Habits of White Discourse

URL: http://tinyurl.com/habitsofwhitediscourse

The habits of whiteness below should not be used as essential in a way that may reify whiteness as some static, monolithic construct. Whiteness is a category of experience in the world -- it's phenomenological -- so it changes and is in flux. It may co-opt any habit. Think of these habits as embodiments of an orientation to the world, making the first habit below most central. The test or validity of a habit or disposition as white is in how it is deployed in the world and what effects that doing (the habit) has on spaces and bodies.

- **Unseen, Naturalized, Orientation to the World** -- an orientation (or starting point) of one's body in time and space that makes certain things reachable; assumes (or takes as universal) proximities (capabilities to act and do things) that are inherited through one's shared space; an oxymoronic haunting, leaving things unsaid/unstated for the audience to fill in and contains multiple contradictions (is ambiguous) in how it can be understood. A style of embodiment that is invisible to the person or voice, a way of inhabiting spaces that is comfortable (allows the person to "sink into the space" around the body); the space becomes an extension of the white body and its discourse in such a way that it is hard to distinguish where the white body ends and the world begins. Any utterance may participate in this orientation to the world by how the utterance operates in the space (does it sink in?) and what its effects are.

- **Hyperindividualism** -- self-determination and autonomy is most important or most valued; self-reliance, self-sufficiency, and self-control are important. Individual rights and privacy are often most important and construct the common good. The truth is always good to hear, no matter how painful, good, or bad it may be (each individual has the right to know the truth).

- **Stance of Neutrality, Objectivity, and Apoliticality** -- assumes or invokes a voice (and body) or its own discourse as neutral and apolitical, non-racial, which might use some of the other habits below to reinforce this neutral and objective stance.

- **Individualized, Rational, Controlled Self** -- person is conceived as an individual who is rational, self-conscious, self-controlled, and determined. Conscience guides the individual and sight is the primary way to identify the truth or understanding. Social and cultural factors are external constraints to the individual. Meaningful issues and questions always lie within the self; individuals have problems and solutions are individually-based; Both success and failure are individual in nature; failure is individual and often seen as weakness. Control of self is important, as is work and staying busy, or being industrious and productive; unsure how to cope with the uncontrollable in selves, society, or nature.

- **Rule-Governed, Contractual Relationships** -- Focus on the individual in a contractual relationship with other individuals; focuses on "informed consent"; model relationships negotiate individual needs. Individual rights are more important and non-political, whereas socially-oriented values and questions are less important and often political (bad) by their nature. There is an importance attached to laws, rules, fairness as sameness, contractual regulations of relationships. Little emphasis on connectedness, relatedness, feeling, interconnection with others; individuals keep difficulties and problems to themselves.

- **Clarity, Order, and Control** -- Focus on reason, order, and control; thinking (versus feeling), insight, the rational, order, objective (versus subjective), rigor, clarity, and consistency are all valued highly. Thinking/Rationality and knowledge are non-political, unraced, and can be objective. Anti-sensuality is valued, while there is a limited value of sensual experiences, considerations of the body, sensations, and feelings. A belief in scientific method, discovery, and knowledge; deductive logics are preferred; usefulness and pragmatism are important measures of value and success.
Works Consulted


