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INTRODUCTION (2014)

Reframing Whiteness

In so many ways, not much has changed since we first published *The Great White North? Exploring Whiteness, Privilege and Identity in Education*, and yet, so much has changed. One of our contributors has passed away, our dear friend and colleague, Patrick Solomon. Most chapter authors have carried on with their academic work, many within the broad field of social justice work. Both of the editors have attained new positions and new duties, and taken on additional commitments both inside and outside of the academy. The topic of Whiteness remains contentious and contested, rarely evokes a neutral response, and we understood the difficulty for our authors of revisiting their chapters some six or so years later. We made the decision to retain the original chapters wherever possible, and include in this edition an opportunity for the authors to reframe their chapters in light of new understandings and experiences since its original publication. It has been a pleasure and an honour to reconnect with the good people who have made this book an award-winning bestseller in this field.

It was an honour to be recognized by our peers for the first edition of this book, with an *Award of Distinction* from the Canadian Race Relations Foundation (CRRF), and with the *2008 Publication Award* from the Canadian Association of Foundations of Education (CAFE). In the meantime, we have often been called upon to write and speak about the book and its related projects. Invitations for community and academic conferences and journal articles (e.g., Lund & Carr, 2010), and edited book chapters (e.g., Carr & Lund, 2009; Lund & Carr, 2012) have seen us talking about aspects of White privilege with a variety of professional, academic, and lay audiences. Appearances on regional and national radio broadcasts have included right-wing radio shows, local and national news stories, and phone-in questions from members of the public. Following the publication of a seemingly innocuous article about our book in a national newspaper (Church, 2007) covering a presentation about our research at a national conference, the reader responses were immediate and many of them vicious. In the first few hours alone, over 160 written items were posted to the newspaper's online "Comments" page, most expressing racist, xenophobic, or otherwise hateful viewpoints. It is no understatement to say that there remains a very high level of resistance to the very notion of White privilege, especially among White people.

Emotional responses to our ideas, and those of our contributors, have ranged from incredulous, to angry, to defensive, to curious, to bemused. People in the West and Global North remain immersed in Whiteness like fish in water. There remain dozens of embedded metaphors, analogies, images, and cultural icons that all speak to the sanctity, beauty, and the hypnotic predominance of the colour white in the Western world. Not merely the opposite of black, the colour white remains a signifier for global racial supremacy—good against evil, lightness versus darkness, and benevolence over malevolence—and symbolizes purity, cleanliness, kindness, serenity, and youthful innocence. White is associated with being the "good guy," the savior, and the empires of Europe and the UK as well as France, Spain and other Euro-colonizing forces, while Black is inexorably fused to colonial notions of the "bad guy," the villain, and the forbidding "dark continent" of Africa.

White supremacist groups have coalesced in North America, and continue to thrive and adapt around virulent hatred based on the false premise of biological superiority. Canada has long been a welcome home to the Ku Klux Klan and numerous other hate groups (Baergen, 2000; Kinsella, 2005; Pitsula, 2013). White supremacist propaganda has been used historically in a sophisticated manner to soften the message of xenophobia to reinforce White hegemony (Daniels, 1997). Slavery, colonialism of First Nations and other peoples, neo-colonialism, imperialism, and a host of other political, economic, and cultural strategic maneuvers and mindsets have all been buttressed by the grandiose conceptualization of the White man as morally enlightened (Dei & Kempf, 2006). Supported for centuries by the Christian religion and the drive to expand the Empire, White people have colonized and ravaged much of the planet. Willinsky (1998) reminds us that the racialized divisions of the past still shape our educational institutions, and that exposing privileges and inequities is part of what we owe our students. Further, he explains that students

> need to see that such divisions have long been part of the fabric and structure of the state, including the schools, and they need to appreciate that challenging the structuring of those differences requires equally public acts of refusing their original and intended meanings. (p. 5)

Rather than regarding this as a sensationalistic depiction of the legacy of a diverse group of people, one need only look at the history of indigenous peoples in North America (Carr, 2008; Churchill, 1998) to understand the present day privilege and power held by White people (Dei, Karumanchery, & Karumanchery-Luik, 2004; Fine, Weis, Powell Pruitt, & Burns, 2004; Lund, 2006a). Throughout the past few years, it has become evident that Whiteness cannot be separated from many other critical areas of inquiry, including neoliberalism, globalization, and democracy (see Carr, 2011).

The collection of writings originally assembled within *The Great White North?* speaks to the idea that Canada is an expansive country, richly diverse in its geography, shaped by the mesmerizing landscapes crafted by the Group of Seven artists in the early 1900s, with an undercurrent of the pioneer spirit defined in the literature of generations of great Canadian writers in the latter part of the twentieth century. One

feature that defines the Canadian experience is the complex, and often antagonistic, relationship it has had with the United States since before Confederation. A common sentiment that continues to bind Canadians together is the self-assured notion that Canada does not suffer from the same racial problems as in the US. We believe we are less segregated, less discriminatory, less racist, and less divided, and we often remind ourselves of Canada's status as the first nation to have its multicultural identity entrenched in its constitution. The Americans, on the other hand, reveal endless visible warts, including a long history of racial tensions and civil rights struggles, and we strive to convince ourselves that we Canadians have not followed their destiny (Lund, 2006c, 2012).

As educational researchers interested in the sociology of "race" and identity in education, the editors of this book have become aware of the intricate, systemic, and pervasive nature of racism in Canada. Many well-known antiracism scholars have taken up the work of acknowledging and documenting this racist past and present (e.g., Dei, Karumanchery, & Karumanchery-Luik, 2004; Fleras & Elliot, 2003; Henry & Tator, 2005; James, 2003; Trifonas, 2003). Starting with the first European contact with the Aboriginal peoples, through the existence of slavery in Canada—about which many Canadians have no information—to the undulating waves of immigration, through the razing of Africville in Halifax, to the internment of Japanese Canadians during the Second World War, through the experience of Jamaican-Canadians in Toronto and Haitian-Canadians in Montreal, the history of racism in Canada is as rich as it is shrouded with resistance and denial (Lund, 2006b). While there have been hundreds of studies on race relations and racism in Canada, there have been few, if any, scholarly works exclusively dedicated to exploring Whiteness in Canada.

We decided to compile such a book examining the multiple perspectives and vantage points on Whiteness in order to challenge the current complacency in the Canadian state and nation, and particularly among educators, to address deep-seated inequities and injustices. This volume builds on a growing desire to examine Whiteness without reifying its centrality in the antiracism and other social justice movements. We have been, simultaneously, inspired by critical White scholars in the US who have undertaken critical self-examination of their own privileges as they take up the work of unlearning racism in their schools, communities, and faculties of education (e.g., Bush, 2005; Howard, 1999; Jensen, 2005; Lea & Helfand, 2004; McIntosh, 1988; McIntyre, 1997; Rodriquez & Villaverde, 2000; Sleeter, 2005; Sullivan, 2006). Questions emerge that seem self-evident and yet confound our work: Do most White people even know that they are White? Do they use their privilege to deny or ignore their racial identity and, simultaneously, infer inherent racial attributes to the "Other"? If White people do not know that they are White, how can those who are in positions of power, many of whom are White, effectively understand and challenge racism and unearned privilege?

We realize the oversimplification entailed in placing into one White category such heterogeneous ethnic, cultural, linguistic, religious, and other groups. Certainly,

there are myriad international examples of nuanced experiences of oppression and struggle within and across nations of White people. For example, Francophones have historical differences with Anglophones in Canada, the Catholics and the Protestants have been at loggerheads for years in Northern Ireland, the Hungarian minority has not had a favourable experience with the majority Romanian population, and the Basque population has been involved in a separatist movement in Spain for generations, with all of these conflicts, struggles, and complexities involving White people. It would seem extremely unusual, and perhaps even unacceptable to most people, to hear news anchors speak of "the White community" during a daily newscast in North America, yet we commonly refer to the "Black community," the "Asian community," the "West Indian community" and so on, as if these racialized groups can so easily be confined within a tightly defined and coded category of identity and social experience.

This second volume asks the question: What does Whiteness look like, in general, and in Canada, in particular? It also pushes contributors to consider how we can challenge, disrupt, and alter power and privilege relations imbued within the Whiteness project. The Canadian context is highly complex with the number and variety of exogamous relations and blending of peoples with complex and shifting ethnic, cultural, and racial identities. Almost infinite individual experiences make for a confusing notion of "race" in Canada; for example, two of the last three Governors General are women from racialized minority groups, coincidentally with each being a former journalist married to a White husband. Is it a coincidence that there has never been a non-White Supreme Court judge or Prime Minister? Who maintains the predominance of power in Cabinet, at the CBC/Radio-Canada, in boardrooms of the large corporations, the Senates of Canadian universities, and so on? Power does have a colour in Canada, despite official multiculturalism, making our nation appear superficially to be a harmonious society in which anyone can be successful with the right attitude and effort. The meritocratic myth has worked against racialized non-White people in Canada for hundreds of years. It is problematic that many White people so effortlessly invoke deficits in individual efforts as an explanation of underachievement by some racial minorities.

Despite recent significant gains for (mainly White) women in the workforce and political life, there still remains an important and visible privilege gap between Whites and non-Whites in Canada and elsewhere. Clearly, women as a group still face numerous barriers and challenges in society, and for non-White women the inequities are multiplied. The tumultuous rift and near dismantling of the *National Organization of Women* (NOW) in the 1980s is illustrative of the tension between White and non-White women. The latter did not see their needs being addressed, nor their voices being heard, through an organization dominated by middle-class White women, which eventually led to non-White women assuming leadership positions in the movement.

Are people generally overtly racist in Canada? While it is unlikely that blatant racist behavior is currently condoned or tolerated by most Canadians, there is

ample evidence that widespread systemic racism is a reality. Part of the problem in documenting trends is the absence of useful data collection. Many people resist indicating their racial origin on census forms, for a variety of reasons. People from racialized minority groups know that a chance at employment may later be tainted with the accusation that the employer simply wanted to "fill a quota." Playing the proverbial "race card" is perhaps most insidious when considering the trivialization and maligning of employment equity in Canada (Klassen & Cosgrove, 2002) and affirmative action in the US (Feagin & O'Brien, 2003). At some level, racial identity is obvious to everyone and, at the same time, is obscured by the false notion that human rights legislation, common decency, and religion all negate its existence, often culminating in the deleterious notion that we are all "colour-blind." Where people live, the positions they ultimately attain, who they may befriend, employ, and marry, the types of associations, clubs, and organizations they belong to, and other markers of social integration all may have a racialized component. Who most often attends private schools, private golf clubs, and private business circles, has traditionally depended on, among other things, unspoken racial categories. How people choose to understand their own implication in racism relates to privilege and power, and ultimately, Whiteness is shrouded with justifications and denials that allow people to avoid discussion of how oppression continues to benefit White people in Canada.

Therefore, we begin once again with the premise that "race" and racial identities are highly contested and problematic ideas for our consideration. Just as with politics and religion, these topics are not comfortably addressed openly in polite company. For this revised volume, we insist that Canadian society cannot be understood without stripping away the layers of the "race" onion. Clearly, social relations are infinitely more complex than race relations. The social construction and intersectionality of identity provide a medium in which Whiteness can be deconstructed and problematized. Whether we are speaking about sexual orientation, ability, religion, gender identity, cultural group membership, or some other aspect of our identities, the racial template always affects the power relations inherent between groups and individuals (McLaren, 2007).

The birth of this Whiteness project stems from a chance encounter of the co-editors at the *National Association for Multicultural Education* (NAME) conference in Atlanta in November of 2005. Sharing a table at lunch, we were both surprised to learn how much we have in common: We are two White males from Canada of about the same age who have been involved in antiracism education for a number of years. One is from Calgary (Darren), one from Toronto (Paul), and both have had a rich experience outside of the academic world—as a high school teacher (Darren) and as a government policy advisor (Paul). We enjoyed the talks, workshops, and especially the Freedom Ride, which traced the roots of the civil rights movement through Spellman and Morehouse Colleges, the Ebenezer Church, and the Martin Luther King Memorial Center. Against this poignant and moving backdrop we discussed the state of racism in Canada, and agreed that being White and not saying

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so, or failing to strive to understand the ways in which it works to subjugate others, serves to undermine the antiracism movement.

We wished to produce a book with people from a range of cultural and racialized identities, and with a variety of perspectives on Whiteness, with the stated desire that each author problematize Whiteness through inquiry that was both personal and critical. We are aware of the highly contentious and discriminatory history facing a number of White immigrants over the years in Canada (e.g., those of Jewish, Italian, and Ukrainian origin) but we wanted to focus on the power and privilege of Whiteness in this volume. This requires changing the paradigm, forcing the issue of who really holds the power, and interrogating the Canadian identity.

One scholar wanted to revise her original piece for this volume, and of course we respected that request. We have also included one new piece, by Gina Thésée, who works and conducts research in the province of Québec.

The book remains unique in that each of the writers addresses his or her personal implication in Whiteness, and for all but the new one, a reframing of their original piece, seven years later. We strongly believe this enhances these accounts of rich, subjective, and politicized experiences of Whiteness. All of the authors of chapters making up the core of this collection are Canadians, with the exception of Brad Porfilio, who taught Canadian students across the border at a university in Buffalo, New York. We are pleased that we have representation from almost all of the provinces, contributing a range of pieces—theoretical, conceptual, and applied— that collectively represent a range of interdisciplinary perspectives.

OVERVIEW OF THE BOOK

There are five sections in the book, each containing three to five chapters. All of the chapters approach Whiteness and race from a critical vantage point, problematizing identity within the Canadian context, and also providing linkages to the international arena. We would like to emphasize that this book need not be discounted as only addressing Canadian issues; on the contrary, it relates to common concerns everywhere, and Carr has used the book in a doctoral course in the US when he taught there, receiving much support and appreciation from the students once they surmounted the initial shock that the book did, indeed, originate in Canada. Education is a central focus to this volume, and is approached from a broad perspective. The range of authors, in terms of racial identity, ethnic origin, gender, region, discipline, and experience builds on our belief that Whiteness is multi-faceted, complex, and permeates human experience in this society. For far too long, many White people have believed, or have been led to believe, that race and racism are concerns only of those who are directly affected by it as its targets, and we challenge that notion through the book. George Sefa Dei's wonderfully critical and engaging Foreword, both for this second edition, and for the first edition, helps set the tone for the entire volume.

The first section sees authors conceptualizing Whiteness. The chapters presented therein provide an array of examples and insights as to how White identity is

constructed and reinforced in Canada from the moment of birth. We need to understand how our own biographies and experiences shape and limit our identities and consciousness, and the path we must take to transform them. The barriers to teaching and learning are documented in this chapter, and the concept of power is underscored as being key to understanding how to achieve equity as well as, importantly, breaking the silence of Whiteness.

The second section is entitled "Whiteness and Second Peoples." As a society, we are so confident of the validity in the normative actions of White Christians that it will surely come as a jolt to some to hear of the colonizers of the First Nations as "Second Peoples." These chapters present important concepts of how we should deal with Whiteness once we have unearthed it, examining the place of both White people and non-White people in the struggle for social justice. This section opens the problematic of White people doing research on Whiteness and others, a common concern among antiracism workers: Who should be researching whom, and how? It can be painful to face White privilege and White guilt; and it can be frustrating to deal with issues related to Whiteness and White identity in a diverse nation such as Canada. Nevertheless, the quality of the relationship with disadvantaged groups depends on being vigilant about the many implications of positions of privilege.

The third section examines developing and de-constructing White identity, including the ability to be colour-blind and not colour-blind simultaneously as the hallmark of the achievement of a mature, anti-racist, White identity. There is never an endpoint to White racial identity development; the work continues as it transforms itself but, significantly, this work must be rendered visible. Attempting to achieve a more critical consciousness of lived and societal experiences through structured programs is one way of laying the groundwork for difficult, but necessary, conversations about race. Emphasizing that individuals and groups experience racism differently, the authors in this section warn against avoiding tackling race issues because of the illusion of colour-blindness, which deflects and denies the lived experiences of racial minorities.

The fourth section deals specifically with teaching, learning, and Whiteness. Ultimately, this analysis of Whiteness unearths and confirms the problem of over-generalizing about identity. Protecting and nourishing ethnic, cultural, and linguistic identity, as is the case for Francophones in Canada, is a complex enterprise, and the connection to Whiteness may, therefore, take on different shapes and forms. These chapters expose the deeply entrenched beliefs of White, middle-class university students, many of whom adhere to flawed beliefs about Canada as a pure meritocracy. The goal remains to implicate privileged students personally in an interrogation of their own roles in oppression.

The last section of the book deals with the institutional merit of Whiteness, building on the previous sections with chapters and dealing specifically with contentious educational issues related to identity and race. For school administrators and teachers, questioning their own predispositions and identities is a necessary component to understanding the educational experience of the students in their

school. There remains a need to focus on accountability in how contentious school-based situations and policy development are handled, emphasizing the inequitable power relations framing school codes and policies used to assert Whiteness.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

We feel honoured once again to have our good friend George Sefa Dei involved in the book for the intensely critical pedagogical perspectives he brings to his work, and to attend to some of the pitfalls encountered when researching and writing about Whiteness. In reading this revised volume, it is inevitable that some will still contest specific aspects of these analyses of how Whites are fully immersed in the swamp of inequitable power relations. As a living and vibrant field, the community of researchers need not speak with a single, consensual voice. We hope that the plurality of views put forward here, and the reframing of the original pieces, will foster deeper conversation and stimulate further activism in eradicating racism and other forms of oppression and inequity. The authors of each of these chapters critically examine diverse perspectives and contexts as well as the construction and application of societal and institutional practices that underpin inequitable power relations and disenfranchisement based on racial identity. Each chapter concludes with a series of Questions for Reflection to foster further analysis and self-critique in readers as they continue to interrogate Whiteness. The relevance and salience of this text, we believe, extends far beyond the Canadian context, and we hope those in other global settings will find abundant and poignant lessons for their own transformative work in education with a particular focus on promoting social justice. We are very open to continuing the debate, and to stimulating new forms of inquiry and critique, and we welcome any and all follow-up aimed at making Canada and the world better places.

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