

# Why is it so difficult to talk about race for some of us to talk about race sometimes?

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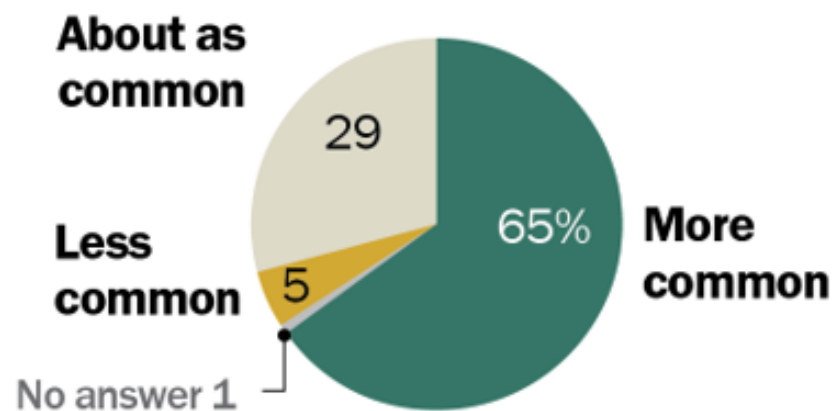
Holly Slay Ferraro, PhD



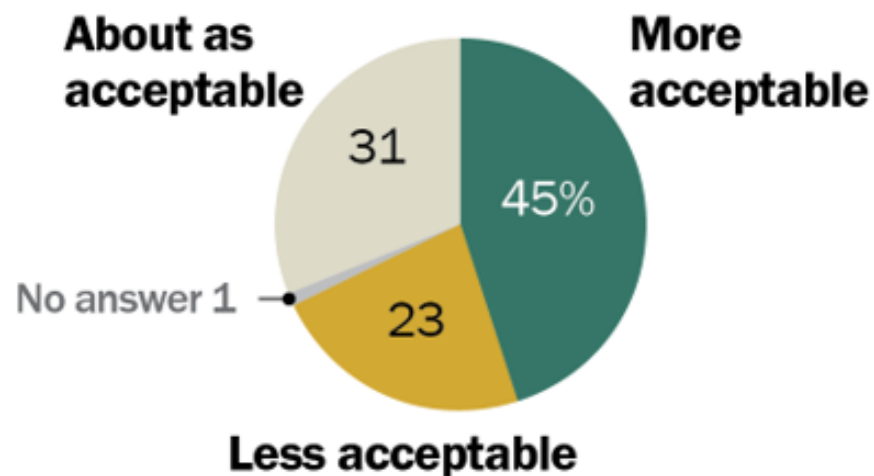
# Most say it's now more common for people to express racist or racially insensitive views

*% saying, since Trump was elected ...*

*It has become \_\_\_\_ for people to express racist or racially insensitive views*



*It has become \_\_\_\_ for people to express racist or racially insensitive views*



Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Jan. 22-Feb. 5, 2019.  
"Race in America 2019"

# Agenda

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Defining race talk

Organizational impediments

Intrapersonal strivings

Discussion



# Defining race talk

# Race Talk (Myers & Williamson, 2001)

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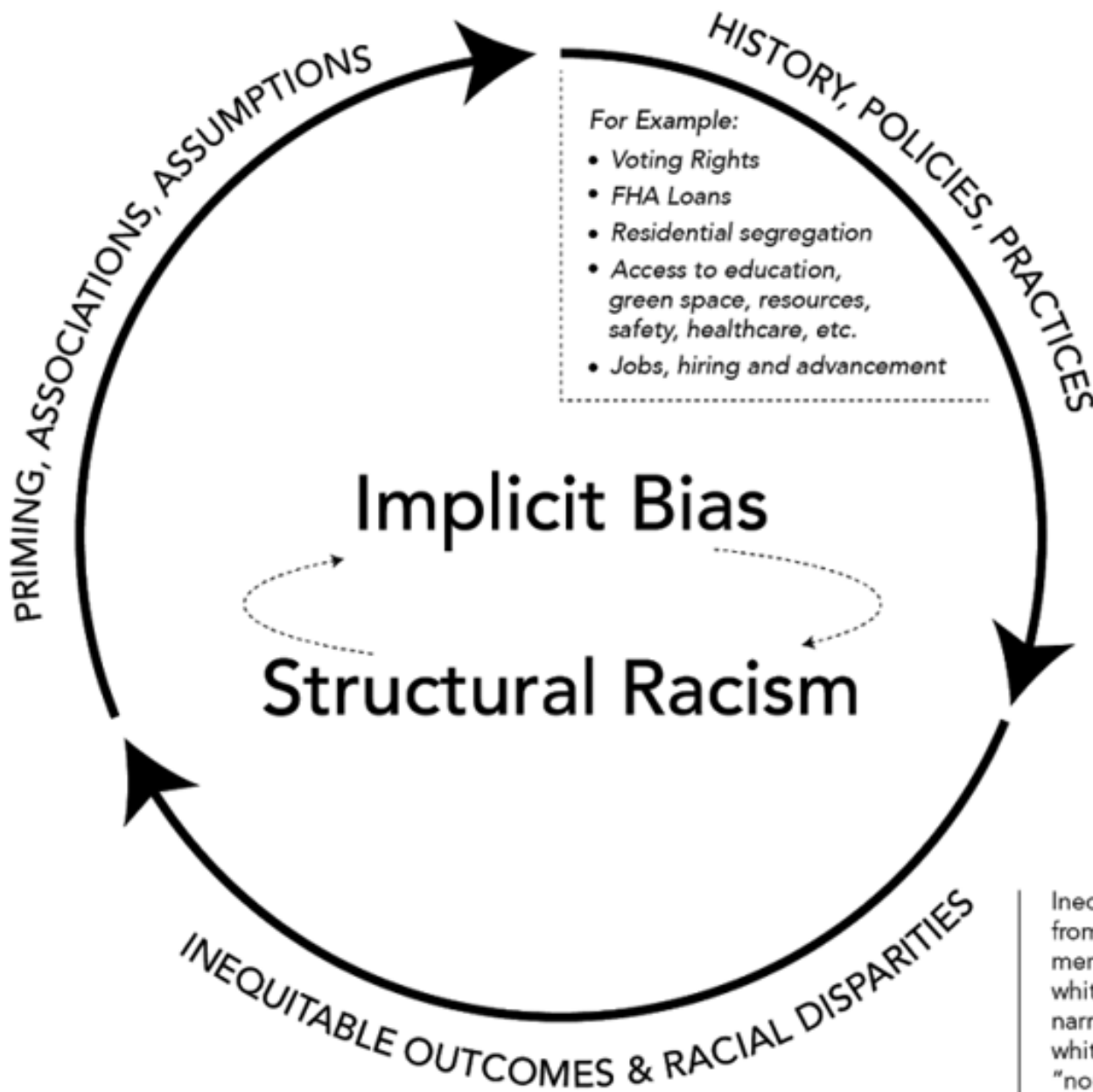
## Race Talk is...

- “...the explicit insertion into everyday life of racial signs and symbols that have no meaning other than pressing African Americans to the lowest level of the racial hierarchy” (Morrison, 1993, p. 57).
- More broadly includes any demeaning speech based on race or ethnicity (Myers & Williamson, 2001)

## Purposes of Race Talk

- Boundary marking – talk that defines a pecking order
- Boundary policing – keeping others in their place
- Boundary maintenance – talk that keeps ingroup members in their place

Dominant narratives about race (family, media, society) coupled with racialized structural arrangements and differential outcomes by race all prime us to believe that people of color are inferior to white people, create and maintain harmful associations, and lead us to make harmful assumptions, consciously and unconsciously, about people of color



Race is created to justify enslaving people from Africa (economic engine of country)

Policies and practices that consolidate and protect power bestow unearned economic, social, cultural, and political advantage to people called "white," and unearned disadvantage to people of color

National narrative (ideology, belief system) about people of color being "less than" human (and less than white) justifies mistreatment and inequality (white supremacy)

Inequitable outcomes and experiences resulting from policy decisions in health, housing, employment, education, and life expectancy - reinforces white supremacist beliefs and ideology; dominant narrative uses disparate outcomes as evidence of white superiority, promotes whiteness as "normal" and desirable and justifies inequality

# Myth of Meritocracy

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- **Have you ever said:**
- God helps those who help themselves.
- Everyone can make it if they work hard enough.
- Fulfill your personal destiny.
- I worked for everything I have. No one ever gave me anything.



**FIGURE 3**  
**RESTAURANT**  
**DEMOGRAPHICS**  
**BY RACE**

Demographics of the restaurant workforce by race in the city of Seattle. American Community Survey, 2013-2017.





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# Organizational Challenges

# Diversity Resistance

Thomas and Plaut, 2008

		Levels where resistance shows up	
How resistance shows up		Individual	Organizational
	Overt	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Verbal/physical harassment</li><li>• Graffiti</li><li>• Intentional and hostile forms of discrimination</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Intentional discriminatory human resource policies and practices</li><li>• Retaliation</li></ul>
	Subtle	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Silence regarding inequities</li><li>• Avoidance and exclusion based upon racial differences</li><li>• Discrediting those who are different from the norm</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Cultures of silence around diversity and discrimination</li><li>• Mixed messages related to diversity</li><li>• Diversity as a non-issue</li><li>• Messages that place diversity as too time consuming/too complex</li></ul>

# Resistance and Race talk in Hiring

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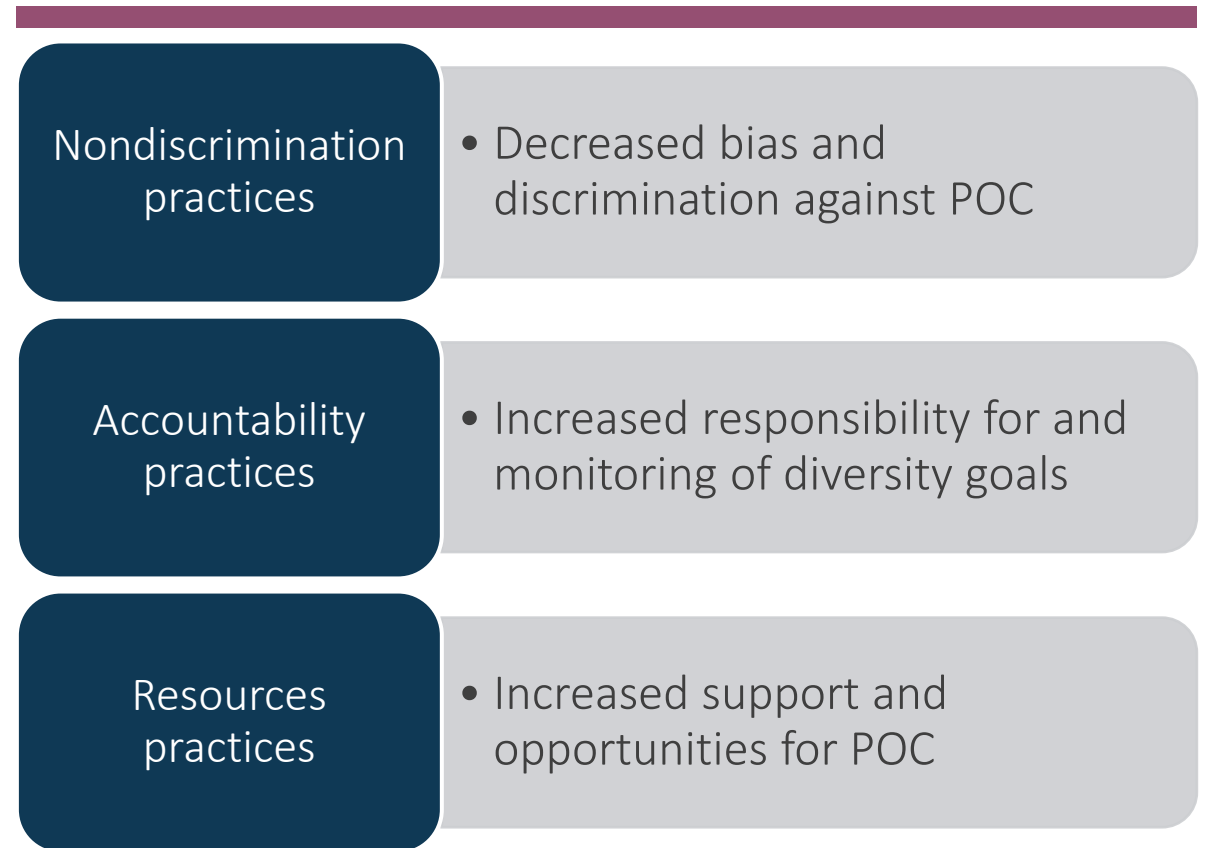


- **Gaudiano & Hunt, 2019**
- We can't get enough qualified applicants
- We hire for quality, not for color
- It would be unfair to the more qualified candidates
- We already know a very good candidate in our network
- The effort to increase diversity is unduly burdensome
- Our company does not have a diversity problem

# Categories of diversity practices and intended consequences

Leslie, 2018

**Overall desired consequence** = more representation, greater inclusion, decreased career gaps between POC and whites



# Unintended but predictable consequences

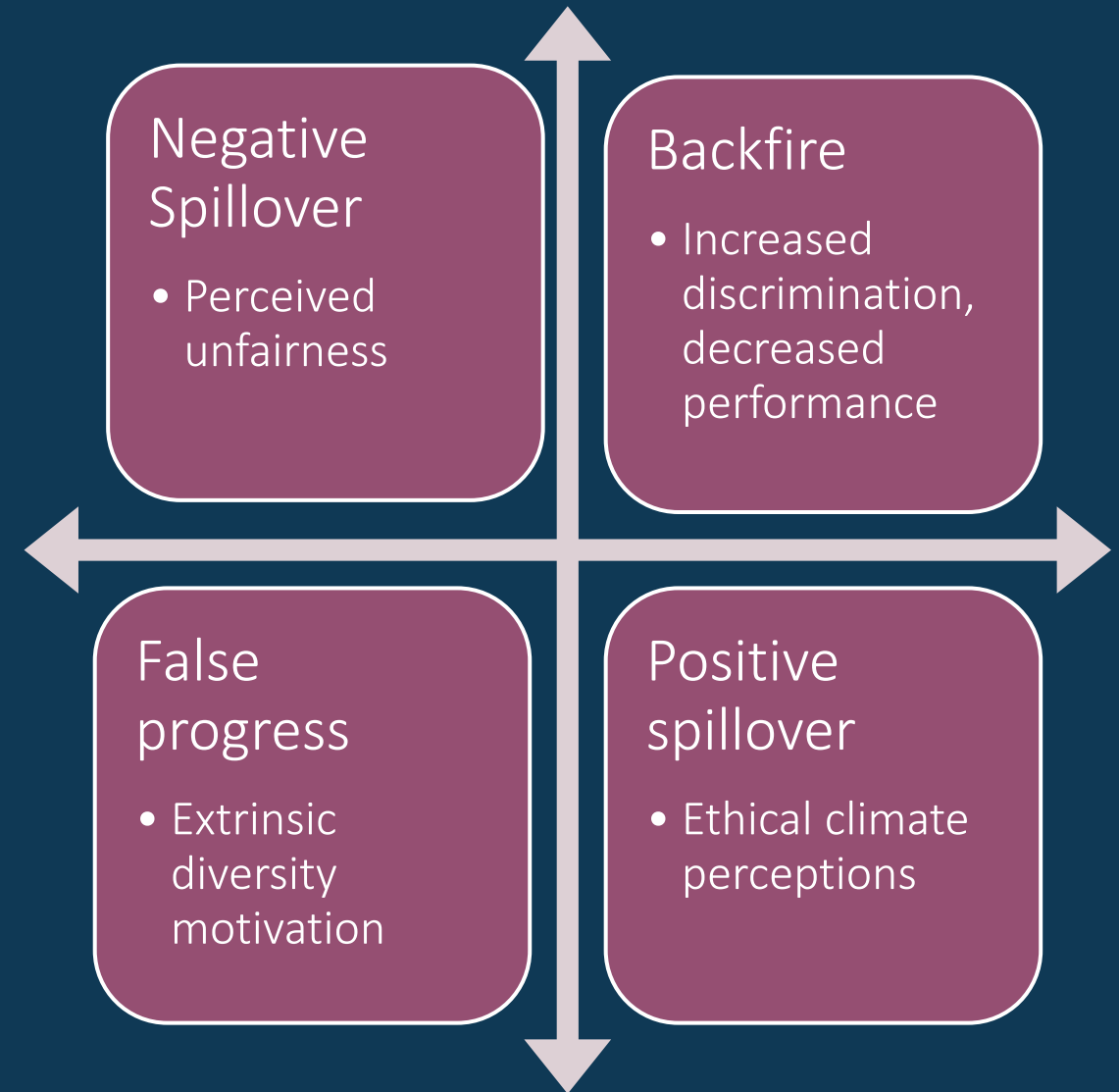
Leslie, 2018

Diversity initiatives send signal such as:

Resource practices – POC will succeed and POC need help

Nondiscrimination practices – Morality is valued

Accountability - Diversity goal progress is valued



# What does this have to do with race talk?

Implementation of initiatives often involves race talk.

How does your organization, leaders frame diversity initiatives? Do you use race talk in framing?

How do employees interpret initiatives? Is race talk used in sharing interpretations?



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**Intrapersonal strivings**



# Where are you in your racial identity development?

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- **Cross, 1991; Sellers, 1998; Helms, 1990; Hoffman, 2006**
- **Early:** uncritical examination of beliefs about race, absorption of the values of the dominant white culture, colorblind
- **Awakening:** exploring history, questioning racist ideologies, confronting prior conceptions of the world
- **Awareness and action:** Know that racist policies create racial inequity (no inherent difference), understanding how to use privilege, fighting racist ideas



# Values Discussions and Facades of Conformity

- **Hewlin, 2003, 2009**
- Inauthentic behavior, suppression of divergent values, pretense of embracing organizational values
- More prevalent in environments that are intolerant to diverse perspectives and values
- More prevalent when leaders have a high degree of integrity.

# Mindset

**Fixed** = avoidance of challenges for fear of showing ourselves to be unintelligent or something else (like racist)

**Growth** = seeking challenging learning opportunities and showing resilience in the face of setbacks

**Dweck, 2011**

Are your core qualities built in and fixed by nature or can your qualities be developed through nurture and your persistent efforts?

## What Kind of Mindset Do You Have?



I can learn anything I want to.  
When I'm frustrated, I persevere.  
I want to challenge myself.  
When I fail, I learn.  
Tell me I try hard.  
If you succeed, I'm inspired.  
My effort and attitude determine everything.



I'm either good at it, or I'm not.  
When I'm frustrated, I give up.  
I don't like to be challenged.  
When I fail, I'm no good.  
Tell me I'm smart.  
If you succeed, I feel threatened.  
My abilities determine everything.

## Reflection Questions

What thoughts, emotions, questions came up for you?

What intrapersonal battles are you fighting?

what are other  
words for  
dismantle?

disassemble, take down, strip,  
take apart, raze, pull down,  
tear down, level, break up,  
demolish



Thesaurus.plus

## Dismantle race talk

- **Race talk vs. anti-racist talk**
- **Race Talk:** ““...the explicit insertion into everyday life of racial signs and symbols that have no meaning other than pressing African Americans to the lowest level of the racial hierarchy” (Morrison, 1993, p. 57).
- **Anti-racist talk:** ...the explicit insertion into everyday life of antiracist signs and symbols that have no meaning other than supporting anti-racist policies by expressing anti-racist ideas (Ferraro, 2020)

# Facilitating or engaging in anti-racist talk

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- Creary, 2020; RACE framework
- R – Reduce anxiety by talking about race anyway
  - Use conversation norms and strategies
- A - Accept that anything related to race is either going to be visible or invisible
  - Ask what is gained or lost when race is invisible, hypervisible.
- C - call on internal and external allies for help
  - You need a network to help you develop
- E - Expect that you will need to provide some “answers,” practical tools, and skill-based frameworks