The Interconnectedness of Implicit Bias, Explicit Bias, Mind Science and Structural Racialization in 2017

Resilience of Racism Conference | #MindScience2017

PRESENTER:
john a. powell

DATE:
June 1, 2017

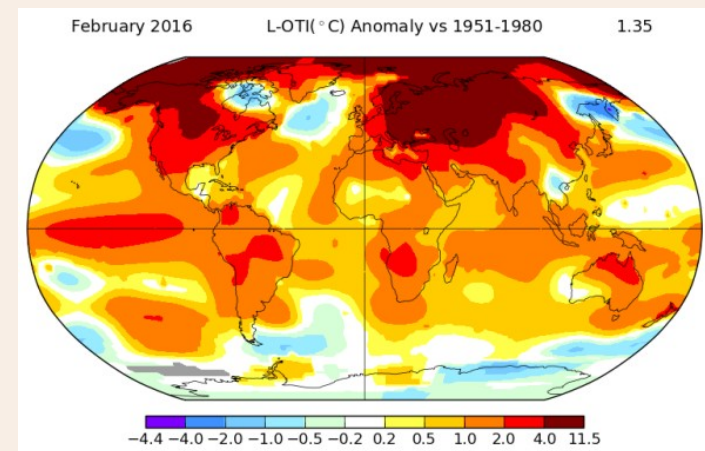AUTHORIAL SUPPORT:
Alyson Reimer
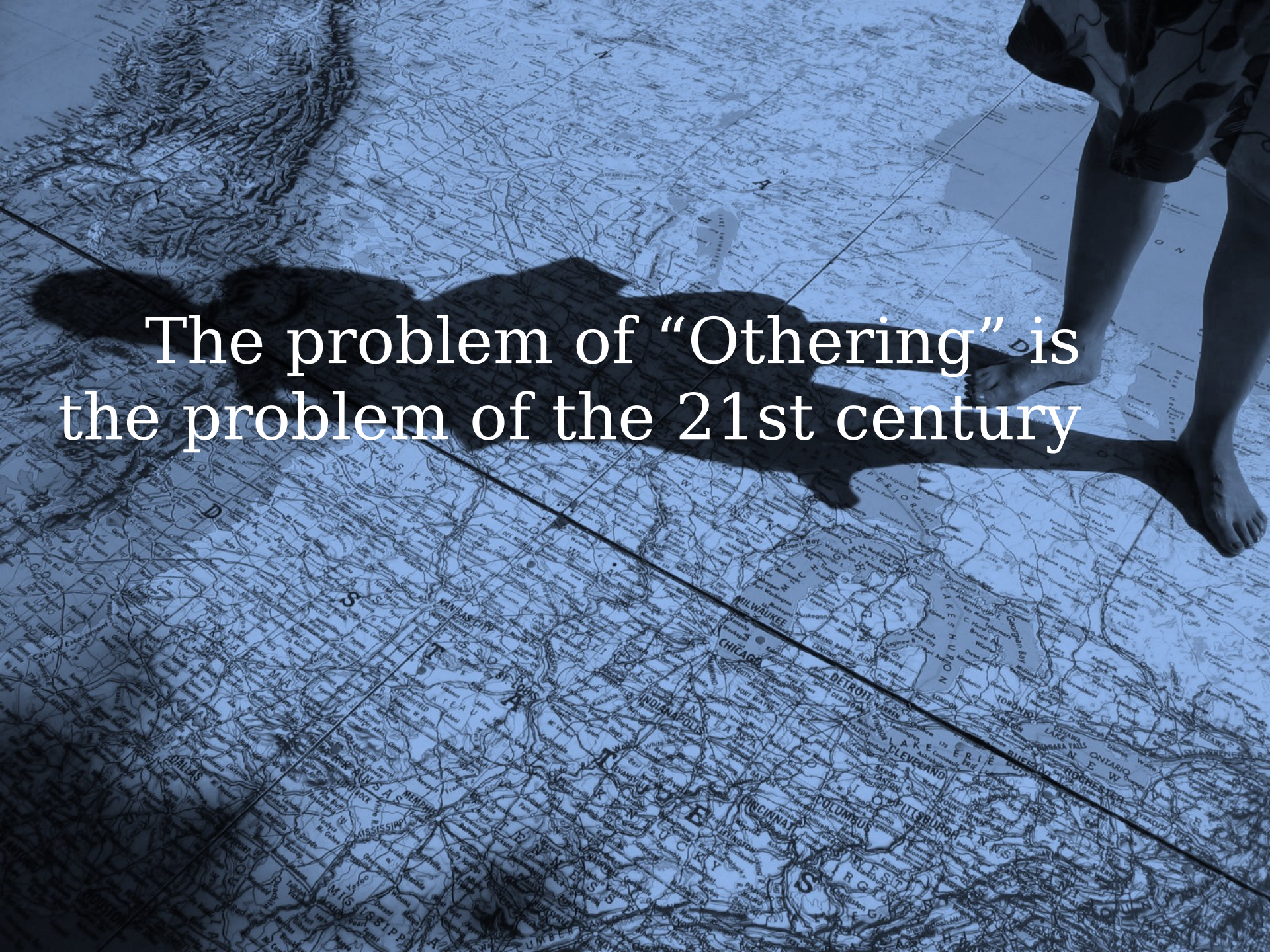
A roadmap of this keynote address

I. Implicit Bias, Explicit Bias, Mind Science, and Society

II. Temporal temperature check

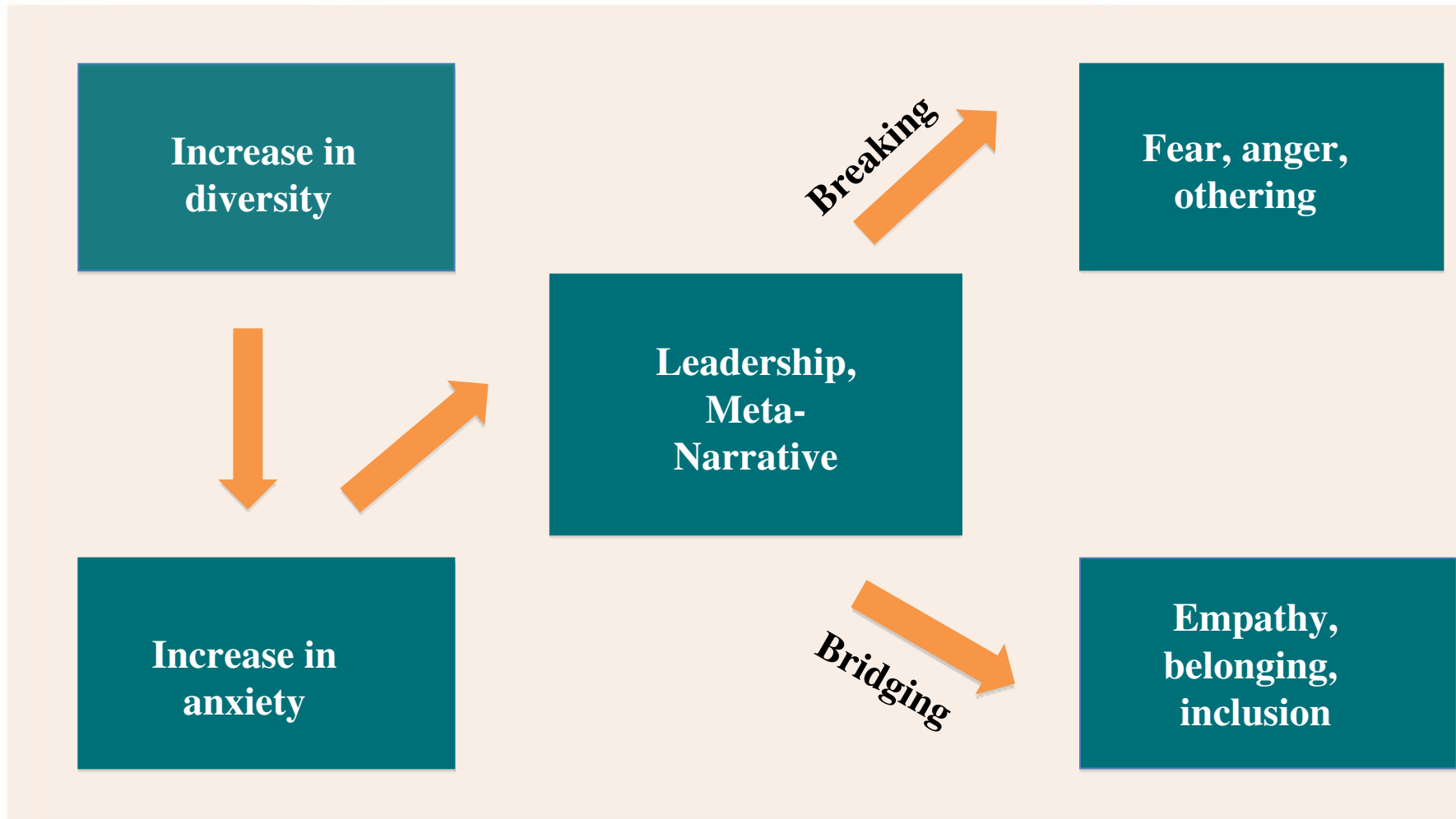III. Identity, Interconnectedness, and the push for deep *Inclusion*

The problem of "Othering" is the problem of the 21st century

The opposite of othering is not saming but belonging

As diversity grows, so does anxiety...

Increase in diversity

Increase in anxiety

Leadership, Meta-Narrative

Breaking

Fear, anger, othering

Bridging

Empathy, belonging, inclusion

Question:

How many of you have dreamed that you could fly? That you were living in a different time, future or past? How many of you have dreamed that you were of a different gender?

Race in America; it is a part of all of our lives.

❖ From trending hashtags, popular memes, Saturday Night Live skits, and the daily news, the word "race" is showing up everywhere; all the time.

    ❖ e.g., In 2016, the Pew Research Center found that Twitter users turned to social media to talk about race *1.5 million times per day*.
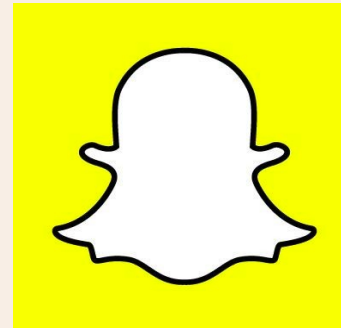
Why is race important?

We are all deeply interconnected and our fates are inextricably linked.

"We are all androgynous, not only because we are all born of a woman impregnated by the seed of a man but because each of us, helplessly and forever, contains the other – male in female, female in male, white in black and black in white. We are a part of each other. Many of my countrymen appear to find this fact exceedingly inconvenient and even unfair, and so very often do I. But none of us can do anything about it."
-- James Baldwin

Race affects everything from our health to our social networks, our access to opportunity, and life outcomes.

Why is talking about race difficult?

➢Breaking
➢Long history of violence, oppression, and injustice toward people of color.
➢Can triggers feelings of guilt, resentment, fear, and hostility.
➢Fear of being labeled a racist.

➢Can trigger the effects of stereotype threat, or self-fulfilling prophecies.
➢Lack of information about the consequences of racial inequality.
➢Implicit bias.
➢Lack of imagination and positive language
➢Inadequate good story

Negative feedback loops

Not surprisingly, if two people are both anxious that an interaction will be negative, it often is.
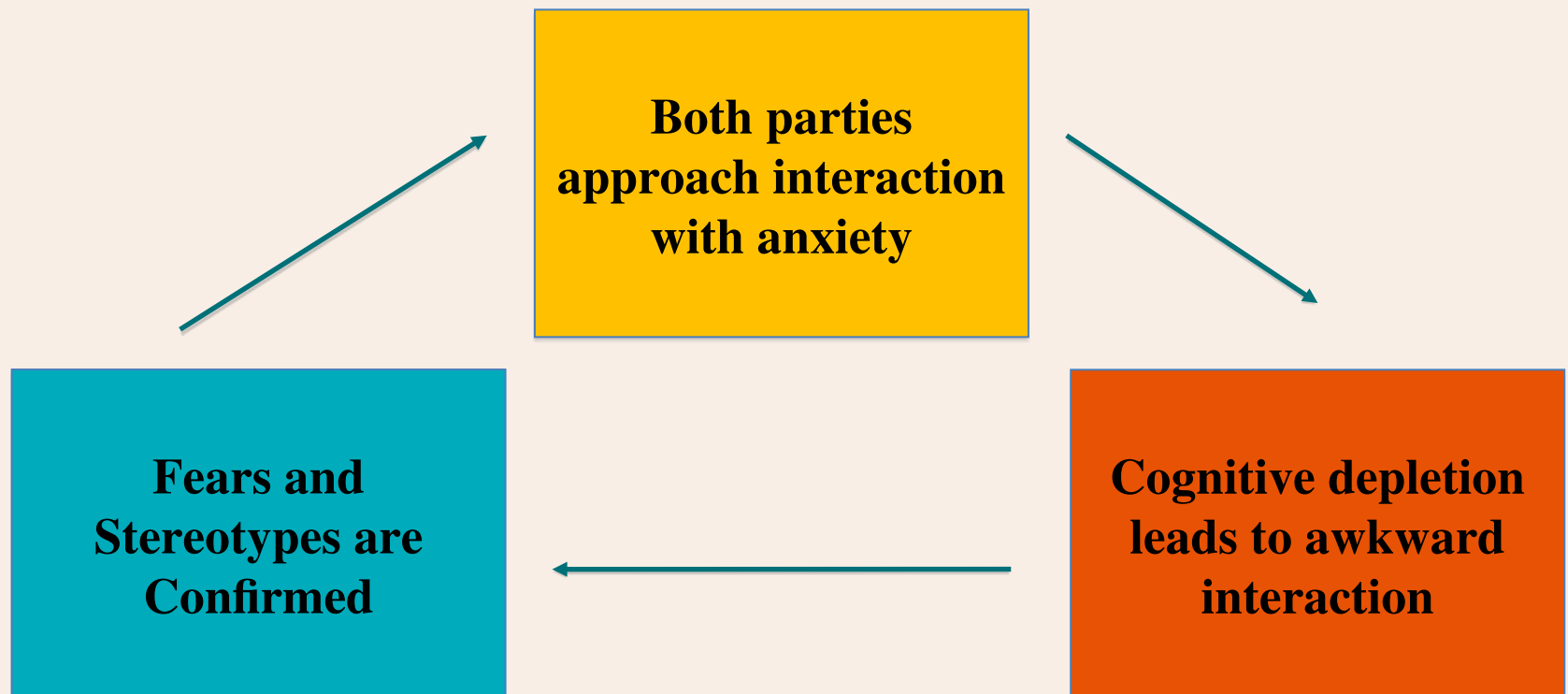
What is implicit bias?

Implicit bias refers to the brain's automatic, instant association of stereotypes or attitudes toward particular groups, without our conscious awareness.

Explicit bias

Expressed directly

Aware of bias / operates consciously

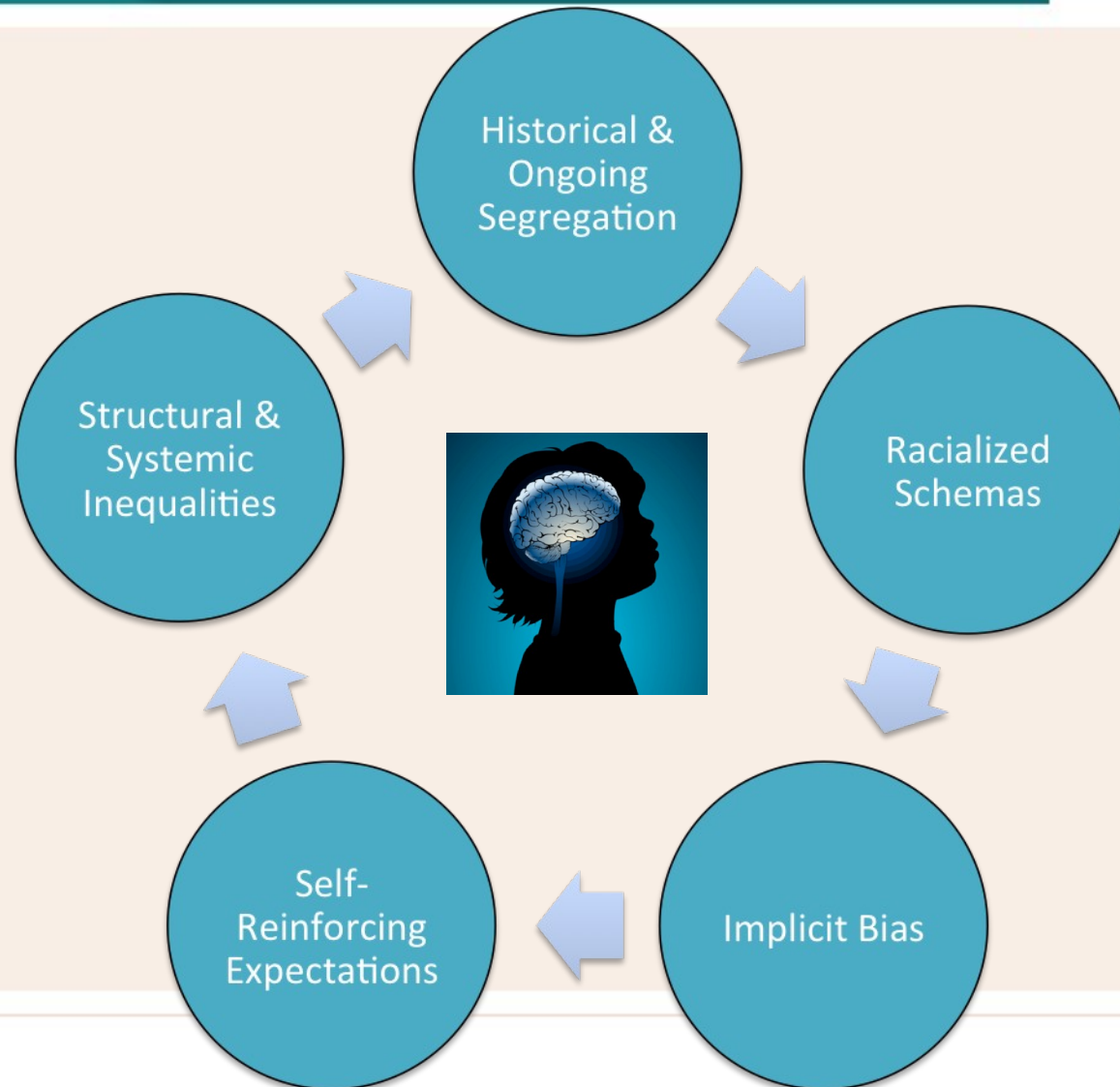Example – Sign in the window of an apartment building – "whites only"

Implicit bias

Expressed indirectly

Unaware of bias / operates sub-consciously

Example – a property manager doing more criminal background checks on African Americans than whites.

The Cycle of Implicit Bias

Unconscious/Implicit Bias

These unconscious biases, categories, anxiety, schemas and stereotypes can be tested.

Implicit Bias

1. Research suggests that these automatic associations affect judgment, perception, interpretation, encoding, retention, and recall of information about other people

2. These biases are cognitive rather than motivational. They operate absent intent to favor or disfavor members of a particular social group

3. **Importantly,** these categories exist whether we want them to or not. The solution is not to get rid of categories, but to slowly work to change their valence/meaning

The role of the unconscious mind

The human brain processes 11 million bytes of information per second

- Consciously aware of any 40 of these, at best
- Only 2% of emotional cognition is available to us consciously
- Messages can be framed to speak to our unconscious
- The process of **Othering** occurs in our unconscious network: this can lead to racial, ethnic, or religious bias

See David Brooks, *The Social Animal* (2011)
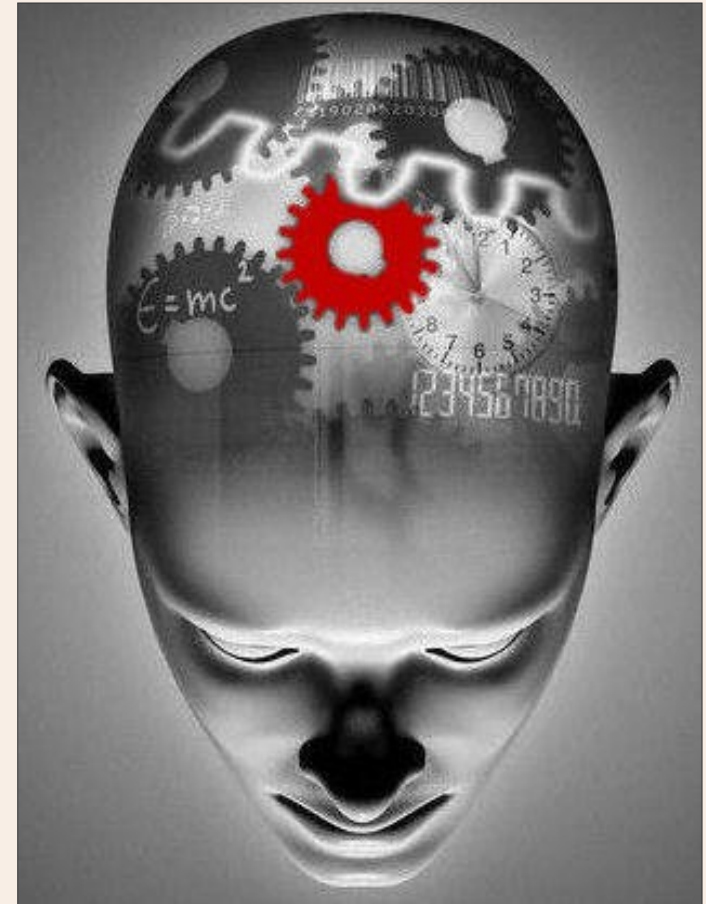
The role of the unconscious mind, continued…


The subconscious mind uses three processes to make sense of the millions of bits of information that we perceive

1. Sorting into categories
2. Creating associations between things
3. Filling in the gaps when we only receive partial information

Schemas

These three processes together add up to schemas – the "frames" through which our brains help us understand and navigate the world.
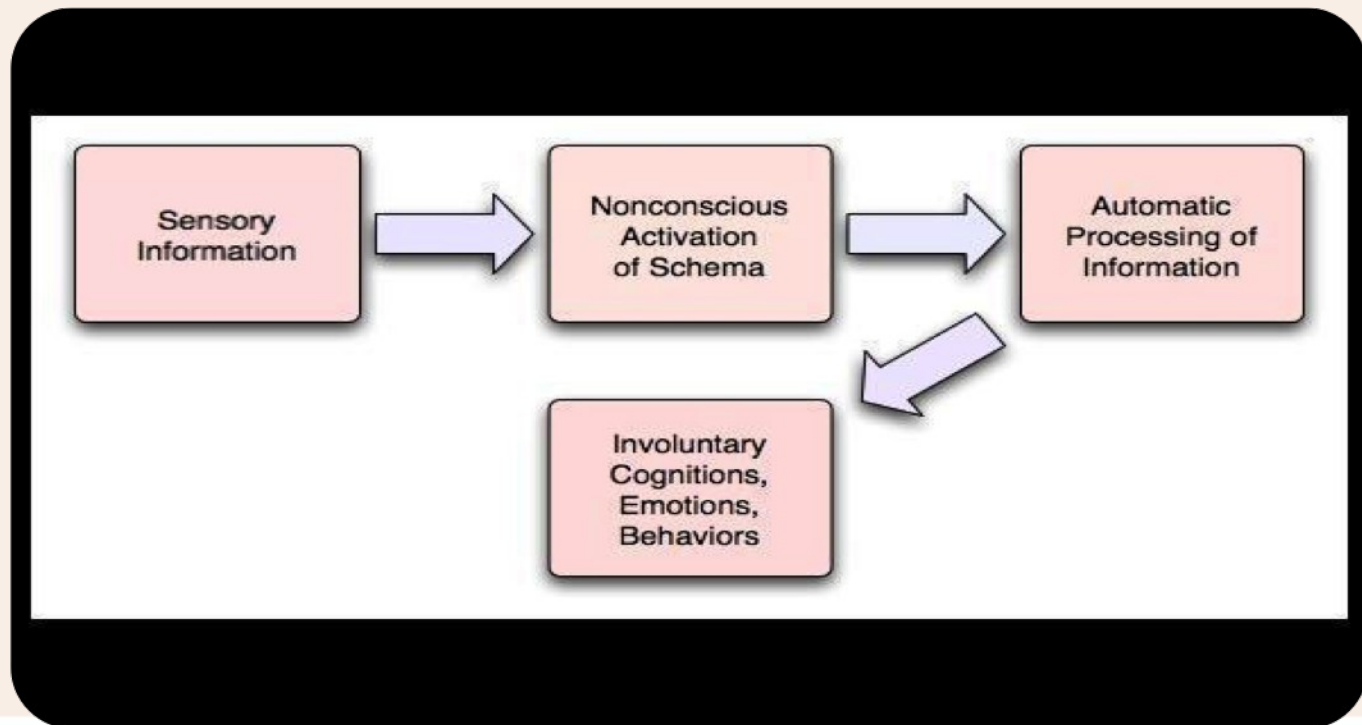
Classification Schemas/ Categories

- Classification schemas are now recognized as necessary to both survival and intelligence, and that human beings may be hardwired to make categorical distinctions
  - As one scholar explains, "If our species were 'programmed' to refrain from drawing inferences or taking action until we had complete, situation-specific data about each person or object we encountered, we would have died out long ago."

- To function efficiently, our brains have evolved processes for simplifying the perceptual environment and acting on less-than-perfect information

- The mechanism for accomplishing both goals is the use of categories
  - Categories simplify reality for us

Schemas & People

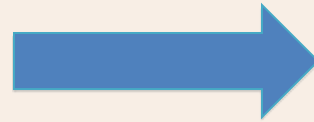1. Schemas That Categorize People = **Stereotypes**

2. Positive Associations With Stereotypes = **Preferences**

3. Negative Associations With Stereotypes = **Prejudices**

haas institute
FOR A FAIR AND INCLUSIVE SOCIETY

Stereotypes /prejudice leads to outcomes, and the outcomes reinforce the stereotypes / prejudice

Prejudice → Outcomes

- Ex: Females aren't good at math.
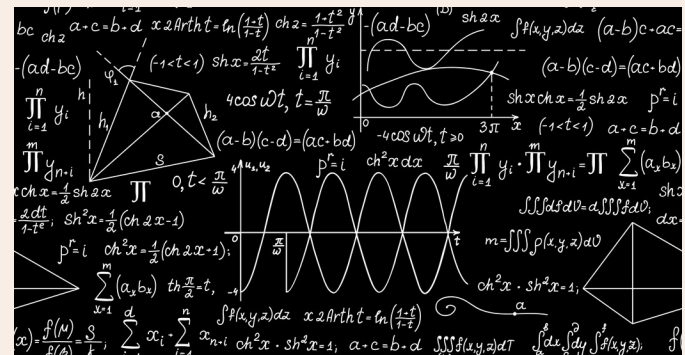   Many females don't take math classes.

Stereotype Threat

➢ When people are aware of a negative stereotype about their group in a domain in which they are identified, their attention is split between the activity at have and concerns about being seen stereotypically.

➢ Stereotype threat diverts cognitive resources that could otherwise be used to maximize task performance.

haas institute
FOR A FAIR AND INCLUSIVE SOCIETY

Implicit bias can leak into everyday interactions

• "Micro-aggressions" and subtle body language affect interpersonal interactions

• "Self-fulfilling prophecy" emerges when nonverbal behaviors are reciprocated with either nervousness or confidence by the interviewee (Word, Zanna & Cooper, 1974)

   • Related to Claude Steele's **"stereotype threat"** (1995)

• Messages can be framed to speak to our unconscious

Cumulatively, these interactions reinforce or exacerbate already existing inequalities within and across systems

haas institute
FOR A FAIR AND INCLUSIVE SOCIETY

Take a moment to sit and reflect on where we are at the moment.

How did *you* get here?

How did *we* get here?

WHERE ARE WE TODAY

WHERE are we going?

How are we feeling about our lives and the outside environment in which we live?

Who are we?
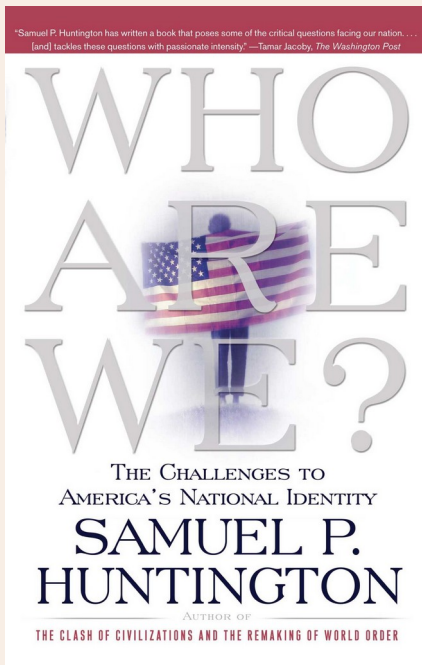
Americans are experiencing anxiety over changing individual and collective identities. What does Trump's presidency mean for our identity as Americans? As we approach "majority minority" level demographics, how will our racial and other identities change?
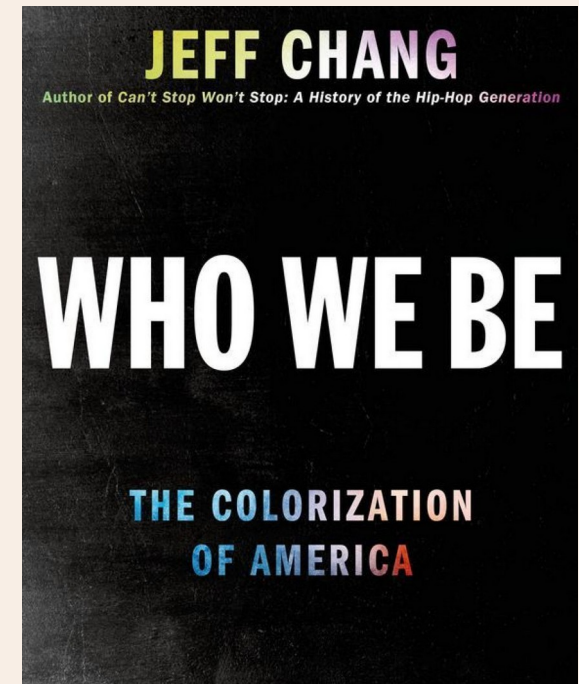
"Othering," defined…

We define othering as a set of processes, structures, and dynamics that see someone as categorically different and usually less than us. Othering and marginality can occur on a group basis or at the individual level.

Dimensions of othering

Dimensions include but are not limited to, sex, religion, race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, disability, sexual orientation, and skin tone.

class

race

ethnicity

ability

religion

skin tone

sexuality

age

Othering, health, and well-being

haas institute
FOR A FAIR AND INCLUSIVE SOCIETY
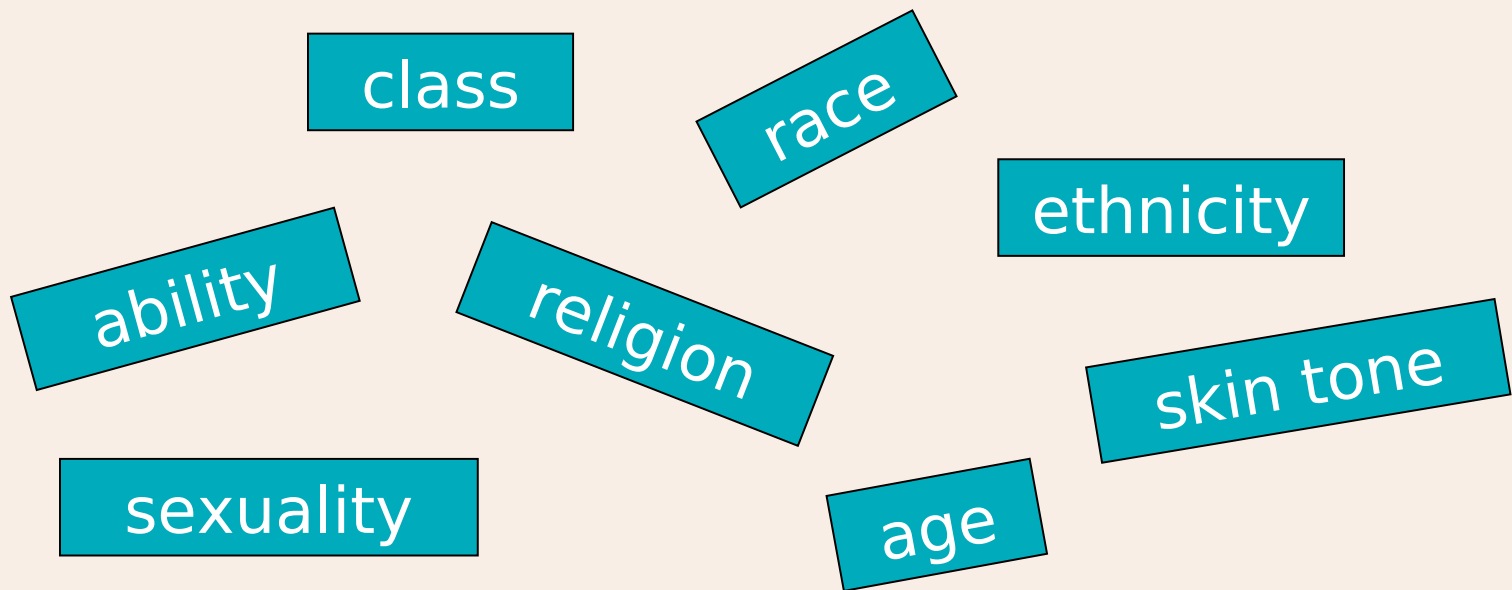
Othering and uncivil discourse can affect one's health. After 9/11, there was an increase in harassment and discrimination of Arab Americans. A study looking at Arab American women that gave birth 6 months prior to 9/11, and 6 months after 9/11, found that the women who gave birth 6 months after 9/11 were more likely to give birth to low-weight and premature infants.

Source: Here's how racism and uncivil discourse can affect your health, Washington Post

Belonging, defined

The term belonging reflects an objective position as well as the inter-subjective nature of group-based identities. In that respect, the process of othering and belonging are deeply relational and important in forming group identities and the self.
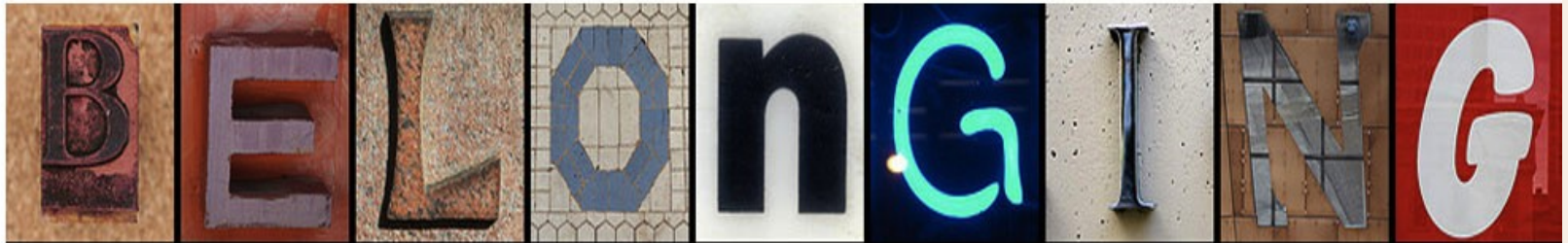
Ambient Belonging

People can make decisions about joining a group or field based on their sense of ambient belonging — the feeling of fitting into an environment.

Belonging, health, and well-being

haas institute
FOR A FAIR AND INCLUSIVE SOCIETY

Our social networks impact our health and well-being.

❖A person's social network is a key predictor in whether an individual will become a victim of a gun homicide, even more so than race, age, gender, poverty, or gang affiliation.

❖Individuals who lack social networks tend to suffer higher rates of morbidity and mortality, as well as infection, depression and cognitive decline.

❖Social disconnectedness is associated with worse physical health, regardless of whether it prompts feelings of loneliness or perceived lack of social support.

We all need to *belong*

Many studies show that belonging and group identity impacts performance. There is a direct correlation between students belonging and doubts about their ability to perform well in academic settings. This doubt creates an incentive to drop out of school, thus continually perpetuating the cycle of "othering" in the nation's collegiate system.

Who do you call?

Who do you call in an emergency?

Does it matter whether you are . . .

- ❖ White?

- ❖ Latinx?

- ❖ Female?

- ❖ Living life in the U.S. undocumented?

All of our lives are made up of multiple networks

Our lives are made up of many different networks. Social networks; business and professional networks; community networks; and opportunity networks.

Networks: Good & Bad

The networks we are a part of can both help and hurt us.

Native Young Adults Are At The Greatest Risk

Completed suicides per 100,000 population, for 18-24-year-olds

○ Female ● All ○ Male
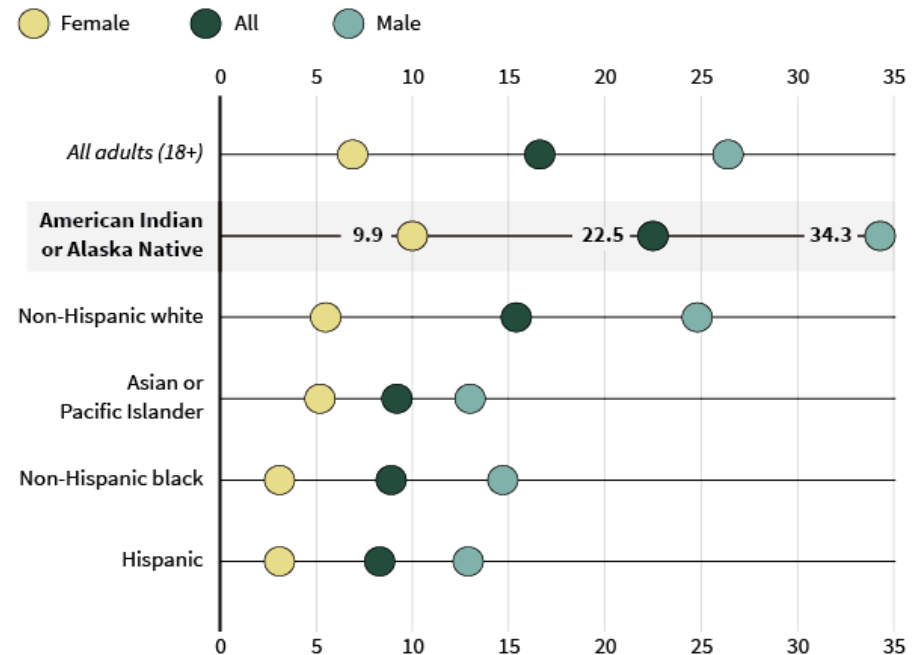
Source: CDC

THE HUFFINGTON POST

What are the structures that affect our lives?

What are the structures that affect our lives?

How are these structures connected?

Understanding structures as systems
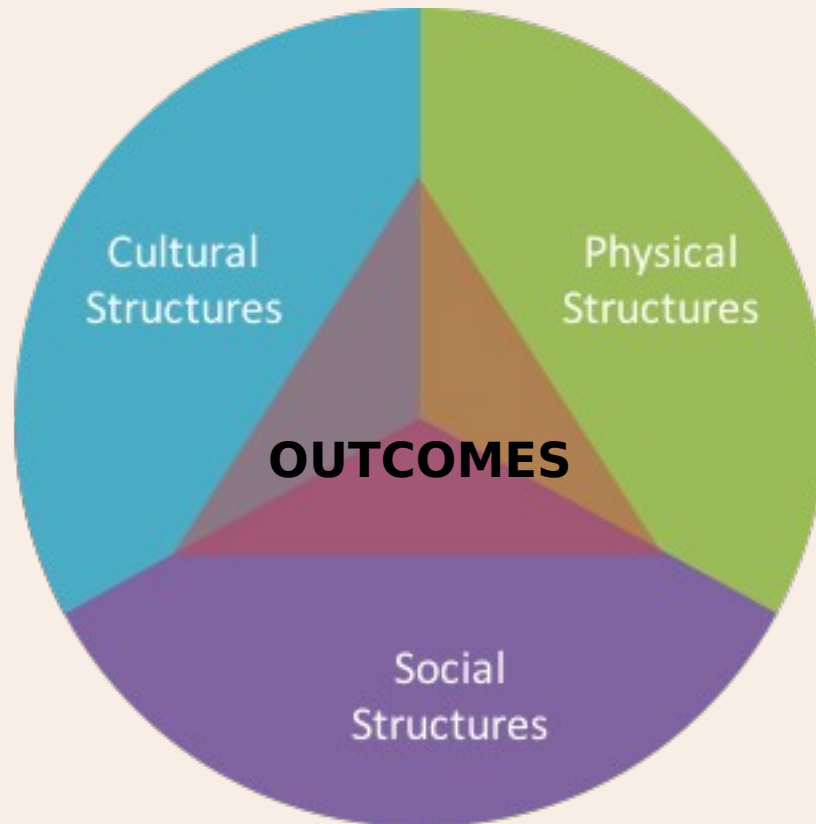
We are all situated within structures but not evenly

These structures interact in ways that produce a differential in outcomes

Feedback Loops: Opportunity is Racialized

- Structures and policies are not neutral
- They unevenly distribute benefits and burdens to different groups differently
- Institutions can operate jointly to produce racialized outcomes

School segregation and concentrated poverty

Lower educational outcomes

Increased flight of affluent families

Racial and economic neighborhood segregation
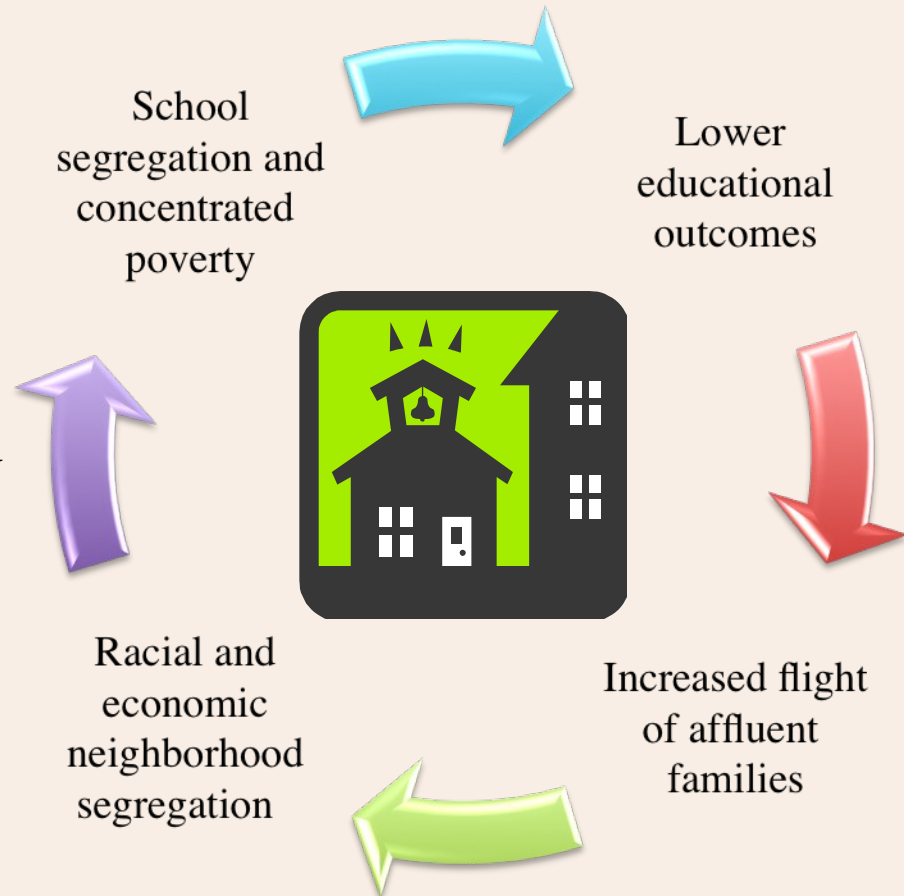
Opportunity structures: Space, place, & life outcomes

- **Opportunity structures** are the web of influences beyond our individual control that enhance and constrain our ability to succeed and excel

- Life changes are shaped by opportunity structures, and those structures are just as important, if not more so, than the choices that individuals make

Place and opportunity structures

Neighborhoods & access to opportunity

• Five decades of research indicate that your environment has a profound impact on your access to opportunity and likelihood of success

• High poverty areas with poor employment, underperforming schools, distressed housing, and public health/safety risks depress life outcomes

- • A system of disadvantage
- • Many manifestations: urban, rural, suburban

• People of color are far more likely to live in opportunity: deprived neighborhoods and communities

Multidimensional understanding of opportunity

Structural Inequality

Example — bird in a cage:

• Examining one bar cannot explain why a bird cannot fly. But multiple bars, arranged in specific ways, reinforce each other and trap the bird.

The necessity of solidarity

Addressing issues like climate change, poverty, health and disease, requires us to think about how we are all related and connected….how we structure our societies, policies, and practices, and how we can achieve our common goals in a way that acknowledges our deep connection to each other

The Trauma of Othering & the Liberation of Belonging

haas institute
FOR A FAIR AND INCLUSIVE SOCIETY

Social cleavages and hierarchies based on differential power, privilege, and access to resources exist in a multitude of manners, many being perpetuated within and through government. **This type of "othering" in and of itself causes trauma in our communities and without our work forces.** The flip-side of othering is belonging. To create cultures and communities where belonging is truly a norm requires a radical transformation of government into a truly effective, caring, and inclusive democracy.

What is trauma?

- Events or conditions that threaten or violate one's psychological, emotional, moral, spiritual, or physical safety, health, and integrity.

- Trauma affects individuals differently; resilience and racial uplift -- huge factors.

- Traumatic experiences typically engender:
  - Fear, Anger, Shame
  - Helplessness and hopelessness
  - Sense of worthlessness

Trauma has consequences

- Thinking

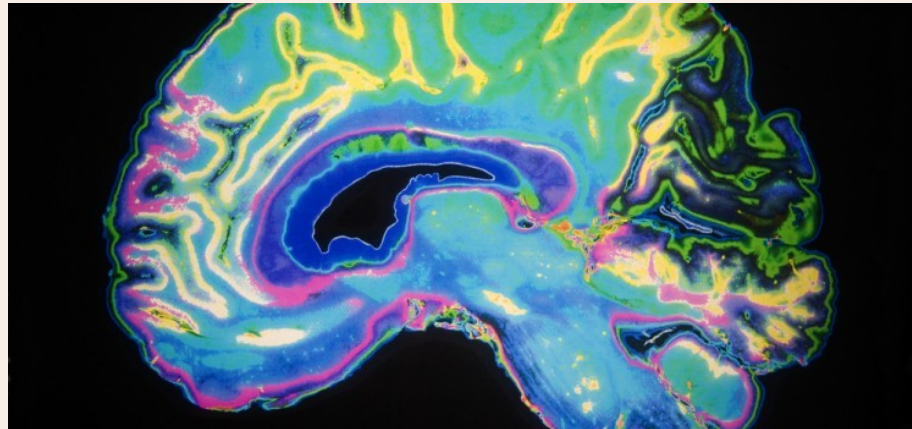- Decision-making

- Behavior

- Relationships

- Affect
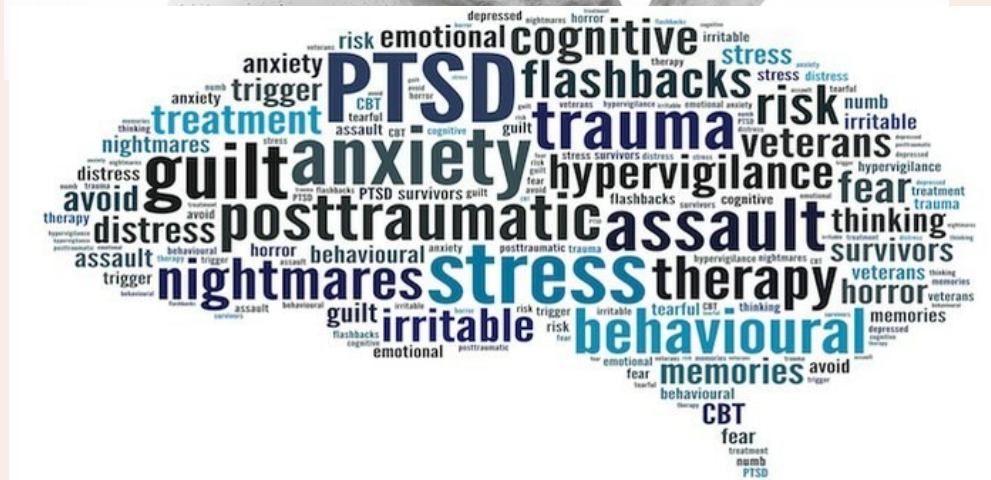
# What has changed? What do we now know?

Advances in brain research; new information about impact of trauma on the brain:

- Developmental neuroscience, interpersonal neurobiology.
- Enormous advances in neurobiology in the last two decades, brain imaging.
  - Evidence of the 'trauma response.'

haas institute
FOR A FAIR AND INCLUSIVE SOCIETY

Trauma and the brain

- Brain development is 'use-dependent'.
- Over-developed amygdala (limbic system).
  - Fight, flight, or freeze reactions.
- Under-developed frontal lobe.
  - Harder to bring on-line when amygdala is working so hard.
- Information processing affected.
- Impact on hippocampus (memory).
- The good news?
  - The brain is plastic; continuously adjusting.
  - Context/conditions matter, and we have the power to change these.
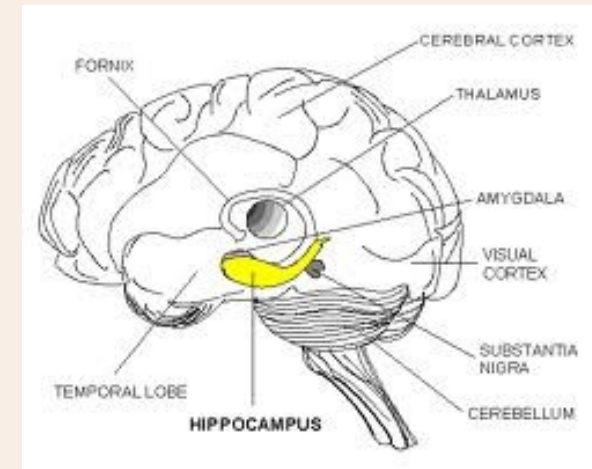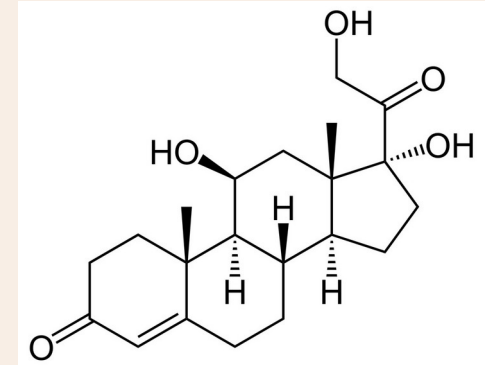
Allostatic Load

Allostatic load is a measure of the cumulative "wear and tear" our bodies experience in response to repeated exposure to stressors over the life course.

Developed in the field of stress physiology, and derived from the word allostasis (maintaining stability or homeostasis through change), the allostatic load model encompasses experiences across multiple interrelated physiological systems.

Allostatic Load: Stressors

A stressor is anything that triggers the release of stress hormones like cortisol and catecholamines. A stressor can be physiological, psychological, environmental, direct, or indirect. Here are a few examples:

- Physical injury, e.g. a broken leg or chemical burn

- Ingestion of a drug, e.g. cocaine or Adderall

- Exposure to environmental toxins, e.g. inhalation of coal dust or ingestion of contaminated water

- Poverty

- Major life changes and events, e.g. birth of a child or death of a loved one, buying a house or becoming homeless

- Trauma caused by Othering, i.e. experiencing prejudice, discrimination, exclusion, or expulsion from life space and opportunity

Group-based othering and allostatic load

Empirical studies show that allostatic load is patterned by social determinants, and has been proposed as a biological link that explains socioeconomic disparities in morbidity and mortality. These social determinants are strongly group-based.

Example:

A study examining the cumulative effects of neighborhood disadvantages and allostatic load from adolescence to mid-adulthood found that the socioeconomic status of one's neighborhood is related to cardiovascular health, beyond what was found for individual-level socioeconomic conditions.

Life-Course Accumulation of Neighborhood Disadvantage and Allostatic Load: Empirical Integration of Three Social Determinants of Health Frameworks, Gustafsson et. Al., American Journal of Public Health, May 2014, Vol 104, No. 5

Group-based othering and allostatic load, continued…

haas institute
FOR A FAIR AND INCLUSIVE SOCIETY

Evidence of early health deterioration among Blacks and racial differences in health are evident at all socioeconomic levels. The "weathering" hypothesis posits that Blacks experience early health deterioration as a consequence of the cumulative impact of repeated experience with social or economic adversity and political marginalization.

"On a physiological level, persistent, high-effort coping with acute and chronic stressors can have a profound impact on health. The stress inherent in living in a race-conscious society that stigmatizes and disadvantages Blacks may cause disproportionate physiological deterioration…producing ever greater racial inequality in health with age through middle adulthood."

"Weathering" and Age Patterns of Allostatic Load Scores Among Blacks and Whites in the United States, Geronimus, Hicken, Keene, and Bound, American Journal of Public Health, May 2006, Vol 95, No. 5

The road ahead; building equity and inclusivity.

haas institute
FOR A FAIR AND INCLUSIVE SOCIETY

➢ Difficult conversations will happen, and we must learn how to be effective leaders and participants in these conversations.

➢ Setting organizational goals and developing a common language and vocabulary for talking about race is a necessary first step.

➢ Understanding concepts such as white privilege, racial anxiety, stereotype threat, and cognitive depletion is another necessary step.

Framing the conversation on race

UNITY

LINKED FATE

Unity and Linked Fate/Bridging

U N I T Y

- ❖ Focus on expanding the circle of human concern to include all humans.
- ❖ Empathic story where we share each others suffering.
- ❖ Shared future
- ❖ Focus on a "we" mindset and perspective, rather than an "us/them" mentality.

L I N K E D   F A T E

- ❖ We are all deeply and profoundly connected.
- ❖ The fates of all people are inextricably linked.
- ❖ We need to understand the effect that structures, systems, and institutions have on all individuals.

haas institute
FOR A FAIR AND INCLUSIVE SOCIETY

Structural Inclusion

Arrange structures and stories to promo
The outcomes we want.

What is outcome?

A cirlce.

Closing thoughts & remarks

haas institute
FOR A FAIR AND INCLUSIVE SOCIETY

Read *Racing to Justice* today!

haas institute
FOR A FAIR AND INCLUSIVE SOCIETY

RACING TO JUSTICE

transforming our conceptions of self and other
to build an inclusive society

john a. powell

For more information, visit:
http://www.iupress.indiana.edu/catalog/
806639

Like the Haas Institute on Facebook!
www.facebook.com/haasinstitute