recent protest meeting organized by a group of Deaf activists in response to allegations of employment discrimination against deaf people within the Deaf community domain. It was claimed that hearing employers in Deaf service organizations hired less qualified hearing candidates for jobs that deaf people were qualified to do. I asked them to work in pairs to talk about audism, using the case study as an example. When we mentioned a public demonstration being organized in protest against the exclusion of deaf people, I asked participants to consider the idea of participating in the event in a show of support. Most participants agreed in principle that a public demonstration should go ahead but would never take part in something controversial. They cited the potential impact this would have on their careers. I noticed their comments were cloaked in hearingness, a place of structural advantage from which they could distance themselves from deaf people's struggle against audism.

Some of the participants' comments featured an apology ("Sorry, I can't risk losing my job") and a couple of declarations

("I am neutral on this" and "I am not the type of person to discriminate against deaf people"). In the last two comments, I recognized the defensiveness in the participants, which resonates with Goodman's (2015) assertion that students from privileged groups tend to become defensive when discussing topics that disrupt their fundamental beliefs. It was the claim to neutrality that caught my attention. In making this declaration, the participant had positioned himself as an outsider in the Deaf discourse. Even though his job took him inside the Deaf community, he seemed impervious to do something about the injustice inflicted on deaf people. The desire to be neutral hindered any discussion around hearing privilege. I had to confront that denial was a common reaction of privileged group members such as White people and *cis*– men—both of whom I am associated with.

In order to more effectively engage in dialogue with participants and to make hearingness visible, I quoted South African civil rights activist, Desmond Tutu who stated: "[if] you are neutral in situations of injustice, you have chosen the side of the oppressor" (McAfee Brown, 1984, p. 19). Some of the participants shifted uncomfortably in their seats. Their comments included: "I believe Tutu is saying that it's impossible to be neutral," "Does this mean we have to take sides?" "I'm not an oppressor," "Is staying silent also supporting the oppressor?" "Yes, we have to take the side of deaf people, not the other way," to which a fellow participant replied, "Yes, well, that's easier said than done."

In the next exercise, participants worked in pairs again to discuss the question: *Who do you think benefits from having no active involvement in social justice movements?* In the ensuing discussion, participants wondered why I was asking this question. One of them thought I was being biased against hearing people. I reiterated that my intention is to raise awareness of hearing privilege in the oppression of deaf people. It seemed to make little sense to the participants to talk about something so remote from their daily experience. If audism is something that deaf people experience, then audism is what deaf people are responsible for.

Following McIntosh (1989), I asked participants to write one or two hearing advantages on yellow sticker paper and put them on a sheet. It was done so that participants could respond truthfully without having to reveal themselves to others. I wrote the statements on the sheet so that participants could read them. The stickers were then disposed of in a waste bag to ensure anonymity. The statements were then compiled into a list (see Appendix). Despite their resistance and defensiveness, I believe the workshop served its purpose in raising awareness of audism. Even if participants had not acknowledged their privilege, uncomfortable conversations about audism seemed to have lessened their resistance and helped them see more clearly who they are and where they come from in relation to deaf people.

On Reflection

On reflection, my experience with teaching about hearing privilege created inner tensions and emotional struggles inside me and the workshop participants. I tried to create a safe space for discussing uncomfortable topics. Such conversations proved to be a challenge for me. It generated emotional responses, some uncomfortable and frustrating but ultimately necessary for learning. I tried to show respect and interest

in the participants' views and opinions. Teaching about hearing privilege allowed me to reflect on my role as a teacher. I was able to open a line of critical dialogue that was previously not possible in Deaf Studies. I believe the literature review and workshop sessions have been valuable in providing essential themes that shaped how I think about Deaf Studies. I also believe that the hearing privilege concept should be explored and taught in Deaf Studies courses. The concept offers a powerful tool to better understand the hidden mechanism of oppression and audism.

Understanding hearing privilege may encourage hearing people to promote equality and social justice rather than leaving all the hard work to deaf people. Pease (2016), for example, advocates for male privilege awareness workshops as a practice for educating men about male privilege and their complicity in women's oppression. Pease believes that workshops should encourage men to take responsibility for ending sexism and promoting gender equality. He suggests that men's emotional investments in privilege need to be disrupted momentarily to help them become more aware of male privilege. I believe this same notion can be applied to dismantling hearing privilege. We can use emotions as a catalyst in disrupting student defensiveness and resistance when presenting uncomfortable ideas. For hearing people to promote equality and social justice for deaf people, they need to recognize their collusion in the oppression of deaf people. And workshops such as mine can bring such awareness.

Conclusion

This essay brings up the necessary questions about the next step: *In what ways can I better engage with students in a discussion about hearing privilege?* Many authors have laid the foundation for discussing privilege that may help participants be less defensive and resistant to learning. Castania et al. (2017) suggest that teachers or facilitators begin by presenting personal stories based on experiences from those with dominant identities and excluded identities. Participants respond better when they can explore practices that exclude them from one or more social identities. Pease (2016) finds that personal narratives of oppression can help students engage in dialogue with others about their experiences. Personal stories increase students' awareness of how privilege and oppression intersect in their lives. By discussing personal stories, students will unlearn and question old assumptions and beliefs that they may have (Walls et al., 2010).

For Goodman (2015), attempts to reduce resistance can be more effective when teaching and learning are "built on a foundation of compassion, trust, and respect" (p. 72). Pease (2016) argues that teachers should reveal their different social identities and talk about their experience of exclusion because of prejudice and discrimination. He also encourages teachers to ask students to list privileges they may have due to their membership to the dominant social identity group. Understanding and engaging in critical reflection and action about hearing privilege is essential to addressing audism and inequality. There is a need for Deaf Studies academics and students to be honest about personal perspectives to become aware of their assumptions and biases that may contribute to the disadvantage of deaf people.

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[i] The term *Deaf Studies* is capitalized to refer to the study of deaf people as a community with a collective identity and particular history and culture.

Appendix
List of Hearing Advantages

In line with Peggy McIntosh's (1988) unpacking of an invisible knapsack of privileges socially granted to Whites and men, I have compiled a checklist of unearned advantages conferred to hearing people based on the workshop discussions and literature review. The list presented below is not complete by any means, but they are written with hearing people in mind. The goal is to raise awareness about certain advantages they have that they may never have thought about before.

- I can reasonably be certain of being included or participating in policy debates affecting deaf people. I do not have to fear being excluded because of my identity.
- I can be reasonably certain of being included in any workgroup to discuss deaf education.
- I can expect to be involved in sign language projects even without the necessary experience or fluency in sign language.
- I can expect to meet hearing people everywhere I go and communicate with them without needing to write notes or use an interpreter (Kendall, 2013, p. 108).
- I can publish books and articles without having to deal with the challenge of writing in the primary language, which is the second or third language for deaf people (Kendall, 2013, p. 108).
- When I go to an academic conference or public seminar meeting, I know that everything will be in place to fulfill my audiological needs. I will not have to worry about whether or not I need to ask for an interpreter or deal with the organizer's negative attitude.
- When I go to any public service office, I do not have to deal with patronizing comments from staff.
- When I start a new job, I can be reasonably sure that I will not be considered a health and safety concern because of a hearing loss.
- When I apply for jobs, I don't have to worry about whether the hiring manager will discriminate against me because of a disability.
- When I win an award, I don't have to worry about being patronized by people who consider me a hero and role model for deaf people.
- I can easily find public places (e.g., railway stations, hotels, shopping centers) that have no access barriers to public information.
- When I read newspapers, I can be reasonably certain of being accurately represented by journalists and not be portrayed in stereotypical terms (e.g., helpless, dependent).
- In my line of work (e.g., sign language interpreter), I can expect to be praised for learning sign language and helping deaf people.
- I can be reasonably confident employers will be impressed with me for learning sign language.

- I can do well in my job and not be called an inspiration to deaf people.
- I can be relatively assured that people will approach me, make eye contact, and not treat me like I am invisible,
- I do not have to deal with people being concerned about my ability to parent my children because of a disability.
- I will not have to deal with people being concerned about me crossing the road because of a disability.
- I can support my children in school without being blamed for their academic performance.

Understanding & Dismantling Privilege

The Official Journal of The White Privilege Conference

Defining, Unpacking, and Contextualizing Class Privilege to Extend the Intersectional Scope of Privilege Studies

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Abstract

This paper seeks to add to the repository of knowledge about unearned advantage by defining, delineating, and contextualizing class privilege. After reviewing McIntosh's (1988) seminal work on white privilege and male privilege, this work seeks to answer contemporary calls (McIntosh, 2012/2015) to extend the scope of privilege analyses into additional domains. A working definition of class privilege is developed by reviewing insights on how class was defined in classic social theory and adding the appendage *privilege.* The proceeding delineation of class privilege incorporates existing qualitative literature on impoverishment to amplify the voices of subaltern people who live without it. Finally, class privilege is contextualized by analyzing the key features of contemporary finance capitalism. This contextualizing is necessary in a world where an already wide and systemically created gap between rich and poor is further widening.

Keywords: class privilege, poverty, inequality, neoliberalism

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> Long ago, it was said that "one half of the world does not know how the other half lives." That was true then. It did not know because it did not care. The half that was on top cared little for the struggles and less for the fate of those who were underneath. (Riis, 1890/2010, p. 3)

It is a common and warranted adage in the burgeoning field of privilege studies that unearned advantages too often go unnoticed (McIntosh, 1988; Kimmel & Ferber, 2014; Pease, 2010). Building upon McIntosh's (1988) foundational analyses of White privilege and male privilege, this paper has four primary aims. First, to posit a working definition of class privilege given that it is next to impossible to discuss a critical aspect of social and material inequality that has not been named and is thus not well understood. Second, to juxtapose the definition of class privilege to poverty as defined by Sen (1992) and The Royal Commission on the Status of Women (1977), given such a juxtaposition, heightens understanding of both phenomena. Third, to build upon the existing knowledge repository about unearned advantage and answer the call to "interrogate and analyze the specific features of particular forms of dominance" (Pease, 2010, xiii). By revisiting 20 select aspects of McIntosh's (1988) seminal knapsack of White privilege, incorporating first-person and micro-level insights from economically disenfranchised people, I seek to add a class-based perspective to McIntosh's foundational analyses of privilege. The fourth aim of this paper is to review the fundamental macro-level features of the economic system in which class privilege operates. In so doing, I will show how the systemic class privileges of some, and the impoverishment of others, are interdependent and insidiously interwoven into the macro-level structures of the way advanced capitalism operates.

A central motif of this paper is to show that class, as a relevant category of analysis, was largely a *blind spot*—a hidden bias most people carry from a lifetime of exposure to cultural attitudes (Banaji & Greenwald, 2013)—in the seminal work of privilege studies. In contemporary privilege scholarship, subsequent calls to fill this void to understand class privilege are limited. This omission is particularly concerning in a world where "income inequality and class divisions have intensified" (Kendall, 2014, pp. 97–98) and the voices of those harmed by increasing inequality remain subjugated, unheard, and ignored.

The first section of this paper revisits McIntosh's (1988) classic work that laid the foundation for privilege studies and her contemporary (2012/2015) scholarship arguing the necessity of examining the multiple and intersecting forms of privilege and oppression. The second section offers a virtue-centered critique: Highlighting the multiple strengths of McIntosh's humane legacy but also positing a primary methodological limitation in that her otherwise thoughtful analyses of privilege did not incorporate the voices of "Others" facing oppression. The third section reviews how McIntosh's privilege analyses have, in only a limited way, been applied to class in subsequent scholarship (Pease, 2010; Kimmel & Ferber, 2014), analyzing various facets of privilege. The fourth section critically conceptualizes class, privilege, and class privilege, incorporating the well-established and longstanding strengths of how class was defined in both schools of thought emanating from classic social theory. The fifth section juxtaposes class privilege to poverty and argues that strategically contrasting the two concepts reveals a great deal about both phenomena.

The sixth section posits a caveat on class reductionism, given that privilege and oppression take multiple intersecting forms, and single-issue analyses are overly simplistic, intellectually passe, and incomplete. The seventh section of this paper revisits 20 select aspects of McIntosh's (1988) foundational knapsack of White privilege. I posit grounded, micro-level illustrations of class privilege in operation, detailing some of the daily living realities of the class privilege and poverty dichotomy. To do so, I incorporate the existing qualitative and ethnographic literature examining impoverishment to amplify the voices of subaltern people experiencing the particular scenarios McIntosh analyzed. The final section of this paper concisely details the macro-level features of the economic system that enables, legitimizes, and reproduces class privilege. In the contemporary world of corporate capitalism, where an already wide gap of income and wealth inequality has become even more astronomical, the necessity of understanding the big picture context of neoliberalism has never been greater.

A Review of McIntosh's Classic Work on White Privilege and Male Privilege

Peggy McIntosh's scholarship is "ground-breaking and celebrated work" (Mullaly & West, 2018, p. 51) and is foundational for examining invisible and unearned privileges (Kimmel & Ferber, 2014; Pease, 2010). In "White Privilege and Male Privilege: A Personal Account of Coming to See Correspondences Through Work in Women's Studies" (1988), McIntosh recounts that although she had often noticed throughout her academic career that few men sometimes acknowledge that women are disadvantaged in the curriculum, acknowledgments of male over-privilege were virtually nonexistent. She argues that "these denials protect male privilege from being fully recognized, acknowledged, lessened, or ended" (McIntosh, 1988, p. 15). A parallel is then drawn to the phenomenon of invisible "[W]hite privilege that was similarly denied and protected" (McIntosh, 1988, p. 15).

McIntosh reflects on the advantages that she lives with and the disadvantages she avoids, given the color of her skin:

> So I have begun in an untutored way to ask what it is like to have [W]hite privilege. This paper is a partial record of my personal observations and not a scholarly analysis. It is based on my daily experiences within my particular circumstances. (McIntosh, 1988, p. 16)

McIntosh argues that there are several types or layers of denial at work in preventing recognition of men's over-privileged state. Drawing parallels to White privilege, she then posits illustrations of her advantages, examining "forty-six ordinary and daily ways in which I experience having [W]hite privilege by contrast with my African American colleagues in the same building" (McIntosh, 1988, p. 16).

The list is explicitly termed an *invisible knapsack of privilege* to reflect the reality that most people are oblivious to and in denial about its existence. The 46 items on the list, McIntosh (1988) states, detail "those conditions that I think in my case attach somewhat more to skin-color privilege than to class, religion, ethnic status, or geographical location, though these other privileging factors are intricately intertwined" (p. 18). McIntosh writes,

> Some privileges make me feel at home in the world. Others allow me to escape

> the penalties or dangers which others suffer. Through some, I escape fear, anxiety, or a sense of not being welcome or real. Some keep me from having to hide, to be in disguise, to feel sick or crazy, to negotiate each transaction from the position of being an outsider or, within my group, a person who is suspected of having too close links with the dominant culture. Most keep me from having to be angry. (p. 22)

McIntosh (1988) explains why she felt it was important to reflect upon the invisible race-based advantages she lived with, in light of her frustrations with unacknowledged gender-based disadvantages:

> After I realized, through faculty development work in women's studies, the extent to which men work from a base of unacknowledged privilege, I understood that much of their oppressiveness was unconscious. Then I remembered the frequent charges from women of [C]olor that [W]hite women whom they encounter are oppressive. I began to understand why we are justly seen as oppressive, even when we don't see ourselves that way. At the very least, obliviousness of one's privileged state can make a person or group irritating to be with. I began to count the ways in which I enjoyed unearned skin privilege and have been conditioned into oblivion about its existence, unable to see that it put me ahead in any way, or put my people ahead, over-rewarding us and yet also paradoxically damaging us, or that it should be changed. My schooling gave me no training seeing myself as an oppressor, as an unfairly advantaged person, or as a participant in a damaged culture. I was taught to see myself as an individual whose moral state depended on her individual moral will. (p. 17)

She further argues that White privilege is an elusive and fugitive subject: Literary silences on matters of privilege keep unearned advantages protected. *Recognizing unearned privilege* means rejecting the myth of meritocracy and realizing that "many doors open for certain people through no virtues of their own" (McIntosh, 1988, p. 21).

Extending the Knapsack

McIntosh's contemporary works (2012/2015) build upon the classic foundations she laid out in her seminal piece (1988). She details a self-awareness activity, intended primarily for helping professionals, by which people reflect upon their unearned advantages and disadvantages:

> Beginning with my previous work on [W]hite privilege, students can extend this analysis to other domains of privilege, including, for example, gender, class, sexuality, age, nationality, and physical ability, to name a few. The primary goals of this reflective exercise are to help clinicians understand how clients' lives are influenced by societal advantages and disadvantages … and to increase empathy towards clients. (McIntosh, 2015, p. 232)

McIntosh (2012) argues that it is a necessary endeavor to continue critically reflecting on privilege given that

> members of powerful groups do not realize that they are privileged because they don't have the social comparison information to recognize the discrimination they don't experience, the poverty they don't experience, the prejudice they don't experience, but

> which members of subordinate groups do. (p. 197)

And notably, McIntosh (2012) argues, societal obliviousness of privilege is enabled by "ideology, media, and institutions as a whole [that] still deny that systems of privilege exist" (p. 194).

A "Virtue-Centered" Critique of McIntosh

Wright (2015, vi) suggests that a *virtue-centered critique* tries "to figure out what is most useful and interesting rather than mainly to point out what is wrong with a particular theorist's work." McIntosh's (1988) classic work critically reflects upon unearned male and White privileges, duly noting that gender and race are not the only advantaging systems at work for the explicit purpose of recognizing the unrecognized daily living realities of those forms of unearned advantage. I contend that critically reflecting on particular forms of conferred advantage to create an awareness of, and empathy for, people disadvantaged by oppression is immanently useful and profoundly fascinating work.

McIntosh's contemporary works duly implore further explorations of additional forms of conferred advantage. And all of her scholarship facilitates the understanding that "the study of power is not accurate unless it includes [analysis of] disadvantage and privilege" (McIntosh, 2012, p. 195). McIntosh's acclaimed works, then, are firmly grounded in virtue and are valuable and interesting—particularly in our contemporary era of "capitalistic and individualistic ethos" (McIntosh, 2012, p. 203). The ethos of competition and self-interest currently subordinate more humane notions of cooperation and collective interests. And McIntosh's exploration of multiple forms of privilege and oppression, via by comparing and contrasting similarities, helps to lay the groundwork for a critically important realization:

> Each form of oppression is part of a single, complex, inter-related, self-perpetuating system … rest[ing] on a worldview that says we must constantly strive to be better than someone else. (Bishop, 2015, p. 9)

In terms of limitations, McIntosh's (1988, p. 16) method—"untutored … personal observation" that is "not a scholarly analysis" but rather "based on my daily experiences within my particular circumstances"—is not, I contend, as compelling as it could have been. Mullaly and West (2018, xii) argue that in challenging oppression and confronting privilege, "We can [and should] supplement what we know from our experiences by studying the experiences, research, and writings of others." Had McIntosh incorporated relevant literature and presented qualitative first voice accounts of how oppression is lived out to supplement her otherwise thoughtful knapsack of White privilege, she could have made her strong arguments even stronger. Messner (2011, p. 3) argues, "a pedagogy of privilege should always be grounded in the standpoints of subordinated groups of people."

Further, McIntosh's admirable aim of highlighting conferred privilege and exposing unearned advantage could have been further realized, and concretely evidenced, had she taken a more scholarly approach that included a statistical and demographic analysis of what groups are (aggregately) over- and under-represented on important metrics like wealth, poverty, education level, income, unemployment, underemployment, health, mental health and

self-reported well-being (among several others). In short, there are several valid and reliable quantifiable metrics and evidence of how privilege translates into highly predictable aggregate patterns. And failure to incorporate such data into privilege studies is part of what allows "mainstream ideology, the media, and [social] institutions as a whole" to "still deny that systems of privilege exist" (McIntosh, 2012, p. 194).

McIntosh's Legacy of Privilege Analyses Applied to Class Within the Existing Literature

McIntosh's work spawned further analyses of various facets of privilege. Editors Kimmel and Ferber (2014) produced a superlative piece, *Privilege: A Reader*, that opens with a reprint of McIntosh's classic (1988) content and proceeds to posit contributed chapters delving deeper into various sides of multiple forms of privilege (including race, gender, sexuality, disability, and religion). The chapter specifically devoted to analyzing class privilege, by Dianna Kendall, is aptly entitled, "Class: Still Alive and Reproducing in the United States."

Kendall's qualitative work shows that class privilege manifests and reproduces itself by upper-class boundary maintenance and elite child-rearing practices. Geographic boundary maintenance activities include residing in elite homes in remote neighborhoods that long-established elite families overwhelmingly occupy. A common child-rearing practice in these neighborhoods is to strategically ensure that children's friendships and social circles, including the schools they attend, are overwhelmingly limited only to other elitist children from wealthy old-guard families—who exist in a lifeworld where a sense of superiority is reinforced and unquestioned.

Undoing Privilege: Unearned Advantage in a Divided World (Pease, 2010) also posits analyses of multiple aspects of privilege: western global dominance and Eurocentrism, gender and patriarchy, racial formations and White supremacy, institutionalized heterosexuality and heterosexual privilege, and ableist relations and the embodiment of privilege. The chapter devoted explicitly to class is entitled "Political Economy and Class Elitism." Here, Pease (2010, p. 62) examines "how class privilege operates among those [educated middle-class professionals] who are positioned between labour and capital" and asks "how those who have some class privileges engage with their class positioning and classed subjectivity to act in a progressive way on class issues." It is duly noted that,

> It is difficult to write about class in 2009. In the 1970s and 80s, class was at the center of analyses of social and economic inequalities. In the last twenty years or more, the debates about class have declined dramatically. Numerous academics have noted the marginalization of class in social theory across a range of academic disciplines. (Pease, 2010, p. 65)

And class, Pease (2010) notes, has also been marginalized outside of academia given that "the majority of people do not talk about class oppression or the class-based nature of North American society" (p. 66). This silence is part of what allows the myths of meritocracy and upward social mobility to persist and make it appear that privileges are justly earned and accessible to anyone willing to work hard. Middle-class professionals, Pease argues, are rarely concerned with recognizing or dispelling these myths as they benefit from them. The article concludes by arguing that "those of

us who are professional workers need to understand how we have internalized class into our psyches and address the role that we play in reproducing class-based oppression" (Pease, 2010, p. 85).

The luxury of obliviousness is a significant contributor to the reproduction of class privilege. Below, when I revisit 20 select aspects of McIntosh's knapsack of White privilege to examine some of the realities of class privilege (and oppression), my analyses will draw upon the existing literature. More specifically, I will highlight the subjugated voices of economically disenfranchised people given that, "We need to take seriously the question asked by Fine (2002, p. 20), 'Who is absent? Who is excluded? And who is refused and audience?'" (Lott & Bullock, 2007, p. 20). Prior to examining the lived realities of class privilege, a detailed definition of the term is warranted, given that "We need a more finely differentiated taxonomy of privilege" (McIntosh, 1988, p. 21).

Defining Class, Privilege, and Class Privilege

Understanding class privilege necessitates a precise definition of the term "class" and clarity about what exactly is meant by the appendage "privilege":

> Privilege studies call on scholars to be as careful and nuanced as possible in all of our uses of language, and they also call on us to devise new language adequate for the complexities of this area of observation and inquiry. (McIntosh, 2012, p. 201)

Longstanding definitions of class originate in classic social theory. Marx and Weber are the most notable theoreticians who defined and analyzed class. I believe that devising a new language to articulate the contemporary realities of class privilege adequately necessitates incorporating the definitional strengths of classic theoretical work.

Defining Class

Conceptualizing Class: Marx

Marx deemed *classes* to be "categories of social actors defined by the property relations which generate exploitation" (Wright, 1994, p. 45). More specifically, *class*

> refer[s] to groups whose "economic conditions of existence compel them to live separately from one another" and who have a "mode of life" different from each other. Marx links the existence of social class to the development of property relations in society and defines a class in terms of its relationship to the means of production. Class is also used in Marx to refer to a historical principle evident in the laws of economic development and the repetition of class relations throughout history. (Morrison, 1995, pp. 310–311)

In short, Marx felt that one's *class position* in a capitalist system[i] was defined either by ownership of the means of production or by non-ownership, thus compelling one to sell their labor in order to survive. Owners of the means of production (bourgeoisie) dominate non-owners (proletariat) given that they extract *surplus value* from their labor—what workers produce creates more value than what they receive in remuneration, and owners appropriate the difference.

The phrase *mode of life* (a way of living) is useful for distinguishing a critical

difference between classes. The relations of production in a capitalist system are relations of class domination. Some people possess the privilege of living in material opulence—without having to work—just by owning the means of production or revenue-generating assets or properties; others are forced to sell their labor to survive, and it is not uncommon for a sizeable portion of those people to receive poverty wages (Munger, 2002; Neuman,1999). The wealth of the former is interdependent upon the impoverishment of the latter (Wright, 2000, p. 10). And notably, the repetition and reproduction of class relations throughout history is evident and made possible by laws of economic development.

Notwithstanding the merits of Marx's conceptualization of class—owning the means of production mattered in the early years of liberalism and still matters a great deal in the contemporary era of neoliberalism (Wright, 2000, p. 39)—there are also finite limits to Marx's definition given the complexities of class that transcend a simple dichotomy between ownership and non-ownership of the means of production. One limitation of Marx's classic conceptualization of class is that "many people do not seem to neatly fit this polarized image" (Wright, 2000, xiii) and "it does not provide us with an adequate conceptual framework for explaining many of the things we want class to explain" (Wright, 2000, p. 15).

Conceptualizing Class: Weber

Morrison (1995) summarizes Max Weber's conceptualization of *social class*:

> Groups who "share the same causal component of life chances." In this, [Weber] differentiated himself from Marx, who thought that social class was defined by ownership of the means of production. Weber went beyond Marx by identifying two distinct categories of class. In the first category, the class situation is determined by the ownership of usable property, which creates life chances in the form of rents and returns on investments. In the second category, the class situation is determined by the kinds of skills and services that can be put up for sale in the market and which are the direct result of training and education. (pp. 340–341)

In Weber's own words,

> We may speak of a *class* when (1) a number of people have in common a specific causal component of their life chances, in so far as (2) this component is represented exclusively by economic interests in the possession of goods and opportunities for income, and (3) is represented under conditions of the commodity of labor market … These points refer to "the class situation." (Wright, 2000, p. 28)

Weber's definition of class is significant given that there is enormous variation of the monetary returns appropriated by those who share the common feature of selling their labor on the market. The possession of valued skills or expertise (for non-owners of the means of production) puts them in a "privileged appropriation location within exploitation relations" (Wright, 2000, p. 19). And the privileges of upper middle-class appropriation locations are increasing, quite drastically, relative to workers: In 1965, the CEO-to-worker pay ratio was 20:1. In 2018, it was 287:1.[ii]

Some workers command higher incomes, at least relative to workers without

valued skills or expertise: "The specific mechanism through which this appropriation takes place can be referred to as *loyalty rent* [emphasis added]" (Wright, 2000, p. 17).[iii] CEOs sell their labor but can receive extraordinarily large sums in remuneration. Further, they hold a great deal of power and control over the fate of frontline labour and thus occupy a contradictory class location in that they are subordinate to owners but still play a role in the exploitation of workers.

The social status that comes from specialized credentials, and the higher pay, also carries a symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1984) and can facilitate distinctive material lifestyles that differentiate one from the typical working-class (Wright, 2000, p. 19). In short, skills and credentialed expertise can be seen "as an asset embodied in the labor power of people which enhances their power in labor markets and the labor process" (Wright, 2000, p. 19).

The Commonalities in Marx and Weber's Classic Conceptualizations of Class

Notwithstanding the differences mentioned above between Marx and Weber, "control over economic resources is central to both Marxist and Weberian class analysis" (Wright, 2000, p. 27). For Marx, that control lay in ownership of the means of production. For Weber, ownership of usable property creating a return in the form of rent, or return on investment, is one form of control over an economic resource. Further, ownership and control over specialized and credentialed labor power are valuable economic resources and can be considered a hallmark of Weberian class analysis.

Wright (2000) posits an inventory of the commonalities between Marx and Weber's views on class:

- Both transcend simple gradational notions of class that consider only the material conditions of life. As important as those material conditions are, "Both Marx and Weberian class analysis define classes relationally, i.e., a given class location is defined by virtue of the social relations which link it to other class locations" (Wright, 2000, p. 27).
- Both theorists emphasize the concept of class "with the relationship between people and economically relevant assets or resources" (Wright, 2000, p. 27). What Marx termed the means of production and what Weber called market capacities were both about similar phenomena.
- Further,

  > Both traditions see the causal relevance of class as operating, at least in part, via the ways that these relationships shape material interests of actors. Ownership of the means of production or ownership of one's own labor power is explanatory of social action because these property rights shape the strategic alternatives people face in pursuing their material well-being: "What you have determines what you get, and what you have determines what you have to do to get what you get." (Wright, 2000, p. 28)

- Finally, "at their core, both class concepts involve the causal connection between (a) social relations to resources and (b) material interests via (c) the way resources shape strategies for acquiring income" (Wright, 2000, p.

28).

Understanding the conceptualizations of class grounded in classic social theory becomes even more relevant for understanding the contemporary world of advanced capitalism when adding the appendage "privilege" to the term "class."

Defining Privilege

Kruks (2005) traces the origin of the word "privilege" to the term *privelegium* derived from two Latin words, *privus* (meaning "private") and *legis* (meaning "law") (Taiwo, 2017, p. 17). Notably, the genesis of the term *privilege* explicitly denotes that only certain groups have access (private) and that formal laws (legis) enforce the existing order. Laws and edicts play a crucial role in creating, sustaining, and increasing privilege. Glasbeek (2017) argues that in the contemporary era of neoliberalism, class privileges have become further entrenched in laws and policies—ultimately giving more to those who already have the most.

Defining Class Privilege

Class privilege, then, is a powerful (and often insidious) form of self-reproducing and legally sanctioned financial, material, social and relational advantage that affect one's opportunities for income, well-being, social standing, and life chances. Ownership and control over economically relevant assets (such as the means of production, revenue-generating properties, credentialed market capacities) are the foundations of class in a class-divided society. Class-based advantages exist in widely varying degrees; they shape living conditions, realistic choices, opportunities, hope, impact how others perceive people, and how they perceive themselves.

It is (aggregately) well established that class positions exert enormous influence on critically important measures like social capital, health, mental health, education, and well-being. The wealthy are given advantages and privileges, not due to ineluctable differences, and often not because they earned them in any meaningful sense of the word "earned." Their advantage, their privileged treatment, is created and structurally supported by a legal system that pretends that our social relations are not class-divided, and that law does not intend to favour one class over all others. Unlike most other privileges, then, class privilege is specifically and pointedly created by law. The purpose is to maintain and perpetuate capitalist relations of production, which, in turn, intends to allow one class to exercise power over all others even though everything in our political and legal discourse says we eschew such an approach.

Class Privilege Juxtaposed to Poverty

There is a consensus in the burgeoning field of privilege studies that privilege is the flipside of oppression, and both phenomena are "two sides of the same coin" (Mullaly & West, 2018, xi). I believe that the definition of class privilege posited above becomes clearer and more meaningful when it is juxtaposed to what it can be most distinguished from: poverty. If poverty, as Nobel prize-winning economist Amartya Sen (1992) astutely claims, is not just a matter of low well-being but also the inability to pursue well-being precisely because of the lack of economic means, then class privilege can be seen as the polar opposite of poverty. On many essential aggregate measures and life outcomes, including the longevity of life itself (Case & Deaton, 2020), class privilege not only facilitates well-being—it helps maintain and reproduce it.

A second and equally thoughtful definition of poverty that is even more descriptive and graphic was posited by The Royal Commission on the Status of Women of Canada (1977, p. 311):

> *Poverty* [emphasis added] is to be without sufficient money, but it is also to have little hope for better things. It is a feeling that one is unable to control one's destiny, that one is powerless in a society that respects power. The poor have very limited access to means of making known their situation and their needs. To be poor is to feel apathy, alienation from society, entrapment, hopelessness, and to believe that whatever you do will not turn out successfully. (as cited in Chappell, 2014, pp. 237–238)

Again, contrasting the freedoms of class privilege with unfreedoms of poverty teaches us a great deal about both concepts. Class privilege, then, is not just about having an abundance of money—it is also about having realistic hope for even better things. It is a feeling that one controls one's destiny and has power (and money) in a society that respects both. The wealthy have the means to make known their situation and needs. To possess class privilege is generally conducive to feeling hope, connection to a society that has treated one well, freedom, and the belief that whatever one does will turn out successfully.

A Crucial Caveat on Class Reductionism

Audre Lorde once said, "There is no [such] thing as a single-issue struggle because we do not live single-issue lives." Privilege and oppression take multiple forms. Zoning in on just one form of oppression—while failing to see that everyone has multiple aspects to their identity—is not only overly simplistic and intellectually passe; class reductionism (or any single-issue analysis) does a tremendous injustice to the people hurt by multiple forms of inequality.

All racial minorities are virtually, or perhaps wholly, guaranteed to have their lives adversely impacted by racism. But the way racism manifests itself and the options, protections, and resources that people have to deal with it vary based on class position (among other factors).

To illustrate: When the Toronto Raptors won the NBA championship in 2019, and team President and General Manager Masai Ujiri was walking on to the court to celebrate with the team that he built, a security guard stopped and pushed him while he was attempting to reach for his identification. That security guard later filed a frivolous lawsuit against Ujiri, claiming that he was assaulted, and the Alameda County Sheriff's Office released this patently dishonest statement, "We 100% stand by our original statement that was released that Mr. Ujiri is the aggressor in this incident. Don't be quick to judge based off of what lawyers are saying." Video footage of the incident in question shows, clearly, that Masai Ujiri was not the aggressor.[iv]

To his everlasting credit, Masai Ujiri was informed and compassionate enough to recognize how the racism he faced (as real and terrible as it was) is partially mediated by his class privilege:

> What saddens me most about this ordeal is that the only reason why I am getting the justice I deserve in this moment is because of my success. Because I'm the President of an NBA team, I had access to resources that ensured I could demand

> and fight for my justice. So many of my brothers and sisters haven't had, don't have, and won't have the same access to resources that assured my justice. (Ujiri, 2019)

Ujiri seemed aware that the brutal taste of racism he experienced from law enforcement would likely have been more severe—and perhaps disabling or fatal—had he lived in a different socioeconomic lifeworld.

Like Anne Bishop (2015, p. 10), "I regain hope every time I see someone reach out past the boundaries of their own oppression to understand and support someone else's struggle."

Critical theorists who share a deep visceral commitment to ameliorating any type of systemic inequality are well served to heed Bishop's (2015) humane and compelling words of wisdom:

> When I see people competing, claiming their own oppression as the "worst," or attacking the gains made by other oppressed groups, I see us all running on a treadmill. As long as we try to end our oppression by rising above others, we are reinforcing each other's oppression and eventually our own. We are fighting over who has more value, who has less instead of asking why we must be valued as more or less. We are investing energy in the source of all our oppressions, which is competition itself. (p. 9)

Below, I analyze some unanalyzed features of class privilege by revisiting 20 select aspects of McIntosh's foundational knapsack, given that the class-based aspects of privilege were a blind spot (Banaji & Greenwald, 2013) in the seminal work of privilege studies. That said, I am convinced that White privilege and male privilege are clearly prevalent and institutionalized features of the world we live in—and this is concretely evidenced by, among other indicators, the demographics of both extreme wealth and poverty. My analyses, then, seek to supplement and build upon, not detract from, McIntosh's work. Thus, while examining the forthcoming illustrations of class privilege, the reader is explicitly asked to keep in mind that both privilege and oppression exist in multiple intersecting forms.

Revisiting the Knapsack: Unpacking Class-Privilege

While McIntosh's (1988) invisible knapsack of White privileges was compelling, Khan (2001, p. 7) argues, "If we add class to the mix [in examining privilege], we see something quite different." Because "a pedagogy of privilege should always be grounded in the standpoints of subordinated groups of people" (Messner, 2011, p. 3), my illuminations of class privilege take place via contrast: By strategically positing first voice accounts taken primarily from qualitative and ethnographic scholarship detailing the daily living realities of impoverishment. The forthcoming illustrations collectively show that having access to economically relevant resources can provide self-perpetuating freedoms, choices, social status, and opportunities that people living in poverty go without.

1. Moving or relocating to an area that one would want to live.

> In a market system, housing is distributed primarily based on the ability to pay. The more money one has, the more housing options one will be able to access. There is

freedom in owning a home in a healthy, safe, and desirable neighborhood. There is unfreedom in being homeless or renting in an unhealthy, unsafe, and undesirable community corroded by poverty. For example, having the financial resources to relocate where and when one wants provides freedom and choices in work, educational, vocational, and social opportunities.

Having less money means having fewer housing options (Layton, 2000). Waiting lists for social housing are several years, and low-cost housing units are becoming scarcer in the age of government austerity (Neysmith, Bezanson, & O'Connell, 2005, p. 141). Some people can work full time their entire adult life and still struggle to afford rent—and have the prospect of owning their own home undercut by insufficient wages (Goode & Maskovsky, 2001). Rapidly rising property costs further entrench the wealth of those who already own property. The realities of neoliberalism (Harvey, 2009) mean that the inequality gap has widened, and there are more people with less money. Yet, homelessness in mainstream political consciousness is attributed mainly to the moral and character deficiencies of the poor (Hurtig, 1999, pp. 46–53).

The need to move for some people is prompted by the reality that they can no longer pay their rent. In order to relocate and rent elsewhere, first and last month's rent is often required—on top of other moving costs beyond some peoples' reach. One respondent living in poverty and with a disability was unable to move away from a cockroach-infested unit because they had no transportation, and their current location was within walking distance to needed medical services (Neysmith, Bezanson, & O'Connell, 2005, p. 131). Another respondent in the same study reported, "I want to move, but I can't find a good, suitable place where my kids can be ok, and I don't have to worry about [her son] crawling on the ground and picking up cockroaches" (p. 133).

Class privileged people typically have the material resources—and thus freedom—to avoid or leave undesirable living conditions. Poor peoples' lack of material resources typically translates into unfreedom. They exist and remain in unhealthy circumstances—perhaps even have their living conditions deteriorate if they must deal with a disinterested landlord or face eviction for being unable to pay rent.

2. Avoiding those one has been trained to mistrust.

The establishment of upper-class homes in elite neighborhoods, sometimes within gated communities, affords class privileged people the boundary maintenance capacity to distance themselves from underprivileged people (Kendall, 2014, pp. 97–105) who are deemed untrustworthy and potentially dangerous. "We are schooled to recognize and be wary of people who are members of subordinate groups" (Mullaly & West, 2018, p. 40). Given that the privileged and underprivileged have differential

access to quality schools and workplaces, class privilege often entails the power to (largely) avoid spending much time with underprivileged people.

It has been argued that class distinctions entail different "economic conditions of existence [that] compel [people from different classes] to live separately from one another" (Morrison, 1995, pp. 310–311). A different form of social distancing has always been in vogue among the elite long before the current COVID-19 pandemic. Class privilege can facilitate preferences about social proximity and whom one spends time with, whereas poverty limits options. Mullaly and West feel that privileged people utilize distancing and avoidance mechanisms, in part because "if they were to get too close to [underprivileged] people, they would find it more difficult to maintain the denial and illusion [of meritocracy] and would have to deal with the troubles that surround privilege and oppression" (Mullaly & West, 2018, p. 51).

3. "Treatment / Social interaction in neighborhood of residence."

The neighborhood one lives in and the neighbors one interacts with are likely to be influenced by class privileges that facilitate or debilitate the friendliness of a locale. One's social class position can, and does, exert a significant influence on how one is likely to be treated in social interactions—and wealthy neighborhoods are not burdened by the material deprivations and accompanying toxic stressors that impoverished communities live with. An overlooked aspect of the seminal research that prompted tenuous theorizing about the culture of poverty is articulated by Oliver Lafarge, "Above all, where hunger and discomfort rule, there is little spare energy for the gentler, warmer, less utilitarian emotions and little chance for active happiness" (Lafarge in Lewis, 1959, ix).

Happy neighborhoods will, naturally, have more pleasant interactions and fewer unpleasant exchanges. A National Bureau of Economic Research study found:

> When we compare the average characteristics of the most and least happy urban communities, we find a number of large matching differences in census-based variables. In particular, in the happiest quintile of urban neighborhoods, incomes are higher, unemployment is lower, fewer people spend more than 30% of their incomes on housing. (Helliwell, Shiplett, & Barrignton-Lee, 2018, p. 18)

John Heliwell, the lead author of the study, argues that "The physical environment has a big effect on the friendliness of a place."[v]

Those "living comfortably in suburbia, miles from the epicenters of hardship" (Abramsky, 2013, p. 3) can avoid being the brunt of both poor-bashing and the accompanying politics of exclusion (Swanson, 2001) by virtue of their class privilege. In research examining

welfare reform in Ontario from the perspective of those most directly impacted, one respondent on social assistance reported that she was told, "Every person [in her neighborhood] on welfare should be forced to account for every piece of toilet paper that they use" (Bratton, 2010, p. 177). Another respondent in the same study advised that when people find out you are on welfare, "You are treated like you are the lowest form of human being on earth because you need assistance" (Bratton, 2010, p. 186). While McIntosh perceptively noted that her White privilege often makes her feel at home in the world, for some, class-based unfreedoms of social exclusion make it impossible to feel at home in a world where they are homeless.

4. Shopping without fear of harassment or scrutiny.

In a consumer society (Bauman, 2000), shopping is essential. One's identity—as good or bad, law-abiding or criminal—is affected by one's perceived social class and the social status brought about by consumption and one's appearance. It matters, then, that at one end of class privilege, some people can shop anywhere and purchase virtually anything anytime they want.

The experience of shopping is also different between the classes. Extremely wealthy people are not likely to be followed by undercover building security or store detectives. On the contrary, if it became necessary, wealthy persons could hire personal security to ensure that no one steals from, follows, or harasses them.

For the economically disenfranchised, poverty can severely limit or completely take away one's capacity to shop. Some people are "too cash strapped to go to malls" (Abramsky, 2013, p. 4). A woman I interviewed on social assistance reported that she dreads days nearing the end of the month, where there is no money to shop for even necessities (Bratton, 2010, p. 191). Similarly, a focus group of social assistance recipients in Niagara Falls described their circumstances to create "[a]n understanding of poverty from those who are poor" (Baker-Collins, 2005, p. 19). The group unanimously concurred, "The end of the month is described as 'you've lost it, not enough to buy bread and milk, nerves are gone'" (Baker-Collins, 2005, p. 19).

In terms of being followed by store security, a respondent in Neysmith et al. (2005, p. 136) reported that when she looks "dreary" and goes to the store, "People are watching me because they probably think I am going to steal something." If one has the appearance of being poor, they are not likely to be exempt from the excessive scrutiny of law enforcement (Hester & Eglin, 1992; Homan, 2007). For example, when exiting a retail store and the greeter requests to see the purchase receipt. It is more likely that a person who appears poor to be stopped than a person who appears confident and financially secure.

5. Being stigmatized by the media.

Television stations and newspapers are owned and operated by a select few media empires (Winseck, 2008). And the media portrayals of poor people are generally negative (Rose & Baumgartner, 2013). According to Sears (2014), "the media . . . tend to portray the current government and corporate policies [even when they further entrench unearned class privilege and concurrently exacerbate poverty] as self-evident truths that only the irrational could challenge" (p. 2). Corporate media delivered a relatively predominant message and disseminated it throughout the popular culture in neoliberalism:

hard work + intelligence + persistence = *wealth*, while

laziness + stupidity + quitting too easily = *poverty*.

It is common for scapegoating attacks to be towards the poor in the media (Baxter, 1997, p. 40). A recent illustration can be seen in a typical *Toronto Sun* media headline: "You'll be footing the bill for freeloaders with Guaranteed Annual Income" (Lilley, 2018). Rose and Baumgartner (2013) have shown:

> Media discussion of poverty has shifted from arguments that focus on the structural causes of poverty [during the early years of the welfare state] or the social costs of having large numbers of poor to portrayals of the poor as cheaters and chiselers and of welfare programs doing more harm than good. As the frames have shifted, policies have followed. (p. 22)

Neoliberal austerity policies have followed and have legitimized the widening of what was an already massive gap between society's "haves" and "have nots." Poor people cannot help but be exposed to what is written about them. One respondent in *Telling Tales: Living the Effects of Public Policy* explained:

> Why should I listen to something that is going to be bashing me? It's like buying the Sun paper. Why am I going to buy a paper that is going to give me more concern, anxiety? I just don't. Things that drive me nuts; I just try to cut myself off from it. (Neysmith et al., 2005, p. 155)

6. Participating in extracurricular activities and accessing curricular material.

The parents' class position influences the extracurricular activities and materials, such as books, vacations, and community experiences that children can access. In a study using in-depth naturalistic observation and interviews with the middle class, working-class, and low-income families, Lareau (2011) established that there are "largely invisible but powerful ways that parents' social class impacts childrens' life experiences" (p. 3).

There are extracurricular events and endeavors that middle and

upper-class children are likely to participate in that poor kids typically miss out on. These disadvantages do more than provide well-funded children with a comparatively more eventful childhood. There is a "concerted cultivation" at work, building the "cultural repertoires" (Lareau, 2001, pp. 4–7) of privileged children that function to transmit educational, social, and career success—and thus intergenerational class privilege. And yet, class privileged researchers utilize methods that patently fail to account for the daily living realities of class privilege and oppression. Consequently, these are the same persons who attribute academic success to the supposedly admirable qualities of self-discipline and grit of the student (Duckworth & Seligman, 2005).

The phenomenon Sen (1992) termed *capability deprivation* occurs when children are deprived of basic material living standards that restrict their range of options about how to live and when they do not have access to capability-enhancing materials and experiences available to middle and upper-class children. A specific illustration can be seen in the class-based pattern of book-ownership because the number of books in the home is reliably related to household income (Schutz, Ursprung, & Woessmann, 2008, pp. 287–288). According to the children in grades 4 and 5 at a North Bay, Ontario, Canada school, a bothersome aspect of their poverty is not being able to buy books at schoolbook fairs (Interfaith Social Assistance Reform Coalition, 1998, p. 107). Not surprisingly, "the relationship between household income and books at home [does] not vary significantly across countries" (Hannum & Xie, 2016, p. 464).

7. Having one's voice heard.

A class privileged person interacting among a group of poor people is apt to feel, and likely be perceived as, superior. Their voice and views are very likely to be heard. In part, this is because (a) *overconfidence*—"the extent to which people hold inaccurate and overly positive perceptions of themselves beyond what reality can justify" (Moore & Healy, 2008, as cited in Belmi et al., 2019, p. 2)—is more prevalent among the upper classes, and (b) overconfidence can function to confer social advantage among the upper classes "by making them appear competent in the eyes of others" (Belmi et al., 2019, p. 4).

Conversely, a poor person within a group of class privileged people is likely to be treated as inferior, and when trying to communicate, their words go unheard, be misinterpreted, and views discredited. Long time anti-poverty activist Sheila Baxter (1997) recounts aspects of her grass-roots advocacy work being unduly criticized, misconstrued, and silenced despite her experiential knowledge of impoverishment that her upper middle-class critics, and purported allies, lacked:

> I have so many memories of speaking and being [mis]interpreted. [Wealthier] people say things like, "What

> Sheila is trying to say is" or "What Sheila means to say is" or "What Sheila meant was" When I speak from my working-class perspective, I know what I say, and I know what I mean. (viii)

In a world of so-called experts and professionals, it is not uncommon for poorer people to be spoken over during conversation or given condescending feedback—regardless of credibility on a topic or issue.

8. **Securing products and services in bookstores, grocery markets, and hair salons.**

The quality and quantity of books, food, and hair maintenance available to people are widened by wealth and narrowed by impoverishment. Books are unlikely to be a priority for someone struggling to pay for the necessities of life, and even if a poor person does opt to enter a book shop, they cannot count on writings from their class being represented.

Writings from middle and upper-class authors are in abundance at most bookstores, and class-privileged readers can own their own personal library. The voices of the poor are usually subjugated (Interfaith Social Assistance Reform Coalition, 1998) or sometimes entirely nonexistent in most published writings. As Baxter (1997) notes, "We, the non-academic working-class poor, don't have many books that speak our true voices. Often when someone like me writes, our thoughts are reconstructed by others who feel that [formal] education brings the authority to interpret our meaning" (vii).

The important experiential education one receives by living in poverty is considered unimportant. Homan (2007, p. 3) argues that in analyzing poverty, "Most of what has been said or written has come from those who have never personally experienced the negative effects of classism and the social injustice of poverty."

A wealthy person has more food choices for at least three reasons: First, because with reliable transportation, they can access more supermarkets (and drive their groceries home instead of being limited by what they can carry); second, because they have the resources to buy better quality and more quantity of food; and third, they can more easily afford countless cooking tools, devices, and storage. At the top end of class privilege, people can hire personal chefs.

In terms of finding desirable and appropriate food, it should be noted that the drastic increase in food bank usage is a powerful indicator that there are more people, about four million across Canada, who are struggling to find the resources to eat sufficiently (www.foodbankscanada.ca). Inadequate income plays a pivotal role in food insecurity (Smilek et al., 2001) and the healthiness of one's diet:

> There are socioeconomic gradients in diet such that those

> who are better off consume healthier diets than the less well to do. The available evidence suggests that income affects food intake both directly and indirectly through the dispositions associated with particular class locations. (Power, 2005, p. 37)

A neglected aspect of impoverishment is the effect it tends to have on diet, and thus health, "Food price becomes the most important consideration in food choice when income is restricted, often leading to the selection of foods that are higher in sugar and fat because they are among the least expensive sources of dietary energy" (Taylor, Evers, & McKenna, 2005, p. 21).

The misguided perception that poverty is not a problem in developed countries because obesity exists among the poor is oblivious to the daily living realities of impoverishment. Some people cannot "buy food anywhere other than dollar stores" (Abramsky, 2013, p. 4). Others are limited to what is given to them at food banks, which in many cases are high in fat and simple carbohydrates.

A respondent in Neysmith, Bezanson, and O'Connell (2005, p. 134) detailed her experience, "Sometimes the children miss a meal, and it's not all the time that I can cook healthy. To cook healthy, like a meal with vegetables, is expensive." Similarly, a woman that I once interviewed detailed a harsh reality of welfare checks being insufficient:

> Nearing the end of the month, there are some days when you just have to get your body used to skipping meals. It is not good for me, and there are days when I feel lifeless, like there is nothing in me anymore. And I just lie in bed because getting up burns energy I know I am not going to have. (Bratton, 2010, p. 190)

Money also provides more access to high-end salons, better quality hair products, and skilled hairstylists. Hair maintenance is a relevant issue because it can limit employment opportunities. An overlooked aspect of class privilege is that one will not lose out on a job opportunity because they could not afford a haircut going into an interview.

Poverty can mean that one does not have money for a haircut. This reality is clearly lost on some people, even those paid to help the poor purportedly. Capponi (1999, p. 42) reports that she encountered a man who was told by his welfare worker that he needed to cut his hair or be cut off social assistance for non-compliance. The worker was oblivious to the fact that the man had no money for a haircut and presumed that his appearance was attributable to irresponsible non-compliance as opposed to economic deprivation.

The differential access to books, foods, and hair maintenance translates into differential life chances because reading ability, health, and a marketable appearance are all affected.

9. Appearing financially reliable.

The ability to appear financially reliable is a class-privilege-related matter. The economic status of people at both ends of the socioeconomic stratum is judged by the style, cleanliness, and quality of their clothing and appearance. Buying a new Armani suit and having it tailored before an elite job interview sends the message to elite employers: "I am one of you" and increases one's chances of being hired. At the other end of the socioeconomic stratum, appearing economically deprived is almost certain to disqualify one from elite employment and is likely to be a barrier for acquiring even working-class jobs. Employers tend not to hire anyone with rotting teeth because this is often deemed a sure sign of long-term impoverishment and a physical marker of individual failure (Homan, 2007).

In a documentary about the hidden homeless—*It Was a Wonderful Life* (Ohayon, 1993)—a former pharmacist reports that she is no longer employable in her profession because she no longer has the means to iron her clothes, straighten her hair, or shower regularly given that she resides in her car. In addition to appearance affecting employment status and hiring decisions, businesses also use dress codes (in part) to screen out customers who do not appear financially reliable (Capponi, 1999, p. 41). All of this adds to the issues in the illustration before this: Without access to proper hygiene and necessary attire, destitute people cannot even get past the front door of a bank, retail store, or hair salon.

10. Protecting one's young children from people who may not like them.

Class is one factor, among several, that influences what children are likely to require protection from being disliked, rejected, and bullied by their peers. Having access to class privilege can provide parents with some capacity to protect their children from social exclusion. Healthy kids with the coolest toys, electronics, clothes, and sporting equipment that enable them to participate in their active lifestyles are more likely to experience formative years of safety and social inclusion. The parents of privileged children can host more appealing birthday parties that build their children's social networks. They can also send more desirable gifts to parties that their children are invited to.

However, some parents do not have the resources or living space to throw even a modest party for their children. A respondent in Ali et al. (2018) "remembered from childhood how no one wanted to play with children from low-income neighborhoods and how such children were bullied" (p. 316).

Teenagers and children from low-income families can encounter challenges in interpersonal relationships that privileged children typically do not face. One mother described her daughter's experience:

> It is very hard to hide the fact that you have no money. To have friends my age who are not on assistance, like to meet new people and for them to come into my house and to see only dollar store stuff. Their kids all have cell phones, and they all know right away when they come in that I am poor and that my daughter is poor. And it has such a negative effect on my daughter. She was like, "You know, Mom, I can't date any guys that come from wealthy families." I was like, "Why?" And she said, "Cause we're poor." You know, but it certainly is a huge blow, huge, to her self-esteem that I can't really have friends. It is hard to make friends with other families because it is so obvious that we have nothing, and people judge you for that—they do. (Bratton, 2010, p. 179)

Parents themselves can have their social life constrained by impoverishment, even if they are resourceful and determined enough to access the limited social activities that are free. One respondent in Neysmith, Bezanson, and O'Connell (2005) explained,

> Like the choir [a social activity that did not cost money] and everything, it keeps me active, and it keeps my mind going, and I feel like I am not vegetating. But I have no friendships from any of these things that I do because I can't go out and socialize afterward because it takes money to be able to do those things. (p. 30)

For parents and children alike, class privilege can expand social opportunities that can help protect them from social exclusion.

11. Needing to educate children about systemic prejudice to keep them safe.

A neglected aspect of class privilege is the impact it has on safety. "Increasingly, wealthy privileged people find themselves living in gated communities complete with private security companies to protect their property and their lives" (Mullaly & West, 2018, p. 36). The children living in those gated communities are undoubtedly much safer than children living in urban ghettoes. Underprivileged parents cannot afford to purchase physical safety for their kids. Rylko-Bauer and Farmer (2016) argue:

> Structural violence is the violence of injustice and inequity—"embedded in ubiquitous social structures [and] normalized by stable institutions and regular experience" (Winter & Leighton, 2001, p. 99). By structures, we mean social relations arrangements—economic, political, legal, religious, or cultural—that shape how individuals and groups interact within a social system. These include broad-scale cultural and political-economic structures such as …neoliberalism, as well as poverty. These structures are violent because they result in avoidable deaths, illness, and

> injury: and they reproduce violence by marginalizing people and communities, constraining their capabilities and agency, assaulting their dignity, and sustaining inequalities. (p. 47)

In Ontario, 89% of children involved with child protection authorities live in families struggling to pay for the necessities of life (Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies, 2013). According to Wedeles (2015), "Children from families with low incomes are at five times greater risk for abuse and neglect when compared to their upper socioeconomic status peers" (p. 3). The exact causal role of socioeconomic status on child welfare outcomes is not clear, and increased surveillance of marginalized populations occurs in child welfare (Swift, 1995). But it should also be noted that the perpetual stress of poverty can become too much for some parents. DiAngelo (2006, p. 51) writes, "If we got sick, our Mother [*sic*]would beat us, screaming that we could not get sick because she could not afford to take us to the doctor."

Children's physical safety is very much impacted by ascribed socioeconomic factors over which they have no control. Children in low-income urban settings "are confronted with the constant challenge of population density and associated problems, including housing that is either inadequate or unaffordable, crowding, limited access to resources, and high rates of crime" (Black & Krishnakumar, 1998, p. 635).

Educating children about the reasoning behind all of this—systemic classism—poses significant challenges, like opposing other systemic forms of prejudice and bigotry. The common cultural phenomena of dislike, prejudice, and bigotry towards the poor, and its flipside of favorable prejudice (Allport, 1954, p. 6) and reverence for those with wealth, have not even been named in public discourse. Media outlets owned by wealthy people do not use the word classism. People who hold blatantly classist views are rarely seen as classist. Many people are convinced that almost all rich people are highly driven go-getters who have earned everything they have and that most poor people have a "well-deserved reputation" (Allport, 1954, p. 87) because they genuinely are unmotivated freeloaders who cannot defer gratification.

12. Receiving differential treatment at school and work.

How teachers and employers treat people, and the norms at schools and workplaces, are influenced by, among other factors, class-based judgments. Students from poorer homes are judged and may even have disciplinary action taken against them because of the quality of their clothing. One mother reported that she was called to pick up her son from school because of an emerging hole in his jeans (Levins & Lunberg, 2018). Parents themselves can experience differential treatment from their children's teachers, "unlike a low-income mother, one who is more affluent can look

forward to respectful treatment in her children's school" (Lott & Bullock, 2007, p. 6).

DiAngelo writes about her childhood experiences of impoverishment, regular evictions, and living with relatives or in her parents' car, where it was difficult to maintain hygiene. "My teacher once held my hands up to my fourth-grade class as an example of poor hygiene and with the class as [my] audience, told me to go home and tell my mother to wash me" (2006, p. 51).

Homan (2007) argues that "Class shapes educational opportunity and experience. [This is because] teachers are mostly from middle-class backgrounds and therefore relate better with students like themselves" (p. 38). It should not be surprising, then, that the academic failure of youth in low-income neighborhoods is "often associated with living in those neighborhoods" (Ainsworth, 2002, p. 117).

As far as treatment in the workforce, some employers have class-based biases as it was found that people get turned down for jobs just because they are on social assistance (Swanson, 2001, p. 83). A young man that I encountered as a respondent in my doctoral research (Bratton, 2010) described a job interview:

> I went to the local McDonald's. I was dressed nice, you know. I took my resume with me. I filled out their application, and I got an interview. So, I went in for the interview to flip hamburgers or clean, or whatever, and I thought that it was going pretty good. Then they asked me what I was presently doing, and I told them that I was trying to get off welfare. Well, it was a mistake to tell them that. At the end of the interview, the manager looked at me and said, "I am sorry, Mr. Taggart [pseudonym], I cannot hire you." And I go, "What do you mean? Why can't you hire me?" He said that I was not qualified to flip their hamburgers. I asked him why, and he just said, "I am sorry, I cannot hire you." (p. 182)

With despondency, this young man expanded on his story and reported that the manager who interviewed him:

> [He] wouldn't tell me why [I was not getting the job], but he didn't have to because I could tell from the moment, I told him that I was on welfare that there just would not be a job for me. I went back and got my grade 12 because I wanted to work, but it was not quite that simple. (Bratton, 2010, pp. 182–183)

13. Sharing political opinions and receiving validation.

When class-privileged people, right-wing "think tanks," and the business press criticize the government by complaining about taxes (Himelfarb & Himelfarb, 2013), their opposition to taxation usually receives widespread support and is turned into government policy. McKenzie and Wharf (2010) argue

that "while the rhetoric of government often holds that the challenges are dealt with in ways that benefit all citizens, our view is that the grand issues are often, if not usually, resolved in favour of wealthy and powerful individuals" (ix).

Suppose a poor person or an anti-poverty advocacy group complains about social welfare spending cuts or taxation policy in general. In that case, they have pejoratively been deemed as a "special interest group … who [is] selfishly exaggerating the proportions of the problem and making excuses for those who abuse the social services that hard-working 'taxpayers' are expected to pay for" (Capponi, 1999, x). The terms "socialist" or "nanny state" (Partanen, 2016) are frequently invoked as pejorative labels to discredit and "other" the people and policies promoting anti-poverty work and distributive justice. Poor people are not likely to garner much support in scrutinizing how the government treats them. But the reverse is not true, "politicians at all levels [often successfully] assure taxpayers that they are being taken advantage of and that poverty [and] homelessness … are just a lifestyle choice made by those who chose not to pull their weight in society" (Capponi, 1999, p. ix).

14. Getting to talk to 'the person in charge.'

When middle and upper-class people talk to "the person in charge," they can be reasonably sure that they will be facing someone of their class. When one lives in poverty, they can be almost positive that they will face a person of a different class if they get to talk to a person in charge.

One respondent on social assistance I interviewed reported that when she got a parking ticket, she went to the (then) mayor's office to explain that she was completely broke and could not pay the ticket. This woman was reportedly permitted to express her concern to the mayor, who was, indeed, from a different social class. The mayor's response reportedly was, "How can somebody on welfare afford a car anyway?" (Bratton, 2010, p. 188). The ticket was not reduced or waived.

15. Ignoring or dismissing the input of others.

Upper middle-class people can, and often do, ignore the perspectives of poor people. The head of a social work agency that I am familiar with once stated that he was committed to hearing from everyone and working to make the organization he headed anti-oppressive and inclusive. And to his credit, when two Aboriginal women at this agency asked to speak to staff about their life and family experiences dealing with racial and gender inequality, provisions were made for this to happen. Powerful accounts were given about the lived realities of racial and gender inequality. On this occasion, the agency was making progressive strides to "walk the walk" in terms of anti-oppressive work by hearing the standpoints of the oppressed.

But this inclusion did not extend so far as to hear the perspectives of an impoverished adolescent the agency was purportedly serving. This often-transient teenager told their worker how they felt jaded that the organization employing his social worker had the resources for a luxurious new building, while at the same time, many of the people the agency was allegedly serving were not having their basic needs met. The worker promised to relay this message to the head of the organization and attempt to arrange a meeting to give voice to this young person's views.

The worker emailed the agency's executive director to discuss the perspectives and life circumstances informing the views of this adolescent. The reply email from the highest level of senior management stated that the organization's board of directors strategically made decisions striking a fair balance between having a nice building—but not too nice—and added that youth often tend to see things in overly simplistic, black and white, terms. The senior management had nothing to fear in ignoring the perspectives of a lower-class child, but the request to meet was not even acknowledged, let alone accommodated.

Tronto (1993, pp. 120–121) describes *privileged irresponsibility* as occurring when "those who are relatively privileged are granted by that privilege the opportunity simply to ignore certain forms of hardship that they do not face." The "luxury of obliviousness" (Mullaly & West, 2018, p. 50) is an integral part of privilege. This illustration is emblematic of a much larger societal trend: The voices and perspectives of poor people are being ignored because they are deemed unworthy of serious attention by people who believe they know what is best.

16. Having ascribed class-based inequality that deeply impacts employment prospects, for multiple reasons, ignored by affirmative action.

Ascribed class is an important factor in occupational achievement (Crompton, 1998; Goyder & Curtis, 1977; Willis, 1977)—and has been for a long time (Porter, 1965; Helms-Hays & Curtis, 1998). Yet, the disadvantaging employment barriers of class are typically excluded in affirmative action legislation. This is even though several reasons being poor can undercut one's capacity to secure and maintain employment. First, if one loses the lottery of birth and is deprived of adequate nutrition and stimulation during their earliest formative years, these disadvantaging realities can, in some cases, impact the wiring of the brain (McCain & Mustard, 1999) and lead to extreme capability deprivation that is not likely ever to be undone. Even though "how economies create and distribute wealth affects early childhood, and early child development affects the health and competence of populations throughout the life cycle" (McCain & Mustard, 1999 p. 45), the disadvantages of class oppression are absent in most affirmative action or employment equity legislation. Second, a minimum material

standard of living—food, clothing, shelter, and transportation—is a prerequisite of healthy functioning that enables one to secure, get to, and maintain employment. Third, one's social capital is very much related to class and significantly influences occupational attainment. Elite students from elite families have easier access to elite jobs because, among several other advantaging factors, they are more likely to have elite connections and advocates directly on (or indirectly influencing) the inside of elite hiring committees (Rivera, 2015). Working-class kids tend to get working-class jobs because their lifeworld, within and beyond school, strongly propels them in that direction (Willis, 1977). And poor people, arguably, have it even worse and can be turned away from jobs by employers because they are poor (Swanson, 2001; Homan, 2007).

Most job postings mentioning employment equity properly have statements including sex, gender, sexual orientation, disability, Indigenous, and racial minority status. While affirmative action legitimately exists to ensure that diversity is obtained and maintained in schools and workplaces and aims to help disadvantaged people by (at least partially) leveling the proverbial playing field, the disadvantages of class—no matter how extreme—are not considered worthy of inclusion in most employment equity legislation. Class-based inequality is not even an enigmatic after-thought in employment equity legislation: "Poverty profiling in hiring practices is socially accepted, and because it is socially accepted, nobody sees it as a problem" (Homan, 2007, p. 35).

17. Being late for or missing a meeting or appointment.

A wealthy person late for a meeting is not likely to have their lateness reflect on their class. But the same cannot be said for a poor person. A woman on social assistance that I once interviewed advised that although she usually is punctual, on one occasion, she was five minutes late for a meeting with her welfare worker, and because of this, "'[The welfare worker] yelled at [her] and asked how [she] ever expected to keep a job.' [She] told her that [she] already [has] a job, and that is why [she was] late" (Bratton, 2010, p. 186).

Similarly, in an article titled "'They Don't Come In!' Stories Told, Lessons Taught About Poor Families in Therapy" Kazdin (1996, pp. 572–582) explores the all-too-common phenomenon of how even well-intentioned helping professionals typically respond when a poor client misses an appointment. The missed appointment is often seen as evidence of a lack of interest in self-betterment and an illustration of personal shortcomings. In one example Kazdin gives to illustrate the large gap between privileged perception and underprivileged realities: If the client has no functional phone to be reached at, the transportation barriers that precluded attending an appointment will almost certainly remain lost on the therapist—and the attributions

for the absence are likely to remain unfair misattributions. If one is poor, "people judge you and look down on you" (Homan, 2007, p. 14), and any bad moment a person has—even if it is quite anomalous (such as tardiness to a therapy appointment)—can be interpreted as a character flaw or moral failing (Sayer, 2005).

18. Using public accommodations.

Enjoying and accessing public accommodations, such as hotels, theaters, restaurants, and amusement parks, is a class privilege matter. Both middle and upper-class privilege includes spending time away from home and at public and private places of entertainment and leisure. They have more flexibility and options regarding travel accommodations and length of stay. Whether going to a recreational facility in the neighborhood or booking a bed and breakfast for a weekend, those are privileges not available to everyone. And it is not the money that gives them these privileges per se; they are simply given access to places because of appearance, social capital, family dowery, work perks, and other possible unearned variables.

Middle-class privilege can, and often does, involve stress relieving—and rejuvenating—family geta-ways to public vacation resorts. Elite upper-class privilege can involve private ownership of a public accommodation resort—and having private ownership of this valuable asset further entrench one's class privilege without the burden of having to work.

In contrast, "the poorest of the poor [can be found] under freeway ramps and bridges" (Abramsky, 2013, p. 4).

19. Accessing quality medical care and legal services.

The quality of legal and medical help that one has access to is, very much, a matter of class privilege. Those with money and employers who offer a good benefits package can easily receive reputable legal representation and adequate medical coverage. But those without the necessary finances or employment benefits can, at best, get lesser quality assistance or, at worst, go completely without legal aid or medical care.

Impoverishment means that one is more likely to encounter the law (Hester & Eglin, 1992) and live with poor health (Raphael, 2007).

Homan (2007, p. 39) argues that "Nowhere is the power differential and the evidence of classism more obvious than in our justice system." While everyone is purportedly equal under the law, this myth is not valid:

> For the same criminal behaviour, the poor are more likely to be arrested; if arrested, they are more likely to be charged; if charged, more likely to be convicted; if convicted, more likely to be sentenced to prison; and if sentenced, more likely to be given longer prison terms than members of the middle and upper classes. (National Council of Welfare, 2000, p. 1)

In addition, wealthy people can post bail while awaiting a trial. Poor people remain incarcerated.

Poor people are also more likely to live in poor health and thus require medical supports that they have less access to. Research has repeatedly shown a strong association between poverty and ill health (O'Connor & Olsen, 1998, p. 164; Social Planning Council of Toronto, 1999, p. 7; Raphael, 2007, pp. 205–237). In fact, according to health officer Dr. John Millar:

> We have reached a point where we can think of poverty and low income the way in the past we have thought of smoking; it's as causally related to poor health as smoking is to lung cancer. It's that solid. (Capponi, 1997, p. 42)

Part of the reason both privilege and poverty tend to be self-perpetuating is that they profoundly impact health and well-being.

20. Attending higher education and contributing to course content.

There are class elitist biases in the privileged world of academia (Pease, 2010, ix). Class privileged people are far more likely to pursue post-secondary education as young adults and even more likely to create the curriculum later in life. People raised on a low income are less likely to attend higher education. Ainsworth's (2002) research on academic outcomes found:

> Children who live in advantaged neighborhoods are more likely to be exposed to helpful social networks or adults who can provide positive resources, information, and opportunities that may be educationally beneficial. Alternatively, individuals in impoverished neighborhoods may be disadvantaged by smaller social networks and less beneficial networks than those in advantaged neighborhoods due to the social position of partners, parents, siblings, and friends. (Ainsworth, 2002, p. 120)

Those inside academia are more likely to develop the curriculum, so it is even more unlikely that low-income persons will contribute to course content or teach at a college or university. Unfortunately, affirmative action in faculty hiring practices and student recruitment typically does not acknowledge, let alone act upon, class-based disadvantage. The daily living realities of poor peoples' lives continue to be downplayed or completely omitted in many academic courses and institutions. This is a troubling irony given that the inequitable world students are purportedly learning about is becoming even more unequal. This is why Lott and Bullock (2007, p. 8) argue for "More research and theoretical attention to the significance of social class [to be given]."

The preceding re-analysis of McIntosh's knapsack of White privilege and male privilege—through the lens of class, utilizing qualitative and ethnographic micro-level illustrations—is intended to be a small step forward in meeting Lott and Bullock's warranted call to understand the significance of social class better. Given that micro-level

experiences invariably occur within macro-level contexts, in the final section of this paper, I will briefly describe some of the features of the economic system in which class privilege operates.

A Class Analysis of Class Privilege in the Context of Contemporary Capitalism

> The class which has the power to rob upon a large scale also has the power to control the government and legalize their robbery.
>
> —Eugene V. Debs, *Unknown*

One of the central features of capitalism is that it facilitates, legitimizes, and reproduces the private accumulation of socially produced wealth. And contemporary neoliberal finance capitalism has been duly described as capitalism with its gloves off. During the global COVID-19 pandemic, a world record was obliterated as the economy went into lockdown and millions were thrown out of work. Already the world's richest man, Jeff Bezos increased his net worth by an astonishing 13 billion dollars—*in just one day*—following an 8% spike in Amazon stock.[vi] This anomalous day should be contextualized within the equally important realization that on just a typical day in 2020, the wealthiest man on earth has had his net worth increase by an average of $311 million (Stopera, 2020). Bezos's company is worth one trillion dollars, pays no federal tax, while many frontline Amazon warehouse employees have to utilize food stamps to supplement their insufficient wages (Weill, 2018).

Sayer (2016, p. 3) argues that "the time is ripe for examining where the wealth of the rich comes from." How is it possible for anyone to become 13 billion dollars richer in just one day? Or, for that matter, $311 million richer every day? Accurately, answering these questions necessitates understanding capitalism's fundamentals: The economic system in which class privilege operates is legitimized and reproduced. In examining the basics of how capitalism operates, it is important to stress that there is nothing random or accidental about class privilege. It is a planned outcome, a *sine qua non* in a class divided polity, especially one that pivots around the private accumulation of socially produced wealth.[vii]

While a comprehensive review of capitalism is beyond the scope of this paper, a concise summation of how this economic system operates is a prerequisite of a fulsome macro-level understanding of class privilege. According to economist Jim Stanford, "capitalism has particular features and forces that need to be identified" (2015, p. 6). Among the most central facts about capitalism:

- Most people have to work for others in return for a wage or salary.
- A small proportion of society owns the bulk of wealth and uses that wealth to generate still more wealth.
- Competition between companies, each trying to maximize its profits, forces them to behave in particular, sometimes perverse ways (Stanford, 2015, p. 6).

A brief analysis of each of these central facts is warranted given that they are all relevant to the illustration at hand, and more importantly, to the general trend of an ever-widening gap between rich and poor.

First, Jeff Bezos has so much partially because Amazon workers on the frontline are paid so little, certainly not in proportion to what they contribute to the company.

According to Carroll (2002), capitalism's "dirty secret" is that its social relations enable the "dominant class to appropriate an economic surplus produced by subordinates." Class privilege is inherently hard-wired into the economic system that allows owners (and shareholders) to extract surplus value from workers. And class privileges are further entrenched when neoliberal policies not only allow the wealthy to take more by ensuring that most labor occurs in an insidiously exploitive way to make a profit but also keep more by continuing to lower (and even eliminate) taxes.

Second, Bezos's wealth created more wealth by purchasing more stock in his own company, so his capital could create more capital. This is a central feature of contemporary finance capitalism and could, perhaps, be considered the very acme of class privilege in an economic system where: "What you have [largely] determines what you get, and what you have determines what you have to do to get what you get" (Wright, 2000, p. 28). And notably, when the properties and assets that wealthy people own increase in value, this is another form of unearned income that allows class privileged people to get richer via what Sayer (2016, pp. 97–103) calls *asset inflation*. According to *Business Insider* (2019), some of Bezos more notable assets: a 5.3-acre home in Medina, Washington valued at $25 million; a townhome in Washington DC, valued at $23 million; a mansion in Beverly Hills valued at $25 million; three apartments in New York City valued at $17 million; *The Washington Post* (purchased in 2013 for $250 million); and a $65 million Gulf Stream jet. In an era where property values and housing prices are skyrocketing, the phenomenon of class privilege exacerbates because the wealthy increase their wealth without having to do anything. The poor see their perpetual rental costs rise and hope forever becoming a property owner dwindle.

Finally, not taking sufficient measures to duly protect Amazon workers from the dangers of the COVID-19 pandemic (Sainato, 2020) because sufficient safety measures could compromise profit can be considered a quintessential example of a company behaving inhumanly and perversely. Glasbeek (2017) shows how class privileged laws often shelter corporations and shareholders from liability when frontline workers are harmed. Chomsky (1999) argues that profits are routinely prioritized over people in the neoliberal global order.

According to Wright (1994, p. 19):

> At the core of class analysis is a specific way of thinking about the problem of economic inequalities: inequalities among people are seen not mainly as the consequence of their individual attributes (intelligence, education, motivation, etc.) but of the way the system of production is organized around mechanisms of exploitation.

The flipside of Wright's (1994, pp. 37–43) claim that "poverty is a result of the properties of the social system," class privilege is the diametric, and interdependent, outcome of that same strategically planned system:

> The amassing of wealth at one pole and the deprivation and misery at the other, far from being the egregious fallacy which bourgeois social science has long held it to be, has, in fact, turned out to be one of the best founded of all [conflict theory's] insights into the capitalist system. (Braverman, 1974/1998, p.

xxvii)

Conclusion

Charles Dicken's famous quote that "It was the best of times, it was the worst of times," is as apropos in today's world of neoliberalism as it was when those words were first penned in the 19th century. Zoning in on class as a largely overlooked category of analysis in privilege studies, while concurrently avoiding the analytical and moral pitfalls of one-dimensional class reductionism, is long overdue. In virtually all advanced capitalist countries, social, economic, and taxation policies have ultimately translated into a reverse-Robin Hood phenomenon: "taking from the poor to give to the rich." The available data on income and wealth distribution over the last 30 to 40 years makes this unequivocally clear (Salverda et al., 2016; Nolan et al., 2016). And yet class remains largely flattened as a category of analysis within privilege studies, particularly academia in general and everyday culture.

Strategically defining class privilege and juxtaposing the definition to poverty, then, is essential given that the multiple and self-reproducing advantages of having unearned wealth have not been named and thus are not well understood in a world of rapidly growing inequality. Delineating class privilege by amplifying the voices—and recognizing the capability deprivation—of subaltern people who live without it—can help counter the harsh reality that injustice often survives by stealth when the luxury of obliviousness is facilitated by continued silence. Contextualizing class privilege matters because it is essential to understand the macro-level contexts that frame experiences and ultimately create, legitimize, and reproduce the micro-level lived realities of class privilege and oppression. And it is clear that in the context of contemporary neoliberalism, the class privileges of some are directly tied to the impoverishment of others. We must come to recognize that the invisibility of class privilege and the structural arrangements that leave so many behind go hand in hand.

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[i] Marx also noted a class of petty bourgeoisie, who were neither exploiters or exploited, given that they own and utilize the means of production but do not employ others in the process of doing so (Wright, 2000, p. 14).

[ii] Berniesanders.com

[iii] By 10:09 a.m. on January 2nd, the top 100 CEO's in Canada will have earned as much money as the typical worker will earn all year. http://www.policyalternatives.ca/publica.../reports/fail-safe

[iv] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UpbQZRVej1g

[v] https://ca.news.yahoo.com/vancouver-toronto-named-candadas-unhappiest-181016636.html

[vi] https://www.vladtv.com/article/264038/jeff-bezos-increased-his-net-worth-by-12-billion-in-one-day-sets-new?page=2

[vii] The critically important insight that class privilege is not randome or accidental, but rather a planned outcome, is owed to Dr. Harry Glasbeek (personal communication, n.d.).

Understanding & Dismantling Privilege

The Official Journal of The White Privilege Conference

The Experience of a White Professor Teaching Diversity Courses in the Midwest

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Abstract

Facilitators of diversity courses in higher education institutions face multiple challenges because these courses are emotionally charged for students and facilitators alike. To date, there is a limited number of recent papers that focus on the reflections of professors from the dominant culture who teach diversity online and face-to-face graduate courses. The present paper fills this gap by describing the experiences of a White, French assistant professor in the midwest of the United States. This paper also provides recommendations for practitioners.

Keywords: white privilege, diversity courses, educational administration, higher education, autoethnography

Corinne Brion is an assistant professor at the University of Dayton. She earned her PhD in educational leadership at the University of San Diego. The overall framework for her research is equity. Her research interests include investigating the process of learning transfer among adult learners to understand what enhances and hinders the transfer of knowledge in different contexts. She is also interested in women's and girls' empowerment in African countries.

When enrolled in a higher education program, taking a diversity course has become either a requirement or an elective, depending on the institution, and its values and priorities. The literature on teaching a diversity course is consistent around the fact that teaching such a course is challenging for both students and facilitators because of the emotions, beliefs, and biases that conversations on equity, gender, and race trigger (Gayles et al., 2015; Kendall, 2012; Marbley et al., 2009). At the undergraduate level~~s~~, the literature has focused on the areas of business (Phillips & Wood, 2017), teacher education (Cardona-Moltó, Tich, & Abery, 2018; Jett & Behm Cross, 2016), psychology (Allen & Porter, 2002), sociology (Steinkopf Rice & Horn, 2014) and medicine (Dogra et al., 2016). At the graduate level, there have been empirical and conceptual studies written in the domains of student affairs and counseling (Gayles et al., 2015; Locke & Kiselica, 1999). In the field of educational leadership, Andrews and Ridenour (2006) have written on gender equity. However, fewer authors have written on their perceptions and reflections as professors of diversity courses. Scholars posit that universities are micro-ecosystems of our larger society, and as a result, diversity courses should not be taught by Black professors based on the fact that they are people of Color and represent a minority (Jett & Behm Cross, 2016; Laubscher & Powell, 2003; Marbley et al., 2009). Rather, these authors suggest that non-African American people facilitate these courses because studying diversity also means studying Whiteness and White privilege to foster authentic relationships based on compassion and acceptance (Sue, 2016). To date, there is a need for additional studies that focus on the experiences of diverse faculty who teach diversity (Jett & Behm Cross, 2016). This paper aims to fill a portion of this knowledge gap by examining the experience of a White French assistant professor who teaches diversity graduate courses in educational administration at a predominantly White Catholic American institution. The present paper also provides recommendations for higher education institutions and practitioners. These recommendations aim to support diversity courses, facilitators, and higher education institutions whose mission is to foster equity, diversity, and inclusion.

Literature Review

Projections estimate that by 2023, racial and ethnic minorities will make up the majority of students in the United States (U.S. Census, 2008). However, the vast majority of the educational workforce remains approximately 83% White (U.S. Department of Education, 2016).

In response to changing student demographics and to prepare future school leaders to become advocates for cultural differences, most educational leadership graduate programs now offer diversity courses.

Several scholars have written about the challenges that diversity courses present to both students and facilitators of learning. These authors claimed that these difficulties resulted from the emotions conversations on gender, race, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, or ableism generated (Gayles et al., 2015; Kendall, 2012; Marbley et al., 2009; Sue, 2016). The tension associated with discussing diversity is not surprising, considering that students often enter graduate school with limited experience and interaction with diverse populations (Quaye, 2014). Students taking diversity courses typically learn about biases, microaggressions, White privilege, cultural proficiency, and Whiteness

(Lindsey et al., 2018). Talking about Whiteness is also important for educators to assist White students to understand that racism is structural and institutionalized (DiAngelo, 2018; Irving, 2014; McIntosh, 1988).

Educators also struggle when teaching diversity courses (Gayles et al., 2015; Jett & Behm Cross, 2016; Marbley et al., 2009; Sue, 2016). In particular, scholars affirmed that White educators generally perceived racial topics as taboo, discussed them only superficially, and evidenced high levels of anxiety when teaching diversity courses, which in turn affected their communications (Young, 2004; Young & Davis-Russell, 2002). Sue (2016) attributed the reasons for avoiding conversations about race to three factors: (a) race as a topic is often considered taboo because it is rooted in a painful part of America's past and present, (b) race-related dialogues often result in intense levels of student resistance, and (c) faculty themselves also struggle with related personal tensions, to include fear, fatigue, and stress (Sue et al., 2009). A second significant challenge that White educators experience is related to their inability to notice and reflect on their White privileges because, by nature, people tend to place a greater focus on troublesome circumstances than favorable opportunities (Kendall, 2012). According to Kendall, White educators who struggle with their identity often fail to recognize that their White status affords them certain benefits and privileges. Additionally, Gayles et al. (2015) uncovered that White faculty members who had marginalized identities did not know how much to reveal about their marginalized identity because speaking about their identity triggered strong emotions.

Another important theme within the literature is the influence of the faculty member's identity on their experiences within diversity education (Baumgartner & Johnson-Bailey, 2010; Brookfield, 2014; Hernandez & Murray-Johnson, 2015; Jett & Behm Cross, 2016). Faculty members' social identities are associated with the extent to which diversity content is included in their courses (Fox, 2009) and their comfort level in teaching diversity content (Sue et al., 2009). Brookfield (2014) suggested that White faculty need to be acutely aware of their race and privileges because they need to use their identity to facilitate discourses on race positively. Brookfield affirmed that modeling the struggles educators generally faced was important for their students and could be done through authentic conversations, storytelling, or writing an autoethnography. This is particularly important for bicultural and immigrant educators because these educators often see themselves trapped in a middle space. This middle space often determines their responses to difficult conversations (Hernandez & Murray-Johnson, 2015).

Different pedagogical strategies have been used to engage students in discussions about race. These strategies include dialogues (Gayles et al., 2015; Nicolazzo & Marine, 2016), documentary discussion (Durham-Barnes, 2015), and self-reflection and autobiographies (Whiting & Cutri, 2015). Gayles et al. (2015) engaged students in direct discussions to initiate racial reflection in White pre-service teachers. These authors used the *privileged identity exploration* (PIE) model, which focuses on recognizing, reflecting, and addressing social privilege. An aspect of PIE includes allowing dissonance, fear, and anxiety as a way to introduce and encourage critical self and societal reflection related to race.

Dialogue is another crucial practice that can transform educational practice

(Nicolazzo & Marine, 2016; Gayles et al., 2015). Dialogue has become critical to our ongoing interrogation of privileges across educational contexts. Additionally, authors such as Eaton et al. (2019) affirmed there was a recognition that examining and unpacking privilege involved a complex process of negotiation across environmental contexts. These authors claimed that the ways educators negotiate Whiteness in the United States are vastly different from other countries, given divergent historical, political, and sociological conditions. This is particularly important to recognize when teaching international students or teaching abroad. Another strategy to consider is using multicultural teaching models that lead to group assignments, case studies, service-learning, projects, field trips, and multimedia (Sciame-Giesecke et al., 2009). Although teaching diversity courses is challenging and can be emotionally draining, the aforementioned strategies are helpful to involve students and faculty in courageous and healing conversations.

In the following section, I share some contextual information about one of my diversity courses. I also outline some of the activities in which my students partake in this course. It is worthy to note that my cultural identity influences these activities. I am a White French woman who has lived in various cultures, immigrated to the United States, and I have an accent to this day. When teaching diversity courses, I share the different aspects of my identity through my pedagogical approach.

Contextual Information about the Diversity Course

I teach a course called "Leading in Diverse Communities" to graduate students in an educational administration program. These students aspire to be school leaders. I also teach a similar course at the doctoral level. I am a tenure-line faculty member at a Catholic, predominantly White institution in the Midwest of the United States. The institution is committed to diversity, equity, and inclusion. I taught these courses face-to-face, in a traditional online format, and now in an online format that allows me to meet synchronously with my students for 90 minutes weekly. In this new online format, students also have 90 minutes of asynchronous content to finish before our live sessions.

Activities

I share my autoethnography in this paper because I usually read it to my students on the first day of class. In this way, students understand my White privileges and see that I am constantly challenging myself to learn, tackle, understand, and mitigate my biases to become culturally proficient. I also ask students to write their autoethnography to become aware of their privileges and cultural identities. In addition, I ask students to write a weekly journal allowing them to reflect on current events, discussions, and assigned readings. In response to changing student demographics and to prepare future school leaders to become advocates for cultural differences, educators and students alike need to adopt a culturally proficient and growth mindset (Lindsey et al., 2018). As a result, I regularly ask my students to read blogs pertaining to social justice issues worldwide. This practice allows students to gain a global view of equity, diversity, and inclusion issues and practices.

Additionally, students complete implicit bias tests from the Harvard Implicit Project and two short essays on cultural proficiency and social justice. Students also engage in group work and discuss teaching case studies or vignettes that I write based on my

readings, personal experiences as a teacher and former principal, and my personal struggles. Students also read numerous empirical and practitioner articles: two primary texts are *Cultural Proficiency: A Manual for School Leaders* (Lindsey et al., 2018) and *Courageous Conversations About Race: A Field Guide for Achieving Equity in Schools* (Singleton, 2015). Lastly, I ask students to take a pre- and post-survey, called the intercultural effectiveness scale (IES), to measure their growth at the end of the course. The IES (Kozaigroup, 2021) was developed specifically to evaluate the skills critical to interacting effectively with people from cultures other than our own. This instrument is used primarily by non-profit organizations, including government agencies and educational institutions. The purpose of taking the test twice is to assess whether students have become more comfortable interacting with people from other cultures. At the end of the semester, students were asked to write a two-page paper reflecting on their two sets of scores.

To expose students to equity advocates practitioners, I invite guest speakers to the class to share their expertise and experience. Finally, I set up online forums and a *WhatsApp* group so that students share resources with each other and with me between class sessions. I also use the *WhatsApp* group to send reminders when an assignment is due, a schedule change, or information about the class. The *WhatsApp* group allows for immediate feedback and builds a community of practice that facilitates the implementation of the new diversity knowledge (Brion, 2018). Students in one of these courses shared that the class opened their eyes and motivated them to become "social justice warriors." Below is a summary of findings from a qualitative ethnographic study I conducted during the 2018 fall semester with six graduate students who attended a fifteen-week face-to-face diversity course (Brion, 2020).

Key Findings Pertaining to Pedagogy

All students stated that what helped them implement diversity knowledge was the facilitator's dispositions, knowledge of the subject matter, and pedagogy. As such, students seemed to appreciate that the class was student-centered and dialogue-based. I asked students to formulate two questions from their assigned readings. I asked them to submit their questions to me the day before class, allowing me to prepare the conversation prompts that were later discussed in class. I used this strategy to individualize the learning and discuss what preoccupied the students most. I also used videos, music, and online resources in order to engage students differently. Mary illustrated the participants' perspectives in this regard by stating:

> The professor really cared about us as students and individuals. She asked us to be involved in the development of class by asking us to write questions from which she would differentiate our learning, and she used different teaching modalities.

In addition to the pedagogy used, the students related that the materials used during the class and stated that these materials impacted their ability to use new diversity of knowledge in their work and personal lives. For example, all six students referred to the autoethnography as "a powerful, somewhat painful exercise but necessary to reflect and grow and face our cultural identities." Students appreciated that I shared my own autoethnography on the first day of class. One of them stated:

> The autoethnography showed that she was humble, vulnerable and that she had had a tough time navigating her identity in this country. It also showed me that being a second language speaker in this country is not easy, and we take that for granted.

An international student in the class added: "I felt comfortable to share with the professor because I knew she understood my struggles because I heard her challenges when she read her autoethnography. It inspired me to write mine too."

In addition, students reportedly enjoyed the readings, including the two books used during the class. Students also indicated that they appreciated having the opportunity to Skype with the authors of the first book. Student Laurie, for instance, spoke on behalf of the group when she shared: "It helped me understand where the authors came from when they wrote the book, and it made it more concrete and personable for me." Students also mentioned some additional readings to be beneficial, such as the *Invisible Knapsack* (McIntosh, 1988), *White Fragility* (DiAngelo, 2018), and various resources taken from websites such as *Teaching Tolerance* or *The Equity Literacy Institute*.

All six students spoke highly of the weekly guest speakers who joined us for part of the class. These guest speakers came from different walks of life, backgrounds, and various positions in education. While some guest speakers were principals, others were consultants, change-agents in their communities, district office workers, or, as mentioned before, authors of books or other materials the class read. Aside from the readings and guest speakers, students valued the exposure to international blogs that exposed them to diverse social justice issues around the world. Students also insisted that the various videos and modalities were helpful.

Lastly, students shared that *WhatsApp* was effective because it allowed them to share news, vent, ask questions, and periodically hear from the facilitator. Tom shared the sentiment of the group regarding *WhatsApp* when he claimed:

> For me, it is normal to be on *WhatsApp*, so using it is great, easier than a phone, email, or regular text. I think it is a good choice because we are all on *WhatsApp* these days. It is free, and all of us around the world use it. I like that we are a family, a group once in class and now on *WhatsApp*, and we keep in touch and chat about diversity.

WhatsApp appeared to be useful in terms of accountability, networking, storing resources, asking questions, serving as a reminder, and maintaining relationships among peers. Some students also used Twitter or other social media as a way to follow up with social justice issues. As an example, one student shared:

> I received social justice materials from the author of the book because I tweeted him after our class interaction with him. And now, he sends me things, and I have a circle of people on Twitter with the same interest.

Reflections on My Experience Teaching the Course

The Pre-course Period

I immigrated to the United States from France. The relationship people have with race in this country is fascinating to me. It is complex, tacit and explicit, and embedded in

the societal implicit norms and policies. In order to understand these racial dynamics, I read dozens and dozens of books, empirical studies, blogs, articles, and commentaries. I also attend conferences, workshops, and seminars, interview colleagues of all races and other cultural identities, and always seek to look at data sets relevant to school systems. I continually seek to deepen my understanding of issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion and gain additional knowledge by listening to the experiences of my students and colleagues. In addition, I constantly learn by observing my Ghanaian husband, who recently immigrated to the United States. I have witnessed him struggle with issues of race, such as questioning why Black people were advised by peers to memorize their driver's license numbers or to carry their identification cards at all times, especially at night. I could not have taught diversity courses without being passionate about social justice and doing my due diligence because how educators negotiate Whiteness in the United States is vastly different from other countries given divergent historical, political, and sociological conditions (Lindsey et al., 2018). Through my reflections, research, and learnings, I have become aware of my identity and privileges, and I am now able to use my identity to positively facilitate discourses on race and other aspects of identities (Brookfield, 2014).

I am multicultural and multilingual. I have lived in various countries, most of which were developing countries in Africa. These experiences have shaped who I am and explain why I am sensitive to culture and language. These experiences have also made me a more empathetic person and have developed my resilience for social justice dialogues, no matter how challenging they can be. My ability to adapt to cultures has served me well with international students, partly because I understand them and partly because I also studied abroad and immigrated to this country. International students and I share common stories and similar struggles.

In order to teach diversity courses, I have had to adapt a few things in my communication style. Since I am French, I speak with an accent, and my communication style is direct. I have had to learn to be less direct to meet my institutions' cultures and values. For example, in France, it would be acceptable to give direct feedback to students, even if they are not good ones. However, in the two Catholic institutions I have taught, I have learned that the delivery had to be softer and coated with positive arguments, even if these were hard to find. This is particularly important when teaching diversity courses because these courses are by nature challenging for students. Adopting a more supportive communication style is necessary to keep them engaged and motivated to do the work rather than avoiding it.

Teaching the Course Itself

Overall, my experience teaching diversity courses has been two-fold. On the one hand, I have truly enjoyed teaching these courses face-to-face and online because I am passionate about diversity, equity, and inclusion. I believe there are a couple of strategies that consistently help me as a novice professor. First, I see my role as a facilitator of learning rather than a professor. In that sense, I do not pretend to own the knowledge. Rather I am a life-long learner willing to learn from students, colleagues, practitioners, and scholars. Second, Bryk and Schneider (2003) posit that in order to have inviting school cultures, it is crucial to first focus on relational trust among all stakeholders. In all courses, I

focus on relational trust the first few weeks of class by collaboratively crafting norms for the class, being clear regarding expectations, getting to know the students through conversations and assignments, and being vulnerable when I share my autoethnography (See Appendix). Without creating robust relationships based on trust, it would not be possible to talk about topics such as race, sexual orientation, gender, abilities, socio-economic status, age, and ethnicity.

In terms of the delivery of the course content, I use student-centered teaching pedagogy. Knowles (1980) stipulated that adults learn by doing and by participating in their learning. As a result, students journal and engage in deep reflection with their autoethnography (Mezirow, 2000), are exposed to various guest speakers, and discuss case studies. Since all knowledge is situated in social and cultural contexts, the learners engage with various stakeholders in the community, whether the class is face-to-face or online. Learning in context allows students to link theory to practice and learn from people who see the world differently from me because of their upbringing and other identifiers.

On the less positive side, teaching diversity courses is challenging because students may not be ready to engage in difficult conversations. They would rather avoid the work and hide behind sentences like "I do not see races; I only see people." These types of self-talks allow people to convince themselves that they are not racist, sexist, or homophobic. DiAngelo (2018) calls this the *good/bad binary* in which people persuade themselves that they are good people, and indeed they may be (p. 71). These close-minded attitudes, however, perpetuate inequities because they allow people to not engage in deep self-reflection.

When addressing biases, I have had students deny the mere existence of societal or personal biases. I usually lead my student through a simulation to explain that the policies in this country benefit Whites in the United States. This is a powerful activity that yields a plethora of feelings. When talking about implicit bias and the IAT test, students often question its validity, feel divided about the experience but very often see the value and intent. After reflection, they are frequently motivated to speak more about the topic and write about it in their autoethnography. On the opposite side of the spectrum, some students do not see the value of the bias discussion and think that the test or any dialogues around bias are bogus.

Questioning values and beliefs are part of the diversity and equity work. However, students may experience denial for a period of time or even perhaps for the entire course. In this case, it is not unusual for students to feel attacked and respond with derogatory comments and low evaluations of teaching. This can be particularly problematic for tenure-line professors for whom the students' evaluations play a key role in obtaining tenure. Teaching these courses requires a thick skin, a passionate and compassionate heart, and a learner attitude.

Journaling helps me chart my feelings and keep the work going even if I experience high-stress levels. Journaling keeps me grounded. Teaching these courses also requires patience because everyone learns differently and at different paces. While some students may embrace and be ready for difficult conversations, others may need more chunking of the knowledge and more time. No matter who the students are and how ready they are for diversity knowledge and conversations, I believe these conversations are necessary to create socially just societies and educational

systems.

Even when I feel discouraged when students refuse to learn about diversity, I truly enjoy teaching these courses because they help me grow and create socially just educational systems. This is the reason why I chose this profession in the first place. Next, I offer some recommendations based on my experience and my marginalized identity.

Conclusion and Recommendations for Higher Education Institutions and Practitioners

In this paper, I shared my experience as a White French professor teaching diversity courses in the Midwest and outlined some of the activities I used in my classes. I also shared key findings from a qualitative study I conducted to understand what helped students in diversity courses. The following recommendations aim to support diversity courses facilitators and higher education institutions whose mission is to foster equity, diversity, and inclusion.

First, university programs should include courses involving social justice, diversity, and equity as part of students' cognates in undergraduate, masters, and doctoral programs. Such courses should be mandatory for all aspiring students. As demographics are changing globally, our institutions', schools', and communities' demographics are changing too. As a result, universities should prepare all students to become culturally competent, understand and recognize biases, and advocate for diversity.

Second, universities are micro-ecosystems of our larger society. Hence, some researchers argue that African American professors should teach diversity courses because they are people of Color and represent a minority (Gayles et al., 2015). In addition, these courses should be facilitated by non-African American people and other faculty from marginalized groups because studying diversity also means studying Whiteness and White privilege to foster authentic relationships based on compassion and acceptance (Laubscher & Powell, 2003; Gayles et al., 2015). Professors from various races and backgrounds could also co-teach these courses.

Third, when facilitators from foreign countries facilitate diversity courses, they should attend trainings, workshops, and seminars to help them understand the severity and the history of racial issues in the United States. Similarly, all facilitators should receive cultural proficiency training to be able to adapt, respect, and advocate for cultural differences and identities.

Fourth, adult learning theory suggests that in order to learn and transfer new knowledge, adults need to experience things. As a result, diversity courses should be engaging and student-centered. Content should include experiential learning in schools and local organizations. Guest speakers should be invited to engage in dialogues with the students, and students should be exposed to international news. Additionally, the content needs to be culturally relevant to meet the needs of local and international students. Finally, faculty and students need ample time to reflect on their identities; and writing autoethnography can facilitate this process.

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Appendix
My Autoethnography

I was born in France on October 21, 1972, in a White middle-class family. My mom and dad were high school sweethearts and met in Lyon, the gastronomic capital of my native France. My father was a doctor of osteopathy and an acupuncturist. My mother was also an osteopathic doctor. My mother never worked after my older sister was born because she wanted to focus on raising us. Fortunately, my dad's income was sufficient for my mom to stay at home with us. I remember living outside of Paris in a suburb for ten years before moving to Normandy. Our first house had a large yard, a bicycle trail, many fruit trees, and a large garage where my dad had his four cars parked. I recall being engaged in many activities: piano, tennis, and horseback riding. I remember getting a *Bounty* or *Mars* chocolate bar every time my dad picked me up from tennis practice. I recollect feeling light and happy, running from my catholic school where I had great friends to tennis practices and horseback riding lessons. Happiness was a daily feeling for me; I was safe, loved, fed, got an education, and had many social and sports activities. We had sheep, horses, chickens, dogs, and cats. I rode our horses in our fields; I bicycled to a local public school and the tennis club. I met new friends, all White and all middle-class.

My good friend, Philippe, or *Fifi*, was a great new friend. He was Black, my only Black friend. I would talk to Fifi all the time, invite him to my house or go to his place. Fifi taught me everything that I did not see or know about living in *la zone*, how people referred to the "bad part of town." La zone was next to my high school. I knew drugs were happening in his area and I remember not feeling safe going there but continued going because I was curious. My family welcomed Fifi but made it clear that his friends from his neighborhood were not welcomed. I remember inviting Fifi to parties and telling him not to bring his friends. I felt bad, but I was scared! I was afraid because my parents made me afraid, but I knew they meant well and were protecting me. The community also made me scared of la zone because of stories I heard, and stories published in the local paper. I started to question societal norms and biases. To this day, Fifi and I are still in touch.

Like many French children of my generation in France, I grew up in the Catholic faith, although we rarely attended church. I attended catechism classes on Wednesday mornings (a day off in French elementary schools). I recall bicycling to my classes and only looking forward to the pastries the volunteer had for us. I remember not paying much attention to what was taught because the volunteer was lecturing for two hours, and that was not how to engage eight-year-old children! Besides catechism in the morning, my Wednesdays were filled with activities and fun. All seemed well in my life until I fell progressively sick and in a coma at the age of 11. I spent six months in a hospital and missed a year of school. These were extremely challenging times for my family. Yet, I was lucky to have access to the best medical care possible. After a few months, I was well again and back on my feet.

All this time glued to my hospital bed allowed me to start reflecting on my privileges. I wondered if people in la zone would have had access to such great medical care. I remember asking Fifi, who simply responded with, *non*. Over the next few

years, I earned a degree to teach French as a second language and a bachelor's in international business from a reputable public business school in Paris and moved to the United States. There, I taught French as a Second Language and became the principal of a charter school. After the charter school, I became the Director of International Programs at a Catholic high school. There, I was working with predominantly wealthy students, and after two years, I decided to pursue my PhD.

My PhD experience was life-changing. The most transformative part of my doctoral studies was spending six years in five African countries. When I first touched the Ghanaian ground, I recall feeling my heart beating. I recall feeling called to be there. My time in Africa has taught me a lot about my White privilege. Fifi had taught me some things; and having him as a friend has been a blessing. In Africa, I met the most resilient, faithful, loving, and caring people. I also met and saw real poverty for the first time in my life. In Africa, I also fell madly in love with an amazing Ghanaian, who was younger, not formally educated, and financially poor. In short, Daniel and I grew up in vastly opposite manners. Daniel worked since he was six years old. I worked at 16 to earn pocket money to travel the world. He could not finish school because he had to help his mom, whereas I have a PhD. Despite all these external differences, we are and remain soulmates.

Daniel may not have a formal education, but he earned seven PhD in my eyes. I know nothing compared to what he knows. I learn so much from him on a daily basis. I am humbled by his knowledge, demeanor, outlook on life, and grace. Daniel may have grown up financially poor, but he has an enormous amount of wealth. Yosso (2005) states that wealth is comprised of various capitals. Besides the social capital, there are the familial, navigational, resistant, linguistic, aspirational, and cultural capitals. Daniel cherishes his family, has navigated many challenging times, speaks three Ghanaian dialects, understands seven more, and speaks English fluently. He has more grit, grace, genius, and resistance than anyone I know. Despite how much some people discouraged me from marrying him, he is my angel, love, and rock. Daniel challenges me not to judge, constantly see the good in people, and examine my biases.

Speaking of biases, I have a story. Upon arriving in Ohio, I had to find an acupuncturist for my broken ankle. I found a doctor that came highly recommended. On the day of my appointment, Daniel was with me. The doctor said *hello* and asked me, "where are you from?" I told him I was French. He responded, "French fries." Surprised, I looked at Daniel, who was as uncomfortable as I was. The doctor pursued on saying: "It must be hard to get rid of your accent." I was dumbfounded, mad, and perplexed. I finally responded: "This accent is part of who I am, and I am not trying to change it." That night, I thought of my graduate students and could not wait to share this story on microaggressions. I know people mean well when they tell me that they love my accent, my English is good, or proudly tell me what they know in French. The fact of the matter is that without having a relationship with the person, these can be interpreted and received as microaggressions. And did I mention that because I am French, it does not mean that I smoke, am elegant, or eat meat!

I am White and have been blessed with many materials, educational, medical, and other privileges in my life. I also have survived difficult times. One of the best privileges I have had is to reflect with my

graduate students on matters of equity and diversity and to have a partner willing to call me on my biases and privileges.