

Facilitating Change

How Leaders' (Non-)Enforcement of Norms Shape the Quality of Race-Conscious Professional Learning

UCEA Annual Convention | Seattle, WA | November 18, 2022

James Noonan, Salem State University

Hilary Lustick, UMass Lowell

Ashley Carey, UMass Lowell

Peter Piazza, Education Commonwealth Project

 @_jmnoonan  @jmnoonan@mas.to

 @hilwith1L

 @ashleyjcarey

 @ptpiazza

Spring 2020

EDUCATION

Schools close for millions of kids as teachers get sick and COVID-19 cases surge: Some districts are holding out

[Erin Richards](#) and [Elinor Aspegren](#) USA TODAY

Published 5:01 a.m. ET Nov. 20, 2020 | Updated 4:32 p.m. ET Nov. 23, 2020

EDUCATION

Gov. Pritzker Orders Closure of All Illinois Schools, Including CPS, Over Coronavirus Concerns

[Kristen Thometz](#) | March 13, 2020 7:57 pm

EDUCATION

Gov. Greg Abbott orders Texas schools closed to students for rest of 2019-2020 school year



[Molly Smith](#)
El Paso Times

Published 11:30 a.m. MT April 17, 2020 | Updated 5:00 p.m. MT April 17, 2020

All Michigan K-12 schools to close for 3 weeks due to coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak

Governor says 'this is necessary step to protect'

ALBANY

Coronavirus: New York state orders all schools to close for at least two weeks

[Jon Campbell](#) and [Joseph Spector](#) New York State Team

Published 12:04 p.m. ET March 16, 2020 | Updated 6:57 p.m. ET March 16, 2020

Gov. Closes K-12 Vermont Schools Starting Wednesday To Slow Coronavirus

Vermont Public Radio | By [Peter Hirschfeld](#), [Mark Davis](#)
Published March 15, 2020 at 3:51 PM EDT



EDUCATION

Indiana schools closed through the end of the academic year



[Arika Herron](#)
Indianapolis Star

Published 2:38 p.m. ET April 2, 2020 | Updated 5:19 p.m. ET April 2, 2020

Seattle Public Schools Close Due to Coronavirus

Seattle's schools serve 55,000 students and it is the first major school system to announce a prolonged closure because of coronavirus.

By [Lauren Camera](#) | March 11, 2020, at 5:39 p.m.

Summer 2020



Fabrice Coffrini, AFP



Chloe Collyer, New York Times

The New York Times

'I Can't Breathe': 4 Minneapolis Officers Fired After Black Man Dies in Custody

"Being black in America should not be a death sentence," the city's mayor said as video of the arrest was widely shared.

The Washington Post

Four Minneapolis officers are fired after video shows one kneeling on neck of black man who later died

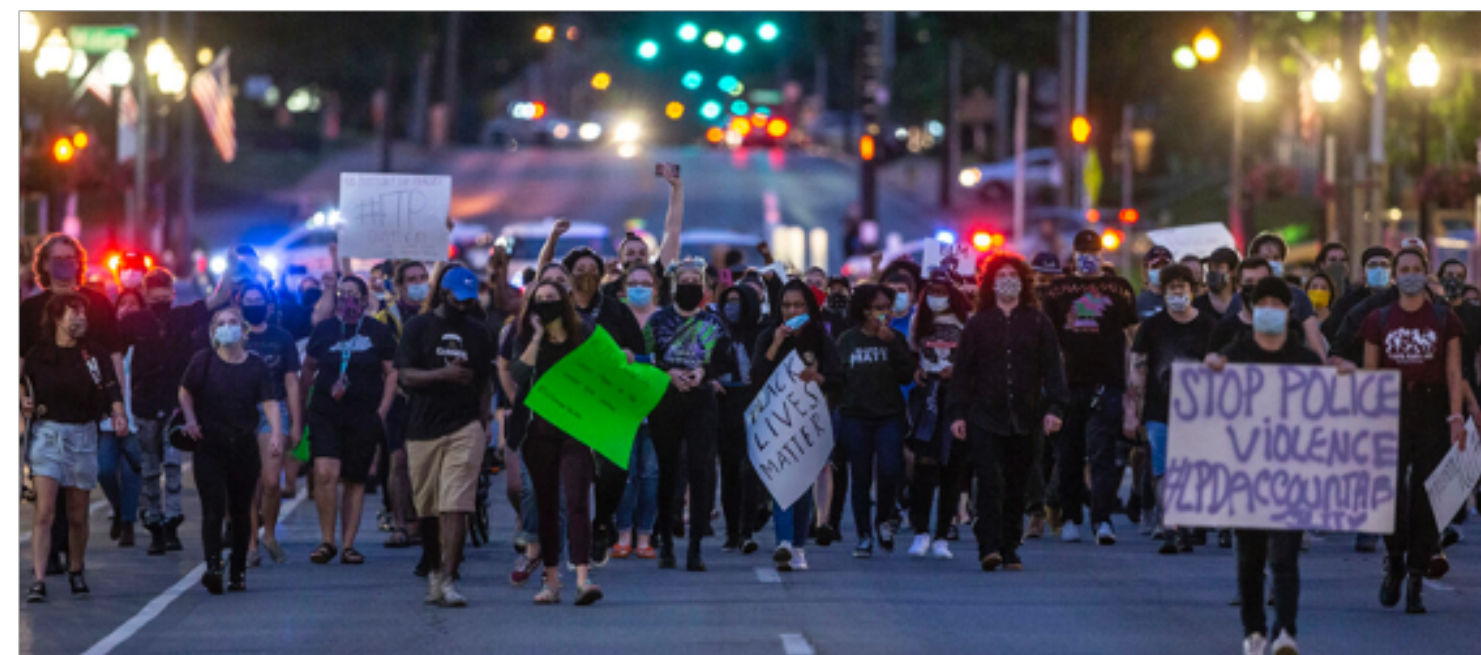
By Brittany Shammis, Timothy Bell, Katie Mettler and Dalton Bennett
May 26, 2020



Craig Lassig, EPA



Joseph Prezioso, AFP



Ryan C. Hermens, Lexington Herald-Leader



Josh Galemore, Arizona Daily Star



Gabriel Bouys, AFP

Race Talk

- Race talk: “conversations about race that touch upon topics of race, racism, ‘whiteness,’ and White privilege” (Sue, 2013, p. 664)

Benefits

- Increased racial literacy (Seider & Graves, 2020)
- Greater capacity to analyze racial ideologies (Bolgatz, 2005)
- More pluralistic orientation (Jayakumar, 2008)
- Increased perspective taking (Gurin et al., 2004)

Risks

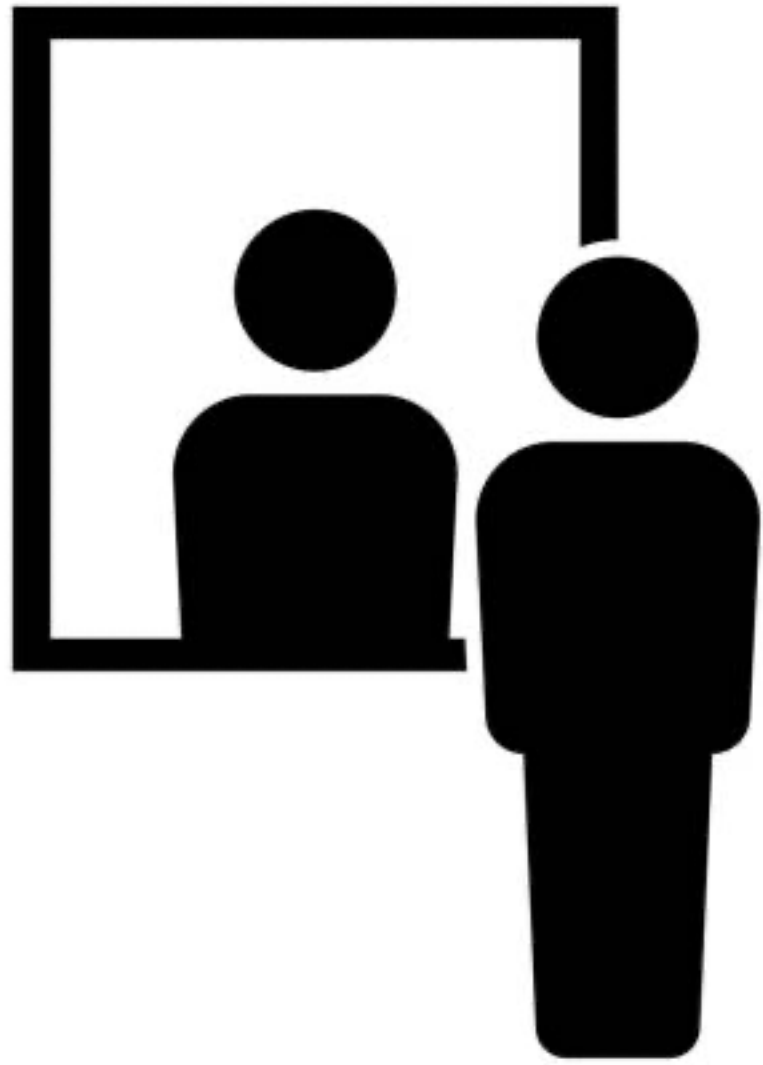
- Feelings of frustration, anger, and stress — for White people and people of color (Sue, 2015)
- “Resistance in the form of silence” (Murray-Johnson, 2019, p. 5)

Race Talk

- **Effective facilitation is a critical factor in effective race talk**
- *Ineffective facilitation includes* (Sue, 2015)
 - Sidetracking conversations to gender or class, which evoke fewer strong emotions
 - Tabling the conversation with an intent to return later
 - Saying or doing nothing
- *Effective strategies include*
 - Validating the emotional terrain of race talk (Sue, 2015)
 - Demonstrating comfort by exploring one's own biases (Murray-Johnson, 2009)
 - Using well-crafted and structured ground rules (Tittler & Wade, 2019)

Conceptual Frame: Critical Whiteness

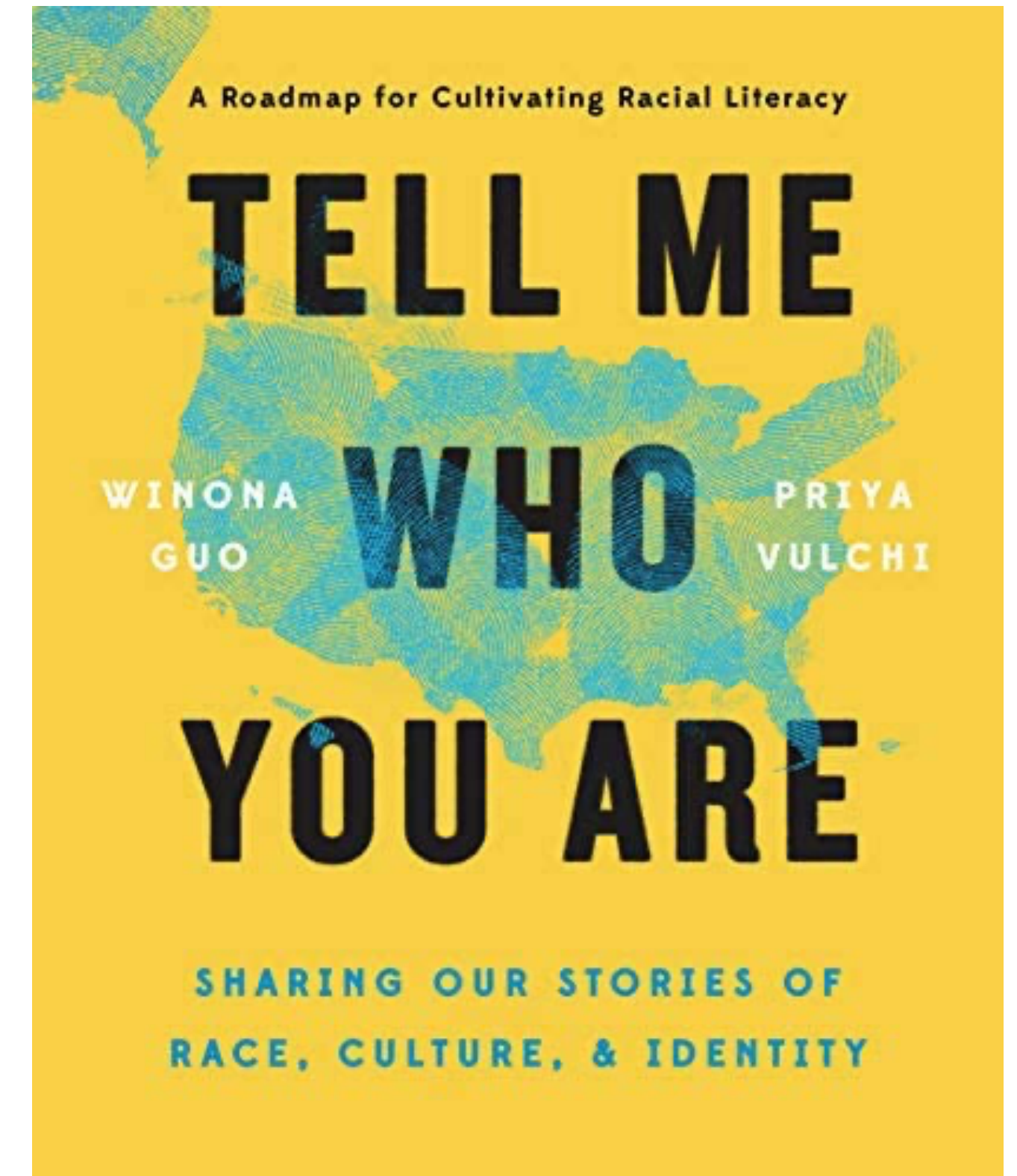
- Whiteness as property (Harris, 1993)
- Critical Whiteness Studies: “a transdisciplinary approach to investigate the phenomenon of whiteness, how it is manifested, exerted, defined, recycled, transmitted, and maintained” (Matias & Mackey, 2015, p. 34)
- Attempts to avoid or subvert race talk and the selective enforcement of norms observed in race-visible reading groups were often “manifestations of Whiteness”



Researcher Positionality

Research Site & Methods

- Chestnut
 - Community: 81.3% White, 14.0% Latinx
 - Public School Students: 59.6% White, 31% Latinx
 - Public School Educators: 93.3% White
- Spring 2021
 - 5-session, online reading group
 - 20 participants: 19 White; 17 female
 - Convened and facilitated by district assistant superintendent (Dennis Donovan), with deep ties to Chestnut



“[The goal of the reading group was] to create a safe space for staff members in our district to engage in discussion around race and equity with colleagues”

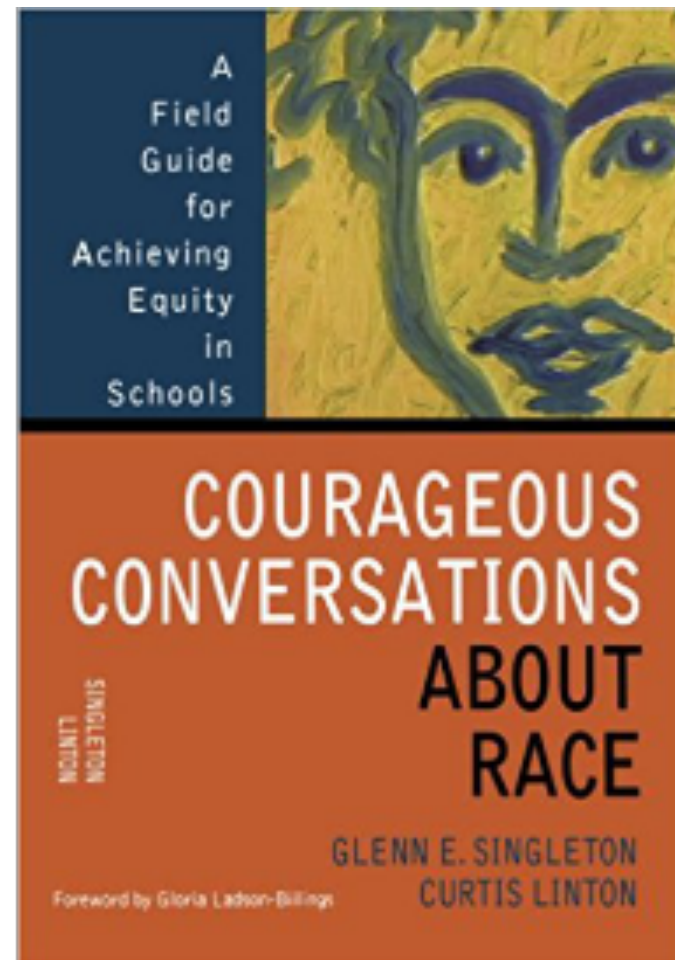
Dennis Donovan, in an email to researchers

What Norms Communicate

Four Agreements of Race Talk

1. Stay engaged
2. Expect to experience discomfort
3. ~~Speak your truth~~
4. Expect and accept a lack of closure

From Singleton & Linton, 2006



“Rules of Engagement”

1. Everyone is here to learn
 1. Stay engaged in the discussion; it is ok to pass
 2. Expect discomfort
 3. Accept and expect non-closure
 4. Respect confidentiality
2. Everyone has the right to be heard
3. Everyone has the right to change their ideas and/or beliefs
 1. “Prior to this discussion I thought that... Now, I believe that....”
4. Everyone has the right to respectfully disagree with others
 1. Be respectful
 2. Be understanding of the backgrounds and beliefs of others
 3. Enter discussions with an open mind

From observed book group



[W]e were in awe because we were *surprised*. Everywhere we turned in the capitol building, we had seen Whiteness... Yet Sean did not convey to us, in any way, that he felt out of place. He was so proud of being non-White *and* being American... So what if he was a politician of color? He made us feel that his power was as *normal* as any other White man in the building.

We definitely didn't share that experience in the capitol; we felt extraordinarily out of place, and we had been explicitly told so! Later, when we interviewed a Utah representative of color named Angela, she told us, "If I didn't have my colleague, the first Black woman elected here, I would lose my sanity." As a man of color, yes, Sean's experience was different, but meeting him still gave us hope, because we began to wonder — what if it actually was normal for all people of color to so boldly belong? To not be shamed or shut down, but instead to be welcomed as Americans just as important and deserving to be here as any other?

“Our [rich] diversity, *not* Whiteness, should be *normal*.”

Guo & Vulchi (2019), p. 213

“It made me think about this from the book: is ‘White’ normal?”



“One thing that really upsets me — and that I hear a lot in our district, and maybe I’m not in a place where I would hear [normal], but I do hear ‘regular’ — as in ‘regular classes’ a lot. [It’s] like nails on the chalkboard, because it means that others are irregular.”

“You’re a special ed teacher or a regular ed teacher.”

It is easy to avoid race talk, even in race-conscious PD.

But the costs — to students and educators — are high.

- Safety is not the goal. Discomfort — with support — is more important.
- Structured norms are helpful, but they must be enforced. Some things that might help:
 - Co-facilitation
 - Outside facilitation
 - Process observers

Thank you.

James Noonan, Salem State University | jnoonan@salemstate.edu |  @_jmnoonan  @jmnoonan@mas.to

Hilary Lustick, UMass Lowell | Hilary_Lustick@uml.edu |  @hilwith1L

Ashley Carey, UMass Lowell | Ashley_Carey@student.uml.edu |  @ashleyjcarey

Peter Piazza, Education Commonwealth Project | ptpiazza@gmail.com |  @ptpiazza