



Standing on the Shoulders of Giants

EFLA STUDY GUIDE

INTRO UNIT: The Politics of Education: Propaganda or Empowerment?

CLASS 3: Real or Imaginary: The Psychological Effects of Racism on Blacks and Whites

OVERVIEW

After observing enslaved African Americans on his tour of America in the 1830s, French philosopher *Alexis de Tocqueville*, wrote the following in his treatise on the American experience, *Democracy in America* (1835):

"The Negro makes a thousand fruitless efforts to **insinuate** himself amongst men who repulse him; he **conforms** to the tastes of his oppressors, adopts their opinions, and hopes by imitating them to form a part of their community. Having been told from infancy that his race is naturally inferior to that of the whites, he **assents** to the **proposition** and is ashamed of his own nature. In each of his features he discovers a trace of slavery, and, if it were in his power, he would willingly rid himself of everything that makes him what he is."

What Tocqueville is referring to is the psychological effects of slavery and racism. Slavery was more than an economic system that forced African Americans to work for life, for free; it was also a system of psychology torture. Slavery was based on the notion that Africans were inferior to whites – subhuman even. This was **implanted** in the minds of both blacks and whites “from infancy,” to quote Tocqueville. Of course this was not true – Africans were never at any period of history inferior to whites. Therefore the white power structure had to “manufacture” this inferiority; they had to make the lie seem true. To do this they made everything associated with the color black negative, and everything associated with the color white positive. In every aspect of their lives, blacks were reminded of their “inferior” status. This constant **bombardment** of negative propaganda and degrading treatment undoubtedly had a negative effect on the **psyche** of black people. It made many black people hate themselves and wish that they were white, as Tocqueville observed. Yet others were never convinced that blacks were inferior and never desired to become a part of white culture, they simply wanted to be free. Others “played dumb” in front of whites to their advantage. Many more learned to read and write despite the law.

As for white people – slavery and racism destroyed the humanity of those who embraced it, and made those who didn’t question the humanity of – not black people, but of their own race. For white people, racism created a false sense of superiority and racial **entitlement** based not on merit, but skin color. Yet, many white people did not endorse this philosophy of white supremacy –

especially slavery, and many fought tirelessly against it. Many others were silenced by fear of violence and **retribution** from whites that did believe in these doctrines.

This class examines the psychological effects of racism on blacks and whites using two pioneering social experiments: The famous “Doll Test” conducted by Kenneth & Mamie Clarke, and the pioneering “Brown Eye, Blue Eye Experiment” conducted by Jane Elliott. Do these psychological effects still exist? In what ways racism affected you?

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After completing this lesson, students will be able to:

- ✓ Assess the psychological effects of racism on blacks and whites
- ✓ Evaluate the methodology of social scientific experiments
- ✓ Analyze governmental policy and societal approaches for alleviating the psychological effects of racism

HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENT

Read/View the following:

1. The Doll Test Short Documentary (9 min)
Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tkpUyB2xgTM>
2. Brown at 60: The Doll Test, NAACP Legal Defense Fund
Link: <http://www.naacpldf.org/brown-at-60-the-doll-test>
3. Jane Elliott's "Brown Eye Blue Eye Experiment" (15 min)

QUIZ/DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

NO QUIZ! (Which also means no grading!) The Intro Unit is designed to foster discussion and get students accustomed to the curriculum's lecture/discussion style format.

Instructions: View in class the two experiments assigned for homework: The "Doll Test" documentary (9 min) conducted by Kenneth & Mamie Clarke, and the "Brown Eye, Blue Eye Experiment" (15 min) conducted by Jane Elliott. For the remainder of the class use the Discussion Questions below to foster guide your conversation:

From The Doll Test

1. What do you think of the results of the doll test?
2. Before seeing the doll test, how would you have thought the black children would have responded? Why?
3. Why do you think it was important to conduct these experiments with 1st - 3rd graders?
4. Did you expect the experiment to have the same results with students from outside of America?
5. Do you think these tests would have similar results today? Why or why not?
6. Why do you think the researchers chose to conduct these experiments with 1st - 3rd graders?

From "Brown Eye, Blue Eye Experiment"

7. What do you think of the results of the brown/blue-eyed experiment?
8. Do you think it was significant that the teacher, Jane Elliott, was white and the experiment was performed with all-white students?
9. How did the students perform on the phonics cards when they were thought to be part of the superior group vs. when they were in the inferior group?
10. Do you think this experiment had a lasting impact on the students who went participated?

SUPPLEMENTAL MATERIAL

The Kenneth & Mamie Clark “Doll Test”



Kenneth B. Clark (1914–2005) Educational Psychologist PhD 1940 LLD 1970 (hon.)

Mamie Phipps Clark (1917–83) Educational Psychologist PhD 1943

The research of Kenneth and Mamie Phipps Clark challenged the notion of differences in the mental abilities of black and white children and so played an important role in the desegregation of American schools. In 1946, the Clarks founded the Northside Center for Child Development in Harlem, where they conducted experiments on racial biases in education. Their findings were presented at school desegregation trials in Virginia, South Carolina, and Delaware. In 1954, in a famous footnote, those findings were cited in *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kan.*, the landmark Supreme Court decision that ruled public-school segregation unconstitutional.

Kenneth Clark was the first African American to earn a doctorate in psychology at Columbia, to hold a permanent professorship at the City College of New York, to join the New York State Board of Regents and to serve as president of the American Psychological Association. In addition to his work as a psychologist and educator, he assisted corporations with racial policies and minority hiring programs. His books include *Prejudice and Your Child* (1955), *Dark Ghetto* (1965), *A Possible Reality* (1972), and *Pathos of Power* (1975). During Columbia's student protests in 1968, Clark, whose son Hilton (Columbia College 1968) was a leader of the Society of Afro-American Students, served as mediator between the black student protesters in Hamilton Hall and the administration.

Mamie Phipps began studying self-perception in black children as a graduate student at Howard University, where she met and married Kenneth Clark. Between 1939 and 1940, the two published three major articles on this subject. Phipps Clark continued her work at Columbia where, in 1943, she became the first African-American woman and the second African American (after her husband) in the University's history to receive a psychology doctorate. It was her work on the way black children seemed to prefer white dolls to black ones that particularly impressed the Supreme Court justices. In 1966, Columbia recognized the couple's work by awarding each the Nicholas Murray Butler Silver Medal.

Jane Elliott & Her “Blue Eye, Brown Eye Experiment”



Jane Elliott, internationally known teacher, lecturer, diversity trainer, and recipient of the National Mental Health Association Award for Excellence in Education, exposes prejudice and bigotry for what it is, an irrational class system based upon purely arbitrary factors. And if you think this does not apply to you. . . you are in for a rude awakening.

In response to the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr. over thirty years ago, Jane Elliott devised the controversial and startling, "Blue Eyes/Brown Eyes" exercise. This, now famous, exercise labels participants as inferior or superior based solely upon the color of their eyes and exposes them to the experience of being a minority. Everyone who is exposed to Jane Elliott's work, be it through a lecture, workshop, or video, is dramatically affected by it.

Acclaim for "Blue Eyes/Brown Eyes" exercise

"It won't help much to be prepared to face Jane Elliott. This elderly woman will tear down any shield. Even we, the spectators in BLUE EYED, can't get rid of this feeling of uneasiness, embarrassment, anxiety and utterly helpless hatred when she starts keeping people down, humiliating them, deriding them, incapacitating them. No doubt about this: for three quarters of the time in this documentation Jane Elliott is the meanest, the lowest, the most detestful, the most hypocritical human being hell has ever spit back on earth. But she should be an example for all of us". - Stuttgarter Zeitung