

# Agronomy 375/Environmental Studies 402 - Systems Thinking

## Lecture Notes for Oct. 23, 2018: Systems thinking and Race

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### I) Intro

- A) This workshop reading developed so people understand the various systems that perpetuate racial bias, and also to help people think about intervening in those systems. So it is both a system description (the section on system thinking) and a system intervention.
- B) Very strong point of view – that racialized thinking is both inevitable and that it causes problems.

### II) Structural Racialization – What is it?

- A) “Dynamic process that creates cumulative and durable inequalities based on race. Structural racialization influences and often determines an individual’s or a group’s position in and relation to physical, social, and cultural opportunity structures” Highly uneven geographic, opportunities, constantly changing, does not require explicitly racist actors.
- B) Why is this an important framework to use when thinking about race?
  - 1) Identifies relationships that lead to racially unequal outcomes
  - 2) Identifies different sources of inequality that each require different types of intervention to correct
  - 3) Represents a dynamic picture with an acknowledgement that history, social relations, economics, unconscious bias, and many other factors in addition to overt racism shape opportunities.

### III) Systems Thinking and Race

- A) Goal is to understand that there are structures, and relationships between those structures, that produce the different housing, air quality, health, economic, or educational outcomes in different communities.
- B) History and life experience of individuals matters, but at each level there are other forces at work that either promote or constrain an individual’s ability to get better outcomes for herself.
- C) Examples of systems from the workbook?
  - 1) Farm workers alliance, national domestic workers alliance, government role in housing discrimination (mutually reinforcing federal and state policies across multiple domains that inhibit investment and create inequality)

### IV) Matching problem analysis with intervention strategy – important to recognize that there are structures and relationships at every level that influence the success of intervention

strategies. Many institutions support the status quo, and we get racially inequitable outcomes even if there are not racist actors. (Polygon game). If you want to intervene, you need to analyze the systems at each level and identify some of the possible points of leverage.

- V) Opportunity Structures – factors that mediate access to opportunity. May be physical, social, cultural. They function to produce racialized outcomes. Changing these may change outcomes in important ways. Name a few? (local jobs, culture of education, lack of police discrimination, etc)
  - A) These are Racialized, Spatialized, and Globalized, and interventions need to acknowledge this (for example, a minimum wage law in a border town may not help people much if capital can easily move across the border but people can't).
- VI) Exercise about lead paint...