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# Individual Leadership's Role to Overcome White Male Privilege

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**Abstract of ML597**

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Our culture has been built by the white male philosophy and is responsible for the lack of cultural diversity in our society today.  Even though steps have been take to eliminate racism, it continues to exist and is more prevalent in an unconscious form called male privilege and white privilege.  These privileges allow white people, particularly white males, to take advantage of certain 'rights' which are inherent in our society simply because it has been largely defined by the white male.

Leaders need to break out of this type of thinking and be the catalyst for bringing this topic out into the open.  Once discussions begin, then can leaders begin to help eliminate it and help society move forward in today's changing and diverse world.

**Introduction**

*"White people have not always been 'white' nor will they always be 'white.' It is a political alliance. Things will change." -- Amoja Three Rivers*

As the world continues to rapidly change, our society is evolving into a system that not only recognizes our diversity but embraces it.  This evolution, however, is moving at a much slower pace than the other changes occurring in the country and the world.  Currently in the United States, white males make up a little over 40% of the population.  Yet even though this number is declining, our society remains extremely rooted in a culture based upon the white male.

This domination by a white male society stems almost from the beginning of humankind.  The male, especially the white male, has controlled our culture because of his perceived superior intelligence, competence, and education as a member of society.  Non-white and non-male people have been, and to some extent, still are viewed as a lesser and ultimately lower members of society.

Up until recent history, the male has also been considered the head of the household.  Because of this position, the white male has been able to dictate our culture and establish the norms by which we all live.

In leadership, people need to understand this history and how it has impacted the current state of our culture.  This knowledge will allow leaders to adjust their

thinking in order to overcome the white male stigma and to be more inclusive in their thinking and decision making.  In addition, leaders need to recognize the changes occurring in society and model a leadership style that not only embraces diversity but also demonstrates it.  A leader who is able to establish his or her company as a global pioneer having overcome the white male stigma will in the end, better position its products or services to appeal to and meet the needs of a changing demographic population.

This paper will define the white male culture that embraces our society by looking specifically at both white privilege and male privilege.  In addition, it will examine how these privileges can be described as addictions of our society.  Finally, the paper will delve into the possibilities for leaders to break out of this type of addictive thinking and move forward in today's changing and diverse world.

## White Privilege

*"All [Negroes] were friends of ours [and] those of our own age were in fact comrades.  We were comrades and yet not comrades; color and condition interposed a subtle line which both parties were conscious of and which rendered complete fusion impossible." - Mark Twain, on his youth in Missouri*

Parents are always full of encouragement when telling their children that they can be anything they want to be when they grow up.  Whether it is to become a doctor, lawyer, machinist, teacher, or whatever else they desire, the world is supposed to be open to them unconditionally.  This was very true for me as I grew up.  My parents continually told me that I could do or be anything I put my mind to.  While I realized that there were certain things I definitely would not do

because of certain personal dislikes, I had every option available to me. But what I didn't realize until recently was that those options that were available to me, were not equally available to everyone my age.

In her article titled "White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack", Peggy McIntosh defines this concept of white privilege. She states that white privilege is an advantage that white people unknowingly have over other people in society. She writes, "I have come to see white privilege as an invisible package of unearned assets which I can count on cashing in each day, but about which I was 'meant' to remain oblivious." (McIntosh, 1989, p.10)

McIntosh also states that racism is entangled in this idea. She states, "As a white person, I realized I had been taught about racism as something which puts others at a disadvantage, but had been taught not to see one of its corollary aspects, white privilege, which puts me at an advantage." (McIntosh, 1989, p.10) According to McIntosh, we are inherently racist not so much by what we knowingly do, but rather by what we unknowingly do. In the article, McIntosh gives several examples to support her point.

One example she gives is financial reliability. She states that no matter what form of currency she chooses to use, no one questions her stability to pay for what she is buying based upon the color of her skin. Another example she gives

is, "If a traffic cop pulls me over of if the IRS audits my tax return, I can be sure I haven't been singled out because of my race." (McIntosh, 1989, p.11)

These examples support her point that white privilege is not a conscious state. Instead, white privilege is an unconscious pattern of the culture.  It is an asset that has been passed from generation to generation by the 'owners' of the culture who had the ability to determine and mold the culture.  The idea seems to be that whites are brought up thinking that their lives are the model, and that all other races need to be given the opportunity to become more 'white'.

In the article "White privilege shapes the U.S. Affirmative action for whites is a fact of life", Robert Jensen describes another aspect of this concept of white privilege.  He writes "the ultimate white privilege: the privilege to acknowledge that you have unearned privilege but to ignore what it means." (Jensen, 1998) This is an important concept because it takes white privilege beyond simply being a system that grants special benefits to whites, but actually exists because those who benefit from it don't openly acknowledge that it exists.

Jensen continues to write, "White privilege, like any social phenomenon, is complex. In a white supremacist culture, all white people have privilege, whether or not they are overtly racist themselves. There are general patterns, but such privilege plays out differently depending on context and other aspects of one's identity." (Jensen, 1998)  This statement suggests that even though there is this

white privilege, everyone doesn't get the same benefits from it.  Even though

some people get more benefits from white privilege than others, it still exists and

all people enjoy the advantages of it at some point in their lives.

In the editorial "Bound by the Chains of Whiteness" in the Minneapolis Star

Tribune on July 5, 1998, Syl Jones supports this concept of white cultural

domination.  In the article, Jones suggests that the concept of whiteness has

seldom been taken seriously by people other than those of color.  He also says

that in recent years, more and more white people are finally beginning to realize

that whiteness is an unconscious disadvantage for people of color.

Jones takes whiteness beyond just a difference in skin color, however.  He

writes, "it postulates that the very concept of race is an artifice and that the true

differences between us are minimal at the biological level.  In other words, race

has been constructed as both an explanation for cultural differences and,

second, as a barrier to true unity between and among cross-cultural classes."

(Jones, 1998)  What Jones is saying here is that color differences are the result

of white people creating a noticeable difference between races, even though

there is no inherent difference otherwise.

This is an important concept considering that whites, more than any minority

race, have controlled and established America's history.  Because of this, it is

incredibly hard and uncomfortable for white people to shift away from this

paradigm.  As a result, the unconscious white privilege is allowed to continue without challenge from white people.

This idea is the key message of another person, Lee Mun Wah, who owns a consulting business, focused on embracing diversity.  In his four-hour seminar, Mun Wah attempts to get people to understand how difficult it is for people who are not whites, simply because of the color of their skin.  Mun Wah uses example after example to relay this point.

One example he uses is German heritage.  Mun Wah asks all people who have German decent in their heritage to come forward and stand at the front of the room.  What makes this remarkable is that the majority of the people have never told anyone that they had German in their ancestry, and they have been able to conceal it because no one could physically see that they were German.  The Japanese Americans, however, did not have this same advantage.

The German Americans were able to bury their heritage and not be discriminated against during the war.  Yet the Japanese Americans were not able to hide their ancestry because their physical make up gave them away.  As a result, they were forced to live in containment camps, while the government confiscated all their possessions.

Another tool that Mun Wah uses in his seminar is a film that he produced titled "The Color of Fear". The film captures nine men sitting in a circle talking about racism. The group consists of two white men, two Latino men, two African American men, two Chinese American men, and one Japanese American man. Mun Wah is one of the men present and begins the discussion by asking the men, "Please introduce yourself". This is the only question Mun Wah is able to ask in the two and a half days.

The movie and discussion continue and through it the men exhibit a whole range of emotional responses. What results from the discussions is an understanding from each of the men that racism is largely a fear resulting from a lack of knowledge about the others. By the end of the film, it is clear that one of the most significant ways to break the barriers of race, is communication. By talking about their fears and perceptions, they were able to better understand themselves and their ignorant fears. Ultimately, they all seemed to walk away with a deeper understanding of each other and commitment to work to end racism.

White privilege is an unconscious result of our culture. Once a person can bring this unconsciousness into the conscious part of the mind, one can recognize it, understand it, and finally act to eliminate it.

**Male Privilege**

White privilege is not the only ingredient to the mix of inequality. The male dominance of our culture has also played an important role in determining our current state. Peggy McIntosh also writes about the male influence in her article "White Privilege and Male Privilege". She states that all men, but particularly white men, have developed an unacknowledged advantage in the world. This also is rooted deep in our history as the male was considered the 'head' of the household. Men were expected to be the workers and support the family. Women, it was thought, were to be mothers and raise the family, not to be working.

McIntosh also gives examples in her article of how male privilege allows an advantage for men in society. One example today would be buying a new car. It is still largely perceived that when a male and female go together to buy a car, that the male is the decision-maker when it relates to the engine and mechanics of the car. When the decision needs to focus on the color, the focus shifts to the female.

Anne Wilson Schaef, author of Women's Reality, describes this male privilege concept as the white male system. She states, "The White Male System – and it is important to keep in mind that I am referring to a *system* here and not pointing the finger at specific individuals within it – controls almost every aspect of our

culture . . .It decides what *is* knowledge and how it is to be taught." (Schaef, 1981, p.2) What is important about Schaef's definition is that she sees white male dominance as a system. This is important because she states that as a system, it can be "clarified, examined, and changed both from within and without." (Schaef, 1981, p.2)

Schaef explains several myths that surround her concept of the white male system. These include the myth that the white male system: "is the only thing that exists, is innately superior, knows and understands everything, and is possible to be totally logical, rational, and objective." (Schaef, 1981, pp.8-10) Schaef describes these myths as fabrications developed by others both inside and outside of the white male system largely done to explain the power that is associated with being a member of the system. Those inside the system don't want to 'lose' their power and those outside want a piece of the power but can't get it.

One way to really look at the white male system as an opportunity to change the status quo is to contrast it with the female system. By doing this, we can examine a new way to look at our culture and ultimately change the power associated with the white male system. Schaef states that time is one way to examine this concept. Schaef writes that time in the white male system is focused upon the clock and the idea that being on time or late is real. As a contrast, time in the female system focuses on the process. It is a series of transitional phases and may or may not be focused on a clock. This is an

important difference because neither relationship to time is right or wrong.  It simply is an alternative way by which one can use the concept of time to achieve a result.

Another example of the differences between the white male system and the female system is the idea of power.  In the white male system, power is measurable and definite.  As a result, the white male system teaches us that we must keep our power to ourselves and not share it.  By sharing it, we give some of it away and we end up with less.  In contrast, the female system defines power as limitless.  The idea in the female system is that the more power you give away, the more one's own power will expand and multiply.  There is no need to stockpile power since it only continues to grow by giving it away.

Leadership is another concept that is closely linked to power.  In the white male system, leadership means that one leads.  It implies that the leader knows more than the followers and has the ultimate authority.  In the female system, the term leadership is closely associated to facilitation.  The role of a leader in the female system is to find the people that can complement the leader and bring missing skills and experiences to the table.  The leader in the female system uses delegation to push people along and to develop their own skills.  In the end, the leader in the female system ensures the continuation of good leaders long after she is gone.

Responsibility is another term that has different meaning in both systems. In the white male system, responsibility means the person who can be blamed when something goes wrong. In the female system, responsibility is focused on the people who do something when it is needed. Blame does not enter into responsibility in the female system.

These differences pointed out by Schaef as described above are not new ideas. It is simply a way to look at the white male system as something that can be changed. By contrasting the white male system and the female system, one can see the differences and strive toward a better understanding of both systems. Schaef writes, "If we can learn to recognize that there is at least one other system besides the white male system, we can begin to see the value of still other systems and realities . . . it is only then that we will begin to grow to our fullest capacity as human beings." (Schaef, 1981, p.145)

**Society/Organizational Addiction**

One of the concepts that Anne Wilson Schaef discusses in her book Women's Reality is how dominating the white male system is in our culture. In the book, When Society Becomes an Addict, she takes the white male system a step further. Schaef looks at the idea that the white male system is not merely a system that exists and that one needs to be aware of, but that this system is an addict agent such as alcohol or drugs which consumes people and controls their lives.

As a result, Schaef begins to refer to the white male system as the addictive system and writes, "The addictive system asks us to become comfortable with actively participating in our own nonaliveness. Addictions take the edge off, block awareness that could threaten our seeming equilibrium and allow us to grow, and keep us too busy to challenge the system." (Schaef, 1987, p.17)

As part of this conclusion, Schaef defines an addiction as "any process in which we are powerless." (Schaef, 1987, p.18) In the case of the white male system, this theory would hold true for anyone. This statement is especially true for whites since Schaef's next part of defining addiction states "An addiction is anything we are not willing to give up (we may not have to give it up and we must be willing to do so to be free of addiction)." (Schaef, 1987, p.18) This definition is significant because it supports the idea that white privilege is an unconscious benefit which whites are not willing to relinquish nor try to alter.

Schaef uses the example of marriage to illustrate her point of how addiction can be a part of our lives and we may not even realize it. According to Schaef, in a marriage there are two sides, the public and private marriage. She writes that in the public marriage, the male acts as the adult and the female acts like the child. The male is expected to earn the money and make decisions affecting the family. The female is dependent upon the male for survival and cannot exist without the male.

Schaef states that in the private marriage the roles are reversed and the female acts as the adult and the male as the child. The female makes sure the meals are prepared, that the male is clothed, and meets his non-work related needs. The male is dependent upon the female both emotionally and physically, yet neither is truly aware of the addictive relationship they have. As a result, neither can leave the marriage without severe pain, uncertainty, and ultimately a new relationship very quickly after the end of the other.

The white male system is very similar to this example of marriage because in the white male system, white people are addicted to the privileges that they possess. They are not willing to recognize their need for these advantages and ultimately cannot make the conscious effort to give them up. They are dependent upon these privileges to live their lives.

Another view of this addictive system can be seen in an article titled "Is there only one way to think if you're black?" from the August 3, 1998 issue of the Minneapolis Star Tribune. In the article, Clarence Thomas is being criticized for his conservative views on all issues, but especially issues such as affirmative action and civil rights. To many people in the black community, Thomas' behavior is outrageous. H.T. Smith, a Miami lawyer stated, "Clarence Thomas ascended to the U.S. Supreme Court precisely because of the civil rights struggles of his ancestors and affirmative action. Then as soon as he got to the

high court, he has turned his back on civil rights and affirmative action." (Fletcher & Edsall, 1998, p.A5)

This type of thinking is clearly a result of living in the addictive white male system as defined by Scheaf.  The white male system has implied that to be white brings certain privileges.  As a result, the model for any minority group becomes to be more like the white culture.  In this article, Blacks see Thomas as more white than black.  Blacks feel betrayed by him because they feel that to become more white is not an option and that all blacks need to be unified in their thinking in order to overcome white privilege.  Because of Thomas' actions, Blacks feel that Thomas has betrayed them.

Control is an important concept in looking at the addictive system (Schaef, 1987).  In the addictive system, control can be linked to power or responsibility over someone or something.  Yet the addictive system can allow people to gain control and others to lose control.   But what is important to understand about control in an addictive system is that it is only an illusion.  Addicted people believe that they can control their own lives.  In reality, they can control some basic things, such as when to get up in the morning or when to go to bed, but they cannot truly control the events that occur during the day.  One example Schaef uses is that of love.  She writes that people will try to 'make' someone love them.  But even thought one could do all sorts of things endearing one

person to another, love is a gift that needs to be shared willingly, not forced on another. Love cannot be controlled.

In addition, Schaef explains that dishonesty is the norm in an addictive system. She states, " Dishonesty is always destructive. The Addictive System is built on dishonesty. It is a system in which we are expected to cheat on our taxes and get away with as much as we can. It is a system that teaches that only fools are honest." (Schaef, 1987, p. 57) This is very true of the white male system as it relates to white privilege. People are being dishonest to ignore or deny that these privileges exist.

In the book The Addictive Organization, Anne Wilson Schaef teams up with Diane Fassel to take Schaef's concept of the addictive system and apply it to an organization within that system. They write that there are some key characteristics of an addictive organization that will result. The first is that addictive organizations will not tend to their problems. They will only continue to expound these issues and create even more destructive issues.

Another characteristic that Schaef and Fassel explore is that an organization that is addictive will "continue to function addictively and become less moral and ethical and more ruthless, they will lose their influence in the world market." (Schaef & Fassel, 1988, p.209) This is an important concept since in today's

world, an organization cannot survive without looking to the world as its market instead of just a regional area.

Schaef and Fassel write that losing good people is another characteristic of an addictive organization. People will be able to recognize the fact that they have little or no power and that they have become dependent upon the organization for their existence. As a result, the addiction continues to grow until they cannot live anymore and they recognize the addiction. Only then do they sever the relationship and leave the organization.

Lastly, Schaef and Fassel express that when an addictive organization does indeed do the things listed above, it becomes victim to the last characteristic. "When organizations continue to function addictively they can expect to 'bottom out' just like an drunk." (Schaef & Fassel, 1988, p.211) Organizations that are addictive will eventually find that people do not want to work for them, that they have lost their influence in the marketplace, and ultimately that their problems are so big that they cannot be solved. As a result, they can either be taken over by another organization or even forced out of business.

Only when people are willing to admit that white privilege exists will we be able to start fixing the problem. We can continue to deny that white privilege exists and as a result, white people will continue to reap the benefits of white privilege.

This, however, will only widen the gap between the white race and the other races. Schaef writes:

> "We cannot recover from an addiction unless we first admit that we have it. Naming our reality is essential to recovery. Unless we admit that we are indeed functioning in an addictive process in an Addictive System, we shall never have the option of recovery. Once we name something, we own it. Once we own it, it becomes ours, as does the power we formally relinquished to it. Once we reclaim that personal power, we can begin to recover and not until then. Remember, to name the system as addict is not to condemn it: it is to offer it the possibility or recovery." (Schaef, 1987, p.144)

## Now What? – Leadership's Role

It seems clearer that racism is not just an issue of visible acts consciously done to another person based upon the color of his or her skin, but rather that racism is also an unconscious advantage white people hold in our society over those of color. The question now becomes what role can leadership play in eliminating racism and its effects, both conscious and unconscious.

Racism and diversity are subjects that many people, especially white people, do not really want to openly talk about. Leadership needs to play the role of bringing this out into the open for discussion. No longer can white people ignore the privileges they enjoy in society and pretend that they do not exist. In his book Authentic Leadership: Courage in Action, Robert Terry examines what it means for leadership to take this course of action.

Terry uses his book to describe leadership as an action. He states that leadership is essentially made up of two parts: the ability to clearly define the issues and to act in an authentic manner to resolve the issues. Being able to define issues is important because leaders need to be willing to ask the tough questions and to dig deep into an issue to find the truth. If they do not, those issues will be allowed to continue and ultimately will not be solved.

This is particularly true in the case of white privilege. The racism issues surrounding it are complex. Yet if one is willing to continue to ask the tough questions and get people to bring the issue from their unconscious mind to their conscious mind, the problem can be solved. However, if leadership is not willing to ask the necessary questions, white privilege will be allowed to continue and racism will never be able to be diminished.

The second part of Terry's leadership action is equally important. Once leadership has raised awareness and clearly defined the problem, it must then act genuinely to resolve it. Leadership roles require people to act and, once an issue or problem is brought forward, the leader needs to take ownership and act to solve it. This is also true regarding white privilege. It is not enough to know it exists. A leader needs to educate others.

Terry states that all leadership actions consist of six major parts.  These include existence, resources, structure, power, mission, and meaning.   He defines each part as follows:

- ✓ Existence is the foundation for the decisions we make.  It is "from which" we decide a course of action.

- ✓ Resources are those thing we use or need to complete the action.  They are the "with which" we carry out the action.

- ✓ Structure is the basis "through which" we act.  This can be a process or plan that we develop to carry out the action.

- ✓ Power is defined as "an expenditure of energy".  It is "by which" we act.

- ✓ Mission is related to the direction that we move when acting.  It is "toward which" we move and usually is founded in our goals, purpose or vision.

- ✓ Meaning is the "for which" we act.  This is based upon our values and ethics and guides the reasons for our actions.

Each segment plays a role in our everyday actions.  But it is how we apply these various parts that makes us an authentic leader or not.

Terry takes these six elements a step further than just defining them as independent parts.  He states that each of these is present in a decision and they all interact with each other.  He calls this interaction the leadership action wheel, since the interaction between them is a circle.  No matter which point one would decide to start, he/she will move around the circle ensuring that each area of the leadership action wheel has been involved in the decision.

The Leadership Action Wheel (Terry, 1993, p.84):
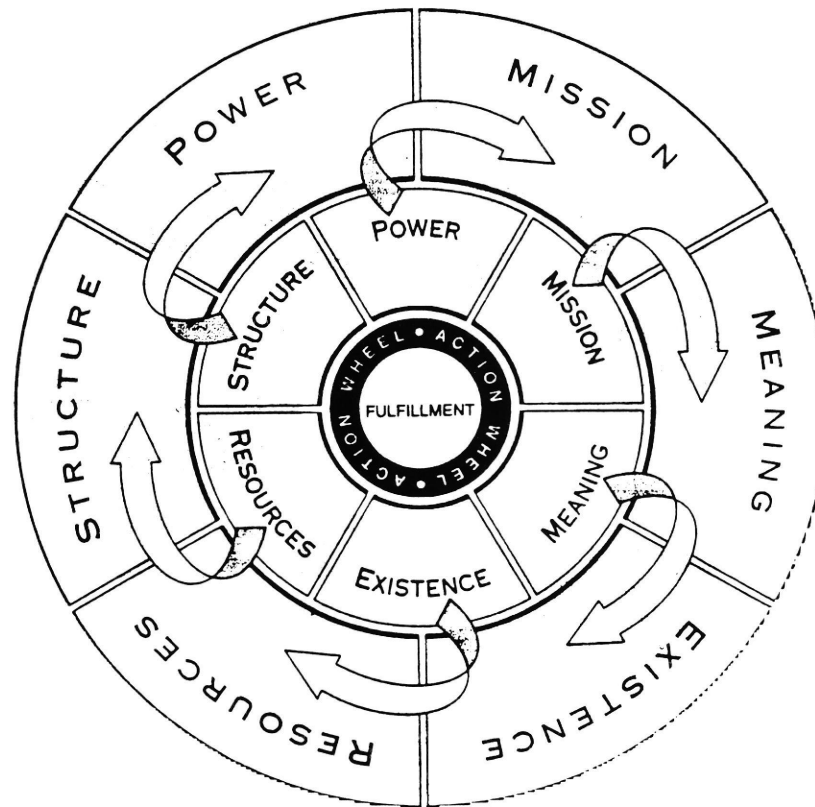


Even thought actions consist of each of the parts, where we start when framing

an issue is instinctively where we tend to make the biggest mistake.  Terry writes,

"The way we frame an issue invariably determines how well we focus the issue,

judge what is really happening, and direct our attention and intervention for

change." (Terry, 1993, p.87)   In addition, once we think we know which area the

problem is originating from, we again tend to solve it by acting from the part or

parts counterclockwise to the area we think this issue resides.   Terry suggests

that it is instinctively easier for humans to look at solving an issue through

structure, resources, and existence then it is in power, mission, and meaning.  As

a result, Terry suggests that when we think we know where an issue resides, we look at the area on the inner circle of the wheel. Then he says we need to follow the arrow the area where the problem really lies.

For example, an organization may be having an issue with employees circumventing a specific policy and think the issue is in the power area. The organization will attempt to solve the problem by adding more policies or requiring a vice president to sign off on an employee's actions. As a result, they are solving the issue through the structure area that is more comfortable to the organization.

If we follow Terry's theory and look at power on the inner wheel, we can follow the arrow to see that in reality the real solution lies in the mission area. Consequently, by communicating and educating employees on the mission of the organization and the purpose of the policy, they can get the employees to buy in to the goal. By doing this, they find that employees are no longer circumventing the policy and have taken ownership for their actions.

The key for leadership, according to Terry, is not only to be better at understanding the root cause of an issue as it relates to the position on the wheel, but is also to better understand each area. By better understanding each area, a person can fully solve the problem from not only the source area, but all areas on the wheel.

To better illustrate how this would fit into racism and overcoming white privilege, Terry would suggest using metaphors to help describe his theory.  In the following table, Terry uses the metaphor 'Life is . . .' for each of the parts on the action wheel.  In addition, Terry defines racism for each area and offers a solution.

| Feature | Metaphors | Racism is: | Solution |
|---------|-----------|------------|----------|
| Meaning | Art | Denial | Own our suppressed fears |
| Mission | A Journey | Ethnocentrism | Education |
| Power | Ups vs. Downs | Oppression/ Expression | Collective liberation |
| Structure | A Body | Social Disease | Healing |
| Resources | A Market | Prejudice/ Discrimination | Equal Opportunity |
| Existence | A Gift | Superiority/ Inferiority | Control/Monitor |

A person whose thinking starts in existence feels that life is a gift and as a result, people are given gifts in life.  They also think that even though these gifts are given to all, some of the gifts are superior to others gifts that are inferior.  As a result, the only way to overcome this thinking is to control and watch things, such as laws, very closely.

Those who focus on resources think that life is a market.  This thinking is rooted in the idea that competition is good.  In other words, the fittest, smartest, and

most competitive will survive.  This thinking supports personal prejudice and discrimination.  The way to resolve this thinking is through equal opportunity.

Structure thinkers feel that life is a body.  As a result, they view racism as a social disease that infects society.  The solution is to cure the disease through special government programs.

Those people whose thinking is rooted in power feel that life is the ups verses the downs.  The ups represent those who are higher in society than those who are down, or lower in society.  Power thinking toward racism leads to oppression of the downs by the ups or oppression of the minorities by the whites.  The solution is collective liberation or the elimination of ups and downs.

Those who think life is a journey are focused in the mission area of the wheel.  These people think that life's rewards come not from the destination, but rather from the trip itself.  Racism here is focused on ethnocentrism.  One moves through life blinded from the issues of racism and chooses not acknowledge the issue.  The solution to this thinking is education.  People need to be exposed and educated on racial issues in order to take the blinders off.

The last area is meaning.  People in this category think life is like art.  It is free to be molded, painted, or written into whatever we choose.  However, this leads to denial that racism exists by suppressing the issue deep into our

unconsciousness. The solution to this is to recognize our shadows and confront them. Only then will we overcome racism.

Clearly the white privilege issue is more prevalent in the last three, power, mission, and meaning. The others can been recognized easily and are more focused externally instead of internally. As a result, solving the white male privilege problem lies in mission and meaning.

As stated previously, white privilege is an unconscious advantage for white people. In mission, leadership needs to get people to remove the blinders through education. Once people recognize the issue of white privilege, they can move to meaning and focus their attention on their own suppressed fears. Once this happens, white privilege can finally be overcome.

The other aspect of Terry's theory is that a leader needs to act in an authentic manner. He defines authenticity as "genuineness and a refusal to engage in self-deception." (Terry, 1993, p.128) This lends itself really well to overcoming white privilege, because refusing to recognize white privilege is really self-deception. Consequently, if one is being self-deceptive, one is not being authentic according to Terry's definition.

In addition to the above definition, Terry also states "an authentic action is one that succeeds in accomplishing its mission."(Terry, 1993, p.128) This is

important to consider, because in order to conquer white privilege, we need to confront our suppressed fears about racism.  By doing this, we become authentic in our actions and take accountability for ensuring the end of white privilege and racism.

David Roediger shares this opinion in his book Towards the Abolition of Whiteness.  He writes, "that consciousness of whiteness also contains elements of a critique of that consciousness and that we should encourage the growth of a politics based on hopeful signs of a popular giving up on whiteness."(Roediger, 1994, p.3)  Roediger is suggesting that by making this issue public, we will hopefully band together to eliminate it.

In addition, leaders need to be held accountable to not only bring the issue of white privilege to the surface, but they must also be committed to surmount it. Patricia Digh, a business consultant that focuses on globalization, ethic/values, and diversity in the workplace, suggests that an organization that simply practices having a diversity program will not successfully meet the challenges of white privilege.

Digh suggests that in order to succeed, everyone in the organization needs to be held accountable for diversity.  Leaders and managers need to have their evaluations, salaries, incentives, and even promotions tied to diversity initiatives. Doing this will ensure that the organizational culture will change at all levels.

Gus Blanchard, Chief Executive Officer for Deluxe Corporation, shares this view. In an article published on October 26, 1998 in the Star Tribune, he wrote "In business, as in life, promoting and supporting diversity is the right thing to do. Period.  As human beings who share the same Earth -- and many of the same dreams, concerns and fears -- equality is something we're granted at birth. Unfortunately, for some, that equality is short-lived as biases and prejudices develop.  Narrow views cause people to fail to recognize the similarities among all human beings and fail to celebrate the differences." (Blanchard, 1998)

Blanchard continues to write that by embracing diversity, an organization can far exceed other organizations by better leveraging the abilities and talents of its work force.  He explains that diversity cannot simply be a plan that is typed up and put on a wall.  He writes, "A diversity plan communicates a company's efforts to become an institutionalized culture of inclusiveness. It should be an indispensable part of an organization's business goals, values and strategic plan -- permeating the organization's core business." (Blanchard, 1998)

**Conclusion**

The history of our culture has been built by the white male concept and is responsible for the lack of cultural diversity in our society today.  Even though steps have been taken to eliminate racism, it continues to exist and is more prevalent in an unconscious form called male privilege and white privilege. These privileges allow white people, particularly white males, to take advantage

of certain 'rights' which are inherent in our society simply because it has been largely defined by the white male.

These privileges lead to another issue for our society, addiction.  Because white privilege and male privilege remain largely unchallenged, our society and organization have been addictive.  This addiction controls people's lives and does not allow them the opportunity to be individuals.  It stifles people's creativity and causes them to conform to the white male way.

Leaders must take the initiative to ensure that this addiction and conformity does not continue.  The role of a leader is to act in an authentic way by facing their own fears about racism and diversity.  Then a leader can focus his/her attention to forcing the issue of white privilege and male privilege out into the open.  A leader needs to be the catalyst for discussions on these privileges in order to move them from people's unconscious to their conscious. Once this has been moved into the conscious, a leader can take the charge to eliminate these privileges.

 *"Let us have faith that right makes might; and in that faith let us dare to do our duty as we understand it."*

*- Abraham Lincoln Address, New York City, Feb. 21, 1859.*

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