

A study of Robin DiAngelo's



White Fragility

# Introduction—We Can't Get There From Here

## Summary Statement

White people are the beneficiaries of separation and inequality; we are thus insulated from racial stress, thereby crafting a weak racial stamina—we become highly fragile in racial conversations; we view any amount of racial stress as intolerable; “the mere suggestion that being white has meaning often triggers a range of defensive responses. These include emotions such as anger, fear, and guilt and behaviors such as argumentation, silence, and withdrawal from the stress inducing situation” 2; such response work to reinstate our white equilibrium? **THIS IS THE CONCEPTUAL PROCESS DIANGELO LABELS WHITE FRAGILITY--it is a powerful means of white racial control and the protection of white advantage. It essentially holds racism in place.**

## Summary Points

What this book is <i>not</i> doing.	Provides a solution to racism  Attempt to prove that racism exists; the book <i>starts</i> from this premise.
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Goal/ Thesis of the book	“Make visible how <i>one</i> aspect of white sensibility continues to hold racism in place: white fragility.” 5
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**Reflection Activity**

Diangelo discusses ‘pillars of whiteness’ which are *unexamined beliefs that prop up our racial responses*. We will walk through the pillars and answer yes and no questions to see how we are thinking about these pillars today. At the end of the book we will do the same to see how we were changed through this experience.

Instructions: Go through the different pillars and answer ‘yes’ if you see it play out in your personal life, church, work, ect. Answer ‘No’ if you don’t see it in your life. Answer ‘unsure’ if you don’t know what she is communicating. Try to be as reflective as possible. As you will learn, you aren’t a bad person--you were socialized into a system that made it possible to think that the meaning of your race is inconsequential to your human experience.

Pillars of Whiteness			
Pillar	Yes	No	Unsure
Good/Bad Binary: only bad people are racist			
Racism is individual acts vs. complex system of oppression			



3. White Progressives: any white person who thinks they are not racist, or is less racist, or in the 'choir,' or already 'gets it.' 5 It is DiAngelo's contention that white progressives cause the most daily damage to people of color. Why is this the case?

# Chapter 1—The Challenges of Talking to White People About Racism

## Summary Points

### *We Don't See Ourselves in Racial Terms*

**The first challenge** white people face in building their racial stamina is naming our race.

### *Our Opinions Are Uninformed*

Our simplistic definition of racism—as intentional acts of racial discrimination committed by immoral individuals—engenders a confidence that we are not part of the problem and that our learning is thus complete. 9

### *We Don't Understand Socialization*

**The next challenge** is understanding the process of socialization.

To understand WF, we have to begin to understand why we cannot fully be either—objective and unique; we must understand the forces of socialization. 9

### *We Have A Simplistic Understanding of Racism*

The final challenge that needs addressing is our definition of 'racist.'

“To increase the racial stamina that counters white fragility, we must reflect on the whole of our identities—and our racial group identity in particular. For white people, this means first struggling with what it means to be white” 14.

## Reflection Questions

### *We Don't See Ourselves in Racial Terms*

1. *How does being created in the image of God interact with contingencies\*?*

\*think of contingencies as things that have happened that did not have to--e.g. I was raised by two parents instead of one; I am white instead of not white?

### *We Don't Understand Socialization*

2. Based upon DiAngelo's description of individualism and how it teaches us to perceive ourselves—again, by “ourselves” she means the white collective—how does this play out ecclesially? Put differently, how does



more indirect theological question that hopefully assists in seeing how individualism masks group relationships is the following: did you crucify Christ? Analogously, are you racist? (The below example hopefully illustrates why we all have Jesus' blood on our hands.)

All Have Sinned	Christ was crucified by those who sinned	I have Sinned	I crucified Christ
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5. In all honesty, what is your first inclination when experiencing the discomfort DiAngelo is talking about on p. 13 in reference to racism?

### Recurring Questions

6. How has your understanding of whiteness progressed?
7. How do you sense God is calling you to respond?
8. What are your lingering fragile responses and why?

## 9. Are you sure you understand the Cross?

## Explanation of Questions

## Question #1

In other words, there must be some sort of experience that we all share—a *human* experience based on being created in God’s image, the *Imago Dei*. But if DiAngelo is correct, this means that we also have unique subjective experiences that others do not; I personally have a *white* experience. The question is, how do they both hang together? While it is true that in Christ there are no longer ontological distinctions (Galatians)—we are all *one*—it is also true that our subjectivities are not superfluous; being white *means* something. If the response to this—that we all share a universal a fundamental foundation in Christ, in the Imago Dei—is that *this* is a privileged statement, one that is the product of my whiteness, then it also means that everything DiAngelo claims is as well; her claim that we all “make sense of perceptions and experiences through our particular cultural lens...which is neither universal nor objective” is suspect exactly because *that statement* seemingly claims the objectivity that DiAngelo is fighting against. Christians do not think that we are Sartrean free--the account of freedom described by French Existentialist Jean-Paul Sartre. We are not abandoned to our own devices. Rather, we are a people unified and created foundationally similarly. But we also possess differences that *matter*.

## Question #2

What I have in mind here is King Jr.’s comment that Sunday mornings are the most segregated time of day. Individualism has convinced us that our own participation in church is *ours*; our salvation and such are dependent upon our own actions and performance, not the *state* of the community locally, but also at large. As DiAngelo states, “Individualism claims that there are no intrinsic barriers to individual success and that failure is not a consequence of social structures but comes from individual character. According to the ideology of individualism, race is irrelevant” 9. So understood, individual success—individual salvation—is not impacted by the complete racial isolation that we experience every Sunday morning. The question, I suppose, is how does the ideology of individualism reconcile itself—if possible at all—to Paul’s comments on the unity of the church? If one part suffers, the whole body suffers. Yet it is clear that we do not believe this by and large; parts of the body *are suffering*; “all lives matter” is one of the most fragile locutions whites have in their arsenal.

Question #4

Once group membership becomes intelligible, objectivity—the second ideology that interrupts our ability to read cultural lenses—crumbles. The individual objective experience becomes questionable in the group setting because we realize that our perspective is the product of that group, not our own.

Homework

While reading chapter two, go through and identify how your church can differ from other churches. This will help with week 2’s homework.

Element	My Church	‘Other’ Churches
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Worship		
Speaking In Tongues During		
Type of music		
Body Posturing (do people stand, do people dance, are people on their knees)		
Spontaneous prayer		
Spontaneous Congregational response		
Videos Shown		
Creative elements (do people perform dances or paint or draw)		
Service Components		
Service Length		
Media Usage		
Communion frequency		
Roles		
Role of Men		
Role of Women		
Role of Children		
Role of Elderly		

Role of Youth		
Church Gatherings		
Food Served		
Racial Make up		

Start thinking about...

1. How have Christians assimilated to 'white' culture?
  
2. How has your church assimilated to 'white' culture?

## Chapter 2—Racism and White Fragility

### Summary Points

Race is socially constructed; it is not biologically determinative. Under the skin, there is no true biological race. Race and biology was driven by social and economic investments; it was essentially a creation.

#### *Social Construction of Race in the United States*

Noble ideology of equality and the reality of genocide had to be reconciled. It was Jefferson who *SUGGESTED* that there may be natural differences amongst the races. The questions were never “are blacks inferior,” but rather, “Why are blacks inferior?” (Reference for question #1)

#### *The Perception of Race*

The term “white” DID NOT EXIST BEFORE THE LATE 1600S! This means that whiteness *means* something. From the beginning, “white” people developed a system that endorsed, justified and sustained their projects. This is true! This is not fictional, as if there is some sort of ontological realness to whiteness. We cattled Africans for “salvific” purposes—to give them a “better” life. This creation of ours was so successful that it blinded us to what is going on; we had to be convinced that black people were human because of Jefferson’ suggestion; a *suggestion!* And now, because of our ignorance of what whiteness means, we call upon the very people we ravished to explain how it all works... is this making sense??? How is it fair for us to ask black people (and other nonwhite people) to explain racism to *us*? How painful must it be for black people to have to explain to us why *our* creation has been so successful that we are blinded to its success; we obtained a comfort level that allowed the space for us to no longer have to worry about race. But at *whose* expense? (Reference for question #2)

It was white people—people who were already seen as white—who made the call to allow others races to be perceived as white.

### *Racism*

Understanding racism takes understanding prejudice and discrimination

- o Prejudice: pre-judgement about another person based on the social groups to which that person belongs. All humans have prejudice; those who claim to lack prejudice are demonstrating a profound lack of self-awareness.
- o Discrimination: is action based on prejudice.

David Wellman's definition of racism is helpful: a system of *advantage* based on race.

White Privilege: a sociological concept referring to advantages that are taken for granted by whites and that cannot be similarly enjoyed by people of color in the same context. Just think: do you have reason to fear for your life when a cop car is behind you? Another way that this could be seen is to think about whether or not, as a male, you worry about being sexually assaulted when walking to your car at night?

### *Whiteness as a Position of Status*

Whiteness can be thought of as all the aspects of being white.

Whiteness rests upon a foundational premise: the definition of whites as the norm or standard for humans, and people of color as a deviation from that norm.

### *White Supremacy*

Race scholars use the term white supremacy to describe a sociopolitical economic system of domination based on racial categories that benefits those defined and

perceived as white. This system of structural power privileges, centralizes, and elevates white people as a group. 30

Naming white supremacy changes the conversation in two key ways.

- o It makes the system visible and shifts the locus of change onto white people, where it belongs.
- o It also points us in the direction of the lifelong work that is uniquely ours, challenging our complicity with and investment in racism.

### *The White Racial Frame*

WRF: how whites circulate and reinforce racial messages that position whites as superior

- o Most general level: views whites as superior and views people of color as less
- o Next level of framing: because social institutions are controlled by whites, white dominance is unremarkable and taken for granted.
- o Deepest level: negative stereotypes and images of racial others as inferior are reinforced

### Reflection Questions

1. What kind of community does it take to make these kinds of moves possible? In other words, what kind of person do you have to be to make the kind of suggestion that Jefferson did? (Please refer to 2nd paragraph in summary points)

2. Perception on Whiteness

a. Reactions towards 'whiteness' being created

b. Do you think it is problematic that we rely on people of color to explain racism? Moreover, why do we find it necessary that they do so in a "white" way?

3. Is there something special about whiteness that God finds favor in?

4. What does DiAngelo's description of racism do to our theology? Does whiteness affect our theology? Think of the "birdcage" metaphor she calls upon 23. Could it be the case that whiteness has determined the manner in which we do theology as if we were looking in the birdcage from up close? To see this, just think: Why do we feel the need to qualify "liberation" theology, or "feminist" theology.

*Whiteness as a Position of Status*

5. Why do we call white churches simple church, but black or Asian churches we add the qualifier? Moreover, why do we feel the need—at least I can testify to this—to qualify our nonwhite friends in conversations; Jackie Robinson was a “black” baseball player rather than simply a baseball player.

6. Have you ever thought that you were “just human?”

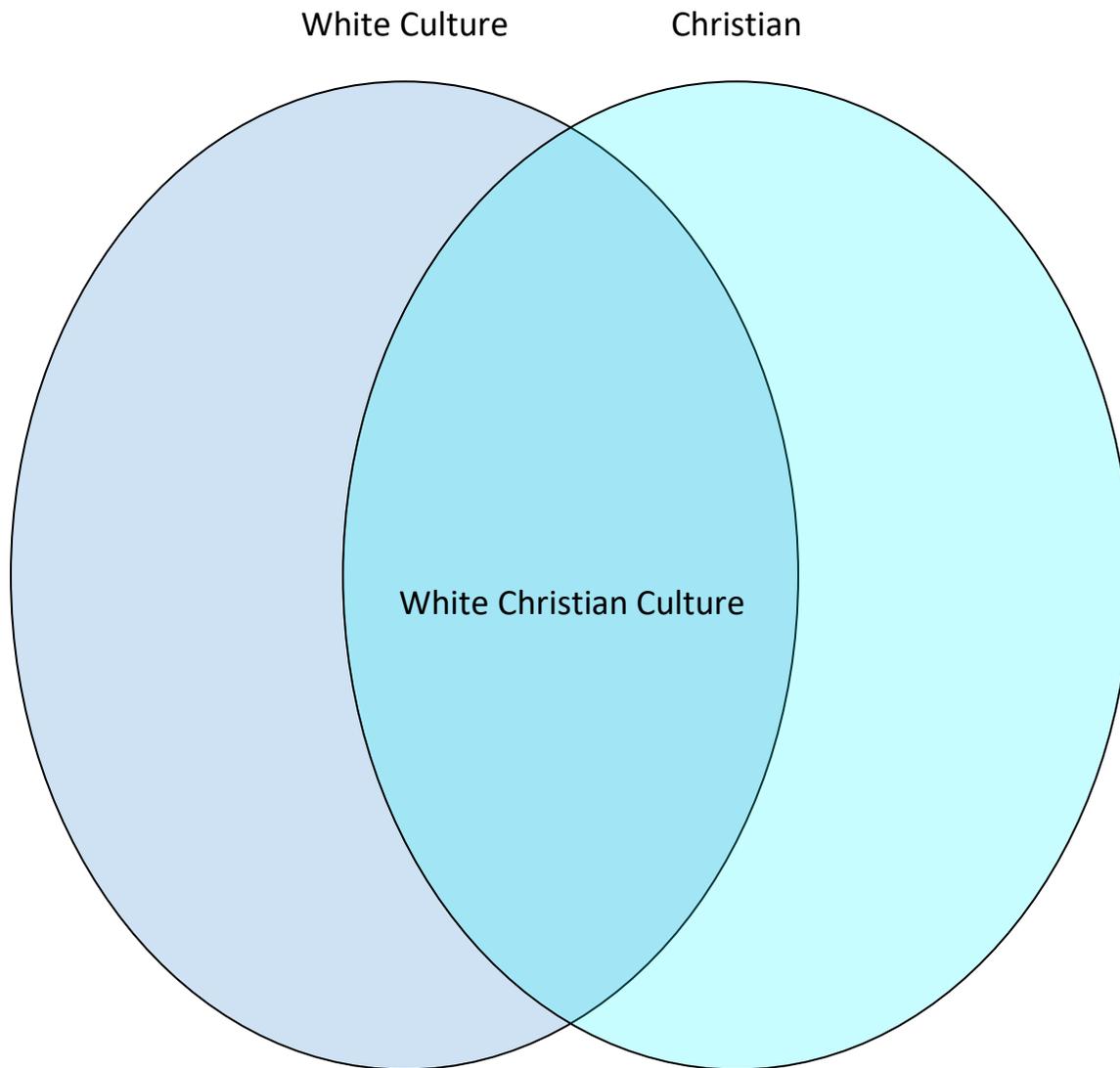
#### Recurring Questions

7. How has your understanding of whiteness progressed?
8. How do you sense God is calling you to respond?
9. What are your lingering fragile responses and why?
10. Are you sure you understand the Cross?

#### Homework

Look back to last week's homework. Identify what elements are essential to be Christian, what elements of your service have assimilated to white culture, and where there is intersection, so that you can identify what is essential to being Christian and how whiteness has integrated itself into our everyday church

structures.



## Chapter 3—Racism After the Civil Rights Movement

Summary Points

New Racism: the ways that racism has adapted over time so that modern norms, policies, and practices result in similar racial outcomes as those in the past, while not appearing to be explicitly racist. 39

No one claims to be racist anymore, but yet racism still exists. How is this possible?

This chapter is aimed at surveying the various ways in which racism has adapted over time.

### *Color-Blind Racism*

If we pretend not to notice race, then there can be no racism. This is the central idea of color blindness.

“we cannot change what we refuse to see.” 42 Such neglect leads to aversive racism.

### *Aversive Racism*

Aversive Racism: Holding deep racial disdain that surfaces in daily discourse but not being able to admit it because the disdain conflicts with our self-image and professed beliefs.

Aversive racism only protects racism, because we cant challenge our racial filters if we cant consider the possibility that we have them. (47)

### *Cultural Racism*

Today we have a cultural norm that insists we hide our racism from people of color and deny it among ourselves, but not that we actually challenge it. In fact, we are socially penalized for challenging racism.

## Reflection Questions

### *Color-Blind Racism*

1. When King Jr. said that one day he might be judged by the content of his character and not the color of his skin, what was he attempting to *do*? And why did white people feel the need to hijack it for different purposes? What—if anything—was at stake for white people in this statement?
  
2. Have white churches co opted Paul's indicative statement in Galatians 3:28 for color-blind-like purposes?

### *Aversive Racism*

3. What are your aversive tendencies? And if you can not think of any, does this show the success of your own whiteness?

4. How “safe” are your spaces?

5. Why does DiAngelo think that those who avow racism are more honest about biases than those who consider themselves open-minded(47)?

#### Recurring Questions

6. How has your understanding of whiteness progressed?

7. How do you sense God is calling you to respond?

8. What are your lingering fragile responses and why?

9. Are you sure you understand the Cross?

#### Homework

Journal a memory you have where someone of authority taught you about how to respond to a specific race implicitly or explicitly. ( This can be a joke an adult shared with you as a child which determined how you interacted with that group.) Then reflect how that has impacted your interactions as an adult.



# Chapter 4—How Does Race Shape The Lives Of White People?

## Summary Points

Underlying foundation of white fragility: How being white shapes our perspectives, experiences, and responses.

### *Belonging*

We belong racially.

### *Freedom From The Burden Of Race*

Because I haven't been socialized to see myself or to be seen by other whites in racial terms, I don't carry the psychic weight of race; I don't have to worry about how others feel about it 54.

Whiteness has psychological advantages that translate into material terms 54.

### *Just People*

Whiteness is the norm for humanity; whites are "just people."

### *White Solidarity*

White solidarity is the unspoken agreement among whites to protect white advantage and not cause another white person to feel racial discomfort by confronting them when they say or do something racially problematic. 57

### *White Racial Innocence*

Because we are not raised to see ourselves in racial terms or to see white space as racialized space, we position ourselves as innocent of race. 62

If white people see themselves as racially innocent it means that we then think we need it explained to us by those who are not racially innocent; “Because people of color are not seen as racially innocent, they are expected to speak to issues of race (but must do so on white terms)...They—not we—have race, and thus they are the holders of racial knowledge.” 62

For those of us who work to raise the racial consciousness of whites, simply getting whites to acknowledge that our race gives us advantages is a major effort. The defensiveness, denial, and resistance are deep. But acknowledging advantage is only a first step, and this acknowledgment can be used in a way that renders it meaningless and allows us white people to exempt ourselves from further responsibility. 63.

White privilege is not innocent; racism must be actively and passively, consciously and unconsciously, maintained.

Having people of color teach white people about racism reinforces several racial assumptions

- It implies that racism is something that happens to people of color and has nothing to do with us and thus cannot be expected to have any knowledge of it.
- Denies that racism is a relationship in which both groups are involved.
- This request requires nothing of us and reinforces unequal power relations by asking people of color to do our work.
- Third, it ignores the historical dimensions of racerelements.

“Now it is our responsibility to grapple with how this socialization manifests itself in our daily lives and how it shapes our responses when it is challenged.” 69

## Reflection Questions

### *Belonging*

1. what do we say to people of color who come into our churches—our surely *white* churches—and do not belong?

### *Freedom Of Movement*

2. Consider the story DiAngelo tells on p. 55 about the workshop she led with Deborah. There was no issue with DiAngelo going to Lake Coeur d'Alene in Idaho; she never thought twice about it. Why? As you go about your day, week, month, etc. pay attention the spaces you occupy. Do you belong there? Must you consider what your race *means* where you are at? If this question makes no real sense to you, is that in itself problematic? If you can, think of the places that you have been personally, or places that you can think of where your race would close that place off to you. And think about what racial groups would be there that would make you feel that way. Again, if you cannot answer this question, you are proving DiAngelo's point.

3. How often do you refer to people of color as specified by their color; how often is your friend referred to as your “black friend.” How does being white make this possible? Why are they simply not your “friend.” Moreover, think of the manner in which we refer to church. Assuming this following assumption to be true, why is your church simply “church,” and other churches are “black church,” or “Asian church?” Why is the theological work done by white people referred to as “liberation theology?” Why was/are James Cone, Willie Jennings, and Kameron Carter considered “black theologians?” In a similar vein, to highlight the way this works, why are women who do theology/philosophy considered “feminine theorists?” Why are people who do not follow the traditional binary structure of sexual relationships considered homosexual?

### *White Solidarity*

4. DiAngelo articulates a scene in which a dinner party is ruined because someone interjects a racist comment that was given by Uncle Bob; white solidarity was broken. She then makes this comment: “Why speaking up about racism would ruin the ambiance or threaten our career advancement is something we might want to talk about” 58. She is right. So talk about it!

5. Jesus said that whoever feeds the least has fed Christ directly (Mt 25: 34-40). Analogically, does this apply to breaking white solidarity in favor of people of color?

*The Good Old Days*

6. Can **Christians** ever think that America has ever been great? *Who* was it great for? Where do we, as Christians, derive the meaning of the word “great” from? Consider Romans 8:28-30. Reflect on the meaning of greatness in this short section. “Greatness,” or “goodness,” is being formed to the image of Christ. How was the nation’s foundation—one that was, as you will remember, justified by Jefferson’s *SUGGESTION*—ever declared good, that is, conformed to the image of Christ?



## Recurring Questions

1. How has your understanding of whiteness progressed?
2. How do you sense God is calling you to respond?
3. What are your lingering fragile responses and why?
4. Are you sure you understand the Cross?

## Homework

1. Go to a church of color for at least a month consecutively (once COVID is over)—even if that means you have to travel a good distance to do so. The goal is to put yourself in a place where your whiteness is obvious in a way that forces you to see areas of life where you belong. This is ultimately to show you how race *works*, and who it works *for*.
2. Consider any period in the past from the perspective of people of color: 246 years of brutal enslavement; the rape of black women for the pleasure of white men and to produce more enslaved workers; the selling off of black children; the attempted genocide of Indigenous people, Indian removal acts, and reservations; indentured servitude, lynching, and mob violence; sharecropping; Chinese exclusion laws; Japanese American internment; Jim Crow laws of mandatory segregation; black codes; bans on black jury service; bans on voting; imprisoning people for unpaid work; medical sterilization and experimentation; employment discrimination; educational discrimination;

inferior schools; biased laws and policing practices; redlining and subprime mortgages; mass incarceration; racist media representations; cultural erasures, attacks, and mockery; and untold and perverted historical accounts. Reflect on: was America ever great for these people?

3. Pause for a moment and consider the profundity of this message: we are taught that we lose nothing of value through racial segregation. Consider the message we send to our children—as well as to children of color—when we describe white segregation as good. 68
4. Our socialization engenders a common set of racial patterns—the foundation of white fragility. Below you find the patterns that found white fragility. Think through and select all that apply to you in both objective and subjective ways. What this should look like, if everyone has understood DiAngelo’s work well, is that every person should have a completely filled out list objectively, and then another subjective list that is their own personal experience. Why is it the case that everyone should have a completely filled out objective list (think about how racism and whiteness works)? This exercise is meant to provoke. What you experience in this exercise means something; it is not benign. If you are annoyed, angry, distressed, etc., *its for a reason*. Again, you are proving DiAngelo’s work.

	Objective	Subjective
Preference for racial segregation, and a lack of sense of loss about segregation		
Lack of understanding about what racism is		
Seeing ourselves as		

individuals, exempt from the forces of racial socialization		
Failure to understand that we bring our group's history with us, that history matters		
Assuming everyone is having or can have our experience		
Lack of racial humility		
Dismissing what we don't understand		
Lack of authentic interest in the perspective of people of color		
Wanting to jump over the hard, personal work and get to solutions		
Confusing disagreement with not understanding		
Need to maintain white solidarity, to save face, to look good		
Guilt that paralyzes or allows inaction		
Defensiveness about any suggestion that we are connected to racism		

A focus on intentions over impact		
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## Chapter 5—The Good/Bad Binary

### Summary Points

This chapter explores what is perhaps the most effective adaption of racism in recent history: the good/bad binary

Here is how the good/binary was made possible—why history is important!

- o Prior to the Civil Rights Movement white people could openly proclaim their belief and allegiance to their racial superiority. These images of white superiority became the archetypes of racism. *After* the Civil Rights Movement, to be a good and moral person meant that you could not be complicit with racism; only bad people were racist. They became mutually exclusive. Practically this meant that to call someone racist was to deliver a deep moral blow to their character. Such a binary makes it virtually impossible to talk to white people about racism. Why? Again, because the good/bad binary reduced racism to individual egregious acts that only bad people do—that only those in the south perform.

- o Omowale Akintunde’s comment: racism is a systemic, societal, institutional, omnipresent, and epistemologically embedded phenomenon that pervades every vestige of our reality. For most whites, however, racism is like murder: the concept exists, but someone has to commit it in order for it to happen. This limited view of such a multilayered syndrome cultivates the sinister nature of racism and perpetuates it.” 72

- o WE ARE ALL AFFECTED BY THE FORCES OF RACISM AS A MEMBER OF SOCIETY IN WHICH RACISM IS THE BEDROCK.

Although individual racist acts do occur, these acts are part of a larger system of interlocking dynamics. 73

- o The simplistic idea that racism is limited to individual intentional acts committed by unkind people is at the root of virtually all white defensiveness on this topic.

### Reflection Questions

1. In the white mind, what qualifies as racism? If your response is that it depends on the individual, then see DiAngelo's definition of racism. If mostly everyone else is saying that it is systematic, why are we hesitant to believe them?

2. How do the claims below function in the conversation?

<b>Color Blind</b>	<b>Color Celebrate</b>
I was taught to treat everyone the same	I work in a very diverse environment
I don't see color	I have people of color in my family/married a person of color
I don't care if you are pink, purple, or polka dotted	I was in the military
Race doesn't have any meaning to me	I used to live in New York/ hawaii
My parents weren't racists so that is why I am not	We don't like how white our neighborhood is, but we had to move here for the schools
Everyone struggles, but if you work hard... (this is called meritocracy)	I was in the peace corps
So and so just happens to be black, but that has nothing to do with what im about to tell you	I marched the sixties
Focusing on race is what divides us	We adopted a child from china
If people are respectful to me, I am respectful to them, regardless of race	Our grandchildren are multiracial
Children today are so much more open	I was on a mission trip to Africa
Im not racist; im from Canada	I went to a very diverse school/lived in a very diverse neighborhood
I was picked on because I was white/I grew up poor	I lived in japan and was a minority, so I know what it is like to be a minority

3. How can these claims exempt you from being a part of the problem?

- a. What would the impact be on the person you are taking to?

#### Recurring Questions

4. How has your understanding of whiteness progressed?
5. How do you sense God is calling you to respond?
6. What are your lingering fragile responses and why?
7. Are you sure you understand the Cross?

## Chapter 6—Anti-Blackness

### Summary Points

According to DiAngelo, a key privilege of dominance is the ability to see oneself *only* as an individual. In order to disrupt our unracialized identities, we must discuss white people as a group. Yet to carry out racial generalization for people of color is damaging because it creates one generic category that denies the different ways different groups of people of color experience racism. (Reference for Question #1)

It is DiAngelo's contention that there is a unique anti-black sentiment that is integral to white identity; "in the white mind, black people are the ultimate racial "other." 90

- She is addressing her readers at the societal level.
- "anti-blackness is foundational to our very identities as white people" 91
- Whiteness has always been predicated on blackness; there was no concept of race or a white race before the need to justify the enslavement of Africans
- But perhaps most fundamentally, anti-blackness comes from deep guilt about what we have done and continue to do; the unbearable knowledge of our complicity with the profound torture of black people from past to present." 94
- Whites need black people; blackness is essential to the creation of white identity
- Whiteness isn't real.



3. what is the overall purpose of this particular chapter? What is DiAngelo doing here?

#### Recurring Questions

4. How has your understanding of whiteness progressed?
5. How do you sense God is calling you to respond?
6. What are your lingering fragile responses and why?
7. Are you sure you understand the Cross?

## Chapter 7—Racial Triggers For White People

### Summary Points

“When ideologies such as color-blindness, meritocracy, and individualism are challenged, intense emotional reactions are common. 100

“Most white people have limited information about what racism is and how it works” 100.

Pierre Bourdieu’s concept of *Habitus*, and its usefulness for understanding white fragility

Habitus: result of socialization, the repetitive practices of actors and their interactions with each other and the rest of their social environment; a person’s familiar ways of perceiving, interpreting, and responding to the social cues around him or her.

#### **Three Key Aspect of Habitus**

Field -The specific social context the person is in

Habitus- Includes a person’s internalized awareness of his or her status, as well as responses to the status of others

Capital - The social value people hold in a particular field; how they perceive themselves and are perceived by others in terms of power. Capital can shift with the field.

In every field, people are vying for power, and each field will have rules of the game. If I don't follow these rules, I will be pushed out of that field through various means. Some rules are explicitly taught, others are learned implicitly.

When there is disequilibrium in the habitus, we use strategies to regain our balance; our response is unconscious.

*White Fragility* is a state in which even a minimum amount of racial stress in the habitus becomes intolerable, triggering a range of defensive moves.

Moves: anger, fear, and guilt; argumentation, silence, and leaving the stress-inducing situation.

These moves reinstate white racial equilibrium.

## Reflection Questions

1. On page 103-104, DiAngelo lists interruptions to white peace. Which of these do you honestly most resonate with? And further, which emotion/behavior usually results?

2. What is the *habitus* that shapes the Church, and how does that *habitus* impact our thoughts on whiteness?

#### Recurring Questions

1. How has your understanding of whiteness progressed?
2. How do you sense God is calling you to respond?
3. What are your lingering fragile responses and why?
4. Are you sure you understand the Cross?

## Chapter 8—The Result: White Fragility

### Reflection Questions

1. At this point in our study, have you boughten into white fragility and whiteness? If not, why?
2. What are your fragilities at the moment? Are you tired of talking about race as well?

### *White Fragility As A Form Of Bullying*

3. Why does DiAngelo think white fragility is a form of white racial control?

### Recurring Questions

1. How has your understanding of whiteness progressed?

2. How do you sense God is calling you to respond?
3. What are your lingering fragile responses and why?
4. Are you sure you understand the Cross?

## Homework

Think through and journal:

Consider this—think about what DIAngelo is saying here: In my workshops, I often ask people of color, “How often have you given white people feedback on our unaware yet inevitable racism? How often has that gone well for you?” Eye-rolling, head-shaking, and outright laughter follow, along with the consensus of rarely, if ever. I then ask, “What would it be like if you could simply give us feedback, have us graciously receive it, reflect, and work to change the behavior?” Recently a man of color sighed and said, “It would be revolutionary.” I ask my fellow whites to consider the profundity of that response. It would be revolutionary if we could receive, reflect, and work to change the behavior. On the one hand, the man’s response points to how difficult and fragile we are. But on the other hand, it indicates how simple it can be to take responsibility for our racism. However, we aren’t likely to get there if we are operating from the dominant worldview that only intentionally mean people can participate in racism. 113-114

## Chapter 9—White Fragility In Action

## Summary Points

This chapter is largely informational. DiAngelo starts with our feelings that come from racial challenges 118. Those feelings usually manifest in action or behavior 119. Because these feelings and actions are strong, they need justification (it seems as though every component of whiteness has needed justification!). We use certain claims to do so 119-120. Those claims, DiAngelo notes, are supported by fundamental assumptions 121. These particular assumptions *function* in a certain way for white fragility. Ultimately, this all keeps racism protected—and remember, that racism is a system. Her argument is, if I understand it correctly, as follows: because racism is a system of which is sustained by white people, that system can only survive if white people maintain the habitus discussed in past chapters. This is done so through fragile responses that are the product of racial insulation predicated upon our control and power.

## Reflection Questions

1. Why are white people okay, at least when confronted by DiAngelo, with abstract ideas about racism but recoil when it is personal? Moreover, how has this made its way into our theology? We say things all the time like, “people do not care about what you know, they just want to know that you care,” or “enough with all of that deep theological talk, just talk about Christ and love—the main things.” These are abstract sayings but are deeply theological/philosophical ironies. Can you identify why?

2. Because this chapter is basically the mechanics of white fragility, identify which feelings, behaviors and assumptions you resonate with most, and think through how they come to fruition in your own fragile responses. But also keep in mind that your own responses are not the key point—in a way, that would only further the individualism that DiAngelo is trying to get us out of. Think through how you see them operate societally--that is, systemically.

### Recurring Questions

3. How has your understanding of whiteness progressed?
4. How do you sense God is calling you to respond?
5. What are your lingering fragile responses and why?
6. Are you sure you understand the Cross?

### Homework

Figure out and journal how each of the introductory examples manifest and display white fragility.



# Chapter 10—White Fragility And The Rules Of Engagement

## Summary Points

### Rules of engagement

- o Cardinal Rule: Do not give feedback on racism under any circumstances.
- o Proper Tone is crucial. If any emotion is displayed, the feedback is invalid and can be dismissed.
- o There must be trust between us
- o Our relationship must be issue-free
- o Feedback must be given immediately
- o You must give feedback privately
- o You must be indirect as possible
- o As a white person, I must feel completely safe during any discussion of race.
- o Highlighting my racial privilege invalidates the form of oppression that I experience.
- o You must acknowledge my intentions and agree that my intentions cancel out the impact of my behavior.

- o To suggest that my behavior had a racist impact is to have misunderstood me.

The underlying assumptions that make these guidelines work is that they can be universally applied. They are thought to be universal because of the system that they come forth from.

## Reflection Questions

Cardinal Rule: Do not give feedback on racism under any circumstances.

1. Why would this be the cardinal rule? What is at stake?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. How have you seen (if you haven't seen it, how could you imagine) fragility play out when the church receives racial feedback\*?
  - a. How should they respond?

\*If it will be more helpful to have a case study:

A person of color visits your church for a month, and then doesn't return. When asked why they state, 'I wasn't welcomed/did not feel like I belonged.' When you ask to explain they state 'When I went to service there was an advertisement for

VBS--the theme was 'Roar: A Wild Adventure' in the video kids had to do work that slaves did. I don't understand why the church would think this okay?

### Recurring Questions

1. How has your understanding of whiteness progressed?
  - a. More specifically for this week, how are you going to build your racial stamina? (See pg. 125 for reference)
2. How do you sense God is calling you to respond? How do you sense God is calling the/your church to respond?
3. What are your lingering fragile responses and why?
4. Are you sure you understand the Cross?

### Homework

Before next week please watch the youtube video 'BBQ Becky'. Think through how her tears impacted the situation. <https://youtu.be/LgaU1h0QiLo>

## Chapter 11—White Women’s Tears

### Summary

Tenets that Male White Fragility is dominating the conversation (134-135):

- Control of the conversation by speaking first, last, and most often
- Arrogant and Disingenuous invalidation of racial inequality via ‘just playing the devil’s advocate’
- Simplistic and presumptuous proclamations of ‘the answer’ to racism
- Praying the outraged victim of ‘reverse racism’
- Accusations that the legendary ‘race card’ is being played
- Silence and withdrawal
- Hostile body language
- Channel-switching
- Intellectualising and distancing
- ‘Correcting’ the racial analysis of people of color and white women
- Pompously explaining away racism and the experiences of people of color

Response to what is missing in this chapter

“It’s infuriating because of its audacity of disrespect to our experience. You are crying because you are uncomfortable with your feelings when we are barely allowed to have any. You are ashamed or some such thing and cry, but we are not allowed to have any feelings because then we are being difficult. We are supposed to remain stoic and strong because otherwise we become the angry and scary people of color. We are only allowed to have feelings for the sake of your entertainment, as in the presentation of our funerals. And even then, there are expectations of what is allowed for us to express. We are abused daily, beaten, raped, and killed but you are sad and what’s what is important. That’s why it is sooooo hard to take” (pg. 136).

## Reflection Questions

1. What effect did BBQ Becky's tears have on the situation?
2. How can tears be harmful?
3. How are white emotions impacting the church/your church?
4. How can you translate your emotions into advocacy/allyship?
5. How does Christ need us to show up?

### Recurring Questions

1. How has your understanding of whiteness progressed?
2. How do you sense God is calling you to respond?
3. What are your lingering fragile responses and why?
4. Are you sure you understand the Cross?

### Homework

Journal about how you are going to navigate the space you take up within racial dialogue.

## Chapter 12—Where Do We Go From Here?

### Summary Points

This chapter assesses how chapter 9's material can be transformed if we transform our racial paradigm.

### Reflection Questions

1. "What has enabled you to be a full, educated, professional adult and not know what to do about racism?"
  
2. Is figuring out racism and how to overcome it as important to you as it would be if you found out you had an acoustic neuroma?

3. Because all of this will possibly take a lifetime to undue, what are steps you are going to take to figure out what it is that you still need to?

### Recurring Questions

1. How has your understanding of whiteness progressed?
2. How do you sense God is calling you to respond?
3. What are your lingering fragile responses and why?
4. Are you sure you understand the Cross?

### Reflection Activity

Diangelo discusses ‘pillars of whiteness’ which are *unexamined beliefs that prop up our racial responses*. You completed this the first week, let’s see what has changed.

Instructions: Go through the different pillars and answer ‘yes’ if you see it play out in your personal life, church, work, ect. Answer ‘No’ if you don’t see it in your life. Answer ‘unsure’ if you don’t know what she is communicating. Try to be as reflective as possible. As you will learn, you aren’t a bad person--you were socialized into a system that made it possible to think that the meaning of your race is inconsequential to your human experience.

Pillars of Whiteness

Pillar	Yes	No	Unsure
Good/Bad Binary: only bad people are racist			
Racism is individual acts vs. complex system of oppression			
How we are socialized does not impact our perception of the world and our human experience(s)			
Meritocracy: If you work hard enough you can accomplish what you want; people of color are just not working hard enough.			

Homework

It may be wise to begin the study overall with the end in mind. That is, chapter 12, or at least aspects of it, is where we are headed. It is the end towards which this study overall is aimed at. If the book is to be read again, which it honestly must be, one should begin with chapter 12 and then start at the beginning.

## Questions That Don't Fit

- o How should we—the white collective—respond to others—who are probably white—who say things like, “God uses everything for the good of those who love God. So even though racism has been horrible for people of color, God is good and will use it?” Moreover, how do we reconcile the egregiousness of the entire racist project with God’s sovereignty? And how white is this question? If answering the white aspect to this question is difficult (and it may be difficult *for a specific reason!*), consider the following statement (one given from a person of color to a white person) as a kind of hint of the direction I want you to go in: “It must be nice to have time to contemplate the stars.”
- o Scripturally, what is the utility or purpose of privilege? I can think of macro *and* micro answers this question.
- o Were you annoyed with the protests for George Floyd? Why or why not?
- o How does “Black Lives Matter” connect with Paul’s theology of the body of Christ? (Romans 12, 1 Cor. 12) (My Thoughts: if the hand suffers, it needs special attention to be healed. Although it is true that the whole body matters, the hand is suffering. The whole body cannot function properly and efficiently if the hand is suffering. To give individualized and specific attention to the hand is needed if the body is to perform at its highest capacity. Judson Lim’s comment to this: This is right, but add that the analogical hand has been broken 1000 times over and has been told that it has not been, and must ask for help in a certain way.)
- o If we come to find out that a white person has done blackface in the past, should they resign from their position of power? (Consider this question respectfully)

o In 1 Cor 3, Paul talks about how we are the Temple of God—the “you” is not singular but plural. The “you” in 1 Cor 6 is singular. Sequentially, this is significant exactly because Paul thinks that we are fundamentally a temple of God communally; that is, we derive our individuality from our participation in a systemic structure. Talk about what this highlights for how whiteness and white fragility operates.

o Consider 1 Cor 9:19-23. Paul is privileged, certainly; there is no doubt about this. He is the fortunate one. *Yet*, he considers the privilege with which he has as only a tool to win others. But notice that he *recognizes* his status and then uses it: “to the Jews I became as a Jew; to those under the law I became as one under the law”; all to win others. Once you recognize the benefits of whiteness, how does this pericope teach us to act thereafter? (I sense that for some reason this paragraph is somewhat racist, but I cannot place exactly why. Consider that it may be, and if it is, why? I will continue thinking it through).