The purpose of *Unhooking from Whiteness: The Key to Dismantling Racism in the United States* is to reconsider the ways and strategies in which antiracist scholars do their work, as well as to provide pragmatic ways in which people – White and of color – can build cross-racial, cross-communal, and cross-institutional coalitions to fight White supremacy. Employing the methodology of autoethnography, each chapter in this book illustrates the individual journey that the chapter contributor took to “unhook” him or herself from Whiteness. *Unhooking from Whiteness* explains Whiteness in ways never conceptualized before. The chapters suggest approaches to “unhooking” from Whiteness, while sharing the authors’ continual struggles to identify and eradicate the role of Whiteness in education and society in the United States.

The contributors to *Unhooking from Whiteness* offer us the invaluable gift of their stories, humble reflections on commitments to racial justice and complicities with racial injustice. But they aren’t merely stories – and this is the brilliance of the book – they are invitations into a reconsideration of the “common sense” discussions about the nature of white privilege, the possibility of white anti-racism, and the pervasive tug of whiteness. This is the rare book that shifts the angle and changes the conversation.

*Paul Gorski, Coordinator of the Social Justice Concentration, George Mason University*

Cover design by Tak Toyoshima
Unhooking from Whiteness
CONSTRUCTING KNOWLEDGE: CURRICULUM STUDIES IN ACTION

Volume 6

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Scope

“Curriculum” is an expansive term; it encompasses vast aspects of teaching and learning. Curriculum can be defined as broadly as, “The content of schooling in all its forms” (English, p. 4), and as narrowly as a lesson plan. Complicating matters is the fact that curricula are often organized to fit particular time frames. The incompatible and overlapping notions that curriculum involves everything that is taught and learned in a particular setting and that this learning occurs in a limited time frame reveal the nuanced complexities of curriculum studies.

“Constructing Knowledge” provides a forum for systematic reflection on the substance (subject matter, courses, programs of study), purposes, and practices used for bringing about learning in educational settings. Of concern are such fundamental issues as: What should be studied? Why? By whom? In what ways? And in what settings? Reflection upon such issues involves an inter-play among the major components of education: subject matter, learning, teaching, and the larger social, political, and economic contexts, as well as the immediate instructional situation. Historical and autobiographical analyses are central in understanding the contemporary realities of schooling and envisioning how to (re)shape schools to meet the intellectual and social needs of all societal members. Curriculum is a social construction that results from a set of decisions; it is written and enacted and both facets undergo constant change as contexts evolve.

This series aims to extend the professional conversation about curriculum in contemporary educational settings. Curriculum is a designed experience intended to promote learning. Because it is socially constructed, curriculum is subject to all the pressures and complications of the diverse communities that comprise schools and other social contexts in which citizens gain self-understanding.
Unhooking from Whiteness

The Key to Dismantling Racism in the United States

Edited by

Cleveland Hayes
University of Laverne, USA

and

Nicholas D. Hartlep
Illinois State University, USA

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Nicholas would like to thank Paul Gorski, Warren Blumenfeld, and Nicholas Ozment; Gorski and Blumenfeld for their insightful feedback on chapters presented in this book, and Ozment for his copyediting expertise. Nicholas would also like to thank Cleveland Hayes for his thoughtfulness when conceptualizing such a book. This book originated because of some wonderful discussions at the American Educational Research Association (AERA) annual meeting in Denver and at the Critical Race Theory Conference in New York at Teachers College, Columbia University. Nicholas dedicates this book to his daughters Chloe Haejin (6), Avery Hana (4), and Olivia Eunhae (1). May it be possible that one day racism is dismantled for you girls.
FOREWORD

I grew up in a small town with little racial diversity. My brother and I were most often the only Black kids in varied crowds of White peers. Each year brought altercations rooted in racial bias and bigotry. The easy fights were the physical ones. Though this combat resulting from covert racism taxed the body, consequences were far less damaging than the effects covert racism had on my humanity, my soul, my mind. After these battles, my mother did her best to help me process my experiences, and, more importantly, to assist me in identifying the psychosis of my assailants. This process of identification, this ability to distinguish the enemy, has proven valuable as I traverse through myriad manifestations of systemic, individual, covert, and overt racism as an educator.

The ability to recognize and categorize oppression is rare given the current times. White supremacy is pervasive and often undetected. Its slick and mostly silent modus operandi affords an anonymity that often precludes people from naming the sources of their oppression. The assaults are most often swift and stinging, leaving the assaulted wounded and wondering, unable to accurately identify the assailant. This book offers a line-up of likely suspects.

A list of suspects is developed to explain the discriminatory treatment minoritized people in the United States often experience. Employing autoethnography, Whiteness is examined through the personal stories of eleven diverse authors. Their racial backgrounds, their lived experiences complicate perceptions of racism and trouble common tropes and frameworks typically used to understand race and racism. These explanatory and counternarratives are important—especially now. Many want to believe that we live in a colorblind, post-racial society, yet oppression vigorously, creatively remains in most American institutions—especially schools. With race diminished as a viable mitigating factor influencing people’s life trajectories, these authors contend that the marginalized are often left searching for explanations, looking for the source of the subjugation they suffer, and worse yet, internalizing felt hatred they experience. This work confronts those sources and explores the kind of conflict most avoided—self-conflict necessary for intrapersonal change.

This book is unique in that White supremacy is discussed, as a transferable equalizer. Cheryl Harris’ positions Whiteness as property. Possession of this property, adoption of the norms and values of the dominant culture, affords benefits to those minoritized people who assimilate. The advantages, of course, do not equate to those with a White birthright; however, life is definitely different for those who cloak themselves in Whiteness and adopt the ways of white folk. The transformational power of Whiteness is alluring to minoritized people in search of a better life.

Even with my adverse encounters with White extremists and my mother’s diligence in ensuring my knowledge of significant contributions made by people who look like me, schooling and societal messages that delineated and reinforced my racial inferiority led me to internalize racism, practice varying degrees of self-deprecation,
and identify with Whiteness. Abandoning accountability to the collective, a value most aligned with the ethos people of color live by, I competed and won. The prize? I joined and contributed to oppressive systems. I found a success adopting Whiteness. Like the authors, I won by investing in the monocultural ethnocentrism I later interrogated and worked hard to unhook from.

Like me, these authors have their own stories, their own experiences with whiteness. They each offer perspectives of Whiteness and detail their varied journeys toward unhooking from Whiteness and its privileges, renouncing the advantages conformity to White supremacy has afforded them. Each author has made a commitment to antiracist work in unique ways, and their voices come from diverse cultural, racial, and professional historical spaces. This commitment to disconnect from privilege is wrought with complex contradictions as they continue this work while still enjoying and employing the accouterments of the Academy, one of the quintessential and iconic fortresses of White supremacy. Theirs are on-going journeys of evolving hypocrisies, tempered by reconciliations made with self in their battles against multiple forms of expedient systemic oppression. These stories have generalizable struggles from which we may all learn if we dare to endeavor in this work.

Read these stories with a self-critiquing lens. Consider the words of these writers with a frame of self-reflection. As you turn the pages, read your own story within the lines offered. Do not neglect this opportunity to self-reflect. Engage yourself, your life’s details. Search out your attachment, your dependence, your complicity with White supremacy and Whiteness, your participation with oppression. Examine your sources of privilege not just for the sake of knowing, but for the sake of leveraging that capital for the uplifting of those in need, those without your advantages, your influence, your voice.

*Analyze Then MOVE*

Do something. Move past what Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. termed “the paralysis of analysis”. Read this book and know. We who know are then called to be people of conviction, not conformity. The knowledge of your role in promulgating White supremacy, your perpetuation of Whiteness from the ivory towers of the Academy, for example, should propel you to action. Social justice demands loyalty to the moral imperative of nonconformity. Schooling institutions, which portend to laud independent thought, are wrought with pressures to conform. Like me, like these authors, resist. Be not seduced by symbols of success fashioned by the dominant culture. Be willing to risk the comfort and security positioned in Whiteness. Determine your own metric by which you measure your accomplishments—your consistent work unhooking from Whiteness and abolishing White supremacy. Unhook and connect to humanity.

Rema Reynolds, Ph.D.
Educator, Activist, and Advocate
Spring 2013
Minoritized, unlike minority, emphasizes the process of minoritizing and insists that the relative prestige of cultures are constituted in social relations of power and agency (Mukherjee, et. al., 2006). Those who are Minoritized, unlike minority, emphasizes the process of minoritizing and insists that the relative prestige of cultures are constituted in social relations of power and agency (Mukherjee, et. al., 2006). Those who are minoritized are subordinated in power relations by those belonging to the dominant culture (Tettey & Puplampu, 2006).


CLEVELAND HAYES, BRENDA G. JUÁREZ,
MATTHEW T. WITT & NICHOLAS D. HARTLEP

1. TOWARD A LESSER SHADE OF WHITE

12 Steps Towards More Authentic Race Awareness

INTRODUCTION: HOW THIS ALL GOT STARTED

The impetus for this chapter was an email conversation between two academic colleagues at the University of Inland, both male, one Black (Malcolm), the other White (Paul), and the response by a third faculty member from another college (George, who is also White).

It all started when Malcolm walked out of a teacher education diversity meeting in protest after a White faculty member made a flip comment about diversity (Juárez, Smith, & Hayes, 2008). Paul, being the instructor of the diversity class in the teacher credential program, subsequently engaged with Malcolm via email, setting the tone for what followed. Ultimately, after a series of email exchanges, Paul characterized Malcolm as a “Black Supremacist.” Paul’s comments, abbreviated, are as follows:

I know that you are incredibly angry. Believe me: we all know that. It is always extremely evident how you feel. I personally perceive you to be an angry black supremacist, if there is such a thing. And I have to keep asking myself what I would do if you were a White supremacist instead, and my answer is the same: anger will not change anything. It never has. It never will.

Malcolm shared this email response with George, a White faculty member of another college. George emailed back to Malcolm with this tongue-in-cheek response:

I didn’t know you were a Black supremacist. Wow. It all makes sense now. What a relief. At first, I thought Paul was forcing equivalence between Black supremacist and White supremacist in a way only a White Ph.D. could pull off. Which would make Paul look really, really silly in a kind of spooky way, kind of like: [quoting Martin Luther King from Malcolm’s email footer notes] “Nothing in the entire world is more dangerous than sincere ignorance and conscientious stupidity.” Owwww!! Oooops!! Whip me, beat me, make me conscientiously stupid!! Thanks, Paul, for leading the way with the first step backwards in the 12 Step Program for Whiteness. Remember: the first step backwards is the most important, and, unlike other 12 Step Programs, it’s really not that hard to take. And remember White brethren: this is really critical for maintaining White privilege. So stand up to the Man and his Black
supremacy. Stand up, and walk backwards. Stand up White people! Stand up and walk the other way; because the farther you walk, the blacker the Black supremacist gets. It’s weird, but true. He looks blacker from a distance. And that’s what we all want, right? We all want to stop denying who we really are and just walk backwards.

The University of Inland is a small private college in a suburb of Los Angeles. Paul, who is White, teaches the diversity class in the teacher credential program. Malcolm, who is Black, teaches the single subject methods course, but is an education anthropologist and sociologist. Paul is what Hayes & Juárez (2009) classify as a “good” White person trying to get a “good White people’s medal” from Malcolm. The idea for the title of the chapter came from the exchange between Paul and Malcolm, an exchange that struck the authors as emblematic of what passes for “authentic exchange” in the academy: a tokenized exchange that is demonstrably one-sided and one-way.

HOW TO READ THIS CHAPTER

Following Thompson (2003), we put Whiteness at the center of our examination of Malcolm’s professional experiences as a teacher educator for social justice. For the purposes of this paper, Whiteness is defined as an identity that is neither problematized nor particularized within discourses on race because it assumes a status of normalcy (Chaisson, 2004; DeCuir & Dixson, 2004; Tate, 2003). Malcolm’s questioning of Paul’s desire for a “good White people medal” challenges the legitimacy of Whiteness. Paul’s actions toward Malcolm, by contrast, fail to question Whiteness and thus reinforce it as legitimate and normal.

Malcolm’s counter-narrative is a composite story made up of characters and events based on actual individuals and situations to represent a particular kind of experience common to and recognized by many scholars of color within higher education. In this chapter, we explore how a critical reading of Malcolm’s lived experiences can become a learning tool for creating more authentic conversations around democratic and inclusive forms of teaching and learning.

The diversity of the four researchers is identified because we draw from one of the central tenets of Critical Race Theory (CRT), which is to cross epistemological boundaries: CRT borrows from several intellectual traditions, including liberalism, feminism, and Marxism, to construct a more complete analysis of “raced” people. Apropos how CRT is interdisciplinary, the authors’ experiences, expertise, and disciplines come together in this essay (Dixson & Rousseau, 2006; Tate, 1997). Each of us is committed to ending the racial oppression of those who claim not to be “one of those White people” but then accuse someone of being a Black supremacist.

We used our experiential knowledge of Whiteness and racism to develop our twelve-step program towards more authentic race awareness. The twelve steps, in the context of this chapter, are a set of guiding principles outlining a course of action as a way to address Whiteness. The intent of the chapter is not to attack
White people, as Whiteness is not about White people but is a mindset. Nor is the intent to imply that Whiteness is a psychological disorder. Rather, this paper intends to confront the socially constructed and constantly reinforced power of white identifications and interest (Bergerson, 2003; Gillborn, 2005). Our intent is to attack not individuals but an institution rooted with teacher education candidates and White faculty members who employ a wide range of speech genres and discourses to speak of self-declared marginalization that allows them to fend off the moral entanglements of White privilege and White racism (McCarthy, 2003). Using the 12-step metaphor, our critique of Whiteness is aimed at addressing equity issues and examining institutional practices (Green, Sonn, & Mastebula, 2007; Juárez, Smith, & Hayes, 2008; Tate, 2003).

COUNTER-STORIES AND CRITICAL STORYTELLING

How does Malcolm’s counter-story connect people’s daily lives with the privileging of Whiteness within U.S. society and its institutions? Counter-stories bridge the gap between societal structures of Whiteness and everyday life by revealing the ways institutional forces influence and guide individuals’ daily interactions and practices.

Critical race counter-storytelling, in turn, is a method of recounting the experiences and perspectives of racially and socially marginalized people. Counter-stories reflect on the lived experiences of people of color as a way to raise critical consciousness about social and racial injustice. Counter-stories serve as an entry point for illustrating how poor and working class Black families fight interlocking race, class, gender, and spiritual oppression (Knight, Norton, Bentley & Dixon, 2005; Parker & Stovall, 2004; Yosso, 2006). Counter-stories, according to Delgado (1989), can be loosely described as the stories of out-groups, that is to say, groups whose marginality defines the boundaries of the mainstream—whose voice, perspective, and consciousness have been suppressed, devalued and abnormalized.

THE RESEARCHERS

Cleveland is a Black male from the southern part of the United States. He teaches in the teacher education program at the University of Inland. He received his Ph.D. in social foundations from the University of Utah. His research interests are Critical Race Theory, Whiteness Theory, and Social justice in teacher education. Although he works in a teacher education program, he does not classify himself as a teacher educator.

Brenda is a White female from the Midwest. She is also a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. She too received her Ph.D. from the University of Utah and is a social justice educator. She began her higher education career in a Teacher Education program at Brigham Young University.

Matt is a White male from the Pacific Northwest. He completed his undergraduate training at one of the most liberal universities in the country. He completed his
Ph.D. at Portland State University. Matt has background in urban studies and public administration; his scholarship examines how Whiteness shapes public institutions outside of education.

Nicholas is a Korean Adoptee from the Midwest. He is a trained elementary education teacher. He completed his Ph.D. at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. Nicholas has a background in Asian American studies, and his research interests include unhooking from Whiteness as coalition building and disrupting the model minority stereotype. He is a transracial adoption and model minority stereotype critic (Hartlep, 2013a, 2013b, 2013c, 2013d, 2013e, 2013f).

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK: THE WHITE PROBLEM

What is it, then, about the democracy-racism paradox that connects democratic ideals to racialized exclusions? In 1968, after four years of inner city upheavals and riot, the U.S. National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders (aka “the Kerner Commission”), which was authorized to report and give recommendations for addressing these matters to Congress and the President, delivered—without mincing rhetoric—this summary: “Segregation and poverty have created [within] the racial ghetto a destructive environment totally unknown to most White Americans. What White Americans have never fully understood – but what the Negro can never forget – is that White society is deeply implicated in the ghetto: White institutions created it, White institutions maintain it, and White society condones it” (Kerner, 1968, p. 2, as cited in Massey & Denton, 1997, p. 3). A three-pronged juggernaut of racist home mortgage lending policies, race-tiered public school financing, and Jim Crow-derived employment standards persisting through the 20th Century and beyond, are the White institutions to which the Kerner Report addressed its indictment. Nearly a half century earlier, the Chicago Commission on Race Relations had derived virtually identical conclusions following a riot there in 1919 after the drowning of a black youth by White assailants. Karl Marx once limned, “History repeats twice; first as tragedy, then as farce.” The persistence of racialized exclusions within the context of much vaunted democratic ideals would seem to give testament to Marx’s dictum.

Even by 1968, as Freund (2004) notes, “the structure of most federal housing and development agencies had barely changed, and the assumptions about the dual housing market, so long entrenched in practice and in bureaucratic culture, continued to guide federal operations” (p. 4). Moreover:

For by the 1960s, state policy had not only helped to create a racially segregated, “dual” market for housing. It had also—quite paradoxically—helped convince whites that the government had done no such thing: that the growth of all-white suburbs and the concentration of black poverty in central cities were simply products of consumer choice in a free market for homes. …In short, federal policies had been instrumental to building both the segregated metropolis
and, with it, a political and economic constituency deeply resistant to change. To alter these government programs – as well as the “urban outcomes” that they had produced – would require more than executive orders [as President Kennedy had done in 1962] and a legislative ban against discrimination (Freund, 2004, pp. 4–5).

It would be against the self-sealing qualities these policies effected across a broad swath of the American White public that the Kerner report inveighed its criticism, challenging the conventional wisdom that inner-city ghettos were the exclusive product of free market activity and not the product of concerted, orchestrated, decades long practices of exclusionary land use zoning, race restrictive covenants, entrenched bureaucratic routines, captured and corrupted housing legislation, and the derivative and reciprocating effects of education and employment discrimination.

Karl Marx’s dictum about tragedy turned farce derives more pointed, potent relevance for America through the lens of its black savants, as with the White problem (DuBois 1940/1968; Wright 1957), a concept derived from the black radical tradition (Dawson 1994; Olson 2004). Responding to a reporter’s question about race relations in the U.S., Richard Wright (1946) famously explained, “There isn’t any Negro problem; there is only a White problem” (cited in Kinnamon & Fabre, 1993, p. 99). By redefining U.S. society’s race problem as White instead of black, “Wright called attention to its hidden assumptions—that racial polarization comes from the existence of blacks rather than the behavior of whites, that black people are a ‘problem’ for Whites rather than fellow citizens entitled to justice, and that, unless otherwise specified, ‘American’ means ‘white’” (Lipsitz, 2006, p. 1).

Synchronous with how racist institution building obscured white culpability for the ghetto, Bennett (1972) comments, “It was a stroke of genius really for white Americans to give Negro Americans the name of their problem, thereby focusing attention on symptoms [the Negro and the Negro community] instead of causes [the White man and the White community].”(p. 1) Institutionalized and normalized as the right and natural way to interpret or understand the meaning of blackness, the hidden assumptions of the White problem created a particular social knowledge that racially marked being black (i.e., “Negro”) as outside the tacit White norm and therefore a problem for whites. By racializing blackness through the privileging of characteristics and interests associated with Whites, the White problem both exculpatated Whites from their collective and historical role in the systemic domination of African Americans and reassured whites that blacks had only themselves to blame for their impoverished situation. Stripped of context and history, in turn, the White problem incited, obscured, justified, and normalized incessant and pervasive violence against African Americans and other historically disenfranchised groups in the U.S. Pointedly, today’s commonplace practices of police surveillance, housing segregation, job discrimination, and race-based ability grouping in schools reflect contemporary applications of the White problem enacted as U.S. society’s contemporary People of Color problem.
If we want to understand what is happening in Harlem, to paraphrase Leronne Bennett, Jr. (1972), we must look to White America. By looking to White America, we see that it is the privileging of ideas, interests, values, beliefs, assumptions, images, and norms associated with Whites, that is to say, the White problem, which invents the colorline by joining social knowledge about “people of color as problem” with practices to become knowledge practices (Rose, 1989).

Defined as the “body of anonymous, historical rules, always determined in the time and space that have defined a given period” (Foucault, 1972, p.117), knowledge practices serve as interpretive lenses guiding the ways we talk about and conduct ourselves with regard to particular topics of interest (Barry, 1999; Hall, 1997). Knowledge of the classroom as an environment of “learning”, for example, structures “how the teacher supervises classroom practices as well as a way in which teachers and children become self-governing in the spaces of schooling” (Popkewitz & Brennan, 1998, p. 9). Knowledge of African Americans as a problem likewise guides what educators and others deem reasonable and appropriate interactions and activities. In Alabama, for instance, African Americans make up 36% of the student population and 60% of the students expelled from the state’s public schools (The Education Trust, 2006, p. 11). The concept of driving while black similarly illuminates punitive social practices disproportionately targeted at and experienced by African Americans (Feagin, 2001). Importantly, even the most technical social practices in schools and society carry a particular way of understanding the human beings who are the subjects and objects of talk and activity (Franklin, 1999; Hall, 1997; Rose, 1989).

THE 12 STEPS

Exactly what does it mean to unhook oneself from Whiteness? In this section, drawing from our experiential knowledge of Whiteness, we develop what we consider key steps to unhook from Whiteness. What is important for people to understand is that in 2013, people of color and their White allies are not typically being subjected to physical violence for attempting to upset Whiteness (as they were, say, in 1965). Nevertheless, as Malcolm X noted [as quoted in Gaskin (2006)], racism is like a Cadillac: a new model is produced every year. In other words, the persecution of those who upset Whiteness may no longer result in lynching, but it continues albeit in different [more insidiously subtle forms than those endured by so many during previous eras in their struggles for equality (Juárez & Hayes, In-Press)].

The 12 Steps

Step one. Hello my name is [fill in the blank] and I have benefitted from racism. I have benefited from a racist world because I benefit from being White. I understand that Whiteness was invented and is maintained with a dominant and normal status
to make “others” less privileged and powerful. I understand that all societies rank and tier social privileges. But in America, I understand that skin tone became the primary signifier for these privileges. This realization may be difficult for me but I must face my racist behavior and name the contours of racism (Bergerson, 2003; Dei, Karumanchery & Karumanchery-Luik; 2007; Gillborn, 2005).

This has been an historical process denoting the dominant subtext of the American experience. Because the “inalienable rights” claimed as pretext for revolution from British overlordship—freedom, equality, opportunity—have, in America, never been conferred symmetrically across class and race, so-called “inalienable rights” are de facto “wished for” rights, which have persevered as free floating signifiers for the “deserving Americans,” those who “work hard and play by the rules.” Among such rules is the one never spoken and therefore that much more assiduously obeyed: Never question the rules. This is an over-simplified parable on American democracy, but, as this essay will show, this parable is sufficient for giving account of how a race/class binary construction has determined who is privileged to speak about what, and for whom; as with how Paul presumes to tell Malcolm how and how not to behave, how and how not to succeed, how and how not to think about Malcolm’s own experiences.

Step two. I do see color. I am not colorblind. Yes, King’s dream metaphor, indeed, had a profound effect upon my psyche and I began to see race as invisible. However, the problem with this discourse is I am denying how the salience of race has continued to impede Americans of color from achieving socioeconomic parity with Whites. I have to understand that even though there have been profound legal changes in the social and economic status of blacks in general, racial discrimination persists in a number of social settings (Smith, 2008).

Step three. I cannot avoid what is uncomfortable. I cannot hide behind politeness and think I am working towards social justice. This will require much more than being nice to the brown people. It is more than teaching pre-service teachers to value and respect each individual kid by nurturing him/her in the way that he/she needs to be nurtured. Achieving social justice will require much more than simply placing emphasis on the “learning about students” assignments in my course or that I chose not to label something. If I don’t put a label on “it,” then it is not social justice. Also, as a White person I have the privilege to determine what gets labeled and what does not get labeled.

Step four. I am not afraid of angry Black or Latino male students. I should be angry myself and use their anger to make real change. I should be upset myself. We live in the wealthiest country in the world and yet Black students in Connecticut have test scores lower than kids in Moldova; students today are less likely to graduate from high school than their parents. I need to start making Whiteness uncomfortable by associating it with unexamined privileges and smug ignorance. If I do not disrupt the
coordinates determining how Whiteness effaces the rewards that should follow the virtue of an examined life, then I have not interrupted White supremacy.

Step five. I have to get over myself. It is not all about me. I should not expect love and a “good White people medal” (Hayes & Juárez, 2009) from those I oppress. It is not love when I express how much I love my Black friend; it is rather the inversion of human kinship based on mutual respect that can too often turn to racist contempt when the object of my fetishized self-concept rejects my fantasy. This contempt turns to anger manifested through elaborate channels that silence, exclude, and expel those who would not give me my fantasy; as, in the case of the academy, when tenure is denied. The number of Black and Latino males who actually achieve tenure on predominantly White college campuses is dismal at best.

Step six. I may “understand” White racism on one hand while on the other deny any entailment in its proliferation by connecting racism against minorities to my own “victim” status (i.e. “I’m a vegan and can’t get a meal on campus,“ “I’m non-Mormon at a Mormon University,” “I’m the only White in a Latin American country, while serving on my LDS mission”). I also proliferate racism by my silence when I do not challenge comments made by White pre-service teachers such as “Migrant farmer workers are not marginalized” and write them off as with “The student did not know” or “They need to learn.” Worst of all is when I pretend to be liberal and to support equality, then allow White students to marginalize the Black professor because he requires them to engage in the “tough” conversations about race and equality (McCarthy, 2003).

Step seven. I have to understand when I am showing my Whiteness. I am showing my Whiteness when I argue we are moving too fast when a scholar from another university talks about White racism and on being Black at historically White institutions. I have to stop being regularly offended as demonstrated by an appallingly oppressive and bloody history known all over the world (Baldwin, 1985). Yet, after 244 years of slavery, 100 years of lynching, and 40 odd years of formal civil rights, I have to ask who is moving too fast? Lastly, I have to stop deciding how fast we should be going.

Step eight. I have to stop using the following statements: “Don’t blow things out of proportion or get too pushy”; “Stop beating a dead horse and using race as a crutch”; “just let the race thing go and get over it”; “Stop being angry [with Whites]; “forgive [Whites] and forget about slavery.” I have to understand that statements such as these fail to acknowledge the roles of power and difference in social formation. I have to understand that difference is constructed through racist discourses and hiding how power obscures culpability for oppression (Juárez, Smith & Hayes, 2008).

Step nine. I admit the possibility that my interests in helping marginalized people may be self-serving. I may not have a vested interest in the racial equality of
marginalized groups unless that equality converges with my own self-interest, and I will tolerate the remedy of affirmative action only to the point that policy makers do not threaten my superior societal status (Bell, 2003).

Step ten. I have to convince females and non-White males to unite in support of Affirmative Action. As a White male, I am in fact the minority in the United States, where there are almost twice as many females and non-White males. What I need to realize is that if the United States axes affirmative action it will be my White mother, my White daughter, and my White significant other who will be left out. I understand that my support of Affirmative Action is not a moral obligation or a way for me to deal with my White guilt, but an appeal to protect the White women in my life. I understand that it is interest convergence that minorities will see some benefit but my intent is to give White women a chance (Tate, 2003).

Step eleven. I need to understand that this “clan” mentality continues to create a divide between Whites and people of color. “Clan” is the basic unit of all social organization. Following Maslow’s theory of needs, “social belongingness” is a deficiency need, which means it is something we require in order to meet higher needs, and so take more or less for granted once it is met. Unlike higher order needs, social belongingness is not something we want to keep working at acquiring. For that matter, the signifiers for belonging are mostly non-verbal, pre-conscious. In the American context, skin tone is a potent signifier for who belongs “where” and “to whom.” So out of this clan mentality, this binary construction around race—the surface, economic realities and the sub-surface psychosexual dimensions—have served a very potent and effective means for distracting White “consciousness” from ever confronting “the man.”

Step twelve. I understand that Whiteness requires a constant distraction from the discovery of its hypocrisy. The more I claim to be a liberal, the more I show my Whiteness. Smith (2008) argues that the tenets of liberalism continue to influence new generations of young White Americans, particularly with respect to how individualism remains a major strand of thinking against a backdrop of colorblind racial ideology.

Social justice advocacy and achievement is not easy; it is often painful. Moreover, social justice is not some fad or new vocabulary term aimed at helping teacher education programs achieve national accreditation. Accrediting agencies must hold accountable educational institutions for examining social justice, and must be willing to deny program applicants accreditation that do not fulfill curriculum requirements addressing diversity and social justice. As an academy, we have to look at teacher education programs institutionally rather than individually. We [the authors] contend that social justice is more than “playing nice” as it relates to issues of diversity, social justice, and student access. Teacher education programs should have a fully detailed plan to address, for example, the dismal fact that Latino and Black males are not graduating from high school. Institutionally, we are failing this group of students.
DISCUSSION: SOME OTHER COMPARISONS THAT ALWAYS NEED TO BE MONITORED

Using Reason and Evans’ (2007) argument, Malcolm’s frustrations stem from Paul’s refusal to examine his own racial identities (or even to recognize that he is making such a refusal), as if racial discrimination is a thing of the past. Malcolm’s justifiable frustrations will persist so long as the very nature of academic environments continues to perpetuate multiple characteristics that excuse White students and White faculty from seriously taking the time to examine the role of race in the lives of others, where Whiteness is a set of normative cultural practices.

This next list that we developed arises out of the notion that those individuals who are not engaged in overtly racist behavior are not racist (Bonilla-Silva, 2006). This list is grounded on the premise that Whites who refuse to challenge the true structural, institutional, and societal causes of inequity are as culpable of racist practices as are those who actively deny perpetuating these practices.

This list, which illustrates some common though often unconscious presumptions, is designed to present the realities of Whiteness. The fiction of “color-blindness” is deeply rooted in the belief that “good” White people can comfortably ignore race (Hayes & Juárez, 2009; Reason & Evans, 2007). This view is grounded in the ubiquitous, background, hegemony-vested “individuality” in the American cultural mythos. Our hope with this list is for us (people in academia) to move toward a more racially cognizant Whiteness, where White students and faculty members can have a space to identify themselves as White, to recognize the unearned advantages they accrue because of being White, and to demonstrate how their presumptive, unexamined privileges make them culpable for racist practices (Hytten & Warren, 2003; Reason & Evans, 2007; Urrieta, 2006).

1. White people have feelings. Black men are angry.
2. White people understand causes like the environment and world hunger. Black men are always too unhappy to notice these issues.
3. White people understand what it takes to work hard and they appreciate why defending our country and way of life requires us to fight in other countries. Black people act as if this country is not a safe place already, nor do they grasp that it is safe because of the hard work White politicians do helping us all fight elsewhere. (Notice how Barack Obama wants to “spread the wealth,” as if that is not what we are doing when we bring democracy to other countries! Of course we have to shoot first! Someone has to take the first step towards Whiteness!)
4. Black people/men do not really all look the same. But this doesn’t matter: they all think the same, which is really why they appear the same. White people are all different and unique individuals because we understand what’s really important and why Black people are actually not really “Black”; they’re just angry. This is a complex matter that can’t really be explained unless it is already understood.
5. White people are not really White. Whiteness indicates correct attitudes emanating outwards.
6. White people suffer the anger of Black people because White people care. The more angry Black people get, the more White people care. Why Black people cannot see how much Whites care is just, well, the way things are. Which is why people-who-radiate-Whiteness, are who [we] are: because we care so much.

7. And so on. This is how this works. White people have to keep reciting to ourselves, “We are goodness.” It will hurt doing so because Black people will just get angrier and angrier. But that’s OK, because that’s the way things are. Whiteness radiates goodness. Blackness brings that goodness out.

THESE ARE THE FACTS

According to McCarthy (2003), eighty-eight percent of the thirty-five thousand fulltime, regular, instructional faculty in the field of education are White; in the case of the University of Inland in the college of education, and more specifically in the teacher education program, out of a faculty of 60 there are four full-time faculty of color (three Blacks and one Latino). But as this relates to the premise of this chapter, McCarthy (2003) argues that White teachers and students benefit from a lack of faculty of color, because this White identity is an effect of privilege and material advantage. When faculty of color challenge this privilege, all too often they get identified as not being a well-behaved minority (Juárez, Smith, & Hayes, 2008) and their identities are constructed through negative discourses that are described as rude, hostile, angry. The perpetrators of these discourses around White racial micro-aggressions (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001) are never called to task.

Racism is a correlate of democracy (Cone, 2004; Delgado, 1999). When the immensity and depth of the physical and psychological violence continually committed against minoritized peoples are considered, the majority of it by nice people, we realize that the cost in suffering and lost lives is too high to keep tiptoeing around Whiteness and trying to appease and placate (otherwise decent) White people. We also realize that “[w]hat societies really, ideally, want is a citizenry which will simply obey the rules of society. If a society succeeds in this, that society is about to perish. The obligation of anyone who thinks of [herself or] himself as responsible is to examine society and try to change it and to fight it—at no matter what risk. This is the only hope society has. This is the only way societies change” (Baldwin, 1963, cited in Wise, 2005, p. 61). For democratic education to be realized, therefore, we must work together to abolish, rather than ignore, the Whiteness of teacher education.

The ongoing demographic shifts in the past three decades have led to the increased visibility of Asian Americans and Latinos (Pew Research Center, 2012). This increased visibility has brought new challenges to educators on how to go about understanding these communities’ complex and diverse histories, cultural practices, and educational aspirations. As these two fastest-growing populations continue to emerge across the United States, educators must begin to interrogate the conventional wisdoms about race and race relations beyond the Black and White binary (Wing, 2007; Wu, 2002).
Scholars have argued that such binary is inadequate in explaining the educational experiences of these children and their families. As a consequence, the persistence of the Black-White paradigm has rendered the experiences of Asian Americans and Latinos invisible where their voices are often ignored and misunderstood (Pang & Cheng, 2000; Wing, 2007). Whiteness wants to maintain the Black-White binary since it is used as a tactic to divide-and-conquer, maintaining its power, and expanding its hegemony through “racial triangulation” (Kim, 1999).

In this book the authors through the use of autoethnographies (Reed-Danahy, 1997) highlight the importance of “unhooking from Whiteness” and of building coalitions as a strategy to disrupt Whiteness (Leonardo, 2009). Through their autoethnographies, the authors will identify some of the key issues facing antiracism work for African Americans, Whites, Asian Americans, and American Indians. The goal is to reconsider the strategies by which antiracist scholars do their work, as well as to provide pragmatic ways in which people—White and of color—can build cross-racial, cross-communal, and cross-institutional coalitions to fight White supremacy (Aoki, 2010).

Each chapter employing the qualitative methodology of auto-ethnography will illustrate the individual journey to unhook from Whiteness in order to fully participate in doing antiracist work. The chapters differ from the work of Peggy McIntosh (1988), since people of color also have to unhook from Whiteness. The chapters contend that in order to do authentic antiracist work, one must fully disengage from Whiteness. Leonardo (2009) argues antiracist work is not a commitment because one gains in human terms, but for Whites it actually means losing position in the racial hierarchy. The narratives chronicle the experiences of loss for whites and the movement towards a critical analysis of our own oppression for people of color. The journey to unhook from Whiteness is different, the loss is different, but the outcomes are the same: racial justice.

Brenda Juárez’s chapter entitled Learning to Take the Bullet and More: Anti-racism Requirements for White Allies and Other Friends of the Race, So-Called and Otherwise considers the historical tensions of White anti-racism in struggles for racial justice. Drawing on her own struggles and the collective wisdoms of the Black radical traditions in the US, the author interrogates her own journey in attempting to move away from and unhook herself from Whiteness by analyzing the limits, possibilities, and consequences of the choices she has made over time in her personal and professional life as she has worked to help push forward endeavors of racial justice. The author posits that the anti-racism efforts of Whites will continue to reinforce the historical privileging of the interests of White people as a racial group unless sincere White people of goodwill keep working to disrupt the structures of White privileges until other Whites representing and acting in behalf of the existing racial hierarchy either expel them from the context or begin making more inclusive, justice-based changes (West, 1997).

Karla Martin’s chapter entitled Privileging Privilege with the Hope of Accessing Privilege is an autoethnographic narrative written in letter format. As an assistant
professor of educational foundations, Martin, a Native American activist, writes about how she is beginning to understand the ways that academia is entrenched in the privilege and power that upholds a system of Whiteness that automatically benefits some and fails others. She actively unhooks from Whiteness by remembering that her community is where her allegiances lie, and it is with them that she finds love, peace, comfort, and family. In short, she refuses to be a pawn for Whiteness as the only Native American in her department.

Nicholas Hartlep's chapter entitled, *I Refuse to Be a Pawn for Whiteness: A Korean Transracial Adoptee Speaks Out* is an autoethnographic narrative intended to dispel the model minority. The personal journey of a Korean American transracial adoptee is shared. The author discusses how his dual consciousness impacts his personal and professional approach to antiracist work. His narrative shares how he refuses to be used by Whiteness. In other words, the author refuses to acquiesce and benefit from honorary White status. Instead, he actively fights racism through forming coalitions with other people of color in hopes to undermine the model minority stereotype’s divide-and-conquer strategy for maintaining white supremacy.

Kenneth Fasching-Varner, Margaret-Mary Dowell, Dana Bickmore and Steven Bickmore, in their chapter entitled *Repositioning the hook: (Re)committing to equity through autoethnographic exploration*, examine how they unhook from Whiteness as White allies. Through an autoethnographic lens, four vignettes shared in this chapter examine intersecting ways in which Whiteness operates. Specifically, the vignettes show that despite commitment and expertise in anti-racism, racism emerges indicating ways in which each of the authors was socialized. The authors counter argue that one can never really unhook from Whiteness, but rather can identify how they are implicated in Whiteness as a means to counteract White privilege and hegemony. The paper recommits faculty to equity and excellence in education as a means of addressing the individual and institutional problems of race.

Matthew Witt writes the chapter, *English Ivy*. This autoethnography examines encounters with race in the author’s early life and adult graduate school and professional experience. From early experiences growing up in Portland, Oregon, cradled by 5,000 acres of urban forest park, to dawning awareness about what race signified across the river, Witt weaves in commentary on his parentage and family exodus—father from Dust Bowl Texas Panhandle, mother from post war Germany. Gleaning insights where he can from across an inter-generational tableau, the author threads this stream of consciousness utilizing the metaphor of English Ivy, known for its tenacious grip on soil and invasive properties across vulnerable plant terrain. The manner in which White consciousness has evolved, and the expansive tendencies that White privilege endows, is canvassed in the closing section.

Cleveland Hayes, author of the chapter *Too White to be Black and too Black to be White*, shares his “unhooking” and the academic lynching that ensued. During this presentation using auto-ethnographic methods, he presents his journey from Whiteness—the good, the bad, and the ugly—and how this has impacted his work as a social justice/anti racist educator. In his journey, he compares and contrasts his
respective pasts and journeys of learning to struggle against the systemic privileging of Whiteness while living his life and enacting his work within historically White institutions. His purpose is to draw on his personal and professional experiences to identify and critically analyze the key factors and events that have influenced not only who he is today as an individual and teacher educator, but also the kinds of opportunities and limitations he has had to date. Analyzing the points at which different lived experiences converge, he ultimately illuminates the *modus operandi* of Whiteness as racial knowledge through and within moments when individuals and groups invoke their institutional authority to act, interact, and make decisions that help either to further or to challenge White supremacy. He submits that although his journey from Whiteness has led him down different paths, his journey from Whiteness has been a struggle.

Rosa Mazurett-Boyle and René Antrop-González, in their chapter entitled, *Our Journeys as Latin@ Educators and the Perpetual Struggle to Unhook from Whiteness* narrate personal and professional experiences of two U.S. Latin@s. They start with their trajectory into the field of education and, most importantly, why they continue teaching both at the high school and college levels. They reflect on their encounters with Whiteness, its influence on their Latin@ worldviews, and their pains to unhook from Whiteness in order to take ownership of their hybridity. Their worldviews place a high premium on Latin@ Community Cultural Wealth (Yosso, 2006). Consequently, they analyzed auto-ethnographic and interview data through the lens of Resistance Capital. The implications of their work are to support efforts to challenge dominant norms in the field of education and to set a course toward deeper and broader changes in the way K-16 educational systems conceptualize and validate the social and cultural wealth of non-dominant students, teachers, educators, and researchers.

By using autoethnographic methodologies, our attempt with the chapters in this book is to interrupt the racial triangle by describing our process of unhooking from Whiteness as a way to build coalition in hopes of ending racism in the United States. Whiteness continues to prosper when it keeps marginalized groups at odds with each other. This discourse can be seen in a historical context after the Civil War. DuBois (1935) argues that when the Civil War ended, White land owners created a social order that prevented poor Whites from joining political forces with the freed slaves. The contributors in this book representing the major minority groups and White allies hope that their stories will disrupt that social divide between these groups for the greater good. We will thus no longer become pawns to benefit Whiteness and to grease the capitalist machine. Lastly, for our efforts to end White supremacy to be truly effective, change must be fundamentally linked to collective effort to transform those structures that reinforce and perpetuate white supremacy (hooks, 1994).

NOTE

1 All of the names in the narratives are pseudonyms. The University of Inland is also fictitious.
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In 2010, Bonilla-Silva asked the question: Are Blacks colorblind, too? Colorblindness for Black people, in my opinion, serves the purposes of Whiteness. Blacks—me individually at one point—who subscribe to these discourses can be dangerous to anti-racist work because colorblind discourses are the ones Whites listen to as the model of behavior for all minority groups: Black Republicans come to mind as an example of how they become the spokespeople for all Black people.

Bonilla-Silva (2010) contends that Black people are affected by colorblind discourses differently, and the consequence for this discourse is developing an all out oppositional ideology to color-blind racism. The answer to this question is not rhetorical in nature as it pertains to my own personal experience. However, before getting started with describing my journey from Whiteness, this chapter is not intended to essentialize this one experience into the experiences of all Blacks and, more specifically, all Black men. In this chapter, I am only talking about one experience—mine—and my own continuing journey from Whiteness.

So, yes, Blacks are colorblind! I started school just as the schools in Mississippi were desegregating. I had White teachers and White friends who, at the time, I thought saw me for me. I worked hard; I was not disrespectful; I took ownership for my academic shortcomings; and, most importantly, I never played the race card. I did not want to be seen as a one of “those” Blacks. I was hooked on this notion that I would obtain the benefits of being White if I did what Whites did. It took me 35 years to realize that it is never going to happen.

In this chapter, using auto-ethnographic methods, I present my journey—the good, the bad, and the ugly—from Whiteness and how this has impacted my work as a social justice/anti racist educator. I compare and contrast my respective pasts and journeys of learning to struggle against the systemic privileging of Whiteness while living my life and enacting my work within historically White institutions. My purpose is to draw on my personal and professional experiences to identify and critically analyze the key factors and events that have influenced not only who I am today as an individual and teacher educator, but also the kinds of opportunities and limitations I have had to date. Analyzing the points at which
different lived experiences converge, I ultimately illuminate the *modus operandi* of Whiteness as racial knowledge through and within moments when individuals and groups invoke their institutional authority to act, interact, and make decisions that help to further or to challenge White supremacy. I submit that although my journey has led me down different paths, my journey from Whiteness has been a struggle.

In this chapter, I begin with how Critical Race Theory (CRT) became my beacon of light down the dark road of unhooking from Whiteness. Then, framed in the resistance work of Delgado Bernal and Solórzano (2001), I describe how I was trying to protect myself from the assault of Whiteness and the loss that came with trying to protect myself. In the section that follows, I will describe an instance when I began unhooking from Whiteness and the academic lynching that followed. I end my chapter by describing how CRT continues to guide my work as an anti-racist educator as well as my continuing struggles with unhooking.

**UNDERSTANDING WHITENESS: A CRITICAL RACE PERSPECTIVE**

For this chapter, I will use the tenets of Critical Race Theory (CRT) as the tool for dissecting my journey from Whiteness. Understanding CRT, like Knaus (2009), gave me the voice and narrative to challenge racism and the structures of oppression while advocating for social justice in its many forms, especially in my classroom (Hartlep, 2010). Tate (1997) asks the question, “Pivotal in understanding CRT as a methodology, what role should experiential knowledge of race, class and gender play in educational discourse?” (p. 235). Especially in the case of this chapter, I expand that question: How has unhooking from Whiteness changed my approach to teaching and advocating for those students who have no voice? Ladson-Billings (1998) states that CRT focuses on the role of “voice in bringing additional power and experiential knowledge that people of color speak regarding the fact that our society is deeply structured by racism” (p. 13). How has unhooking from Whiteness allowed me to give voice to students who do not have a voice, and how has unhooking from Whiteness allowed me to hear other voices such as those who, in one form or another, have already unhooked or refused to hook in the first place? In the case of K-12 education, this unhooking or refusal to hook comes in many forms: Often these kids are labeled as the disinterested other, and because I was hooked I contributed to this labeling.

In a similar vein, Solórzano and Yosso (2001) define CRT as “an attempt to understand the oppressive aspects of society in order to generate societal and individual transformation and [it is] important for educators to understand that CRT is different from any other theoretical framework because it centers race” (pp. 471–472). As a result, CRT scholars have developed the following tenets to guide CRT research, and all of these tenets are utilized within the design and analysis of this study (Kohli, 2009):
Centrality of Race and Racism

All CRT research within education must centralize race and racism, as well as acknowledge the intersection of race with other forms of subordination (Kohli, 2009; Sleeter & Delgado Bernal, 2002). As my narrative will show, CRT is my way to interpret and de-center Whiteness in the larger society. In order to forge partnerships in the fight for social justice, I also had to begin a critique of our own Whiteness. I did this by first de-centering Whiteness from my own life.

Valuing Experiential Knowledge

Solórzano and Yosso (2001) argue that CRT in educational research recognizes that the experiential knowledge of students of color is legitimate, appropriate, and critical to understanding, analyzing, and teaching about racial subordination in the field of education. Life stories tend to be accurate according to the perceived realities of subjects' lives. They are used to elicit structured stories and detailed lives of the individuals involved (Delgado, 1989; McCray, Sindelar, Kilgore, & Neal, 2002).

Fairbanks (1996) states that storytelling, one of the methodologies of CRT, has been an accepted mode of constructing realities throughout human history. CRT narratives and storytelling provide readers with a challenging account of preconceived notions of race. The thick descriptions that emerge from the stories serve to illuminate the experiences of the person telling the story (Parker & Lynn, 2002). Stories offer descriptions and explanations of situations and circumstances from which readers may cull insights into their own practices. For example, storytelling is about human agents doing things on the basis of beliefs and desires, striving for goals, and meeting obstacles (Fairbanks, 1996).

Challenging the Dominant Perspective

CRT research works to challenge dominant narratives, often referred to as majoritarian stories. CRT scholar Harris (1995) describes the “valorization of Whiteness as treasured property in a society structured on racial caste” (p. 277). Harris (1995) also argues that Whiteness conferred tangible and economically valuable benefits, and it was jealously guarded as a valued possession. This thematic strand of Whiteness as property in the United States is not confined to the nation’s early history (Frankenberg, 1993; Ladson-Billings, 1998).

Unhooking from Whiteness” for me means centering the problem of White racism and refusing to place the onus on communities of color to fix the problem that they did not create. Whiteness, which I describe in my narrative, caused me to take ownership of “fixing” my communities, in hopes of obtaining some sort of validation. “Unhooking from Whiteness,” for people of color, forces Whites to move away from a discourse of White racism to a discourse of Whiteness because
White racism is inherently oppressive but Whiteness is multifaceted and complex (Hayes & Juárez, 2009; Kendall, 2006; Leonardo, 2009).

This is an important distinction to understand. Many believe in general antidiscriminatory principles, that “color makes no difference,” “people are people,” and “there should be one human race” (Caditz, 1977). Many of the teachers in this group, according to Caditz (1977), have a strong and longstanding commitment to ethnic integration. They believe in the general ideas of civil rights and justice for minorities. In her study she described how even though many Whites felt themselves liberal, a majority of them voting for Johnson and Kennedy, their thinking did not match their practice. Many of the White participants in her study felt that having Black students attend schools within their White neighborhoods would lessen the value of their schools. These same White liberals felt unsafe around Black students, especially Black male students. Even though many White Americans felt the era of Jim Crow was wrong and worked to end this reign of tyranny in the South, as Caditz (1977) showed, they still devalued Blackness, illustrating the value that was still associated with being White. Black children are literally inundated with images that associate authority, beauty, goodness, and power with Whiteness (Hill, 2001).

Commitment to Social Justice

Social justice must always be a motivation behind CRT research. Part of this social justice commitment must include a critique of liberalism, claims of neutrality, objectivity, color-blindness, and meritocracy as a camouflage for the self-interest of powerful entities of society (Tate, 1997). Only aggressive, color-conscious efforts to change the way things are done will do much to ameliorate misery (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Tate, 1997).

Being Interdisciplinary

According to Tate (1997), CRT crosses epistemological boundaries. It borrows from several traditions, including liberalism, feminism, and Marxism to include a more complete analysis of “raced” people. Ladson-Billings (1998) has already put forth the argument that CRT has a place within education. She argues that CRT in education allows for the use of parables, chronicles, stories, and counterstories to illustrate the false necessity and irony of much of current Civil Rights doctrine: we really have not gone as far as we think we have. Adopting CRT as a framework for educational equity means that we will have to expose racism in education and propose radical solutions for addressing the ever-present issue (Ladson-Billing, 1998).

SAVING MYSELF FROM WHITENESS: RESISTING, OR WAS I?

I graduated from high school and went to Mississippi State. It was during college when my identity shifted. I took on the identity that Fordham (1996) describes in her
book *Blacked Out*. At the time I really did not realize it; I thought what I was doing is what successful Black students did. I never realized how racist it was for someone to tell me, “You aren’t really Black,” or “If only more Blacks could be like you.” This is the period of my life that I call too White to be Black and too Black to be White. In my mind I was thinking *if I am going to make it in the world, I have to ignore a certain part of my “Blackness.”* I still attended a Black church and I had Black friends, but whenever the Black students organized themselves in order to fight a racial injustice I was not going to be there. I was acting White.

Delgado Bernal and Solórzano (2001) argue for four types of resistance. Their study provides a distinction between four different types of students’ oppositional behavior: (1) reactionary behavior, (2) self-defeating resistance, (3) conformist resistance, and (4) transformational resistance (p. 13). However, for the purposes of this chapter and my journey from Whiteness, I will only focus on conformist resistance and transformational resistance; the other two were never part of my identity and journey from Whiteness because I knew early on that self-defeating resistance was not going to get me the what I perceive to be the benefits of Whiteness.

*I Will Accept Your Domination Now: Conformist Resistance*

Among contemporary African-Americans, resistance is constructed as power and appears to take two primary forms: conformity and avoidance. As conformity, it is interpreted as unqualified acceptance of the ideological claims of the larger society; within the African-American community, it is often perceived as disguised warfare in which the Black Self “passes” as (an) other in order to reclaim an appropriated humanity (Fordham, 1996, p. 39).

This type of resistance refers to the oppositional behavior of students who are motivated by social justice, yet hold no critique of the systems of oppression. These students want social change for themselves as well as for others, but are likely to blame themselves, their families, or their culture for the negative personal and social conditions. Though some social change is possible through conformist resistance, without a critique of the social, cultural, and economic forms of oppression, it does not offer the greatest possibility for social justice (Delgado Bernal & Solórzano, 2001).

Growing up, it never dawned on me that racism was endemic in American society. I had White friends. I had White teachers. It was not until I started school that things changed for me. I started to notice that some of the White kids received attention that I was not receiving but I wanted. It never dawned on me that the segregating factor was academics. My teachers had always told me that I was doing okay. I was passing. This is when my mother and I had a serious heart-to-heart about objectivity and neutrality. She told me, “You cannot just get C’s; I know you can do better; you are going to do better; you are a young Black male; you are held to a different standard.”

I thought she was the devil. I responded, “Racism is over, why don’t you give it a rest?” However, some years later what she said had come to pass. I was in the ninth
grade preregistering for 10th grade. In 10th grade students had to make a decision about what track they were going to take. I knew I was going to college; it had been an expectation in my family for years, and I was not going to be the exception. The school counselor had other ideas. She felt, based on my grades, that I should go the vocational route, and if it was not for my mother and father I would be working a factory job. From that day forward, thoughts around my identity changed. This experiential knowledge caused me to cross epistemological boundaries. I had to become more aware of what was going on around me. The subtle racism that was about to marginalize me, and the systems continuing the protection of Whiteness even though we were all supposed to be equal, are two examples.

*I Won’t Do It to Myself*

My portrait looks at issues around identity, resistance, and what it meant to grow up as a Black man in Mississippi. My narrative takes me on a journey as a young man who felt that becoming as White-like as possible was the key to my success; it was me who needed to change, and it was my students, when I started teaching. Working to change the system was not a part of my thinking.

When the slaves received their First Emancipation, Black people constructed acting White as a characteristic of those group members who resisted affiliation with Blackness, with the slave experience, and with other Black people in exchange for success. This strategy compelled an uncritical resistance—manifested as conformity—to the then dominant ideology (Fordham, 1996). Likewise, I conformed as a way to achieve. I also conformed as a way to erase some of the negative stereotypes that dominant society has about Blacks. Again, I was looking at success through a Eurocentric lens (pull yourself up—isolate yourself from those unlike you—be more like us). I also conformed in hopes of cashing in on what I have now learned is “Whiteness as property.” I conformed as a way to get “in,” a way to get the management job, so I thought I would be able make the necessary social changes from the inside. Little did I know that Whiteness would not allow me because once I got the “card” to the club I was going to have to behave in certain ways in order to keep the “card.” However, Fordham (1996) argues, when students take on this identity, when Black students strive to become an Other, they usually discover that their efforts are thwarted and their ability to both imagine and dominate is hyphenated and fragmented. A student in her study describes his experience that was not unlike my personal experiences.

In college, I never understood why my White friends who claimed neutrality and meritocracy often left me out. There were several examples such as the case when I was passed over for a promotion to assistant residence hall director even though I was the most qualified and had the most experience among those applying. I played the game, working hard, and it didn’t get me anywhere. At the time of these experiences, it didn’t dawn on me that this was as a systematic position and nothing that I had done or did not do.
The student in Fordham’s study states,

I stayed in school and remained home at nights....I suffered a lonely Catholic school education.... At Notre Dame and Brown, I endured further isolation.... I burned the midnight oil as Dr. King had suggested.... I have a White education, a White accent, I conform to White middle-class standards in virtually every choice.... I led a square life ... and now I see that I am often treated the same as a thug, that no amount of conformity, willing or unwilling, will make me the fabled American individual (Fordham, 1996, pp. 51–52).

Black students resist dominant claims of Black intellectual inadequacy by conforming to existing norms and values. They work hard to disprove Black lack. These students struggle with images of “acting White” and with conceptions of book-Black Blacks. Book-Black Blacks are individuals whose identity is de-contextualized and constructed largely from academic and proper texts rather than from intimate interactions with African-Americans. Conforming to school norms propels them to a place where they are construed by their classmates as representing the dominant other (Fordham, 1996).

As the young man stated above, “no matter how much conforming I did, I was and I am still Black.” When White people see me the first thing they see is Black, and then I will have to expend needless energies trying to disprove how Black I am. Conforming, in my opinion, only divides and allows dominant society to conquer. Those students who try to conform to dominant ideologies are socially removed, either by choice or by their peer groups. Therefore, conforming is not the sole answer. It may work in the short term, but long term effects (being removed from the fictive kinship) far outweigh any short term gains (Fordham, 1996).

I Won’t Let the System Do It to My Students

Delgado, Bernal, and Solórzano (2001) argue external transformational resistance involves a more conspicuous and overt type of behavior, which does not conform to institutional or cultural norms. This type of resistance refers to a person’s behavior that illustrates both a critique of oppression and a desire for social justice. In other words, for me as I started moving from Whiteness, I became aware of not only my oppressive conditions but also aware of the way the system was creating a permanent underclass. My motivations became less about White approval and more about social justice.

It was not until I began the journey of completing a Ph.D. that my approach toward students changed, and my own personal journey from Whiteness commenced. My approach has not changed in the sense that I am also “old school.” I am a very demanding teacher with very high expectations, and I will not compromise my position. Because I teach in Salt Lake City, the number of Black students I teach is small in comparison to that in the South. I do share being a person of color with a large number of my students of color. Crossing epistemological boundaries,
I now have to take into account language and issues of immigration and class when I develop my teaching approach.

The internalization of Whiteness framed my philosophy when I first started to teach. I first started teaching in Mississippi right after I graduated from Mississippi State. Because of this Whiteness internalization, I felt that in order for students of color to be successful they were going to have to learn how to play the game, which meant in my mind basically not acting Black. I was looking at the students in a deficit mode; in other words, the reason why the students of color in my classes were not successful was their fault. When I moved to Utah and started teaching in Salt Lake City, I still went into my classroom with the deficit mindset toward students. I still believe that students have to be the best that they can be, and that the reason why they may or may not be is not necessarily something they are doing or not doing. I still believe that too many students of color are becoming victims of a school system that really does not believe that students of color, especially those who live on the wrong side of the street, can learn at a level comparable to that of White students.

Transformational resistance was and is the best type of resistance for me; as I began to unhook from Whiteness, it allowed me the freedom to socially change. Now, this does not come at a cost, which I will explain in the next section, but Leonardo (2010) argues that in order to move from Whiteness or to end Whiteness one has to be willing to lose, as many of the contributors in this project have expressed (c.f. Hartlep’s chapter). In my opinion, that is what education is for, to make a change in your personal life as well as in the life of others. Delgado, Bernal, and Solorzano (2001) assert that educators of students in urban areas also have an obligation to cultivate transformational resistance. We must provide strategies for students to be able to challenge anti-affirmative action, anti-bilingual education, anti-immigrant, and heterosexist legislation and polices. This is crucial to counteracting the results of ineffective, inappropriate, and often racist and sexist educational practices and policies that continue to fail many students of color.

THE CONSEQUENCES OF UNHOOKING

My approach to race relations changed after I enrolled in the master’s program at the University of Utah. It was the professors in the department who provided me with a framework where I began criticizing the system and how it was problematic for me to be critical of the students. If I am truly going to be an advocate for students, students of color in particular, I am going to have to critique liberalism and recognize the experiences that my students bring to classroom. It was through this framework that my pedagogy changed. I began teaching students how to fight within the system (transformative resistance) and be critical of their oppression, even if it is hidden behind equality and universality. Recognizing the difficulty in the task, my belief is grounded firmly in “If a person does not stand for something then the person will fall for anything.”
TOO WHITE TO BE BLACK AND TOO BLACK TO BE WHITE

However, as a result, unhooking has a very violent turn in the form of what I refer to as “academic lynching.” For the purposes of this chapter, I will use Juárez and Hayes’ (In-Press) definition of academic lynching. We define academic lynching as a form of domestic terrorism in which individuals apply institutional power through e-mail correspondence, course evaluations, letters destined for personnel files, and other forms of official and unofficial actions, policies, and decisions as part of processes of White racial domination used to define those outside the realm.

Put plainly, these systems help to support and maintain White supremacy with the violence of domestic terrorism directed against those seen as threats to the historical privileging of Whiteness. Institutions and social systems, in turn, do not readily change or move toward more democratic and humanized forms of organization because domestic terrorism is readily and abundantly applied against any efforts by individuals or groups to resist or challenge White supremacy.

This unhooking from Whiteness has moved me from conformist resistance to transformative resistance. Individuals whose identity is framed in transformation are critical of the oppression and have a desire for social justice. I began to hold an awareness and critique of their oppressive conditions and the structures of domination. Now, this critique does not come at a cost, as I have argued at the outset of this section, and for me that cost comes in the form of academic lynching, especially now that I have moved into teacher education.

When I moved into higher education, at an institution that prides itself on being progressive and has social justice in their mission statement, I quickly found out it was a bad idea to question my White colleagues about cultural diversity and poverty issues. When I began to question racist practices in the program, the violence began. I was called a Black Supremacist. My colleagues were caught up in ideology versus research around these issues: now, I recognize my approach should have been a little less aggressive. However, I had unhooked myself from placating Whiteness prior to coming into higher education, and I was not going to regress.

When I arrived in higher education, my department was using the racist text by Ruby Payne. While I knew the racist historical context of this book, I began to question the use of this text. My academic lynching began when I simply asked a question.

“Why is there a modification for poverty on the lesson plan form?” I asked, adding, “My fear is that teachers will lower their expectations for students who come from lower socioeconomic groups.” When I asked the question, the work of Kozol (1991) and Macleod (1997) came to mind, so I knew that the lowering of expectations happens based on social class.

“That will not happen,” my colleague Michelle replied. I, however, had already heard teacher candidates in the class make negative comments about children from homes impacted by poverty and how they would not hold the same high expectations for students who come from lower socioeconomic situations as for students who come from economically privileged backgrounds.
I was hoping that my ideas and comments would provide a counter-argument to Ruby Payne’s (1998) book, *A Framework for Understanding Poverty*, which is the foundational text in the diversity class. I was shocked by her reaction. She immediately silenced me. I expected my question to spark a dialogue not a tongue-lashing.

This was the first instance of where I became a victim of academic lynching. This faculty member prided herself on being such a progressive. Michelle stood up and proceeded to tell me why, based on her own personal experiences growing up in poverty and having had experiences similar to those described by Payne (1998), race was not an important factor to consider for teaching, let alone for social justice. It was not about race, she said, it was about class. Validating her experiences as more important and legitimate than mine and discrediting my experiences and the research in the field, Michelle came to my office and told me not to come back to her class. I was not welcome to shadow her any further; a second instance of being a victim of the brutality of Whiteness and my attempt to challenge it.

The week after Thanksgiving break, I was asked to meet with the department chair. I immediately knew something was wrong, just from prior experience dealing with management when I was a public school teacher. I wanted to find someone to go into the meeting with, but as a new faculty member I did not know who I could ask, and I was advised against contacting an attorney or Human Resources. Hindsight is 20/20 and the next time something like this happens, I will be more prepared, but I went into the meeting alone. When I went into the department chair’s office, I was presented with a letter and was informed that he had already contacted Human Resources. I am not going to recreate the letter but only present the important sections that illustrate how the structure of the department showed its Whiteness. Statements from the letter are in italics followed by my reaction.

The letter started off with *given the reports I have received from a number of sources, including faculty whose judgment and observations I trust and students, regarding your performance to date. From all of the reports that I have received, the shadowing process has not seemed to work well for you. You have tended to treat the class in a very casual manner in term of both your presence and your attitude. You have interrupted class to argue with the instructor regarding instructional resources and pedagogy. Comments from students related to your behavior in classes in which you shadow include “indifferent,” “rude,” and “hostile.”*

The words “indifferent,” “rude,” “hostile,” “showing arrogance” and “offhand behavior” can be classified as racial micro-aggressions. These terms, the verbal nooses used to hang faculty of color, are used as a way to control people of color in academia who may have a different research agenda or are outspoken about issues of equality and access. The department chair did remind me that I am on probation for the next three years.

The problem statement in this portion of the reprimand is *willingness to develop professionally in the direction that we need you to go.* After much thought about that statement, I had to ask myself exactly what did that mean? I am at an institution of
higher learning that has a policy of academic freedom. There was no formal induction process that outlined “my direction,” and because I have my own direction, now I was being reprimanded for it. It did not make sense to me. I can only interpret this as “Cleveland, you need to be a well-behaved Negro and conform to our expectations.”

HOW I UNHOOKED: A CRITICAL RACE THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

In this section, using the tenets of CRT, I explain what I have learned over the years about beginning the process of unhooking from Whiteness, noting that I still have a lot to learn in the process about unhooking. The question for me, then, becomes how do I move this from the Ivory Tower of Academia into a grassroots movement in hopes of making it “better” for the next generation?

First, I had to learn and accept that racism is an endemic part of American society. Not the aggressive forms of racism but the subtle forms of racism that come in the forms of micro-aggressions or in having a White person tell me that I am really not Black as if it were a compliment rather than an insult. I also have to realize that when people hooked to Whiteness refuse to consider the everyday realities of race and racism, it is because this self-reflection requires them to face their own racist behavior and to name the contours of racism, and to realize it is less about them and more about Whiteness (Bergerson, 2003; Dei, Karumanchery and Karumanchery-Luik; 2007; Gillborn, 2005). Indeed, Whiteness silences any discussion of race outside of niceties of liking people who look like the racial other.

Second, I had to learn that there is no such thing as true colorblindness; in fact, colorblindness is not an appropriate ideal for social justice. According to Bergerson (2003), Whites attribute negative stereotypes to people of color while at the same time espousing their opposition to blatant racism. When White liberals fail to understand how they can and do embody White supremacist values even though they themselves may not embrace racism, through this lack of awareness they support the racist domination they wish to eradicate (Gillborn, 2005; hooks, 1989).

Tim Wise (2008) argues that colorblindness leads to even deeper systematic racism. The key word in Wise’s statement is systematic racism. Something that scholars who study Whiteness realize when they begin to pull back the layers is that Whiteness never addresses the institution as racist. Critical Race Theory Scholars (Crits) argue that holding onto a colorblind framework only allows these Friends to address the egregious forms of racism, the ones everyone would notice and condemn, such as a White person calling an African American the “N” word in public. Yet, because racism is embedded in our thought processes and social structures, the ordinary business in our society keeps people of color in subordinate positions through daily interactions and practices. Only aggressive, color-conscious efforts to change the way things are done will do much to ameliorate misery inflicted on people of color by White racism (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Tate, 1997).

My academic lynching serves to protect the existing racial hierarchy in education and society because those deemed respectable and professional are the nice people
who use their abilities to draw on institutional power to silence those deemed as disrespectful within the context of White supremacy. Importantly, Whiteness defines the normative standards of what is considered respectful. Therefore, being respectful within the context of White supremacy necessarily means collusion with and perpetuation of the historical privileging of Whiteness.

Third, I had to understand that merit is problematic in the United States. It is not enough to say that anyone who works hard can achieve success. Students of color are systematically excluded from education and educational opportunities despite their hard work. Merit operates under the burden of racism; racism thus limits the applicability of merit to people of color (Bergerson, 2003). The hard work of some pays off much more than the hard work of racial others. Being passed over for the Assistant Hall Director after all my hard work, I remained invisible within my work contexts even though at that time I was not disrupting Whiteness and should not have become a target of Whiteness. My hard work was not valued by the official discourses of the institutions where I worked.

Next, I had to learn the role that my experiential knowledge as a Black man and the stories of other people of color, namely my Black and Brown students, play in their discourses. Angela Valenzuela’s (1999) book *Subtractive Schooling*, which I read in my Ph.D. studies, opened my eyes to understanding how important these experiences are. As someone who was employing Whiteness, I was oftentimes unwilling to recognize the knowledge of those who are victims of the brutality of Whiteness as legitimate, appropriate, and critical to us (my students and me) as we were trying to navigate in a society grounded in racial subordination.

What I began to understand is that Whiteness is usually postured toward faculty members of color and students of color who refuse to remain silenced and to be the well-behaved minority (Hayes & Juárez, 2009; Juárez & Hayes, 2010). This is what Hyttén and Warren (2003) call appeals to authenticity. In their model, when people hooked to Whiteness cited their experiences to counter or contradict non-White voices, their experiences were usually a means to undermine others experiences. An example of academic lynching would be a White professor standing in class espousing his/her majoritarian story as a non-majoritarian story; he/she is using his/her experiences as a weapon to silence. This is the same academic lynching that students of color face from teachers who subscribe to Whiteness and who do not value the experiences their students bring to the classroom; I was one of those teachers. Remember, Whiteness is not about skin color. I contend that during this journey my silence along with trying to protect my students from this violence not only did not prevent further violence; it was also an act of violence. When I was teaching in silence while my students were protecting themselves from this violence by exercising transformative resistance, this left my students labeled as the angry and disruptive ones (self-defeating resistance). Now that I am on this journey from Whiteness, I inform the pre-service teachers that I work with that in order to minimize conflict in the classroom, you as the teacher must recognize the experiences that their students bring to the classroom and draw on those experiences.
Most importantly, I had to learn about a type of “clan” mentality that continues to create a divide between Whites and people of color. Specifically, “clan” is the basic unit of all social organization. Following Maslow’s theory of needs, “social belongingness” is a deficiency need, which means it is something we require in order to meet higher needs, and so take more or less for granted once it is met. Unlike higher order needs, social belongingness is not something we want to keep working at acquiring. For that matter, the signifiers for belonging are mostly non-verbal, pre-conscious. In the American context, skin tone is a potent signifier for who belongs “where” and “to whom”.

So out of this clan mentality, this binary construction around race—the surface, economic realities and the sub-surface psychosexual dimensions—has served a very potent and effective means for distracting White “consciousness” from ever confronting “the man.” In other words, Whites, out of fear of losing the privilege associated with being White, will stand on the sidelines and watch social injustices rather than speak out against them (Leonardo, 2009). Importantly, the expectation is that Whites are supposed to remain united even when they disagree with other Whites. A group of people who line up behind the rhetoric of individuality, working hard, not complaining, etc. will join that group around Whiteness. Because of this same Whiteness when given the choice to do what is right versus what is White, the White choice is the one chosen. This has probably been the hardest realization on my journey away from Whiteness: the realization that there is no such discourse as meritocracy and working hard, because no matter how hard I work, I will never be White or have the benefits that come along with being White.

IT HAS NOT BEEN EASY

I began resisting the stereotype that Black boys were incapable of succeeding in college prep classes. Sanders (1997) describes how many Black students respond to the necessity of being superior by not being superior. She explains, “Many African American students have mentally withdrawn from schooling as a response to the occupational and educational discrimination” (p. 83). I was determined that I was not going to be one of those students. I was mentally aware of my oppression, I thought, but I was not critical of it. As I described in my portrait, providing a critique of White racism was not part of my identity. I had to prove myself superior, which meant placing a distance between myself and those Blacks I felt did not display the characteristics that Whiteness wanted. Sanders (1997) would describe my behavior as “overproving” myself. She states that many African American students are forced to prove their equality by being superior. This needing to be superior is a response by many African American students to the fact that racism is an endemic part of American society.

This response to racism by being superior causes Black students as well as Black teachers to cross epistemological boundaries. In terms of Black students, many give up their sense of identity and their indigenous cultural system in order to achieve
success as defined in a dominant group’s terms, resulting in the notion of racelessness (Fordham, 1988; Sanders, 1997). But at the end of the day it did not matter how hard I worked, how much distance I put between myself and Blackness and valued Whiteness, how hard I worked to be “White-like”; I was never going to be White and enjoy the privileges that go along with being White. I had to learn the hard way that this talk of individuality and working hard was just White rhetoric to keep other Blacks at odds with each other. I should have known. Whiteness has a history of this, for instance, by creating divisions between house slaves and field slaves. These notions of individuality also keep persons of color at odds with each other; DuBois (1969) describes in Back Toward Slavery how powerful Whites convinced poor Whites that although they may not have material property they had Whiteness as property, and we see it with the division between Black, Brown, and Yellow folk. One day, I woke up and decided, like Nicholas Hartlep (see his chapter in this volume), that I too will no longer be a pawn of Whiteness. I learned that there is no compromising with Whiteness, which has been one of my hardest lessons.

NOTES
1 Michelle is the faculty member whom I was shadowing. Michelle is not the professor’s real name.
2 At this University, before a faculty member can teach a class he/she has to shadow a professor who has taught the class. In my opinion, this shadowing process only serves as a way to continue the oppressive hegemonic practices of the department.

REFERENCES
TOO WHITE TO BE BLACK AND TOO BLACK TO BE WHITE


