Unhooking from Whiteness
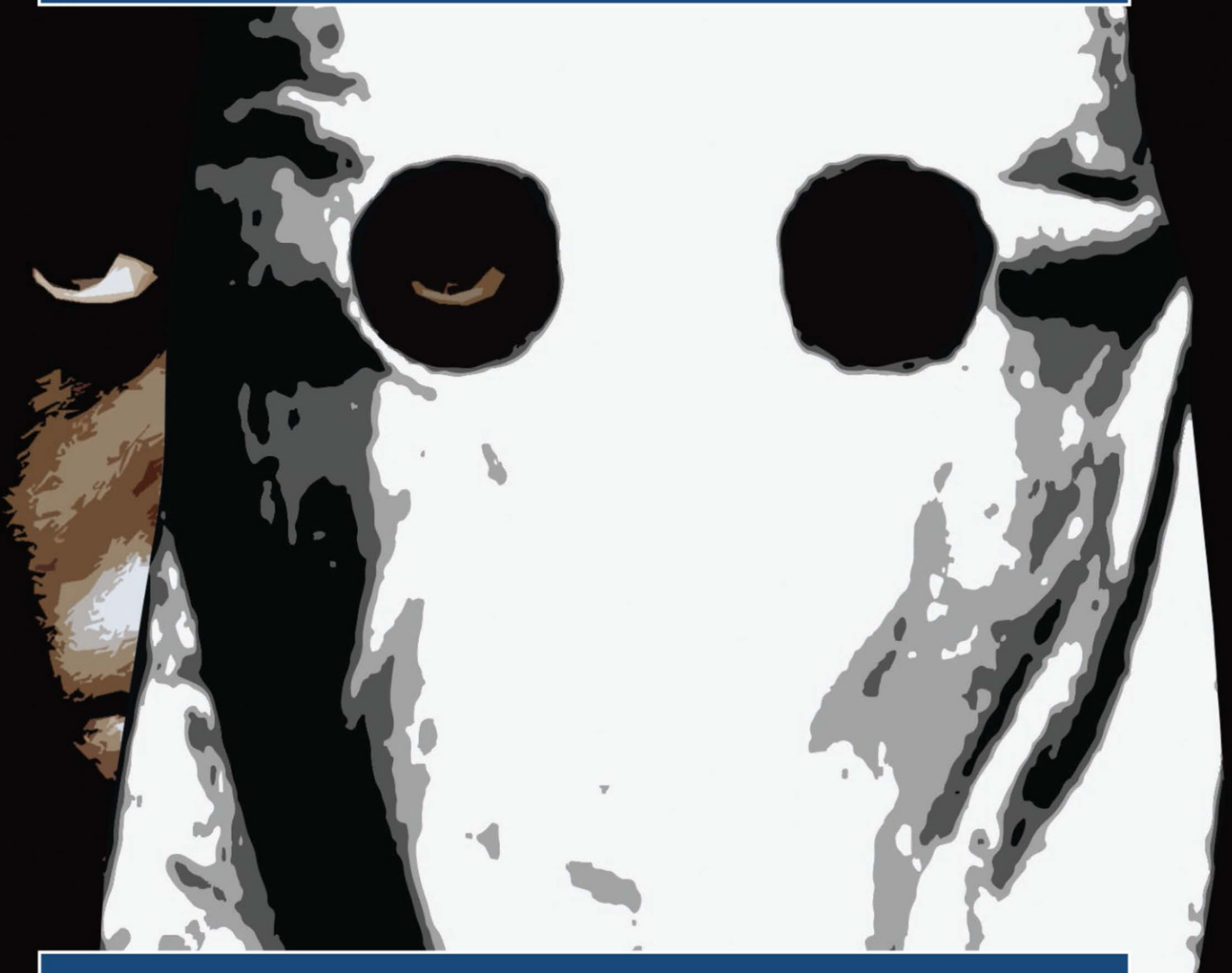
Resisting the *Esprit de Corps*

Nicholas D. Hartlep and
Cleveland Hayes (Eds.)

Unhooking from Whiteness

CONSTRUCTING KNOWLEDGE: CURRICULUM STUDIES IN ACTION

Volume 10

Scope

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

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

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

Unhooking from Whiteness

Resisting the Esprit de Corps

Edited by

Nicholas D. Hartlep
Illinois State University, USA

and

Cleveland Hayes
University of La Verne, USA

All chapters in this book have undergone peer review.

Cover image by Tak Toyoshima

Printed on acid-free paper

ADVANCE PRAISE FOR
UNHOOKING FROM WHITENESS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

SUZANNE SOOHOO

FOREWORD

Double Consciousness for All

The clarion call from creators Hartlep and Hayes is to "unhook from shackles of whiteness…to assist people of all races, cultures, and backgrounds and educate them about the importance of unhooking oneself from whiteness in order to dismantle racism in the U.S." (preface). This book is for people of color (POC) and people of non-color (whites) to unhook from the normalcy of white dominance; to unhook from the mind numbing influence of hegemonic complacency and to unhook from ideological iron cuffs that prevent us from disabling the white status quo.

This book builds on whiteness work of other scholars in the past two decades. Several scholars in higher education (Chávez Chaávez & O'Donnell, 1998; McLaughlin & Tierney, 1993; Monzó & SooHoo, 2014) have secured courageous first person accounts about racial travesties they or colleagues have experienced or witnessed. In this rich body of literature, one sees how whiteness is framed (Feagin, 2010), scanned (Carr, 2007), manifested, and "called out" of its invisible neutrality. This collection of work and its authors accomplish what Feagin describes as "racist realities that are taken 'out of the closet' so that they can be openly analyzed and, hopefully, redressed or removed" (p. 21). And indeed, is this not the life's work and struggle of what we do as critical educators and as cultural workers? Distinguished Freirean scholar Antonia Darder (2015) reminds us, "The political work of the oppressed has always required the unveiling, naming, and challenging of asymmetrical relations of power and their consequences within schools, communities, and the larger society" (p. 38). The authors in this book zero in with laser sharp acuity on the cancerous racism that invades academic spaces, recognizing that racism makes ill not just red cells but also white cells. Organizations and cultures suffer together when racism goes unchecked and unchallenged. Our call collectively as authors and readers as Freire puts it is "to unveil the contradictions and courageously challenge practices that objectify, dispirit, and dehumanize, preventing our political expression as full cultural citizens" (p. 44).

Some people may be uncomfortable with this challenge. Within white neutrality, there is comfort in white invisibility. To suddenly recognize others are watching you with 3D lenses and examining your behavior as a course of study can be annoying. We all know how being the object of study through colonial research practices most often results in characterizations that are not our truths. It can make one paranoid

not only because of the scrutiny but also in the power of the Other to define. What happens when the Other engages in ethnographic examinations on whiteness? What happens when the Other becomes the researcher and whiteness becomes the researched? Imagine the audacity of being studied, analyzed, and interpreted without one's consent?

Peter McLaren (1995) cites bell hooks (*Black Looks*), who notes that white people are often shocked that black people have the ability to critically assess whiteness. "Their [white people's] amazement that black people match white people with a critical 'ethnographic' gaze is itself an expression of racism" (p. 110). Behind that shaken awareness is apprehension of what is being said. For most of white America who have not had the opportunity or the courage to examine their white privilege, they are not accustomed to being framed/scanned by Others and they have not heard our counter stories to racism and whiteness—counter stories that occupy large spaces in our mental landscapes. Anti-racist counter frames are pragmatic literacies among people of color and other disenfranchised groups that have "called out" racist issues, deconstructed its causes, and re-storied how to move practically within "the contours and realities of everyday life" (Feagin, 2010). Counter framing is not taught in schools or in media but are grounded in communities of interests such as homes, churches, barbershops, and beauty salons. Feagin characterizes black beauty salons as places "where black beauty is routinely defined, honored, and enhanced—in resistance to the conventional white framing of black women" (p. 179).

Counter frames to racism are found in this book, accessible to everyone. For people of color and people from other marginalized groups, they will find these folk stories of our racist experiences in the academy disturbing, affirming, inspiring, and challenging as we continue to seek solidarity among all groups encountering white oppression. We look to these stories for strength and truth to power in recognition of racism's omnipotence throughout organizational structures and everyday micro-aggressions.

Last month I waited for a car to pull out of a space marked *faculty*. A white gentleman was hanging his suit jacket up in the backseat and positioning himself to leave.

I asked, "Are you leaving?"

His response: "These spaces are for faculty."

With irritated disbelief, I exclaimed, "I wonder what faculty looks like?", leaving him quite puzzled. I should have replied, "Where are your credentials?"

While stories like this occur on a daily basis, our white colleagues are often not aware of or have dismissed these incidents as socially without warrant. They perceive these as "paper cut" transgressions that can be ignored because white has the power to define what is important and what is not, by validating some experiences and subjugating others (Sefa Dei, 2007). Disregard and indifference are manifestations of the "arrogance of the powerful" according to Pope Francis (D'Emilio, 2016), who in this New Year's homily emphasized the need to "let

ourselves be reborn, to overcome the indifference which blocks solidarity, and to leave behind the false neutrality which prevents sharing."

White allies have listened and learned to act on our behalf, recognizing that this racist world requires attention, conversation, and action by all of us. Acts of opposition by marginalized groups to address institutional racism are necessary but not sufficient in changing the structures that maintain its immortality (McLaren, 1995). Freire maintains that dialogue between the oppressed and the oppressor is key to developing critical consciousness in which we establish a dialectical relationship and bring our mutual unfinishedness towards a conscious awareness of limit situations. POC must name limit situations. Whites need to question white normativity. Here lies hope and possibility for a more humane existence among all people of the world.

What can this book do towards this end? How can this book along with other great works around similar lines "stimulate conversation and activism in eradicating racism and other forms of oppression and inequity" (Carr, 2007, p. 13)? Can this book evoke conversations and potential action whereupon both whites and people of color develop a double consciousness; a sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others as a means to inform action (Du Bois, 1903)? For African Americans and other minoritized groups, this sense making and folk literacy was taught and sustained through intentional socializing by one's own community to ensure political and social survival within white dominance—a necessary and pragmatic way to deal with racist issues, not a literacy of choice. But what if this burden was shared? What if double consciousness was in fact a desired outcome of dialogical relationships? Self-monitoring and consciousness of white neutrality would mean whiteness can no longer maintain invisibility and racism no longer can live in the shadows of our institutions. This might entail uncomfortable conversations, translations, and negotiations within untested feasibility (Freire, 2002), but it is here that hope and possible transformation lies. Instead of both claiming the other as culturally deprived, we recognize, from a stance of humility and love (SooHoo, 2015), that we must offer our mutual unfinishedness as the foundation for our co-constructed agenda to eradicate racism. Dialogue initializes proximity to action. It is within emancipatory praxis that we formulate pathways for counter-hegemonic action. For after all, our ultimate goal in the academy is to legitimatize colorized ideologies and epistemological pluralism that we believe is central to the mission of universities and democracies.

REFERENCES

Carr, P. R., & Lund, D. (Eds.). (2007). *The great white north? Exploring whiteness, privilege, and identity in education.* Rotterdam, The Netherlands: Sense Publishers.

Chávez Chávez, R., & O'Donnell, J. (Eds.). (1998). *Speaking the unpleasant: The politics of (non)engagement in the multicultural education terrain*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

Darder, A. (2015). *Freire and education.* New York, NY: Routledge.

D'Emilio, F. (2016, January 1). Pope: Now's the time to end indifference, 'false neutrality.' *Orange County Register*. Retrieved from http://bigstory.ap.org/article/52507190663644a495088bdeb1ab8684/pope-nows-time-end-indifference-false-neutrality

Du Bois, W. E. B. (1903). *The souls of black folk.* New York, NY: Dover Publications. Retrieved from http://scua.library.umass.edu/duboisopedia/doku.php?id=about:double_consciousness

Feagin, J. R. (2010). *The white racial frame: Centuries of racial framing and counter-framing.* New York, NY: Routledge.

Freire, P. (2002). *Pedagogy of hope.* New York, NY: Continuum.

hooks, b. (2014). *Black looks*. New York, NY: Routledge.

McLaren, P. (1995). White terror and oppositional agency: Towards a critical multiculturalism. *Counterpoints, 4*(1), 87–124.

McLaughlin, D., & Tierney, W. (Eds.). (1993). *Naming silenced lives: Personal narratives and the process of educational change*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Monzó, L. D., & SooHoo, S. (2014). Translating the academy: Learning the racialized language of academia. *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education*, *7*(3), 147–165. Retrieved from http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/a0037400

Sefa Dei, G. J. (2007). Foreword. In P. R. Carr & D. E. Lund (Eds.), *The great white north*? *Exploring whiteness, privilege, and identity in education* (pp. vii–xii). Rotterdam, The Netherlands: Sense Publishers.

SooHoo, S. (2015). Humility within critical pedagogy. In B. J. Porfilio & D. R. Ford (Eds.), *Leaders in critical pedagogy: Narratives for understanding solidarity* (pp. 225–233). Rotterdam, The Netherlands: Sense Publishers.

NICHOLAS D. HARTLEP

PREFACE

INTRODUCTION

In *Unhooking from Whiteness: The Key to Dismantling Racism in the United States,* professor Hayes and I attempted to petition people of color (and also whites) to unhook themselves from the shackles of whiteness. Our *Unhooking* volume included the auto-ethnographic accounts of African American, Native American, Asian American, European American, and Latinx[1] academics and K–12 educators who have attempted to "unhook" from whiteness.

The present volume is equally committed to such a project. *Unhooking from Whiteness: Resisting the Esprit de Corps* examines the consequences of deciding to unhook from whiteness. In other words, what happens to people when they choose to unhook from the rules and modes of thought whiteness requires and expects of them? From the outset, professor Hayes and I need to make clear that we have not edited *Resisting the Esprit de Corps* for white people exclusively, although Carrie Morris writes that "[r]acism is never subtle to the victim. Only White people say race doesn't matter" (as cited in Smith, 2005, p. 439). In other words, whites can be victims of whiteness too, albeit in different ways. The edited volume that stands before the reader is for all people, of all races, and all cultures, because although racism is a "white" problem, its consequences, invariably, affect us all, especially people of color (e.g., see Hayes & Hartlep, 2013; Lipsitz, 1995; Smith, 2013).

A few more points of clarification need to be made earlier than later. First, European Americans[2] unhooking from whiteness is not merely race traitorship; although traitorship is a facet of it. Noel Ignatiev and John Garvey (1996) identify the principle of race traitorship as "*treason to whiteness*" which, according to them, is "*loyalty to humanity*" (p. 10). Second, this volume builds upon the important work of whiteness and racialization scholars—such as George Lipsitz (1998), Zeus Leonardo (2002, 2013), Noel Ignatiev (Ignatiev & Garvey, 1996), Cheryl Matias (Matias, 2012; Matias, Viesca, Garrison-Wade, Tandon, & Galindo, 2014), and others who are not named here. We hope that the chapters in this book can assist people of all races, cultures, and backgrounds and educate them about the importance of unhooking oneself from whiteness in order to dismantle racism in the United States, especially during this "third wave" (Twine & Gallagher, 2008).

We strongly believe that this edited volume will be an essential read for those who are passionately interested in disrupting whiteness' influence in society, especially within an academic or higher education context. Professor Hayes and I believe that

academics cannot seek societal transformation (such as the elimination of racism), when we ourselves as academicians and theoreticians create the same injustices we critique in our scholarship. In other words, the problems we face inside the academy are related to the problems we create by not unhooking ourselves from institutionalized whiteness.

Professor Hayes and I invited contributors to provide chapters that considered how individuals could push back or disrupt whiteness. Nine auto-ethnographic accounts were published in *Unhooking from Whiteness: The Key to Dismantling Racism in the United States* (Hayes & Hartlep, 2013). We sought to include more voices and alternative forms of expression in *Resisting the Esprit de Corps.* For example, this volume includes poems. In this book Hayes expands what he has termed "academic lynching" (see Juárez & Hayes, 2014), while I share my thoughts about the psychological and physical manifestations of whiteness.

Why This Book? Why Now?

Why not now? Professor Hayes and I believe that the hypercompetitive and neoliberal conditions in higher education do not encourage faculty to cooperate. The "dog-eat-dog" higher education system shows no mercy or humanity; we suspect Ignatiev Garvey (1996) might say it is *unloyal to humanity*. Hayes and I have become embittered by what we label here, for lack of better terms, an *esprit de corps* or a *coterie of whiteness*. The *esprit de corps* refers to the spirit of the academy that is based on whiteness[3], while the *coterie of whiteness* refers to faculty and editors who serve as gatekeepers of knowledge production and dissemination, who curiously perpetuate exclusivity rather than inclusivity or diversity of thought. Peer-reviewed research publications are the medium of exchange in the academy—but few consider how that supposedly "blind" and "meritocratic" system *is* whiteness, reinforced by the supposed proper forms of citing, such as what is required by the American Psychological Association Manual (cf., Thompson, 2004).

We are sure that others reading this book have come across "critical" scholars who write against oppression, inequality, and oppression yet who also maintain inequality and racism by oppressing other junior faculty members and undergraduate and graduate students through various insidious behaviors. Whether that oppression is "academically lynching" those who do not conform or intentionally misadvising pre-tenure faculty members and doctoral students, there is no shortage of this going on in the academy. It's a shame, and it's time to speak up and out about it.

Moreover, why are academics required to publish in journals that make it difficult to access such privileged "cutting-edge" information? Who actually reads what we write as teacher educators and academics, and more importantly, how many practicing K–12 teachers read it? It has been asked, "If a tree falls in a forest and no one is around to hear it, does it make a sound?" Similarly, "If no one reads what we write, have we written anything?" Certainly the *esprit de corps* can refer to critical scholars who write about social justice but don't live it out in their daily (private)

lives. But it also can include those individuals who falsely say they are freedom fighters or antiracists, when in actuality they are not.

Indeed, there's no shortage of scandals in the world that have involved allegedly "progressively-minded" people, "freedom fighters"—be it Greg Mortenson, the man who built schools in Afghanistan and Pakistan for girls, who was later found out to be a con artist who enriched himself at the expense of Afghani and Pakistani girls (cf., Krakauer, 2011), or Jesse Jackson Jr., the son of Civil Rights leader Jesse Jackson, who embezzled campaign funds (Gray, 2013). These two individuals may be rare, but what do we make of the professor who attends conferences and stays at hotels that cruelly underpay their maids and staff, who are homophobic, and who don't tip the *maitre d'*?[4] We certainly are talking about the contradictions between public personae (published life) and private realities (private lifestyle), but we can be talking about other problematic behaviors and uncritical mindsets too.

SPEAKING TRUTH TO POWER

Working to dismantle the racism and whiteness that continue to keep oppressed people powerless and immobilized in academe requires sharing power, opportunity, and access. Removing barriers to the knowledge created in higher education is an essential part of this process. The process of unhooking oneself from institutionalized whiteness certainly requires fighting hegemonic modes of thought and patriarchal views that persistently keep marginalized groups of academics in their station (or at their institution). As editors of this volume, we know full well that its contents will be highly polemical for some; but irrespective of its reception, the book is highly necessary from our perspectives as pre-tenure and tenured faculty members. Because speaking truth to power is never an easy thing to do, we appreciate *Sense* publishing such critical and unpopular work, as "unhooking" from whiteness is perceived by those still hooked into whiteness as heresy and less than scholarly. If writing must adhere to whiteness to be considered "scholarly," then I don't want to aspire to be a scholar.

Similarly, the perception that open-access articles are less scholarly than traditional print journals benefits whiteness. It's possible that academics who benefit from institutional or personal connections are more apt to want to maintain the idea that open-access journals are substandard when compared to print- and pay-walled journals; after all, these individuals thereby maintain material advantages.

Meanwhile, I have a personal experience with the whiteness that publishers benefit from. When I published an article in *Equity & Excellence in Education,* a prestigious peer-reviewed journal, I chose to pay a fee to make my article open-access. I chose to do so because I felt that having a pay wall would make the knowledge exclusive and not open to the public. The fee I had to pay was over $2,000![5] Taylor and Francis and the Copyright Clearinghouse are benefiting from erecting barriers to accessing knowledge. What I find deeply troubling is that the publishing process is a virtuous cycle. The more that you buy into it, the more you benefit from it.

Jealousness, bitterness, and competitiveness are not what professor Hayes and I are talking about *per se,* and we aren't describing a scenario in which it's white professors against all other professors of color. We're addressing an unwillingness to "unhook from whiteness," which strengthens the "possessive investment in whiteness." We're also discussing when people of color choose to remain hooked to whiteness for fear of losing the little power and prestige they may currently enjoy. Some faculty members of color perpetuate the processes illuminated above for reasons that seem logical. But when the logic they use is examined deeply, it becomes obvious that failure to unhook from whiteness is hegemonic. Antonio Gramsci would refer to minoritized and oppressed academics—who continue to be ensnared in the clutches of whiteness—as the "petite bourgeoisie." In relation to intellectuals, Gramsci argues that people who somewhat benefit by the dominant power structure remain complacent in the system they know exploits them, out of fear of losing their marginal position (Gramsci, 1971).

Worth quoting at length, George Lipsitz (1995) writes the following:

> All whites do not benefit from the possessive investment in whiteness in precisely the same way; the experiences of members of minority groups are not interchangeable. But the possessive investment in whiteness always affects individual and group life chances and opportunities. Even in cases where minority groups secure political and economic power through collective mobilization, the terms and conditions of their collectivity and the logic of group solidarity are always influenced and intensified by the absolute value of whiteness in American politics, economics, and culture. (p. 383)

Therefore, knowledge of whiteness is critical for ending it, or at least slowing its spread and the harm it does within both the academic and non-academic worlds. And this is highly consequential because, oddly yet predictably, research has found that whites believe they are victims of racism at rates higher than people of color (cf., Norton & Sommers, 2011). According to Norton and Sommers' (2011) research, whites have now come to view anti-White bias as a bigger societal problem than anti-Black bias! It's clear that speaking truth to power will be met with resistance.

TOWARD A THEORETICAL AND CONCEPTUAL UNDERSTANDING OF WHITENESS

Whiteness promotes a form of hegemonic thinking, which influences not only thought processes but also behavior within the academy. This behavior and mode of thought is normalized through ubiquitous things such as academic conferences, wherein presenters frequently share their research studies via PowerPoint presentations rather than oral story format. For instance, at a Critical Race Theory conference in New York at Columbia University, professor Hayes and I refused to share our presentation via PowerPoint. We stated that we wouldn't behave
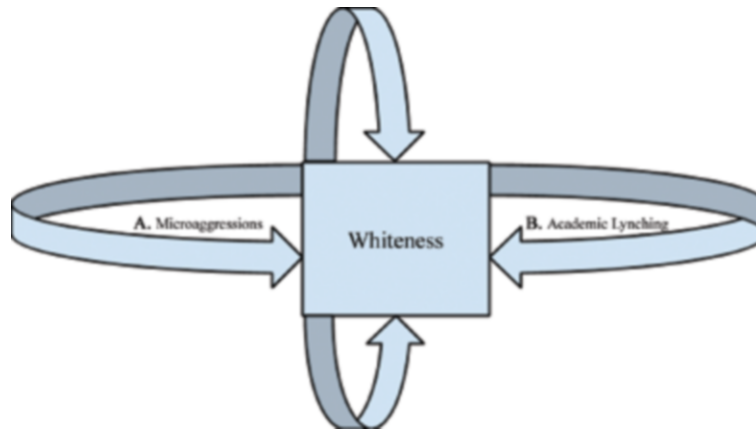
Figure 1. Theoretical and Conceptual Diagram of Unhooking from Whiteness
[A]*(Sue, 2010a, 2010b)* [B]*(Juárez & Hayes, 2014)*

according to social modes of thought in the academy that we didn't participate in creating. Who says we need to use PowerPoint? Who makes the rules for conferences?

We also understand that academic and behavioral modes of thought can be socialized by faculty members and diffused through the advice given to doctoral students as well. For instance, doctoral students are socialized to do what is best for themselves at the expense of classmates who, upon graduation, will be competing for a limited amount of faculty positions. Another example of whiteness is how doctoral students are socialized and trained to believe that working at anything besides an R1 means that you are a failure or something less than a true academic. This is complete insanity: professor Hayes and I both work at R2s.

Microaggressions (and micro-invalidations), seen in arrow "A," serve as daily reminders that faculty members who don't conform or behave in ways that are accepted are not wanted (Sue, 2010a, 2010b). Academic lynching, seen in Arrow "B" and also explicated in professor Hayes' chapter (see chapter 1), serves to terrorize non-conformity (Juárez & Hayes, 2014). While microaggressions and micro-invalidations are subtle and often automatic put-downs and insults directed toward people of color (Sue, 2010a, 2010b), academic lynches are not-so-subtle, and can lead to faculty of color experiencing trauma and racial battle fatigue as the result of macroaggressions (cf., Hartlep, 2014; Hayes, 2014). This can lead scholars to becoming paranoid, something I detail in my chapter (see chapter 3).

Professor Hayes and I would like to thank the many people who read and provided feedback on this project. We would also like to thank by name the following people for their support and contribution to this project: Rene Antrop-González, Paul R. Carr, Paul Chambers, Antonio L. Ellis, Veronica Escoffery-Runnels,