Race Talk and the Conspiracy of Silence: Understanding and Facilitating Difficult Dialogues on Race

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Preface to the Paperback Edition

Why do attempts at racial dialogue fail so miserably? I have found that simply encouraging people to discuss race issues without understanding what it entails can actually prove detrimental and harmful. Unless one understands the dynamics and meaning of racial conversations, and unless it is carefully planned, racial dialogues can actually backfire and create greater chasms between groups.
Racial dialogues represent a clash of racial realities.

Herein lay one of the major obstacles to honest and meaningful racial conversations. Many well-intentioned citizens harbor deep-seated fears about possessing unconscious racial biases that assail their images of being good, moral and decent human beings who would never intentionally discriminate. Race talk threatens to unmask the ugly secrets of personal prejudices. Ironically, successful racial dialogues as a means to increase awareness and compassion can only come about when we acknowledge and take responsibility for our implicit biases and behaviors.

SECTION ONE
The Characteristics, Dynamics, and Meaning of Race Talk

CHAPTER ONE
What Is Race Talk?

Race Talk Represents a Potential Clash of Racial Realities

!   Studies show that racial microaggressions may appear harmless and trivial, but they are detrimental to mental and physical health, and create disparities in employment, education, and health care (American Psychological Association [APA] Presidential Task Force on Preventing Discrimination and Promoting Diversity, 2012; Sue, 2010).

...it goes without saying that the racial reality of people of color is dif-ferent than that of White Americans. Dialogues on race seldom bridge these worldviews as they are often antagonistic to one another. The racial reality of most White Americans is of a nation that has conquered racism, that we now live in a postracial era, that racism is a thing of the past, that equal access and opportunity are available to everyone, and that we should be a color-blind soci-ety (Bell, 2002, 2003; Bolgatz, 2005; Neville, Awad, Brooks, Flores, & Bluemel, 2013; Pollock, 2004).

As the earlier quote from the Chinese American journalist indi-cates, Whites "don't initially view things in terms of race, while people of color normally do." Even this statement, however, belies the real truth; Whites do view race issues through the prism of their own race and culture (Whiteness), and thus race is always a factor. Whiteness in terms of race is just invisible to them because it represents a default standard from which to compare every-thing else.

!   When teachers complain that students of color should not bring their cultural baggage into the classroom, they are unaware that is precisely what they, themselves, are doing (bringing in their cultural baggage and perspectives—White Euro-American norms related to education and teach-ing, curriculum, history, etc.). Whites view race as residing in others, but not themselves. They may not realize that Whiteness is the background from which the figure of difference emerges.

Race Talk Pushes Emotional Hot Buttons

!!!   ...it is important to note Mark Kiselica's open admission to racist thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. As a White psychologist, he offers insights into the reasons why many Whites fear open dialogues on race; they may ulti-mately reveal unpleasant secrets about themselves. In his own racial/cultural awakening, he realizes that discussing race and racism is so difficult for many Whites because they are racked with guilt about how people of color have been treated in the United States, fearful that they will be accused of being a racist, and blamed for the oppression of others. Maintaining one's innocence by avoiding racial topics is a major strategy used to hold on to one's self-image as a good, moral, and decent human being who is innocent

of racial bias and discrimination. Kiselica's reflection is a powerful statement that addresses a major question: Can anyone born and raised in our society not inherit the racial biases of our ancestors and institutions? When I pose this question to my students, surprisingly an overwhelming number say no. In other words, on an intellectual level they admit that we are products of our social conditioning and escaping internalizing biases and prejudices is impossible. Yet, when racial biases are discussed, they have great difficulty entertaining the notion that they have personally inherited racial biases; "racism resides in others, but not me!"

Race Talk Evokes Avoidance Strategies

Avoiding direct discus-sions of race and attempting to transcend race has been a strategy he has used to maintain his authority as president. Unfortunately, these maneuvers tend to have a major downside: They maintain the superficiality of race talk and implicitly suggest that racial discussions are divisive and deviant.

!   Nervousness, fear, and discomfort are frequently manifested in telltale behav-ioral signs: White people increase their personal space between themselves and people of color, become fidgety, avoid eye contact, and blink excessively (Trawalter & Richeson, 2008).

Why Is Successful Race Talk Important?

...exposure is not enough, especially if diversity does not lead to interra-cial contact and dialogue (APA Presidential Task Force, 2012; Sorensen et al., 2009). For example, it has been found that interracial contact as a means to dispel stereotypes and biases is one condition that must prevail to have a positive effect (Allport, 1954; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006). But in spite of being a diverse society, we are not an integrated one despite living and working next to one another. I frequently ask students in my classes on race, for example, the following question: "How many of you live in an integrated neighborhood?" Because Columbia University is in Harlem and because apartments and housing are less expensive than in other parts of Manhattan, a good percentage of students raise their hands eagerly to show that they practice nondiscrimination. I generally respond with this statement: "There is a difference between living in Harlem and how you live in Harlem." When I explore the meaning of this statement with them, the following facts about their lived experiences arise. First, although students live in the Harlem neighborhood, they seldom participate in community events, seldom shop in the local retail outlets or grocery stores, seldom attend the Black churches, seldom socialize with their Black neighbors, and only engage in the most casual and superficial conversations about race. So, although they live near African American neighbors, their whole orientation is toward the Columbia University campus, Midtown, Downtown, and the Village. So, although we may live next to people who differ from us in terms of race, culture, and eth-nicity; work side-by-side with one another; or go to school with classmates of color, sadly, we do not engage in meaningful racial dialogues with one another.

CHAPTER TWO
The Characteristics
and Dynamics of Race Talk

!!! 	Although none of us would sup-port racist statements and racism, public condemnation, ironically, may work against honest race talk and the eradication of bigotry. The lesson people learn in watching these events is "Don't express your true thoughts and feelings about race in public, because bad things will happen to you." This is one of the issues we address in this book.

But, what exactly is race talk? What characteristics form the basis of a difficult dialogue on race? What makes it so difficult for people to honestly dialogue about race? If racial dialogues are an important means to combat racism and discrimination, how can we make people more comfortable and willing to explore racial topics?

What Are Characteristics of Race Talk?

Although our focus has been in an educational context, I believe the findings are equally applicable to all racial dialogues whether they occur in education, employment, health care, or the media.
LB: why?

The apprehension about a racial dialogue can result in rhetorical incoherence, a term coined by Bonilla-Silva (2006) in reference to difficulty in articulation, barely audible speech, voice constriction, trembling voices, and mispronunciation of common words asso-ciated with race.

...participants in race talk often feel that their perspectives or world-views are being challenged and invalidated (Bell, 2002, 2003); the result is that they feel compelled to defend their positions. Rather than a dialogue (listening and exchanging ideas), race talk becomes a monologue where the participants simply state and restate their initial positions, oftentimes with greater intensity and conviction.

How Do Social Ground Rules (Norms) Impede Race Talk?

!! 	Race talk is not only a clash of racial realities, but reenacts the differen-tial power relationship between a dominant group master narrative (Whites) and the less powerful socially devalued group counter-narrative (persons of color; Sue et al., 2007).

!!!   The counter-narratives of race talk are extremely threatening to Whites and to our society because they may unmask the secrets of power and privilege, and how the public transcript of a master narrative justifies the continued subordination of people of color (Bell, 2003; Sue, 2005). If racism is a thing of the past and no longer a force in the lives of people of color, for example, it allows Whites to maintain their innocence and naïveté while absolving them from taking personal responsibility to rectify injustices (Accapadi, 2007; Feagin, 2001; Frankenberg, 1997; Sue, 2005).

Race Talk Violates the Politeness Protocol

Addressing topics of race, racism, Whiteness, and White privilege are discouraged in favor of friendly and noncontroversial topics. In mixed company (social gatherings, public forums, classrooms, and neighborhood events), race talk is seen as improper and impo-lite and potentially divisive, creating disagreements, offending participants, and working against social harmony (APA Presidential Task Force, 2012; Zou & Dickster, 2013). In social interactions, the focus is generally on small talk and pleasantries that do not result in conflicting opinions/beliefs.

Violating these conversation conventions can have very negative consequences as to how one is perceived (rude or complaining) and treated in future interactions (dismissed and retal-iated against; Rasinki & Czopp, 2010; Zou & Dickter, 2013).

Race Talk Violates the Color-Blind Protocol

Others have concluded that the pretense of not seeing color and avoiding critical consciousness of race lowers empathic ability, dims perceptual awareness, maintains false illusions, and allow Whites to live in a world of false deception (Bell, 2002; Kawakami, Dunn, Karmali, & Dovidio, 2009; Spanierman, Poteat, Beer, & Armstrong, 2006; Sue, 2005).

Why Is Race Talk So Difficult and Uncomfortable for Participants?

The Impact of Race Talk on Students and Faculty of Color

Interestingly, maintaining neutrality often enraged students of color, who looked to the professor of color for support and validation.

!   ...<u>reveal how unprepared they were to facilitate such heated exchanges</u> (Pasque et al., 2013). They frankly admitted that they felt paralyzed and helpless, and feared having the incident become the classroom from hell. Ironically, by leaving racial offenses unspoken and untouched, they created an elephant in the room that interfered with learning and perpetuated a hostile, invalidating, and racially charged classroom climate for students of color (Solórzano, Ceja, & Yasso, 2000).

(1) Fear of Appearing Racist

Earlier, I indicated how many Whites pretend not to notice differences in an attempt to appear nonracist. One of their greatest fears is that whatever is said or done during a race conversation may be misunderstood and deemed racist. Thus, when a race topic arises, they are likely to become quite guarded and deliberate in their responses. The verbal exchanges are likely to be superficial and noncommittal as they engage in strategic color blindness and other maneuvers to prevent the commission of unintended racial blunders. When topics of race or racism arise, they become anxious, constricted, and cautious in what they say. Remaining silent or consciously screening and censoring out anything they consider to be racially offensive become the hallmark of their communications. Unfortunately, research shows that such strategies are often unsuccessful and may have directly the opposite effect (Shelton, Richeson, Salvatore, & Trawalter, 2005; Vorauer & Turpie, 2004). <u>In a laboratory experiment between Black and White volunteers, for example, Shelton and col-leagues (2005) found that those who engaged in attempts to appear unbiased often made their stance very unclear and distorted, appeared inauthentic, and were perceived as being more racist. It appears that people who expend con-siderable energy to appear nonprejudiced make very poor conversational part-ners, resulting in behaviors that communicate distance and phony friendliness.</u>

(2) Fear of Realizing Their Racism

Below the fear of appearing racist lies an even more dreaded one: the realiza-tion that Whites harbor biased and prejudicial attitudes, albeit unknowingly (Sue, 2005). Although it can be debated whether anyone born and raised in the United States is immune from inheriting the racial biases of their forebears, research on aversive racism and implicit bias support the notion that most, if not all, have internalized prejudicial attitudes and behaviors (Dovidio, Gaert-ner, Kawakami, & Hodson, 2002; J. M. Jones, 1997). These implicit biases are extremely resistant to change as they operate outside the level of conscious awareness and make their appearance in subtle ways (i.e., racial microaggres-sions; Boysen & Vogel, 2008). Because most Whites experience themselves as good, moral, and fair-minded human beings who actively stand against overt acts of discrimination (hate crimes and obvious discriminatory acts), it is dis-turbing for them to realize that they possess racial biases. Race talk has the potential to

open the can of worms by moving beyond the fear of appearing racist to being one. The teachings of democracy, equity, and equal access and opportunity that Whites profess to hold can be seriously challenged in race talk. The realization that one holds biased beliefs and attitudes, and has acted in discriminatory ways toward people of color, shatters a self-image of good-ness many Whites hold about themselves. To accept this fact is truly alarming because it means acknowledging responsibility for the pain and suffering of others. This realization is likely to be strongly resisted and the feelings of anxi-ety, defensiveness, and anger during race talk are indicative of this realization.

(3) Fear of Confronting White Privilege

To confront issues of race and racism is to confront Whiteness and White privi-lege (Spanierman et al., 2006; Sue & Sue, 2013; Watt, 2007). McIntosh (2002) has indicated that Whiteness is an invisible veil and represents a default standard by which differences are seen and judged. She further defines White privilege as the unearned benefits and advantages that accrue to Whites by virtue of their skin color (not necessarily due to their own efforts). The following statement is often used to illustrate privilege on the part of George W. Bush when he first ran for president of the United States: "George W. Bush was born on third base but believes he hit a triple." Like many White males who have attained positions of power and influence, the former president believes that he sacrificed and worked hard to attain the presidency. Invisible to him and many White Amer-icans are two facts: (1) Many persons of color and women have worked equally hard if not harder but don't even make it to the batter's box, and (2) Bush ben-efited from White privilege, male privilege, and economic privilege.

Confronting White privilege in race talk means entertaining the possibility that meritocracy is a myth, that Whites did not attain their positions in life solely through their own efforts, that they have benefited from the historical and current racist arrangements and practices of society, and that they have been advantaged in society to the detriment of people of color. As J. M. Jones (1997) indicates, White privilege cannot exist outside the confines of White supremacy. Race talk threatens to unmask the hidden secret that the superior positions of many Whites were attained through the oppression of people of color and through current inequitable arrangements.

(4) Fear of Taking Personal Responsibility to End Racism

!   Working through fears of appearing racist, acknowledging biased social conditioning, owning up to racist attitudes and beliefs, and realizing that one has benefited from White privilege are important changes, but they are not enough. Race talk ultimately asks White Americans a moral question that moves beyond these fears. If denying one's role in the perpetuation of inequities can no longer be placed on lack of awareness or naïveté, and if one realizes that silence and inaction are to collude in the oppressions of others, we must ask, How

is it possible to allow situations of oppression and injustice to continue without taking personal responsibility to end them?

"!!   In a study aimed at participants' actual and anticipated response to a Black racial slur, experimenters found that White participants who predicted they would be upset with witnessing a racist act and would reject the racist actu-ally experienced little emotional distress and did little to change their behav-iors toward the perpetrator (Kawakami et al., 2009). In other words, although White Americans are well intentioned and honestly believe that in the face of racism they would act to end it, the tendency by most to do nothing is more the norm. Someone once said that the ultimate White privilege is the ability to acknowledge one's privilege, but do nothing about it. And frankly, this is where I believe the last battle must be waged. Race talk reminds Whites that they have both the responsibility and power to take action against racism and oppression. Accepting the existence of personal bias and utilizing this aware-ness to rectify injustices, however, is not an easy task.

Conclusions

!!!!!   For White Americans, the greatest obstacle to honest racial discourse is to make the invisible visible: how silence allows them to maintain a false belief in their own racial innocence, avoid personal blame for the oppression of others, and dodge responsibility to combat racism and oppression. Race talk threatens to unmask unpleasant and unflattering secrets about their roles in the per-petuation of oppression. Avoiding racial dialogues seems to have basic functions related to denial. The denial of color is really a denial of differences. The denial of differences is really a denial of power and privilege. The denial of power and privilege is really a denial of personal benefits that accrue to Whites by virtue of racial inequities. The denial that they profit from racism is really a denial of responsibility for their racism.

CHAPTER THREE
The Stories We Tell:
White Talk Versus Back Talk

Telling on Racism: Unmasking Ugly Secrets

The master narrative of our culture tells us (a) that we are a democratic society; (b) that we are good, moral, and decent human beings; (c) that egalitarian relations are valued; (d) that truth and justice are important; (e) that equal access and opportunity are hallmarks of our society; (f) that prejudice and discrimination are bad; (g) that hard work and individual effort are the pathways to success; (h) that people should not be judged by the color of their skin; and (i) that

although racism is abhorrent, it is now a thing of the past (Bell, 2002, 2003; Frankenberg, 1997; Sue, 2003, 2013).

A Tale of Two Stories: Themes from White Talk and Back Talk

Theme 1: We Live in a Meritocratic Society

The belief in hard work as the key to success is part of the Protestant ethic that implies a strong relationship between ability, effort, and success.

Theme 2: Racism Is a Thing of the Past

White talk is filled with themes that depict racism as only a historical injus-tice, portray our society as transcending our racial past, and suggest that prej-udice and discrimination are no longer major factors in the lives of people of color.

Theme 3: Color Blindness: Minimizing Differences or Pretending Not to See Them

In this case, there is possible recognition of differences, but Jack and many White Ameri-cans prefer to stress commonalities or the universal level of identity—we are all members of the human race. This mentality suggests that stressing sim-ilarities leads to greater group cohesion (Sue & Sue, 2013). Although there is great merit in acknowledging and stressing commonalities of the human condition, the belief that pretending not to notice differences (race, culture, and ethnicity) contains a hidden message: There is something wrong with dif-ferences, and they ultimately lead to conflict. It has the unintended conse-quence of equating racial differences with being bad or deviant.

Theme 4: Invisibility of Power and Privilege

!   Strangely enough, Whiteness is most visible to people of color when it is denied, when it evokes puzzlement or negative reactions, and when it is equated with normality.

!   Seen from this perspective, the melting pot (a seemingly harmless and neutral concept) is in actuality a justification for political oppression and imposition—historical European colonization toward the Americas. The melt-ing pot concept is a demand for forced compliance to the norms and standards of a dominant group who impose their power over other groups.

!   Second, although early White immigrants encountered prejudice and discrimination when arriving in this country, they were seen as not American enough. It took several generations, but when the children of immigrants became westernized, they could usually be expected to be accepted by other Whites. Thus early ethnic immigrants of largely Protestant

and Anglo-Saxon background from countries such as Britain, Germany, Ireland, and Italy could expect to melt in and be accepted if they were White. Despite assimilating and acculturating, however, people of color are told in no uncertain terms that they continue to be unwelcome, undesirable, and inferior because of their visible racial ethnic differences. They can never be "true Americans."

Theme 5: Denial of Individual Racism

"Racists are only the skinheads, the Klan, and White supremacists—I am not like them." When people of color hear such statements, they immediately become vigilant and, rightly or wrongly, perceive the speaker as attempting to hide personal biases or as telling sincere fictions.

Which Is The True Story?

👀　　Despite the voluminous research studies we have referred to in our description of the storytelling themes, especially as they support the perception of people of color, many Whites are disinclined to alter their way of viewing themselves and the world they live in. Why this is so will be discussed in a later chapter. While asking White folks about their White-ness may prove beneficial at some levels, accepting their answers as truth is unlikely to elicit a deeper understanding of racial reality. This is not meant as a put-down of White Americans but acknowledges the invisibility of White-ness and all that accompanies it.

Common sense, for example, would lead us to conclude that people of color understand White people better than White folks understand persons of color. People of color operate within a White world and are forced to operate within that context. They are taught White ways, the English language, White Western European history and culture, and the thoughts and feelings of White Ameri-cans from the moment of birth or from the time they arrive in the United States. They attend all-White schools, are exposed to a Euro-American curriculum, work for White-controlled places of employment, and are subjected to a White justice system (Sue, 2003). They are also exposed to the beliefs, attitudes, val-ues, biases, and prejudices of the dominant society. White Americans, however, seldom have much experience with people of color. While Whites may claim to have friends of color, they do not socialize together nor have much inti-mate contact with persons of color once they leave their places of employment. Although they may attend ethnic celebrations, dine in community restaurants to sample ethnic foods, or participate in fundraising for good causes related to ethnic arts and/or humanitarian goals, they often remain on the outskirts of the groups they hope to help or understand. Whites are acquainted with only the most superficial cosmetic workings of ethnic minority groups.

Hearing the Meaning of Back Talk

Once race talk moves from an external public struggle to an internal personal struggle of conscience, it becomes frighteningly unpleasant for many White Americans.

SECTION TWO
The Constraining Ground
Rules for Race Talk

CHAPTER FOUR
"The Entire World's
a Stage!"

...impression management strategies.

The Politeness Protocol and Race Talk

Managing Impressions: The Roles Played by Actors

When in mixed company, especially casual acquaintances or strangers, people attempt to manage and influence the images that others have of them. Social psycholo-gists believe that there are three types of selves that we try to project to others using self-presentation techniques or tactics (Bolino & Turnley, 1999): the authentic self, the ideal self, and the tactical self.

!!!   The label racist is a socially horrendous label, and an abhorrent and vile stigma to most ordinary White citizens. Thus, we are motivated to have others perceive us as people who stand for egalitarian ideals, equal access and opportunities, and the importance of civil and human rights. This is the image we like to project to others. Ironically enough, the impression management strategies most well-intentioned people use to uphold this image are those used by White supremacists and avowed racists as well. Although the latter group consciously tries to deceive others by portraying their tacti-cal selves in public, most ordinary citizens try to deceive not only others, but themselves as well.

The Strategies and Techniques of Acting

Compliments vary from true admiration, to exag-gerations, to outright falsehoods.

Impression management strategies tend to enhance a favorable image of the self, downplay possible negative attributions of the self by others, and mask or conceal the authentic self for the purpose of social harmony.

!!!	Race talk or discussions of race have the potential to be divisive topics that can destroy social synchrony in interpersonal interactions. It is a socially taboo topic that often pushes powerful emotional hot buttons in peo-ple; exposes major differences in worldviews; creates discord, disagreement, and conflict; and threatens social harmony. When topics on race, racism, power, and privilege arise in conversations, the ground rules governing how they are handled and discussed among individuals are triggered and influenced by the norms of social context, the impression management strategies used by par-ticipants, and the implicit and explicit conflict-avoidant transactions. In such situations, a conspiracy of silence operates to prevent the authentic self from emerging, and what is presented in the tactical self is often inauthentic in order to preserve social harmony. The storyteller observed that discussions on race seemed superficial as people danced around the topic or failed to weigh in on it, which is often the result of impression management strategies employed by participants.

The Academic Protocol and Race Talk

The conditions that would facilitate a meaningful diffi-cult dialogue on race, for example, may be at odds with learning assumptions, policies, and practices of the academic environment (hooks, 1994; Palmer, 2007).

Extraneous variables that need to be controlled or eliminated are often the emotions, opinions, and preconceived notions of researchers, teachers, and participants. Truth seeking in Western science operates from several basic assumptions:

Empirical reality is valued over experiential reality; (b) the mode of know-ing is accomplished through breaking down phenomena into distinct and sep-arate units or objects; (c) data, facts, and knowledge (truth) exist when they can be observed and measured via one of the five senses; and (d) universal prin-ciples are the hallmark of science so that cultural influences and differences are minimized. The concepts of separation, isolation, and even individualism in human relationships are hallmarks of the Euro-American worldview and, thus, not surprisingly, are foundational to our educational system.

Empirical Reality Versus Experiential Reality

!!   ...opinions, beliefs, feelings, knowledge, ideas, and information have credibility and reliability only when put to an empirical test. As we have seen in previous chapters, race talk is about storytelling or bearing witness to one's lived reality or experience (Bryan et al., 2012; Willow, 2008). Oftentimes, <u>race talk from the perspective of people of color is inherently anecdotal</u> and includes stories of the pain and suffering of racism, and is subjective in nature, <u>experiential</u>, and <u>unverifiable</u> in the immediacy of the moment.

Thus, when dialogues on race occur in the classroom, experiential reality is not considered as reliable and valid information because it is contaminated by opinions, idiosyncratic experiences, emotions, and personal values. As a result, knowledge acquired and accepted through storytelling is considered to be an inadequate source of information and generally false.

Physical sciences adhere strongly to empirical reality, whereas the social sciences (psychology, sociology, and anthropology) are considered less scientific; as a result, social sciences often attempt to mimic the higher status of physical sciences by adopting quantification, objectification, and logic/rationality to studying the human condition. In many respects, such an approach ultimately distances "ways of knowing" or renders the means of ask-ing and answering questions about the human condition to an abstract hypo-thetical level that dilutes, diminishes, and disconnects empirical reality from experiential or lived realities.

Reason Versus Emotion

...<u>the three Ds: disruptive, dysfunctional, and disrespectful</u>. Emotions such as anger and frustration, for example, are disruptive to Western European classroom decorum where calm discussions filled with logic and reasoning are philosophically aspects of appropriate student and faculty conduct (Valentine et al., 2012).

Most educators consider the strong expression of emotions, especially anger, as disruptive and not conducive to learning.

The prevailing implicit assumption in academic circles is that emotions are antagonistic to reason, that learning occurs when topics are discussed calmly. When a discussion on race becomes heated, students are admonished by teachers to not let their emotions get the best of them, to calm down, and to speak to one another with respect (Sue, 2010). Anger is seen as dysfunctional (even pathological) during race talk, so instructors feel com-pelled to control its intensity and expression.

One of the major obstacles to race talk is the common assumption that dif-ferent cultural groups operate according to identical speech and communica-tion conventions. Black styles of communication are often high key, animated, heated, interpersonal, and confrontational. Many emotions, affects, and feel-ings are generated (Hall, 1976; Shade & New, 1993; Weber, 1985). In a debate, Blacks tend to act as advocates of a position, and ideas are to be tested in the crucible of argumentation (Banks & Banks, 1993; Kochman, 1981). White middle class styles,

however, are characterized as being detached and objective, impersonal and nonchallenging. The person acts not as an advocate of the idea, but as a spokesperson (truth resides in the idea). A discussion of issues should be devoid of affect because emotion and reason work against one another. One should talk things out in a logical fashion without getting personally involved.

...experiencing embedded or nested feelings associated with our beliefs and memories about different groups are preconditions to dealing with our anxieties associated with race and racism.

<u>"Most whites begin with a good deal of amnesia."</u>

The challenge for education as we shall see in the later chapters is not that one way of knowing and learning is better than the other, but for educators to integrate both to make education, self-knowledge, and understanding meaningful and life changing.

Objectivism Versus Subjectivism

"   According to Palmer (2007), objectivity in teaching is the major culprit that creates disconnection between teachers, their subjects, their students, and the ability to learn from lived experience:

For objectivism, the subjective self is the enemy most to be feared—a Pandora's box of opinion, bias, and ignorance that will distort our knowledge once the lid flies open. We keep the lid shut by relying exclusively on reason and facts, logic and data that cannot be swayed by subjective desire. . . . The role of the mind and the senses in this scheme is not to connect us to the world but to hold the world at bay, lest our knowledge of it be tainted.

In objectivism, subjectivity is feared not only because it contaminates things but because it creates relationships between those things and us—and relationships are contaminating as well. When a thing ceases to be an object and becomes a vital, interactive part of our lives—whether it is a work of art, an indigenous people, or an ecosystem—it might get a grip on us, biasing us toward it, thus threatening the purity of our knowledge once again.

So objectivism, driven by fear, keeps us from forging relationships with the things of the world. Its modus operandi is simple; when we distance ourselves from something, it becomes an object; when it becomes an object, it no longer has life; when it is lifeless, it cannot touch or transform us, so our knowledge of the thing remains pure.

=O!!   Our worship of science reveals the value placed on symbolic logic, analytical and linear approaches, and the ability to tease out parts from the whole. The results of this overriding philosophy of life are also reflected in our educational system, legal system (individual rights), standards of healthy development and functioning (autonomy, independence, and being your

own person), definition of the family (nuclear family vs. extended family), and even religion (separation of church and state).

IG"   While individualism as a value has many positive components, is it possi-ble that its extreme form may lead to an unhealthy separation between people? When you objectify others, see them as distinct from you, and perceive your relationships with people as less desirable than separation and objectification, is it possible that you may also be prone to dehumanize them? Because your world revolves around you, others are less important. Others become objec-tified, and in many cases dehumanized as well.

as long as you do not feel connected to the other beings and do not perceive them as part of you, injustice and oppression are not disturbing.

If your disconnection from others allows racism to thrive, then the solution might lie in becoming connected with one another by viewing humanity as all-encompassing and inherently unifying. In that respect, if the us-and-them thinking is replaced by the collective we, then what happens to one person happens to all.

CHAPTER FIVE
Color-Blind Means
Color-Mute

As in the politeness and academic protocols, color blindness works against honest racial dialogues by intentionally or uninten-tionally ignoring race and/or physical differences associated with it.

The mother's reaction communicated clearly to the child that talking about racial differences was a taboo topic.

"Colorblindness refers to a set of beliefs that individuals' group membership or physical appearance is not and should not be influential in how we perceive, evaluate, make decisions about, or formulate public policy toward them" (APA Presidential Task Force, 2012, p. 9). In other words, color blindness is a belief that race should not and does not matter in judging a person's character and should not influence decisions or actions toward individuals or groups, which overlooks the notion that racism continues to be a significant negative factor in the lives of people of color. It can be said to be comprised of three over-lapping processes: (1) attempts to deny differences by adhering to the idea of sameness and equity (color-evasion), (2) attempts to disassociate problematic racial beliefs from implicitly held ones (stereotype-evasion), and (3) attempts to avoid acknowledging the continuing existence of structural or institutional racism in society (power-evasion).

Regardless, by intentionally or unintentionally ignoring race and racial differences, race is relegated to being an insignificant factor in the lives of people of color. As long as one professes color blindness, race talk is avoided and muted.

Color-Evasion: "We Are All the Same Under the Skin"

Color Blindness: An Aspiration Goal

The erroneous assumptions contained in this philosophy can be stated in the following way: (a) It is possi-ble for individuals to be color-blind or to not see race, (b) not acknowledging and talking about race will make one appear nonprejudiced, and (c) color blindness as a means to promote equality can be successful (Apfelbaum, Pauker, Sommers, & Ambady, 2011).

Explaining the phenomenon of color blindness or the discrepancy between perception of racial differences and its conscious acknowledgment has been labeled strategic color blindness (Apfelbaum et al., 2008).

In their attempts to appear nonprejudiced, many well-intentioned Whites employ a strategy to make them appear free of bias by not acknowledging and talking about race even when race is a relevant factor (APA Presidential Task Force, 2012). Many studies suggest, however, that this strategy may backfire and actually make the person appear more prejudiced (Apfelbaum et al., 2008; Tynes & Markoe, 2010; Vorauer & Kumhyr, 2001; Vorauer & Turpie, 2004). In general, these studies indicate that when involved in an interracial dyad or when placed in an environment in which race is salient, many White participants become concerned that whatever they say or do may be construed as being prejudicial. Self-regulation strategies or impression management (being careful what to say or how to say it, or pretending not to notice race) may be employed, but they exact a psychic toll on the person, resulting in considerable depletion of psychological resources (Richeson & Shelton, 2007).

...energies were diverted toward a favorable image of themselves (Richeson, Trawalter, & Shelton, 2005).

Color blindness as a means to attain social justice and equity has also been shown to be highly unsuccessful in eliminating prejudice and discrimination (APA Presidential Task Force, 2012; J.M. Jones, 1997; Neville et al., 2013; Plaut et al., 2009).

A multicultural ideology stresses the importance of group differences and celebrates their positive contributions, whereas a color-blind ideology stresses ignoring or minimizing group differences.

First, they found that minimizing group differences reinforced majority group dominance and minority group marginalization in the work-place. In a climate of color blindness, it appears that employees of color feel excluded and disengage from their work roles, resulting in lower productivity.

...color blindness actually predicts greater bias, whereas multiculturalism predicts lowe bias (Neville et al., 2000; Plaut et al., 2009; Richeson & Nussbaum, 2004).

Color Blindness: Belief in Sameness

To be color-blind not only denies the central importance of racial differences in the psychologi-cal experience of minorities (racism and discrimination), but also allows the White person to deny how his or her Whiteness intrudes upon the person of color.

Stereotype-Evasion: "I Don't Believe in Those Stereotypes"

Psychologists believe that in early childhood (up until 3 or 4 years of age), children are relatively naive about the meaning of racial and cultural differ-ences, although they do recognize social categories and reveal a preference for facial features of their own group (Cassidy, Quinn, & Humphreys, 2011; Shutts, Banaji, & Spelke, 2010).

There is a tendency to be innocent, open, and spontaneous regarding racial differences. Such an open and naive orien-tation becomes less characteristic as the socialization process proceeds. The negative reactions of parents, relatives, friends, and peers toward other racial groups influence the perceptions of children. It is important to note that such messages send mixed signals to children, who are also taught that prejudice and discrimination are wrong, that we are all equal under the law, and that we should treat everyone the same.

Almost all studies on attitudes toward groups of color, however, indicate that explicit expressions of biased beliefs and attitudes have declined dramat-ically over the past 45 years (Dovidio et al., 2002; Gaertner & Dovidio, 2005). Many social scientists believe that the blatant expression of prejudice and bias have morphed into a contemporary or modern form of racism (DeVos & Banaji, 2005; Dovidio et al., 2002; Sue, Nadal, et al., 2008).

Thus, it is possible to consciously know that a stereotype of African Americans (being less intelligent) is inaccurate, but harbor the belief subconsciously (Devine, 1989; Dovidio & Gaertner, 2000).

White Americans have been more successful in disengaging the relationship of deviancy to racial differences on a public or conscious level than in an unconscious or implicit one (Baron & Banaji, 2006; Boysen & Vogel, 2008).

!   What may be even more surpris-ing is a study conducted by Boysen and Vogel (2008) that attempted to measure the effects of formal multicultural training in combating bias and stereotypes attributed to African Americans, lesbians, and gay men. Although explicit bias declined significantly with formal training, implicit bias toward these groups remained unchanged.

The effects on race talk are highly correlated with these findings and may indicate people's attempts to cling to conscious (explicit) beliefs of equality while disavowing their unconscious (implicit) biases. One method of doing this is to avoid talking about race by espousing color blindness. By ignoring race and not talking about it, the incongruence and conflict between hidden biases and stereotypes with conscious beliefs of equity remains hidden (Sue, 2010). Support for this assertion can be found in a study of children ages 8 to 11 (Apfelbaum et al., 2011). The investigators found that (a) older children ages 10–11 were more likely to avoid using race as a descriptor than their younger counterparts, and (b) their responses mirrored that of their adult counterparts (Apfelbaum et al., 2008).

Power-Evasion: "Everyone Can Make It in Society, If They Work Hard Enough"

According to J. M. Jones (1997) cultural racism is the individual and institutional expression of the superiority of one group's cultural heritage over another, and institutional racism resides in the programs, policies, and practices of organizations.

Power-evasion has several consequences: (a) It denies the racialized experi-ences of people of color (that they are disadvantaged), (b) it denies the existence of privilege enjoyed by Whites (that they are advantaged), (c) it perpetuates the myth of meritocracy, (d) it masks or makes invisible structural inequities in our society, (e) it sustains the social hierarchy by providing a cover of inno-cence, and (f) it justifies inaction in tackling racial inequities brought about through power and privilege (APA Presidential Task Force, 2012; J. M. Jones, 1997; Neville et al., 2013; Ponterotto, Utsey, & Pedersen, 2006; Sue, 2003).

As more and more White immigrants came to the North Amer-ican continent, the guiding principle of blending the many cultures together became codified into such terms as the melting pot and assimilation/acculturation.

The ultimate hope was that these early immigrants would forge a new national identity in which there would be a shared language, culture, and history (Takaki, 1998).

If there is anything that can be termed White culture, it is the synthesis of ideas, values, and beliefs coalesced from descendants of White European ethnic groups in the United States (Barongan et al., 1997).

First, the melting pot seems to have been meant for White Euro-Americans only. A basic important tenet of assimilation and acculturation is the existence of a <u>receptive society</u>. That is, once a person has learned the language and customs of the group and now accepts those desired values, he or she should become a full member of the society with all the rights and privileges that follow. But, despite how acculturated people of color become, they are never fully accepted by the dominant culture.

<u>The new Europeans were seen as not American enough, and they were pressured to give up their strange and threatening ways and to assimilate.</u>

Many psychologists of color, however, have referred to this process as <u>cultural genocide</u>, <u>an outcome of colonial thought</u> (Guthrie, 1997; Thomas & Sillen, 1972).

Let us, for the moment, assume that assimilation is desirable and that becoming a part of your coun-try of residence is important. The question is this: Shouldn't we, therefore, all become Native Americans? Further, why aren't we? Answering these two ques-tions brings us into the realm of sociopolitical discussions of power. It is clear that <u>assimilation is not a concept of equality, but one of power</u>. Who has the power to determine the direction of assimilation? The early immigrants to the North American continents imposed their will upon the indigenous people of the land. They had no inclination or thoughts to assimilate or acculturate to the customs and norms of the American Indians. True assimilation and accul-turation is based upon an equal status relationship, wherein different groups have equal influence upon one another.

Myth of the Melting Pot

One might even conclude that the ideal of melting is to become as White as possible.

<u>Institutional racism</u> that benefits or favors Whites is seen in all facets of our society: bank lending practices, access to health care, housing, jobs, edu-cation, media portrayals, law enforcement, and court decisions that mete out justice.

"   Race talk is frightening because it threatens to destroy the fabric of naïveté and innocence that has shielded many from acknowledging their continuing roles as unintentional oppressors in a cultural context that is inherently unfair to people of color.

SECTION THREE
Why Is It Difficult for People of Color to Honestly Talk About Race?

CHAPTER SIX
"What Are the Consequences for Saying What I Mean?"

It seems that White America exhibits minimal appreciation for the incredible strength and resiliency that we have shown in surviving and sometimes flourishing in the face of racism. Our experiences of oppression have required us to sharpen and hone our survival skills to such a degree that they now represent assets. We have learned this through the courageous and undefeatable actions of our ancestors who showed us the way. It is ironic that overcoming adversity has led us to develop an ability to understand the minds of our oppressors with astounding clarity.

These experiences have taught people of color to be wary about what Whites profess about themselves, to be constantly vigilant about the motives and actions of others, and to approach the world with a healthy skepticism when racial issues arise.

Ethnocentric Monoculturalism

!   The power of racial microaggressions is in their invisibility because they represent a subconscious worldview of inclusion-exclusion, superiority-inferiority, normality-abnormality, expressed through the norms, values, and standards derived from White Euro-American perspective that are imposed upon marginalized groups in our society (Sue & Sue, 2013).

Component 1 — Belief in Superiority

Within the United States, there is a strong belief in the superiority of White Euro-American cultural heritage (history, arts/crafts, language, traditions, religion, values, etc.) as expressed in the mores, values, and standards of the group.

!! In race talk, for example, being calm and rational in discussing issues and not letting one's emotions get the best of him or her are often norms imposed upon participants.

The underlying White Euro-American belief here is that emotion is antagonistic to reason.

Component 2 — Belief in Inferiority of Others

Conversation conventions in Euro-American society, for example, assume that the behaviors and rules for speaking or interacting with others are universal and those who deviate from them are considered uneducated or breaking the mold of good conduct.

=O Among traditional Asian cultures, however, indirectness and subtlety in expressing oneself are seen as signs of maturity, wisdom, and appropriateness.

Component 3 — Manifestation in Institutions

As mentioned earlier, J. M. Jones's (1997) definition of institutional racism labels it as a set of priorities and accepted normative patterns designed to subjugate, oppress, and force dependence of individuals and groups on broad societal values. It does this by sanctioning unequal goals, unequal status, and unequal access to goods and services. It prescribes lesser roles for people of color and sanctions them through selective enforcement of laws—blocking economic opportunities and outcomes—and the imposition of compliance through assimilation and acculturation.

Component 4 — The Invisibility of White Racial Ideology
in Worldviews

That, as we have repeatedly emphasized, is why race talk is so threatening to their image as good, moral, and decent human beings.

No person acquired prejudices and misinformation through free choice; people were not born into the world wanting to be racist, sexist, or heterosexist.

Power and Oppression

! It is clear that the early founders had good intentions and meant well; they were not evil men whose conscious motivation was to oppress and dominate others.

(1) First, racism can be expressed through oppression by force in which control and compliance of people of color can be attained through coercion, threat, or duress. A succinct description of this form of oppression follows:

It is the act of imposing on another or others an object, label, role experience, or set of living conditions that is unwanted, needlessly painful, and detracts from physical or psychological well-being. An imposed object, in this context, can be anything from a bullet, a bludgeon, shackles, or fists, to a penis, unhealthy food, or abusive messages designed to cause or sustain pain, low self-efficacy, reduced self-determination, and so forth. Other examples of oppression by force can be demeaning hard labor, degrading job roles, ridicule, and negative media images and messages that foster and maintain distorted beliefs. (Hanna et al., 2000, p. 431)

(2) A second form of oppression is that of deprivation—the flip side of impo-sition by force described as

!! 	the act that deprives another or others of an object, role, experience, or set of living conditions that are desirable and conducive to physical or psychological well-being. It also includes the deprivation of loved ones, respect, or dignity. Neglect is another form of oppression in which a person is deprived of love, care, support, or vital services as well as basic material needs such as food, shelter, and clothing. (Hanna et al., 2000, p. 431)

Effects on Trust-Mistrust

...history and anecdotal tales are replete with examples of how, in the face of historical oppression and discrimination, African Americans employ strategies (behaviors toward Whites) that have proven successful for survival in a racist society.

Boyd-Franklin (2003, 2010) describes teaching Black children, especially males, (a) to express aggression indirectly in the face of insults and indignities, (b) to create as few waves as possible by engaging in ritualized accommodating/subordinating behaviors, and (c) to read the thoughts of others while hiding their own.

! 	...Whites are not truthful in stating what they think or believe. These statements and beliefs continue to contemporary times in which Whites are believed to hold biases, prejudices, and stereotypes that they consciously or unconsciously attempt to conceal.

Coping With Oppression — Heightened Perceptual Wisdom

!!! 	Whites do not realize that possessing unchecked power and con-trol over others often results in the dimming of their own perceptiveness and leads to a distorted reality.

Becoming aware of the customs and contradictions of the dominant group is a coping mechanism that maximizes survival.

People of color have been forced to operate within a predominantly White culture, and are taught the history, mores, and language of Western society from the moment of birth (Banks, 2004). They have been exposed to a Euro-American educational curriculum, work for White-controlled places of employment, and are subjected to a White justice system. In other words, they have been immersed in the prejudices of their oppressors and their biased institutions. Thus, their survival depends on how accurately they are able to discern the truth as it relates to the thoughts and actions of White Americans. For their survival, they have had to become hypervigilant in discerning the motives, attitudes, and the often unintentional biased contradictions of their White brothers and sisters. Their intuitive insights about White Americans and their biases often cause great discomfort and consternation to those in the dominant group. It is precisely this fear of being unmasked in the eyes of persons of color in public that creates much of the difficulty that Whites have in speaking about racism and oppression. Yet, it is exactly this heightened perception and wisdom that represents a valuable asset and an aspect of optimal human functioning among persons of color.

People of color often approach race talk with these questions
    (1) What makes you any different than my White teacher, White neighbor, or White employer who said one thing but meant another?
    (2) How aware are you of your racial biases and will they interfere with our ability to form a working relationship?
How a White person handles these challenges will either enhance or negate the success of race talk with their brothers and sisters of color.

CHAPTER SEVEN
"To Speak or How to Speak, That Is the Question"

Communication Styles

African American Styles

Daryl's challenging behavior and manner of presentation may represent his honesty and authentic connection to the ideas and beliefs he advocates. On the other hand, White styles of communication are in marked contrast to the conversation conventions of most Black Americans; Whites believe that discussions should be devoid of affect;

that one serves as a spokesperson (truth resides in the idea) not as an *advocate*; and that the debate should be objective, detached, and reasoned (Irvine&York, 1995). From the White perspective, Daryl lacks objectivity and is allowing emotions to cloud his judgment. From Daryl's perspective, however, his White colleagues are inauthentic, and he is disinclined to believe that they do not possess an opinion or a connection to their beliefs.

!!   Daryl is positively oriented toward cultural diversity and is <u>advocating it forcefully (not angrily). African Americans can easily distinguish between the two, but White Americans have great difficulty (Kochman, 1981).</u>

Nonverbal Communication

Kinesis

Many White teachers may be prone to view African AMerican students as being inattentive, sullen, resistant, or uncooperative. Going through the motions of looking at the person and nodding the head is not necessary for many African Americans to indicate that they are listening (Hall, 1974, 1976).

Paralanguage

<u>...White Americans frequently feel uncomfortable with a pause or silent stretch in the conversation, feeling obligated to fill it in with more talk.</u>

Nonverbal Communication in Race Talk: Sociopolitical Considerations

Nonverbals as Reflections of Bias

<u>The power of nonverbal communication is that it tends to be least under conscious control.</u>

<u>If people are unaware of their own biases, their nonverbals are most likely to reveal their true feelings. It is notable that studies suggest that women and minorities are better readers of nonverbal cues than are White males (Hall 1976; Jenkins, 1982; Pearson, 1986; Weber, 1985).</u>

Our racist attitudes, beliefs, and feelings are deeply ingrained in our total being.

As we have repeatedly emphasized, one of the dominant stereotypes of African Americans in our society is that of the hostile, angry, prone-to-violence Black male. The more animated and affective communication style, closer conversing distance, prolonged eye contact when speaking, greater bodily movements, and tendency to test ideas in a confrontational/argumentative format all contribute to Whites' belief that their lives are in danger, a la Bill and Jack's reactions to Daryl's communication style.

Being Constrained and Silenced: Impact on People of Color

Behavioral

Many Black students report that to convey their message and have it received the right way, they cannot be emotional while speaking. Squelching their natural style of communication to conform to White talk was often described as humiliating.

Emotional

...*anxiety* and outright fear of the personal consequences for raising issues of bias and unfairness were always on the minds of the targets. In many cases, people of color described enduring humiliation in silence for fear of retaliation from those with authority and power. Third, many describe an *emotional exhaustion* of having to constantly deal with a never-ending onslaught of microaggressions and being placed in a no-win, damned-if-you-do-and-damned-if-you-don't situation. If a person chooses to confront the microaggression, energy must be expended in defend-ing oneself, oftentimes with negative consequences. If a person chooses not to confront the situation, he or she must endure the affront in silence, often berating oneself for not having the courage to act on his or her convictions.

SECTION FOUR
Why Is It Difficult for White People to Honestly Talk About Race?

CHAPTER EIGHT
"I'm Not Racist!"

Cognitive Avoidance — Racism Denial

As mentioned previously, attempting to appear nonprejudiced through silence, avoidance, and lack of disclosure may actually make someone appear more biased because great energy is expended to conceal thoughts and feelings, thereby making the person appear less friendly or involved (Apfelbaum, Sommers, & Norton, 2008; Sue, 2010).

Denials that work against honest race talk come in many forms. There is denial that they are prejudiced, denial that racism still exists, denial that they are responsible for the oppression of others, denial of their advantaged and privileged status, denial that they hold power over people of color, and even denial that they are White (Feagin & Vera, 1992; McIntosh, 2002; Sue, 2010; Tatum, 1992; Todd Abrams, 2011).

Denials of Personal Bias, Prejudice, and Discrimination

All of these strategies allow the person to hide his or her prejudice through distortion or provide a seemingly alternative rational or legitimate reason. Further, they are nearly impregnable to unmask in that they are difficult to argue against.

Denials Through Deflections

!   The relationship of intent to action is often used in criminal law to determine the degree of responsibility of the perpetra-tor (murder and manslaughter varies depending upon the intent). In race talk, shifting the topic to intent is tactically very effective because proving biased intent is virtually impossible.

These allegations are conservative ploys used to silence back talk and allow White talk to dominate and to reinforce the master narrative of Whiteness. People of color who attempt to break away from these constraints earn labels as being troublemakers, peo-ple who have an ax to grind with White folks, or who are being excessively paranoid and oversensitive.

Emotional Avoidance — Fear, Guilt, and Other Feelings

!!   ...we identified <u>four major fear categories experienced by White Americans when race talk occurs: (1) fear of appearing racist, (2) fear of realiz-ing their racism, (3) fear of confronting White privilege, and (4) fear of taking personal responsibility to end racism.</u>

Anxiety and Fear

The insight and awareness is so painful and fearful because it directly challenges White people's self-image of themselves as good, moral, and decent human beings who do not discriminate.

Defensiveness and Anger

Whites who feel attacked may engage in behaviors or argumen-tative ploys that present denials and counterpoints because <u>they view the racial dialogue as a win–lose proposition</u>.

Guilt, Regret, and Remorse

<u>Guilt</u> as an emotion occurs when a person believes they have <u>violated an internal moral code</u>, and that they have <u>compromised their own standards of conduct</u>. The question becomes, why should Whites feel guilty when topics of race, racism, or Whiteness are discussed?

<u>Researchers have identified White guilt as one of the major psychosocial costs of racism for White individuals because it impacts empathic reactions to targets of racism</u> (Spanierman et al., 2006; Spanierman et al., 2009; Todd & Abrams, 2011). In other words, guilt seems to have several functions in race talk. First, the manifestation of guilt among Whites signals an internal conflict involving transgression of moral standards and culpability. <u>It may be experi-enced as a generalized low level of unease or discomfort, not fully acknowl-edged as guilt.</u> Second, its presence in Whites signals that self-awareness of one's complicity in racism is beginning to bubble to the surface. Denial, mysti-fication, and self-deception are weakening, and guilt, remorse, and regret are likely to follow if race talk is continued. The problem here is that <u>guilt can serve a dual function</u>; it propels people to take responsibility for their actions, or it negatively

diverts and works against self-awareness. Third, unless handled effectively, guilt may work against successful racial dialogues. Spanierman and colleagues (Spanierman et al., 2006; Spanierman et al., 2009) find support for these two forms of guilt. They label this second type fearful guilt in which Whites exhibit not only high guilt, but high fear of interracial interactions as well. Empathic ability is seriously compromised and people exhibiting fear-ful guilt report the fewest number of interracial friendships. The main goal for fearful guilt is to defend and ward off awareness and to preserve the positive self-image of the self as a White person.

Behavioral Avoidance — Helplessness and Hopelessness

....taking action is a means to alleviate feelings of guilt.

While self-change requires becoming a nonracist person, societal change requires becoming an antiracist one.

Hopelessness, however, is one of despair and of giving up, a self-belief that no action will matter and no solution will work.

In other words, helplessness and hopelessness are emotions that can provide cover for not taking action. They allow many Whites to not change for fear that their actions will result in the negative consequences previously expressed.

Emotional Roadblocks to Race Talk

There are many other powerful emotions often experienced by Whites during race talk. They include sadness, disappointment, humiliation, blame, invalida-tion, and so on. These feelings, along with those already discussed can make their appearance in dialogues on race at any point. The unpleasantness of these emotions and their potentially disturbing meanings make avoidance of racial dialogues a common strategy used by White Americans. As we have seen, the politeness and academic protocols discourage the negative expression of intense feelings, and oftentimes consider it to border on irrationality. There is great fear that those involved in a heated exchange may lose control and begin attacking one another. In one of our studies, we found that White professors, for example, tried to dampen down the emotions in race talk and table the dis-cussion for fear of losing control of the classroom situation (Sue, Torino, et al., 2009). Choosing not to deal with the conflict, however, led to the presence of an unresolved emotionally charged situation in the classroom that continued to affect the relationships between students despite not talking about it.

As long as emotions are left untouched, unacknowledged, and unexplored, they will serve as emotional roadblocks to successful race talk. Our research suggests that successful race talk

must allow for the free expression of nested and impacted feelings, acknowledge their legitimacy and importance in dialogues, and be deconstructed so their meanings are made clear (Sue, 2013; Sue et al., 2010; Sue, Torino, et al., 2009). Rather than seeing emotions as a hin-drance and barrier to race talk and rather than shutting them down, allowing them to bubble to the surface actually frees the mind and body to achieve understanding and insight. The cathartic relationship between memories, fears, stereotypic images, and the emotional release of feelings is captured in this passage by Sara Winter (1977, p. 27), who describes her own racial awakening:

Let me explain this healing process in more detail. We must unearth all the words and memories we generally try not to think about, but which are inside us all the time: "nigger," "Uncle Tom," "jungle bunny," "Oreo"; lynching, cattle prods, castrations, rapists, "black pussy," and black men with their huge penises, and hundreds more. (I shudder as I write.) We need to review three different kinds of material: (1) All our personal memories connected with blackness and black people including everything we can recall hearing or reading; (2) all the racist images and stereotypes we've ever heard, particularly the grossest and most hurtful ones; (3) any race-related things we ourselves said, did or omitted doing which we feel bad about today. . . . Most whites begin with a good deal of amnesia. Eventually the memories crowd in, especially when several people pool recollections. Emotional release is a vital part of the process. Experiencing feelings seems to allow further recollections to come. I need persistent encouragement from my companions to continue.

...Perhaps each success-ful individual racial dialogue should be perceived as planting seeds that will blossom fully in the near future.

CHAPTER NINE
"I'm Not White; I'm Italian!"

What Does It Mean to be White?

By viewing people only as individuals or as human beings, Whites are often able to avoid the group level of identity, and thus avoid acknowledging race or color and the ensuing implications (Sue & Sue, 2013).

39-year-old Black male Salesman

...being White means (a) having the power to define reality, (b) possess-ing unconscious biases that people of color are less competent and capable,

deceiving the self that one is not prejudiced, and (d) being oblivious to how Whiteness disadvantages people of color and advantages White people. This worldview is in marked contrast to the White respondents who would rather not think about their Whiteness, are uncomfortable or react negatively to being labeled White, deny its importance in affecting their lives, and seem to believe that they are unjustifiably accused of being bigoted by virtue of being White. Strangely enough, Whiteness is most visible when it is denied, evokes puzzlement/negative reactions, and is equated with normalcy. Few people of color react negatively when asked what it means to be Black, Asian American, Latino, or a member of their race. Most could readily inform the questioner about what it means to be a person of color.

The Invisibility of Whiteness: What Does It Mean?

First... A fish in water, for example, requires oxygen for survival. However, the medium to deliver it must be water, not air. The atmosphere that symbolically represents White culture is quite noticeable to people of color, and while nurturing to White Euro-Americans, it may prove less than healthy for people of color.

!   Second, if Whiteness, as unearned privilege and advantage, is predicated on White supremacy and the oppression of people of color and if Whites benefit from it, then a frightening conclusion must be drawn: Whites have a stake in racism and to be White is to benefit from racism (Wise, 2002). Little wonder then that race talk is threatening and that many Whites avoid it in order not to reach this conclusion. Racism hides in the background of Whiteness and is protected through a conspiracy of silence that aids in making it invisible (Sue, 2005). As long as racism is an unacknowledged secret, it allows White people to accept the unearned advantages of their skin color while allowing them to deny responsibility for how it disadvantages other groups (African Americans, Asian Americans, Latino/Hispanic Americans, and Native Americans; Harris, 1993; Tatum, 2002).

The Fear of Owning White Privilege

White privilege continues to be a taboo topic for White people in our society. It is an unacknowledged secret that is overtly and covertly denied and protected through the use of self-deception and ground rules that prevent discus-sion and exploration. It protects Whites from realizing that they benefit from racism; as long as it is not talked about and is hidden from consciousness, they can maintain the illusion that they are not responsible for the state of race rela-tions because they do not knowingly engage in racist behaviors. The invisible nature of White privilege serves to keep them comfortable, confident, and rel-atively oblivious to how it has the opposite effect on persons of color—harms, intimidates, oppresses, alienates, and makes for discomfort. Making the invis-ible visible through race talk is the first step toward dismantling the unfair and harmful nature of White privilege (Sue & Sue, 2013). The deconstruction of White privilege requires an analysis of its five basic components.

1. Automatically Confers Dominance Versus "I Made It on My Own"

Most Whites would entertain the notion that being a person of color in this society subjects them to second-class citizenship. Yet it is intriguing that most White Americans would actively deny that they are advantaged automatically by this state of affairs.

2. Exists on White Supremacy Versus "I'm Not Responsible for the Oppression of Others"

White privilege could not exist without White supremacy. White supremacy is a doctrine of racial superiority that justifies discrimination, segregation, and domination of persons of color based on an ideology and belief system that considers all other non-White groups inferior (J. M. Jones, 1997). Our discussion of ethnocentric monoculturalism provides the components of how White supremacy operates. Unlike individual acts of racism, White supremacy is more all-encompassing and insidious because it resides in the very institutional and cultural foundations of our society.

White supremacy and oppression go hand in hand. To maintain confor-mance and silence of persons of color, White supremacy as a doctrine and belief is instilled through education and enforced by biased institutional policies or practices that punish those who dare raise their voices in objection to their second-class status (Freire, 1970; Hanna, Talley, & Guindon, 2000). People are taught that Columbus discovered America, that the pioneers settled the West, that differences are deviant, the myth of the melting pot, positive portrayals of White people, negative portrayals of minority groups, that the internment of Japanese Americans was based on national security (not racism), and that the Lewis and Clark expedition gave the United States a claim to the Oregon Ter-ritory. A particularly noteworthy and powerful example of White supremacy was the Manifest Destiny argument in the 1840s: All land owned by Native Americans was decreed by God to belong to White people.

The irrational sense of entitlement is a dominant feature of White privilege (McIntosh, 2002). And, more insidious, are the benefits that accrue to White folks from these historical events. Pretense and mystification about these facts only serve to perpetuate White supremacy, and the claim that Whites should not be blamed for the past injustices of their ancestors misses a vital point. They still benefit from the past injustices of their forebears! Thus, even if completely free of conscious racial prejudices and desire to forego or disclaim White privilege, Whites still receive benefits automatically and unintentionally.

3. Predicated on Favoritism Rather Than Meritocracy Versus "The Most Qualified Ought to Get the Job"

...Molly Ivins is often credited for saying that "George Bush was born on third base and believes he hit a triple.

Using the baseball analogy, while President Bush started on third base, most persons of color cannot even make it to the batter's box.

In the United States, our society arose from the cherished concept of rugged individualism; it is part of the Protestant ethic that believes there is a strong relationship between ability, effort, and success.

4. Embedded Systemically in Society Versus "The Cream Always Rises to the Top"

!   There is a triple purpose to the existence of White privilege: (1) to advantage White Americans, (2) to disadvantage persons of color, and (3) to attribute causes to individual deficiencies, thereby relieving White society of responsibility for perpetuating inequality.

5. The Unspoken and Protected Secret or "We Should Be a Color-Blind Nation"

The invisible whiteness of being maintains its viability precisely because it is a protected and seldom spoken secret. Avoidance of race talk is one means of protection. Not seeing color helps to mask these disparities and unfair advan-tages.

Getting White privilege out of the closet is difficult and resisted for these reasons. White privilege and its flipside, color blindness, mimic the norms of fairness, justice, and equity by whiting out differences and perpetuating the belief in sameness. The denial of power imbalance, unearned privilege, and racist domination is couched in the rhetoric of equal treatment and equal opportunity (Sue, 2003, 2005). As mentioned earlier, the programs, policies, and practices of institutions may be monocultural. They are applied equally to all groups so organizations and policy makers believe they are being immi-nently fair and not discriminating. Educational policy regarding IQ testing, use of college admission test scores, and hiring and promotion criteria in employ-ment decisions are applied equally across all groups. Equal treatment in this case is discriminatory treatment because it has damaging differential impact on persons of color. Unfortunately, the belief in equal treatment masks the fact that the universal standards are White.

Fear of Taking Personal Responsibility to End Racism: Moving from Being Nonracist to Becoming Antiracist

Awareness of one's role in the perpetuation of racism, and the pain inflicted on people of color would seemingly call for action on the part of White brothers and sisters. And herein lies one of the major obstacles in the path to social justice: Despite increasing awareness of the detrimental impact of racism and one's role in its perpetuation, social action does not seem to follow automatically or easily (Kawakami, Dunn, Karmali, & Dovidio, 2009).

In other words, the experimenters concluded that people tend to mispre-dict their affective and behavioral responses to racism.

Becoming antiracist, therefore, may mean significant changes in how Whites live their lives and may alter their relationships with family, friends, and coworkers as well as affect the environments in which they live (neigh-borhoods, communities, schools, and worksites). In many cases, estrangement may occur, and White allies may find that their new identities and commit-ments mean, at best, changing the relationships they have with others and, at worst, giving them up. This is a frightening prospect because the very people who have been important in their lives, people who have sustained and nurtured their old identities and people who have played an important role in their development, no longer can provide those nutrients to support their new nonracist awareness and antiracist actions.

SECTION FIVE
Race Talk and Special Group Considerations

CHAPTER TEN
Interracial/Interethnic Race Talk: Difficult Dialogues B etween Groups of C olor

Interracial/Interethnic Relationship Issues

...the media has delighted in playing up interracial/interethnic conflicts leading to political consequences to the detriment of communities of color (E. H. Kim, 1998; Sue & Sue, 2013).

Ground Rules for Interracial/Interethnic Race Talk: "Don't Air Dirty Laundry in Public"

One of the greatest fears of people of color is that race talk will reveal to the public disagreements and differences that exist between them, thereby playing into the hands of those

who would prefer to maintain the status quo (E. H. Kim, 1998). They are, therefore, admonished by their own groups "not to air dirty laundry in public" for four primary reasons.

First, people of color fear that White Americans in power will use interracial/interethnic conflicts to assuage their own White guilt feel-ings, excuse their racism, and justify their passivity to making change— "People of color are equally racist, so why should I change when they can't even get along with one another?"

Second, people of color are wary of the divide-and-conquer ploy that can be used to divide and diminish the strength of groups of color—"As long as people of color fight among themselves, they will be unable to form alliances against systemic forces of racism." This strategy is often employed when Asian Americans are held up to their African Ameri-can counterparts as the model minority—"Why can't you people be more like Asian Americans who made it through hard work and good family values?"

Third, people of color are concerned that honest discussion of interra-cial/interethnic conflicts will divert attention away from the injustices of society by defining racial problems as residing chiefly among racial/ ethnic groups rather than the broader society.

The fourth reason is more difficult and confusing to comprehend by most Whites and even many people of color. As discussed earlier, filmmaker Spike Lee, an African American, is known for taking the position that only Whites can be racist and people of color cannot be racist toward Whites nor toward one another. Such a position infuriates many, who believe that racism is a two-way process. In keeping with J. M. Jones's definition of racism (1997) and that of the APA Presidential Task Force (2012), how-ever, this position holds great validity. It is true that people of color can be biased and prejudiced toward Whites and one another, but to define it as racism ignores the power dimension of oppression. It is important to understand that prejudice by people of color occurs under an umbrella of White racial superiority and supremacy. Raised in the United States, they are equally prone to inherit the stereotypes and biases of the society. Although people of color can be prejudiced and discriminate, they do not have the power to oppress on a large-scale basis (Spradlin & Parsons, 2008; Sue, 2003). In other words, they may be able to hurt one another on an individual basis, but they possess little power to cause systemic harm to White Americans (education, employment, and health care). Further, many people of color believe that interracial/interethnic prejudice serves only to benefit Whites while disadvantaging their own groups.

Thus, while the politeness protocol, the academic protocol, and the color-blind protocol serve as ground rules that prevent race talk by Whites, the com-mandments (a) "Thou shall not air dirty laundry in public" and (b) "Thou shall not speak ill of one another and destroy group unity" are equally pow-erful forces preventing people of color from honestly dialoguing about their thoughts and feelings toward one another.

Although cognizant of the dangers of honest race talk between groups of color, recognition of the unquestioned merit of openly addressing racial issues is long overdue. People of color have

always known that they, too, harbor prejudicial and detrimental beliefs about one another and about their White brothers and sisters. It is important, however, to understand the wider social context of race talk between groups of color when exploring the biases, preju-dices, and conflicts that may be uncovered lest we lose sight of their political ramifications and unjustly blame the victims.

Sources of Conflict Between People of Color

Historical Relationships Between Groups of Color

African American and Asian American Relationships

...in terms of economics, references to the higher median income of Asian Americans do not take into account (a) the higher percentage of Asian American families having more than one wage earner, (b) a higher prevalence of poverty despite the higher median income (14% versus 8% for the U.S. population), and (c) the discrepancy between education and income.

...figures suggesting low rates of delinquency and mental illness are due to cultural factors related to <u>shame and stigma that prevent Asian American families from making it known that a member has become problematic.</u>

**   Table 10.1
Interracial/Interethnic Race Talk Issues: The Necessity of Dialogue

Difficult interracial/interethnic dialogues almost always have sociopolitical implications that make people of color wary about addressing these in public. As these various topics are discussed, it is important to acknowledge and understand the external social, political, and cultural forces affecting race talk between and within groups of color. None of these topics occur in isolation and are often a microcosm of wider race relations in the United States.

Interracial/interethnic bias and prejudice exist between groups of color. As discussed in the chapter, no groups or individuals are immune from inheriting them. This often creates major conflicts between groups.

The Who's more oppressed? game actually is related to perceiving which groups belong to the People of Color category discussed earlier in the chapter. Feelings of invisibility, rejection, and resentment often result when left out of the conversation.

Tentative political alliances involving shared and different goals often lead to economic and political competition for a small piece of the pie or desiring a seat at the table. At times, conflicts between groups have created hard feelings.

Immigration is a hot-button topic not only for White Americans, but for people of color as well. Some of the greatest sources of friction between African Americans and Latinos lie in the perception that immigration of the latter takes jobs away from the former.

Colorism is the practice of discrimination in which those with lighter skin tones are treated better than those with darker skin. Colorism occurs not only between groups, but within groups as well. Among almost all groups of color, those within the group with darker skin are often perceived and treated more negatively. This is an issue explored by Spike Lee in his film School Daze and creates within group friction.

Internalized racism is a concept referring to people of color internalizing racist attitudes and beliefs toward their own group and themselves. In this case, the positive reference group for a person of color becomes that of White Americans.

Being co-opted is a term used to indicate a person of color who is selling out to achieve the rewards of the larger White society. Derogatory terms such as Uncle Tom for Black Americans and the Big Banana (yellow outside, but White inside) for Asian Americans are used in reference to such individuals. Some believe, for example, that Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas is such an individual.

Interracial marriage and relationships are difficult dialogues to have for nearly all groups. As mentioned previously, Asian Americans have the largest out-group marriages of brides and some view this as greater acceptance by White society of Asian Americans. But many African American women feel great resentment toward African American men who marry outside of the group.

Male–female relationships within groups of color are also partially related to the feelings and reactions to interracial relationships and marriages. While Asian American women tend to out-marry in greater numbers than Asian American men, the reverse seems to be true about African Americans. The out-marriage of one gender over the other can create many hard feelings between the sexes.

Roles of men and women within a racial/cultural group can also create problems in a society that values egalitarian relationships. Among Latinos/as and Asians, for example, a patriarchal relationship is normative and can affect how men and women relate to one another.

Terrorism and relationships with MENA (Middle Eastern/North African) groups as perceived by people of color need to be openly discussed. Despite our conscious acknowledgment about Islam being a legitimate religion, many people of color continue to stereotype not only the religion, but also those who adhere to it as extremists/terrorists.

Externalizing blame to avoid personal or group responsibility means that not all bad things that happen to us individually and collectively are the result of racism. Sometimes it is easier to blame others than to face the truth that everyone has faults, limitations, and weaknesses, and that we must take responsibility for our own life situation.

CHAPTER ELEVEN
Race Talk and White Racial Identity Development: For Whites Only

Let us briefly return to the walkway metaphor provided by Tatum (1997) in her classic book, Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?

First, the walkway metaphor is a strong and powerful statement of the continuous and insidious nature of racism; it is ever-present, dynamic, and oftentimes invisible as it takes us on a journey to White supremacist notions, attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors. The visible actions of White supremacists moving quickly on the belt represent our awareness of overt racism; these forms we consciously condemn. The conveyor belt represents the invisible forces of society or the biased institutional policies, practices, and structures that control our everyday lives. From the moment of birth, we are placed on the conveyor belt and culturally conditioned/socialized to believe that we are headed in the right direction. For many White people, the movement of the belt is barely noticeable, and its movement remains hidden from conscious awareness. This allows White people to remain naive and innocent about the harm their inaction imparts on people of color. Second, as indicated by Tatum (1997), one need not be actively racist in order to be racist. The pace by which one walks with the flow of the conveyor belt determines the degree to which one consciously or unconsciously harbors White supremacist notions: (a) active racists who are aware and deliberate in beliefs and actions move quickly; (b) those slowly strolling may be unintentional racists, unaware of their biases and the direction they are taking; and (c) passive racists may choose not to walk at all. Despite choosing not to walk in the direction of the walkway, passive racists are, nevertheless, being moved in a direction that allows for racism to thrive. On a personal level, despite beliefs of justice, equity, and fairness, inaction on the walkway ultimately means that these individuals are also responsible for the oppression of others. Race talk has potential to make White Americans aware of the conveyor belt movement and the ominous direction it is headed.

Third, most people of color are desperately trying to move or run in the opposite direction. Back talk from people of color is filled with attempts to make well-intentioned Whites aware of the direction they are taking and aware of the harm they are inflicting on people of color. But these people of color are hindered by many obstacles: well-intentioned White Americans who tell them they are going the wrong way (White talk); institutional policies and practices that put obstacles

in their retreating path (institutional racism); and punish-ment from society for not obeying the traffic rules—a one-way street of bias and bigotry.

Fourth, despite limited success in battling the constant forces of racism, peo-ple of color are also slowly but surely being swept in a dangerous direction that has multiple implications for their psychological health, physical well-being, and standard of living. Walking at a fast pace and running in the opposite direction are never ending activities that are exhausting and energy depleting for people of color. Worst yet, they are being trampled by the large numbers of well-intentioned White Americans moving in the opposite direction. Giv-ing up, or ultimately being swept to the end of the walkway, means a life of oppression and subordination.
(LB: Disagree but I hear you)

Developing a Nonracist and Antiracist Racial Identity

<u>Successful race talk is predicated on raising critical consciousness about race (Pasque et al., 2013) through cross-racial interactions (Valentine et al., 2012) and lived experience (Sue, 2013).</u>

...most White Americans at some levels are willing to admit that persons of color are subjected to different experiences than majority group members. They are less willing, however, to admit that in many ways they have been unknowingly responsible for the oppression of others. Understanding these reactions and how they affect Whites is locked up in the process of White racial identity awakening. Further, psychologists and educators hypothesize that the comfort or discomfort experienced in race talk is related to the developmental level of the person's White racial identity (Helms, 1990; Tatum, 1992). Indeed, <u>the emotive reactions of Whites during race talk seem correlated with their level of racial consciousness.</u>

Studies, for example, have found that the level of White racial identity awareness was predictive of racism. The less aware Whites are of their racial identity, the more likely they were (a) to exhibit increased levels of racism, to deny the racial reality of people of color, (c) to profess a color-blind approach to racial interactions, and (d) to find race talk uncomfortable, anxiety provoking, and threatening (Bell, 2003; Hardiman, 1982; Helms, 1990; Pasque et al., 2013; Pope-Davis & Ottavi, 1994; Spanierman et al., 2006; Todd Abrams, 2011). In some of these studies it was found that women tend to be less racist than men, probably because of women's greater experiences with discrimination and prejudice and a more enlightened sense of racial identity. Evidence also exists that multicultural competence (ability to communicate, understand the worldview of people of color, teach, manage, and supervise effectively in a pluralistic society) is correlated with White racial identity attitudes. Since developing multicultural sensitivity is a long-term develop-mental task, <u>the work of many researchers has gradually converged toward a conceptualization of the process of racial/ethnic identity development for White Euro-Americans.</u>
The process of healthy <u>White identity development</u>, according to psychol-ogist Janet Helms (1990, 1995), involves a <u>two-phase process</u>: (1) the aban-donment of White racism and (2) work to develop a nonracist White identity. Acceptance of this developmental process is based on

several important assumptions that can be seen in resistance to race talk among White Americans. Entertaining their legitimacy is difficult for many White Americans because of the invisibility of Whiteness and racism, and their personal implications.

First, racism is a basic and integral part of U.S. life and permeates all aspects of U.S. culture and institutions. This statement should be clear in light of our analysis of White supremacy, White privilege, and ethno-centric monoculturalism.

Second, in keeping with previous assertions, everyone is socialized into U.S. society and, therefore, inherits the biases, stereotypes, and racist atti-tudes, beliefs, and behaviors of the society (some more and others less). Although an unpleasant conclusion for many, it is inescapable that Whites harbor racist beliefs whether knowingly or unknowingly.

Third, the level of White racial identity development in an interracial encounter (working effectively with and understanding people of color) affects the process and outcome of relationships and how we talk about race to one another.

Fourth, how Whites perceive themselves as racial/cultural beings seems to be strongly correlated with how they perceive and respond to racial stimuli. Consequently, their race-related realities often represent major differences between their view of the world and that of people of color.

Fifth, White racial identity development seems to follow an identifiable sequence. That is, there is an assumption that White Americans who are born and raised in the United States may move through levels of con-sciousness regarding their own identity as racial/cultural beings.

Last, the most desirable development for White Americans is to not only accept their Whiteness, but also define it in a nondefensive and nonracist manner. This must be an active and constant ongoing process where Whites do so without guilt, but with a determined understanding that to deny the humanity of any one person is to deny the humanity of all.

The following developmental phases of White racial identity development are distilled from the work of a number of scholars (Hardiman, 1982; Helms, 1990; Ponterotto, Utsey & Pedersen, 2006; W. Rowe, Bennett, & Atkinson, 1994; Sue & Sue, 2013; Tatum, 1997). Considerable liberty has been taken to catego-rize, summarize, and condense their descriptive meanings.

Phase 1 — Naïveté

Studies reveal that <u>racial awareness and the burgeoning social meanings occur between the ages of 3 and 5 years. (Aboud, 1988; APA Presidential Task Force, 2012; Hirschfield, 2001)</u>

Phase 2 — Conformity

<u>Two major but diametrically opposed belief systems are being planted in people's psyche. First, they are taught about the virtues of democracy:</u> that everyone was created equal, that the nation

was built on the foundations of freedom, that equal access and opportunity are the building blocks of our soci-ety, and that prejudice, discrimination, and bigotry are not only distasteful, but evil. From this early schooling, they are told that racism is not only illegal, but also morally wrong. The good, decent, and moral citizen does not discrimi-nate on the basis of race. These beliefs are deeply ingrained into their self-image and identity. To be accused of being a racist in our society is to malign their per-sonal integrity. As mentioned throughout, this is one of the major impediments to race talk.

u. The White parent who quickly locks the car doors while driving through a Latino neighborhood, the mother who discourages a child from playing with Black schoolmates, the young child who overhears racial epithets, and the negative portrayal of minorities in the media all lead to one damning conclusion: Persons of color are the dregs of our society and should be avoided. <u>The Conformity phase is marked by acceptance of White superiority and minority inferiority</u>. Consciously or unconsciously, Whites begin to believe that White culture is the most highly developed, and all others are primitive or inferior.

Contradictory beliefs can exist because of people's ability to compartmen-talize attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors. On the one hand, they may believe that they are not racist, yet on the other hand they believe that minority inferiority justifies discriminatory and inferior treatment. Or they believe persons of color are different and deviant, yet believe that people are people and that differences are unimportant. <u>The primary mechanisms operating here are denial and compartmentalization</u>. For example, Whites deny that they belong to a race, which allows them to avoid personal responsibility for perpetuating a racist system. It is important to note that in general, people at this phase of development are unaware of these beliefs and operate as if others universally share them: "Differences are unimportant"; "People are people"; "We are all the same under the skin"; "We should treat everyone the same"; "Problems wouldn't exist if minorities would only assimilate"; and "Discrimination and prejudice are something that others do." During race talk, Whites at this level of consciousness profess color blindness and the belief that people are no different from one another regardless of race, gender, and so forth.

!!!   Because of naïveté and encapsulation, <u>it is possible for two diametrically opposed belief systems to coexist in the mind of Whites: (</u>1) There is an uncrit-ical acceptance of White supremacist notions that relegate minorities into the inferior category with all the racial stereotypes, and (b) there is a belief that racial and cultural differences are considered unimportant. This allows Whites to avoid perceiving themselves as a dominant group member, or of having biases and prejudices. In her own White racial awakening, Peggy McIntosh (2002) stated,

My schooling gave me no training in seeing myself as an oppressor, as an unfairly advantaged person, or as a participant in a damaged culture. I was taught to see myself as an individual whose moral state depended on her individual moral will. . . . Whites are taught to think of their lives as morally neutral, normative, and average, and also ideal, so that when we work to benefit others, this is seen as work which will allow "them" to be more like "us." (p. 99)

The primary mechanism used in encapsulation is denial—that people are different, that discrimination exists, and of your own prejudices. Instead, the locus of the problem is seen to reside in the minority individual or group. Minorities wouldn't encounter problems if they would assimilate and accul-turate (melting pot), if they would value education, or if they would only work harder.

The Conformity stage is marked by conscious beliefs in the democratic ideal—that everyone has an equal opportunity to succeed in a free society and those who fail must bear the responsibility for their failure. White Euro-Americans become the social reference group and the socialization process consistently instills messages of White superiority and minority inferiority throughout one's upbringing. The underemployment, unemploy-ment, and under education of marginalized groups in our society are seen as support that non-White groups are lesser than Whites. Because everyone has an equal opportunity to succeed, the lack of success of minority groups is seen as evidence of some negative personal or group characteristic (low intelligence, inadequate motivation, or biological/cultural deficits). Victim blaming is strong as the existence of oppression, discrimination, and racism are denied. While the Naïveté stage is brief in duration, the Conformity phase can last a lifetime.

Phase 3 — Dissonance

...obliviousness may eventually break down when they become aware of inconsistencies.

Dissonance may make them feel guilty, shameful, angry, and depressed. Rationalizations may become the manner used to exonerate their own inactivity in combating perceived injustice or personal feelings of prejudice: "I'm only one person, what can I do" or "Everyone is prejudiced, even minorities." As these conflicts ensue, they may retreat into the protective confines of White culture (encapsulation of the previous stage) or move progressively toward insight and revelation (Resistance and Immersion stage).

Whether they regress is related to the strength of positive forces pushing them forward (support for challenging racism) or negative forces (fear of some loss) pushing them backward.

Phase 4 — Resistance and Immersion

...the person is likely to undergo a form of racial self-hatred at this stage.

Phase 5 — Introspection

The feelings or affective elements may be existential in nature and involve feelings of lack of connectedness, isolation, confusion, and loss. In other words, they realize that they may never

fully understand the minority experi-ence but feel disconnected from their Euro-American group as well.

The intense soul searching is most evident in Sara Winter's (1977) personal journey as she writes,
"   In this sense we Whites are the victims of racism. Our victimization is different from that of Blacks, but it is real. We have been programmed into the oppres-sor roles we play, without our informed consent in the process. Our unawareness is part of the programming: None of us could tolerate the oppressor position, if we lived with a day-to-day emotional awareness of the pain inflicted on other humans through the instrument of our behavior . . . . We Whites benefit in con-crete ways, year in and year out, from the present racial arrangements. All my life in White neighborhoods, White schools, White jobs and dealing with White police (to name only a few), I have experienced advantages that are systematically not available to Black people. It does not make sense for me to blame myself for the advantages that have come my way by virtue of my Whiteness. But absolv-ing myself from guilt does not imply forgetting about racial injustice or taking it lightly (as my guilt pushes me to do). (p. 27)

Phase 6 — Integrative Awareness

The racist-free identity, however, must be nurtured, validated, and sup-ported in order to be sustained in a hostile environment.

...Helms (1990) believes that a successful resolution of this stage requires an emotional catharsis or release that forces people to relive or reexperience previous emotions that were denied or distorted. The ability to achieve this affective/experiential upheaval leads to a euphoria or even a feeling of rebirth and is a necessary condition to developing a new nonracist White identity.

Phase 7 — Commitment to Antiracist Action

Integrative Awareness is a major step in combating racism, but it is not enough.

They will, however, become increasingly immunized to social pressures for conformance because their reference group begins to change.

White Racial Identity Development and Race Talk

Race talk, especially how we model talking about race to one another and how we talk to children about race, will determine whether they develop firmly ingrained biases or become immunized to them.

In facilitative race talk, this phase is most aided by <u>helping Whites to realize</u> that <u>no one was born wanting to be racist, that guilt is nonproductive in making changes,</u> and that they were <u>socialized into oppressor roles,</u> and then getting them to <u>take action in defining their own Whiteness and what it means.</u>

!   ....<u>becoming nonracist does not mean becoming antiracist.</u> And, as our earlier research findings suggest, considerable courage and determination are required to stand against the toxicity of racism. Educational experiences and activities aimed at maintaining a nonracist and antiracist stance are of paramount importance, especially in a society that constantly attempts to resocialize liberated Whites back into the mainstream. We will address this important point in the following chapters.

SECTION SIX
Guidelines, Conditions, and Solutions for Having Honest Racial Dialogues

CHAPTER TWELVE
Being an Agent of Change: Guidelines for Educators, Parents, and Trainers

<u>Avoidance of educational race talk, as we have seen, can damage the psyche of both children.</u>

...around <u>ages 3 to 4, children become curious about the world around them</u>, notice differences, view things through eyes of openness, and are receptive to parental interpre-tations of what these differences mean (Rogin, 2013b). <u>Around ages 5 to 6, they begin to associate differences with what they hear from peers</u>, the media and significant others.

<u>...when Chloe and June become parents them-selves, they are equally likely to pass on to their own sons and daughters the confusions, apprehensions, and fears of their mothers.</u>

When educators lack critical consciousness about race/racism, have not adequately dealt with their own racial hang-ups, and are uncomfortable and unprepared to deal with difficult dialogues on race, they become part of the race talk problem (Bell, 2003; Pollock, 2004)

!   While the battle against prejudice and discrimination must be a systemic national effort, there is much that can be done on an individual basis, especially as a parent or teacher. Race talk as a means to make the invisible visible; to confront biases, prejudices, and fears; and to help one another understand ourselves as racial/cultural beings opens the educational gateways to self-reflection and positive change. Developing race talk skills is crucial for parents and teachers if they desire to help themselves and young people.

Talking to Children About Race and Racism

Most teachers and parents are quick to ask for techniques and strategies to deal with racial sit-uations or topics that they realize should be addressed, but they are paralyzed in deciding what type of action to take. Providing them with specific race talk skills can be very effective if they are enlightened about issues of race, have done the necessary hard and painful task of understanding their own biases and prejudices (Kiselica, 1998, 1999), and are comfortable in their relationships with people of color (APA Presidential Task Force, 2012; Bolgatz, 2005). If unen-lightened, however, providing strategies of race talk will do little good with-out knowledge and understanding of the racial issues and goals they hope to achieve. Attempts to do so may only lead to misinformation, ignorance, and a perpetuation of the fears associated with race dialogues.

Guideline 2 — Learn From Healthy and Strong People of the Culture

- Frequent minority-owned businesses and get to know the proprietors.
- Attend services at a variety of churches, synagogues, temples, and other places of worship to learn about different faiths and meet church leaders.
- Invite colleagues, coworkers, neighbors, or students of color home for dinner or a holiday.
- Live in an integrated or culturally diverse neighborhood and attend neighborhood organizational meetings and/or attend/throw block parties.
- Form a community organization on valuing diversity and invite local artists, authors, entertainers, politicians, and leaders of color to address your group.
- Attend street fairs, educational forums, and events put on by the community.

!   First, no one should enter a minority neighborhood or any unfamiliar neighborhood without an understanding or some knowledge of it. Second, people should not enter as uninvited strangers who may be seen as interlopers. Third, reciprocity is important: In what ways are Whites willing to give back or help those they hope to understand?

Immersing oneself with people who differ in race, culture, and ethnicity without adequate preparation may only result in hardening of prejudices.

<u>Dealing with racism means a personal commitment to action.</u>

!   For persons of color, dealing with bias and prejudice is a day-to-day occurrence. If Whites are to be helpful, their lives must also be a constant "have to" in dealing with racism.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN
Helping People Talk About Race: Facilitation Skills for Educators and Trainers

Unsuccessful Racial Dialogue

I would have interacted with the trainee on a intellectual/cognitive content level. Although my factual arguments were solid and accurate, it seldom seemed to have a desirable resolution.

<u>...race talk is often not about the substance of an argument, but a cover for what is actually happening.</u>

Ineffective Strategies: Five Things Not To Do

1. Do Nothing

2. Sidetrack the Conversation

He or she may be sufficiently uncomfortable with the topic and allow the topic to be changed. These maneuvers are often very visible to students or trainees in a racial dialogue. Their use

often diminishes the credibility of facilitators and makes them even less effective in teaching and training.

3. Appease the Participants

Usually, the trainer is uncomfortable with the expression of powerful emotions in race talk that may prove divisive.

The problem with the maintenance of harmony is that it negates deeper explorations of biases, stereotypes, and nested emotions associated with race and racism. The teachable moment is lost.

4. Terminate the Discussion

When trainees feel accused of being biased, they engage in self-protective behavior in the form of righteous indignation or innocent victimhood.

Successful Strategies: Eleven Potentially Positive Actors

1. Understand One's Racial/Cultural Identity

2. Acknowledge and Be Open to Admitting One's Racial Biases

3. Be Comfortable and Open to Discussing Topics of Race and Racism

4. Understand the Meaning of Emotions

! I have repeatedly stressed that nested or embedded emotions are frequently expressed in race talk—although they may not be acknowledged or understood by those initially engaged in such conversations. The skilled facilitator helps others make sense of these feelings and frees the individual from being controlled by them. As long as feelings remain unnamed and unacknowledged, they represent emotional roadblocks to having a successful dialogue. The most common feelings and their hidden meanings derived from earlier chapters are the following:

- I feel guilty: "I could be doing more."
- I feel angry: "I don't like to feel I'm wrong."

- I feel defensive: "Why blame me? I do enough already and am not responsible."
- I feel turned off: "I have other priorities in life."
- I feel helpless: "The problem is too big. What can I do?"
- I feel afraid: "I'm going to lose something." "I don't know what will happen."

5. Validate and Facilitate Discussion of Feelings

- This is a primary goal in race talk.
- The importance of allowing space for the strong expression of feelings.
- That it was okay to have them.
- That talking about their anxieties or anger helped them understand them-selves and others better.
- That it was important to create conditions that allowed for openness and receptivity to strong emotions.

6. Control the Process and Not the Content of Race Talk

When a heated dialogue occurs on race, the duel between participants of dif-ferent races is nearly always on the substance or content level. But the hidden and less visible levels are where the true dialogue is taking place (White talk vs. back talk).

7. Unmask the Difficult Dialogue Through Process Observations and Interventions

!   Refocus the dialogue on feelings: "I wonder if you can tell me how and what you are feeling." For example, the teacher might say, "John (Black student) has just agreed with you that women are an oppressed group. Does that make you feel better? [Usually the student says no.] No. I wonder why not." Try to help the student to explore why the feelings are still there.

8. Do Not Allow a Difficult Dialogue to Be Brewed in Silence

Some-times an impasse is due primarily to participants engaging in monologues rather than a true dialogue.

9. Understand Differences in Communication Styles

10. Forewarn, Plan, and Purposefully Instigate Race Talk

One of the great advantages of preplanning a difficult dialogue is that it <u>allows the facilitator to immediately control the process rather than having a dialogue arise by happenstance.</u>

!   Only recently, however, have I come to the realization that if the eradication of racism is dependent on the courses or workshops we offer, then we have lost the battle. Only if teachers and parents are willing to create their own learning experiences will they have any hope of becoming helpful in race talk situations.

11. Validate, Encourage, and Express Admiration and Appreciation to Participants Who Speak When It Is Unsafe to Do So

<u>Courage</u>… <u>is to be honest when it is unsafe to speak their true thoughts and feelings.</u>

<u>"It is how one recovers, not how you cover up that matters."</u>

!   John Greenlef Whittier wrote, "<u>For of all sad words of tongue or pen, the saddest are these: It might have been!</u>"