Research project on how Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) became Divisiveness, Inequity, and Exclusion (DIE)

I am currently doing research on why Diversity, Equity, and Inclusiveness (DEI), Critical Race Theory (CRT), and White/Male Privilege theory have come under attack in the United States, not only as part of a white/male/conservative "backlash" but from people of all races and genders across the political spectrum, including liberals and radicals, whose opposition cannot be disingenuously dismissed as "white defensiveness" or "white fragility" (whites being unable to acknowledge or give up their unearned privileges). I have written a preliminary discussion paper, "Privilege: A Radical Alternative," which can be accessed on my website at https://files.cdn-files-a.com/uploads/8269783/normal_66f75e7c0de8c.pdf. I would welcome feedback on this project from any interested SIETAR members, whether supportive or critical, which can be addressed to me at <evanoff.richard@gmail.com>.

My initial findings (to be thoroughly documented in the final paper) are that DEI in general and White Privilege theory in particular are mostly based on shoddy scholarship, flawed research methodologies, an overreliance on anecdotal evidence, slanted interpretations of empirical data (confirmation bias), fallacious reasoning and logical inconsistencies, distorted analyses, fundamental misunderstandings and misapplications of sociological theory, the promotion of overgeneralizations and stereotypes, ideological conformity rather than critical thinking (groupthink), ethical double standards, a not-so-hidden and polarizing political stance which, despite its best intentions, exacerbates rather overcomes sexism and racism, and a naive understanding of "social change." In short, the area is not a valid field of inquiry, but a pseudoscience. If DEI is to survive, it needs to get its act together by comprehensively rethinking its core ideas and coming up with an entirely new theoretical paradigm.

While DEI, CRT, and White/Male Privilege theory are typically regarded as default positions in the intercultural communication community, they are in fact highly contested concepts. According to the independent think tank, Movement Advancement Project at https://www.mapresearch.org/file/2024-DEI-report-MAP.pdf, more than 440 anti-DEI bills have been introduced in the United States since 2023; 23 states have enacted at least one anti-DEI law; anti-DEI bills have been introduced in 19 other states; only 8 states plus the District of Columbia have not introduced any anti-DEI bills. The reasons behind this reaction often seem legitimate. Far from facilitating Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, DEI programs often promote the exact opposite: Divisiveness, Inequity, and Exclusion (DIE).

While DEI has the laudable aim of trying to overcome racism and sexism, it often ends up promoting racist and sexist views of its own. Peggy McIntosh, the originator of White/Male Privilege theory, and her followers in Japan, posit an untenable binary between an "oppressor" group consisting of whites and males, and an "oppressed" group comprised of everyone else. The result is that members of both the dominant "majority" and subordinate "minority" groups are demeaned simply on the basis of their skin color and sex. Whites and males are typecast as "overprivileged" while non-whites and females cannot escape being pigeonholed as "underprivileged."

Overgeneralizations such as "Sexism: Men are oppressive" and "Racism: Whites are oppressive" cannot be taken as anything other than sexist and racist stereotypes against males and whites (see Makiko Deguchi's 2023 JALT presentation https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=21xouWANui0 at 20:15). It is factually incorrect to say that *all* whites and men are overprivileged "oppressors" (or *all* "oppressors" are white men)

and that *all* non-whites and females are underprivileged and "oppressed" (or *only* non-whites and females are "oppressed"). Both whites and non-whites, males and females can be in either the "oppressor" or the "oppressed" categories.

White Privilege theory presents a highly misleading (and ethnocentric) view of race relations in the United States. Certainly racism continues to be a major problem in the US, but a more accurate characterization of the "majority-minority" divide would distinguish between: (1) the vast majority of Americans *of all races and genders*, including most white males, who are neither racist or sexist and are opposed to *all* forms of discrimination, and (2) a growing racist minority comprised of both (a) extremists on the right, such as White Nationalists and alt-right neo-fascists, and (b) extremists on the left who promulgate an anti-white, anti-male perspective, sometimes in the guise of DEI, CRT, and White/Male Privilege theory.

While some DEI supporters may be sincerely opposed to all forms of racism and sexism, others remain unconscious of their own racism and sexism, particularly against white males. To turn the expressions Deguchi (*ibid.*, 19:00 *ff*.) uses to describe white males on their head, White Privilege theorists who think of themselves as "progressives," who "believe in equal rights for all," and who "don't consciously discriminate against anyone," may also be inadvertently "nice" and "oppressive" at the same time even if they don't realize it (although some DEI advocates are decidedly "not nice"—see the links below).

Contrary to what White Privilege theorists claim, privilege does not always correlate with race and gender. Privileges are conferred more by the position one occupies in our current social hierarchy, which makes class a much better indicator of privilege than skin color or sex. In the US, while it's true that blacks have a higher poverty rate than whites on a percentage basis, in terms of raw numbers there are twice as many whites living in poverty as blacks. By cherry picking the data, White Privilege theorists fail to acknowledge that many non-whites also occupy the middle and upper classes. The highest ranked ethnic group in the US for education and income levels is not whites but Asian-Americans, although some Asian-Americans, of course, also have lower education and higher poverty levels.

DEI's attempt to achieve equity by giving special consideration to people solely on the basis of race and gender is openly discriminatory against lower class, underprivileged whites and non-whites, males and females, who struggle to make ends meet and suffer from the exact same problems of unemployment and underemployment, low wages and poverty, homelessness and a lack of affordable housing, poor schools and inadequate healthcare, crime and drug abuse, and so on. Equity is not about lowering standards or giving unearned advantages to some groups instead of others but about providing everyone with equal opportunities to meet the higher standards, which involves the hard work of overcoming a host of social inequities that create privilege, rather than simply slandering whites and males.

White Privilege theory claims to be addressing "systemic" racism and sexism but in fact diverts attention from genuine structural problems in our hierarchical, meritocratic society by personalizing the issue and focusing on consciousness-raising. For White Privilege theorists, the problem is not oppressive social *structures* but oppressive *people* (i.e., members of majority groups) and the solution is to convince whites and males that they are inherently racist and sexist, even if they "may not think they are" (Deguchi, *ibid.*, 20:25 *ff*.). Unfortunately, laying the blame on "privileged" people rather than on social structures is a form of finger-pointing with a long and very ugly history (think the Reign of Terror, the

Holocaust, the Cultural Revolution, the Killing Fields). Holding white males responsible for society's ills has as little credibility as blanketly scapegoating any other social group.

Supporters of DEI and CRT who demonize white males claim this does not constitute "reverse racism," based on the spurious argument that non-whites and females cannot possibly be racists or sexists since they lack the necessary privileges to be oppressors. Pre-judgments (= prejudice) against whites and males are nonetheless forms of racism and sexism, even if those holding such views do not (yet) have the power to openly discriminate. Overcoming racism, sexism, and discrimination against "minority" groups: Yes! Promoting stereotypes and prejudice against "majority" groups: No!

"Multiculturalism" originally meant different veggies coexisting in the same bowl but has degenerated into segregating each kind into different bowls, perpetuating the very tribalism that intercultural communication is intended to overcome. From this revisionist multicultural perspective, "diversity" means that when we look in a mirror, we do not have the freedom to define ourselves in our own terms (e.g., as "human beings") but are required to construct our "identities" on the basis of our race and gender (e.g., as "white males," "black females," or something "intersectional" (*cf*. Janet Helms' White Identity Theory). "Equity" is interpreted as helping non-whites and females gain positions of privilege in our current stratified society at the expense of underprivileged non-elites of all races and genders. "Inclusion" is granted to members of majority groups labelled "oppressive" (even if they aren't) only if they are willing to become "allies" with minority groups labelled "oppressed" (even if they aren't) and to help further their political agendas. Insulting white males by calling them "racists" and "sexists" is hardly a good way to win allies and influence people. In any case, monologue replaces dialogue. Whites and males are unidirectionally 'splained to about their supposed insensitivities and obliged to listen without being listened to.

Intercultural communication has always had elitist tendencies (e.g., its preoccupation with multinational corporate communication, university exchange programs, international political negotiations, and globalization in general, which directly involves only a tiny minority of the earth's total population). White Privilege theory similarly claims to be working on behalf of the "oppressed" but is in fact elitist. Why should poor working-class folks in the US struggling to make ends meet want to become "allies" with relatively privileged non-white women attempting to break through the "sliding glass doors" (Deguchi's term) that prevent them from getting into elite universities or being promoted in prestigious corporations? Glass ceilings also prevent any number of other people, regardless of race and gender, from rising to the top, but instead of addressing this as a problem of systemic social stratification, White Privilege theory sees it entirely in terms of "oppressors" conspiring against the "oppressed" by controlling the sensors of the sliding glass doors.

A genuinely systemic solution is not to change the persons in charge of the sensors, but to dismantle the sensors; not to change guards at the Berlin Wall but to tear the wall down; not to make "allies" with slaveholders but to abolish slavery. Structural problems cannot be blamed on *people* but require *structural* change. The entire white race cannot be held collectively responsible for slavery (or other historical atrocities) any more than modern-day Turks can be held collectively responsible for white slavery during the Ottoman Empire, which was carried out on a vastly larger scale than slavery in the US and continued well into the twentieth century (not to mention the Turkish government's denial of the Armenian genocide and its ongoing oppression of ethnic Kurds). Structural oppression is obviously not something engaged in only by whites. Historically blacks have also been slave owners, both

in Africa and the US. Currently there are an estimated 38 million slaves in virtually every country of the world. While not perfect, compare the considerable progress the US and Europe have made expanding civil rights to people of all races, genders, sex orientations, etc. with the relative lack of structural reform to address the persistent suppression of human rights in parts of Asia, Africa, and the Middle East.

My general feeling is that many (not all) interculturalists are living in an echo chamber. Some highly objectionable aspects of DEI, Critical Race Theory, and White Privilege theory are uncritically accepted while legitimate criticisms either remain unacknowledged or are actively suppressed. The reactions I myself have received when trying to explain these issues to others range from a nodding "I know exactly what you mean" to a myopic "I can't see what the problem is." My suggestion is that these issues should be widely discussed among the intercultural community as a whole, with a willingness to listen to and engage with critics both within and outside the field, even if we do not share their views or politics.

If anyone is still not clear about "what the problem is," below are some testimonials from people of varying racial/gender backgrounds and political persuasions, which offer a wider perspective on why there is so much opposition to DEI in the United States. It is difficult, I think, to become aware of these alternative perspectives without concluding that there is something seriously wrong with certain mischaracterizations and prejudices that are structurally built into DEI, Critical Race Theory, and White Privilege theory. It is not simply about racism and sexism on the part of individual DEI practitioners. Rather, many aspects of these theories are fundamentally flawed and require not just a bit of tinkering but a complete overhaul. DEI is not as innocuous as some of its propagandists would have us believe. If DEI cannot reform itself, it deserves to die and probably will.

TESTIMONIALS:

Progressive white male professor at Evergreen State College is ostracized for objecting to a "Day of Absence" which asks (only) white students and faculty to voluntarily leave the campus: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2cMYfxOFBBM

Minority students claiming to protest against racism use "sliding glass doors" to systematically prevent "privileged" white and Asian students from entering the gate at the University of Berkeley: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i_g9uIHCAZs

Black female British MP explaining her opposition to Critical Race Theory and White Privilege theory: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vIa4bvXjDhA

Jordan Peterson, white male Canadian psychologist, and Brandon Tatum, black male former American police officer, debunk White Privilege theory: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ChVtq7NCO1M

Zuby (Nzube Olisaebuka Udezue), black male British rapper and podcaster, dismisses White Privilege theory as racist: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZZC-iUs7dII

Saritha Prabhu, immigrant female journalist in the US, refuses to be party to the bashing of white men: https://www.tennessean.com/story/opinion/columnists/2018/10/26/white-male-bashing-trend-dangerous-saritha-prabhu/1753911002/

Nana Akua (Amoatemaa-Appiah), British television presenter and journalist, sees White Privilege as a "divisive ideology": https://x.com/GBNEWS/status/1407213602549927939

Kimi Katiti, Ugandan-American artist, musician, and skateboarder, on "This Is Why I HATE Critical Race Theory": https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zeHqZT-NsxE

Kenny Xu, author of *An Inconvenient Minority*, argues that Asian-American success in the US disproves Critical Race Theory: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y2esl0yVFXE

Jewish-American explains why no one has a right to tell us what racial, gender, ethnic, or religious identity we should adopt (not even Janet Helms): "Defining your own identity is not a privilege. It's a right. And it's time we reclaim that right from any and everyone who seeks to deny it." https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=On4QmiyhFPk

"I'm Gay and I Dislike Pride Month": "The only way that you're going to reach normalcy is when you stop highlighting the fact that you're different": https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oBj03CHiLNE

Contrary to the predictions of White Male Privilege theory, some black males and females also have "white privilege" (!): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zXMj3vfa9sM

Try telling this guy about his "white privilege" and he's likely to reply with "F-ck off"—not because *he* is a racist but because *you* are: https://imgflip.com/i/7dcx8d

Brendan O'Neill on why "white men" is the "most dehumanising insult of our times": https://www.spectator.co.uk/article/white-men-the-most-dehumanising-insult-of-our-times/

Morgan Freeman: "I'm gonna stop calling you a 'white man' And I'm gonna ask you to stop calling me a 'black man'": https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Eui0Nwlqlz8

An intersectional white male Christian meets an intersectional socially challenged female in the "gayborhood": https://www.youtube.com/shorts/RZjpFdBkOvg

Black teacher bullies white students in a "multicultural space" at Arizona State University over slogans on their belongings: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KnVA2RidSDU

Black Harvard prof needs police protection after releasing a study (backed by *piles* of data) disproving racial bias in police shootings: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FefEVH-Cxl8

A white male professor sues Penn State (and eventually wins) for forcing him to attend training seminars which see white teachers as a "problem" and associate whites with "all the evils of the world": https://www.foxnews.com/media/penn-state-professor-says-school-forced-teach-english-language-white-supremacy-religious-cult

Black female teacher is called a "white supremacist" for rejecting anti-white racism in Critical Race Theory: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=we45ySMOjXQ

Female DEI head fired for "supporting white students too much": https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=86C7267gVxw

The New McCarthyism: As of 2024 more than 1,000 cases have been documented of attempts to fire professors for expressing ideas that conflict with "woke" ideologies: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U2nmiHAaclM

Papers that don't conform to "woke" ideology can't get published in scientific journals (time to consider samizdat publishing!): https://www.city-journal.org/article/unscientific-american

The Grievance Studies Project: A hoax which managed to get nonsensical and morally questionable papers lacking academic rigor published in respected peer-reviewed gender, race, and sexuality journals: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kVk9a5Jcd1k (One of the papers included a passage from Adolf Hitler's *Mein Kampf* rewritten in feminist language.)

Progressive evolutionary biologist explains how demonizing whiteness helps to create the very problem it's trying to solve: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S1sJgjG5AF4

"Brainwashing and indoctrination": Brittney Cooper, professor of Women's and Gender Studies at Rutgers University and founding director of the Race and Gender Equity (RAGE) Lab, claims (rather ragefully!) that white people are "committed to being villains," morally inferior, and need to be "taken out" (!): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yQYdOG_W-ck

How "privilege walks" give "majority" groups a false sense of entitlement while humiliating "minority" groups: https://www.ubunturesearch.com/blog/2017/11/20/why-i-dont-do-privilege-walks-anymore

"DEI is applying unequal standards to ensure preferential outcomes for individuals and groups based on race, sex, and gender identity" vs. "The same standards should apply to everyone, everywhere, regardless of race, sex, or gender identity."
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2ltWVmsbJxc

DEI must DIE: Toy designer is ticked off because DEI "intimidates people into silence" and "teaches kids to be obsessed with race": https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2ltWVmsbJxc

Diversity Trainer Speaks Out Against DEI: DEI perpetuates racism to insure it "will always have a business getting rid of racism." https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VZSusqfJeD4

Anglican filmmaker secretly films human rights abuses at Ushiku, a detention center for refugees in Japan: https://mubi.com/en/films/ushiku/trailer (A good example of people of all races working together to overcome problems affecting people of all races.)

Structural discrimination in Japan: "Japan has no laws prohibiting racial, ethnic, or religious discrimination, or discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity" (including refugees): https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2023/country-chapters/japan (Simply reminding "majority" groups about their privilege is the perfect way to deflect attention away from serious structural problems such as this and avoid doing anything to solve them.)

The solution? Judge people "not by the color of their skin," but "by the content of their character": https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vP4iY1TtS3s

The Case for Colorblindness: Be totally blind about race and gender while totally opposed to racism and sexism: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QxB3b7fxMEA

African-American father and his daughter explain why they reject Critical Race Theory. I think SIETAR should invite this little girl as its next keynote speaker since she "gets it" much better than the "experts" do: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=beOAJz_pUxI