

But I Don't See Color

The Perils, Practices, and Possibilities of Antiracist Education

Terry Husband (Ed.)



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Edited by

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TERRY HUSBAND

INTRODUCTION

Recent census data indicate that the student population in many U.S. classrooms have and continue to become every increasingly racially diverse as we journey through the 21st century. It is projected by the year 2035 that white students will no longer make up the majority of the student population in U.S. classrooms. Despite these dramatic and shocking demographic changes, the teaching force in most U.S. classrooms continues to remain largely white, middle-class, and female. These discontinuities often create challenges when dealing with issues of race and racism in the classroom. While many scholars and practitioners advocate in favor of dealing with issues of race and racism in schools and classrooms in a forthright manner, the vast majority of teachers and administrators prefer ignoring issues of race and racism or applying what is commonly referred to as a colorblind approach to education. The fundamental idea behind the colorblind approach is that ignoring racial differences in schools and classrooms will lead to more equitable and just outcomes than attending to racial differences in schools and classrooms explicitly. On the surface, the colorblind approach may appear to be politically neutral and somewhat beneficial for students of color. However, research suggests that a colorblind approach to education leads to many unfavorable outcomes for students of color over time.

As an alternative to a colorblind approach to education, *But I Don't See Color: The Perils, Practices, and Possibilities of Anti-Racist Education* advocates for a direct and anti-racist approach to dealing with issues of race and racism in classrooms and schools. This book brings together a diverse group of scholars and practitioners who describe and discuss the complexities of integrating anti-racist education in P-12 and higher educational contexts. The overarching questions that drive this book are:

1. How do we define anti-racist education within varying educational contexts?
2. What are some of the benefits of integrating an anti-racist approach to education?
3. What are some of the challenges associated with integrating an anti-racist approach to education?

The broader goal of this book is not to provide a clear and concise answer to the “race problem” that has and continues to plague so many classrooms and schools in America. Instead, the objective of this book is to ignite a theoretical and practical discussion of how we might move beyond a colorblind approach to education. Given the overarching questions that drive this book, Chapter 1 begins with a discussion

of the history of colorblindness and the negative outcomes associated with this approach. This chapter ends by presenting a practical and multileveled framework for implementing anti-racist education. This framework involves teaching, curriculum, disciplinary policies, standardized assessment, and parental involvement.

It almost goes without saying that relationships between students and teachers are significant keys to academic and social success in schools. As such, Chapter 2 describes the keys to developing positive anti-racist relationships between students and teachers of different racial backgrounds. The author provides rich examples from the classroom to guide our understanding of the relationship development process.

As we know, racism can have a negative impact on students. Chapter 3 discusses the trauma that is commonly associated with racial injustice. A discussion of how race based traumatic experiences impact students on a daily basis is presented. The authors of this chapter conclude with a list of tools to aid educators in responding to race related traumatic experiences in the classroom.

What students do or do not have access to reading in the classroom can have an impact on how students view themselves and others from different racial backgrounds. Chapter 4 discusses how children's literature may be used to engage students in critical discussions of race and racism. Examples of anti-racist activities that might be used in tandem with multicultural children's literature are presented as well.

Early childhood educators often struggle with how to implement anti-racist education in their respective early childhood contexts. Chapter 5 describes the experiences of an early childhood educator as he implements anti-racist education in a kindergarten classroom. Implications for early childhood educators are presented.

Recently, the notion of "Black History" has come under scrutiny by scholars in the field of race studies. Some argue that this practice often causes more harm than good. Chapter 6 discusses the importance of moving toward an anti-racist approach to history curriculum design and development. Through an analysis of common textbooks used to teach history, the author of this chapter documents how textbooks construct racism as something that rarely happens today in society.

Colorblindness can have a negative impact on middle school students. In a candid and open manner, the author of Chapter 7 discusses the consequences of teaching from a colorblind perspective. She draws from her first-hand experiences as a former middle school teacher. Recommendations for middle school teachers are presented.

Teaching pre-service teachers about race and racism can be a daunting task, as racial privilege is often difficult to identify and denounce. Chapter 8 discusses the challenges of two teacher educators who attempt to teach their students about race and racism in a direct manner. Recommendations for other teacher educators who wish to engage in this process are discussed.

Creative expression is a powerful pedagogical tool for teaching various concepts in the classroom. Chapter 9 discusses the potential of using creative expression as a tool for engaging in critical self-reflection and anti-racist pedagogy in the community

college classroom. Drawing from her experiences as a community college professor, the author of Chapter 9 presents a first-hand narrative of the challenges and triumphs embedded in using creative expression to teach her students about race and racism.

Any form of transformative pedagogical practice begins with critical self-reflection. As such, Chapter 10 documents the experiences of a teacher educator as he worked to denounce racial privilege and develop a critical, anti-racist identity. A frank and honest narrative of one white male's experiences while combating racial injustice in the classroom is presented.

The final chapter of this book identifies themes that emerged across the various chapters in this book. Next, this chapter provides a brief discussion of each theme and the implications for anti-racist education. Finally, this chapter concludes with recommendations for research, policy, and practice.

PART I

ANTI-RACIST EDUCATION IN P-12 CONTEXTS

TERRY HUSBAND

1. IGNORANCE IS NOT BLISS

Moving Beyond Colorblind Perspectives and Practices in Education

INTRODUCTION

It was a typical fall afternoon at Valley Middle School. Valley Middle School is a racially diverse school located in a large urban school district in the Midwest. Mrs. Jackson, the 7th grade language arts teacher, walks into the break room and sits down. Mrs. Brown, the 8th social studies teacher, enters shortly after and sits next to Mrs. Jackson. The two women begin chatting about upcoming events at the school as they partake in a light snack.

The conversation between the two teachers is abruptly interrupted by a news update on the television hanging on the opposite wall of the break room. “Please turn that up!” says Mrs. Brown emphatically. Mrs. Jackson reaches for the remote control and turns up the volume on the flat screen television. The news reporter begins sharing information regarding an unidentified black man who was shot 17 times by a white police officer in the local community where these two women teach. “I’m so sick and tired of these people who think they can resist the law and get away with it!” states Mrs. Brown in an assertive tone. “How do you know the gentleman was resisting arrest?” Mrs. Jackson inquires. “If he wasn’t resisting arrest, he wouldn’t have been shot 17 times.” Mrs. Brown logically replies. “How do we know racism didn’t play a part in all of this?” Mrs. Jackson says in an angry tone. “After all, the victim *was* black and the officer *was* white.” Mrs. Jackson further points out. The two women continue debating the topic vigorously for the next 5 minutes or so. Mr. Smith, the 7th grade science teacher, attempts to diffuse the debate by redirecting the conversation. “Clearly, we can see that the topic of racism evokes many different perspectives. Personally, I think this topic would serve as an excellent theme for us to discuss with our students. Perhaps, we can develop an interdisciplinary unit of some sort. What do you two think?” asks Mr. Smith. “I think this is a wonderful idea. This will allow us an opportunity to teach in a way that is realistic and responsive to the needs and interests of our students.” argues Mrs. Jackson. “Well, you can count me out!” interjects Mrs. Brown. “I think school is no place for us to be talking about all of that race stuff. In fact, I don’t really see color anyway. All I see are strong students, average students, and below average students in my classroom.” Mrs. Brown further explains. Unable to agree on this controversial topic, the three teachers decide to discuss another topic for the remainder of their

break period. A few minutes later, the bell rings and the three teachers begin making their way back to their respective classrooms.

Although the above vignette is fictional in nature, it represents one of the ways in which race is or is not addressed by teachers within many schools in the United States today. Much like Mrs. Brown, many teachers believe that it is in the best interests of their students to teach in colorblind ways that ignore racial diversity. While this particular approach (colorblindness) may appear to be “safe” and politically neutral in nature, research suggests that it leads to negative outcomes for both the students and teachers involved. Given the overwhelming prevalence of colorblindness in so many classrooms today, the purpose of this chapter is to identify ways in which this approach to race and racism is problematic. I begin by defining the notion of colorblindness in educational contexts. Next, I outline multiple ways that colorblindness leads to negative outcomes for students and teachers. Third, as an alternative to the colorblind approach, I present a 5-part anti-racist framework for responding to issues of racial diversity in classrooms and schools. Finally, I conclude with a discussion of practical and political considerations teachers should take into account as they engage in anti-racist education.

DEFINING COLORBLINDNESS

As a consequence of the 1896 landmark *Plessy v. Ferguson* case, Supreme Court Justice John Marshall Harlan called for a colorblind society. In short, a colorblind society is one in which Americans make no distinctions among people based on racial group membership. In more recent years, colorblindness has emerged as a dominant ideological approach to dealing with issues of racial diversity in the United States in general and within educational institutions in particular. Proponents of the colorblind ideology believe that paying special or close attention to an individual’s race when making policy and practical decisions is inherently problematic, as it potentially distributes inequitable privileges to individuals from one particular racial group. Furthermore, proponents of the colorblind ideology largely deny and ignore the existence and devastating impact of racial injustice in various institutions in the societies of today and yesteryear.

In more contemporary terms, Bonilla-Silva (2010) identifies four frames associated with colorblindness in general and colorblind racism in particular. These frames include: abstract liberalism, naturalization, cultural racism, and minimization of racism. When applied individually or collectively, these four frames allow whites to talk in racist ways without sounding overtly racist. The first frame, *abstract liberalism*, involves using abstract ideas associated with political and economic liberalism to explain racial matters. For example, when asked why there are so few minority students in the advanced placement classes in a particular high school, a guidance counselor who is applying abstract liberalism might use personal choice or preference as the logic behind this occurrence.

The second frame, *naturalization*, is when whites explain racial injustice as a natural occurrence. In other words, this frame uses natural logic to justify the presence of racism in society and schools. For example, a teacher who is applying this frame might argue that its “natural” for the black students and white students to segregate themselves during lunch.

The third frame, *cultural racism*, relies on long-standing culturally constructed arguments used to explain the condition of racial minorities in society. For example, when asked why there are so few minority students in the gifted program at a particular elementary school, a gifted education specialist who is applying this frame might argue that the parents of minority students “don’t care” about their children’s education as much as the parents of the white students.

The final frame, *minimization of racism*, diminishes the power and impact of racial prejudice and discrimination in the lives of minorities. In other words, this frame assumes that racial prejudice and discrimination have very minimal long-lasting effects on people of color. A teacher who is applying this frame might argue that racism seldom exists in schools and other social institutions in society.

CONSEQUENCES OF COLORBLINDNESS

Although many educators would like to believe that colorblindness is the most appropriate and effective way of dealing with racial diversity in schools and classrooms, several researchers (i.e., Bakari, 2003; Banks, 2006; Modica, 2015) point out ways in which this particular ideological position produces negative consequences for teachers and students alike. In the subsequent section, I discuss six reasons why we need to abandon colorblind perspectives and approaches in education. The reasons I discuss here involve: racial representation within the curriculum, implicit teacher bias, pedagogical approaches to teaching and learning, identifying racial injustice within school programs and policies, sensitivity to racial injustice, and challenging and changing racist attitudes and biases in and among students.

The first reason teachers should abandon colorblind perspectives and approaches deals with racial representation within the formal school curriculum. The United States is becoming ever increasingly racially diverse (Nieto & Bode, 2008). Accordingly, one might easily presume that the curriculum that is taught in most schools in the U.S. is representative and inclusive of these racial demographic changes in society. However, in far too many schools in the United States, the formal curriculum that is taught centers primarily on white and male voices, histories, and knowledge bases (Ladson-Billings, 2001). In many cases, the experiences of people of color are presented minimally or not at all (Banks, 2006). Therefore, when a teacher chooses to teach the formal school curriculum while paying little or no attention to race and racial representation, it is highly likely that he or she will teach a curriculum that marginalizes and or excludes the experiences of people of color.

Not only does such a curriculum have a negative impact on students of color, but it also limits what white students can learn about people in the world who are not white. Consequently, many white students who experience these types of curricula in P-12 classrooms develop into adults who have a very narrow and ethnocentric view of the world around them (Banks, 2006). Furthermore, in an effort to ensure that students of color are represented equitably within the school curriculum, teachers must move away from a colorblind approach to curriculum development and implementation and toward a more color-conscious approach to curriculum development and implementation.

The second reason teachers and schools should abandon colorblind perspectives and approaches deals with implicit teacher bias. White teachers often hold implicit biases toward students from racially diverse backgrounds (Sleeter, 2008). These biases often impact academic achievement, as they frequently drive and shape teachers' assumptions and expectations while making pedagogical decisions regarding students of color (Bakari, 2003). Basically, teachers with high levels of implicit bias (toward students of color) are likely to foster low expectations for students of color. To this end, these low expectations can have a negative impact on the academic achievement opportunities that are made available to students of color in the classroom.

A salient example of how low expectations can have a negative impact on academic achievement in students of color is evidenced by the findings from a recent study involving elementary students. Interested in the relationship between student ethnicity and teacher expectations in 83 classrooms, McKown and Weinstein (2008) found a significant correlation between teacher biases and low student achievement. The researchers began the study by asking the teachers to rank the students in order of expected year-end achievement in reading and mathematics. Next, the researchers administered the Teacher Treatment Inventory (Weinstein & Middlestadt, 1979) in each classroom to measure students' perceptions of differential treatment. Then, the researchers analyzed the relationship between students' perceptions of treatment and teachers' expectations of year-end performance in reading and mathematics. Overall, data analysis revealed that the teachers who participated in the study held lower expectations for year-end performance in reading and mathematics for the African American and Latino students than the European students studied. At the same time, the African American and Latino students in the study reported being treated differently more often than the European students in the study. Ultimately, what this study suggests is that a teacher's implicit bias can have a direct influence on how students are treated in a classroom—particularly students from racially diverse backgrounds. To ensure more equitable academic outcomes and opportunities for students from racially diverse backgrounds, teachers must be willing to confront and eliminate these implicit biases and low expectations. To this end, a colorblind perspective and approach does very little in the way of encouraging teachers to reflect critically on the ways in which he or she may be fostering racially biased expectations toward students of color. Hence, a color-conscious and or anti-

racist approach is more useful in helping teachers facilitate this goal of critical self-reflection.

A third reason that educators should abandon colorblindness deals with pedagogical approaches to teaching and learning. A colorblind approach to teaching and learning encourages teachers to teach *all* students in the same manner (Modica, 2015). In addition, a colorblind approach encourages teachers to use the same materials with all students, regardless of the differences across students' racial backgrounds. In this same vein, it is often argued that "all children are the same" and that race has little or no importance in the classroom. This perspective on teaching and learning is problematic because it does not take into account the varied and idiosyncratic interests, experiences, and "assets" that students of color bring to the classroom (Sue, 2011). Consequently, in classrooms where colorblindness is the dominant approach, students of color are often taught in ways that are irrelevant, irresponsible, and even harmful to their academic and social progress. While it is certainly important that students of color have educational experiences and opportunities that are equal to their white peers, it is doubly important that students of color have educational experiences and opportunities that are equitable in nature as well. Colorblind approaches to teaching and learning tend to focus on the former (equality) at the exclusion of the latter (equity). Providing all children with the same learning experiences and opportunities in the classroom does not ensure that the teacher is providing each student with an experience that best meets his or her individual needs, strengths, and interests. Thus, educators should move away from colorblind approaches to teaching and learning that do not take racial diversity into account and toward more color-conscious approaches to teaching and learning that center race in all aspects of the pedagogical process.

A fourth reason educators should abandon colorblindness pertains to identifying racism within normalized school programs, policies, and practices. Schools often function in ways that lead to achievement disparities between white students and students of color (Hawley & Nieto, 2010). Colorblind approaches to program and policy making in schools and classrooms frequently make it difficult for educators to identify and respond to issues of racial injustice (Hawley & Nieto, 2010). For instance, a principal who is operating from a colorblind perspective on school discipline might argue that a "zero tolerance" disciplinary policy affects all students in his building in the same way, as this policy states nothing explicitly about targeting students from racially diverse backgrounds. In contrast, a principal who is operating from a color-conscious perspective would note the fact that students of color are impacted at significantly higher rates by these types of disciplinary policies than white students (Welch & Payne, 2010). Hence, a colorblind approach can make it challenging for educators to identify and combat covert and institutionalized forms of racial injustice in schools and classrooms.

A salient example of how colorblindness works to mask racial injustice in schools is evidenced in Lewis' (2003) ethnography at a predominately white elementary school. Approximately 90% of the students in the study were white and from

middle or upper middle class backgrounds. While many of the school officials proudly proclaimed that race was *not* a problem at that school, several of the students of color pointed out ways in which racism existed and operated openly within the many of the formal and informal school policies and practices. Lewis also pointed out that teachers' reluctance to talk about race and racism in critical and substantive ways made it difficult to combat and resolve the racial issues that were taking place at their school. Ultimately, what this study suggests is that a colorblind perspective allows teachers to avoid and conceal racial issues that are alive and well within many schools and classrooms.

A fifth reason that educators should abandon colorblindness concerns an individual's sensitivity to racial injustice. Proponents of colorblindness tend to assume that deemphasizing racial differences will ultimately lead to great degrees of racial equality, equity, and appreciation. However, a recent experiment conducted by Apfelbaum, Pauker, Sommers, and Ambady (2010), suggests that promoting a colorblind perspective can actually diminish a person's ability to recognize and challenge racist behaviors. In their experiment, the researchers examined the effects of promoting a colorblind approach to diversity among 8- to 11-year-old students. A total of 60 students participated in the study. During the initial phase of the experiment, students reviewed different versions of a multimedia storybook. Half of the students in the study reviewed a colorblind version of the storybook, while the other half of the students reviewed a version of the book that was filled with race-based distinctions and considerations or what the researchers refer to as the value-diversity version. In both stories, the narrator emphasized the notion of racial justice. After the storybooks were read, the students listened to three additional stories featuring varying degrees of racial bias. The control story involved a scenario wherein a white child was marginalized by his white schoolmate's contribution to a school science project. The second story described the experiences of a white student being excluded from a black student's birthday party. The third story described a white student who assaults a black student in a soccer game for no apparent reason. After the stories were read, students were asked to describe the three events and their responses were video recorded by the researchers. Findings indicate that students who had read the value-diversity version of the storybook were more likely to detect evidence of racial discrimination in the three additional stories. Approximately, 43 percent of students who read the value-diversity version of the storybook perceived racial discrimination in the ambiguous story. Similarly, approximately 77 percent of the students who read the value-diversity version of the storybook perceived discrimination in the explicitly biased story.

During the colorblind condition of the experiment, the frequency with which students detected discrimination dropped significantly. Only about 10 percent of the children who read the colorblind storybook perceived racial discrimination in the ambiguous story. Also, only 50 percent of the children who read the colorblind storybook perceived racial discrimination in the racially explicit story. It is important to note here that the racially explicit story consisted of overt acts

of racial discrimination. Ultimately, what this study suggests is that colorblind approaches to education can potentially decrease a student's sensitivity to issues of racial injustice. Therefore, in an effort to aid students in developing a moral and ethical commitment toward combating and eliminating racism, educators must move beyond colorblind perspectives and approaches.

A final reason why educators should abandon colorblind perspectives and approaches deals with challenging and changing racist attitudes and biases in and among students. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, proponents of colorblind perspectives and approaches assume that ignoring race will lead to a decrease in negative racial attitudes and biases. However, several studies (i.e., Neville, Lilly, Duran, Lee, & Browne, 2000; Richeson & Nussbaum, 2004; Verkuyten, 2005) suggest that colorblind perspectives and approaches have a very minimal influence on diminishing pre-existing racist attitudes and biases in and among students. In an attempt to evaluate the influence of colorblindness and multiculturalism on white racial attitudes, Richeson and Nussbaum's (2004) conducted a quasi-experiment involving 52 undergraduate female college students at Dartmouth College. In short, the participants were randomly assigned to read one of two different 1-page statements. The first statement espoused the benefits of multiculturalism. The second statement was consistent with a colorblind ideology. After reading the statements, the participants were provided a list of 21 responses and asked to circle the responses that were similar to their own views and thinking. Next, the participants were administered the Implicit Association Test (IAT) to assess automatic racial attitudes. Quantitative analysis revealed two important findings related to colorblindness and racial attitudes. First, the participants who were exposed to the colorblind 1-page statement had a larger degree of pro-white bias than the participants who were exposed to the multicultural 1-page statement. Second, the results from the Implicit Association Test revealed that automatic white racial bias was higher for participants in the colorblind group than the participants who read the multicultural statement. Although the findings from this study are not causal in nature, they, nonetheless, suggest that racial bias is greater in individuals who interact with material and content that is explicitly colorblind in nature than individuals who interact with material and content that is explicitly multicultural in nature. Hence, in an effort to challenge and ultimately change racist attitudes and biases in students, educators must move away from colorblind approaches and perspectives and toward color-conscious approaches and perspectives.

ANTI-RACIST EDUCATION: MOVING FROM COLORBLINDNESS TO COLOR-CONSCIOUSNESS

Thus far, I have argued against the use of colorblind perspectives and approaches in education for a number of different reasons. In the subsequent section, I offer anti-racist education as a viable alternative to colorblind perspectives and approaches. I begin by defining anti-racist education for clarification purposes. Next, I outline

the theoretical tenets that undergird anti-racist education. Finally, I describe practical ways anti-racist education might be implemented in classrooms and schools to identify, combat, and reverse issues of racial injustice.

Defining Anti-Racist Education

The scholarship surrounding anti-racist education is broad and diverse in nature. For clarification purposes, I draw heavily from Kalin's (2002) definition of anti-racist education as an approach to education that: emphasizes knowledge deconstruction and critique, assumes an overtly political stance, analyzes racial and economic oppression simultaneously, and emphasizes social activism. In keeping with the notion of knowledge deconstruction and critique, anti-racist education assumes that schools are microcosms of a broader racist American society. Essentially, it is assumed that the same racism that exists in various institutions in U.S. society also exists within many classrooms and schools. Therefore, anti-racist educators spend a significant amount of time analyzing and critiquing practices, policies, and procedures that transpire in classrooms and schools for racial injustice. The primary goal of this process is to identify spaces in classrooms and schools where racism exists. The secondary goal is then to reconstruct these practices, policies, and procedures in ways that are racially just.

A second defining characteristic of anti-racist education is its overtly politically nature (Kalin, 2002). Unlike colorblind approaches, an anti-racist approach to education deals with issues of race and racial injustice in open and explicit ways. Essentially, educators who are implementing anti-racist pedagogies in their classrooms are upfront, open, and honest about their commitment to racial justice. This commitment is often evidenced by the classroom environment constructed by the teacher, the texts that are included/excluded in the curriculum, and the pedagogical methods that are implemented on behalf of students from racially diverse backgrounds.

A third defining characteristic of anti-racist education is the way in which it seeks to analyze racial and economic oppression simultaneously (Kalin, 2002). While other approaches to dealing with racial diversity tend to focus on racial oppression exclusively, an anti-racist approach interrogates race and class simultaneously. The basic assumption here is that racism and classism are inextricably coupled together and often used in tandem with one another to exploit and marginalize people of color in the United States. Therefore, a robust critique of racism must inevitably include a simultaneous critique of classism. Furthermore, it is important to note here that other forms of diversity (gender, sexual orientation, ability, age, etc.) are also woven into the analysis where feasible. Nonetheless, race and class are the starting points of the analysis within an anti-racist approach.

A fourth defining feature of anti-racist education is its emphasis on activism (Kalin, 2002). While less critical approaches to multicultural education tend to

problematize school practices with little or no subsequent activism, an anti-racist approach sees “action” as the fundamental purpose behind the analysis and critique. In plain terms, anti-racist educators not only engage in the process of indentifying racial problems within their classrooms and schools, but they also take steps toward solving these problems.

Theoretical Foundations of Anti-Racist Education

Anti-racist education draws from two bodies of critical scholarship related to race and racism. The first body of scholarship that informs anti-racist education is known as Critical Race Theory (CRT). CRT was developed by legal scholars in the 1970s to address the effects of race and racism in the U.S. legal system (Tate, 1997). CRT substitutes race for class as the primary lens for exploring legislation (Chapman, 2007). CRT has been applied in a variety of educational contexts to examine the role race plays in practices related to: school finance, discipline, curriculum, teaching, and assessment (Alemán, 2007; Dixson, 2006; Ladson-Billings, 1998). While critical race scholarship is broad based and non-monolithic in nature, CRT as a research orientation is comprised of four essential tenets: (a) the permanence of race, (b) counterstorytelling, (c) whiteness as property, and (d) interest convergence. Regarding the first tenet, CRT contends that race and racism play permanent and pervasive roles in all aspects of U.S. society. Consequently, CRT calls for the examination and monitoring of the political, economic, and social institutions in society to ensure that these institutions do not continue to privilege whites over people of color.

Concerning the second tenet of CRT, counterstorytelling is defined as a method of telling a story that aims to cast doubt on the validity of premises, myths, and grand narratives that are generally accepted as truth by many white people in society (Dixson, 2006). CRT scholars believe that counterstories validate the life experiences of people of color and serve as powerful ways to challenge the versions of reality held by those who benefit from whiteness and white privilege. In light of this tenet, anti-racist educators seek to provide spaces in the curriculum and classroom where the stories and experiences of students of color are vocalized and honored.

A third essential tenet of CRT is the notion of whiteness as property. In the U.S., property owners have specific rights that non-property owners do not have (Harris, 1995). Essentially, individuals with property are entitled to more and higher quality services and benefits than those with no property. If we apply this notion of property rights to whiteness, being born white in America provides white people with privileges and rights that non-white people do not have (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Harris, 1995). For instance, having access to a high-quality, rigorous curriculum is a right that has been almost exclusively enjoyed by white students in predominately white schools (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). Furthermore, in

keeping with this tenet, anti-racist educators seek to grant equal and equitable rights and privileges to whites students and students of color.

A fourth tenet of CRT is the notion of interest convergence. CRT maintains that people of color will not achieve racial advances unless those advances intersect with the economic interests of whites (Bell, 1980). Accordingly, Bell and Clark (1998) contend that the majority of the civil rights advancements within communities of color happened only because they converged with the personal and political interests of whites. In addition, these advancements did not disrupt the “normal” way of life for the vast majority of whites in society. In light of this theoretical tenet, anti-racist educators seek racial advances in classrooms and schools that converge and diverge with the personal and political interests of whites.

In as much as anti-racist education is informed by CRT, it also informed by Critical Whiteness Studies (CWS). As an extension of CRT, CWS illuminates ideologies and behaviors that define what it means to be white in a society (Gillborn, 2006). In short, the primary goal of CWS is to analyze what whiteness is and how it works to perpetuate racial oppression in various aspects of society. Because racism is often difficult for many white people to identify, race is analyzed within socio-political, socio-economic, socio-cultural, and socio-historical contexts. The fundamental intent behind applying a contextualized analysis of race is for white people to begin viewing whiteness as a socially constructed position of unearned power and privilege that maintains and advances colonialism, slavery, segregation, and racial oppression (Aal, 2001; Haney-Lopez, 2006).

The second goal behind CWS is to identify and analyze the effects of white privilege. Although whiteness is socially constructed, it has tangible effects (i.e., generational wealth inequities, employment discrimination, inequitable educational opportunities) that continue through multiple generations (Brodkin, 2006; Lipsitz, 1998; Roediger, 2005). For instance, Lipsitz (1998) explains how white privilege is often constructed and advanced through the profits made from real estate sold and purchased in discriminatory markets. For this reason, a critical analysis of how wealth is built and maintained is frequently involved in critiques of white privilege.

A third intent of CWS is to develop and advance a discursive discourse surrounding whiteness (Gillborn, 2005; Levine-Rasky, 2000). In many cases, whites tend to see racism as an *individual* act of discrimination performed against a person of color on the basis of his or her skin tone. While this notion of racism is certainly important, it is, nonetheless, incomplete in explaining the ways in which comprehensive systems of whiteness contribute to racial oppression in society. In light of this, CWS seek to move the discourse on racism from the individual and toward the structures, mechanisms, processes, and institutions in society that produce inequitable outcomes between whites and people of color (Kincheloe & Steinburg, 1998). By shifting the primary unit of analysis to systems (such as disciplinary policies, testing, pedagogical approaches, etc.) rather than individuals, whites are better able to identify spaces and places in schools and classrooms where racism exists and functions in covert ways.

A fourth intent of CWS is to assist whites in developing an anti-racist identity (Pollock, 2004; Tatum, 2008). As Kincheloe and Steinberg (1998) point out, whiteness is deeply entrenched in one's identity. Therefore, a robust and sustainable effort toward eliminating racial oppression must also involve anti-racist white identity development. Essentially, the ultimate goal of CWS is for whites to develop personal and political identities that are committed to actively challenging racial oppression in various arenas in society. To assist in this identity development process, a significant portion of this scholarship focuses on equipping whites with the knowledge, skills, dispositions, and models needed to combat racism in constructive and pro-active ways.

PRACTICAL STRATEGIES FOR IMPLEMENTING ANTI-RACIST EDUCATION

In many public schools in the U.S., racial oppression operates throughout multiple aspects of the schooling process (Blackwell, 2010). Therefore, any robust and effective attempt toward eliminating racial oppression in schools must be comprehensive and strategic in nature. In the following section, I outline five practical strategies for implementing anti-racist education in P-12 contexts. These strategies pertain to the following: teacher expectations, school disciplinary policies, pedagogical methods, assessment measures, and parental engagement.

The first way that educators can combat racial inequalities and inequities in schools and classrooms is by establishing high expectations for students of color. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, many white teachers often hold implicit biases toward students of color. These biases are often translated into lower academic expectations for students of color than for white students. Research suggests (e.g., Ferguson, 2003; Steele, 1997; Tettegah, 1996) there is a strong relationship between teacher expectations and student achievement. Essentially, students of color who have teachers who believe in their abilities tend to perform at higher levels in classrooms than students of color who have teachers who do not believe in their abilities. Thus, the first step in combating racial inequalities and inequities in schools and classrooms is to establish and foster high expectations for all students—regardless of race.

The second key to combating racial inequalities and inequities in schools and classrooms is to restructure the current disciplinary policies that exist in many public schools in the United States. Students of color are impacted at far greater rates than white students by many of the formal and informal disciplinary policies and procedures that exist in schools and classrooms today. In fact, in a recent study involving 3,002 school districts in the United States, Smith and Harper (2015) found that black students were suspended at disproportionately higher rates than their white peers. In 132 Southern school districts in the study, black students were suspended at rates five times or higher than their white peers. Also, in 84 of the districts in the study, black students constituted 100% of the students who were suspended from schools. These statistics become even more daunting and troubling

as we consider the fact black students made up only 24% of the overall student population involved in the study. The time that black and other students of color spend out of the classroom often results in loss of learning opportunities and low overall achievement outcomes. Hence, anti-racist educators must develop creative and innovative ways of disciplining students of color that will not impact their opportunities to learn and achieve in the classroom.

Despite the implementation of various school reform initiatives over the past 50 years, students of color continue to underachieve in comparison to their white peers. These achievement disparities have been well documented over the past 20 years (Braun, Wang, Jenkins, & Weinbaum, 2006). A growing number of scholars (e.g., Gay, 2000; Hollie, 2001; Howard, 2001) point out that achievement disparities between white and non-white students can be linked to ineffective pedagogical approaches. In keeping with this school of thought, anti-racist educators can combat these achievement disparities by implementing culturally responsive pedagogies in their classrooms. In short, culturally responsive pedagogy is a philosophical, ethical, and practical approach to teaching and learning that recognizes, values, and incorporates the rich and varied cultural knowledge and skills that diverse learners bring to schools and classrooms (Gay, 2000). Moreover, a culturally responsive approach to pedagogy views students' culture as a powerful asset that can and should be used to aid students in acquiring knowledge, skills, and experiences related to the official school curriculum and beyond. To this end, the fundamental belief behind culturally responsive pedagogy is that teaching in a way that values, affirms, and builds on students' culture will lead to stronger academic outcomes than teaching in a manner that devalues, ignores, and dismisses students' cultural knowledge, skills, and experiences.

In far too many schools in the U.S., there is an over-reliance on standardized tests when making "high-stakes" decisions related to grouping, retention, advanced placement courses, and special education services (Au, 2009). Compared to their white counterparts, students of color are frequently affected in negative ways as a result of this over-reliance on standardized testing data (Au, 2009). Teachers and other key school officials can combat these negative consequences of standardized testing by including alternative forms of assessment in the evaluation processes involving students of color. For instance, in addition to using data from standardized instruments when making important decisions regarding students of color, teachers and school officials should also consider using and including data from authentic assessment measures. In short, authentic assessments are assessment tools and measures that simulate real-life knowledge, tasks and scenarios (Swaffield, 2011). Through the use of authentic assessments, students of color will be provided with an opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge and skills in a context that more closely mirrors their everyday life experiences.

Another way that teachers can minimize the negative consequences of standardized testing on students of color is by relying more heavily on data from formative assessments than data derived from standardized assessments. Unlike

standardized tests, formative assessments are used to collect data related to students' knowledge, skills, and dispositions while the teaching and learning process is still happening (Cornelius, 2014). This form of assessment serves as a means of checking for understanding during the actual teaching and learning process—as opposed to after the teaching and learning process has come to an end. The ultimate goal behind formative assessment is for teachers to adjust and improve their instructional practices based on the data gained from implementing these tools. Some examples of formative assessment tools include but are not limited to: observations, questionnaires, discussions, exit/admit slips, response logs, graphic organizers, peer/self assessments, visual representations, and quick writes. To this end, formative assessment tools provide opportunities for educators to make changes in their instruction before it is too late.

A fifth strategy for implementing anti-racist education involves parental involvement. Parent involvement in a child's education is an essential component of academic and social success at school. Students who have parents who are involved in the schooling processes of their children in on-going, comprehensive, and purposeful ways tend to perform at higher rates than students who do not have parents who are substantively involved in the schooling processes of their children (Malone, 2015). Historically, schools have struggled to engage parents of non-white students in the education process of their children in meaningful and significant ways (Larocque, Kleinian, & Darling, 2011). In many schools, parental involvement opportunities are limited to parent-teacher conferences and or participation in special social events related to holidays and other celebrations. Traditional school norms and structures have and continue to be most responsive to parents who are middle-class and white (Epstein, 2010). Therefore, in an effort to eliminate academic disparities between whites students and students of color, teachers and other key school officials should rethink and restructure the ways in which parents are engaged in schools and classrooms. Accordingly, educators should consider developing what Epstein (2010) refers to as culturally responsive partnerships between parents and schools as a means of improving academic and social outcomes for students of color. In short, the term culturally responsive partnerships is defined as mutually beneficial and dynamic partnerships between parents, teachers, family members, and other key school officials that recognize, value, and respond to the complex and every changing beliefs, values, and family dynamics of the students involved (Epstein, 2010). The fundamental goal behind these partnerships is to develop culturally sensitive and contextually specific systems, structures, and strategies that enable parents and teachers to work side by side for the success of the students involved. Some steps educators can take toward developing and establishing culturally responsive partnerships include but are not limited to the following:

- Expressing a written and verbal commitment to engaging in culturally responsive partnerships between parents and school officials
- Conducting a survey/inventory of parents' ideas, perspectives, needs and strengths

- Planning and implementing a series of workshops related to data derived from the parent survey/inventory
- Identifying a parent liaison/instructor/translator to serve as a resource for parents
- Developing resource materials to assist parents in the school/classroom acclimation process
- Creating physical spaces within classrooms and buildings for parents
- Soliciting parental input regarding the policies and programs in the classroom and school
- Acknowledging and celebrating the contributions of parents
- Creating untraditional and innovative opportunities for parents to become involved in both the classroom and school environments
- Soliciting formal and informal feedback from parents related to school and classroom practices and policies on a consistent basis
- Revising the policies and practices that occur in schools and classrooms on a regular basis to encourage growth and change.

CONCLUSION

Unfortunately, we still live in a country where racism is very much alive and well. For instance, black youth are arrested, incarcerated, and murdered twice as often as white youth (Alexander, 2012). As microcosms of the larger U.S. society, schools often perpetuate racist ideologies and acts toward students of color in both covert and overt ways. Throughout this chapter, I have argued for the implementation of an anti-racist approach to education as a means of combating issues of racial inequity and racial inequality in schools and classrooms. Educators who are willing to embrace and enact this approach to education must also be willing to embrace three underlying ethical and political actions that accompany this form of emancipatory praxis. First, anti-racist educators must be willing to *acknowledge* that racism is still a problem in society and schools today. Far too many educators today hide behind the romantic notion that we live a “post-racial” society that is exempt from racism. This perspective on race and racism, in many ways, allows racist structures and systems to go unchallenged in many schools and classrooms. Hence, those who are serious about implementing anti-racist education must be willing to make this necessary first commitment.

In addition to acknowledging that racism is still a problem in many schools and classrooms today, anti-racist educators must also be willing to *alter* many of the “normal” policies and practices that happen in schools and classrooms on a daily basis. In many cases, the policies and practices that are deemed as normal and effective in schools and classrooms are of very little benefit to students of color (Nieto, 2011). Therefore, those who are serious about implementing anti-racist education must be willing to reconsider and revise (where necessary) the policies and practices that do not produce equal and equitable outcomes for white students and students of color.

Finally, anti-racist educators must be willing to *act* in response to issues of racial inequality and racial injustice in a comprehensive manner. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, racism operates at multiple levels within the schooling process (e.g., teaching, curriculum, assessment, etc.). Therefore, strategies aimed at identifying, resisting, and combating racial injustice in schools and classrooms must involve a comprehensive and multi-leveled approach. This requires educators to work collectively and collaboratively across multiple contexts to achieve the goal of racial justice for all students. Furthermore, without a comprehensive approach, anti-racist education is likely to yield results that are short lived and insignificant in nature.

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