

# Critical Race Theory: What it is...What it ain't...and everything in-between

Missouri Psychological Association  
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# Presenter Bios

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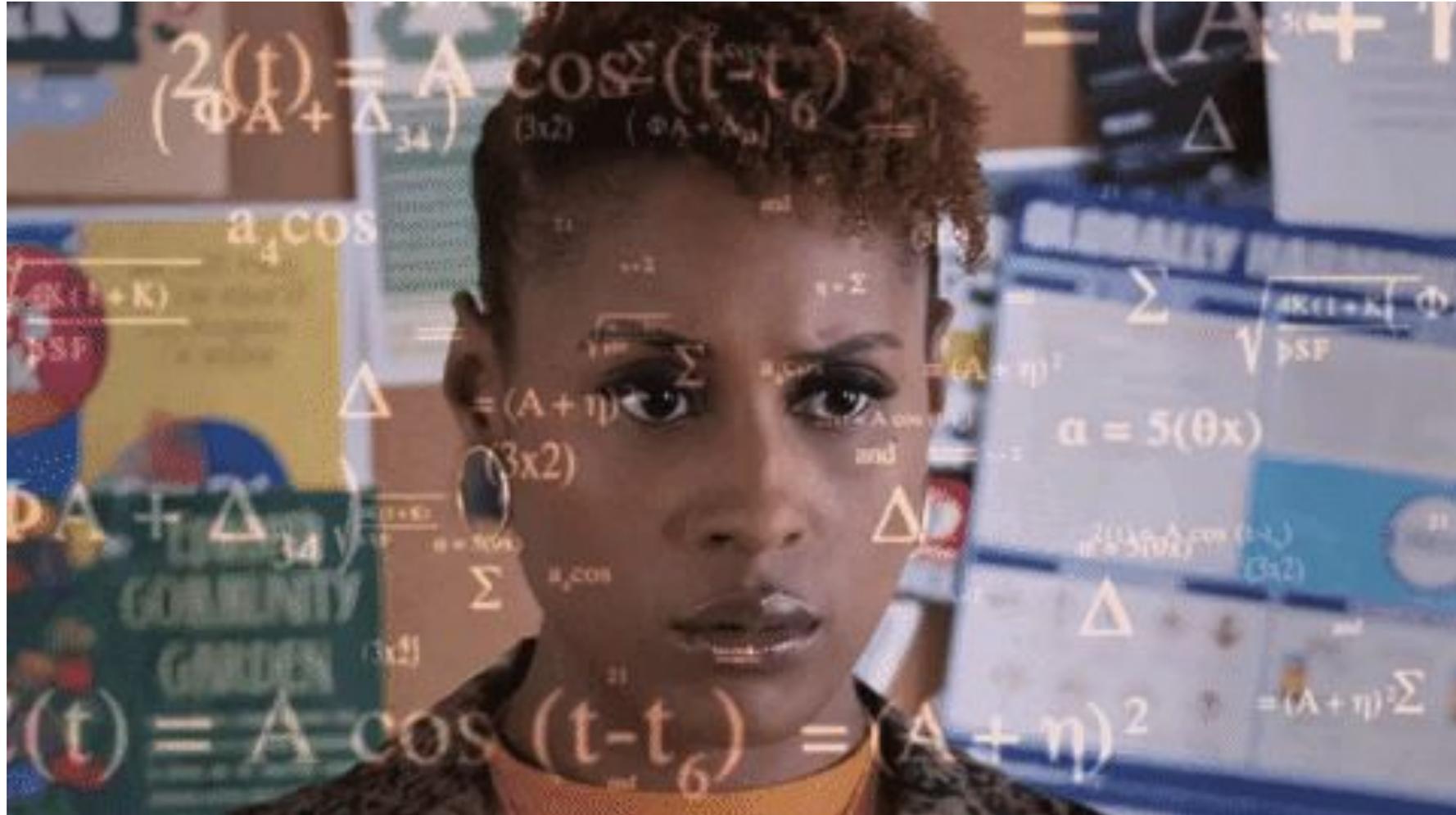
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# What is Critical Race Theory?

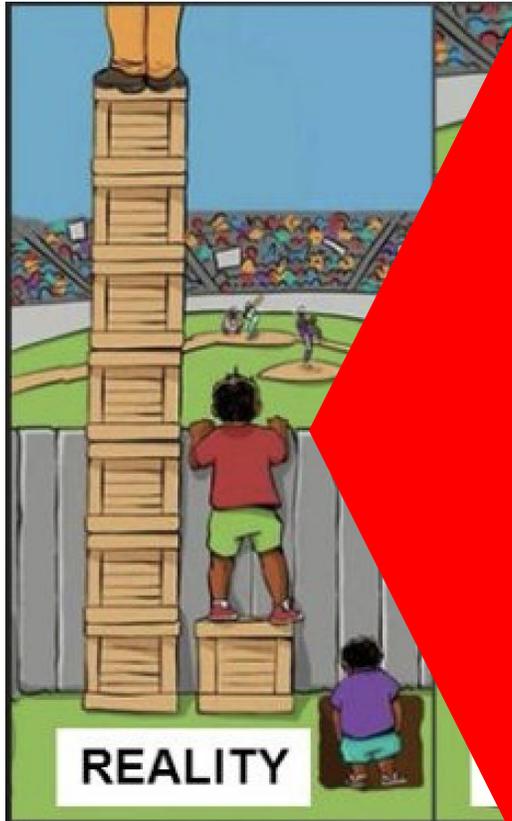


# Overall Premise of CRT

- Framing that helps shift what we know and understand about Western (American) society – its norms, values, beliefs, ideologies – to recognize and validate the persistent existence of racism in a systematic and institutionalized form.
- Exposes and challenges notions of “whiteness” and white supremacist values that exist, demonstrating their deleterious effects on humanity, mobility and prosperity.
- Designed to validate the experiences of those marginalized because of their race (& other identities), situating their stories and lived experiences as the crux for understanding aspects of life (e.g., representation, performance, perceptions, engagements, etc.).

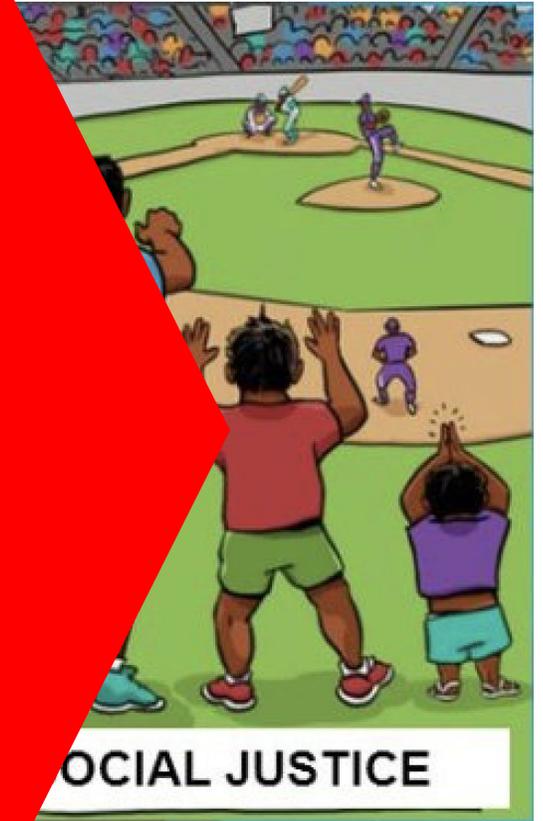
“A Theory of

1972, 1999)



Who is (are) the actor(s) and what are their beliefs?

To what extent does their beliefs shape what is seen, designated as unjust, and acted upon? And what specific action is implemented?



# A Historical Recap

- The Rise of Critical Legal Studies – 1970's
  - Group of “left-leaning” primarily white legal scholars who critiqued and challenged the “neutral, value-free, apolitical” nature of legal reasoning.
- Critical Race Conference of 1989
  - Group of legal Scholars of Color who raised critiques of CLS.
    - Lack of explicit attention to the struggles of People of Color, primarily Black people.
    - Dismissal of legal rights (i.e., policies put in place that focused on advancing racial progress) when new legal doctrine was put in place that would support the dismantling of these rights.
  - Expressed concern with Civil Rights legislature.
    - Emphasis of individualism embedded within both conservative and liberal legal theories.
      - Idea that concepts implemented focused on supporting individual progress as it pertains to their own effort implemented to drive their success.

# Development of the Argument

- Alan Freeman (1978) – Critiqued interpretations used to support precedence setting rulings for defining racism and racial oppression (discrimination).
  - Perpetrator's perspective □ Racial discrimination as being a conscious action done by an irrational individual.
    - Racial justice thus being removing the irrational individual where others who do not do this act are thereby innocent and have no responsibility in making amends.
  - Victim's perspective □ Racial discrimination occurs as it is experienced, interpreted, and understood by the person operating within the system.
    - Racial justice thus equates to transforming the structure (i.e., laws, policies, and social norms) to enhance the quality of life.
- Charles Lawrence (1987) – Lack of awareness from the Supreme Court of including unconscious racism in its definition of racial discrimination.

# Constructs Overview

## Critical Race Theory Constructs

**Interest Convergence**

**Racial Realism  
(Permanence of Racism)**

**Whiteness as Property**

**Critique of Liberalism  
(Myth of Meritocracy)**

**Intersectionality**

**Counter-narratives / Counter-Storytelling**

## Key Critical Race Theorist

## Noted Contributions to CRT

Derrick Bell

Racial Realism  
Interest Convergence

Cheryl Harris

Whiteness as Property

Richard Delgado

Counter-Storytelling

Kimberlé Crenshaw

Intersectionality

Mari Matsuda

Neil Gotanda

Patricia Williams

Myth of Meritocracy/  
Critique of Liberalism

Gloria Ladson Billings

William Tate

Daniel Solórzano

Laurence Parker

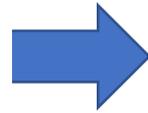
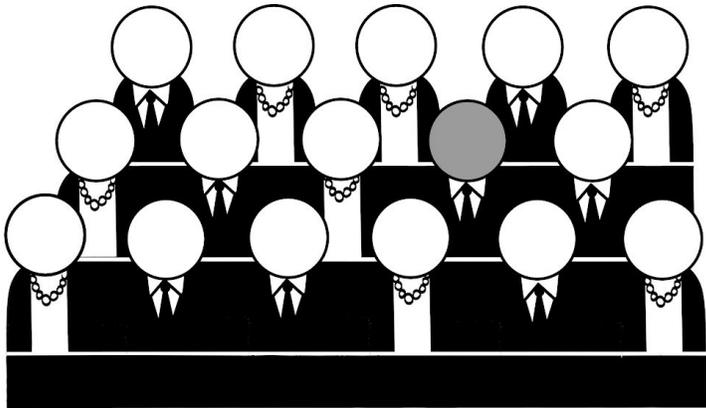
CRT in Education



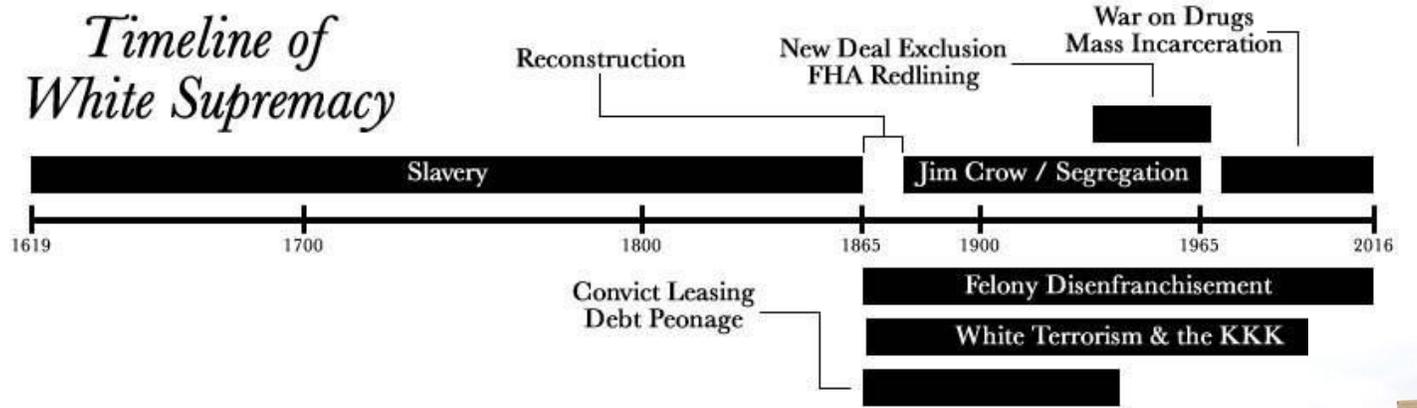
What's wrong with the fish?



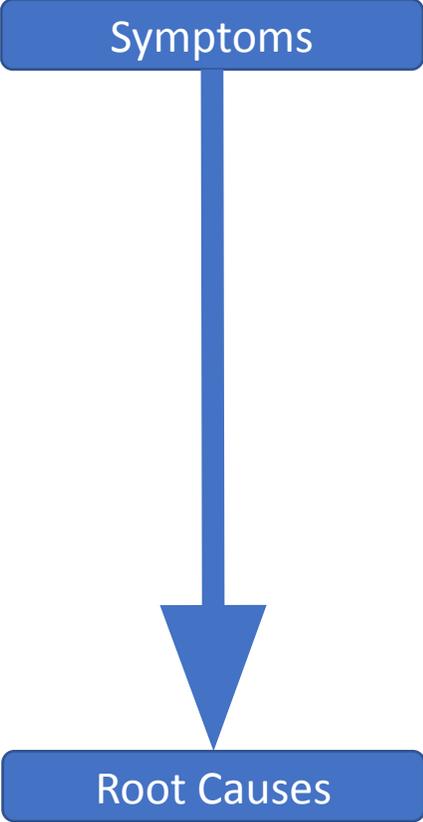
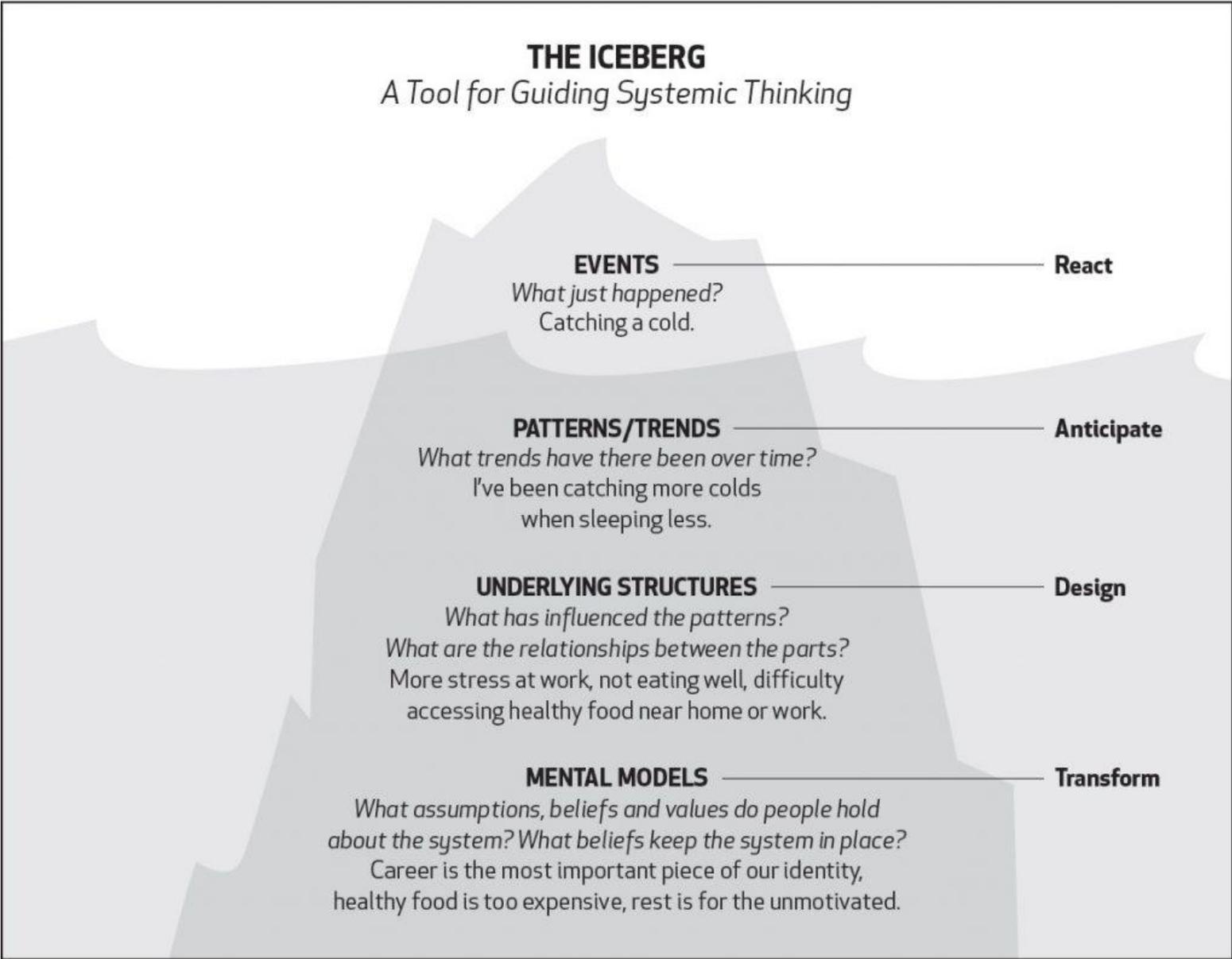
What's wrong with the lake?



### *Timeline of White Supremacy*



# The Iceberg Model for Systemic Thinking



# Racial Realism

- Racism is endemic and ordinary in the United States (Delgado and Stefanic, 2001).
  - Embedded into the fabric of our social institutions, policies, and practices.
- Renounce the notion, and supporting ideologies, that claim that racism can be abolished through meritocratic and legal remedies (Delgado and Stefanic, 2001).
- Challenges the erroneous assumption that racism is comprised of infrequent, and isolated, acts of benign hostility (Ford and Airhihenbuwa, 2010).



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**IN THIS ISSUE...**

The American Psychological Association last month acknowledged its complicity in contributing to systemic racism. During an Oct. 29 meeting of the APA's Council of Representatives, the APA issued a formal apology and adopted resolutions to dismantle systemic racism and advance health equity in psychology.  
... See top story, this page

NSDUH report finds COVID impacted adults with MI negatively  
... See page 3

New White House strategy to prevent military, veteran suicide  
... See page 5

APA: Decision-making a struggle for young adults during COVID  
... See page 7

Ohio lawmaker introduces bill to address MH, COVID connection  
... See page 8

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**APA apologizes to communities of color for structural racism, vows change**

Apologizing and accepting responsibility for structural racism is increasingly becoming an important move, as witnessed over the past several months by the actions of two major mental health organizations. The American Psychological Association (APA), the most recent, apologized for its long-standing contribution to systemic racism. The APA says it will engage in a comprehensive audit of all its equity, diversity and inclusion initiatives and anti-racism-related activities.

The American Psychiatric Association earlier this year also issued a formal apology for its role in structural racism in psychiatry. The organization timed its apology to Jan. 18, the national holiday to celebrate Martin Luther King Jr.'s birthday. The association expressed a commitment to developing anti-racist policies that promote equity in mental health for everyone (see *MHW*, Jan. 25).

More and more companies are raising conversations about racism, implementing education programs and fostering more diverse workplaces. A *New York Times* article in August 2020 reported that since the murder of George Floyd that year, See **Apology** page 2

**Bottom Line...**  
A long-term plan to prioritize, operationalize and ensure accountability for achieving resolution goals is to be presented to the American Psychological Association Council of Representatives by August 2022.

**Colorado identifies free counseling as key to engaging more youths**

Leaders in Colorado believe they have identified a productive strategy for assisting more young people as their mental health needs continue to soar: Take any financial concerns out of the initial decision to pursue help.

The state last month launched an initiative in which youths age 18 and younger will be eligible for three free mental health counseling sessions available from a variety of professionals. Dubbed "I Matter," the new program has been designed with a great deal of influence from young people themselves, as they had a hand in the initiative's name and the functionality of its online platform.

Elizabeth Owens, director of policy and communications at the Colorado Department of Human Services, told *MHW* that state officials believe this is the first initiative of its kind nationally. Owens said the National Conference of State Legislatures could not identify any other program around the country that was offering free therapy in this fashion.

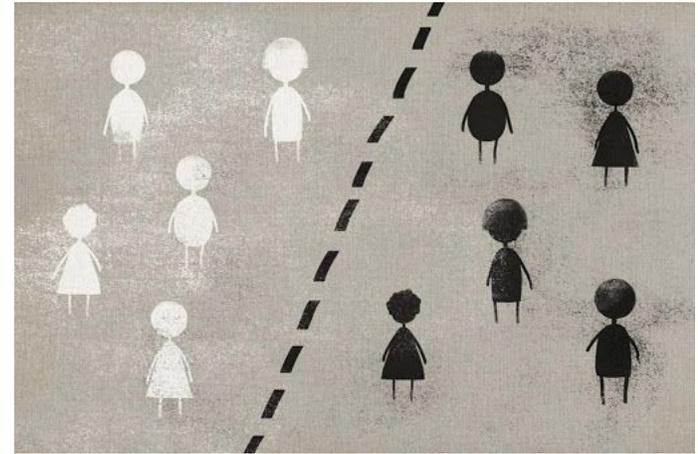
A state House bill that was enacted earlier this year (House Bill See **COLORADO** page 6

**Bottom Line...**  
The pioneering "I Matter" initiative in Colorado is offering three free counseling sessions to young people who are experiencing mental health challenges.

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# Critique of Liberalism

- CRT adamantly refutes colorblind ideologies that overlook the role racism and racialization play perpetuating social and racial inequity (Ford and Airhihenbuwa, 2010).
- Widely held notions of neoliberalism undermines efforts to redress racial inequity by discounting the fact that inequity, inopportunity, and oppression are historical artifacts that will not easily be remedied by ignoring race in the contemporary society.



*“The ethos of American “rugged individualism,” the overwhelming attention in this country to “market justice”, and an unnatural separation of social factors from their impacts on health and illness all play a critical role in understanding public views of inequities in health. When health is seen as the sole responsibility of the individual, society will be deemed to have no role in addressing health inequities.”*  
(Jones, Hatch & Troutman, 2009, pg. 571)

# Critique of Liberalism

- The wide-spread acceptance of a colorblind racial ideology has involved swapping overt forms of racism with racialized discourses that are replete with culturally-deficit thinking about how Black Americans, allegedly fail to live up to traditional neoliberal and meritocratic American values and practices (Chesler, Lewis & Crowfoot, 2005).
- As a result, the persistent inequalities that racial and ethnic minorities experience are explained and rationalized through colorblind logics that insist that racism cannot possibly be the source of these injustices, which effectively obscures the structural processes that facilitate and maintain ongoing White supremacy and racial inequality (Bonilla-Silva, 2013; Harvey and Feagin, 2012; Jones, 2002).

## Supplemental Reading

- ✓ Burkett, C. A. (2017). Obstructed use: reconceptualizing the mental health (help-seeking) experiences of Black Americans. *Journal of Black Psychology*, 43(8), 813-835.

Article

## Obstructed Use: Reconceptualizing the Mental Health (Help- Seeking) Experiences of Black Americans

Christopher Ashley Burkett<sup>1</sup>

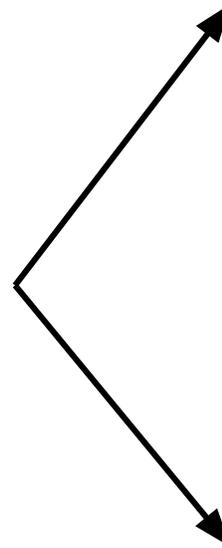
### Abstract

The present body of scholarship suggests that Black Americans seek mental health services at much lower rates than their White American counterparts. The explanations for these decreased levels of mental health help-seeking typically distinguish “barriers” such as stigmatization, lack of culturally relevant treatment models, and negative attitudes toward mental health services. The final results of these analyses are not invalid; however, this researcher contends that they are arguably incomplete. Black Americans must navigate countless obstacles rooted in systematic oppression, institutional inequalities, and structural disparities when seeking help for mental health concerns. This article reviews a set of key terms to offer a historically based and culturally candid perspective on those mental health service seeking experiences for underresourced Black Americans living in environmentally toxic urban spaces. The four theoretical concepts of historical trauma, environmental toxicity, culturally bound economic insecurity, and cultural mistrust both individually and interactively are used to present a more realistic topography of the mental health (help-seeking) experiences for underresourced Black Americans. These ideas are collectively positioned as the theoretical construct of *obstructed use*.

Journal of Black Psychology  
2017, Vol. 43(8) 813–835  
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# Interest Convergence

Interest-convergence asserts that any progress or advances made toward racial equity for people of color will only occur when it converges with the interests, needs, expectations, and ideologies of White people (Harris et al., 2015; Milner, 2008).

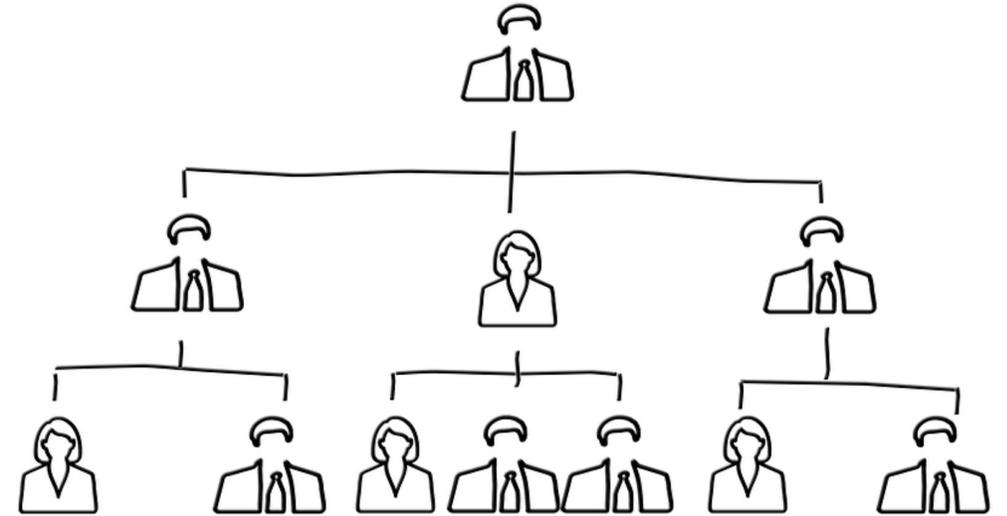


Self- and systematic interest = the tendency of White people to be more likely to support social justice and equity- oriented policies when it does not require them to alter their status (Bell, 1980).

Loss-gain binary = the ability of White people to make decisions resulting in more racially equitable policies is shaped by whether they will ultimately lose something important to them— their power and privilege.

# Whiteness as Property – *What is Whiteness?*

- Whiteness is a racialized social system that unjustly allocates economic, social, and ideological benefits people of European descent, while simultaneously depriving people in other groups of those same benefits (Malat et al., 2018).
  - Primary function is to maintain white supremacy and oppression by perpetuating racial injustice through systemic privilege (Applebaum, 2013).
- “Whiteness is a constantly shifting boundary separating those who are entitled to have certain privileges from those whose exploitation and vulnerability to violence is justified by their not being white” (Kivel, 1996, p.19).



## Supplemental Readings

- ✓ Bonilla-Silva, E. (1997). Rethinking racism: Toward a structural interpretation. *American sociological review*, 465-480.
- ✓ Ray, V. (2019). A theory of racialized organizations. *American Sociological Review*, 84(1), 26-53.

# Whiteness as Property

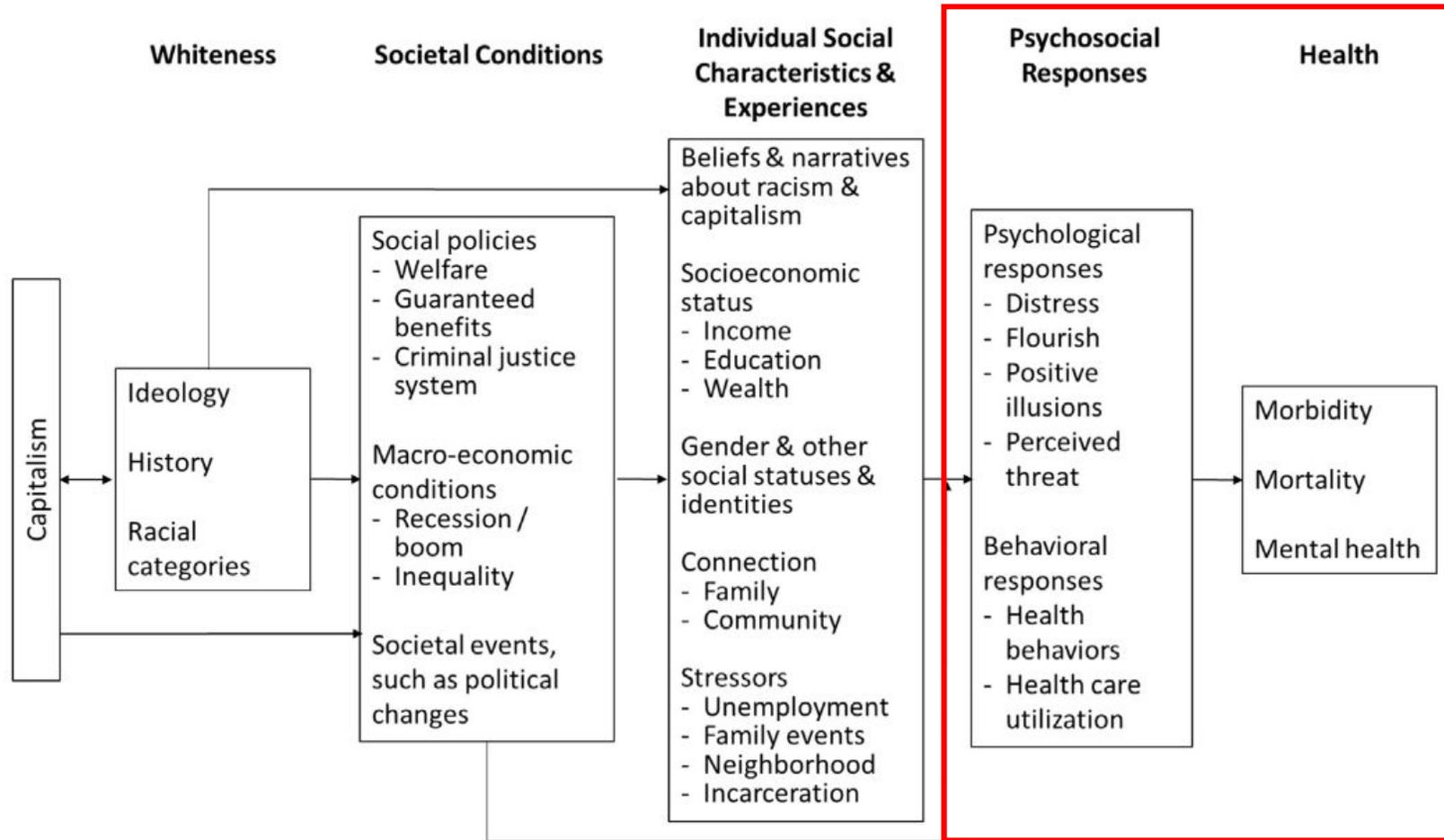
In the U.S., whiteness is an intangible property interest associated with undisputed economic, political, and social security (DeCuir and Dixson 2004; Harris, 1993).

The property functions of whiteness are: (1) the right of disposition; (2) right to use and enjoyment; (3) reputation and status property; and (4) the right to exclude (Harris 1993).

*What do you mean by property?*

A history of global conquest and domination have afforded White people an existence through which they have come to expect and rely upon an exclusive set of **assumptions**, **benefits**, **predispositions**, and **socioeconomic privileges** (Donnor, 2021; Harris, 1993; Mills, 1997).

# Whiteness as Property



**Fig. 1.** Framework describing the relationship between whiteness and health.

## Supplemental Reading

- ✓ Malat, J., Mayorga-Gallo, S., & Williams, D. R. (2018). The effects of whiteness on the health of whites in the USA. *Social Science & Medicine*, 199, 148-156.

# Implications for Academic and Clinical Psychology

- Self:

- Who are you? What do you see? What do you believe? What do you value? What do you consider normal and/or standard (healthy/ whole)?
- How does your epistemological (knowledge) and ontological (reality) perspectives either acknowledge or deny, fight or is complicit with structural racism and gendered racism?
- How does this understanding then inform the ways in which you engage others across various social ranks and societal roles?

- Role:

- How do you wield and leverage your power and privilege?
- To what extent do you engage your practice through a mindset that accounts for structural racism and gendered racism?
- To what extent are you actively (explicitly or implicitly) perpetuating oppression or are actively (explicitly or implicitly) working to dismantle it?

# Panel Discussion



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Keisha Ross, Ph.D