

Traumatizing young minds: “White Privilege” a faux pas reverse racism

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Introduction

“We learn from history that we learn nothing from History”

Georg Hegel (1770-1831)

In times of social and political upheaval, a society of rational adults should advocate for “circling the wagons” around our children and adolescents and empowering families and communities to join forces by cogently advocating for constructive reforms on all fronts both to rectify injustices and to remedy the psychological damage that such upheaval can cause. Now the United States zeitgeist is characterized by unprecedented stressful crises: a fatal Corona epidemic, drug overdose and suicide related health crises, bipartisan political hostilities, and racial unrest. Rather than attempting to ameliorate this damage, those who lead the “liberal progressive” socioracial new order defy what we have learned from history by pushing for a dangerous confrontational revolution. Their “bon ton” philology includes several incendiary terms. One of the most troubling is the bullying term of “White Privilege.” This intellectually compromised term is a reminiscent of Lewis Carroll’s Humpty Dumpty absurd statement, “when I use a word, it means just what I choose it to mean—neither more nor less” [1]. The term “White Privilege” fails to acknowledge the inherent complex heterogeneity of any community defined simply on the basis of shared melatonin level only. Furthermore, any purported reform that attempts to justify a term such as “White Privilege” is naïve at best or at worst a misleading sham. The deleterious potential of this is a clear example of adding fuel to the fires of racial polarization by supporting reverse racism. This constitutes an immense potential of “collateral damage” in particular to impressionable developing young minds while serving no constructive purpose such as improving our youth’s understanding, empathy, compassion and assertive collaborative intervention to address the grievances of Black communities in historical perspective.

Childhood and adolescence are periods of marked psycho-behavioral development of the brain. The sense of self, identity and role are established, and peer approval is of supreme value. There is a shift from a family-focused value system and acceptance into a social and peer oriented process of enhancing internal motivation for perception and behavior change that often progresses in opposite direction from their adult caregivers’ tendency towards conformity and moderation. This process is not without risk because brain regions governing reward, impulsivity and sensation-seeking are relatively more developed and influential than higher order cognitive regions regulating behavioral inhibition, decision-making and planning, which continue to mature into the early-mid 20’s [2]. Consequently, while the developing brain is “under construction” by forging new pathways taking advantage of its immense neuroplasticity, it is also prone to physical, chemical (e.g., substance abuse) and psychological insults.

Any abuse of the tender brain may inflict potential life-long traumas with morbid neuropsychological negative consequences that can be identified by neuroimaging techniques (e.g., The Addicted Brain).

Currently, our youth are witnessing traumatic events such as multiple deaths due to the Corona virus, televised violent encounters between the police and civilians with an emphasis on confrontations with minority individuals, massive protests, anarchy and violence in the streets, fire setting both literally and figuratively by using incendiary speeches. The moral failure of supporting violence and anarchy as the means to justify an end result of social and racial justice is scarring young minds. Feelings of helplessness and hopelessness mount when safety is compromised. We cannot right wrongs by adding bias, prejudice, stigma and discrimination in any direction. There are recognized brain structures in the limbic system such as the amygdala, insula, hippocampus as well as the anterior cingulate cortex and associated pathways addressing automatic and controlled output of negative stimuli of bias, stereotyping, stigma, prejudice thoughts and fear of the “racially other” [3,4]. These feelings have been serving evolutionary existential purposes but are problematic and unwelcomed for an orderly function of a heterogeneous and civilized society. That said, there are also correcting pathways with the potential for restoring emotional and balanced well-being by reducing these perceived evolutionally and psychosocial learnt threats [5].

Stigma occurs when the targeted person is seen as part of stereotyped group that may suffer social rejection, isolation and internalized shame. Coining and implementing the term “White Privilege” is vindictive, humiliating and traumatizing. It is meant to stigmatize an entire subpopulation. It is impossible not to be blinded by the glaring glee of the Schadenfreude (i.e., now it is my turn to see you to suffer) from naming, shaming, and guilt not because of “dids” but by simply existing as a white child or adolescent. The similarity to antisemitism is sadly obvious. Is it not the objective of anti-racism campaign to combat with a prejudice such as this?

The reader may ask how do we know that to truly be happening. The answer is, it is live on TV and on social media. People do not hold back. The Id trumps the Super-ego.

This approach is akin to the “end justifies the means” philosophy regardless of the collateral damage done adopted in the French

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and Russian revolutions resulting in both cases in gigantic and calamitous “social experiments”. This new form of public “human sacrifices” has already been seen on mainstream and social media where children and adolescents state that they hate their families due to political differences and nonpolitically correct attitudes. They are easy prey due to their brain developmental stage. They are rewarded and manipulated by peer pressure, programmed by “likes” and presumed politically correct self-responses. An adolescent carrying a sign “White Privilege” as seen on TV means a Stockholm syndrome is in the making. The emotional anguish of self-deprecating behavior to achieve peer approval (self-bullying) increases the risk for anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, suicidal and self-injurious behaviors has been alarming since the previous decade. This “sins of the fathers” symbolizes a new disorderly order of politically incompetent and dangerous post-conventional (PC) moral reasoning. It compels submission to identity politics even by children or else the potential threat for continued personal and societal stress and chaos will prevail. According to Kohlberg’s Stages of Moral Development the PC moralists live by their own ethical principles [6]. They do not serve the community well being according to a utilitarian approach and regardless of negative consequences place their ideology as a priority when societal rules and laws are inconsistent with their own principles.

Might we be witnessing further disintegration of the most important American institute and protective factor for kids, that is, their families?

The answer is most probably yes if intellectual puppet-masters continue a process that would mercilessly pit children against their parents who do not submit to the nouveau politically correct dictionary. This happened in totalitarian regimes where the call of the reformed “motherland” destroyed families. Do we need dystopic books such as “The Lord of the Flies” or “Fahrenheit 451” to remind us of how fragile civilization is when responsible and courageous adult leaders are hard to find?

Can it happen here? it is already happening, therefore, increased awareness, prevention efforts as well as damage control should be in full swing.

What can mental health/education professionals, parents and community leaders do to alleviate the crisis threatening our youth due to any kind of racism including the new and dangerous reverse racism illustrated by “White Privilege”?

First and foremost advocate that the interests of a child are paramount and supreme to any politically manipulative agenda—“primum non nocere”; second, teaching history of science and the philosophy of logics in high-schools are crucial. Our children should learn primarily “how to think” and not the “what to think” as commonly done by opinionated partisan teachers in high-schools and colleges. Further, we need to allow our youth to identify and reinforce healthy developmental processes, and potentially improving self-efficacy for abstaining from poor and harmful choices dictated by the street. Finally, (apropos the 3 Fs): a call to all “responsible adults”, do not succumb to the Fright and Flight of the “silence of the lambs”. Activate your limbic system to Fight for the minds of our kids.

Conclusion

Let us all hope that regardless of color theregulation and management of neural and social pathways of bias and prejudice that lead to discrimination of “the other” would be addressed in educational and scientific manners. The alternative is to allow the Newtonian third law of motion into the mix. The outcome of action and a push back reaction would be deleterious to American society. The process will be slow yet progress will be steady. It would amount to a group cognitive-behavioral therapy like of immense proportion following a paradigm of “Problem Solving” according to the Social Learning Model of Bandura [7]. However, there is simply no other constructive way.

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