CHAPTER 1

Introduction

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In recent years public debate over a "common" or core curriculum has revealed an explicit racial aspect. The exchange at a 1989 Madison Center[1] conference is illustrative. The center's president, John Agresto, characterized the conference as a "response to the academy's current trivialization of liberal education and the continuing attacks on the canons of traditional collegiate instruction." "Under the cover of pluralism," criticizes Agresto, "is the dismissal of the past" (O'Brien, 1989). In opposition, Houston Baker, noted literary critic and professor of English at the University of Pennsylvania, charged that the continued curricular emphasis upon Western civilization constitutes "a willful ignorance and aggression toward Blacks" (O'Brien, 1989). Regarding the so-called Great Books curriculum of St. John's College (Maryland), Baker commented: "The Great Books won't save us . . . but rap may because it might finally allow us to recognize that the world is no longer white and one might even say no longer bookish." Jonathon Culler, professor of English at Cornell University, cited a 1988 study of that literature taught in high schools conducted by the Center for the Teaching and Learning of Literature at the State University of New York at Albany. Albany researchers found that twenty-seven books were required in more than 30 percent of the schools surveyed. Culler commented: "I find it scandalous that long after the

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[1] A conservative research and education policy center founded by former education secretary William Bennett and *The Closing of the American Mind* author Allan Bloom.

civil rights movement, there are no books by Black authors in the top 27, and books by and about women are so poorly represented" (O'Brien, 1989). It is an understatement to observe that issues of race are paramount in contemporary curriculum debates in the public sphere.

To contribute to the understanding of the racial issues embedded in the public debates over the canon, we offer a collection of essays which complicate the curriculum controversy. To introduce these essays, we suggest that curriculum is racial text, that is, that debates over what we teach the young are also—in addition to being debates over what knowledge is of most worth—debates over who we perceive ourselves to be, and how we will represent that identity, including what remains as "left over," as "difference." To help us think about curriculum in this way, we rely on three interrelated concepts. These concepts organize our formulation of curriculum as racial text. They are race, text, and identity. In this introduction we will suggest that understanding curriculum as racial text implies understanding the American national identity, and vice versa. The essays in this collection exemplify in diverse ways these concepts through their articulations of representation and difference. The essays, representing scholarship in the humanities, social science, and education, point to the complexity of race and identity and, in particular, how racial representation—including the splitting off and projection of difference—portrays, suppresses, and reformulates racial identity. Curriculum is one highly significant form of representation, and arguments over the curriculum, we suggest, are also arguments over who we are as Americans, how we wish to represent ourselves to our children. Although we will speak of an American "self," of an American identity, clearly—as these essays assert—'self' and 'identity' are multivocal concepts. We ask readers not to mistake the implicit unity of a concept of 'American self' or 'American identity' for its constituent diversity.

The Concept of Text   Why employ the concept of 'text'? The concept of text implies both a specific piece of writing and, much more broadly, social reality itself. A term borrowed from poststructuralism, and more particularly from the work of Jacques Derrida, *text* implies that all reality is human reality, and as human reality, it is fundamentally discursive. In contrast to the phenome-

nological view (Pinar and Reynolds, 1992) that language is derived from a more fundamental and prior substratum of preconceptual experience, the poststructuralist view is that all experience has been deferred (hence the famous construct *différance*) from original experience, and in this "gap" occurs language and history. Reading, in Derrida's words, "cannot legitimately transgress the text toward something other than it, toward a reference (a reality that is metaphysical, historical, psychobiographical, etc.) or toward a signified outside the text whose content could take place, could have taken place outside language" (Derrida, 1976, p. 158). In one sense, race points to the "gap" between self and other. We aspire to read this text in such a way as to contribute to understanding curriculum as a discursive formation of identity and difference. What discursive formations are written in our unconscious, which selectively we represent in the curriculum, splitting off the excess as "difference"? Susan Edgerton's essay, relying on Ellison and Morrison, provides one answer to this question. Of course, what is "different" from majority culture is not reducible to the unconscious of the majority culture, and in this collection we read affirmative statements of African American history (Kincheloe, Gordon) and culture (Young, Gomez). As Toni Morrison asserts, "we are not, in fact, the 'other'" (1989, p. 9).

The Concept of Race   What is the meaning of race? It is hardly an unchanging, biological concept, as the Livingstone and Murphy essay underlines. Race is a complex, dynamic, and changing construct. Historically, those identified as "people of color" have changed according to political circumstance. For instance, before the Civil War southern Europeans, Jews, even the Irish were considered "nonwhite" (Omi and Winant, 1983). The racial category of "black" grew out of slavery. "Whites" collapsed the diversity of African—and native—peoples into monolithic, racialized categories. "By the end of the seventeenth century, Africans, whose specific identity was Ibo, Yoruba, Dahomeyan, etc., were rendered 'black' by an ideology of exploitation based on racial logic. Similarly, Native Americans were forged into 'Indians' or the 'red man' from Cherokee, Seminole, Sioux, etc. people" (Omi and Winant, 1983, p. 51). In nineteenth-century California, the arrival of large numbers of Chinese provoked a "crisis" of racial classification. In *People v. Hall* (1854), the Supreme Court of California ruled that

the Chinese should be regarded as "Indian" and thereby ineligible for those political rights afforded whites (Omi and Winant, 1983). Race intersects with class and gender, as we observe in essays by Patricia Collins, Wendy Luttrell, and Lindsay Murphy and Jonathan Livingstone.

The Concept of Identity   Identity becomes a central concept in the effort to understand curriculum as racial text. *Identity* is not a static term either, reflective of a timeless, unchanging inner self. Rather, identity is a gendered, racialized, and historical construct. For involuntary immigrants such as African Americans, the notion of 'caste' is not inappropriate. Castelike minorities tend to construct a collective identity in opposition to the dominant group, arising from the experience of oppression (Ogbu and Mattute-Bianchi, 1986). Additionally, "the formation of a collective oppositional identity system is usually accompanied by an evolution of an oppositional cultural system or cultural frame of reference that contains mechanisms for maintaining and protecting the group's social identity" (Ogbu and Mattute-Bianchi, 1986, p. 94). Identity formation is constructed and expressed through representation, that is, the construction of "difference," and negotiated in the public sphere. As we shall see, what is at stake is the identity not only of minority groups but of the American nation as a whole.

For those readers who are curriculum scholars, we wish to acknowledge that curriculum is not only a racial text. It is also a political text, an aesthetic, a gender text (Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery, and Taubman, 1994), but it is, to a degree that European Americans have been unlikely to acknowledge, a racial text. We will lay out the broad outlines of this concept of curriculum as racial text, linking knowledge and identity, by focusing upon issues of representation and difference. Then we will introduce the essays which work with these issues, focusing upon African Americans.

IDENTITY

"We are what we know." We are, however, also what we do not know. If what we know about ourselves—our history, our culture, our national identity—is deformed by absences, denials, and incompleteness, then our identity—both as individuals and as Americans—is fractured. This fractured self is also a repressed self;

elements of itself are split off and denied. Such a self lacks access both to itself and to the world. Repressed, the self's capacity for intelligence, for informed action, even for simple functional competence, is impaired. Its sense of history, gender, and politics is incomplete and distorted. Denied individual biography and collective history, African Americans have been made appendages to European Americans (Bulhan, 1985).

In this collection of essays dealing in diverse ways with issues of race and representation, we seek to link current debates regarding the "canon" with questions of self, identity, and difference. Such an understanding enlarges the curricular debate from an exclusive preoccupation with equity or with multiculturalism to include debates regarding the relationship between knowledge and ourselves. We maintain that the "Eurocentric" character of the school curriculum functions not only to deny "role models" to non–European American students, but to deny self-understanding to "white" students as well (Castenell, Jr., 1991). We would argue that the American self is not exclusively or even primarily an European American self. Fundamentally, it is an African American self. We refer here not only to well-publicized demographic trends (minorities are predicted to constitute the majority by 2050); we refer to the American past and the present. To a still unacknowledged extent, the American nation was built by African Americans. African Americans' presence informs every element of American life. For European American students to understand who they are, they must understand that their existence is predicated upon, interrelated to, and constituted in fundamental ways by African Americans (Goldberg, 1990).

The American self—repressed and fragmented—"acts out" repression via imperialism in foreign policy and political, economic, and cultural repression domestically. The refusal—sometimes unconscious, sometimes not—to incorporate African American knowledge into the mainstream curriculum can be understood as a psychoanalytic as well as political process of repression and suppression. *Understanding curriculum as racial text suggests understanding education as a form of social psychoanalysis* (Kincheloe and Pinar, 1991). That is, what we as adults choose to tell our children in schools—the school curriculum—represents who we want them to think we are and who they might become. The stories we tell them are presumably only about the disciplines,

disinterested bodies of knowledge unrelated to who we are as civic creatures. Particularly in the humanities and social sciences, this view has been largely discredited. Knowledge is rarely politically neutral or disinterested. School knowledge communicates—not always explicitly, of course—assumptions regarding many features of human life. Moreover, it communicates that which we choose to remember about our past and what we choose to believe about the present. Our interest here is how representations of race and difference communicate a sense of the American identity. We maintain that the American identity is constructed partly by denial, by maintaining fictions. The American identity, the American "self," is not exclusively or even primarily European. That delusion represents a fantasy, a flight from historical and cultural reality. As James Baldwin wrote, "White Americans . . . are dimly aware that the history they have fed themselves is mainly a lie, but they do not know how to release themselves from it" (Baldwin, quoted in Taubman, 1987).

The absence of African American knowledge in many American schools' curriculum is not simple oversight. It represents an academic instance of racism, or in Baker's apt phrase, "willful ignorance and aggression toward Blacks." Just as African Americans have been denied their civil rights in society generally, so they have been denied access to their history and culture in school. Not only African Americans have been denied, however. Institutional racism deforms white students as well. By refusing to understand curriculum as racial text, students misunderstand that they are also racialized, gendered, historical, political creatures. Such deformity occurs—for most "whites"—almost "unconsciously." Many European American students and their parents—and many curriculum specialists—would deny that the curriculum is a racial text. Such denial is done "innocently"; it represents an instance of repression in its psychoanalytic sense. Socially, psychological repression expresses itself as political repression (Schwartz and Disch, 1970; Kovel, 1971).

Repression impairs intelligence because it siphons off energy from, for instance, problem solving to maintain the repression. Further, repression implies that information is limited, as well as distorting that information which is available. The contemporary crisis of American education is complex in its nature and causes; it is not reducible to one factor or one set of factors, such as poorly

prepared teachers, an out-of-date curriculum, malnourished students, developmentally and/or culturally inappropriate examinations, and other school practices. One overlooked factor is repression, the repression of African Americans in American society, the repression of women, the repression of other marginalized groups, and the repression of non-European knowledge. Such repression is evident in the schools in several ways, including funding inequities, tracking, teaching practices, and a curriculum that is Eurocentric and unrelated to the lived experience of students.

Freudian imagery of the self is provocative here. During the decade of the 1980s the businessman represented the American prototype. Lee Iaccoca, Donald Trump, Michael Milken: white, male, savvy, shrewd, calculating, devoted to the bottom line. If this prototype represented the American "ego"—realistic, adaptive, adjusting in self-profiting ways to "reality"—then African Americans represented the "id"—pleasure seeking, unpredictable, accomplished in athletics and the arts. European American culture projected African Americans as the "id," and in classical Freudian style, maintained relative repression of the "pleasure principle" so that—presumably—ego stability and hegemony could be maintained. Those elements of American life which could be said to represent the "superego"—fundamentalist religious groups—were permitted by the "business" ego to grow in size and influence. Those groups marginal to this version of the "ego"—African Americans, other marginalized ethnic groups, women, children, gays—were undermined via public policy and in political practice. In her essay, Susan Edgerton explores the dynamics of marginalization.

Christopher Lasch (1984) has argued that the conservative political prescription for schools and society during the 1980s can be characterized as "superego" in nature. Illustrative of this "superego" voice are slogans such as "more homework," "just say no," "work harder." Conservatives insisted that the problem with American society was simple laziness (not their own, of course), and in this simpleminded analysis African Americans were assigned a major blameworthy role. Liberals continue to call for rational deliberation, incorporating aspects of the unconscious (African Americans in the parallel) into the conscious ego (mainstream society), but in controlled and planned ways (as in the liberal conceptualization of an orderly, incremental civil rights

movement). Our point is that the question of school curriculum is also a question about the self, the American self. *Understanding curriculum as racial text means understanding the United States as fundamentally a racialized place, as fundamentally an African American place, and the American identity as inextricably African American as well as European, Hispanic/Latino, American Indian, and Asian American.* Debates over the canon are also debates over the constitution of the American self. They involve as well the private self, as Taubman's studies of "canonical sins" and "separate lives"—which open and close the collection—indicate.

In this collection we focus upon African American issues, especially those of identity (including gender, race, and class) and representation (especially in curriculum). Our position is that historically European Americans and African Americans are two sides of the same cultural coin, two interrelated narratives in the American story, two interrelated elements of the American identity. Projected as "other" and repressed, African Americans' presence in the American, indeed, "Western" self has been understood, perhaps most precisely, by Frantz Fanon. Like James Baldwin and others, Fanon understood that 'white' is a fabrication made by the construction of the concept 'black.' Briefly, there can be no 'black' without 'white' and vice versa. One cannot understand the identity of one without appreciating how they are "codependent" upon each other. So it is that European Americans cannot hope to understand themselves unless they are knowledgeable and knowing of those they have constructed as "different," as "other." The sequestered suburban white student is uninformed unless he or she comes to understand how, culturally, he or she is also—in the historical, cultural, indeed, psychological sense—African American. Because 'white' does not exist apart from 'black', the two coexist, intermingle, and the repression of this knowledge deforms us all, especially those who are white and male. All Americans are racialized beings; knowledge of who we have been, who we are, and who we will become is a story or text we construct. In this sense curriculum—our construction and reconstruction of this knowledge for dissemination to the young—is a racial text. Cameron McCarthy reviews past efforts to represent the American multicultural reality in its school curriculum, recommending the formulation of a "collective identity politics oriented toward change."

Such African American cultural affirmation is indicated in the Gordon, Young, and Gomez essays as well.

During the past decade much has been made of the failure of public school students to learn even the most elementary and necessary facts regarding their history, geography, and culture. Cultural literacy is a noncontroversial requirement for any citizenry. What becomes controversial is the composition of such literacy. In the popular press voices express views of cultural literacy that are informed by, primarily, Eurocentric and patriarchal knowledge systems. Without question American students must know and understand the European antecedents of contemporary American culture. However, this knowledge ought not be used as a defense against "otherness" and "difference," a denial of what we might term our "cultural unconscious."

We believe that understanding curriculum as a racial text is especially urgent in the present time of neoconservatism during which racial attacks and racial antagonism have increased. In November 1990 in Louisiana, as is well known, David Duke's white supremacy candidacy for the U.S. Senate brought him 60 percent of the white vote; even in his November 1991 defeat in the Louisiana gubernatorial election, Duke captured 55 percent of the white vote. The increase in racial attacks, particularly on college and university campuses, is dramatic (McCarthy, 1990). We have been struck by the silence of curriculum specialists during the public debates of the decade. We worry that this silence results from both ignorance and avoidance. While making enormous strides during the recent reconceptualization of the field (1969–1980) toward understanding curriculum multidimensionally (Pinar, 1988), mainstream curricularists have yet to incorporate racial considerations in any significant way. Even multiculturalism—inadequate as that curriculum movement is viewed by scholars of race such as Cameron McCarthy—remains relatively marginalized and unincorporated in the scholarly effort to understand curriculum. Even those scholars who accept and study the profound ways in which the curriculum is a political text seem reluctant to assert and teach curriculum as a racial text. Instead, race tends to be subsumed under politics (McCarthy, 1988a, 1988b). It is past time for the curriculum field to acknowledge the significance and relative autonomy of the scholarly effort to understand curriculum as a racial

text. We hope this collection will take its place alongside such seminal contributions as Cameron McCarthy's *Race and Curriculum* (1990) and Warren Crichlow and Cameron McCarthy collection *Race, Identity, and Representation in Education* (1993). No course on curriculum can ignore this vital sector of scholarship.

THE ESSAYS

Race and Representations of Identity

To understand curriculum as racial text suggests understanding ourselves as racialized beings whose stories are racial stories, even when denied. By exploring the denied past, we might push back the blacked-out, repressed areas of memory and in so doing be able to offer more of ourselves to our students, as we have more of ourselves to offer. We begin this labor of self-understanding in an exploration of identity and curriculum politics.

An Opening: Identity and Curriculum Politics   Opening with Peter Taubman's framing of the contemporary debate over the literary canon, the first four essays depict issues concerning representations of identity. Taubman's essays both open and close the collection. They do so not because we believe they represent the "first" and "last" word on this subject, but because they frame issues of race and difference in terms of life history, of identity, the organizing idea of the book. On the margins of the collection they provoke what Edgerton (see Chapter 3) regards as those issues of inter-referentiality and intertextuality which lace debates over multicultural representation.

Taubman accuses canonical conservatives of being guilty of idolatry, of fixing selected "classics" in an ahistorical realm in which "they are worshiped for their embodiment of the Western metaphysic." He characterizes canonical radicals as heretics, as they seek "to stretch the canon's boundaries to include noncanonical texts or to dissolve those boundaries altogether." Both radicals and conservatives, he alleges, might be guilty of a decontextualism: "Perhaps both discourses [radical and conservative] do violence to the quirky and unique ways books move through our lives, flatten out our private relationship to reading, and force us to read and hear a prior discourse in the words which meet our eyes and ears and the intentions which move our hand to pull down the volume

from the shelf." He proceeds to locate his reading in his life history, asking, with Foucault, "How is it, given the mass of things that are spoken, given the set of discourses actually held, a certain number of these discourses are sacralized and given a particular function? Among all these narratives, what is it that sacralizes a certain number and makes them begin to function as 'literature'?" He regards the knowledge of marginalized groups as a kind of discursive unconscious, and this realm he suggests is "fueled by Desire in the Lacanian sense." From Freud and Lacan, Taubman continues, we have learned that "the unconscious is formed by the No! which separates mother and child and introduces the paternal or patriarchal realm of language. . . . I am suggesting that the formation of the canon introduced a No! into the individual's relationship to reading and thus opened the space for a canonical unconscious, one structured by the canon but not articulated by its discourse." He sketches pedagogical as well as curricular implications of his view of the canon, worrying that the welcomed demise of the traditional canon may result in a "new canon," which in turn will produce its own canonical unconscious. He worries also, as does Henry Louis Gates, Jr. (1990), that a radical interest in the margins, in the molecular, and in dispersion rather than unification (in those radical discourses associated with poststructuralism) risks undermining the political initiatives of marginalized groups. "The fetishizing of the molecular in particular is a denial of difference. Each unique molecule is finally the same, since no identity lasts long enough for difference to exist. I suspect such a fetishizing of the molecular and the temporal reflects the fear of any real relationship between reader and reading, reader and text."

This collection, in its diversity and nonlinear design, illustrates difference within identity. Just as Taubman's essays suggest that marginalized literature is not monolithic, not unified, and ought not to represent a new set of timeless, ahistorical, and sacralized texts (a new canon), so this collection asserts difference and nonsynchrony. Understanding the curriculum as racial text implies curriculum as social psychoanalysis, implies knowledge conscious and unconscious, functioning to maintain and disturb illusions of identity and power—indeed, reality. Understanding the curriculum as racial text may also illustrate a notion of knowledge as revelatory, in which identity becomes complex enough to support and express difference and contradiction. Such an understanding of

curriculum might reflect a historically and culturally accurate, nonsynchronous American identity.

Race and Representation   Susan Edgerton understands that marginality is created by centrality (and vice versa), that marginality "lives within the very language/world that makes it necessary and that it must oppose." Marginality can suggest invisibility, as portrayed in Ellison's *Invisible Man*. As the novel indicates, it is possible to be invisible to others but not to oneself. By the end of the novel the Invisible Man notes that he is "invisible, not blind." Others so marginalized may internalize their social invisibility, may suppress their interior life, indeed, their humanity. Edgerton quotes from the Ellison novel: "Already he's learned to repress not only his emotions but his humanity. He's invisible, a walking personification of the Negative. . . The mechanical man!" Hidden not only to himself, the African American is hidden to "white" America. Again, Edgerton quotes from the Ellison novel: "You're hidden right out in the open. . . . They wouldn't see you because they don't expect you to know anything, since they believe they've taken care of that."

The second novel Edgerton consults—Morrison's *Beloved*—enables her to depict how the fantasies of European Americans become realized in the marginalized "other." Edgerton quotes from the Morrison novel:

> White people believed that whatever the manners, under every dark skin was a jungle. Swift unnavigable waters, swinging screaming baboons, sleeping snakes, red gums ready for their sweet white blood. In a way, he thought, they were right. The more colored people spent their strength trying to convince them how gentle they were, how clever and loving, how human, the more they used themselves up to persuade whites of something Negroes believed could not be questioned, the deeper and more tangled the jungle grew inside. But it wasn't the jungle blacks brought with them to this place from the other (livable) place. It was the jungle whitefolks planted in them. And it grew. It spread. In, through and after life, it spread, until it invaded the whites who had made it. Touched them every one. Changed and altered them. Made them bloody, silly, worse than even they wanted to be, so scared were they of the jungle they had made. The screaming baboon lived under their own white skin; the red gums were their own.

In this brilliant passage the inextricability—psychologically and culturally—of "whites" and "blacks" is vividly portrayed. This inextricability is not only an empirical historical fact; it is a psychological reality. European Americans are what they displace onto others, and their self-representation requires repression of the "other." The dynamics of racism are complex, much deeper than a catalog of attitudes which workshops might aspire to change. The very complexion of one's skin, the nature of one's blood, and one's view of the world are all experienced racially. These dynamics cannot be decreed away; perhaps, as Edgerton suggests, "love in the margins" might make them visible.

Photographs make the dynamics of racism visible as well. Such images become representations of identity, especially when reprinted in textbooks. Because photographs appear "objective," they can communicate a sense of truth that, say, a drawing might not. In her study of photographic illustrations of black people in college-level sexuality textbooks, Mariamne Whatley reports that although images of black people were intended to be positive, negative patterns or themes were discernible. She characterizes these negative themes as blacks as "exotic," blacks as "sexually dangerous," and blacks as asexual. The photographs she studied functioned to communicate a sense of "difference," of blacks as "other." A message of racial tolerance seemed merely tacked on.

The theme of blacks as "sexually dangerous" extends our earlier observation that in contemporary "white" American culture, African Americans are, in Freudian terms, the "id." One form of this projection of fantasy takes involves the long-standing and powerful myth of rape. White women and men have feared black men for centuries (Jordan, 1971). However, Whatley reports rape statistics indicating that at least 90 percent of sexual assaults involve same-race rapist and victim. How are we to understand the persistence and intensity of the rape myth? Psychoanalytically, fear is sometimes inverted desire, and in another place Pinar (1991) has speculated—after Eldridge Cleaver—that the pervasive fear that African American men will rape European American women might represent a denied and displaced (onto white women) homoerotic attraction of white men to black men. Aside from these possible sexual dynamics, the fear has, as we know, also functioned to justify white violence against black men.

Whatley discovers that these textbooks tended to ignore the

dangers of sexually transmitted diseases to African Americans; only the risk to European Americans was viewed as a problem. Whatley suggests that "the stereotype of the Black woman as 'depreciated sex object,' in this instance disease-ridden, serves to warn white men against inter-racial interrelationships." Regarding the depiction of AIDS, she reports that the disease's origin in Africa is overemphasized, underlining the stereotype of Africans and African Americans as carriers of disease, especially sexual disease. This aspect of race and representations of identity is studied in the next chapter.

In "Til Death Do Us Part: AIDS, Race, and Representation," Brenda Hatfield examines an example of racial representation in the electronic media, namely, in an educational film on the AIDS epidemic produced by and for an African American student audience. Hatfield learned that student viewers were "critically concerned" over what appeared to be their roles as carriers and victims of the disease. Student responses included the following: "It makes it look like only black people have it." "If whites see it, they might say 'Oh, only blacks have AIDS.'" "On TV always lots of things about black people. Like they are the only ones to get the virus, use drugs and stuff. Act like they are the only ones to have the problem." Statistics indicate otherwise, Hatfield reports: of the infected population, 57 percent white, 27 percent black, 15 percent Hispanic, 1 percent others.

There were positive aspects of the film. Students liked the presentations of "rap" in the film. One student wrote: "What I like about the film, I have never seen in a film like this before. They have new changes such as rap, and someone dressed represented AIDS." Unfortunately, the film featured only male rappers. Females were assigned to background positions in the dance routines, only indicating, Hatfield writes, "their subordinated gendered positions." Further, "African American females were stereotyped in roles of anguish, suffering, and singing the hymns. Ironically, the strongest character in the play among all of the roles was a female, but this powerful role figure was depicted as a supernatural white female. In this case, the message of white racial domination is clearly signified above black characterizations in the film."

Understanding Curriculum as Racial Text begins by locating the debates over the canon in issues of identity and representation. In these first four essays we have seen these issues as they are

discernible in novels, textbook photographic images, and an educational film about AIDS. In each of these gender has surfaced as a theme, and the concluding five chapters of this section focus upon gender and women specifically. In different ways, each of these following essays illustrate dynamics of race, representation, and identity.

Gender, Race, and Class The introductory chapter on gender works within the African American community, calling for "breaking the silence" on gender in African American studies. Patricia Hill Collins begins by acknowledging that the survival of African American studies departments on predominantly white campuses has required the elevation of the category of race over class and gender. The external threat to African American studies has thus functioned to undermine diversity and dialogue among black intellectuals. Collins asks, "Can African American studies accommodate the scholarly diversity essential for producing analyses of black life and culture responsive to race, class, and gender?" If the answer is to be an affirmative one, then the silence on gender must be broken. Gender must join class and race as a major analytical category of research in African American studies; indeed, these must be considered interlocking dimensions of the African American experience. After listing the contributions and directions feminist research in African American studies might take, Collins poses a "final question":

> how [might] black feminist thought [produce] unique analyses that do not confirm, complement, or challenge existing African American studies paradigms but instead produce something that is entirely new. Reconceptualizations of rape, violence, and the overarching structure of sexual politics; of power, political activism, and resistance; of the relationships between work and family; and of homophobia and its impact on the interlocking nature of race, class, and gender oppression are all neglected topics explored in black feminist thought.

The relationships among gender, race, and class raise crucial theoretical questions, not only within the sector of scholarship on race and curriculum, but across curriculum studies as well (Pinar, 1988). These are questions of identity, which get framed differently according to which dimension one emphasizes. In the remaining

chapters in this section we observe four different representations of gendered and racialized identity.

Jewelle Gomez begins by noting that imaginary representations of idealized figures are essential to cultural life. Oddly enough, Gomez discovered, heroic black women characters are difficult to find in those genres she terms "fantasy fiction." Certainly, historical figures are not uncommon, as Gomez's survey of them reminds us. In fact, she writes:

> African history has provided the role models for an expansion of our concept of what heroism can be. But few of us have taken the cue. When this store of wealth has been exploited, it has generally been by white male writers who bleach the history of Dahomean Amazons and turn them into Wonder Woman and Queen Hera. It is clear that the history of African women has many epic figures for those interested in the fantasy genre. But why have so few black women writers been intrigued by either this genre or this history?

One answer might reside in European American representations of heroism, which typically are male. Typically, women are portrayed as deferential and dependent, mere appendages to male conquering heroes. Further, Gomez continues, those women who are independent are characterized as "bitches."

And, to take this analysis a step further, Gomez concurs with Barbara Christian's analysis:

> The stereotypic qualities associated with lesbian women: self-assertiveness, strength, independence, eroticism, a fighting spirit, are the very qualities associated with us (meaning black women in general). Qualities that we have often suffered for and been made to feel guilty about because they are supposedly 'manly' rather than 'feminine' qualities. . . These are the charges leveled at the 'bitch' but the same words are accolades for the male hero.

This sexism is reflected, Gomez asserts, in creative thinking and writing. Black women have suffered the inability to see themselves as the center of anything, even of their own lives. Black men sometimes resent black women's efforts at autonomy. Gomez lists examples of female heroism in science fiction, noting that these cited works replace images of black women as passive victims with representations of an identity constituted by "fighting spirit, strength, eroticism." In an argument that could be extended to

include representation generally, Gomez insists that fictional representations affect everyday experience, including how we think about ourselves, upon which action is predicated. Gomez concludes:

> While critics have often neglected to scrutinize fantasy or science fiction or place it within the context of literary and social constructs, the genre—like any other popular art form—is very intimately related to the sensibilities of the broad-based populace. It can be a barometer of our secret fears and secret dreams: dreams of solidarity, strength or heroism. And we, as a people, should be acutely aware of just how powerful dreams can be.

From fictional representation we move to the present time to examine a different order of identity representation. Wendy Luttrell's "Working-Class Women's Ways of Knowing: Effects of Gender, Race, and Class" describes how black and white working-class women define and claim knowledge. Based on participant observation in adult education classrooms and in-depth interviews outside school, Luttrell finds that these women's experience challenge those feminist analyses which posit a single, universal mode of women's knowing.

Before describing differences among these women, Luttrell describes similarities. Both black and white working-class women tend to share similar conceptions of knowledge and a similar framework for evaluating their claims to knowledge. Both differentiate between that knowledge associated with school and textbook and that knowledge associated with living, with experience. Both groups tend to share ideas regarding their commonsensical abilities "to take care of others." That is, their ideas of knowing and knowledge are situated in community, family, and work relationships. They cannot, Luttrell asserts, be judged by ordinary academic standards. Moreover, "their commonsense knowledge cannot be dismissed, minimized, or 'taken away.'"

Both the black and white women interviewed appeared to accept stratification of class. They accepted a taken-for-granted distinction between common sense and intelligence. Although white working-class women described themselves, their mothers, their aunts, and sisters as exhibiting common sense, they regarded only "certain aspects" of common sense as "real intelligence"—and these were aspects associated with men's work and men's activities.

Even when referring to skilled manual work as requiring "real intelligence" they were not referring to skilled manual work required of women working in factories; they were referring to men's manual labor. One woman commented: "Now just because we're going to school and getting educated, we shouldn't forget that people, like my husband, who work with their hands, are just as important as college professors and just as smart."

The black women interviewed did not emphasize the intelligence required to do manual work, perhaps, Luttrell speculates, because black men have had, historically, "limited access to the 'crafts.'" Further, unlike the white women interviewed, the black women did claim "real intelligence" for themselves. They credited their domestic, caretaking work as requiring "real intelligence." One woman reported:

> I got a sister I think she is smart, real intelligent. All of them is smart, but this one is special and she do the same kind of work I do but she's smart. She can hold onto money better than anyone. It look like anything she want she can get it. . . . anytime she or her childrens need something, she can go and get it. But she has a husband that help her, not like my other sisters or me. Her husband is nice to her and both of them working. But even that, it take a lot of intelligence.

Further, the necessity of dealing with racism requires "real intelligence." A woman named Kate reported: "I'll tell you what takes real intelligence—dealing with people's ignorance. . . . You see a lot and watch people. It's a feeling you have to have because not all white people are the same. I sure know that 'cause I worked for different ones, you know, taking care of their children, and I've seen different things." Resisting racism requires intelligence.

Luttrell concludes that differences between white and black working-class women's understandings of knowledge disclose that women do not share a single view of their identities as women. They do share a sense that the organization of knowledge—organized as academic expertise and as men's competence—undermines their power in negotiating the world. Luttrell writes: "Since women do not all experience the work of being a woman in the same way, it is impossible to identify a single mode of knowing. To understand why certain forms of knowledge appear more amenable to women, we must look more closely at the ethnic-, class-,

and race-specific nature of women's experiences, as well as the values that are promoted in each context."

Luttrell's research points toward the specificity of relations between identity and knowledge, and particularly toward the non-synchronous complexity of race, class, and gender. Her study undermines the feminist claim that women's gendered experience is more fundamental than their racial or class experience. This view is taken further in the concluding essay of the first section, "Racism and the Limits of Radical Feminism." While unfortunately presenting radical feminism as monolithic, Murphy and Livingstone's angry article does make important points pertinent to understanding identity and representation. Provocatively, they assert that "race" is a social—and economic—question; upon analysis, it falls apart as a category. The distinction between "black" women and women of "color" (a more inclusive category, including Asian, Hispanic, Native American, and Third World people generally), for example, does not hold:

> (i) Black does not designate a colour. Africans are no more black than Eskimoes are white; and people of colour may well be 'blacker' (i.e., darker) than black people. (ii) Black does not designate a culture. Black people may be of Caribbean or English culture, as may people of colour have a culture which is Indian, English, or anything else. (Not to mention the fact that never is any 'culture' homogeneous.) (iii) Black does not designate a 'race'. A black person or person of colour may be of 'mixed race'.

They point out that such efforts to differentiate racially are "products" of racism. What underlines the gradations of color is nothing biological; it is political. "Those who are the most resistant tend to be painted the blackest, and those who are more easily 'integrated' are given a lavishing of white." To whatever extent there is a black culture, they continue, it is created through the struggle against racial oppression.

The concept of ethnicity, Murphy and Livingstone insist, is a "white concept." (This view is not shared by, for instance, Alma Young; see Chapter 11.) They write: "Black culture is the culture of resistance and rebellion—whatever form this may take. . . . *ethnicity* turns what is essentially an economic question about racism into a problem of culture." In this sense, multiculturalism becomes an instance of Fanon's concept of 'cultural mummification'.

"Multi-culturalism tries to resurrect an old culture, a culture from the past, from a different setting: a mummy to mummify. It takes what it supposes to be black people's culture, separates it from its living historical context, and offers it, like a drug, to black people, to make them placid and inert." This is also a view not universally shared, as we will see in the next section.

Although extreme in tone and thesis, this article functions to summarize the first section by reiterating questions of identity, and specifically gender. Written in the United Kingdom for a British audience, the Murphy-Livingstone article also functions to remind us that issues of racial identity and representation are not exclusively American, although given the American history of slavery and racial segregation, they may prove more intractable for us than for many other nationalities.

The Murphy and Livingstone article not only functions as summary. Additionally, it functions as a transition to the second section, wherein issues of difference within identity and their curricular representations become paramount. The concept of curriculum as racial text is a complex one. One issue—as we have seen—is that of representation, including how images of racial identity are portrayed in curricular materials such as textbooks and instructional films. Obviously, these can function to convey racial stereotypes, despite the intentions of their producers. The complexity of racial identity, its singularity, diversity, and historicity, was illustrated via a focus upon gender. Issues of "breaking the silence" within the African American community, issues between and within white and black working-class women as well as vignettes of fictional and historical figures, all speak to this complexity and suggest, most elementally, that representations of racial identity might be most progressively produced from within racialized communities. Representation becomes important not only because it reflects identity at a particular historical conjuncture; it is important because it also creates that identity. Understanding curriculum as racial text implies, in part, that we teach ourselves when we teach textbooks. The identities we represent to children are those we wish (as a nation) to become and to avoid as well as those which we are. The complexity of these issues makes it unsurprising that representations of difference have led to difficult curriculum politics. To these subjects we turn in the second part.