

WHITE PRIVILEGE AND WHITE SUPREMACY

Introduction to Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies

Spring 2020

RACISM

“Foundationally [we] have to change our idea of what it means to be racist.” (DiAngelo speaking to van der Valk, “What’s My Complicity?”)

“Racism is a **system** into which we are socialized.” (DiAngelo, *White Fragility*)

RACISM IS SYSTEMIC

“When a racial group’s collective prejudice is backed by the **power of legal authority and institutional control**, it is transformed into **racism**, a far-reaching **system** that functions independently from the intentions or self-images of individual actors.” (DiAngelo)

“[...] “a **system of advantage** based on race.” (Wellman qtd. in DiAngelo)

WHAT IS RACE?

“Concepts of race did not exist prior to racism. Instead, it is **inequality and oppression** that have **produced the idea of essential racial differences.**” (Ferber, 176 qtd. in Kang et al., 46)

Social construction of race

“The external characteristics that we use to define race are **unreliable indicators** of genetic variation between any two people.” (DiAngelo 2018)



WHITE PRIVILEGE

“[...] advantages that are taken for granted by whites and that cannot be similarly enjoyed by people of color in the same context.” (DiAngelo)

Peggy McIntosh, “White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack” (1989)

WHITE SUPREMACY

“An overarching political, economic, and social system of domination.” (DiAngelo)



We reviewed 503 of the most powerful people in American culture, government, education and business, and found that just 44 are minorities. Any list of the powerful is subjective, but the people here have an outsized influence on the nation's rules and culture.

WHO'S IN POWER?

[The Faces of American Power](#) (*The New York Times*, 2016)

WHITENESS: MORE THAN PHYSICAL DIFFERENCES

- Whiteness rests upon a foundational premise: “the definition of whites as the **norm or standard for human**, and people of color as a **deviation from that norm.**”
- “To be white is to be in a privileged position within society and its institutions—to be seen as an **insider** and to be granted the benefits of **belonging.**”
- Bestows unearned advantages to whites, disadvantages for people of color (DiAngelo)

WHITENESS AND NATIONALITY

Who is an American?

What do Americans look like?

What race are Americans?

Who decides?



SCIENTIFIC RACISM

“Indigenous Races of the Earth (1857)” by Josiah Clark Nott and George Robins Gliddon (Kang et al., 47)



Apollo Belvedere



Greek



Negro



Creole Negro

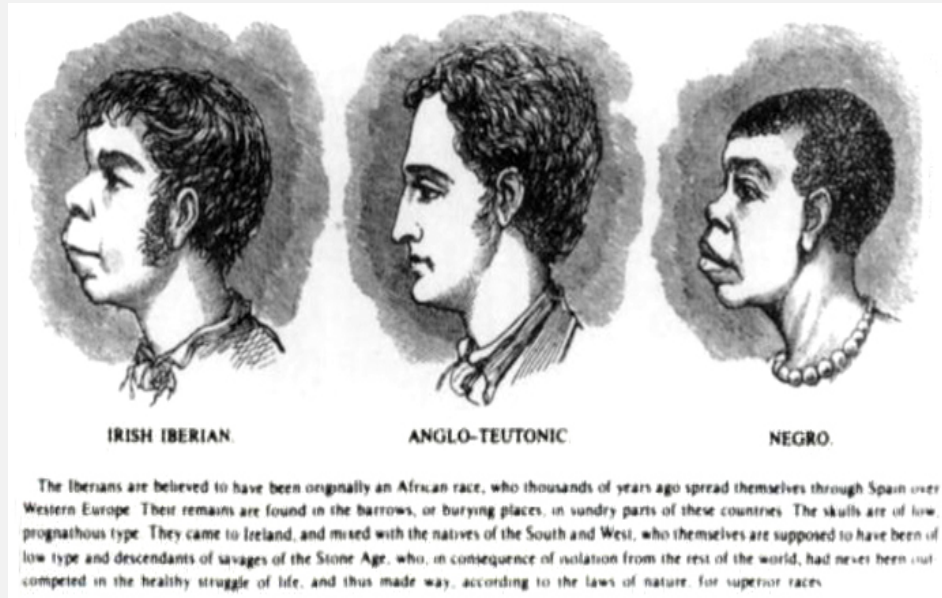


Young chimpanzee



Young chimpanzee

“IRELAND FROM ONE OR TWO NEGLECTED POINTS OF VIEW (1899)” BY H. STRICKLAND CONSTABLE



“An illustration shows an alleged similarity between ‘Irish Iberian’ and ‘Negro’ features in contrast to the higher “Anglo-Teutonic.” The accompanying caption reads:

‘The Iberians are believed to have been originally an African race, who thousands of years ago spread themselves through Spain over Western Europe. Their remains are found in the barrows, or burying places, in sundry parts of these countries. The skulls are of low prognathous type. They came to Ireland and mixed with the natives of the South and West, who themselves are supposed to have been of low type and descendants of savages of the Stone Age, who, in consequence of isolation from the rest of the world, had never been out-competed in the the healthy struggle of life, and thus made way, according to the laws of nature, for superior races.’” (Kang et al., 49)



WHITENESS

How Italians Became 'White'

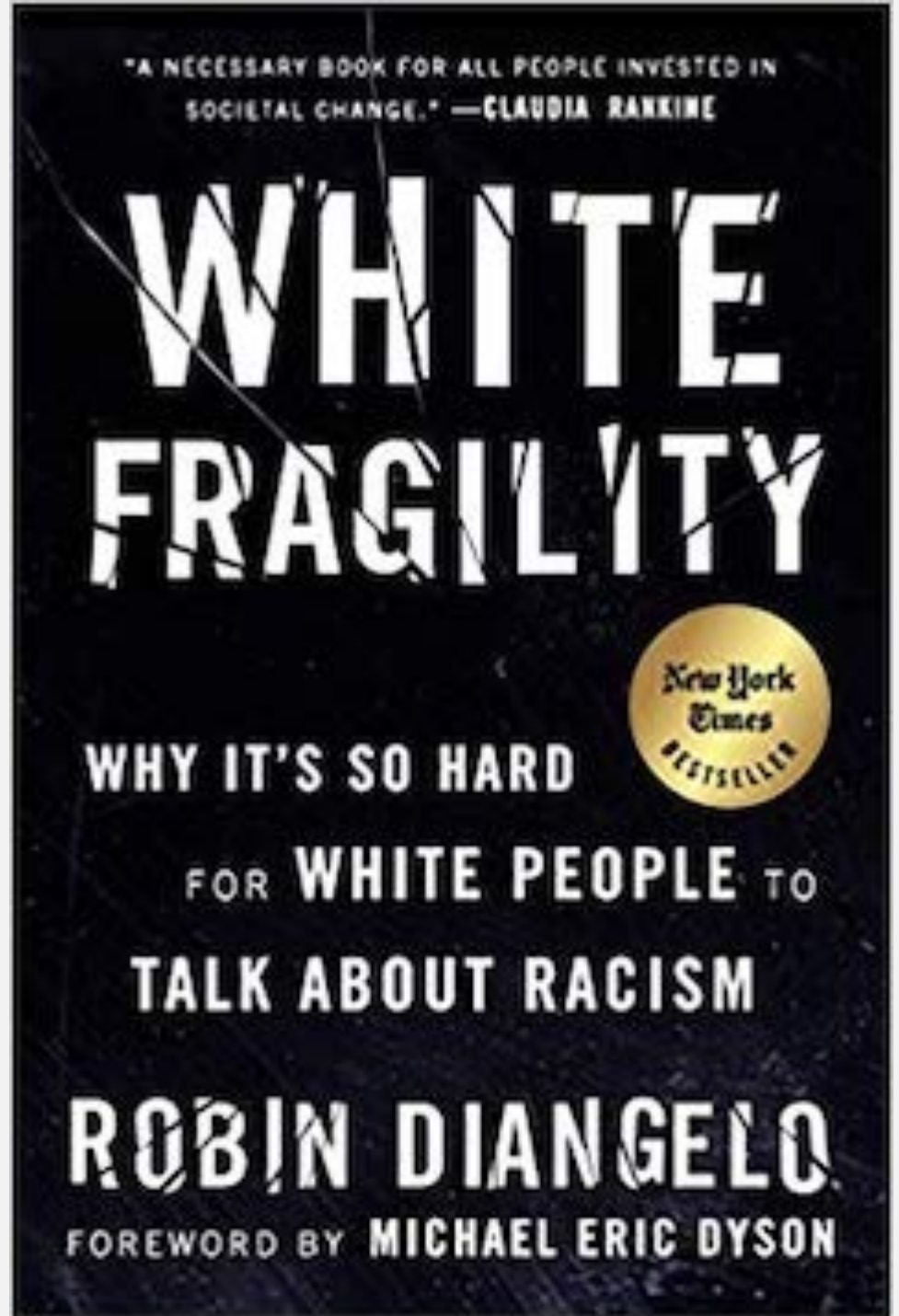
(Staples, 2019)

“...racial categories that people mistakenly view as matters of biology grow out of **highly politicized myth making.**” (Staples)

ROBIN DIANGELO

Book published in 2018 (Beacon Press)

Interview with Adrienne van der Valk
in [Teaching Tolerance](#) (Summer 2019)



“WHITE FRAGILITY”

Coined in 2011 by DiAngelo

Q: In a nutshell, what is white fragility?

A: Well, when I coined that term, the fragility part was meant to capture how little it takes to upset white people racially [...] Right now, me saying “white people,” as if our race had meaning, and as if I could know anything about somebody just because they’re white, will cause a lot of white people to erupt in defensiveness. And I think of it as a kind of weaponized defensiveness. Weaponized tears. Weaponized hurt feelings. And in that way, I think white fragility actually functions as a kind of white racial bullying. (van der Valk, “What’s My Complicity?”)

WHITE FRAGILITY<>WHITE SUPREMACY

“White fragility is much more than mere defensiveness or whining. It may be conceptualized as the *sociology of dominance*: an outcome of white people’s socialization into white supremacy and a means to protect, maintain, and reproduce white supremacy.” (DiAngelo)