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A Canary in the Coal Mine: Taking a Deeper Look at the Race-based Achievement Gap and What Must be Done to Effectively Address It

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Ground In

- Feet flat
- Sitting as upright as possible
- Eyes closed or cast your gaze to a neutral site
- Breathe as deeply as you are able
- Focus only on the breath as it comes in and out of your nose
- Your mind will wander. Don't judge that, just notice it and bring your attention back to your breathing.



- Why is this important for RJ/RE work:
 - Relax the body <> Relax the mind
 - Interrupts “the story”
 - It speaks truth to our connection
 - We simply cannot do good RJ/RE work if we are not fully present



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Hello and Welcome

- Who are you?
 - Paired introductions: Who are you and why are you in this session?
- Who am I?
 - Teacher education history
 - Now consulting
- Overview of the day
 - How we currently frame the R-BAG and the implications of that,
 - How I believe we should be framing it,
 - Some tools to do so.



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How We Frame “The Gap”

- In pairs, please discuss how you hear the race-based achievement gap commonly framed. For example, how is the “cause” of it framed? What type of response is commonly offered? How are Students of Color / Native students described within this framework?



How We Frame “The Gap”

- “The problem” is consistently essentialized within the students / communities,
- This makes the solution seem like it is about “training ‘them’ up to be successful on ‘our’ tests”,
- This, then, ignores the systemic roots of the problem and thus leaves the White educational system in tact,
- This ends up further marginalizing SOC/NS and favoring WS (e.g. School to prison pipeline)
- Layer on top of that neoliberal, seemingly “race neutral” policies that lead to minimal changes in the practices and procedures that serve White students, do not serve SOC/N, and encourage assimilation.



How we should be framing it

- Canary in the coal mine
- Look at the gas in the mine
 - The ways that Racial Narratives inform teacher expectations, administrative responses, content development, information delivery, and even student self-expectations.
 - The system of Racism and its impacts on SOC/N
 - The ways Whiteness informs the dominant narrative of education in the U.S.



Tools to Understand “The Gap’ Differently

- Conceptual tools
 - Diversity – Cultural Competency – Racial Justice in education
 - Race, Racism, Whiteness (RRW)
- Ways to talk about it
 - How “the gap” is used as a surrogate for assimilation of POC/N
- Steps the create change around it



Diversity, Cultural Competency and Social Justice

Diversity

- Awareness and appreciation of difference
- Not about access to resources, power and privilege
- Not about systems
- (Vaguely used)

Cultural Competency

- Skill development for work across cultural lines
- Not about access to resources, power and privilege
- Not about systems

Social Justice (i.e. Racial Equity)

- Big Picture *and* daily lives
- Examines systems and how they impact individuals
- Looks squarely at access to resources, power and privilege
- Is hopeful - a steward of our best values

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Race In U.S. Education: Voice / Perspective

- In small groups, please generate the list for the general norms, rules and expectations in U.S. education.



Race

1* Skin color
2* Phys features
Socially constructed
(a “lie”)



Assigned Meaning

Culture

Food
Language
Clothing
Traditions
Music
Celebrations



Intrinsic Meaning

Ethnicity

Ancestry
Origin
Geography
“Carrier” of culture



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Race - History

- British Colonization
- When
- Why
- How
 - Categories are created
 - Meaning is assigned
 - Rewards and punishments are doled out based on the meaning(s)
 - This is repeated again and again



- The creation of “White”
 - Culture >> White >> “American”
 - Chip Smith reading
- U.S. Racial Narratives
 - Today we are left with five U.S. racial “narratives” or “stereotypes” that powerfully inform everything we do.
 - They are meant to “explain away” / Justify / rationalize the differences based on race in this country

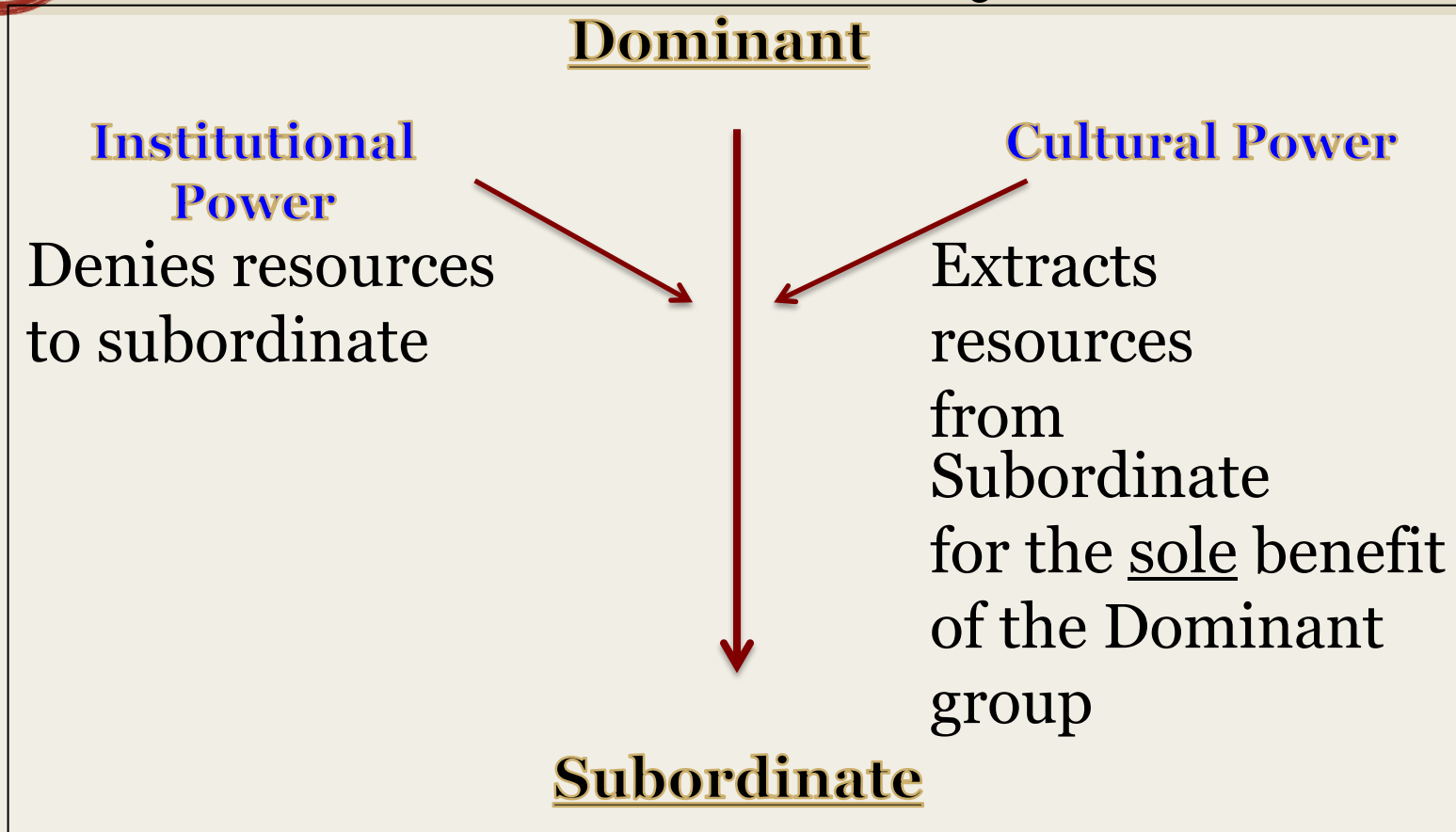


Race In U.S. Education: Voice / Perspective

- In small groups, go back to your list for the general norms, rules and expectations in U.S. education and compare it to the White Racial Narrative (WRN).
- What does this tell you about the “voice / perspective” of U.S. education? What does it tell you about the “lens” of our policies?



Racism: General Dynamics



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Some Resources

- Race:
 - Jacqueline Battalora's *The Birth of a White Nation*
 - DVD *Race: The Power of an Illusion*
- Racism:
 - Michelle Alexander's *The New Jim Crow*
 - DVD *Cracking the Codes*
- Whiteness:
 - Paula Rothenberg's *White Privilege* (anthology)
 - Tim Wise *White Like Me*
 - Debbie Irving *Waking Up White*