

We Can't Teach What We Don't Know

White Teachers, Multiracial Schools

SECOND EDITION

GARY R. HOWARD

Foreword by Sonia Nieto

2006



Teachers College, Columbia University
New York and London

Ways of Being White: A Practitioner's Approach to Multicultural Growth

When Whiteness is discussed in educational settings, the emphasis is almost exclusively on revealing it as an ideology of privilege mediated largely through the dynamics of racism. While such interventions are crucial in developing an anti-racist pedagogy, they do not go far enough.

—Henry Giroux, "Rewriting the Discourse of Racial Identity"

My friends and colleagues from other racial groups often tease me about "acting White," particularly when I become overly concerned with details and time constraints. I usually take these jibes in the light-hearted way they are intended, but I also want to challenge the assumption that "acting White" has any consistent or singular meaning. Theories of White racial identity development clearly demonstrate there is more than one way of being White. "Acting White" can have multiple and even contradictory meanings, depending on a given White person's stage of racial identity development. As we saw in the previous chapter, each stage describes a significantly different approach to issues of race and Whiteness. A White person in the reintegration/retrenchment stage, for example, is consciously racist, whereas an individual in the stage of autonomy/authenticity is actively antiracist. A person in the disintegration stage is confused and conflicted about his or her own Whiteness, whereas an individual in autonomy/authenticity has evolved a positive cultural and racial identity. Because of these differences, there is no single way of "acting White," and Whites in one stage of identity development often experience conflict with their White peers in other stages.

This potential for conflict was illustrated when one of our recently certified REACH national trainers went home to share her multicultural knowledge with relatives over the Thanksgiving holiday. She distributed

workshop handouts, put the overhead projector on the dining room table, and invited her parents and siblings to experience a few multicultural training activities. Unfortunately, her mini-workshop lasted no longer than the first transparency, which presented the concept of "multiple perspectives." Her father quickly grew irritated and challenged her basic premise that other cultures have valid perspectives to offer Whites. A verbal donnybrook ensued, from which it was difficult to salvage a modicum of fellowship for the turkey dinner. This was our trainer's last attempt to share her newfound multicultural knowledge with the folks back home. She was in the stage of pseudo-independence at the time, enthusiastic in her efforts to convince other Whites of their lack of awareness. Her father was instantly catapulted into reintegration, with all of the resistance and denial characteristic of that stage. In this situation, the father and daughter were each manifesting their Whiteness in entirely different ways.

Recognizing that educators represent a broad range of different stages in our racial identity development, my wife, Dr. Lotus Linton, and I became interested in mapping the process of multicultural growth. Beginning in 1989 we initiated a process that engaged educators and other professionals in a series of weekend seminars and dialogues designed to explore the deeper dimensions of personal and professional growth relative to racial and cultural diversity. Our intent was not only to describe the significant experiences and guideposts along the path of development but also to determine how we might encourage and stimulate such growth in other educators. Four assumptions guided our work:

1. Growth in multicultural awareness is possible.
2. Growth in multicultural awareness is desirable.
3. Multicultural growth can be observed and assessed.
4. Multicultural growth can be stimulated and promoted.

From our initial work with educators in several intensive seminars over a three-year period, we developed a model of multicultural growth. The model has subsequently been revised and adapted by the REACH Center, and utilized by our staff and national trainers with thousands of workshop participants throughout the United States and Australia since the early 1990s.

WHITE IDENTITY ORIENTATIONS

For the purpose of this book, I have built upon previous work with my wife and the REACH Center and created a model that relates specifically

to different ways of being White. The model, as presented in the accompanying chart in Table 6.1, recognizes three distinct White identity orientations, which I have designated as fundamentalist, integrationist, and transformationist White identity. Each orientation is described by nine indicators, which are, in turn, clustered into three modalities of growth, including thinking, feeling, and acting. Each orientation is profoundly different from the others in terms of (1) how Whites *think* relative to the constructs of truth, Whiteness, and dominance; (2) how Whites *feel* relative to self-awareness, racial differences, and discussions of racism; and (3) how Whites *act* relative to teaching, management, and cross-cultural interactions.

The White identity orientations model provides a means of tracking how White educators can progress in our thoughts, emotions, and behaviors relative to Whiteness and issues of dominance. I offer the model as a way to support, extend, and complement the work of other researchers and practitioners who have developed theories of White racial identity development. I present the White orientations model not as a fully developed theory but rather as a conceptual tool that has grown from many years of engagement with White educators in the process of multicultural identity development. It is a practitioner's model, designed to further describe and clarify the different ways of being White. My hope in presenting the White orientations model is that it will facilitate and encourage the process of growth toward greater multicultural competence among White educators. In the discussion that follows, I describe each of the orientations and share stories that illustrate how individual White educators have grown from one orientation to the next.

Fundamentalist White Identity

Thinking. Fundamentalist Whites are literal and linear thinkers regarding issues of race and Whiteness. They are fixed and rigid in their cognitive functioning and immutably committed, either consciously or unconsciously, to the assumption of White supremacy. A White person in the fundamentalist orientation adheres to the single-dimensional understanding of truth that is characteristic of all forms of fundamentalism. Fundamentalist Whites are zealous defenders of the single-truth reality that "White is right." They shun ambiguity. White dominance is rationalized, legitimized, and actively perpetuated. In its less intentional and more unconscious form, fundamentalist White thinking may be characterized by denial and/or ignorance of Whiteness and White supremacy. Unaware fundamentalist Whites often do not see themselves as racial beings at all but prefer to describe themselves as "just American" or "just Australian."

Table 6.1. White Identity Orientations

WHITE IDENTITY ORIENTATIONS			
MODALITIES OF GROWTH	FUNDAMENTALIST	INTEGRATIONIST	
T H I N K I N G	Construction of Truth	Acknowledge diverse perspectives Interest in broader truths Continued defense of Western superiority	TRANSFORMATIONIST Legitimacy of diverse perspectives Truth as dynamic/changing Actively seeking divergent truths
	Construction of Whiteness	Supremacist/White is right Ignorance/avoidance Confusion	Self-reflective critique Deep interrogation of Whiteness Affirming authentic/positive/nonracist identity
	Construction of Dominance	Legitimize/perpetuate dominance Rationalize Deny/ignore	Acknowledge complexity Holistic critique of oppression Comprehensive analysis of dominance
	Level of Self-Awareness	My perspective is right – the only one Self-esteem linked to supremacy Threatened by differences	My perspective is changing Self-esteem linked to growth and change I am enhanced by connection to different groups
	Emotional Response to Differences	Fear/hostility/avoidance Judgment Colorblindness	Appreciation/respect Enthusiasm/joy Honesty
	Emotional Response to Discussions of Racism	Anger Denial Defensiveness/avoidance	Acknowledgment/empathy Enlightened aversion to oppression Responsibility without guilt
	Approach to Cross-Cultural Interactions	Distance/isolation Hostility Reinforcing White superiority	Active seeking Deeply personal/rewarding Transforming/healing
	Approach to Teaching About Differences	Monocultural Treat all students "the same" Actively Eurocentric	Social action/authentic engagement Learning from other cultures Challenging the Eurocentric perspective
	Approach to Leadership/Management	Autocratic/directive Assimilationist Perpetuates White dominance	Advocacy Collaboration/co-responsibility Challenging/dismantling White dominance
	A C T I N G		

Feeling. Relative to the feeling modality, fundamentalist Whites harbor a strong emotional commitment to the rightness of their own perspective. Their self-esteem is bolstered by the assumption of White superiority. People from different races and cultures, or other White people who espouse different definitions of truth, are responded to with fear, hostility, or avoidance. Some well-meaning fundamentalist Whites may be emotionally committed to a belief in colorblindness, which allows them to deny and avoid differences (Chapter 3). When confronted with the issue of their own racism, individuals in this orientation respond with anger, denial, or defensiveness.

Acting. Whites in the fundamentalist orientation are either overtly or covertly racist in their cross-cultural interactions. The more overt fundamentalist Whites are hostile toward people of different races and they usually seek to avoid such encounters whenever possible. The more covert, or well-intentioned, fundamentalist Whites often claim that they do not see differences or that they treat all students "the same." Fundamentalist White educators demonstrate a monocultural and Eurocentric approach to teaching. Their curriculum content and pedagogy reflect an inherent commitment to Western supremacy. They resist multicultural education and pride themselves on preaching an assimilationist doctrine to their students of color. Fundamentalist Whites in positions of leadership are autocratic, directive, and committed to the preservation of White hegemony. They are ardent defenders of "business as usual" in those organizations that have traditionally been White-dominated.

Whites with a fundamentalist racial identity demonstrate a high degree of "social dominance orientation," which Sidanius and Pratto (1993) define as "the degree to which people desire and strive for superiority of the ingroup over the outgroup and oppose egalitarianism" (p. 178). This aspect of the fundamentalist White orientation was epitomized for me in a workshop I conducted with 25 White male school superintendents in Texas. I began the session by eliciting their concerns and issues regarding racial and cultural differences in their schools. One superintendent received broad approval from his peers when he said, "We know that Anglo culture is superior, but we can't figure out how to get our Black and Hispanic students and families to buy into it." These men were angry that parents should demand culturally relevant content and bilingual instruction. They resented having to attend my multicultural workshop. Their thinking modality was fixated on White supremacy; their feeling modality was locked into denial, hostility, and avoidance; and their acting modality was committed to an autocratic and monocultural defense of business-as-usual in the schools. I spent eight hours working with these

gentlemen but was unable to make even the slightest dent in their White fundamentalist armor.

Changing. Powerful experiential catalysts are required to dislodge individuals from their fixation in the fundamentalist White orientation. Finefrock (Narratives) described one such experience in her relationship with two Black women who taught her about "the other side of the tracks" regarding race relations in her small Ohio town. Through their "wisdom, honesty, insight, and patience" these two powerful role models were able to dismantle the "bubble world of assumptions" that had been Finefrock's previous reality. Similarly, the mentoring I received from Black youth and community leaders in New Haven in the 1960s caused me to reorient my entire social reality and grow beyond the White fundamentalism of my youth (Chapter 1).

In another example of personal change, a young White professor in Australia, who had never previously grappled with diversity issues, became deeply unsettled in a recent workshop in Brisbane when he heard several stories of injustice told by women, immigrants, and Aboriginal participants. Following my presentation on the dominance paradigm, in which I shared the "fish discovering water" image (Chapter 3), he was obviously upset and said to me, "I feel like one of those fish who just discovered water, and I can't breathe. I have been living in dominance my whole life. I've been blind to so many issues, and I am amazed at how narrow my perspective has been. I now wonder how many of my previous assumptions are actually untrue."

Over the course of a three-day workshop, this young professor's fundamentalist White orientation gradually began to come apart. He was a willing participant in its demise, yet he also experienced considerable personal confusion and disorientation as his worldview slowly shifted to a more nuanced and multidimensional configuration. I was impressed with his honesty in confronting the new information, and I appreciated the example he set for other White participants who were also struggling with shifts in their own White identity orientations. He listened to the stories of racial "others," heard the message beneath the words, and had the courage to begin the process of personal change.

Integrationist White Identity

Thinking. The integrationist orientation represents a significant shift in thinking away from the fundamentalist perspective. Unlike their fundamentalist peers, integrationist Whites are willing to acknowledge the existence and legitimacy of diverse approaches to truth. Their acceptance of

differences, however, is often rather shallow, and they prefer to think that "we're really all the same under the skin." Integrationists have begun the process of interrogating Whiteness, yet they remain ambivalent in their conclusions. They acknowledge the historical reality of White dominance, but they usually fail to grasp the significance of its continuing effects in contemporary social institutions. Because their assessment of racial issues is only skin deep, they often underestimate the depth of the change that will be necessary to achieve real equity and social justice.

For the most part, integrationist Whites see injustice as the victims' problem. As Sleeter (1994) points out, "We are willing to critique the psychological impact of slavery on Blacks, but not its impact on ourselves" (p. 6). Integrationist thinking does not question the legitimacy of Western hegemony and does not acknowledge the need for fundamental shifts in White consciousness. Although differences are acknowledged, a tacit acceptance of White superiority remains. Integrationist Whites are aware of the personal pain others have experienced because of White dominance, but they have not yet grasped the systemic and institutional nature of social inequality.

Feeling. In the affective domain, integrationist Whites have grown beyond the knee-jerk defensiveness of the fundamentalist orientation. Their positive self-regard now includes an interest in other cultures and races. They are curious about differences but often take a tourist's approach to learning about other racial and ethnic groups, sometimes verging on cultural voyeurism. They can become entangled in the emotions of the "wannabe" phenomenon, searching for their own identity in the images of other groups.

Integrationist Whites often demonstrate the emotional confusion, ambivalence, and dissonance associated with Helms' disintegration stage of identity development. Although they have acknowledged their complicity in racism at the intellectual and collective levels, they continue to distance themselves from racism at the personal and emotional levels. Feelings of racial superiority still linger, but they are more subtle and unconscious than in the fundamentalist orientation. Integrationist Whites can easily become embroiled in guilt, shame, or denial when directly confronted with their own personal racism. As Sleeter (1996) describes, "We . . . want confirming evidence from people of color that we are not racist, and many of us are afraid of saying something wrong that might undermine our 'non-racist' self-perception" (p. 22).

Acting. Integrationist Whites are open to cross-racial interactions, but their relationships with people from different groups are often narrowly

circumscribed and not deeply personal. They are most comfortable with people of color who have achieved success in the dominant culture and do not challenge Whites' assumptions about the inherent goodness of Western hegemony (thus the popularity among some Whites of public figures such as Clarence Thomas and Condoleezza Rice). White integrationist teachers take an additive and contributions approach to multicultural education (J. A. Banks, 1994). They want to teach about other cultures but tend to position their efforts as "special programs for special folks."

Leaders and managers in the integrationist orientation attempt to respond positively to diversity, but they are primarily concerned with issues of compliance and assimilation rather than fundamental change or real inclusion. Demonstrating the "quaint liberalism" (Giroux, 1997a, p. 237) of this orientation, integrationist White managers are often paternalistic in their interactions with people from different ethnic and racial groups, seeing their White leadership role as one of "helping others." As an Aboriginal doctoral candidate in an Australian university, Moreton-Robinson (Narratives) experienced this integrationist behavior from her White professors and supervisors, who related to her paternalistically as an inferior "other," not as an articulate and self-empowered Indigenous woman.

Integrationist leaders and teachers are well-meaning in their attempts to respond to issues of difference, but they have neither deconstructed dominance nor confronted their own White privilege. These aspects of the integrationist perspective were exemplified in a discussion of "minority scholarships" that took place among the faculty and administrators at a prestigious private school in the Seattle area. A friend who teaches there reported that the dominant perspective among her colleagues was expressed in the following way: "We don't need scholarships for children of color because race is merely an abstraction." This sentiment is the ultimate expression of White privilege. It is typical of the pseudo-sophistication that is characteristic of the integrationist orientation. Although it is true, from a purely scientific point of view, that race is a socially constructed abstraction, racism and White dominance are realities that continue to diminish access to elite private school education for children of color. Race may be a myth, but racism is real.

Exemplifying the luxury of ignorance and the privilege of social distance, integrationist Whites in this school were able to avoid the real issues of dominance by failing to question the basic assumptions that have maintained their exclusionary practices. They did so by capitulating to a supposedly "higher-order" intellectual understanding of race, one that dismissed them from any responsibility to explore strategies for more effective outreach to students of color.

An Australian Aboriginal colleague, Bob Morgan, who served for many years as a high-ranking administrator in a large urban university in Sydney, has helped me gain a deeper understanding of the integrationist White orientation. Throughout most of Australia's history, Aboriginal people have been intentionally excluded from higher education, a product of the country's fundamentalist White orientation, officially known as the "White Australia Policy," which was in effect until the late 1960s and lingers on in many ways even today. Only recently have Aboriginal students been actively recruited to attend universities. Morgan and many other Aboriginal and White educators have worked diligently to help build supportive structures that will encourage Aboriginal students to persevere and succeed in these primarily White institutions. He says, "We have now been invited to the party, but the university is still *their* house. Only when the institution reflects and honors Aboriginal culture and clearly belongs to *all* of us will we feel fully included." As Finefrock says (Narratives), "We have a pronoun problem." From the perspective of the integrationist orientation, "we" refers to Whites and "they" refers to the people of color who are invited into "our" schools, institutions, and neighborhoods. For integrationist Whites, the racial and ethnic composition of the guests may change, but the rules of the house remain the same.

Changing. The integrationist orientation begins to break down when Whites realize that the "we" of our social institutions must be truly inclusive. This realization leads to the gradual disintegration of a Eurocentric and Western-dominated perspective. This transition happened for me in New Haven when I began to see that the purpose of my work was not to "help" Black youth or "save" the Black community, but rather to reeducate my fellow Whites and help dismantle the dominance paradigm in the White community. My focus shifted away from externalizing racism as someone else's problem and toward internalizing the issue of White racism as the fundamental focus of change.

In the process of growing beyond my integrationist orientation, it was necessary for me to become self-reflective regarding White dominance. Liz Sweaney, from her experience in an outback Australian school, documents a similar shift:

We began to discern that the current practices and curriculum had little relevance to the majority of our [Aboriginal] students or, in fact, to ourselves. Although unspoken, we formed an alliance and I think became advocates for change. (Sweaney, Narratives)

The integrationist orientation can be transcended only when Whites begin to question the legitimacy of those institutional arrangements that continue to perpetuate White dominance. When Whites form alliances with people who have historically been marginalized by White hegemony, we ourselves become agents of change within the White community. When White paternalism is abandoned in the service of meaningful social action, we begin to disengage from the integrationist stance and move toward a transformationist orientation.

Transformationist White Identity

Thinking. Transformationist Whites actively seek to understand diverse points of view. They know that the construction of truth is a dynamic process that is continually shifting in the context of diverse cultural perspectives. They are aware that their personal appropriation of truth is merely one of many possibilities, not the *only* one. They are comfortable with multidimensional realities. Transformationist Whites challenge the legitimacy of White dominance. They welcome the process of self-interrogation that inevitably destabilizes their own assumptions about the commonplace and the normal (Fiske, 1989; Johnson, 2001). They acknowledge the collective reality of White complicity in dominance and oppression, while at the same time claiming a positive connection to White racial and cultural identity. Through their willingness to probe the deeper terrain of racial identity, they become self-reflective, authentic, and antiracist in their understanding of Whiteness.

Feeling. Transformationist Whites have abandoned the tacit assertion of White supremacy that lingers in the emotional backwaters of the integrationist orientation. Their personal pride and sense of self are no longer tied to assumptions of superiority but are grounded in the self-generated process of growth and learning. They affirm a positive sense of White identity, often finding a renewed and deep connection to their cultural roots in Europe. Transformationist Whites welcome the personal growth that continues to be generated by their exposure to diverse cultural realities. Their lives are enhanced rather than threatened by differences. They are guided by empathy and respect in their emotional response to people from different racial and cultural groups. Very importantly, their empathy also extends to other White people who have not grown as far as they have in their racial identity development. Transformationist Whites choose to assist their White colleagues in the process of growth rather than judging them for their inadequacies. Because they have worked through their own emotional issues of guilt and shame related to White racism and oppression, they do not need

to project blame onto their White colleagues. Rather than being immobilized by the weight of history and the pain of dominance, they are motivated by a vision of healing and social justice.

Acting. White educators in the transformationist orientation are committed to social action for the purpose of dismantling the dominance paradigm. As they participate in the process of liberation for others, they acknowledge that they themselves are being liberated as well (Bishop, 1994). Mutual growth and the commitment to change are essential for becoming allies in this work (Kivel, 1996). Transformationist Whites realize they cannot dismantle White dominance without fundamentally altering their own White identity. In a profound understatement, Sleeter (1996) notes that "becoming actively involved in working to dismantle racism will change a person's life" (p. 26).

Transformationist Whites actively seek cross-cultural and cross-racial interactions because they realize their own growth is dependent on such connections. Likewise, they engage their students in a continuous process of exploring multiple perspectives. As my wife found in her experience as a teacher in inner-city schools, transformationist Whites enjoy learning *from* and *with* other cultures, rather than merely *about* them (Linton, Narratives). Transformationist White teachers create curricula that manifest a multidimensional view of reality, and their pedagogy fosters equity, inclusion, and empowerment for all their students (J. A. Banks & C.A.M. Banks, 2005).

Transformationist White leaders and managers are champions of healing and change. They are advocates for those people who have been marginalized by the forces of dominance and oppression. They actively interrogate institutional structures, policies, and procedures. They are self-reflective regarding their own leadership style, seeking to be collaborative and co-responsible in their approach to change.

Changing. Whites who enter the transformationist orientation have experienced a profound shift in their understanding of the world and themselves. They have acknowledged, critiqued, and rejected the legitimacy of the dominance paradigm. They have committed themselves to a lifelong process of dismantling the assumption of rightness, the luxury of ignorance, and the legacy of privilege that have been the foundations of White hegemony for centuries. Although there is no ultimate escape from these negative realities of Whiteness, they are not overwhelmed by guilt or shame. Having changed themselves, they are passionate about educating other Whites and committed to working with colleagues from

all racial groups to overcome the social arrangements of past and present dominance.

For transformationist Whites, the privileges of avoidance and non-engagement have been significantly eroded. Almojuela, a Native American colleague, told me recently:

I used to think that Whites in social justice work always had the privilege of leaving when things got too uncomfortable for them. Whereas this is probably true for many, I now see that there are some White people who have gone too far down the road of commitment to turn back. Their hearts and minds are too deeply engaged in the healing work for them to leave it. There is no choice for them. This was a profound thing for me to realize because I never looked at Whites in this way before.

Almojuela's insight is echoed by one of Nieto's (1998) White students who, after learning many lessons about Whiteness in the context of an intense multicultural discussion group, said in her final report, "Now I can never *not* know again" (p. 20). Similarly, Sweaney (Narratives) comments of her 10 years of transformational work with Aboriginal students in a racist country town in Australia: "I found this time to be the most challenging, exciting, creative, and constructive in my career. I grew not only as a teacher, but also as a person. What I gained from the friendships made has become a part of my very being."

As inspirational as these words might be, it is important not to romanticize the transformationist White orientation as an end-point in the journey to cultural and racial awareness. Transformationist identity is, in itself, an ongoing process of change and growth. At the same time, it is helpful and hopeful for White educators to realize that there are different ways of being White and that we have a choice and an opportunity to grow beyond the limits of either the fundamentalist or integrationist orientations. It is also important to acknowledge that it may be too early in our exploration of White identity formation to more rigorously prescribe the best methodology whereby we might achieve positive movement for ourselves, our colleagues, and our students. The White identity orientations model, however, does provide a tentative roadmap to guide our growth in the three modalities of thinking, feeling, and acting. By critically analyzing dominance, by exploring possibilities for emotional growth, and by creating new arenas of collaborative and transformative action, there is much we can do to encourage our White colleagues and students to join us on the road to social justice, healing, and positive racial identity. The actual work of transformationist White teachers in the classroom will be the focus of the next chapter.

REFLECTIONS ON THE RHETORIC OF WHITENESS

Before leading a workshop with middle school teachers in North Carolina, my training partner and I were informed by school district administrators that our prospective audience of educators had been highly resistant in previous multicultural inservice sessions. Teachers resented being forced to attend these workshops. They had verbally attacked previous presenters and had once even stormed out of the room in mass protest. We were not comforted by this information, which was shared with us just minutes before our session began.

We worked with this group of 60 teachers in North Carolina for a full day and were both surprised and impressed by their positive attitude and willingness to engage in the various discussions and activities that we introduced. We dealt with issues of multicultural curriculum infusion, and also with the realities of prejudice, power, and racism in their schools. We did not attempt to compensate for the alleged recalcitrance of our audience, but merely tried to be inclusive in our approach and open to their perspectives. At the end of the session, one of the more senior faculty members, a White woman who had worked in this school district for 25 years, came up to thank us. She said, "This is the tenth multicultural workshop I have been to in the past few years, and it's the first time I haven't felt blamed. Thank you for treating me like a professional."

In another instance, Nieto (1998) shares a journal entry from one of her White male students at the end of a term-long discussion of racial issues in a highly interactive and diverse setting with other students. Her student wrote:

I still do not accept the definition of racism that "if you are White in America, you have benefited and are therefore a racist." This guilt-laden definition is great for provoking response, but in my opinion is simplistic, divisive, and more importantly, could completely discourage adherents from seeking change. The definition itself is racist, or at least too "pat." (pp. 28-29)

Both the teacher in North Carolina and the student in Nieto's class remind us to exercise care in our rhetorical formulations, lest we fall victim to the very exclusion and stereotyping we are attempting to dismantle. The rhetoric of blame and guilt often pushes our White students and colleagues into the stage of perpetual reintegration, locking them into resistance and self-protection rather than responsible reflection and positive growth. If we want to engage the issues of White dominance and racism in a compelling way, then we must allow for open dialogue and the possibility of change. We must learn to use the language of discovery and exploration,

rather than the rhetoric of blame and projection. We must continually invite our White colleagues to see the potential for their role as allies in the work of social healing.

Since the first edition of this book was published in 1999, the study of Whiteness has become a virtual cottage industry in the academic community. Scores of graduate students and academics have asked me for permission to use the White identity orientations model in their dissertations and research. As more scholarly attention becomes focused on Whiteness and White racial identity development, it is important to consider the political and educational implications of this relatively new arena of research. We need to clarify our use of language and vigilantly assess the rhetoric that frames our discussion of Whiteness. If our intention is to be inclusive, then it is essential that our interrogation of Whiteness not be confined to the academic community but be made accessible to a broad audience of educational practitioners.

I raise these concerns as a multicultural practitioner who has worked with many teachers in schools throughout the United States and Australia over the past 40 years. In multicultural teacher training, as in any other educational endeavor, our pedagogical approach ought to be developmentally appropriate for the audience we are attempting to reach. Rather than blaming unaware White teachers for the sins of past dominance, we need to start where they are, which for many White teachers means dealing with the earlier stages of White identity development, including pre-contact, contact, disintegration, and reintegration. When we employ the language of blame and guilt with Whites who are in these early stages of development, we essentially contribute to the perpetuation of the very denial and resistance we are attempting to overcome. To this end, it is important to remember that the "enemies" in our multicultural healing work are dominance, ignorance, and racism, not White people. "Affirmation before reformation" is as important in our work with White teachers as it is in our work with children (Geneva Gay, personal communication, March 1997).

In light of the above discussion, I worry about the use of academic rhetoric that equates Whiteness with oppression. Sleeter (1996), for example, states that "Whiteness has come to mean ravenous materialism, competitive individualism, and a way of living characterized by putting acquisition of possession ahead of humanity" (p. 31). Fine and colleagues (1997) similarly claim that "Whiteness demands and constitutes hierarchy, exclusion, and deprivation" (p. viii). In addition, Roediger (1994) writes that "it is not merely that Whiteness is oppressive and false; it is nothing but oppressive and false" (p. 13). And with perhaps the most extreme rhetorical flourish, Ignatiev (1996) claims that "the key to solving the social problems of our time is to abolish the White race" (p. 10).

Whereas it is essential to acknowledge, as I did in Chapters 2 and 3, the inherent connection between oppression and Whiteness, it is equally important to critically examine the scholarly rhetoric employed in our attempts to deconstruct Whiteness. We must carefully seek to understand the implications of our rhetoric for the healing work of social justice and personal transformation. From a practitioner's point of view, I am concerned that the analytical approach of "Whiteness-equals-oppression" will merely serve to alienate White educators rather than inspire them to become co-responsible for positive change.

If Whiteness is theorized to be synonymous with oppression, then how do we provide White educators with a positive racial identity and include them in the work of social transformation? When writers in the "Whiteness-equals-oppression" genre wish to free White people from their own definitional constraints, they are forced to exercise further rhetorical sleight-of-hand by differentiating between "White people" and "Whiteness." Thus Sleeter (1996) writes: "To break with Whiteness, I must first distinguish between being a person of European ancestry and one who identifies with being 'White'" (p. 32). This careful distinction may function well in theory but raises significant problems for educational practice (Giroux, 1997b).

No matter how unbecoming my Whiteness may be made to appear, I cannot "un-become" White. Given the common use of language and the real politics of race, I am both White and European American. I cannot separate "Whiteness" from "being White" from "being of European ancestry." Any attempt to do so is merely a word game. As Delpit (1995) has cautioned, the language we employ in the deconstruction of Whiteness often functions "not for the purpose of better teaching, but for the goal of easier analysis" (p. 46). Relative to the stages of racial identity development, the "Whiteness-equals-oppression" rhetoric emerges from the kind of self-loathing that is often associated with the disintegration stage as well as from the "less-White-than-thou" attitude that is characteristic of pseudo-independence.

Regardless of any rhetorical distinctions we may employ, White educators and students will continue to be seen as White. As McKenna (Narratives) learned from his early struggles as a teacher in predominantly Black schools, "As much as I despised Whiteness, that is what I was." The goal for White people in the process of racial identity development is not to un-become White but rather to transform for ourselves, and hopefully for others, the *meaning* of Whiteness. If Whiteness is by definition bad, then so are White people. Telling White people not to identify with Whiteness is tantamount to telling Black people not to identify with Blackness. It is an invitation to deny one's very existence.

Our attempts to dismantle dominance and oppression must follow a path other than that of either villifying or obliterating Whiteness. Just as African Americans have challenged the negative associations of "Blackness" and chosen to recast their identity in their own positive image, so Whites need to acknowledge and work through the negative historical implications of "Whiteness" and create for ourselves a transformed identity as White people committed to equity and social change. Our goal is to neither deify nor denigrate Whiteness, but to defuse its destructive power. To teach my White students and my own White children and grandchildren that they are "not White" is to do them a disservice. However, to teach them that there are different ways of being White, and that they have a *choice* as White people to become champions of justice and social healing, is to provide them a positive direction for growth and to grant them the dignity of their own being.

CHAPTER 7

White Teachers and School Reform: Toward a Transformationist Pedagogy

Often, without knowing it, we are waiting for a new idea to come and cut us free from our entanglements. When the idea is true and the space is ready for it, the idea overtakes everything. With grace-like swiftness, it descends and claims recognition; it cannot be returned or reversed.

—John O'Donohue, *Beauty*

What is the new idea we have been waiting for that will free us from the entanglements of White dominance and the tragic persistence of educational inequities for children of color in our public schools? Since the first edition of this book was published in 1999, I have worked with tens of thousands of educators in school districts and universities throughout the United States. For the most part, the core content of these sessions has centered on the conversation we have engaged in here: How do we prepare a predominantly White teacher population to work effectively with racially and culturally diverse students? The conversation has become increasingly intense and more politically strident over the years, with issues of the achievement gap, high-stakes testing, school reform, and the federal No Child Left Behind legislation taking center stage.

In this chapter, I will use the current climate in public education as a backdrop onto which we can project, focus, and illuminate the two central themes we have discussed in the previous chapters: (1) the dynamics of White social dominance and (2) the developmental process whereby White educators grow toward a transformationist racial identity. It is from these two themes that we can forge the new idea that will help extricate us from the restraints of the past. And the new idea which emerges from this