

DISSERTATION

PORTRAITS OF WHITENESS: EXAMINING FRAGILITY AND THE PRACTICES THAT
PERPETUATE AND DISRUPT WHITENESS AMONG WHITE PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS

Submitted by

Thomas H. Bell III

School of Education

In partial fulfillment of the requirements

For the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Colorado State University

Fort Collins, Colorado

Summer 2019

Doctoral Committee:

Advisor: Susana Muñoz

Co Advisor: Vincent Basile

Albert Bimper

Daniel Birmingham

Copyright by Thomas Bell 2019

All Rights Reserved

ABSTRACT

PORTRAITS OF WHITENESS: EXAMINING FRAGILITY AND OTHER FACTORS THAT PERPETUATE AND DISRUPT WHITENESS AMONG WHITE PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS

National data indicated approximately 80 percent of the teaching force is white while the student population continues to become increasingly racially diverse. Teacher education programs continue to graduate and recommend for licensure a disproportionate number of white teachers. Research indicates overwhelmingly pre-service teachers suffer from a collective experience enculturating their miseducation as it relates to deconstructing and disrupting whiteness. Using Critical Race Theory and Critical whiteness Studies, this study utilized portraiture and narrative inquiry to understand how seven white pre-service teachers are engaging or not engaging with their whiteness. In particular the portraits (APPENDIX A) enhance a deeper understanding of the factors contributing to the participant's ability and willingness to engage on race and disrupt whiteness. Through thematic analysis of the portraits, five themes emerged which provide a deeper understanding of the factors that contribute to the willingness to disrupt or challenge whiteness in the context of teaching. These themes also discuss the miseducation of these seven participants related to their ability to engage in disrupt whiteness during their experience in a teacher preparation program.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

A series of activities, events, experiences, and decisions. Life is fascinating and those that we get to share this experience with, shape how we interact and see the world. This experience, both the Ph.D. program and working on this project is no different. I would not have been able to make it where I am today and I would not have been able to finish this without the love, challenge, support, and persistence of my support system. First, to my dearest Christina, you are just as much responsible for the completion of this project and the degree as I am. You kept our house running, our children alive (in fact you birthed two throughout this process), and kept a hold of my sanity, all while at times neglecting your needs. So I guess the next five years are yours? There are not enough moments in a year (525,600 minutes in fact) to express how thankful I am that we chose to share our lives together. To Scarlett and Thomas, your light literally illuminates our world. I can't wait to begin to slow down and enjoy the rest of my time on this earth with the two of you, and maybe an additional brother or sister someday. Thank you for bringing me laughter and sleepless nights that were not related to this project.

Next, I want to thank my parents. First, my dad. I know you are somewhere looking in, watching over us, and it must on some level bring you comfort knowing that I now have finished "all the schooling". I miss you every day, and would not be half the person I am if it were not for your guidance, patience and wisdom. To my mom, thank you for supporting me, providing relief for Christina from time to time, and your efforts to talk about this work. Thanks for also making me do my homework when I was growing up, I learned some things that I guess helped me get to this point. To Barb, thank you for pushing me in school and challenging me to read more often. Your love and support is so appreciated. To Sara and Ed, I am pretty sure I would still be in the proposal stage of this project if not for you. You literally have fixed our home, watched our kids,

and aided in Christina keeping her senses throughout this entire experience. I am forever in debt to your kindness and goodwill.

To my brother Michael and sister Malissa, you two are amazing siblings. I am thankful for your love and support through this process. Malissa you showed me that it was possible to do well in school, and that I could persist. Michael thank you for your willingness to stand by my side even when I did not deserve it.

In addition to my family, there is the family we choose, and while this is never ending, as many people are responsible for me being able to have enough understanding of life to get to this point, there are a few people that I feel the need to acknowledge by name. To Josh, Carmen, Keith, Josie, Lindsay, John, and the “other” Thomas, thank you for being the ride or die through this experience. On days when I could not do it anymore, you were there to shine much needed light into life. On days when I needed to be held accountable, you were there to hold the mirror, and on days when I needed to celebrate you were there with shots held high. Thanks for being my scholar family. To Brandon and Gwen, my original CSU ride or die, thanks for always being there. Brandon, you are my best friend, my brother, and a person I know who will always have my back while still challenging me to be a better human. Gwen, you have read more of my writing than I have, and I am thankful to call you my friend and editor. Without you I would only have a Baccalaureate degree. I also would not be in this program without your nudging and support. Thanks to Dan, Donna, and Lesley, I so much enjoyed our ability to keep it light, and not take ourselves too seriously. In times of heavy stress, I knew that our time together would be helpful and always bring much needed levity to our experience. Finally, to the 2014 cohort as a whole, thank you for allowing me to take this journey with you and for allowing me to learn

through your lived experiences and viewpoints. I am forever grateful for having had the opportunity to having this learning community with you all.

To Dr. Susana Muñoz, thank you for believing in me, for pushing me, and guiding me through this process. You very well could have let this project go, but you took a risk and gave your time to make sure it ended up being something we both could be proud of. To Dr. Vincent Basile, thank you for stepping in and sharing the advising role, for being my champion, and for pushing me to always do better. To Dr. Susan Mendoza, without you I would not know my own fragility. I mean, I probably would, but you pushed me on my fragility, and aided in my ability to work through it. Thank you for being my mentor and champion! I am forever grateful for your kindness and goodwill. To Dr. Steve Tripp, well, as you read this you might still be cringing, as this section is hella passive, however, without you I would be a far worse writer. Your time and commitment to aid in showing me that I could write, made this dissertation possible. To Dr. Alvin Sturdivant, thanks for taking a risk on me and hiring me out of graduate school. You assisted in molding me to become the agitator and disruptor I am today, and provided me with the skills to challenge whiteness on all levels. To Dr. Nolan Cabrera, thank you laying the foundation for this work, and taking the time to talk with me through the research. I am forever grateful for your commitment to the work and teaching the future.

Finally to a few others that I felt that needed to be mentioned. To Sharese, your friendship and “realness” is something I have always appreciated and loved. To Dr. David Luke, thanks for being my new work friend, and for the pedal. I love the possibility of having another critical mind at our University, and the possibilities that it entails. Also, without the pedal I am pretty sure I would still be transcribing. There are so many others that I could name here, as I have been fortunate to have so many people to share this experience with me. I am forever

grateful for all those who have contributed to this project, especially my committee for passing me.

DEDICATION

This project is dedicated to my two amazing kids, Scarlett and Thomas. You two are the reason I do the work I do. You have taught me how to love more than I thought I could, and I feel honored to be your dad. You are both inimitable and original, and I truly am enamored with the love, joy, and honesty you bring to the world.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	iii
DEDICATION.....	vii
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION.....	1
Purpose.....	5
Decolonizing Research.....	7
Problem of Whiteness.....	8
Problem of whiteness in the miseducation of white teachers.....	10
Whiteness is damaging the education system.....	14
Significance.....	15
Research Questions.....	16
Summary.....	17
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW.....	20
Theoretical Perspective.....	22
Critical race theory.....	23
Critical whiteness studies.....	25
Intersection of CRT and CwS.....	27
Building a System of Invested Whiteness.....	28
Impact of slavery in the United States.....	29
Jim Crow, civil rights, and a new era of racism.....	32
Building the historical construction of whiteness as property.....	34
Education as a System of Racial Oppression.....	39
Education Policy.....	42
Whiteness research in education.....	44
Higher Education.....	48
Whiteness in Pre-Service Teacher Education.....	53
Examining national standards.....	55
White pre-service teachers.....	57
Summary.....	64
CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY.....	66
Methodological Approach.....	68
Critical qualitative methodologies.....	68
Portraiture and Narrative Inquiry.....	70
Research Approach.....	74
Participant Recruitment and Sampling.....	75
Data collection strategies.....	78

Data analysis	81
Research as a liberatory praxis	83
Trustworthiness.....	84
Limitations	85
Delimitations.....	86
Summary	86
CHAPTER 4: PORTRAITS OF WHITENESS, THE FINDINGS	88
Portraits of choice: Disrupting whiteness is a choice.....	89
Portraits of obfuscation: The legacies of post racial ideologies and the impact on engaging whiteness	94
Color evasion and not centering the racialized experience.....	95
Politics and a-political teaching.....	101
Portraits of individualism: The possessive nature of whiteness through white immunity	105
Portraits of fragility: Being viewed as incomplete and fear of the loss of status	117
Portraits of miseducation: Teacher preparation’s responsibility in perpetuating whiteness ..	123
Summary	130
CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION.....	132
Challenging whiteness is a choice	134
The lingering impact of learned color evasive, race neutral, and post racialized practice ..	136
Individualism and the possessiveness of white immunity	139
The fragility of being thought of as incomplete.....	144
The miseducation of pre-service teachers on race, whiteness and white supremacy	148
Summary of the Study.....	155
What role does white fragility play in a white pre-service teacher’s willingness to engage whiteness?.....	156
What factors are associated with willingness to disrupt or perpetuate whiteness for white pre-service teachers?.....	159
How has their teacher preparation program enhanced their ability to engage in challenging whiteness in education?	161
Theoretical discussion.....	163
Implications for praxis: Preparing white teachers to engage whiteness.....	168
Recommendations for current and future educators	169
Recommendations for teacher preparation programs	171
Policy implications.....	172
Portraiture and whiteness research.....	174
Future Research.....	175
Limitations and Strengths.....	176
Working through my own fragility, immunity, and whiteness: A self portrait.....	177
REFERENCES	182
APPENDIX A: PARTICIPANT PORTRAITS	205
Karen: The A-Typical	205

Understanding the Bubble.....	206
Striving to be a good white person	210
Disrupting whiteness is not the role of an educator	218
Karen and her vulnerability	223
Ella: The Fearless	224
The oldest of 12	225
It started with a car ride	229
Whiteness is everywhere but there is so little time.....	235
Be bold be fearless	242
Gloria: The Conflicted Activist.....	244
The unseen portion of the iceberg.....	245
“Thank God I am white”	250
The N-Word and being part but not part of the system	253
Teaching the future	261
The dichotomy of being white and challenging whiteness	267
Jake: The Reflective	269
A Sense of Duty.....	270
Spending privilege and the challenges of naming whiteness.....	274
Theory to Practice, the challenges of working in a historically white school	279
It is my responsibility and my responsibility to engage	286
Megan:The Servant Leader	288
Camp: A place for more than just spiritual growth.....	289
Serving without being the savior: Megan, whiteness, and white immunity	292
The politics of race and serving her students.....	300
Megan conflicted	306
Sally: The Supporter.....	309
Relationships form a framework.....	310
White people can't dance	314
I try hard.....	316
Underprepared, making mistakes, and growing: Teaching as a white person.....	319
Complicated, layered, and learning	328
Laura: The Inclusive Educator	329
The city and suburbs	331
Finding her vulnerability.....	336
A lot to learn but a place to start	339
Gaining confidence and accepting responsibility	347
APPENDIX B	349
APPENDIX C	355
APPENDIX D.....	358
APPENDIX E	363

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Turn it up! I love how music takes me on a journey of past experiences. I have found music to trigger hope, rage, anger, happiness, and sadness while connecting my present day experiences to visions of the past. Sometimes when I write and reflect, the perfect song or group of songs play through my headphones and channel emotions that conjure vivid expression of my experience. Whether it be through grooves of the bass and guitar playing in harmony or in poetic lyrics, sometimes the music resonates with my work on Critical Race Theory (CRT) and Critical whiteness Studies (CwS). For example, as I was prepping to work on creating narrative portraits (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2005) for this project, I was sitting in a dark room with only my laptop and my headphones plugged into my iPad. The music was shuffling various genres and styles. As I closed my eyes, I began to think about the work of scholars that came before me and their contributions to the theorizing whiteness.

Leonardo (2009) mused, “Whiteness is characterized by the unwillingness to name the contours of racism, the avoidance of identifying with a racial experience or group, the minimization of racist legacy, and other similar evasions” (Leonardo, 2009, p. 170). *The music continued to shuffle, and as I started to flash through my career as an educator, I found myself turning it up, locating moments and times in space that stood out.* I began to narrow in on how the currency of whiteness is used and accumulated through investing in systems, practices, ideals, and values that promote white supremacy or simply ignoring race is something that ought to be considered (DiAngelo, 2010; Harris, 1993; Lipsitz, 2006).

I sat with my eyes closed, and I could slightly see the light of my monitor shine through my closed eyelids as a melodic tune of a song ended and faded out. All of a sudden a high pitched guitar radiated through my headphones. Turn it up, I thought! The drums thumped in a

familiar pattern, and then the entire band came into focus. The song Voice of the Voiceless by Rage Against the Machine blared into my ears and stimulated my brain. Images came in a flurry, as the words flowed through my head “you’ll never silence the voice, the voice of the voiceless.” I thought of the irony, as the voices are not voiceless, but the space and willingness to listen to the loud voice of those that have been minoritized is prevalent in education, and that at its core is an expression of whiteness. I reflected on my eight years of national accreditation meetings with three different accreditation agencies that focused on teacher preparation, eight years of statewide meetings related to policy governing educator preparation and certification in Michigan, and five years of meetings about curriculum and program effectiveness. In my mind I scanned the room of these meetings, the minoritized were both silent and not represented while whiteness was pervasive and normalized. The white faces dominated the images, the language, the approach, the style, the policy, the practices, the norms, and all aspects of the conversation. I closed my eyes tighter and saw the Michigan State Board of Education, largely comprised of white people, and again People of Color’s lived experience and learning is placed on the fringe while the emphasis is placed on white voices and experiences. Conversation echoed were heavily tinged with color evasive language and strategies.

I was then drawn to a memory of a moment sitting in a meeting in which the discussion focused on “rethinking our education system” through statewide policy initiatives. I began to talk about race, racism, and whiteness as factors for access and opportunity. I was quieted by a colleague stating that race is not the issue, but rather poverty is the issue. The room agreed and quickly moved on, as I sank and thought to myself, “Why are we not talking about this?” This was a complete failure of those to see the intersectionality of identities. Often poverty is misappropriated by educators and policy makers as the primary issue without deconstructing the

layers of the topic (Milner & Laughter, 2015). White educators have a tendency to move past race onto other issues of inequity (Milner & Laughter, 2015), such as poverty, because of fear and fragility on topics related to race (DiAngelo, 2011). DiAngelo (2011) theorized white fragility as often reflected in the outward displays of emotions such as anger, fear, and guilt, and behaviors such as argumentation, silence, and leaving the stress-inducing situation (DiAngelo, 2011). A great example of this is the State of Michigan's *Top 10 in 10* initiative which specifically addresses that educators must recognize poverty matters (Michigan Department of Education, 2015), but failed to address racial inequity by not discussing the nature in which our society and systems have been constructed to support whiteness.

In my five years working at the Michigan Department of Education, I could only recall two conversations that were specifically about race; both conversations approached viewing the learning of young Black men from a deficit perspective. The conversations on “achievement” were always laden with discussion of test scores, and these tests were constructed by white people using curriculum developed by white people and most often taught by white teachers.

Turn it up! The song fades out, and another RATM song blares in my headphone. The lyrics overlay a funky drum rhythm. The sound of chanting lyrics reverberated in my ears, “No matter how hard you try you can't stop us now . . . we are the renegades of this time and age.” I began to reflect on my work as a disruptor to whiteness in practice. Specifically, when I along with some other colleagues have enacted practices working to place People of Color at the center of our work and disrupting whiteness and white supremacy. Whether it was conversations with lawyers at institutions who feared creating space for future Educators of Color to have space and resources, or working with principals who state they would be happy to hire a Teacher of Color if any of applicants they interviewed were qualified.

I then saw myself sitting in a classroom surrounded by seven white pre-service teachers. I was teaching a course on foundations of education and we started discussing systemic racism, whiteness, and white supremacy. The room was quiet, the students looked around and sat uncomfortable. No one was willing to talk about their whiteness, or how whiteness has impacted education. Finally, one student began to use coded language about predominately Black and African American schools in Detroit. The student discussed not feeling safe at the school and how having their student teaching experience in Detroit would be problematic because they did not feel safe walking from their car into the building. This was not the first nor the last time I heard a white pre-service teacher talk about Children of Color and districts that are predominately comprised of Children of Color using coded language that reflects racist undertones. The students then used their whiteness and fragility as a deflection and their own currency as a white person to be able to avoid naming race as a factor for their engagement in the topic.

Turn it up! I reflected on my own experiences. I wish my own upbringing and lived experiences were different as it related to my own fragility. I too struggled mightily with my whiteness and to this day constantly track and engage in my actions and behaviors to ensure I am not reproducing or perpetuating whiteness. I rarely thought of myself as racist as I did not exhibit behavior or actions that discriminated against People of Color, or at least I thought. Similar to other white people, I easily wanted to separate myself from larger societal issues that dehumanized and created significant barriers and oppression for People of Color (DiAngelo, 2011). I had learned experiences that controlled the way I understand and interpret how race was or was not factored into my experience. For example, I learned to not “see” race, because not “seeing” race was a way to distance myself from being, feeling, acting, and being labeled as

a racist. I also had been conditioned to a sense of individualism. Not seeing race also allows a white person to ignore how race has formed their thoughts and impacted their experience (DiAngelo, 2010). Failure to acknowledge the constructs, systems, and cultural implications contribute to a conditioned buy-in to accept meritocracy and individualism (DiAngelo, 2010). My experience was littered with this concept from a young age. I was taught my successes were dependent on how hard I worked, not the currency of race, and to acknowledge that race had somehow provided me access or created advantage would allow for the breakdown of the American principle of individualism. Thus, I am a product indoctrination and colonizing mindset of individualism. The emphasis of individualism teaches that rewards, prosperity, and successes are all dependent on an individual's hard work while not acknowledging the greatest currency to earning this success, whiteness. *As the music faded and the string of RATM songs come to an end, I opened my eyes and began to write the portrait that framed my perspective and supported the overall discussion of this project.*

Purpose

The purpose of this research study was to build a deeper understanding of how whiteness shapes the lens and perspectives of pre-service teachers and identify the experiences in their preparation has challenged or upheld values related to whiteness. In other words, *turn it up!* Bring to the center of the discussion the aspects of whiteness that permeate educator preparation and the mostly white pre-service teacher students going into the profession. For this study, a pre-service teacher is someone who is either in their student teaching experience or has recently completed their teacher education program. Given the permanence of racism (Bell, 1992) and demographic disparities of teachers compared to students. The study explored the lived experiences and stories of seven white pre-service teachers completing their student teaching

experience at various institutions across the United States. I utilized Critical Race Theory (CRT), Critical whiteness Studies (CwS), narrative inquiry, to construct complex portraits, of the participants experiences through the practice of portraiture. The development of portraits both serves as reflexive practice for me as the researcher and the participants (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997) in enhancing the understanding of how whiteness is shaped, maintained, and disrupted. By enhancing the deep understanding of the lived experiences of these pre-service teachers, we can begin to understand how to engage pedagogically to build practices that disrupt and dismantle whiteness in pre-service teachers.

Additionally, my aim for this project was to build on the work of those that came before me, and disrupt whiteness by *turning it up* through creating portrait narratives that cast a light on the layered complexities that are part of the miseducation of our white pre-service teachers. Many of those authors are cited in the various sections of this project. In addition, I created an intentional practice for me, the participants, and the readers that engages and disrupts normative and colonized learned behaviors associated with whiteness. As Patel (2016) described, the complexity of our society and interaction of people within the context of society results in being both colonizers and colonized. Reflecting back, I have been colonized to be a colonizer, and have had an ideology built around presuppositions of normalizing whiteness and white supremacy. In this case, I do not mean white supremacy in the extreme context, but “more a system for protecting the privileges of whites by denying communities of color opportunities for asset accumulation and upward mobility” (Lipsitz, 2006, loc. 26). The concepts and ideology supporting whiteness and white supremacy is embedded into the nature and being of people and lives both as conscious and recognized as well as unconscious and unrecognized (Althusser,

1971). Thus, I believe this work can be part of the growing activism-based research, and turn up the advocacy and acts of activism that aim to dismantle whiteness.

Decolonizing Research

Patel (2016) discussed the implications and connections of research as often a colonizing experience, and one that more often than not reinforces hegemonic practices and ideologies. As an act of disruption, in my research practices, I have made some choices to both challenge the status quo and act in a manner that is congruent with the tenets of CRT. Therefore, in this study you will notice I use capitalization of certain words and or identity descriptors, such as People of Color, Black, Asian American, Latinx, and Chicano(a) as way of challenging dominant narratives and as a mechanism for challenging typical stylistic guides, which have been constructed and maintained by white people. I also have made the choice to use the lower case w for the word white, as a challenge to dominant ideology and the hegemonic practices of style guides which historically have been developed through the lens of whiteness.

Additionally, as part of the reflexive process and in congruence with both narrative inquiry and portraiture, I have intentionally inserted my experiences and lens into the discussion in all aspects of this study, including the discussion of empirical research. I do this to authentically engage the literature in a manner that is consistent with the narrative approach used in this study by sharing my interpretation and critique of existing information. Research, in particular in the social sciences, is not something that can be done by silencing the author's voice. Even when the researcher attempts to remove themselves from the voice of the study, their bias and viewpoint is evident in the literature chosen to review, the way they shape and interpret data, and discuss findings. As reflected in my method choices of narrative inquiry and portraiture, the voice of the researcher as both an interpretive tool and in the construction of the

narrative will be ever-present throughout all aspects of the research process (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997). Thus, in order to be congruent and consistent with my study and the efforts to own my subjectivity, I felt it was important for the reader to understand the lens in which this study has been framed and discussed.

Problem of Whiteness

Ideologies that uphold systemic racial oppression are part of constructed world views which produce beliefs and practices, creating a sense of privilege and earned status for individuals with privileged identities (Leonardo, 2009). In looking through news articles, discussion boards on social media, and in engaging with others, often conversations about race included dialogue about “being racist” or racism in the context of individual acts of a person. Rarely, however, is it discussed in connection with larger societal systems or practices, and even rarer, particularly in conversations with white people is the problematization of white supremacy attributed to the nature of whiteness. Matias (2016), however, defined the relationship of racism to whiteness and white supremacy by stating that “racism is the symptom, then white supremacy and whiteness are the disease” (p. 129). White supremacy perpetuates a dehumanization and oppression of People of Color by creating whiteness as the currency. Whiteness then serves as oppressive toward People of Color by creating cultural norms that values whiteness as both correct and superior (Lipsitz, 2006). Thus, racism is the manifestations of individual and system level oppression. I acknowledge the diversity among the racialization of being white; however, for this study, I made some scholarly assumptions based on previous literature to define being white. The following suppositions are to be considered and will be discussed further in other parts of this study furthering what it means to be white. Being white is a social construction of dominant racial ideology that has been valued as “normal” in the context of the United States and

given privilege and currency not afforded to People of Color (Kendi, 2016). From a historical and legal perspective, what is and who is considered is fluid (Bell, 1992). Being white is a reflection of accepted and normalized dominant ideology that has currency socially, politically, systemically, and culturally leading (Lipsitz, 2006).

In the system of education racial oppression, white supremacy, and whiteness are upheld in research practices (Patel, 2016), pedagogical approaches and practices (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 1995), law (Bell, 1992), and policies (Apple & Gillborn, 2009; Gillborn, 2005). I, all too familiar with being colonized through my educational experience and on daily basis, have to challenge my own learnings and unpack how I see and experience the world as it is often through the lens of multiple dominant identities and from a colonized perspective. Whiteness is the dominant culture lens which is often held responsible for perpetuation of racism and upholding the status quo (Coates, 2011; Hooks, 1996; Leonardo, 2009).

My experience is not uncommon and thus can provide some background as to why this research is important. In all aspects of education, from elementary schools to middle and high schools, to all facets of higher education, the pervasiveness of whiteness is everywhere. Not simply in individual actions, but deeply rooted in the behaviors and functions of our systems and organizations (Lipsitz, 2006). Lipsitz (2006) continued by discussing that these behaviors are reinforced through long lived practiced cultural norms of society in the United States (Lipsitz, 2006). For example, the norming of behaviors perpetuating that perpetuate whiteness adding to the accrue and possessiveness of whiteness to assist with asset and power accumulation (Lipsitz, 2006).

Problem of whiteness in the miseducation of white teachers

Our education system is plagued with the practices of whiteness and lack of engagement on issues of race and racism (Ladson-Billings, 1999; Ladson-Billings, 2014). Dr. Shaun Harper (2017), during a keynote address at the American Association of College Teacher Educators (AACTE), addressed the issues of racism in our school system, and noted that the systemic racism ought to be addressed if we were to advance our democracy. Harper (2017) theorized his concern by focusing his discussion on white people, more specifically white teachers and future white teachers. He challenged the profession of teacher education to reconsider and challenge the concepts that allow for the miseducation of white teachers. Harper's concerns about white teachers can be found and evidenced in a plethora of research which will be discussed in Chapter Two. Recently, a National Board Certified Teacher, discussed her experience which supported Harper's assertions regarding the miseducation of white teachers. The white teacher wrote in the opening line of her article, "I was a racist teacher and I didn't even know it" (Calvert, 2017, p. 1). Calvert (2017) went on to discuss how she saw herself as a liberal and never would have thought of herself as a racist, until she started to unpack her whiteness and her support of structures and systems that were oppressive. Harper and Calvert are asking questions about similar topics, pointing out that we ought to be better, we ought to build deeper understanding of how we begin to prepare white teachers to unpack bias and disrupt whiteness through their practice. Both Harper and Calvert provide a clear rationale for further exploration on the topic of whiteness in teacher preparation.

My research on whiteness in teacher education is built on utilizing Harper's comments regarding the miseducation of white pre-service teachers as an essential supposition for inquiry. The example of my own experience, Harper's critique of teacher education, Calvert's reflection

on her experience, and the research discussed in Chapter Two of this project, provide insight to supporting the assertions regarding the miseducation of white educators. Further, this miseducation also includes actions and behaviors resulting in the perpetuation of a colonized mindset aiming to uphold and protect whiteness and white supremacy in the praxis of education. Furthering the understanding that, “white-supremacist thinking informs every aspect of our culture including the way we learn, the content of what we learn, and the manner in which we are taught” (hooks, 2003, p. 25). This project begins to take shape around examining education and the way we prepare teachers. Instead of focusing on the institutions, I decided to frame the problem posed by Harper regarding the miseducation of white teachers from a viewpoint framed utilizing a Freirian perspective. Freire (2000) suggested that education must be a practice of liberation. Freire (2000) argued that educators have the ability to create emancipatory experiences for learners, or they can maintain the status quo and perpetuate existing structures upholding oppression. I interpreted this to mean that if pre-service white teachers aim to disrupt whiteness as part of their praxis, they can create liberatory experiences for their students and begin to dismantle the oppressive systems supporting white supremacy and whiteness. Thus, I felt compelled to explore and engage white pre-service teachers, who were finishing their preparation programs. I wanted to understand and unpack what was causing them to, or not to, challenge the status quo related to whiteness and racism.

Race and racism as concepts in the context of the United States are complicated, layered, confusing, full of contradictions, and have changed over time (Omi & Winant, 2015).

Anthropological and biological studies have found no scientific significance in the use and or categorization of race (Goodman, Moses, & Jones, 2012; King, 1981). Despite the lack of findings, the United States has developed systems and structures supporting the notion of racial

classification, ultimately creating socialization and practices that shape beliefs, systems, and structures to enhance white dominance and supremacy (Leary, 2005; Omi & Winant, 2015). White dominance, white supremacy, and whiteness are central to the creation of race within the context of society in the United States (Omi & Winant, 2015). Racism, as a set of beliefs/practices and systems, has been prevalent in the United States since the arrival of Europeans. More specifically, the long-term and cyclical development of policies that have allowed for accumulation of wealth and status through racial dominance and oppression (Omi & Winant, 2015). Bell's (1992) work analyzing history and law confirmed accumulation of race and racism being "an integral, permanent, and indestructible component of this society" (p. i). Similar to Bell, Leary's (2005) research of the long-term impacts of slavery concluded racism is, in addition to personal acts of hate and stereotyping, a structured system of disadvantages and dehumanizing practices toward people of color which are legal, political, and systemic. These systems shape and impact the lived experience of each person in the United States. My lived experience as a white person is no different.

The concept of whiteness, much like racism, is not always explicit or overt. Matias and Mackey (2016) argued in their study of teaching, whiteness is the act of perpetuating racism. Recognizing whiteness is hegemonic and "difficult to pinpoint because it is often a normative, unspoken, assumption of how things are" (Yoon, 2012, p. 607). For the sake of this project, hegemony is defined using Gramsci's (1985) theorization which positions hegemony to be the engagement of social and political power of one group over others. The use of hegemony to describe and understand oppression is applied by several CRT and CwS scholars such as Patel (2016), Lipsitz (2006), and Matias (2015) to name a few, in which the intersectional relationship of social, political, and cultural dominance of whiteness is challenged in research.

Leonardo (2009), unpacked through analysis of historical artifacts, legal analysis, and literature the nature in which whiteness is perpetuated and thus continue the fostering of racism. Further, Lewis (2004) found that given the nature of whiteness it is imperative to examine the social and historical contexts first to begin to understand the nature of whiteness in the United States. Both the concepts of racism and whiteness are critical elements to this study in beginning to understand how White teachers navigate and make meaning out of these concepts. “Racism is an integral, permanent, and indestructible component of this society” (Bell, 1992, p. loc 68). Racism is normalized in the United States, and is reflected as both individual and systematic acts and advantages that privilege white people over people of color as it relates to social, political, cultural, material, and legal capital and wealth (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). Further, racism is reflected through practices, mental categorization, attitude, and social construction in a manner that provides advantages and concepts of superiority for white people.

In examining the context of race, racism, and whiteness in teacher education, it is important to also understand the demographics of current teachers and teacher candidates. White teachers in the United States continue to make up over 80% of the pre-kindergarten through 12th grade (PK-12) teachers while students of color make up 50% of the PK-12 classroom demographics (Snyder & Dillow, 2013). Over the course of the past 15 years, several researchers have examined aspects of teacher education candidates and programs to better understand how white teachers can better engage with Student of Color. Further, research has been conducted examining white pre-service teachers constructs of whiteness in the education setting (Matias, Viesca, Garrison-Wade, Tandon, & Galindo, 2014), as well as the importance of engaging in critical dialogue on the constructs of race and racism (Leonardo, 2004). There a few instances of institutions, such as the University Chicago, developing programs that aim to recruit more

diverse populations. However, most schools of education continue to admit and prepare predominately white teachers, thus being able to continue to identify barriers in engaging whiteness is even more important as the population and lived experience of PK-12 students continues to diversify.

Whiteness is damaging the education system

Whiteness is often normalized and in the context of education systems; this is reinforced as it relates to schools, neighborhoods, and student performance (DiAngelo, 2011; Yoon, 2012). Education, as a system has created and sustained racialization and practices of white supremacy, particularly in higher education (Wilder, 2014). The problem of whiteness is evidenced and perpetuated and protected in multiple ways. For example, in two separate studies, there were several instances in which white college students utilized tactics to distance themselves from what they identified as racism and at the same time they normalized the concept of whiteness (Cabrera, 2009; Cabrera, 2014). These actions and behaviors were found to be consistent with pre-service teacher educators (Matias, 2013; Matias & Mackey, 2016; Sleeter, 2017; Young, 2016). Therefore, what if teachers and schools as part of the systems and structures that developed ideologies, utilized practices and engaged in actions that disrupted whiteness? With white teachers continuing to make up a majority of educators (Snyder & Dillow, 2013), and recognizing that racism and whiteness are purposefully upheld in maintaining white supremacy (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012), we then are back to Harper's statements regarding the miseducation of white teachers. Findings on whiteness in teacher education included that pre-service teachers utilize multiple strategies in advancing hegemonic narratives supporting whiteness.

These narratives are prevalent in the way teachers or pre-service teachers engage in content and place People of Color on the margins of learning. Even more direct, data suggest that it is not just the framing of learning but even content directly related to race, racism and whiteness is impacted by strategies that perpetuate narratives of whiteness (Berchini, 2014; Mensah & Jackson, 2018; Shuster, 2018). For example, in a recent study, only 8% of high school students are able to identify slavery as the cause for the Civil War (Shuster, 2018). Shuster (2018) further problematized that slavery is not being taught well in schools nor are their connections to present day practices and the economic stability of the United States due to slavery. If educators are not critically engaging students on the issue of slavery and the very nature of our racial caste system, then it makes sense that white people struggle seeing themselves as part of a larger system of racial oppression (DiAngelo, 2010). Teachers ought to be able to engage in practices that disrupt and challenge racial injustice and whiteness. Failure to do this only results in continued cycles of oppression and creating individuals that will continue to support practices of whiteness in their lives after they leave schools.

Significance

I believe that the current dialogue, or lack thereof, on race in the United States reflects our teachers' inability to engage critically on racism and disrupt whiteness. Thus we have a populous of 55% of white people who believe they are unfairly treated based on their race and have been systematically discriminated against for promotion, jobs, educational opportunities, and other aspects where the property of whiteness might be challenged (NPR, Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, & Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, 2017). Although educators of future teachers believe they have employed various strategies to engage pre-service teachers in understanding whiteness, it seems pre-service teachers are being prepared each year without

the abilities or willingness to engage in disrupting whiteness. In this study, the concept of willingness stems from previous research in which participants engaged in dialogue, discussion, and reflection or demonstrated behaviors and actions that challenged whiteness actively or with little aversion (Cabrera, 2009; Cabrera, 2012; Matias & Mackey, 2016). More specifically, gaps existed in how pre-service teachers engage and make meaning of their whiteness and how the role of white fragility plays a role in their enacting of practices in whiteness. This study aims to inform educator preparation programs into better understanding how their candidates make meaning of their own whiteness and to identify strategies for providing tools to enhance skills and knowledge to disrupt whiteness.

Research Questions

This study will investigate the research problem by developing portraits of four to six pre-service teachers. In order to guide the study, I developed three research questions that stem from examining how white pre-service teacher's experiences have shaped their willingness and ability to disrupt or perpetuate whiteness:

1. What role does white fragility play in white pre-service teacher's willingness to engage in whiteness?
2. What factors are associated with willingness to disrupt or perpetuate whiteness for white pre-service teachers?
3. How has their teacher preparation program enhanced their ability to engage in challenging whiteness in education?

Summary

In this study, I examined how the lived experiences of seven pre-service teachers framed how they each learned to uphold and disrupt whiteness. In particular, I investigated how their fragility as white people factored in to shaping how and when they chose to engage in disruption or perpetuation of whiteness. Critical Race Theory and Critical whiteness Studies are used as the theoretical perspectives that guided every aspect of the study. I used portraiture and aspects of narrative inquiry to create a deep, rich, and complex analysis of the participants lived experiences.

In Chapter Two I provide an overview of the conceptual framework and literature related to core themes in exploring the topic of whiteness in the United States, specifically in the context of teacher education. In order to construct a story narrowing to the topic, I utilized four conceptual themes to organize the literature. I first began the by situating myself and sharing in a reflexive deconstruction of both my positionality in the research and my own experience with challenging the ideology and construction of whiteness in my lived experience as an educator. The first section of the conceptual framework provided a review and analysis of CRT and CwS as the theoretical framework used in this study. The second section is a historical and legal analysis of race, racism, and whiteness in the United States. This section largely provided a context for examining the disease of whiteness (Matias, 2016) through the construction of race and racism. The third section discussed and analyzed the racialization of education in the United States. In this section, I analyzed research, policies, and practices that contribute to education serving an institution that perpetuates racism and whiteness (Leonardo, 2009). The fourth and final section examined whiteness in an educational context. I have chosen to narrow most of the

discussion to whiteness research in higher education, specifically teacher education. I also discussed the research on the concept of disruption and fragility.

In Chapter Three, I describe the methodological approach used in this study. I begin by making case for why I consider CRT and CwS as more than theoretical perspectives, but also as integral parts of methodology. I provided an overview of how portraiture coupled with narrative inquiry allowed me to gain insight to the stories behind the participants' experiences. I then provided a description of the research approach which includes participant selection, data collection strategies and data analysis procedures. In the section on data analysis, I explained the choice of Lawrence-Lightfoot's (2005) concept of portraiture as the analysis process for constructing understanding of the experiences of participants and the emerging themes that were found by analyzing the portraits. Finally, I discussed the criteria used to establish trustworthiness, as well as the delimitation and limitations in the study.

The five major themes that were found through analyzing participant portraits in this study were discussed in Chapter Four. These themes include a) disrupting whiteness is a choice; b) the lingering impact of learned color evasive, race neutral, and post racialized practices; c) the possessiveness of white immunity, the nature of individualism, and difficulty naming and owning systemic whiteness; d) the fragility of being thought of as incomplete and loss of status; e) the miseducation of pre-service teachers on race, whiteness and white supremacy. The five themes represent the narratives, stories, and experiences of the seven participants along with analysis.

In Chapter Five, I discuss the five major themes in relationship with the related literature, as well as findings related to the three primary research questions guiding the study. I also discussed implications and recommendations for current and pre-service white teachers, faculty

preparing future teachers, and policy makers as they all continue to identify, deconstruct, and disrupt whiteness as practiced both by individuals and in systems. Finally, I provided some recommendations for future research and a brief reflection of my experience throughout this project.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

I begin this chapter with a statement of positionality and a brief portraiture of my experience related to the concepts of education, whiteness, and hope. I believe this will assist the reader in understanding the position from which I discuss this research. I follow this story by discussing themes organized into four sections. The review of literature is a blending of theoretical and empirical research synthesized to explain/define/present four concepts that frame and contextualize the study (Rocco & Plakhotnik, 2009). I began the discussion with examining the theoretical perspectives of Critical Race Theory (CRT) and Critical whiteness Studies (CwS). Through these frameworks, I am grounded in the suppositions that race and racialized lived experience positioning white supremacy as normalized (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). The second section analyzed whiteness in the United States and the conceptualization of whiteness and how it has become invested in as property (Harris, 1993; Lipsitz, 2006). The third section examined the education system as a place for upholding and perpetuating whiteness with a narrowed focus on higher education and teacher education. In the fourth section, I narrow the discussion by examining research on pre-service teachers as it relates the concepts of perpetuating and disrupting whiteness. I concluded this chapter by discussing emerging themes that stem from the prevalence and maintenance of whiteness. Finally, I discuss the premise of fragility of white pre service teachers and how fragility impacts the disruption or lack of willingness to disrupt whiteness.

I have a disposition of hope. Most often, I credit this disposition to my privileged viewpoint as a white person, whose lived experience is regularly reflected positively when I turn on the television, read a book, listen to stories about the history of the United States, and overall think about the images and ideological norming of my educational experience. My current

understanding and definition of hope has evolved through time. I believe I originally viewed hope from a place that emulated and perpetuated a narrative consistent with dominant ideologies. Through my lived experience, I now believe this hope is one of a critical nature, that emulated a which juxtaposes the possibility of change, justice, and equity with the stark realities of challenge, oppression and despair (Duncan-Andrade, 2009).

My story of hope started as a young kid. I became infatuated with the concepts of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. As I stated, I positioned my hope and embedded constructs of neoliberalism. Omi and Winant (2015) position neoliberal economic policies with color-evasive tactics which place individualism and individual rights and successes at the center of policies and praxis. Therefore, for the sake of this project, I utilized neoliberalism and individualism as an additional facet of whiteness cloaking policies and practices of meritocracy with ideals that suggest that the concept of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness was intended and is enacted for all. Through time, and much work with mentors, friends, scholars, I began to unpack my own whiteness that built this neoliberal identity and at times white savior complex that often is associated with work on issues of race that are framed in neoliberal ways. Through my continuous work, which exists today, I began to still wish for hope. I unpacked my own whiteness and began to name and recognize that people with minoritized identities were not intended be part of the narrative of freedom nor did they seem to be centered in neoliberal practices. In fact, these policies negate the existence of systematic oppression and individuals with minoritized identities at the margins of society. Further, the term minoritized creates a systemic understanding that People of Color are regularly oppressed and forces the construct of being white as a racial group while reinforcing that we must challenge, disrupt, and interrogate whiteness (Solomona, Portelli, Daniel, & Campbell, 2005).

I began to shift how I framed hope, as to not provide false hope with false narratives of access that does not exist. I changed my approach as an educator and as a scholar to frame hope using a critical framework. My experience in working with white educators, in particular educators similarly to those referenced in this chapter by other scholars, is that there is a sense of wanting to promote equality but failing to recognize the need for equity. Thus, I began to explore how whiteness is part of the experience of those entering the teaching profession.

In reflecting on this project, it was important for me to share the above experience. I think this reflects a notion of a very different lived experience of white people compared to People of Color. Not that my experience is the same as all other white people in the United States, but what it begins to demonstrate is this concept of preserving, investing, and possessing whiteness (Harris, 1993; Lipsitz, 2006). While this seems to simplify the complexity of the racialization of our experiences, the truth of the matter is this is what helps set the tone of how people like me see their lived experience and often learn about life through a lens cloaked in whiteness. With this being said, the conceptual framework discussed in this chapter provides a frame for supporting these assertions, and an analysis of the current state of perpetuation and disruption of whiteness.

Theoretical Perspective

In building foundational themes to guide this study, the theoretical perspectives assist in creating an understanding of the lens and viewpoint used for the exploration of the research questions. Critical whiteness Studies (CwS) and Critical Race Theory (CRT) are used as intersectional philosophical frameworks to situate and understand the nature and hegemonic power dynamics that exist from a racialized context in the United States education system.

Critical race theory

Critical Race Theory (CRT) began as a response to legal and law scholarship, and has evolved to research and teaching methodologies focused on disrupting and exposing systemic racism (Milner, 2008). Furthermore, CRT places the operation of racism at the systems level, while simultaneously acknowledging and interrogating the way the hegemonic system is upheld by individual and group action (Cummings, 2014). Crenshaw (2002) credits Bell (1992) for his work in centralizing race and challenging white supremacy in legal practices. Crenshaw continued, Bell's development of the framework for CRT as an analytical and philosophical grounding in both lifting the voices of People of Color while simultaneously calling race neutral laws as problematic actors of white supremacy. Despite Bell's building of CRT as a tool for analyzing legal disparities and oppression, Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) argue that CRT needed to be further theorized in deconstructing racism and inequities in education.

CRT as a theoretical foundation calls for the questioning of "the very foundations of the liberal order, including equality theory, legal reasoning, enlightenment rationalism, and neutral principles of constitutional law" (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012, p. 3). CRT operates from the supposition that the status quo only perpetuates inequality and racism, and that all aspects of dominant culture operate to maintain the status quo (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012).

In the early stages of utilizing CRT in education, Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) theorized CRT by intersecting race with property rights. In their theoretical development they discussed three propositions which would later become the basis for the tenets of CRT in educational research. Ladson-Billings and Tate give credit to Du Bois' (1904) work in the early 1900's for theorizing racism in education through his lived experience. Later in her research, Ladson-Billings (1999) furthered the theorization of CRT moving away from legal analysis by

declaring CRT's use of storytelling to critique and deconstruct hegemonic and dominant ideology myths. As CRT evolved in education research it fostered examining the personal day to day and the systemic educational practices causing harm and oppression of People of Color both within the system and through individual actions (Beyer, 2001). As CRT continued to become part of pedagogical praxis, scholars found educators needed to create mechanisms to challenge the nature of dominant practices (Leonardo, 2002) and continuously disrupt and dismantle racism and the structures that allow for the perpetuation of whiteness to exist (Ledesma & Calderón, 2015).

Through the evolution of the tenets and theorization of CRT over time researchers began to expand to five or more tenets guiding the examination of racism in education (Solorzano & Yosso, 2002). I have found that CRT's evolution and fluidity of tenets to be both a challenge and strength. For this research project, I utilized seven CRT tenets to frame my work (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Ledesma & Calderón, 2015; Solorzano & Yosso, 2002).

The first tenet, race is central and racism is an ordinary experience woven into the fabric of all aspects of our society. Second, there is an advantage for the maintenance of racism by white people and racial justice strategies by whites such as color evasiveness and neutrality. Third, often progress occurs through interest convergence which advantages white people just as much or more as People of Color. The concept of interest convergence is heavily theorized by CRT scholars (Crenshaw, 1997; Crenshaw, 2002; Delgado & Stefancic, 2012; Solorzano & Yosso, 2002). Initially theorized by Bell (1992) from a legal context in that items such as the 14th Amendment and the decision of *Brown v. Board* on its face seem to be promoting equality, but in reality are actions that serve a greater interest in benefiting whites than People of Color.

Interest convergence is also used as a tool for analyzing policies and practices (Milner, 2008). Fourth, there is a need for counterstorytelling which ought to be used to lift the voices of and centering the research of/on minoritized individuals. Fifth, there must be a commitment to social justice. Sixth, it is important to recognize that no human has one identity, but rather multiple identities that create layered levels of privilege and oppression, thus establishing and acknowledging the intersectionality of race, gender, class, national origin, sexuality, and other identities. Finally, there is a need to utilize an interdisciplinary approach.

Critical whiteness studies

Despite the effectiveness of CRT in education research, Dixson and Roussea (2005) argued that there had not been enough progress made on utilizing all CRT tenets in education research. Specifically, the ways in which whiteness impacts and permeates all aspects of education systems and practices. Since 2005, several scholars have theorized how to challenge whiteness in the system of education. For example, Sleeter (2017) problematized the whiteness of teacher education by utilizing three of the tenets of CRT which include interest convergence, color evasion, and centering the lived experience of students of color. Sleeter suggested examining policies and practices, and confronting race directly, to assist in the process of interrogating whiteness. Given the challenges of interrogating whiteness when the participants of the study are white utilizing CRT, several scholars utilize CwS either as an independent perspective or by intersecting the two perspectives (Cabrera, 2009).

Cabrera (2009) argued that many scholars inappropriately orient CwS within CRT. Cabrera articulated that while there are aspects of intersection there are clear distinctions between the two perspectives. Interestingly, other scholars theorize CwS as part of or an extension of CRT (Matias et al., 2014). I find the complexity of CRT and CwS to be

complementary and I also recognize how given other perspectives nestled in CRT, such as Latinx Critical Race Theory (Solorzano & Bernal, 2001), there is a case for CwS to be part of the CRT perspective. With that being said, there is a connection of property in the subtext of the current theorization of CRT and tenets; however, CwS seems to be missing in the overt discussions. On the contrary, scholars theorizing whiteness have made connections to whiteness as a property and something that is protected and valued by white people (Harris, 1993; Lipsitz, 2006). While CRT scholars have contributed to theorization of whiteness as property and has evolved from CRT scholars like Harris over the last 20 years greater focus on research and theorization has occurred more regularly in CwS literature.

Cabrera (2009) argued CwS does often intersect with CRT. The intersections ends however, because CwS focused primarily on the constructs, disruption, and dismantling of whiteness. In the context of education, CwS scholars asserted dominant white culture maintaining the status quo and thus perpetuates constructs of whiteness in all aspects of education (Leonardo, 2002, 2009; Matias et al., 2014). Thus in the framework of CwS educators and students alike must constantly work in harmony to “name, reflect on, and dismantle discourses of whiteness” (Leonardo, 2002, p. 31). However, this process is not simple; most individuals with dominant identities, in this case white people, often operate without awareness of their own identity and their impact on the system of oppression (Freire, 2000).

For this study, I utilize Nayak’s (2007) three tenets for CwS research. Nayak’s three tenets are: whiteness is modern and has evolved over time; whiteness is socially constructed, normalized, and operates through maintaining privileges that establish white supremacy; whiteness can be deconstructed, disrupted, and dismantled. In addition to the tenets, research in CwS requires scholars to examine the political, social, and personal systems involved that

perpetuate whiteness and the intersection of how participants, in particular those that are white, both uphold and disrupt these systems (Cabrera, 2012).

Intersection of CRT and CwS

In this study, I am interested in the intersection of CwS and CRT and utilizing both perspectives to continue to add to the theoretical framing in conducting research that challenges master narratives. I recognized that in this study, certain aspects of CRT are not possible, given that the participants of this study will be white, and thus counternarratives are not an option. Counternarratives or counterstorytelling is a critical key component to CRT, often used to lift and raise the voices of People of Color (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012; Love, 2004; Solorzano & Yosso, 2002). Without being able to utilize key method for CRT research, I turned to other methods, such as portraiture (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2005) to expose analyze and challenge whiteness.

Both CRT and CwS as theoretical frameworks acknowledged the historical legacy of racism and the current structures of how this legacy is still effecting the lived experiences of people in the United States today. Both CwS and CRT operate from the supposition racism is woven into the fabric of modern existence and is often operationalized through whiteness and that concept of whiteness maintained through constant investment in the property of whiteness (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012; Harris, 1993; Leonardo, 2009; Lipsitz, 2006). Thus, in building a deeper understanding of the theorizing of whiteness as a property, it is important to acknowledge and understand the historical aspects that constructed and created racism as it exists today. By examining historical literature, as well as in a study of current racial phenomena, Patterson (2015) argued that there must be a distinction between racism and racial discrimination; however, Patterson noted “racism cannot exist without racial discrimination” (p. 33). The

literature discussing race and racism is complex, but it is important to further identify and define the nature and value placed on the culture of dominance in the United States.

Building a System of Invested Whiteness

Analysis of history is important in problematizing the contextual development of whiteness as a construct (Nayak, 2007) because of the importance of recognizing the building blocks of whiteness are founded in colonization. The United States is a society obsessed with discussing and not directly discussing race (Terrell, 1993), although often the obsession is cloaked in the myth of color evasion (Leary, 2005). Color-evasiveness was theorized by Annamma, Jackson, and Morrison (2017) by critiquing the concept of colorblindness. Annamma, et. al., challenged the notion of colorblindness as both a concept of intersectionality of racism and ableism. Colorblindness implies one is blind to race, which on its face is not actually what is occurring, as the individual is avoiding or being evasive to race. Further, color evasiveness is a more accurate description of the refusal or choice not to “see” or acknowledge race or racism (Patel, 2016). Thus, color-evasion describes situations in which a person, often a white person, makes a conscious choice or a learned choice to avoid acknowledging the systemic impact of race in the United States with a belief that race no longer matters (Alexander, 2012).

The obsession of race has led to what Alexander (2012) describes a racial caste system stemming from the legacy of slavery through Jim Crow and in to the modern era of mass incarceration. The nature of race and the ties to racism are “inextricably bound to [a] racist ideology” (Leary, 2005, p. 23). In examining and discussing racism, it is much easier discuss and rationalize racism as an act or acts of a person or group against another group based on racial stereotypes or prejudices (Feagin & McKinney, 2005). If racism resembles both systemic power and privilege afforded to a particular racial group as well as acts of bias, discrimination, and hate

(Bell, 1992; Hooks, 1996; Patterson, 2015), then one must consider what group is advantaged and name how those advantages have been created.

Racism is part of the system of oppression which supports the aforementioned stereotypes and prejudices while also perpetuating laws, policies, and practices aimed to oppress People of Color (2005). In an examination of United States history and civic ideals, Smith (1997) argued that a majority of laws and policies throughout history utilized race as a major component for limiting access and creating barriers of accessibility for citizenship and other services. Thus, to better understand how the micro level racist acts such as prejudice and stereotypes are reinforced, it was important to first analyze the historical development of the system of racism in the United States.

Impact of slavery in the United States

In examining issues of racism in the United States and the constructs of race as an identity, it is important to begin to deconstruct the factors leading to modern day understandings how race and racism are discussed. The historical references to race and racism begin with examining the legacy of slavery in the United States. It is important to note how historical discussion of history impacts current impression. For example the end of slavery through emancipation is often discussed from the white perspective which underscores the importance of the role Black individuals played in their liberation (Roediger, 2014). Prior to examining emancipation however, the historical and political implications of slavery which Leary (2005) argued perpetuated beliefs that “[B]lack Africans were fitted by a natural act of God to the position of permanent bondage” (p. 51).

The concept supporting the dehumanization of Black people is relatively well-documented in Colonial history in the United States. The oppression and colonization is not

indicative of Black Africans in early United States history, as there is significant documentation of the theft of land, marginalization, colonization, and genocide of Native North Americans (Churchill, 2002; Dunbar-Ortiz, 2014). Legally speaking, as it relates to Black Africans, the development of the three-fifths compromise allowed for discussion as to the view of how People of Color were viewed. On its face, the three-fifths compromise stated that the state's population of slaves could be counted as at a ratio of three for every five people (Ohline, 1971). Ohline's review of historical documents discussed the origins of the compromise stemming not from dispute about taxation, rather as to how a state's representation would be determined in the lower and upper houses of what would later become the federal government. Legal practices such as the three-fifths compromise begin to lend a foundation for Ladson-Billings and Tate's (1995) discussion regarding the intersection of race as concept of property. Harris (1993) would slightly challenge this notion and describe that whiteness is conceptualized as property through establishing mechanism to procure power.

Through time the original proposal of the three-fifths compromise was meant to be a mechanism of counting people for representation, individuals supporting slavery began to rally around the concept as a way to institutionalize the practice of slavery (Ohline, 1971). Madison (1787) argued during the Constitutional Convention that Black Africans were not considered to be merely property but also were not human. Furthermore, Madison argued that these beliefs ought to be represented in language and in laws, discussions of representation, and for taxation purposes (as cited by Leary, 2005). Review of historical documents concluded the establishment of the three-fifths compromise led to, at the very least, a majority in the lower house as proponents of the dehumanizing and oppressive practices of People of Color, thus establishing long-term support for slavery (Lynd, 1966).

In examining the impact of the three-fifths compromise, Alexander (2012) argued the structure and understanding of American democracy is defined and perpetuated even through the removal of the clause. Bell (1992) argued the three-fifths compromise was essential in the establishment of the United States and supported practices of oppression of indigenous peoples and People of Color. Similarly when the “first naturalization law was passed in 1790, it named the imagined American citizen as [w]hite” (Roediger, 2010, p. 56). The imagined American citizen as white also ignored the Indigenous Peoples that had lived here for centuries prior to the arrival of white Europeans.

As the United States constructed by white Americans continued to grow, the practice of slavery and dehumanization of People of Color continued. For example, when exploring historical documents related to the Louisiana Purchase, Jefferson believed not only was there an opportunity to expand the United States but also a move against indigenous populations (Roediger, 2010). It was becoming more and more evident through analyzing the work of Thomas Jefferson, that the work of the revolution to develop a new nation was one built for whites and further developed the early constructs of what we know today as whiteness (Roediger, 2010).

The concept of race, racism, and slavery can be traced as early in ancient Egyptian culture, and heavily prevalent in Greek and Roman history as well. However in the United States the constructs of race, racism, and slavery were all built on a blatant notion that there was a context of equality while People of Color and Indigenous Peoples were never thought of as equal (Fredrickson, 2002; Smedley, 1993). Additionally, there are differences as to how humans that were enslaved were treated in Latin American and the United States. In Latin America there was a notion that once emancipated, formerly enslaved individuals had

opportunity and were not barred from certain privileges. Where as in the United States, Africans who were designated as “free” were never thought of as equal nor were they able to have similar privileges afforded to those in Latin America (Smedley,1993). The notion of slavery in the United States not only stemmed from foundational beliefs that People of Color were less than, it was systematically engrained in practice and the belief structure of the dominant culture (Roediger, 2010). Furthering the narrative that People of Color were to be considered *less than*, an additional example is the treatment of and tactics used to obliterate Native North American’s (Dunbar-Ortiz, 2014).

Jim Crow, civil rights, and a new era of racism

The brutality of slavery along with both the systemic and personal beliefs held by whites created and made the long-term impact on the practices and systems of the United States and all people centuries after emancipation (Leary, 2005). The policies, practices, and belief structures creating exclusionary practices and segregation known as Jim Crow, while different from slavery, continued the further damage and oppression of People of Color in the United States (Roediger, 2006). These laws and practiced rules of segregation developed a new level of reinforced whiteness maintaining a stronghold on dominant culture (Fredrickson, 2002).

In examining historical documents post Emancipation Proclamation, Alexander (2012) discussed how African Americans “found themselves yet again powerless and relegated to convict leasing camps that were, in many ways, worse than slavery” (p. 58). Systemic and legal segregation became more and more prevalent creating lack of opportunity and equity for People of Color (Roediger, 2010). After analyzing and reviewing historical and political documents, including narrative, the implications of Jim Crow have produced “another caste system” which exists to this day (Alexander, 2012, p. 59).

To support this assertion of a caste-like system, People of Color have a higher and disproportionate incarceration rates, lower access to affordable and quality housing, limited access to quality education (including higher education), and often face systems of significant disadvantage (Alexander, 2012; Fredrickson, 2002; Leary, 2005; Roediger, 2010, 2014). These aspects of law and societal based segregation led only to furthering the privilege of whites which only furthered aspects of superiority and continued to cement whiteness as the mechanism to obtain and maintain societal positions of power (Blauner, 2001). Additionally, the implications of policies on white psyche led to feelings of hatred (Terkel, 1993) and in more modern sense an inability to acknowledge racism or being white as a factor for creating currency in achieving success (Dize, 2011).

The implications of Jim Crow and the legacy of slavery impacted not only laws and policies but opinions and beliefs which impacted interactions among People of Color and white people. In examining multiracial friendships through a series of interviews, Terkel (1993) found that both People of Color and white people had a mistrust often going into the friendship that was unfounded, but rather based on perception and learned behaviors. One participant discussed her feeling of superiority and what she described as her unfounded opinion of hate, “I didn’t like [B]lack people. In fact, I hated ‘em” (p. 52). Later the participant described that it took an experience in which she watched a Person of Color being beat for her to realize how unfounded and inappropriate her hatred was (1993).

Terkel’s (1993) study unveiled some interesting findings about what it might take for one to change perspective. More recently, Dize (2011) found there were two dimensions of color-evasive attitudes that were strong predictors for support of discrimination of Black people. Dize discussed the two dimensions of color-evasiveness included denial of the present existence of

blatant racism and unawareness of institutional discrimination. As Freire (2000) suggested, dominant culture has difficulty seeing themselves as oppressors or recognizing institutional oppression. The more modern color-evasive attitudes often lead to white people's ability to "rationalize existing racial injustices and inequities as stemming from something other than racism in a conscious or unconscious attempt to avoid acknowledging the considerable negative impact of racism" (Dize, 2011, p. 93).

The dehumanization of People of Color in the United States is not exclusive and is an indication of the construction of whiteness in the United States. Additionally, these practices serve as a constant reminder of the how laws, practices, beliefs, social structures, and systems have treated People of Color. For example, Austin (2007) provided a narrative account of Japanese American College age students during World War II. Austin recounted the horrific incarceration of Japanese Americans and the treatment they received while living in American concentration camps. These examples are just some of the horrific treatment of Japanese Americans during and after World War II.

Building the historical construction of whiteness as property

The construction of whiteness in the United States has been created and maintained through laws, practices, and systems (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). The nature of whiteness is not necessarily evident to white people, but People of Color are constantly reminded by the existence and impact of whiteness (Du Bois, 1994). Although white people avoid or claim to not recognize whiteness, utilizing evasive tactics, often white people act in a way to protect the privileges afforded through supporting whiteness (Lipsitz, 2006). Lewis (2004), in a sociological study of race and racism, discussed the nature in which race permeates the entirety of society and is virtually impossible for one to avoid in the United States.

The notion of establishing Civil Rights for Black Americans was challenging for white people, because any sense of progress for Black individuals would result in what some white people thought would be a loss of their societal place (Bell, 1992). This sentiment was found to still be evident in a more recent study on discrimination in America. White people participating in the study named employment, pay equity, and college admission as the places where white people felt they experienced discrimination based on race (NPR et al., 2017). Each of these areas seemed to be a place where white people fear they are losing status which Harris (1993) argued is part of establishing aspects of property.

Whiteness includes the constant shifting of defining what it means to be white and the privileges that allow for a position of power and privilege for white people (Kivel, 2002). Whiteness, in essence, creates a sense of individualism in which a white person believes they can “at will, easily shake off the manner in which one’s body is taken up by a white supremacist system” (Howard, 2004, p. 71). Thus, whiteness is more than individual acts, it is a systematic culture embraced knowingly and unknowingly by white people (Roediger, 2006).

Andersen (2003) argued “the focus on diversity and racial identity and the changing composition of the population have created a society marked by racial anxiety” (p. 23). The anxiety around issues of racism by white people has led to national debates around issues that while not being named as whiteness, certainly reflect the nature in which dominant culture wants to protect whiteness. Leonardo (2009) argued that as long as white people continue to reproduce, protect, and invest in whiteness, whiteness and racism will continue to flourish.

Investing in the property of whiteness

As discussed earlier Harris (1993), was the first CRT scholar to theorizes whiteness as property. Harris, discussed the concept of whiteness as being so engrained in society that rarely

are white people aware of the assumptions, privileges, and benefits that establish a status with being white that is protected at all costs. Harris, in a narrative of her grandmother, a Person of Color, described how the nature of her grandmother's light skin and willingness to "give up" aspects of her identity resulted in an increase of status. Similarly to Harris' story, Marguia and Forman (2003) analyzed the historical aspects of whiteness related to Mexican Americans. Marguia and Forman described the process of accessing whiteness and the intersectionality with skin tone, language, economic status, and education all as factors that create opportunities for Mexican Americans to be accepted as White. However, they noted, similar to Harris' grandmother and the Italians in the early part of the 20th century, there is a price for accessing whiteness and being accepted by white culture. Marguia and Forman also discussed the challenge that at any given time the property of whiteness can be taken away by the dominant group when it fits the particular narrative supporting white supremacy.

Each example provided insight to the concept of investing in whiteness. In examining whiteness as possessive investment, Lipsitz (2006) described and analyzed how white culture exists through taking aspects of ethnic identities, including those of People of Color and appropriating these aspects as culturally-owned and accepted by dominant culture. Further, Lipsitz described the investment of whiteness through inherited wealth, health, and discriminatory practices in housing to name a few. Each of these investments alone establish a legacy for the upkeep of whiteness, and establish an intersection of a complicated and complex structure of investment which maintains power and privilege for white people.

Therefore, the constant proprietary dominance of whiteness as a cultural investor and approver of what is accepted and what is not accepted gives credence to the existence of an accepted norm of white culture. Whiteness is theorized by both CRT and CwS scholars through

the analysis of historical artifacts, legal analysis, and critical analysis of systems and structures as mechanism for upholding systems of white supremacy and racism in the United States (Bell, 1992; Coates, 2011; hooks, 1996; Leonardo, 2009).

The need to relinquish ethnic identity and movement toward development and maintenance of white culture which manifests in whiteness, is an act of investment in whiteness as a property (Harris, 1993; Lipsitz, 2006). Guglielmo (2003) analyzed the experience of Italians living in Chicago during the late 1800s and early 1900s to understand the relationship of ethnic identity with White identity. Guglielmo found that in order to gain status and control over their lived experience, the more they embraced whiteness and left behind their ethnic identity, the greater the acceptance. The giving of culture and identity to achieve or access whiteness is not just for white Europeans.

Whiteness as an enactment of white culture

Although the concept of race is consistently shifting (Omi & Winant, 2015), one constant has remained; the association of being white is related to a positive association of behavior, attitudes, beliefs, and what is considered to be normal (McDermott & Samson, 2005). In other words, race is also a concept that was created in an effort to define People of Color as other (Omi & Winant, 2015). In examining racism, it is also important to understand the constructs of whiteness. “Whiteness, along with race, is the structural valuation of skin color, which invests it with meaning regarding the overall organization of society” (Leonardo, 2009, p. 91). More specifically, whiteness “is a social construction that embraces white culture, ideology, racialization, expressions, and experiences, epistemology, emotions, and behaviors” (Matias, Viesca, Garrison-Wade, Tandon, & Galindo, 2014, p. 290), which normalized white supremacy as part of American culture (Lipsitz, 2006). Therefore, whiteness allows for the perpetuation of

oppression based on race and places value on dominant identities and Eurocentric attitudes in social and political structures (Leonardo, 2009).

The construction of white identity and the amalgam of cultures creating the concept of white culture and whiteness is complex. White as a racial category has been developed through time with a constant “expansion and contraction of the circle of inclusion/exclusion of who qualifies for whiteness” (Steyn & Conway, 2010, p. 284). Lipsitz (2006) theorized that white supremacy and whiteness often goes unnoticed but serves as “organizing principle in social and cultural relations” (loc. 219). Whiteness extends through the act of investing in creating social and cultural relations that become normed and part of hegemonic practices. These practices not only serve as an investment but become owned and part of what makes whiteness valuable as property (Harris, 1993). In this particular analysis, it is important to remember Ladson-Billings and Tate's (1995) notion of the intersection between race and property, thus establishing a framework for arguing that through the creation of property as part of a racial construct, culture exists within race. Lipsitz (2006), contended that race has cultural implications and impact the institutionalized understanding of identity through racial group association.

White culture in the United States consists of individuals with varying ethnic identities with various backgrounds (Steyn & Conway, 2010). As described in Harris' (1993) story of her grandmother, there was benefit to giving up her ethnic identity and attempting to appear white. Roediger (2006) discussed a similar phenomenon for white Europeans in which they give up some or all of their relationship with their ethnic identities in an effort to distance themselves from blackness and reap the rewards of whiteness. For example, white people much like People of Color experienced a racialized experience, and thus experience the notion of culture related to their racial identity (Andersen, 2003).

Andersen (2003), furthered the argument of culture related to white identity, in that it often is part of perpetuating and participating in the upholding of hegemonic whiteness and creating norms around white supremacy. In a study examining ethnic identity, Gallagher (2003) found that often white people would use ethnic identity as a mechanism to avoid talking about racism. Thus, Gallagher posited, white people call to their ethnic identity, in an unwilling nature to be categorized as part of white hegemonic culture, and thus argues this as a form of enacting whiteness. Continuing the theorization of whiteness and being white as having cultural components, Cabrera framed the concept of white immunity as an extension and reframing of white privilege (Cabrera, 2019). Cabrera argued, white people have been absolved and are not recipients of the negative consequences of the racialized experience, thus creating a sense of immunity. For the purpose of this study, I framed the concept of immunity as an integral part of the analysis and interpretation of the participants' experiences.

Education as a System of Racial Oppression

The construct defining race in the United States is complex and layered. Among CRT scholars, race is considered a social construction and represents categories created by those in power; specifically, it is something developed as a system of privilege for white people in the United States (Bell, 1992; Delgado & Stefancic, 2012; Harris, 1993; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Lipsitz, 2006; Solorzano & Yosso, 2002). The boundaries, definitions, understandings, and classifications of race have shifted over the course of time (Lewis, 2004). Omi and Winant (2015) argued that race serves a purpose for creating structures of inequality. While race is a social construct, it is a construct that carries the weight of access, privileges, and rights that one group, white people, serve as keepers of power (Omi & Winant, 2015).

The United States has developed systems and structures supporting the notion of racial classification, ultimately creating foundational beliefs of white racial dominance and supremacy (Leary, 2005). The concept of white being superior is foundational in understanding and the concept and construction for racism and the role of racism in society. For example, Bell's (1992) analysis of historical events and law contends that racism is "an integral, permanent, and indestructible component of this society" (p. i). Leary's (2005) research argued the long-term impacts of slavery created structured system of disadvantages, which are legal, political, and systemic, that hold People of Color back in the United States. Ever since Europeans arrived in the space now known as the United States, there has never been a moment in which society was post-racial (Span, 2015). Despite proclamations from liberals, like Chris Matthews host of MSNBC's *Hardball*, that the election of President Barack Obama in 2008 began a post-racial society. Matthews and other individuals pushed the concept that we were moving in a post racial society through furthering tactics such color evasion, for example after the 2010 state of the Union, Matthews stated "he [Obama] is postracial, I forgot he was Black" ("State of the Union Coverage," 2010)

The push for a post racial and color evasive approach is prevalent in the system of education. The historical legacy of racism in education is prevalent as much today as it was during segregation (Dixson & Rousseau, 2005; Ladson-Billings, 1999; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Lynn & Parker, 2006; Milner & Laughter, 2015; Milner, 2008; Solorzano & Bernal, 2001). Bell (1992) argued, the decision in *Brown v. Board* (1954) is another indication of interest convergence that never aimed to disrupt racial oppression. Bell discussed *Brown*, identifying that the case failed to address systemic issues of racial inequity and allowed for delays in policy changes while not creating actual accountability for failure to comply. Interest convergence often

occurs veiled in advancing all groups, but there is often a more significant advantage for dominant culture (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). Thus, in this case, the Brown decision appeared as if those in power were truly behind desegregation and equity, but were only invested in the optics and not structurally and systemically addressing racial inequity in schools.

In the United States it is impossible to examine institutions such as education without “placing the dynamics of racial exploitation and domination and their accompanying logics and power relations at the heart of one’s analysis” (Apple & Gillborn, 2009, p. 652). In examining education policy, the systems and policies, particularly on issues related to expulsion and disciplinary actions, discussion of and assessment policies related to achievement, and resources related to literacy benefit white students and teachers over students and teachers of color (Gillborn, 2005; Kendi, 2016). Additionally, the overt nature of whiteness, covert daily habits, and practices in education settings exemplify practices steeped in White culture and whiteness (Leonardo, 2002). These practices, compounded with the historical legacy of slavery and racism in the building of the American higher education system (Wilder, 2014), only provide greater support for the assertion that racism and whiteness dominate the education system, policies, practices, and individuals in the United States.

Segregation based on race and social class remains a significant factor in student demographics in most public schools in the United States (Maxwell, 2014). Segregation in schools was related to race and culture and impacted Black/African American, Native American, Asian Americans, and Latinx students (Gross, 2014). The challenge with post-*Brown* policies, is the over emphasis on integration which often embraces color-evasive practices when practiced in schools which often stifle any real dialogue on racial progress in the United States (Curry, 2015).

Education Policy

Critical scholars contend several educational policies in the past 15 years, both in the United States and England, have led to further marginalization of people of color. Gillborn's (2005) work is essential in understanding the overt connections of white supremacy in an education policy context. Thus, in analyzing and deconstructing education policy, Gillborn's work extends the conversation to critically analyze how policies for all often serve as fronts for legitimizing and defending white supremacy. For example, Leonardo (2007) argued the Bush administration's No Child Left Behind (NCLB) approaches student progress, in particular students of color progress, from a deficit perspective as the policy approaches defining achievement from a colorblind and race neutral perspective. One study analyzing all schools in the state of North Carolina found that NCLB policies improved scores for racially minoritized students; however, gains between 2000 and 2008 were minimal (Lauen & Gaddis, 2012).

A different study contradicted these findings, in analyzing statewide performance of minoritized students between 2000 and 2009, the researchers found NCLB policies to have adverse effects on performance in math and reading (Lee & Reeves, 2012). Further, Lee and Reeves (2012) found that often the increases in student performance were most strongly correlated to resources for the school and teacher rather than greater influence of accountability measures due to NCLB. In analyzing the perception of teachers, students, families, and a community that was part of a school labeled as a failing school by NCLB, Cooley (2013) found utilizing standardized testing to assess achievement was problematic for a multitude of reasons. In focused interviews with a predominately African American student population and predominately white teacher population Cooley found both groups to frame discussions on racism from a colorblind perspective. Gillborn (2005) argued these findings are not uncommon

as the nature and policy impacting the school promotes whiteness and white supremacy, which fosters a color-evasive and neutral viewpoint.

The shifting demographics of schools

Racial demographics will continue to shift in the United States and racially minoritized students are destined to become the numerical majority in pk-12 schools in the United States (“Data: race and ethnicity in U.S. Schools”, 2014). According to data collected in 2011, 84 percent of white students attend a school where they represent more than 50 percent of all students and 55 percent of Black students attend a school where they make up at least 50 percent of the population (Maxwell, 2014). The racialization of schools has had significant impact on Students of Color through systemic policies creating increasingly segregated schools (U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2016), the approach and discussion around race and academic achievement, and the practices of teaching that negatively impact learning opportunities for Students of Color.

Various aspects of racism and oppression have been well-documented in pk-12 learning environment and education systems. One of the biggest and most discussed areas of concern regarding systemic and individual racial oppression is found in examining opportunities for students of color, in particular young African American or Black men/boys (Harper, 2010; McGuire, 2016; Timar & Maxwell-Jolly, 2012; Warren, Douglas, & Howard, 2016). For example, a recent study in Delaware found when comparing Black students’ experiences to white students’ experiences, Black students face significant barriers which impact academic achievement (Davis Jr, 2017).

Even the concept of academic achievement is racialized; often achievement dialogue is often framed as a deficit of Black students rather than placing focus on tests that are bias (Kendi,

2016). Ladson-Billings (2006) reframed concepts of the “achievement gap” by connecting “historical, economic, sociopolitical, and moral decisions and policies” (p. 5) to the creation of an educational debt impacting Students of Color. Kendi (2016) similarly problematized the concept of achievement by critiquing funding models and the structural challenges existing for districts with large populations of Students of Color. Kendi argued that there have been both creation and maintenance of systems and structures which provides access and opportunity for white kids while limiting opportunity for Students of Color.

Communities of Color have attempted to raise awareness and vocalize frustration with the system. For example, participants in a forum on achievement for African Americans utilized counterstorytelling to discuss their experiences of frustrations and feelings that “society deliberately structured to deny them the entitlements, privileges, and opportunities for participation that are available to white people” (Love, 2004, p. 243). Schools are spaces in which whiteness and racial oppression is a significant part of the experience (Leonardo, 2009); thus, if teachers and administrators do not have the skills or the space to disrupt these notions and practices of whiteness, they will continue to exist.

Whiteness research in education

Although race as a concept has shifted, one constant has remained in that the association of being white is related to a positive association of behavior, attitudes, beliefs, and what is considered to be normal (McDermott & Samson, 2005). In examining racism, it is also important to understand the impact of the social construction of white identity and whiteness.

White identity development

White identity development is significant in understanding how white students are able to understand not only their racial identity but also how they interact in a racialized context.

Leonardo (2009) would argue that whiteness is a large driving force for the perpetuation of race and racism in the United States. For example, Frankenburg (1993) conducted a qualitative study examining 30 women participants living on the west coast of the United States; the study focused on white women's experience with whiteness and race consciousness of participants. The study identified participants who struggled with the concepts of race and made meaning of race in both biological and ontological sense. Additionally, Frankenburg (1993) found the participants referred to larger social trends related to issues of race to assist in their ability to make meanings of the dialogues on race.

The research conducted by Frankenburg (1993), would have been a precursor to discussion on white identity development. Helms (1996, 2008) discussed the process for white person racial identity development, and the salience of making meaning of their racial identity. Carter, Helms, and Juby (2004) conducted a study examining white students' relationship with racism and identity development to further expand on Helms's development of white racial identity. Using Helms' (1996) white identity profiles, the researchers examined 207 white student participants' relationship in White racial identity development and attributes which perpetuate and further racism. Findings from the Carter et. al (2004) study were similar to that of Helms' (1994) study where a majority of the participants had very little exposure and experience with racial diversity, and thus their own development in identity was limited. Additionally, it was determined there was relationship a between subtle racist behaviors or microaggressions and lack of or low progress in racial identity development (Carter et al., 2004). Racial microaggressions are everyday or commonplace instances of intentional and unintentional oppressive behavior toward a Person or People of Color (Sue et al., 2007).

While Helms' work set forth a model for understanding white identity development, several other scholars have added or provided a different viewpoint of how white identity develops. For example, Sue and Sue (2012) developed a model that examined the property of becoming white and the disruption of whiteness as part of the model. Sue and Sue's model builds off of Helm's (1994) descriptive model. Sue and Sue's model approached the development through a recognition of the intersectionality of ethnic culture and white culture. In particular the second level of the seven step process, discusses the invisibility of race and cultural assumptions. The third phase indicated a person might believe all are equal and operate in a colorblind state, but hold assumptions about people of color and fail to recognize the system and structures of race and racism. The theorizing of white identity development using Sue and Sue's model and unpacking Harris' (1994) research on whiteness as property, provided insight to both the innate want to maintain racial superiority and potential for opportunities to disrupt and dismantle white supremacy.

This particular phase was personified in several studies of college students. For example in a 15 person phenomenological study of white college students, Smith (2014) found that most of the participants recognized they were white; however, they were unable to articulate how and when they learned about their whiteness. For nine of the 15 participants, the first time they realized or thought about their own race came when they were required to answer a question on standardized test form (Smith, 2014). Smith (2014), discussed how often there was a lack of connection between systems of racial advantage and how the white students recognized their relationship in that system. Similarly, in a study exploring student segregation and racial perception utilizing focus group discussions, the white students participating in the study acknowledged there was segregation on campus and stated most of their experiences socially

were with students from the same racial identity (Jackson, Sweeney, & Welcher, 2014). Jackson et al. (2014) discussed that students described segregation as something that just happens, and tended to have post racialized viewpoints that harken ideas of color-evasive approaches to examining their experiences. Further, the participants in Jackson et al.'s study indicated a lack of connection to the greater system of racial privilege; while they name issues related to race, they are not able to cognitively connect these issues to a racialized society or systemic issues. Similarly, Bonilla-Silva (2014) discussed how white people frequently use color evasive strategies or race neutral ideology to engage in racist and whiteness based dialogue and distance themselves from responsibility or participating in perpetuating oppression. Bonilla-Silva describes color-evasive practices as white people's new racial structure and strategy for upholding white supremacy.

In a quantitative study examining 300 white undergraduate college students, the researchers found that often white students had difficulty understanding their role in as it relates to perpetuation of racism (Miville, Darlington, Whitlock, & Mulligan, 2005). In a different study, Pearson correlation was conducted, and researchers found white identity development was correlated to ability to connect to privilege and systems of racial oppression (Silvestri & Richardson, 2001). These findings supported experiences that advance racial identity development as a mechanism for furthering white college students development in being able identify whiteness in their own actions (Silvestri & Richardson, 2001).

Frankenburg's (1993) participants placed different values on difference as it relates to race, and in some cases a participant found seeing race was found to be racist, which perpetuates notions of color-evasion. Similarly, Lewis (2004), in examining sociological literature focusing on race, found whiteness to be the default culture practice within the United States. Further,

whiteness when idealized as culture, supports and perpetuates notions of “not seeing race,” but often use othering language and points to racial difference when it benefited or supported the personal narrative of white people (Lewis, 2004). A great example of this, was discussed in an ethnographic study of white youth. Perry (2001) found participants did not need to identify with their race because their racial identity was consistently manifested in dominant culture. Lipsitz (2006) described similar phenomena of young white kids gaining access through transformative benefits without recognizing the benefits occur due to race. Due to the lack of awareness and often unaware benefits, Lipsitz discussed the concept of whiteness as a possessive investment in which white people find opportunities to continuously gain advantage through the perpetuation of whiteness.

Higher Education

Issues and challenges of racism are well-documented in multiple aspects of higher education. Many of the early colonial institutions in the United States promoted and benefited from slavery and worked to maintain the oppressive system (Wilder, 2014). Early research at America’s first universities developed assertions of superiority of whites and noted racial divisions among the world’s people and also utilized African slaves to assist in maintaining the institution (Wilder, 2014). The accumulation of social, educational, financial, and political wealth gained from establishing higher education as a mechanism for status accessed by white people contributed to Harris’s (1994) and Lipsitz's (2006) discussions of whiteness as both property and investments. Experiencing and obtaining an education through institutions of higher education are considered property and an investment, thus furthering the entrenchment of white supremacy and investment in upholding this system (Bell, 1992; Harris, 1993; Ladson-Billings, 2006; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Lipsitz, 2006; Lopez, 2003).

The legacies of the practices discussed by Wilder (2014) exist today in the form of policies and systems, even though it is possible for institutions to develop a culture supporting equity and antiracism values. There is little evidence of institutions being successful in working through systemic practices and barriers that exist to uphold racial oppression in higher education (Museus & Jayakumar, 2012). Milner (2008) would suggest analyzing the institutions developing diversity and antiracism values using the tool of interest convergence. Milner speculated that institutions only create forward progress when it is comfortable and benefits those in power. Thus, utilizing Harris' (1994) concept of whiteness as a property, and education is a property and a resource (Lopez, 2003; Lopez, 1994), then these legacies are part of the construction of whiteness in higher education.

The perpetuation of whiteness is not limited to curriculum (Leonardo, 2004), it is also embedded in all aspects of the systems of education and inhibits a sense of belonging for students of color (Richard Delgado & Stefancic, 2012; Patel, 2016; Solomona et al., 2005; Solorzano & Yosso, 2002). For example, in a qualitative study utilizing critical visual text discourse, researchers examined 20 campus viewbooks, used as marketing materials for the institution, gathered using a purposeful sample model from a total collection of 7,000 viewbooks from universities throughout the United States (Osei-Kofi, Lui, and Torres, 2013). In their findings using both critical race theory and the critical visual text discourse model to analyze the data, they found most of the viewbooks were intended for white audiences, and students of color were often placed in certain majors or in activities situated outside of the classroom environment.

Beliefs, values, and ideologies of white students

In an experimental study of adults in the United States, Unzueta and Lowery (2008) discovered participants likeliness to acknowledge institutional racism when the

acknowledgement occurred as motivation to maintain positive self-image with others.

Additionally, the study found acknowledgement of racism often was perceived as a threat due to having to acknowledge white privilege (Unzueta & Lowery, 2008). Acknowledgement of white privilege is challenging and difficult for students and often leads toward anger and rejection of privilege (Cabrera, 2014).

Similarly, in examining white male perspective on privilege, participants often responded with anger when they could not avoid topics of racism and their own privilege (Cabrera, 2014). Smith (2014) had similar findings in that participants became frustrated when approached about concepts of privilege due to their race. In some cases, the participants in Smith's study only thought about being white in terms of skin color, but failed to acknowledge or recognize larger connections or benefits due to their being White (Smith, 2014). DiAngelo (2011), would argue the findings in both Smith's (2014) and Cabrera's (2014) study would be considered to be manifestations of white fragility. On the other hand, some white male college students committed to disrupting racism and had an easier time working through their fragility when they had some pre-collegiate experience in diverse communities or had close African American/Black friends (Cabrera, 2012). Specifically, one of the participants discussed a close Black friend challenging his whiteness, which allowed him to recognize the lived experience of Black peers differed significantly from his own (Cabrera, 2012). While the students in this study were able to challenge racism, in order to move these students to a place to challenging their fragility and become actors, the burden was placed on People of Color to do some initial educating. Without the close peer friendships, and in some cases, even when there are close peer relationships, white people will rely on certain strategies that are associated with white fragility and consequently perpetuate whiteness.

Research on white college students gave various layers and levels of white fragility, which is a triggered reaction of avoiding discussions of racism utilizing various strategies (DiAngelo, 2011). For example, color-evasion is a strategy that both perpetuates whiteness but also is manifested due to white fragility. On the most basic level, color evasion is often defined as a belief system that it is not necessary to examine, acknowledge, or recognize race (Neville, Lilly, Duran, Lee, & Browne, 2000). Color evasiveness is often a strategy in which white folks navigate situations on race (Apfelbaum, Sommers, & Norton, 2008; Hikido & Murray, 2016). In a study conducted of 104 White undergraduate college students, participants who held color-evasive beliefs also demonstrated aloof or cold behaviors toward people of color (Apfelbaum et al., 2008). Further, this study found that when white participants utilized color-evasiveness in responses or interactions, it was done so more as a strategy to appear not racist (Apfelbaum et al., 2008). In a later study, participants identified using color-evasion as a way to appear less racist or as a way to not engage about race when they felt uncomfortable (Hikido & Murray, 2016). White participants made statements that would indicate race did not play a factor in their life and then later talk about something that had to do with race thus indicating race was a factor (Hikido & Murray, 2016). In documenting their experiences and interactions with white students, Matias and Mackey (2016) discussed how often their students contradict their beliefs and understandings of issues of race. In the same study, the researchers found deep reflective practices to engage white students often led to students demonstrating greater awareness of their own contradictions and as well as the impact they have in relation to the systems supporting racial oppression (Leonardo, 2009; Matias & Mackey, 2016).

There is a theme in the research of white resistance, often as a result of fragility, to fully engaging in their own whiteness. Ambrosio (2014), found it was important to simultaneously

engage in the resistance of not wanting to engage in discussion while creating experiences in which white students could deconstruct their whiteness. In reflecting about their experience teaching at university, Prendergast and Shor (2005) discuss how often white students avoid and demonstrate uncomfortableness when talking about privilege and whiteness. College students' avoidance of discussing whiteness is only problematized further by the notion that students were found to also navigate discussion on race by using concepts of colorblindness and overt avoidance (Apfelbaum et al., 2008).

Exploring how whiteness is perpetuated

CRT and CwS problematize the perpetuation of racism through practices veiled in whiteness (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012; Leonardo, 2002, 2009). In examining a legal case using a CRT framework, Gillborn (2008) argued systems such as education, in particular curriculum and policies, are layered and steeped in whiteness. Often whiteness is layered in multiple aspects of curriculum and practices in both higher education and p-12 environments. Further, at predominately white institutions, multicultural education and learning often included education practices educating white students on their whiteness (Yeung, Spanierman, & Landrum-Brown, 2013). Although the efforts attempted to get white students to discuss issues of race and racism, students in Hikido and Murray's (2016) study were comfortable talking about faculty and other students of color by discussing race but found it problematic when their own white identity was being discussed. Students in this study also discussed actions of white people using language that indicated normal, average, and regular.

The practices of reinforced whiteness discussed in Hikido and Murray's (2016) study was reinforced in a critical examination of whiteness practices that framed or blamed students of color as being segregationist and failed to recognize their own impact on creating challenging

environments for students of color. Specifically, whiteness is often reinforced through assuming and placing the behavior of white people as the accepted manner and culture (Chubbuck, 2004). Further, Chubbuck (2004) discussed specific practices in education of whiteness that create a narrative in which people approach students of color with a deficit model. Specifically, deficits were often couched by comparing students of color and their academic performance and behaviors in the academic environment with white students and noting differences through a negative lens, establishing white students' behaviors and performance as the norm (Chubbuck, 2004).

White people have a tendency to protect and rationalize their privilege as being something they earned (Chubbuck, 2004), which is another component of action related to white fragility (DiAngelo, 2011; DiAngelo, 2010). For example, in a study of 12 white male college students, the participants discussed aspects of reverse racism and that they were victims because advantages and preference was given to students of color (Cabrera, 2014). In a previous study, Cabrera (2012) found when analyzing interviews of 15 white men, that they were able to discuss and begin to break down constructs of whiteness when cross-racial interactions and intentional multicultural education were present in their life experience.

Whiteness in Pre-Service Teacher Education

Both critical race theory (CRT) and critical whiteness studies (CwS) provide a theoretical foundation for educators aiming to address issues of racism in the education system. CRT as a theoretical foundation calls for the questioning of “the very foundations of the liberal order, including equality theory, legal reasoning, Enlightenment rationalism, and neutral principles of constitutional law” (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012, p. 3). CRT operates from the supposition that the status quo only perpetuates inequality and racism, and that all aspects of dominant culture

operate to maintain the status quo (2012). In regard to education, CRT provides a lens for examining the personal and day-to-day aspects of the education system and the oppression of People of Color in that system and by those individual actions (Beyer, 2001).

CwS operates as both a separate entity and, at times, an extension of CRT (Nayak, 2007), focusing on the constructs of whiteness and dominant culture (Matias et al., 2014). In the context of education, CwS scholars assert dominant white culture maintaining the status quo and thus perpetuates constructs of whiteness in all aspects of education (Leonardo, 2002, 2009; Matias et al., 2014). Thus, in the framework of CwS, educators and students alike must constantly work in harmony to “name, reflect on, and dismantle discourses of whiteness” (Leonardo, 2002, p. 31). This process is not simple as most individuals with dominant identities, in this case white people, often operate without awareness of their own identity and their impact on the system of oppression (Freire, 2000).

CwS intersects with CRT research and examines the political and structural systems that perpetuated whiteness, while examining and deconstructing how participants from dominant identities deconstructed (Cabrera, 2012) or perpetuated (Matias et al., 2014) whiteness. Being able to engage in analysis and name actions that perpetuate whiteness and racism is important. For example, Leonardo (2009) identified that through utilizing a CRT and CwS perspective, programs preparing future teachers and college students preparing to be teachers were often engaging in practices that utilized constructs of whiteness. Specifically, in one example, Leonardo noted both program faculty and students utilized deficit-based practices when working with students of color.

Examining national standards

In an attempt to address issues of inequity, several organizations have developed policies to assist preparation programs in preparing future teachers. However, these standards and organizations rarely unpacked or discussed racial equity, racism, or culturally-responsive practices (Weilbacher, 2012). In an examination of literature and historical nature of standards using a CRT lens, Weilbacher (2012) theorized there is a strong connection between standards in education and whiteness. Weilbacher argued standards are often efforts of social efficiency and connected to large scale accountability efforts. Weilbacher then utilized CRT to examine the former national accreditor for teacher education, the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Educators (NCATE) standards related to diversity, which failed to mention race or position social justice at the center of the standard. Instead, the standard examined diversity from a perspective of whiteness because the standard does not emphasize the importance of challenging dominant ideologies and perspectives.

NCATE no longer exists and has been replaced by a new accrediting body, the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP). In the CAEP standards, associations with diversity and multiculturalism is a theme across all standards (CAEP Board of Directors, 2013). The CAEP standards move beyond the NCATE standards, mentioning issues of race and again discussing the importance of pre-service teachers being able to meet the learning needs of all learners. Similar to that of NCATE, when discussing competency, the CAEP standards mentioned gender, culture, language and ways of knowing; however, the standards do not specifically discuss issues of race or racism. The standards do require candidates to acknowledge power and privilege in the learning environment (CAEP Board of Directors, 2013). Using Gillborn's (2005) framework for analyzing education policy, it is important to understand the

challenges of teaching to all students. More specifically, without acknowledging or naming race, racism, or whiteness as part of the process for teaching all allows for a mostly white profession to ignore racial oppression by focusing on other areas.

The CAEP standards failed to address racial inequity and whiteness, but in the standards there is language that challenges institutions to ensure they are recruiting diverse candidates. CAEP cites the disparity among Students of Color and the overwhelming proportion of white teachers (2013) as support for this standard. However, the CAEP standards fail to make a call for more racially minoritized teacher candidates by not clearly discussing intersectionality, thus obfuscating the concept of racism and whiteness that exists in education. To provide more specificity as it relates to competencies and dispositions guiding teacher preparation, the CAEP standards references the Interstate Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium Model teaching (InTASC) standards.

The InTASC standards utilize overarching term of “diversity” in discussing most concepts, and in the definition of diversity, the standards include the concept of race among other demographic and identity-related indicators but do not discuss intersectionality related to oppression (Council for Chief State School Officers, 2013). Both the CAEP and InTASC standards appear on the surface to adhere to practices such as described by Weilbacher which places “students’ experiences at the center of learning environment” (2012, p. 4). Moreover, the InTASC standards provided support for the importance of the educator in understanding one’s own identity and its impact in education environment (Council for Chief State School Officers, 2013).

The InTASC standards begin to unpack some aspects of identity and challenging whiteness. The standards, however, seemed to be missing any real significant discussion on

disrupting whiteness both in practice and systems. Most of the time, these standards have been written by mostly white individuals and often come from a dominant identity and perspective thus the lack of true commitment to dismantling these oppressive systems (Hayes & Juarez, 2012; Weilbacher, 2012). The efforts were more or less acts of interest convergence, where the organizations benefited by having language about teaching to all or having candidates understand the impact of their identities, but fail to truly engage in disrupting whiteness.

For example, Leonardo (2007) found analyzing policies in teacher preparation with such policies as No Child Left Behind that make attempts to enhance learning for all students, still support practices that continue the perpetuation of whiteness in the teaching profession. In the analysis, Leonardo (2007) asserts that “whiteness is the guiding frame” for focusing on how to explain failing schools and the norming of white cultural in education curriculum (p. 268). The question then becomes, what do we know about pre-service teacher’s ability to unpack, address, and disrupt whiteness in the teaching process?

White pre-service teachers

An examination of literature on teacher preparation found current teacher preparation practices were not creating adequate experiences for critical engagement of racial identity and opportunity for teacher candidates to understand how their identities, specifically race, impact pedagogy and teaching (Hayes & Fasching-Varner, 2015). In a survey of teacher preparation directors across over 200 universities, issues of race were ranked as the most important to address and the most frequently addressed in programs (Jennings, 2007). Even though it is ranked as the most important and most frequently addressed in preparation, a study of pre-service teachers found most white pre-service teachers under-prepared to deconstruct their own racial identities (Philip & Benin, 2014). It is easy to believe then, if teacher candidates do not

have the ability to unpack their own racial identities, they then will struggle in supporting students and disrupting whiteness (Cabrera, 2012; Cabrera, 2014; Carter et al., 2004; Helms, 2008).

Lack of skill to and time for unpacking identity

Without the ability to engage on issues of race, people with dominant racial identity “consistently mystify the process of racial accumulation through occlusion of history and forsaking structural analysis for a focus on individual” (Leonardo, 2004b, p. 141). In the case of teacher education, findings were similar as pre-service teachers either rejected constructs of privilege and became defensive or failed to connect the systemic issues of racial oppression to their own actions or occurrences they witnessed (Matias et al., 2014).

In an effort to demonstrate teacher preparation programs’ overt connection to constructs of whiteness, Hayes and Juarez (2012) used a case study and counter-narrative approach in examining one institution’s pre-service teachers perpetuation of whiteness. In this particular case, a pre-service teacher was challenged by a faculty member to recognize their whiteness, in a response the administration of the program supported the pre-service teacher and thus sustained the beliefs held by the pre-service teacher.

Similar to understanding broader concepts of whiteness in higher education, it is important to understand how white pre-service teachers are perpetuating whiteness by reinforcing dominant culture and also by not creating opportunities to disrupt the status quo (Matias et al., 2014). Constructs of whiteness which attempt to normalize and provide a set of standards created by white dominant culture create a safe dimension in which white pre-service teachers understand race (Matias et al., 2014). In a review of literature exploring preparing white teachers, Sleeter (2001), discussed the challenges and implications of working with

predominately white pre-service teachers. Challenges included multiple aspects of white fragility including reoccurring themes of reinforcing normalized whiteness characteristics (Leonardo, 2004b), adverse reactions and responses to discussions of recognizing contributions to systemic racism (Matias, 2013), and inappropriately placing blame on parents of students of color (Schulz & Fane, 2015).

Utilizing data gathered from a larger study on disability awareness, Young (2016) developed a study utilizing both CRT and LatCRT techniques. Young discovered that when coding the data, there was a significant absence of discussion of race, which was concerning, given all participants were white and most of the students they were working with were students of color. Young conducted a tertiary analysis examining interview transcripts, looking for coded words on race. Some of the participants utilized race-specific demographic language in talking about their students, but often used language that identified being white as normal and Students of Color as the other. In absence of specific discussion on race, the pre-service teachers often used veiled race talk in which participants discussed students of color using deficit based terminology (Young, 2016).

In examining journals of pre-service teachers, Schulz and Fane (2015) found participants utilized language that directly demonstrated constructs of whiteness. Specifically, some of the participants would use deficit-based language when discussing their perceptions of their students of color cultural characteristics (Matias, 2013). More specifically, examples of white pre-service candidates perpetuating whiteness included aggressively answering questions about race, ignoring the saliency of race, or avoid discussions of their understanding of their own race, which is interpreted as an exertion of their privilege which students of color are not afforded (Matias, 2013). Furthering this point, current teachers also struggled with engaging critically on

issues of race. For example, were timid or displayed fear in conversations related to race and racism (Annamma, 2015). Annamma (2015) utilizing CRT in examining her data found participants to utilize various constructs of whiteness in making statements of “non-normal” behavior of young girls of color.

Similar to Annamma’s findings, when examining pre-service teacher’s ability to deconstruct racial context in literature, Cochran-Smith (2000) found her white students struggled with recognizing aspects of racism in texts. When a student takes time to analyze their actions, they might recognize how they normalize the aspects of racism in the text and were unable to critically deconstruct what they were reading. Thus, the notion of supporting the dominant narrative and normalizing racism supports constructs of whiteness. For example, in a study of 16 pre-service teachers, 15 of whom identified as White, the following four themes were identified among the white participants:

- (1) Teacher candidates were emotionally (dis)invested in racial justice;
- (2) Students recognized that they are white but did not push themselves beyond acknowledgement;
- (3) Students resonated in “white guilt” and;
- (4) There was an overall engagement and endorsement of hegemonic whiteness. (Matias et al., 2014, p. 293)

These four themes were duplicated and found in several studies (Annamma, 2015; Cochran-Smith, 2000; Schulz & Fane, 2015) and often the preparation programs were either not successful or assisted in the perpetuation of whiteness (Philip & Benin, 2014). Taking time to allow for pre-service teachers in preparation to critically analyze their families past and their perceptions, might allow for greater understanding of their whiteness (Sleeter, 2011).

Manifestations of whiteness as fragility

In maintaining the status quo, whiteness manifests in multiple ways in pre-service teachers. A study conducted on pre-service teachers found participants identifying as more politically conservative tended to hold assumptions that students of color and their families had lower work ethic compared to white students and their families (Schulz & Fane, 2015). In particular, Schulz and Fane (2015) found participants used both veiled and overt language perpetuating issues of racism. For example, participants both demonstrated an inability and desire to identify or discuss the constructs of whiteness and would often normalize whiteness in action (Schulz & Fane, 2015). Constructing whiteness as normal or appropriate is further problematized because white teachers often teach white students, and thus the practices of whiteness shape their entire experience (Matias & Mackey, 2016). For example, Matias and Mackey (2016) discussed the potential concerns that many of the pre-service teachers in their study rarely had teachers of color at any point throughout their academic career.

One conclusion from this study indicated participants acted on and discussed issues in race as if they had little exposure to a curriculum that was not veiled in whiteness (Matias & Mackey, 2016). Interestingly, one of the participants, a Latina, discussed an internalized whiteness learned through the education system (Mackey, 2016). This concept of learned whiteness is furthered by research of Leonardo (2009), concluding that critically analyzing education systems reveals whiteness being embedded in education at all points. Further, Leonardo suggests it is not only in the systems but also most pk-12 teachers, higher education faculty, and students perpetuating and upholding whiteness which results in discourse supporting a nature of color evasiveness.

Whiteness often manifests itself in the notion of color-evasion and in some senses it allows White people to “name the symptoms, rather than the causes of racial inequality”

(Leonardo, 2009, p. 10). In a sense, color-evasion attempts to explain racist based phenomena without using race as a factor or acknowledging the role of racism (Leonardo, 2009). More harmful, color-evasion also manifested in coded talk about race when individuals use coded language to target or make comments perpetuating racism that were covertly articulated (Bonilla-Silva & Forman, 2000).

Pre-service teachers using a variety of pedagogical approaches and philosophies to create a safe and inclusive learning environments seem to be more supportive to teaching to all students (Beyer, 2001). In several studies color-evasive practices of pre-service teachers have been found to have multiple impacts on their students in the classroom by both reinforcing constructs of whiteness and othering students of color by using coded language (Apfelbaum et al., 2008; Leonardo, 2004; Matias, 2013; Young, 2016). Similarly, Lewis (2001) found that in addition to incidents where pre-service teachers failed to pick materials representing all students, color-evasive practices of the teachers silenced the race and cultural identities of students.

When approaching pre-service teachers about their language and approaches to color-evasiveness, Matias and Mackey (2016) found certain participants to be more open to engaging students and cognizant of deficit framework while other participants similarly to Young's (2016) study which found the pre-service teachers avoided discussions of race. Although when white participants would engage in conversations on race, they often credited the openness to discussing race in practice by having experiences with a faculty member of color who intentionally discussed issues of race (Matias & Mackey, 2016). In both Matias and Mackey's study and the Apfelbaum et al. (2008) study the participants avoided conversation of race and often mentioned they feared making mistakes and did not want to appear to be racist.

In examining pre-service teachers entering multicultural education courses, white participants often thought of themselves as prejudice-free and wanted to “treat people fairly, regardless of skin color” (Lawrence & Tatum, 1999, p. 6). Despite this, the participants generally failed to recognize or see the impacts of institutional racism and often masked these frameworks utilizing aspects of color-evasion (1999). The importance of teachers being aware of and cognizant of issues of race was demonstrated in a study examining anti-bias attitudes of children 4-8 years of age. The study found that when a white teacher showed consistent commitment to anti-bias behaviors and attitudes, white children were affected and started picking up on these behaviors and shifted their perceptions of People of Color (P. J. Johnson & Aboud, 2013).

In examining white guilt’s relationship with feelings on affirmative action, Swim and Miller (1999) found there is a relationship with heightened sense of white guilt and support of affirmative action. In a more recent study, Samson (2013) found interest convergence has significant impact on how white people support or challenge affirmative action. For example, white people were said to support affirmative action policies related to college admission when fear of increased completion from Asian Americans (Park & Liu, 2014; Samson, 2013). However, there was not a pervasiveness of white guilt among the participants, which Swim and Miller attribute to a lack of exposure of issues related to systemic racism. Helms (1996, 2008) discussed how white individuals utilized various skills to make meaning out of their privilege and identity, while Sue and Sue (2012) describe guilt as being part of phase 3 and often manifest these feelings through acts of dissonance.

Research indicated that the perpetuation of whiteness stemmed from aspects or manifestations of white fragility. However, researchers do not name fragility as a primary factor, the behaviors or reactions of white pre-service teachers such as anger, fear, hostility, or

defensiveness all are aspects and responses related to fragility. Conversely, the literature indicates that when white-pre-service teachers make attempts to disrupt whiteness, they have spent time addressing their own understanding of identity and whiteness. With this being said, the research did not indicate the pre-service teachers were given the support or tools in preparation to disrupt whiteness.

Summary

Through a review of the of the literature, the following suppositions can be made: the tenets of CRT and CwS have not only been thoroughly theorized, but utilized in several different aspects of empirical research in higher education and teacher education; the formation of race as a construct with heavy implications was done to advantage white people over People of Color (Omi & Winant, 2015; Roediger, 2010); whiteness is possessed, owned, accumulated over time and permeates through all aspects of systems, including education (Annamma, 2015; Harris, 1993; Lipsitz, 2006). As it relates to the research in higher education and teacher education, whiteness and white supremacy is prevalent in the systems and policies of the institutions, and perpetuated and upheld by both acts of students and faculty. Often these acts result in concepts of fragility. However, there are gaps exploring the narratives that contribute to participants and their white fragility and generating themes supporting antiracist attitudes. Additionally, the concept of disruption and the interconnection of fragility has not been discussed as it relates to pre-service teachers. If education is to be a system used to disrupt racism there must be mechanism, preparation, and support to disrupt actions of whiteness and a place for disruption. Given “race and racism involve violence, oppression, exploitation and indignity, they also generate movements of resistance and theories of resistance (Omi & Winant, 2015, p. 3).

There needs to be greater theorization in both CRT and CwS and research on the concept of disruption in action beyond white identity development models, particularly when the participants of the study are educators or future educators. As discussed in this literature review, the system of education was designed to uphold whiteness, therefore educators that act as disruptors will find challenges in all aspects of their work. In this literature review, there is very little research exploring the understanding of how white pre-service teachers view their role as disruptors of racial hegemonic practices and whiteness in the teaching profession. In a recent study, an assertion was made indicating fragility as a mechanism for color-evasion (Jayakumar & Adamian, 2017). In this study, Jayakumar and Adamian (2017) discuss the potential implications of power that need to be explored as part of unpacking fragility as a mechanism for color-evasion. This research has not yet been connected to educators however, especially considering their power dynamic in the classroom.

The gaps and challenges presented in this conceptual framework resulted in the following research questions which examine how pre-service teachers experiences shape their willingness to engage in disruption or perpetuate whiteness: What role does white fragility play in white pre-service teacher's willingness to engage in whiteness?; What factors are associated with willingness to disrupt or perpetuate whiteness for white pre-service teachers? How has their teacher preparation program enhanced their ability to engage in challenging whiteness in education?

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

The purpose of the research aimed to understand how whiteness shaped the lens and perspectives of white pre-service teachers and what experiences in their preparation has challenged or upheld values related to whiteness. In an effort to explore the research purpose following three questions have been developed: What role does white fragility play in white pre-service teacher's willingness to engage in whiteness? What factors are associated with willingness to disrupt or perpetuate whiteness for white pre-service teachers? How has their teacher preparation program enhanced their ability to engage in challenging whiteness in education?

In addition to exploring the whiteness of pre-service teachers, I felt it was important to center my experience to challenge and check my own whiteness. I have found in my experience, whether working on this project or in other areas, it is easy to fall back into my colonized understanding of life which often perpetuates and normalizes whiteness. For example, in the construction of this project, I was meeting with my committee. Dr. Muñoz, my co-chair, raised her hand and asked why I felt the need to place an unnecessary burden on Women of Color in my research strategies. I sat, felt ashamed, and my fragility caused an initial urge to distance myself or absolve myself from what happened. Where could I place this, how could I logically explain away my actions or the impact of my actions? There it was for the whole room to see, staring me in the face, my whiteness and my white fragility exposed in a room full of critical scholars. I sat, taking a minute to challenge my initial feelings and my fragility, and then owned my actions instead of distancing myself, I moved closer to the experience, as a way to be able to refine my own reflexive practice.

Dr. Muñoz was referring to a brief section in a document I had written for my preliminary exam in which I explained a process for creating accountability in my research findings. I had, at some point in discussions with colleagues, got the idea that a Woman of Color could work with me on my research and check my findings to make sure I wasn't missing anything or reinforcing whiteness. Similar to the multitude of experiences shared by People of Color who often get referred to experts on the topics of racism, I had done the same thing in my research approach. Yoon (2012) would describe my actions as relying on safe practices with an unwillingness to place the burden on myself to do the critical work of unpacking my own privilege, bias, and racial colonization. I believed I needed to have someone else check me on my whiteness, and that I was not a strong enough scholar to be able to do the research that I set out to complete. I also seemed to be seeking safety, in not wanting to do the critical work in holding myself accountable which is imperative in the process of disrupting whiteness. The subtle irony in Dr. Muñoz's statement was not only had I failed to check my own fragility and assumptions in my research, I was again relying on a Person of Color to facilitate working through my whiteness.

In an effort to build a study of inquiry to explore these questions and challenge my own whiteness I used a critical methodological approach. The theoretical framework suggested a call for utilizing Critical Race Theory (CRT) and Critical whiteness Studies (CwS) as mechanisms for disrupting and exploring issues of race and racism in education. This chapter provides information on the methodological approach, specifically the use CRT and CwS as perspectives for framing portraiture and aspects of narrative inquiry methods. I also will review the strategies I used for participant recruitment, data collection and analysis, the establish trustworthiness, and addressing potential limitations of the study.

Methodological Approach

Given the focus of the research questions on examining and challenging racism and concepts of whiteness, I utilized critical qualitative methodologies as the basis for shaping all aspects of the research design. In examining race in education, there is a need for the researcher to be able to utilize methodologies that acknowledge the contradictory practices, hegemonic narratives, and marginalization perpetuating oppression (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012; Leonardo, 2004b, 2007; Solorzano & Yosso, 2002). One of the hegemonic practices often upheld and entrenched in education is whiteness (Leonardo, 2007, 2009). Thus, for this project it was imperative to identify methods that would aid in answering the research questions, analyze the complexities of the lived experiences upholding whiteness, and be able to name and challenge whiteness as a product of the experiences of the participants. Thus, I used critical qualitative methodologies grounded with a framework of CRT and CwS tenets to guide methods reflective in portraiture and narrative inquiry to engage dominant ideologies of whiteness (Matias et al., 2014) and begin to deconstruct and dismantle racism and whiteness through research (Nayak, 2007).

Critical qualitative methodologies

Critical qualitative perspectives provided an opportunity for me to engage in developing an understanding and deconstruction of “power and justice and the ways that the economy, matters of race, class, and gender, ideologies, discourses, education, religion, and other social institutions, and cultural dynamics interact to construct a social system” (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2011, p. 288). Additionally, in alignment with the CRT tenet which discussed research as a mechanism for social justice (Solorzano & Yosso, 2002), I felt it was important throughout the process to utilize methods that enhanced a critical consciousness for both the participants and me

throughout the study (Freire, 2000). There are a multitude of critical theories and research perspectives which address dynamic issues of oppression through research (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2011). Thus, I wanted to ensure that I utilized methods that are consistent with my theoretical framing around racism and whiteness, so I framed the research using both CRT and CwS as methodologies and methods and not merely theoretical grounding.

Both CRT and CwS used in research aim to disrupt white supremacy, provide theoretical perspective, conceptual framework, methodology, and strategies for data collection and analysis (Leonardo, 2004b; Matias et al., 2014; Solorzano & Yosso, 2002). Specifically, utilizing the tenets of CRT as a methodology allowed for me to place race at the forefront of the research and through questions, methods, and analysis strategies (Solorzano & Yosso, 2002). CRT as a methodological approach provided a framework for developing strategies and methods required for me to critically examine systems and practices that perpetuate racism (Huber, 2008).

I utilized the concept of interest convergence as a tool for deconstructing aspects of practice and policies that perpetuate oppression (Milner, 2008). While often in CRT work counterstorytelling is used to challenge dominant narratives (Daniel G. Solorzano & Yosso, 2002) this particular study, given that all participants are white, does not use counterstorytelling in that particular manner. However, I utilized counterstories as a method to elevate experiences of participants when they challenged their own possessiveness of whiteness and or systemic whiteness disrupting master narratives (Huber, 2008; Daniel G. Solorzano & Yosso, 2002).

While CwS has established a theoretical design and framework for the study of whiteness, there is less clear approach as to how CwS scholars engage in the research when the participants of the study are white and counterstorytelling is not an option (Corces-Zimmerman,

2017). Through methods that challenge the status quo of white supremacy, I, as a white researcher, needed to establish methods that challenged my own tendency to be complicit in perpetuation of white supremacy in research (Applebaum, 2010; Corces-Zimmerman, 2017). Therefore, I utilized methods consistent with portraiture and aspects of narrative inquiry for this project, which allowed me to engage in developing detailed portraits unpacking the complexities of whiteness in all aspects of the participants' lives.

Portraiture and Narrative Inquiry

In essence, portraiture is an artistic process intended to delve into the complex nature of the researchers desired unit of analysis (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997) while narrative inquiry utilizes methods of inquiry to build and gain understanding of experience (Kim, 2016). Combining aspects of portraiture with narrative inquiry allowed for me to gain a deeper understanding of the participant's experiences with the world around them (Kim, 2016), while building a process for inquiry to enhance the ability to deepen the understanding of the participant's experiences (Guba, 1990).

I utilized the complimentary nature of these two methods in all aspects of the study, from aspects of design, analysis, reporting of findings, and the aspects of discussion. Both portraiture and narrative inquiry provided opportunities for the me to analyze language, actions, and understandings of the participants and generate interpretation of these experience in an informed and delicate manner (Guba, 1990; Kim, 2016; Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2005; Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997). Hendry (2009) argued that narrative is essential in understanding the meaning making process, and that most inquiry utilizes narratives as the process for making meaning from a particular inquiry. Thus, I utilized participant narratives and an inquiry process to engage participants in a quest to deepen my and their understanding of their journey with whiteness.

Similar to CRT and CwS, both portraiture and narrative inquiry utilize a multidisciplinary approach that aimed to understand the lived experiences of participants through story, contextual history, and interaction in generating thematic understandings of their experiences (Kim, 2016; Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2005). Kim (2016) discussed that narrative inquiry works nicely with CRT through multiple methods including allegory for legal and policy analysis and norms and counterstorytelling. Although counterstorytelling in a traditional sense was not utilized for this study due to the unit of analysis being participants who identified as white, there were opportunities to engage in challenging normative and hegemonic whiteness practices, policies, and beliefs. For this particular study, using narratives aided in developing themes of the lived experiences of the participants (Kim, 2016) and analyzing these themes utilizing tenets of CRT and CwS provided for a rich opportunity to engage the participants and the data in deconstructing and disrupting hegemonic practices and resulted in the development of thematic portraits of whiteness. Through a dialogic process, it allowed for me to gain a deeper insight into the stories and narratives that build in the psychological foundation of the human experience (Kim, 2016) of each of the participants detailed the tension found between upholding and perpetuating whiteness and patterns supporting white supremacy.

In answering the guiding question of this research, I found it important to build a process that created opportunities for the participants to share experiences and stories about events and their lived experience. Furthermore, the process demanded that I not limit the experiences of the participants to these events, but instead use these events to construct deeper narratives. Given the complexity of whiteness and the research questions, there is evidence and support to utilize multiple methods to enhance and deepen understanding of complex research questions (Nolas, 2011). In particular, combining aspects of narrative inquiry and portraiture created an

opportunity to engage the construction of who they are, how they developed their beliefs, what those beliefs were, how those beliefs have been reinforced and reconstructed, and why they continue to believe these things (Kim, 2016), in particular around issues of racism and whiteness.

Additionally, combining methods allowed for me to engage openly and creatively with the participants to develop an understanding of their existence around issues of racism and whiteness in particular as it related to their role as a future educator. I used the process of inquiry to both understand and to challenge their notions of understanding of race, racism, and whiteness (Bazeley, 2013). Finally, these combined methods built a solid framework for establishing themes, inferring understanding, and combining my own lived experience as a lens for interpreting the data (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997; Riessman, 2008). The interpretation of the data and as lived experiences and stories of the participants could then be critiqued and examined using CRT and CwS to challenge and enhance understanding based on the tenets of each perspective.

It was my intention of this study to be deeply human experience. As the project unfolded, I was able to capture and interrogate both my own and the participants manifestations of vulnerability that became evident and apparent in deconstructing the interactions with our own and systemic whiteness. The complexity and layering of the discussion required for a particular focus of narrative that resulted in addressing the deep layers of whiteness and how the participants worked through or failed to work through these layers. Portraiture allowed for a shared experience between the participants and me to create a complex and dynamic expose of the lived human experience (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997) detailing their interactions, engagement, and inaction with whiteness.

In unpacking whiteness, I wanted to be able to connect the complex and subtle ways each participant's lived experience has been and is impacted by the political, social, and cultural elements that have allowed them to either challenge or perpetuate whiteness (Chapman, 2007). In developing portraits for each participant in juxtaposition to the political, social, and cultural, is important to understand that portraiture addresses three different but related groups (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997). The audience, which takes into consideration the preconceived notions and context impacting the manner in which the reader interprets the portraits. The participants were regularly engaged in all aspects of the project creating a critical lived meaning making experience for them in their journey to unpack their own whiteness. Finally, I, as both a reflexive participant in the process and also the interpreter and artist utilizing narrative to paint descriptive in-depth portraits of the participants, was able to both develop a complex but appropriate intimacy with the participants (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997) necessary to understand the complex nature in which they perpetuated and challenged whiteness. The strengths of combining portraiture and narrative inquiry came in that I was able to collectively drive the inquiry while creating community with participants (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2005a).

Recognizing the need for methods and strategies for disrupting the hegemonic and master narratives in teacher education programs, I found blending aspects of CwS with CRT with portraiture as an imperative strategy in addressing the research questions. Critical whiteness Studies changes the centering of research from the margins to deconstructing and disrupting the dominant and master narratives (Steyn & Conway, 2010). Thus, by establishing methods that would lift narratives and develop themes that named and challenged whiteness without being able to use counterstorytelling from the perspectives of racially minoritized individuals was crucial to the success of the study. Therefore, portraiture and narrative inquiry created a process

not only exploring the lived experiences of the participants and capturing the emotional connections to whiteness in their lived experiences, but also created a liberating experience for the participants. Portraiture, if done correctly, enhances meaning making opportunities for both the participant and the researcher to engage critically with their experiences and topics thus establishing a process for liberating (Freire, 2000) and enhancing understanding of their lived experience (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997). Blending aspects of CRT and CwS in concert with portraiture as part of the methodological purposes allowed for me to actualize liberation and more critically understand how the participants both disrupted and perpetuated racism through acts of whiteness and by attempting to distance themselves from oppression (Patel, 2016).

Research Approach

The research design utilized CRT, CwS, and practices consistent with portraiture and narrative inquiry. Data collection strategies and analysis were developed to understand the participants lived experiences (Kim, 2016) and practices in constructing understanding of race, racism, and whiteness, while deconstructing and assessing the individual and systemic power and hegemonic dynamics involved (Patel, 2016). Additionally, I created space in the design to be able to understand how I interacted with the participants (Kim, 2016) and with my own whiteness as it related to the study. The design accounted for the understanding that whiteness will be maintained and upheld by white people (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012), and thus the tools, processes, and analysis utilized strategies to deconstruct maintenance of racism and oppression (Patel, 2016).

In order to address the research questions, I selected eight undergraduate pre-service teachers as participants. Seven of the eight participants completed the study, and the seven participants completing the study served as the unit of analysis for the study. For the purposes of

this study a pre-service teacher represents an individual who was in the process of or had recently completed the summative experience of their initial teacher preparation experience and who had not yet completed a full year of teaching. They best fit the research questions for this study because they are either completing or had recently completed their teacher preparation program, they have significant time in a pk-12 classroom thus giving them the range of experiences needed to meet the needs of the study, but are not yet fully inducted into the profession of teaching. Further, understanding the experiences of individuals that recently completed their summative experiences allows for a reflective practice in the entirety of their experience. For this particular study, I was interested in finding participants that were identified as student teachers from September 2017 through May 2018.

Participant recruitment and sampling

To begin to recruit and identify participants for this study, I first developed a strategy for gaining interest using a purposeful strategy (Gliner, Morgan, & Leech, 2017). In support of a purposeful strategy, I developed a criteria to identify potential participants that could be identified by faculty from a teacher preparation institution. The criteria developed included the following: was a student teacher at any point from September 2017 to May 2018; the individual needed to have had some experience with a project, placement, or other learning experience involving the concept of race and or racism. The purpose of the criteria was to ensure that the potential participants were recent enough in teacher education that they could reflect on their experiences and they could somewhat articulate and discuss topics on race, whiteness, and white supremacy.

Next, I developed a process utilizing a purposive sampling method by contacting colleagues across the United States that are part of my peer network established through various

national accreditation agencies (Appendix C). I first identified six universities and colleges throughout the United States to begin recruitment. The six institutions were located throughout various regions of the United States. Two institutions were located in the Great Lakes/Midwest region, one was in the Midwest/Plains state region, one was in the Mountain West Region, one was on the Mid-Atlantic region, and one was on the West Coast. I had personal contacts at each of these institutions and each institution had been recognized as a quality teacher preparation institution or had recently completed a national accreditation process.

In my initial email exchange, I requested that they identify students that might fit the criteria and either provide me with their contact information, or share my recruitment letter and contact the possible participants to generate interest. Each of the institutional contacts chose to first contact possible participants and then sent my recruitment letter with an invitation to participate in the study. Each potential participant then completed the interest intake survey (Appendix D). The interest survey served as an initial indication of willingness to participate, an explanation of the study, and a collection of basic demographic information. Once the interest surveys were completed, I ensured the potential participant met the criteria identified for the study, and then I sent an introductory email. I had initial conversations with all eight potential participants, during this time I verbally discussed the process of informed consent, the benefits of participating, the risks, and the time commitment. All eight potential participants verbally agreed to participate, and were sent an informed consent document (Appendix E) that was completed prior conducting the initial interview.

Seven of the eight participants completed the entire study (Table 3.1), one participant, “Miriam,” only completed the initial interview and for reasons unexplained chose not to return the study. Miriam’s information was not used for participant overview section or the Findings

(Chapter Four) section of this study; however, I did, in the Discussion Section (Chapter Five), posit that based on my discussion with her, it seemed that both time and fragility were factors in her willingness to continue.

Table 3.1 *Participant Overview*

Name	Age	Region of Origin	Grade Level of Preparation	Content of Preparation	Student teaching school type
Karen	22	Midwest	Secondary (6-12)	French and Social Studies	Suburban and Rural
Jake	23	Mountain West	Secondary (6-12)	Science	Suburban
Megan	23	Midwest	Elementary (K-8)	Elementary and Special Education	Suburban and Rural
Sally	24	Midwest	Early Elementary	Early Childhood	Urban and Suburban
Laura	21	Mid-Atlantic	Elementary (K-5)	Elementary and Special Education	Suburban
Ella	22	Midwest/ Plains	Secondary (6-12)	Social Studies	Suburban
Gloria	22	Mid-Atlantic	Elementary (K-5)	Elementary and Urban Education	Urban and Suburban
*Mariam	22	Mountain	Secondary (6-12)	English	Suburban

*Indicates participant that did not complete the study

Each of the participants completed their initial teacher preparation experience within a year of beginning the study and had not been working full time as a teacher for no longer than six months. All participants identified as white, and of the eight participants to begin the study only one identified as a man, the rest identified as women. The participants ranged in age from 21 to 24 years of age. Three of the seven participants that completed the study were prepared to teach in secondary education, and the other four were prepared for Elementary. Two of the participants were prepared for working with students with varying cognitive, emotional, and

social abilities, and one participant was prepared with an urban education minor. I completed full portraits for each of the participants completing the study (APPENDIX A) and those portraits were used as primary data for the thematic analysis found in both the Findings and Discussion chapters of this project.

Data collection strategies

Consistent with portraiture and narrative inquiry, data collection strategies were designed to provide opportunities for the participants to engage in sharing experiences, stories, and perceptions (Kim, 2016). In addition to collecting data from the participants, I also identified historical, political, systemic elements that contributed to participant narratives and their interactions with racism and concepts of whiteness which is consistent with CRT and CwS research (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012; Harris, 1993; G Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Nayak, 2007).

To ensure alignment between research questions, CRT and CwS tenets, and strategies for data collection, I developed an alignment chart to build a case and rationale for each part of the process (Appendix B). I also wanted to ensure I constructed mechanisms to collect data that allowed for me to build a saturation of understanding of the experiences of each participants as it related to how they viewed themselves as educators in a racialized context and sufficiently build themes related to the research questions (Kim, 2016; Kim & Latta, 2009). Therefore, I established six processes for collecting participant information and data (Table 3.1). The six major data collection processes included an initial interest survey, semi-structured interview processes with open-ended questions, and written reflections which allowed for the narrative to build organically and provided flexibility to shape questions and dialogue to create deeper

understanding of the participant’s experience (Corbin & Strauss, 2015; Corbin & Morse, 2003; Kim, 2016).

Table 3.2 *Data Collection Process*

Data Method	Constructs	Means	Timeline
Initial Intake Survey	Personal Demographic	Survey	June/July 2018
Intake Discussion	Informed Consent	Zoom	July/August 2018
1 st Interview	Lived Experience	Zoom	July/August 2018
1 st Story response	Identity	One Drive	August/September 2018
2 nd Interview	Identity, fragility, and teaching	Zoom	August/September 2018
2 nd Story Response	Fragility, whiteness, teaching	One Drive	September 2018
3 rd Interview	All themes	Zoom	September 2018

The first step in data collection was the interest/intake survey, which aimed to collect demographic data and establish an initial understanding of willingness to participate. Once a participant completed the survey and met the criteria, I contacted them to establish a relationship, reviewed the study and process, answered questions, and reviewed the informed consent document (APPENDIX E). I then sent each participant the informed consent document which was completed prior to the first interview. I then scheduled the first interview. The first interview was a semi-structured interview and it was conducted using *Zoom* web conferencing services. I recorded each interview using *Zoom*’s recording feature. The first interview lasted between sixty and seventy-five minutes. The purpose of this interview was to gain an understanding of the lived experiences related to the construction and understanding of race, racism, and whiteness. At the conclusion of this interview, I explained the next phase of data collection which is to complete a written narrative regarding three topics and a free write experience. The three topics

categories include: General feelings and thoughts on race, racism, and being white in the United States; What is the role of a teacher/educator in addressing systemic racism and whiteness?; What has been your experience in discussing race, racism, and whiteness in your teacher education program? The purpose of the first written response process was to deepen my understanding of how each participant constructed an understanding of race, racism, and whiteness at an early age and in their teacher education program and how they constructed or did not construct lesson in student teaching thinking about concepts of race, racism, and whiteness.

The next phase of data collection was a second semi-structured interview which lasted between fifty-five and seventy minutes. Again, the interview was conducted using *Zoom* web conferencing services, and was recorded using *Zoom's built-in recording process*. The purpose of this interview was to expand on the participants' experiences, with more focus on their experience as a pre-service teacher while deepening my understanding of their experiences related to the research questions. There were a core of similar questions, however I utilized previous interviews and written reflections to generate follow-up questions that enhanced saturation of understanding. The next data collection process was a second written response activity. Each participant was prompted to write responses to the three main topics addressed in the first writing response and a free write. The questions, while structured, included information or follow-up from the first and second interview. The goal with the second writing exercise was to gain a deeper understanding of experiences and thoughts specifically as it related to challenging, disrupting, and perpetuating whiteness both in their experience in teacher education and in their practice as novice educators.

The final stage of the data collection process was a final semi-structured interview using *Zoom* web conferencing services, and was recorded using *Zoom's recording process*. For each

interviewee, I developed initial questions based on data and themes from their previous discussions and reflections during the study, and then used a consistent core of questions for each participant. Each of the final interviews lasted between sixty and seventy minutes. The interviews were intentionally designed to be dialogic in nature and ensure saturation of understanding, clarify questions that arose during the interview and previous phases, and to allow for the participant to discuss possible next steps in their pursuit of enhancing their understanding of whiteness in the context of teaching.

Once each interview was completed, I stored the audio files on my personal laptop in a password protected folder. In addition, I personally transcribed each interview, and stored the data using Colorado State University's secure One Drive server. I password protected each file to ensure security.

Data analysis

All data was collected, stored, and analyzed utilizing the online data assessment platform *Dedoose* and secured using *Dedoose's* encryption service. Prior to the second and third interview, I reviewed transcripts and notes from the previous interview. After reviewing the transcripts, I outlined further questions and underlying assumptions to aid in enhancing my inquiry process (Kim, 2016). These notes were used to begin the data analysis process. In examining the data, I developed a strategy that both created a space for discovery to develop stories (Kim, 2016), while also examining the data by threading experiences to develop patterns and themes (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997) to artistically paint a dynamic depiction of the participant. I also highlighted the contextual situations of the participants to deconstruct and name hegemonic and systemic practices of whiteness (Huber, 2008).

In organizing the data collected for this study, the participant was labeled as the unit of analysis and all data sources collected about the participant were considered as individual pieces but also connected to the whole. As I began to construct the portraits for each participants, I developed themes for each of the participants (Kim, 2016), while providing a focus on aspects of their story and experiences that highlighted active and passive approaches to engaging in disrupting whiteness. I first examined each participant data set by conducting exploratory coding looking for patterns of their independent individual experience. I then coded the data by highlighting repetitive refrains that existed in each of their pattern codes. The refrains began to illuminate an understanding of the essence their epistemological stance (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 1997), in particular as it related to race and whiteness. I examined each participant's individual data set looking for resonant aspects of their experience and related to their upbringing, educational experience, and framework as an educator. I then examined the data of each of participants for convergence to begin constructing themes to articulate and tell their story. Finally, for each individual participant, I analyzed the themes using a framework grounded in CRT and CwS tenets. This framework was used to critically engage in their lived experiences and identify the complexities of their interactions with possessing, securing, perpetuating, and being influenced by whiteness.

Once I completed the individual data analysis, I began to construct portraits for each of the seven participants that completed the entire study (APPENDIX A). The portraits reflected their lived experience up to the point of the interview, and revealed the complex nature in which each participant navigated their learned and practiced action in upholding and disrupting whiteness. After each individual portrait was completed, I contacted each participant to review the portrait for accuracy. There were no reported issues with accuracy or interpretation.

Throughout the process each participant discussed what they learned, and how the process enabled them to further their efforts to engage and challenge whiteness.

These completed portraits were used for two different aspects of the final product of this study. First, the portraits represent the voices, as interpreted by me, of each of the participants, and are a continuation of my commitment to ensure each participant completing the study was represented in the work of this project. The second major function of the portraits is they served as the data set that I used for the analysis and discussion in Chapters Four and Five of this study. I analyzed the portraits holistically and conducted a thematic analysis of the portraits. This process challenged normal research methods, and was a continuation of an effort to utilize multiple methods to gain insight of the complexities and manners in which whiteness existed for these participants. As part of the thematic analysis, I refined themes and examined the portraits and themes through a critical framework consistent with CRT and CwS. This process resulted in the following five themes: a) disrupting whiteness is a choice; b) the lingering impact of learned color evasive, race neutral, and post racialized practices; c) the possessiveness of white immunity, the nature of individualism, and difficulty naming and owning systemic whiteness; d) the fragility of being thought of as incomplete and loss of status; e) the miseducation of pre-service teachers on race, whiteness and white supremacy.

Research as a liberatory praxis

As I began to reflect critically on how this study combined methodologies and perspectives of narrative inquiry and portraiture with CRT and CwS, I recognized the need for this study to engage in liberatory praxis for the participants. In examining concepts of critical pedagogy, Freire (2000) posited learning and liberation from colonized mind can be achieved through problem posing strategies and praxis. Thus, in keeping with the CRT tenet to enact

research engaging in practices of social justice, and the CwS tenet that whiteness can be disrupted, I used problem posing with the participants as mechanism to begin to engage their own liberation from the shackles of their colonized experience with whiteness.

Problem posing methodology engages participants and actively seeks to create liberatory praxis by making them part of the knowledge creation experience. In particular, for this study, I had participants actively work to reflect and create aspects of their identity both in dialogue and written reflection. In addition, the way that I used portraiture and how I engaged with the participants regarding their participation in the process was critical to the liberatory experience. Portraiture at its essence attempts to “capture the texture and nuance of human existence” (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2005a, p. 6), thus problem posing provided a deep and rich textured understanding of how participants viewed themselves related to the study.

Finally, I utilized a process that engaged the participants in a manner that challenged and critiqued culture, developed a critical consciousness around social order, and begin to disrupt the status quo (Smith-Maddox & Solórzano, 2002). Thus, in actively participating in this study, participants were able to actively be part of a critical analysis of their lived experience and development of their lived experience.

Trustworthiness

The concept of validity, typically used in post-positivist research (Creswell, 2014), is not an appropriate aim for this study. Thus, for this study, I used the term trustworthiness of data. In portraiture, narrative inquiry and other qualitative research, trustworthiness is measured by the accuracy of the data and the accuracy of the analysis (Riessman, 2008).

For data collection and analysis, I ensured trustworthiness through the portraiture and problem posing process. First each set of transcriptions were sent to participants to ensure I

accurately captured their voice, narratives, and experiences. Participants were also involved in construction of the portraits and review of my interpretation of their stories, thus creating trustworthiness in the data and the interpretations of the data. Further, the participants were part of the analysis through the problem posing process and by engaging in dialogic process to unpack their lived experience. In addition to problem posing, I used multiple sets of data to construct the analysis creating a triangulation and convergence of data. Triangulation and convergence are both effective tools in creating portraits and analysis (Chapman, 2007). By using multiple methods for analysis it allowed for the strengthening in triangulation which enhanced credibility of findings (Kim, 2016; Riessman, 2008).

Limitations

There are two limitations with this study. The first limitation is that the study had seven participants. Thus, the representativeness of the sample was extremely limited. While the property and construction of whiteness has similar aspects regardless of region (Harris, 1993; Lipsitz, 2006) there is variance in racial formation that is impacted by regional area (Cabrera, 2009). Further research could include a mixed method design which begins with generating initial data to create a representative sample and then creating a qualitative design to gain a more complete picture as to the stories represented in the numerical data.

The second limitation was related to how the findings ought to be used and understood. This study framed findings understanding the context in which the participants are situated, the manner in which data are gathered (Patel, 2016), and my interpersonal subjectivity as the instrument of research (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). Quality in qualitative research is assessed based on criteria as it relates to both transferability and the applicability of the research to have resonance (Clandinin, 2013; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). My

research aims to build a deeper understanding of the complexities of the unique experiences of the participants and I was able to draw some connections and allow for the reader to draw connections to the larger context of their existence (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2005a).

Delimitations

There are two delimitations in this study. The first is that the study is limited by examining only white pre-service teacher's experiences. While the research questions narrowed the focus to only examining white students, whiteness, through its possessive nature, is engrained in the being for all people in the United States regardless of race (Harris, 1993; Lipsitz, 2006). Thus, the study does not include the voices of those oppressed, marginalized, or impacted by colonizing forces of whiteness.

The second is that I only recruited participants that attended traditional teacher preparation programs and excluded participants completing alternative route programs. Including alternative route program participants would have increased the participant scope. Additionally, some alternative route programs are not connected to institutions of higher education, and for this study I was interested in examining students coming from an institution of higher education.

Summary

The purpose of this study was create an understanding of how whiteness shaped the lens and perspectives of white pre-service teachers and what experiences in their preparation has challenged or upheld values related to whiteness. In interrogating whiteness, I used a methodological framework grounded in CRT and CwS to support methods of portraiture and narrative inquiry to examine the research questions. Therefore, I developed an alignment of all my research methods with the tenets of CRT and CwS to ensure that I was utilizing research practices to not only name, challenge, and disrupt racism, whiteness, and white supremacy in the

research, but also challenge, name, and disrupt my own bias throughout the research (Applebaum, 2010; Patel, 2016). Using CRT and CwS as the foundation, I discussed the use of portraiture and narrative inquiry methods to guide the process of developing themes and understanding the lived experiences of the participants. Finally, I discussed how CRT and CwS framework coupled with portraiture and narrative inquiry impacted aspects participant recruitment strategy, a plan for data collection, analysis, trustworthiness, and limitations and delimitations of the study.

CHAPTER 4: PORTRAITS OF WHITENESS, THE FINDINGS

This chapter presents the research findings, which were developed by conducting a thematic analysis of the participant portraits. Portraiture provided a canvas to stitch together the complex lived experiences of each participant while carefully crafting a thematic tapestry achieving resonance (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997). The five themes that emerged from the study will be discussed using overarching concept of whiteness as a layered and complex aspect intricately interwoven in the lived experience of the participants impacting their work as educators. For the purposes of this study, I am calling these themes the portraits of whiteness. The portraits of whiteness are detailed intentionally to examine each participant's experience while simultaneously revealing an "overarching vision of the aesthetic whole" (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 1997, p. 252) aligned to the three research questions guiding the study. The three research questions guiding the study are: 1) What role does white fragility play in white pre-service teacher's willingness to engage whiteness? 2) What factors are associated with willingness to disrupt or perpetuate whiteness for white pre-service teachers? 3) How has their teacher preparation program enhanced their ability to engage in challenging whiteness in education? The five primary themes that emerged from this study that were used to structure the portraits of whiteness are: a) disrupting whiteness is a choice; b) the lingering impact of learned color evasive, race neutral, and post racialized practices; c) the possessiveness of white immunity, the nature of individualism, and difficulty naming and owning systemic whiteness; d) the fragility of being thought of as incomplete and loss of status; e) the miseducation of pre-service teachers on race, whiteness and white supremacy. These five themes are interrelated and share common elements of actions and inaction that consistently surfaced throughout the

findings. The themes illustrated how these seven participants interacted with, disrupted, and perpetuated whiteness.

Portraits of choice: Disrupting whiteness is a choice

How do you begin to unpack the concept of willingness? The question lingered in my head as I began to meet with the participants. As I began to wrestle with the research question and the concept of willingness, I recognized it was important to begin to understand the major factors of what it meant to be willing. I watched the participants wrestle with the concept of willingness, and how it seemed to be based on circumstances, so as I reflected on my initial discussions with each of them, I began to think about it more simply. It was in an early dialogue with Jake, that I recognized the important nature of choice, and how one begins to unpack if something is a fact a choice. Jake shared, “how can I be willing if I do not have a choice, my unwillingness is impaired by the lack of ability to choose”. I looked at Jake and then asked, well is it a choice, do you have a choice to challenge whiteness or to be willing? He smiled, and said “of course”. It was at this point, I knew that with each of the participants we needed explore the concept of choice. Through this inquiry path, we explored what led them all to conclude that yes they felt they were making active and passive choices in engaging whiteness, thus upholding the concept of willingness as an appropriate naming of action for engaging whiteness.

In each of the conversations, each participants shared a variety of experiences in which whiteness was normalized, remained unrecognized, and part of the fabric of their experience. It would have been easy for them to evade responsibility and claim they never had a choice to begin with because they did not as Sally shared “see it, like ever”. Even though they took their time intellectually grappling with the idea that challenging whiteness was a choice, the

participants began their answers by saying, as Laura said, “oh of course it is a choice, a complicated choice, but it is a choice”.

As we began to unpack the intricacies of what making a choice meant, two distinctive discussions occurred that furthered their belief that they indeed were making conscious and subconscious choices to challenge whiteness. First, they each acknowledged that they were at a developmental place where they had enough information to be responsible for their actions. This responsibility included making a choice to disrupt and challenge whiteness. Second, while each of them struggled with naming whiteness, they ultimately took varying degrees of responsibility for their lack of awareness and ability, and were not interested in using lack of awareness or knowledge as an excuse for not choosing to address whiteness.

Depending on the circumstance and situation, each participants presented stories and instances that reflected vacillation between remaining conscious and being unconscious of their whiteness, which they owned as part of their responsibility. This sentiment was largely echoed by Megan who shared that there needed to be starting place and willingness to engage in one’s own consciousness, but at the end of the day, she felt at this point it was her responsibility to engage. As she shared, one could simply just not be willing in a given day at one time, and then the next day not be willing because it was too difficult, there was limited time, or because it just was not part of their consciousness on that day. She replied, “you are making a choice to prioritize other things”. She then explained, looking back “at my student teaching, I was trying to survive, but that was important at the time, and I made a choice to prioritize that, and that is on me”. Megan saw herself as an advocate for social justice, but felt that surviving, especially early in her career was more important. She recognized this was a choice and shared, “that was not a hill I was going to die on”. In thinking about it further, Megan recalled her journey as a

Christian, which was salient to her. She shared, “I think we can all have the best intentions and be willing to make a choice to fight against racism and use our power in different settings to do that, but the flesh is so weak”. Her response was to not make excuse, but the reality that she felt while yes it was a choice, it was complicated and difficult to make that choice because it challenged all aspects of the system she was working hard to be part of as a teacher. Megan admitted, that through this process her awareness of the ability to make choices has increased, and while this has empowered her to be more engaged with challenging whiteness, the challenges outside of it being a choice weigh more heavily on her willingness to disrupt whiteness.

Karen too acknowledged that awareness was a factor in engaging whiteness. She shared, that as an educator she ought to have some awareness of race, whiteness, and racism. She contextualized her response “I think it is important to be aware of, especially all that comes along with the identity of race, it is also the cultural differences, but you have to be aware of it first, and that awareness is my responsibility”. It was not just the level of awareness, as Karen and others owned that it was their responsibility, but that there needed to be an ability to be critical and self-reflective. Karen in a later discussion shared, that being a teacher it was important to not simply rely on her own experience and use the experiences she had that shaped her world view. She explained, that she should not “be so blissfully ignorant and unwilling to adapt, that I do not challenge things that I think I know”. Despite Karen’s statements and recognition of her need to challenge herself, she often relied on learned patterns supporting the perpetuation and normalization of whiteness. For Karen, she believed it was not a teacher’s role to challenge whiteness, and this was her choice to view the profession in that manner. She saw teaching as providing students with the ability to engage content, and her responsibility to frame

the learning environment. She shared, “while challenging racism is important, my job as a teacher is to not politically engage, but provide a platform for my students to engage, with the hope they come to that conclusion”. Karen’s viewpoint in this case seemed limited to content only, as if she only had the ability to impact the content she taught in the classroom.

Ella’s responses challenged Karen’s notion a bit, as she believed it was the role of a teacher to challenge oppression and whiteness. Ella’s journey through this process was different in that she recognized, much like the other participants, it was her job to challenge herself to learn more and “being ignorant was not excuse”. Ella shared, the “choice to be ignorant and not learn was choice”. She believed it was a choice because she had made decisions of inaction in the past:

It is something you actively choose to do, do I want to learn more, I don’t know maybe that is making it too simple, but at this point in my life, I am responsible for my learning and development. I mean if I am going to be a teacher, I have to choose to be part of progress, and not being part of change is a choice.

She also shared as educator, there needed to be both the willingness to constantly evolve and educate one’s self, but also willingness to constantly engage in practices of challenging whiteness.

Gloria shared Ella’s sentiment that she had experienced enough at this point and her awareness was at level where she had the ability to choose. She shared, because she had the education, and has learned about herself, about historical and current realities related to white supremacy, racism and whiteness it is her job now to work against whiteness. She recognized that she had the ability to choose to challenge her biases toward operating in whiteness. I asked Gloria if her opinion would change if she had not went through school, and she explained:

As someone that chose to go into teaching, we make choices in how we engage our kids, and we make choices as to what we teach, within the curriculum, and so regardless of someone's level of awareness, at this point how could you not be somewhat accountable, how is it not a choice?

Jake's statements were in agreement, he shared that their needed to be a willingness by someone to examine their lived experience and learn to become aware of things like whiteness that are seemingly unnoticed. Jake's opinions were largely influenced by his experiences with his mentor teacher. He often described her as "just doing it the way she always had, and holding on to beliefs that were outdated, she never challenged herself, or I never saw her be critically reflective". When Jake and his mentor would talk about issues of racism and whiteness, she often remained on the surface, "she never took risks, and never took responsibility", and Jake attributed this to her lack of self-reflection and critical awareness. Jake believed if an educator was not willing to self-investigate, to challenge their notions and beliefs, and to be critically aware it was not possible for them to be a successful teacher. He continued our discussion by sharing that he believed the choice was more about continuing to evolve, once you stop thinking and critically evaluating, "the unwilling nature to not be self-reflective, self-critical was indeed a choice". Ella furthered Jake's point, "I think, it can be a choice but also a point of ignorance, I think you can choose whether or not to engage in something that day".

Sally shared a similar feeling, and also had some challenge with knowing she was part of upholding whiteness even when she did not recognize it. In the context of teaching Sally recognized the aspect of choice was also by acknowledging you are part of the system as a teacher. She shared, "as a teacher everything you do is connected to the system, and this frustrating because you in turn feed that system, you have to make the choice to change it". At

one moment in our conversation, Sally became agitated and said “it really frustrates me that I am part of this and I am not changing it, I am just trying to do my job, but that is my choice, I am choosing to not invest or take the time and initiative”. She clearly recognized that even when she could find excuses, like time, lack of awareness, it was ultimately her responsibility to challenge. Due to her nature of being an authority figure, someone in the position of power in the system, failure to act, to engage regularly was a choice.

Each of the participants attributed their recognition of responsibility through their lived experiences as human actors in a racialized world as part of the reasoning. At times their fragility became evident in accountability, but nonetheless, they each owned that disrupting whiteness was more to do about willingness, then it was to do about awareness. For each of them, they recognized that they were and had the ability to enhance their own awareness, and not continuing to enhance their own consciousness about their whiteness was their choice.

After establishing the nature of challenging whiteness was a choice regardless of it being and active or passive process, there were three distinct themes that impacted their willingness to engage whiteness. These factors represented how the participants were actively or passively upholding whiteness, and the degree to which they were willing to engage whiteness in practice as teachers. The next section of this chapter will discuss the second theme, which was the first factor, the impact of and ability to navigate post racial ideologies as a factor for willingness to engage whiteness.

Portraits of obfuscation: The legacies of post racial ideologies and the impact on engaging whiteness

As extensively highlighted in each of their portraits (APPENDIX A), each participant shared experiences in which their cognitive awareness of whiteness had been blurred or

dismissed because of the nature of their normalized experiences of being white. Often they shared initial experiences of awareness related to their racialized experience with the feeling of being bewildered and unsure. While recognizing in some manner, they individually had areas of growth, they still were part of a system that had colonized their thinking about what it meant to be white and the normalization of that experience.

The obfuscation of whiteness as a system that reinvents itself, protects itself, and sustains its longevity on being mystic and difficult for white people to name was not lost any of the individuals participating in this study. In each instance, they individually described points in time where they remained and were allowed to remain unaware of their lived racialized experience. Being white had been normalized, and the pervasiveness and possessiveness of whiteness became apparent as most described being brought up with post racial ideologies supporting equality and meritocracy. For them, the post racial ideologies were translated into moving away from recognizing the construct of race, thus creating a sustained sense of color evasiveness that was often difficult to correct. Each of them shared instances and stories as to how they were working through or upholding these values and ideals, and the impact each of these ideals and values hindered their ability to challenge and disrupt whiteness in the context of being an educator.

Color evasion and not centering the racialized experience

For most of the participants, the coming to realization of their whiteness was allusive, and they often described the tensions of learned behaviors that supported concepts of equality over those of equity. Laura for example shared, “I learned everyone had a chance, and I should work hard, and if I worked hard, I could succeed. I made the assumption that if everyone was treated equally that we could all succeed”. She witnessed her father succeed due to what she perceived

as hard work, and was told that if she went to college and worked hard, she too would succeed. The concept of race, or being white was never discussed as a currency for success or a factor, thus the void of race talk led to a belief that race did not matter.

Karen reflected a similar sentiment, as she also witnessed firsthand her mother's hard work to excel in her field as being a judge. Karen described situations in which her family used coded language around race, but often expressed ideals and values that were consistent with post racial ideologies. Karen shared, "race should not be a factor, if we do not want it to be a factor, then we need to start by seeing everyone as equal". Karen compounded her belief of equal treatment would mean equal access with her belief structure of individualism, which ignored societal and systemic factors impacting racially minoritized people.

Karen's framework was deep seeded, and unlike the other participants Karen struggled to move beyond a post racial ideology, which became evident in the way she first spoke about affirmative action, and later about teaching. Karen's family, her community, and her schooling all contributed to the ideals and values of whiteness, in particular those that believe that acknowledging or "seeing race" was problematic. Even though she shared that "we must address race as an issue" and explicitly said that "racism is a problem", she struggled with her ability to move beyond the individual. She said "I do not see my kids by their race, I shouldn't". Failing to acknowledge their racialized identity and how that identity is part of their experience, only further challenged Karen's ability to challenge whiteness as an educator. For example, Karen shared that she intended and had used a framework for color evasiveness in approaching her students. She feared that by acknowledging their race, she would apply the deficits she learned about People of Color. Therefore, it seemed to be a more conducive strategy in promoting her

position of equality, by positioning her students as equal, and thus not acknowledging their racial identities.

Karen began to challenge her own preconceived notions on thinking about her students' identities as she began to work with students who were English Learners. As she processed her teaching and the way in which she engaged her students and their families, she recognized the importance of shifting how she approached developing her communication. Despite showing the willingness to challenge the dominant narrative in how she worked with English Learners, Karen's position in supporting post racial ideologies encumbered her ability to recognize and acknowledge the intersection of her students' racial identity with their identity as an English Learner.

Similarly Sally often operated from a post racialized paradigm. She had learned from a young age and through schooling that it was not okay to talk about race. She felt as if she ignored race, she would be able to "treat her students more fairly". In effort to compensate for some her internalized learned beliefs about People of Color, she opted for a color evasive strategy. However, in reality, her framework of trying to not acknowledge race, negatively impacted her ability as a teacher to reach her students in two different and distinct ways. It ultimately disregarded her students lived experiences as racialized humans in the context of the United States.

In order to justify her viewpoint Sally tried to justify her position by stating that she believed her students did not "see race". When I asked what she meant by her students not seeing race she shared, "because racism is taught, my kids are colorblind, they just love all people, they do not see color". Sally was trying to explain that she felt her young students, who were mostly Students of Color, did not "see race" because they treated Sally with respect and they did not talk

openly with her about their experiences with racism. When I asked her what else made her believe her students did not acknowledge or “see race”, she said because she did not think about race as a young kid, and assumed her students did not either. When I asked her about not acknowledging her students and their experiences growing up as Black in America, her response shifted. She then said, well “I guess they probably do see race, and experience it, I guess I was putting my own stuff on them, you know”. Sally shared a story where her students talked about her being white, and in that conversation, she shyly said, “well I guess they do see me as white”. Sally had difficulty because of how often she shifted back to her default mode of operation in difficult situations, where race was removed from being a factor. Sally’s perspective of not willing to see her students through the lens of recognizing their experiences attached to their racial identity was problematic. Ultimately, it led to her inability in certain circumstances in recognizing how race and her whiteness were factors in certain situations impacting her ability to challenge and disrupt whiteness.

For example, she shared a story where she was “disciplining a young Black boy” outside during recess. Later that day her principal talked to her about the situation, sharing that they had received a complaint about a white teacher yelling at a young Black student. In Sally’s discussion, she avoided race being part of the equation, she wanted to assert that his race or hers had nothing to do with the incident. When I asked her to deconstruct what happened by thinking about the context of whiteness, she reframed her thought and said “I guess, well, I mean I get that the optics are not good, but I still do not think that his behavior or how I treated him had anything to do with race, I try to treat my students fairly”.

For Sally, even when she tried to apply the concept of race being a factor, she hesitated to think that she may have been treating the student in particular manner, because to her, she was

treating him like “every other student”. However, by not acknowledging the racial dynamic or the power dynamic she held in the situation as being both a teacher and white, her whiteness was being exerted in a way to justify and normalize her response while dismissing the response of the concerned member of the community.

Conversely there were some of the participants that tried hard to compensate for some of their post racialized learning in the way they taught. They attempted to make conscious decisions to either center concepts of race, experiences of People of Color, racism in their teaching practice, or took steps to address power dynamics associated with power. Jake described instances where he was left with an inability to act or constantly questioned his actions because he wanted to balance his power, acknowledge the racialized lived experience, and not continue to add to the racialize trauma experienced by the Students of Color in his classroom. Jake’s inaction or the way he treated Students of Color often was a result of a lack of skill or knowledge on how to maintain rigorous expectations while acknowledging the power dynamics and not causing harm to his Students of Color. It was not that Jake was operating from a deficit viewpoint, but it was more or less he was trying to counter unfair treatment that he perceived two of his students had experienced in their schooling. Instead of framing the entire class and challenging the dynamics and articulating non-dominant narrative expectations, Jake was applying inconsistent messages to his students.

Jake’s experience was further complicated that he was in an environment that, in his words, “did not challenge whiteness and failed to think about race as something that ought to be considered”. Jake’s main challenge came through the school hosting his placement did not seem to be committed to challenging whiteness. He often found himself in situations challenging cultural norms that more or less supported upholding whiteness, and when he attempted to shift

the cultural he received negative feedback from students, his mentor teacher, and others in the school.

Ella, like Jake, was quick to talk about examples of where she tried explicitly to challenge the status quo. Ella tried to insert situations and engage in dialogue with her students about race, specifically when it came to examples in the content. Ella taught a lesson that was about the Trail of Tears, and in doing so, she utilized text and content that came as either first person narratives or as close to first person narratives of the experiences of Native Americans. Ella shared, “it was important that our students understand that we have a legacy and history of harm, and to hear the voices of Native Americans was important”. Laura had a similar experience in which her mentor teacher framed a concept from a deficit perspective. Laura addressed the incident, and the mentor admitted that he never had thought about her perspective or that his framing was from a deficit oriented perspective.

Despite Laura, Ella, and Jake’s efforts to challenge whiteness, their work and actions to name race and whiteness were exceptions in their practice. For the most part, all three and the others that participated in the study acknowledged that race was not something they thought enough, and as Ella shared “I probably was less actively involved in deconstructing race or my identity when it had nothing to do with the content”. Although Jake attempted to change both the content and the way he taught, he felt limited by the environment, and was significantly challenged when he tried to frame teaching and learning from a perspective that decentered the normalization of whiteness. Jake shared, even though he tried to be active in engaging whiteness, he too recognized that because his “default perspective” was to uphold whiteness and not always think about the impact of race, he “probably reinforced whiteness more often than not”.

Politics and a-political teaching

Each of the participants at some point discussed the political nature of teaching, and that they felt that talking about race or racism out of context of content would trigger political ideological discussion. For example, Megan struggled at times with the positioning of dialogue on race, racism, and whiteness. In several instances in our discussions Megan questioned why topics of race have become political or politically charged. She challenged that it made no sense that anti-racism was only aligned with being “liberal” or anti-conservative. She asked “how is doing the right thing political”?

Megan shared that she often struggled with how to talk about topics, such as whiteness and racism, or even bring up a topic like race which seem to her very politically charged. I could tell she was feeling frustrated when she shared:

I know these conversations are important to have, I am still unsure the best way to approach the topics without making my lessons a matter of I know your parents say x and I am here to tell you different, the last thing I want to do is turn children against their parents or even worse turn their parents against me

It was evident there was a sense of fear of challenging whiteness in all white communities particularly as a novice teacher or during student teaching.

Megan expressed a sense of fear in not wanting to ruffle the ever important relational dynamic between teacher and parent. Furthering her fear, as stated previously, she did not want to be known as the anti-racist teacher or that to be the only thing she was known for. Clearly her commitment to social justice was being challenged here and she was frustrated, but ultimately decided to work through comfort in not being overly disruptive, as that would have created too much friction. Megan also feared, both in her student teaching placement and now as a new

teacher, having a Principal that might not be supportive of anti-racist strategies. Megan began to explain, and while she spoke her general demeanor and enthusiasm began to dissipate:

I do not think that is not a hill I am willing to die on in my first year. I am in my probationary period in my first five year, so I would be really worried about my administration not being behind me, like not getting my contract renewed, so I think that is something I would be more apt to push when my five years is up.

Interestingly, I brought this statement up with her during our final conversation, and it seemed Megan had done some reflecting on the statement and her feelings about being frustrated that race, whiteness, and racism were so politically charged. Megan questioned:

Where do you draw the line between like passing on your political views to a person, and be like all I can do is to teach you what is in the curriculum? I think it comes back to the way you present it and how you integrate it I guess”

Megan’s uncertainty and wavering surprised her a bit, as she had presented early in our discussions a very confident person in how she operated and believed herself to be. She then began to realize that in action, it was more difficult and this started to become a barrier for her. Megan felt that because there was a perception of whiteness and white supremacy had been politicized and challenging values, systems, and structures upholding whiteness might be viewed by parents, other teachers, or even administrators as pushing a liberal agenda. She explained that she felt that she needed a curricular piece to point to that would assist in not making it seem too “political” and more about the content.

The other participants struggled much like Megan, but not as openly about the nature of the dilemma Megan described. Ella also felt the pressure to be politically neutral, but recognized that it was her job to challenge and disrupt whiteness, and thus regardless of the nature of teaching

traditionally being A-political, she felt the need to act. Ella did confirm that she felt the need to remain neutral related to content. She shared that there was an instance in which some students began discussion a topic on race and the students “became frustrated with each other and the conversation turned toxic”. Ella described that in the moment she tried to remain neutral but it was difficult. I asked her why she felt she needed to remain neutral, and she shared that while she saw her role to challenge whiteness, she herself could not be “seen as preferencing a particular political ideology”.

Karen fought the hardest against the notion that it was the job of a teacher to challenge whiteness. She shared that from her opinion challenging whiteness would on some level be the equivalent of pushing a political ideology, and from her standpoint, teachers were supposed to be A-political. As discussed Ella too struggled with balancing the political nature of challenging whiteness while remaining neutral. Ella believed she was fearless, that she had a purpose to challenge racial oppression and to support social justice, but also struggled because of the nature of teaching expressed in a way she interpreted she had to be neutral. When I asked her about how she could both be fearless and neutral, she said “, you know as a teacher my role is to provide facts, information, and let students come to their own conclusions”, she then thought for a moment, and added “but at the same time, given that I want to challenge whiteness I know that I need to find a way to do that. Maybe being neutral, I don’t know, maybe being neutral is not the right way”. Karen often failed to see how she “as one person” was able to really make much of impact on challenging whiteness and racism systemically. When talking about disruption, she had a difficult time articulating what it meant to her outside of treating everyone fairly, and challenging “racist comments” from students. Karen’s neoliberal and post racial viewpoints

utilized color evasive and race neutral practices to guide how she framed and thought about working on issues of whiteness. Specifically, she said:

I feel like I have a mindset that I just don't care, like really try to think about and be sensitive to cultural aspects. . . I don't want to be one of those people because it sounds so pretentious when people say it, but I don't see race, you know, which I feel like, I hate it when people say it, it is something that I try to do. . . I just try to hold everyone to the same exact standard and expectation . . . no matter what race they are

Not acknowledging race in her classroom challenged her ability to disrupt whiteness.

As each participant wrestled with the role of a teacher and the varying degree in which each saw their role as an educator in challenging whiteness, they all agreed that in some respect there would be potential consequences for their actions. In realizing their role as educators was to, as Gloria shared “shape the lives of future students” and create positive learning environments. However, the concept of A-political teaching, as discussed by the participants reinforced color evasive and post racial ideologies. Essentially, when they would share that it was too political to challenge or discuss certain topics, or to challenge a peer or students behavior that was upholding whiteness, they really were talking in code that as teachers they should not talk or acknowledge race as a factor. Karen summed this up the most poignantly, when she discussed “I think it can happen in the content. I teach about colonization, but outside of that, you need to let the students come to their own conclusions”. Megan would have agreed with Karen:

Where do you draw the line between like passing on your political views to a person, and be like all I can do is to teach you what is in the curriculum? I think it comes back to the way you present it and how you integrate it I guess”

They both articulated they were comfortable framing conversation about race, but not comfortable challenging ideologies that perpetuated whiteness because it was not viewed as a teacher's role or responsibility. The next section of this chapter will discuss the third theme, the impact of individualism and the possessive nature of white immunity.

Portraits of individualism: The possessive nature of whiteness through white immunity

For their entire life, they were treated with individual respect. They were taught they were responsible for their actions, and had the power to change their dynamic, situation, and life path. Laura shared that she felt she could accomplish anything if she “worked hard, and put my mind into it”. The concept of individuality is foundational and fundamental when examining the framing context of the United States. The fundamentals of individualism is largely rooted in the context of post racialism and neoliberalism, where a person is viewed, understood, and treated without context of race or other identities. White individualism is largely rooted in this concept and belief, that they, as individuals are extraordinary (Kendi, 2016), and this mentality and framework was largely positioned in all aspects of the participants learned experience. They each shared stories of how the individual frame left a deep impression on them, that they needed to unpack and deconstruct in effort to engage in challenging whiteness. However, the reinforced nature of the education project, influenced and provided challenges for each of them in the manner in which they disrupted whiteness.

Participants described experiences in which they had difficulty of connecting to being white because of the disassociation of their racial identity, which also enhanced their inoculation from negative experiences related to systemic whiteness and white supremacy. Interestingly, the participants also described instances where the concepts of individualism absolved and allowed them to distance themselves from being responsible for racism, whiteness, and white supremacy.

In effect, not only had they received immunity from experiencing negative effects of a racialized system, but in addition they described a sense of also being immune from responsibility of systemic oppression. The notion of being immune from being responsible for contributing to systemic oppression was highlighted in statements like when Laura shared her actions were “not connected to white supremacy” or as Karen bluntly stated, “I have done nothing personally wrong”. They each shared a belief that confounded their ability to connect to systemic whiteness, because they had been taught racism and white supremacy were only acts of intolerance by individuals or groups. If they were simply able to remain neutral or as Sally shared “not do mean things”, then they were able to create a dissociation from the systemic constructs of the racialized experience in the United States. Finally, the concept of individualization also spread to the way in which they taught, and the policies that instructed individualized learning and teaching to the individual reinforced a disconnect to the connection of race, thus reinforcing a sense of race neutrality, color evasion, and the pursuit of normalizing whiteness through possessive investment.

On some level, the participants were able to engage and unpack their own connection with being responsible for perpetuating whiteness through inaction. However, five of the seven, rejected the notion that they actively participated or were at fault for racism and whiteness. Megan shared a concept she learned from her camp “I am not at fault, but I am responsible”, which was an interesting way to both take accountability but find the space to cover herself from sharing in the systemic struggle. In explaining the difference, she said that she “did not cause the situation, but was responsible for fixing it”. The other participants shared a similar viewpoint in that they recognized cognitively they had a responsibility to make the choice or to be willing to

engage and disrupt whiteness, but whiteness was not their fault. Even to a degree, they took responsibility for its perpetuation, but stopped short in owning their part in the system.

Their individualism allowed them to create space to pick and choose when they were comfortable and able to engage in disrupting whiteness. Each of them named instances in which they challenged whiteness, but could not provide examples of how they regularly took part in disrupting whiteness. Thus, their willingness to challenge whiteness was at times in place of convenience and privilege. Jake reflected that it was his “privilege that allowed [him] to enter in and out of the conversation, whenever it was convenient”. Although each of them struggled with the concept of connecting to the system, they all admitted that as teachers they must address at the very minimum racism when present. The minimum however did not include the way they interacted in deconstructing their own whiteness.

Gloria very much saw herself as being nonjudgmental and even prided herself on “not having bias”. When I asked her to explain what she meant, she shared a story about a time where she took a quiz in one of her education courses that indicated that she had neutral bias tendencies, or in her words “did not have bias toward any particular group over the other”. Puzzled by this, as she in our conversation said “it seems to me that no matter our race, we all have bias and concepts we struggle with as humans”. Then again later she admitted to having to fight “voices in her head”. She shared, “well I feel like I am definitely good a checking them”. Therefore, her framing of not having bias toward a particular group was interesting. I asked her if she had her professor deconstruct the finding, and she shared that he did not go into detail and somewhat evaded her questioning the results. Gloria also used her white immunity by inoculating herself from taking responsibility or accountability for her actions and language.

During our discussion, Gloria shared an instance where she was in her new position, and her principal had just acquired a new reading series which had “difficult topics”, one of them being race. The principal explained that they could avoid the topics or even using some of the language. I asked her to clarify what the principal said, and she shared “well like if we did not feel comfortable saying any of the words that refer to race or talk about race we don’t have to, we can like skip over them”. I sat for a moment and was like okay, but then she continued, and said that some of the books might use the word “N*****”, and she actually said the word. She shared the principal had given the teachers permission to skip over the word, but she felt that it was not necessary. Hearing the N-word come from her mouth in our conversation and the manner in which it rolled off her tongue I found surprising and bit jarring. Gloria defended her usage of the word by sharing that she learned that it was okay by a guest presenter she had in her urban education program. The guest lecturer, identified as African American, had a PhD, and was a trained trauma specialist with the focus on urban environments. Gloria viewed his expertise and identity as something that gave her permission and granted her absolution from actions, based on his recommendations and discussions.

I had asked several questions to better understand why Gloria felt the way she did, and Gloria responded:

I do believe that I would be comfortable using that word with a Black person. Since I’ve been in my new position I have joined the team that does outreach to inner-city families and parent engagement. I’ve also become a part of my school’s PBS team where we have analyzed data that shows that Black children are the only children in our school’s system that have been documented with write up’s. Such a small population of my school is Black, so I brought it to the attention of my teammates that this isn’t right and had the

conversation with them about recognizing their biases and think about how they are responding to and interacting with each child on a daily basis and how their race and economic status may be playing a part in those interactions. Both my principal and vice principal are Black and I felt very comfortable having these conversations in front of them and with them about race, bias, and racism. I would be comfortable using this word in a room full of Students of Color after spending time with them on the history of the word and how and why it was used. I would also inquire about their feelings on the word, how it makes them feel and how they've heard it used. I of course would need to have a great relationship with my students and have built a comfortable environment where they feel safe. I think the way I use the word can impact my students so I must be careful, but I do think it's an important conversation to have if it's appropriate to the context of a situation or the curriculum. We can't pretend like the word doesn't exist or like it doesn't have an impact on people. Obviously there could be potential harm in using the word, offending a child or making them feel uncomfortable around me or their peers, it could change my relationship with them, and that's why I feel I need to know my students, where they stand, where they come from, what their background is, before going forward with any conversation about race or the use of the N word.

For her entire life, she experienced very little accountability for her actions and shared that she never had been held accountable for upholding whiteness. From her perspective she was given intellectual permission by an educator to use certain language in context. Her comments in our exchange reinforced that she believed she had not only accumulated white immunity from being held accountable but now had intellectual immunity that covered or outweighed any negative consequences that might come from her language use.

Each of the participants expressed some level of being able to shed the responsibility of being part of the racialized experience. Most instances were not as significant as Gloria's response or as overt, however, by the nature of the fact that they discussed the concept of willingness as a day to day action, it framed the concept that they viewed themselves as individually being able to come in and out of the work of disrupting whiteness. This framework continued to shape how they interacted and viewed their students as individuals and often without context of understanding the identity of race and the lived impact of those identities. This was heavily reinforced by the way they only talked about race being a factor when People or Students of Color were present in situations. The notion of race being something they needed to think about only when People of Color were present, continued the normalization of the white experience, whiteness, and the nature in which they regularly invested in whiteness, in particular in white dominated spaces.

For example, Karen only began to recognize the importance of talking about race, learning about students and their experiences from a racialized perspective, when she began working with English Learners. Karen said:

I have a lot of students, even surprisingly in French class where English is their second language and parents at home don't speak English. That is something I have to think about like when I was making my syllabus for this year. I have to use more concise or simple language and have parents sign it and give it back to me, and I have that power of being a native English speaker I don't have to think about the language barrier. Which is kind of difficult, like with some of students like, I really have to go through and explain things with them. They are all brilliant students, you know they are all driven to take a third language cause they could just take the heritage Spanish classes and get their

credits. They don't have to take a language they don't know, which is a really cool program the Spanish heritage program it gets them to focus on, it gets them to focus on writing, they can speak it and hear it but can't always write it, so they focus on grammar mechanics.

Karen's discussion of meeting her students on an individual level is consistent with how she viewed oppression, racism, and whiteness. She mentioned that her limited experience with working with cultures and races different from her own during her preparation limited her ability to understand how to connect with her students, and was something she was actively working on addressing. Her thoughts and reactions were completely different when she was student teaching in a predominately white environment. She disclosed the concept or the thought of being conscious of race rarely ever occurred. The moments in which she felt she needed to challenge whiteness often involved behavior of white students. For example, while teaching one day, a few white men, she described as "really good guys", made some comments that were "somewhat racist". Karen felt compelled to create a learning experience for these students however, also was mindful of the potential pushback for "pushing ideology". Karen's timorous nature in not wanting to "politically challenge" her students, and only respond when an individual made bias or racist comments, furthered the perpetuation of the misunderstanding that whiteness operated from an individualized frame. Furthermore, it created a sense that she was willing to let the investment in white ideals continue in mostly white spaces.

In addition, her connection to whiteness and her racialized experience as a white person is also somewhat constantly challenged in how she viewed her role as a disruptor of whiteness. At the end of our discussion, Karen admitted that she needed to do a better job understanding how her Students of Color perceived her whiteness to impact their experience. She began to start

to engage on a systems level, however her framework was still heavily grounded in seeing her ability, her interactions, disconnected with the greater system which she was part of.

Each of the participants then shared experiences in which they only were able to challenge or recognize the ability to disrupt whiteness by thinking of their students as individuals. For example, Gloria saw her role in disrupting whiteness was at the student level, and creating space for her students to engage on issues of race and racism while at the same time making sure her lessons reflected the students' identities. In thinking about how she approached this and what she learned she shared:

It is important to have difficult and uncomfortable conversations with my students because the steps we take as teachers impact our future, our students they are the future, and unless they get a quality education especially on the topics of whiteness and racism, the problems we have today will racism, bias, and ultimately whiteness will persist

She felt the most effective way to work against and disrupt whiteness was to work directly with her students and engage them in practices, which included addressing issues of bias that occurred between her students. For Gloria, the concept of challenging whiteness came at the individual level and in the moment.

After engaging with each of the participants, I began to notice how their experiences were heavily shaped by their formative experiences, but also reinforced by the nature of how they were taught to teach to all students. They often confused the nature of teaching to the individual, and getting to know their students on the individual level, without thinking about the larger connections of their students' identities to the learning and educational experience. Karen believed her experiences in teacher preparation aided in her focus on the individual child. When

talking about teaching, Karen's face would often light up. She knew she was a novice teacher, but it was clear she cared about and for her students. She reflected:

I really just think about my kids when I am teaching. . . and I think about their situations and what they are dealing with at home. . . I went through all the classes and checked who was on IEP, who is McKinney Vento status, which is pretty big in our area. . . and what languages are spoken at home.

Karen described in her attempt to frame the learner in the context of the content, but often evaded the concept of race and the systemic connections beyond the individual. Even in her consideration of the individual, it was their identity as English Learners that became her focus rather than framing it from an intersectional perspective and thinking about it from a cultural, racial, and language learning perspective.

Jake shared that he worked to spend his privilege and often tried to engage in how he was part of the larger system. However, Jake's actions still remained heavily on the individual frame of interaction. Even in the context of teaching, Jake's comments often reflected more of his own "checking" of his behaviors, reactions, and bias in an effort to not further the situation or values supporting whiteness. It was almost as if his self-reflective nature turned his thoughts inward and resulted in being cautious as to not be "racist" or do something that would be perceived as with bias by a Person of Color. Jake managed to navigate challenging his own whiteness, but had difficulty moving from the individual frame to the systemic frame because he lacked the skills and knowledge to recognize and unpack cultural, political, and ideological whiteness that was pervasive in education.

Megan too felt challenged in moving beyond the individual frame. Often she described experiences in which she struggled moving beyond individual actions and intention of action as

the major actors of perpetuating whiteness. To make this point Megan shared, “it gets back to how whiteness has been normalized, and I believe that treating people equal and everyone having equal opportunities despite their skin color is right and it is my job to help that”. She then discussed how she recognized the systemic piece but became frustrated with not having the ability to make a large impact on the system. She believed each individual had the right to their beliefs and questioned how she could and ought to challenge those beliefs.

Megan’s uncertainty and wavering I think surprised her a bit, as she had presented early in our discussions a very confident person in how she operated and believed herself to be. She then began to realize that in action, it was more difficult and this started to become a barrier for her. Megan attributed some of this to the way the system wants you to engage all learners. However, it was if she was placing her framework of celebrating the individual but disconnecting the individual from their racial identity and thus marginalizing the aspect of race as a significant factor in someone’s lived experience.

Megan felt that because there was a perception of whiteness and white supremacy had been politicized and challenging values, systems, and structures upholding whiteness might be viewed by parents, other teachers, or even administrators as pushing a liberal agenda. She explained that she believed there needed to be a curricular piece to “fall back on and point to”, and that makes it less “political” and more about the content. Megan began to recognize that she could make greater challenges to the system by engaging colleagues and their actions. However, again, it was often based on individual actions or bias. Megan shared that she had the ability to interpret the curriculum, select materials, and create a learning environment that challenged whiteness, but often the larger system was difficult to comprehend and understand.

Sally's experience began to surface more transparently the nature of how white students who believed themselves to be individuals and disconnected from race is problematic when operating in a framework of teaching to all learners and seeing learners as individuals. Sally's explanations and experiences personified that she often projected her own experience as white person and her immunity from being connected to being white with Students of Color, in not recognizing how their race impacted their lived experience.

Sally explained, her teaching framework fully embraced the concepts committed to reaching every child in her classroom. In talking about her approach she stated;

I live by a cheesy motto in making everyone feel like they are somebody, that they are valued, I feel like this is important for where I teach because my students do not feel like they are valued, you know by society.

It was easy for Sally to think about her interactions with students on a one on one basis, and to reach them individually. However, she still struggled with connecting their experiences to larger systemic whiteness and how she might contribute to upholding the structures in their lives. Furthermore, as previously mentioned Sally operated with utilizing color evasiveness and did not want to acknowledge or recognize her students' race, because she said "I see them as wonderful people, I don't want to see them as Black, or whatever". This statement in itself frames Blackness from a deficit, and is largely problematic.

When talking about how she interpreted the role of a teacher in challenging whiteness, she stated that she felt it was important. Her examples however were with challenging racist values and language, for example when a fellow student used a racial slur, she thought it was important to call them out and challenge them. Very rarely, did Sally interrogate her own practices and beliefs that upheld whiteness. Sally said that she really struggled to challenge the

status quo directly, and at times even had difficulty challenging overtly racist behaviors because she became nervous and did not want to say “the wrong thing”. In addition, Sally also found it difficult while student teaching to challenge much of the status quo because of her status and the power dynamics of being a guest. She shared that she would had difficulty with addressing whiteness when it came from someone that supervised, managed, or had more seniority over her. At times it seemed that her individualized narratives, meaning her approach to each individual learner, was also shading her inability to recognize cognitively the larger systems and the connections between her students and the oppressive systems that are stifling urban communities where she taught

Laura like Sally, had a similar perspective that framed how she viewed teaching. It was during her time during student teaching that Laura solidified her teaching framework and belief that “all children deserve the right and opportunity to learn”. She did say that in the first three years, each of her courses helped build that philosophy but it was during her equity and justice class and then in student teaching that she began to really understand the importance and need to support each individual learner. During her student teaching placement she began to embrace how each learner is unique and has their own story. Laura reflected, “I learned so much from my placement, and I feel personally like every student is capable of learning and they all have their potential”. She later stated that it was her job to help her students realize their potential and give them the opportunities while removing barriers to aid in fulfilling their potential. Laura however, had difficulty in viewing her students through a contextualized racial lens, thus limiting her ability to deconstruct how her students’ lived experiences has impacted their learning.

Expressing a commitment to teaching all learners and teaching individual learners is not inherently a negative. However, when coupled with white people, who have spent their entire life

having the concept of race become distanced from the lived experience, and the concepts of individualization associated with an individual's access and hard work without recognizing the implication of race, is problematic. White people have been inoculated from experiencing the negative and traumatic toxicity related to race and racial oppression (Cabrera, 2019), thus they become challenged to examine their learners in context of race because they themselves had never as Ella shared, "been forced to consider race". The next section of this chapter moves the point of individualization further in examining the concept of fragility, and how the participants shared that their fragility manifested when they in situations where they felt they were less than or incomplete as learners.

Portraits of fragility: Being viewed as incomplete and fear of the loss of status

As future educators, the participants all shared an expressed understanding the profession demanded that they continue to evolve and learn as part of their ongoing praxis. However, most described the concept of education in the concept of demonstrating knowledge and learning in advancing through a system from one grade or experience to the next. When theorizing about their learning, each of them expressed an awareness that learning was a constant process. However, in the practical sense, most thought of their own learning as an experience in which there was mastery and an endpoint, and this was reinforced throughout their time in the education system. Thus, when thinking of themselves in the context of becoming learned individuals, where each of them expressed being "good students", it was often the thought of not being recognized as complete or not having an understanding of race that caused or created a sense of fragility. Moreover, it was the fear associated with not wanting to make mistakes or not living what they believed to be their ideal self that resulted in fragility impacting their ability to engage whiteness. Each of the participants on some level saw themselves as champions for social

justice. The notion of not being an ally threatened their perceived credibility as advocates for social justice.

Ella's story was wrought with a framework of being someone who "stood up for something". Whether it was her brothers and sisters or her friends, she realized that she needed to be viewed as someone who "got it". However, whiteness and being an active anti-racist does not have an endpoint, thus it was difficult for Ella in situations where she was challenged on her whiteness. In spaces where it was comfortable that were designed for learning, Ella took risks, however in other spaces where it was less about a collective growth for the whole, she was less likely to put herself in a position to lose credibility as a social justice ally and advocate. This only moderately translated to the classroom, but Ella admitted that she was less fearless than she originally perceived herself to be. Ella shared:

I definitely learned that I am not as fearless as I thought, and I am definitely scared of repercussions. . . like I need to look at myself and better understand why am I not talking about these things, you need to be brazen if you are going to change the system.

In reflecting on her teaching she had not taken the risks she thought she had, because she allowed herself due to time, energy, curriculum expectations, and other factors to take time off from being constantly involved in upending whiteness. She admitted that this often occurred because she wanted to survive and finish student teaching.

Jake suffered from a similar experience, although his fragility manifested in direct response to his mentor teacher and the environment of his placement. Jake realized that he could not employ anti-racist practices, or shift the power dynamics of the classroom environment and challenge whiteness because the school he was assigned to had normalized learning in a

traditional sense, which included upholding whiteness. Jake expressed that he received less criticism and more accolades when he “followed the script” and followed his mentor’s lead.

He claimed to have a race conscious approach to teaching, but felt he was not allowed to be explicit because of the power dynamics that existed between him and his mentor. In the moments where he was able to do this, he shifted the curriculum and the way he was teaching, and the students rejected his attempts because, as he put it, “they wanted their workbooks because that is what they knew”. Jake fell back into using practices that were supported by his mentor. He was at a point where he just wanted to make it through student teaching, survive, and not fail.

Jake shared that as he was finishing his student teaching experience, he noticed the student teachers in his cohort that did well or were getting a lot of praise were those that seemed to be duplicating the systems in the schools. He shared these systems, structures, and practices “fit” the dynamics that upheld whiteness. Those, like him, that tried to advance more “radical” pedagogical strategies were challenged, and in order to survive were forced to adopt the practices of their mentor or of the school where they were conducting their student teaching experience. As he started to just do the basics and follow his mentor’s script, his feedback became more positive and he was affirmed for his teaching.

Jake described that he also became hesitant and lacked confidence in supporting his Students of Color. He attributed this largely due to both the lack of experience working with Students of Color in pre-student teaching field experiences and the lack of specificity in preparation related to working through whiteness and power dynamics in the context of teaching. He feared failing them, and thus found it easier to simply follow his mentor’s plans and strategies. As it related to working with Students of Color he shared

I was never really, I obviously was taught to treat everyone equal and never accept anything than the best. I found myself in a lot of double binds in that, you know am I like being too demanding, is this conversation hurtful or is this way I am holding them accountable too much or pushing my power. You know if I am not doing that am I just complacent in assuming they are not capable of doing the standards, I never knew where to do that, and there was never a discussion on that kind of stuff.

Jake constantly questioned himself, and thus he at times lacked the willingness to engage and disrupt whiteness out of fear for making a mistake. It was also really important for Jake to be seen as someone who supported his Students of Color. Thus, if he were to make a wrong move or saying something inappropriate, he felt as if he would lose their trust, thus he realized he did not “take as many risks” as he probably should have in challenging the systemic and cultural whiteness present in his classroom.

Laura also felt that in order to survive student teaching it was easier to not address whiteness and normalize the already inherited system and culture. Laura shared several instances that both framed her fragility and connections to white immunity. She shared that as a novice teacher and especially in student teaching she had no power and did not want to put herself in a position to not pass student teaching. She said, “you know, as a student teacher it was not even my classroom, so my ability to control the environment and lessons was limited”. So, as in her case, being placed with a teacher that did not work to disrupt whiteness, whiteness was normalized. Laura then, said “it is my job to follow the curriculum you know, because the state makes it that way, and that is what I am required to do”. However after further reflection Laura acknowledge she could make changes to the lessons but it was difficult to always being aware of or having the time to deconstruct “all of the aspects of whiteness in all moments”.

For Sally, Megan, and Gloria the connection to being labeled less than was more overt. Sally felt cautious about engaging in discussion on race outside of the classroom, because being labeled a racist or someone who was unaware was not an option. Sally talked about not “always having the right thing to say”, not always recognizing the best way to work with her students, and trying to modify instruction without teaching from a deficit point of view. At times though Sally operated from a framework of fragility in that she had difficulty tracking her own whiteness or defensiveness in a situation. Often when she described a situation in which someone challenged her whiteness, her initial response was to reject that race was a factor, and this she later admitted was largely due to not wanting to be labeled as a racist or as someone who “did not get it”. Sally, shared that she, “tried really hard” to be someone who understood and was there to support People of Color. However, her constant pursuit of support, inhibited her ability for self-growth and development, because she often described instances in which she was unwilling to engage in her own areas of growth.

Gloria also was challenged with recognizing her own areas of growth. At one point she discussed that after taking a self-assessment in one her classes where she “was the only person who was neutral related to biases”. Gloria had difficulty inwardly examining why this was, or how she may have intentionally tried to skew the results as to appear as though she was more aware than she really was. Gloria explained that she really enjoyed arguing, and part of what fueled her desire to be an advocate for social justice, was the nature of being “right” and arguing with others with a “point of being right”. Gloria’s quest for being right, clouded her own understanding and often mystified her ability to recognize her bias and white immunity. For example, in a class she argued with another student who was also a first generation student and identified as Latina. Gloria made the assertion that she too struggled and that their challenges

were similar given their status as first generation students, completely dismissing the students intersectionalized identity of being both Latina and first generation.

When I began to challenge Gloria on this topic, she quickly asserted that the conversation was not about race but about being first generation. Her response indicated a color evasive attitude, but also that she did not want to be viewed as wrong, even in reflection during our discussion. In addition to being viewed as wrong, Gloria also explained her fear of losing privilege. Gloria shared that she wondered what would happen when being white was no longer normalized, and that she feared the comforts she might lose. She indicated that losing privilege did not make her any less willing to engage whiteness, but she admitted at times it gave her pause. Gloria's response to the conversation about the n-word also resonated a level of fragility. In that discussion, even after we discussed the challenges that she might face working in a community of Black and African American folks, she dug into her belief that what she was doing was right. It was as if she was so grounded in not wanting to be wrong, that she could not reflect on the impact she had on others nor show any personal growth or challenge. There is no doubt that Gloria had been able to overcome her trigger of the need to be right and work through her fragility, but it was difficult to get to that point for her. Often when she did move through her fragility, it was in moments where she first felt validated, and then seemed as if she could then move into a place of vulnerability.

The concept of vulnerability and the relationship to fragility was really interesting to experience throughout my time with each of the participants. When they expressed instances in which they experienced vulnerability and the willingness to think more critically about themselves, and moved through the need to be seen as complete, they demonstrated a greater ability to connect to their part in perpetuating whiteness and were more willing to engage in

disrupting whiteness. For example, Laura experienced profound change when she was able to allow herself to be vulnerable. Jake too was able to track and name his growth directly related to his experiences, in particular his experiences related to trauma. Jake recognized that in order to make meaning out of his trauma, he needed to engage in it directly, and allow himself to feel, which was not a place he often wanted to reside.

Out of all of the participants, Karen and Gloria deflected the most, even though at times they showed points of vulnerability and willingness to work through their fragility. For Karen, it was in a space of challenging her “bubble”. For Gloria, it came in instances in which she allowed herself to not want to be “right” in the situation. For each person, however; the lack of willingness to experience vulnerability impacted their ability to engage their fragility and thus they became unable to challenge whiteness in those instances.

Through each of these three themes: working through fragility, the dynamic of individualism, and the obfuscation of whiteness all began to shape a complete framework of how the participants both worked to challenge and often were left upholding whiteness.

Unfortunately, these learned behaviors, practices, values, and ideals were often upheld, and even in instances, supported in the teacher preparation programs. The final section of this chapter will explore the miseducation of these seven participants during their teacher preparation.

Portraits of miseducation: Teacher preparation’s responsibility in perpetuating whiteness

In initial conversations, each participant thought highly of their teacher preparation program. However, through critical dialogue and conversation, they each revealed that the construct of race, identity, and whiteness was rarely if ever discussed. Even the intersection of race, gender, and socio economic status was not discussed in the context of teaching or learning. For each participant, they shared how each of them had experienced a miseducation, which

resulted in the inability to critically engage their own identity as a white person and the ability to challenge and disrupt whiteness in practice.

The challenges faced by the teacher preparation programs, were significant in that they were inheriting students who had for entire lifetime normalized whiteness and had experienced an educational system that normalized whiteness. While these seven individuals completed programs at four different universities across the United States, each shared common experiences that often not only failed to acknowledge race as a factor, but in multiple instances gave permission to and complicity demonstrated the value of upholding whiteness.

In each person's situation the way their program engaged on the issue of race and whiteness varied. However, most shared that their programs never really intentionally focused on race. Karen shared:

It [race, racism, whiteness] was not ignored, but at the same time it was not the main focus when we discussed diversity, this was just due to our location. My professors and classmates knew that for the most part we would be dealing much more economic diversity in our classroom rather than racial diversity as far as students.

The fact that Karen's program felt the need to only discuss issues connected to the constructs of race when there was a direct relationship to People of Color furthered and reinforced Karen's learned experiences that began during her formative years. The messages she received from her program failed to address the concept intersectionality by not engaging the layers of identity in particular the intersectionality of race and class. In addition, her program reinforced that race as a topic or construct was not relevant for white people to talk about in historically white and predominately white spaces.

Megan, who attended the same program as Karen, shared similar experiences in that race was never really discussed. In fact Megan shared that most of what she learned about challenging whiteness came from her time at summer camp. She shared, her program did not really provide her skills, the language, or the ability to understand how to engage in practices that disrupt whiteness in a school setting. Megan felt the language aspect would have been helpful at the very least for some of her peers who seemed to not have any significant understanding of how to even talk about race let alone challenge whiteness. Megan was a bit mystified that some individuals were able to successfully complete the program holding deficit oriented values about People of Color, urban environments, and “anything they really did not experience first-hand themselves”.

Jake too felt frustrated about his peers inability to engage on whiteness, racism, or anything of “societal consequence”.

I think there is a lot of like really, really cringe worthy laden conservatism in some of the more Socratic discussions we had. It is hard to give those ideas any weight because they like, they to me do not make sense, you know. It is so centered on one single culture, or one time in one place, and you are one of many groups that exist in that culture, and you think of whatever betters yourself is best for everybody else. I am not sure how others could have those ideas, be teachers, and want to help people.

Jake left his program feeling frustrated and mystified that the individuals who excelled were those that more often than not were the most “oppressive” and “bought into traditional values”. He shared that while his program tried to engage on issues of whiteness, racism, justice and equity, there were no consequences for students failing to internalize these concepts and recognize their part in perpetuating the system. He shared it was great to have the discussion, but without any real consequence he felt there was no need for a future teacher to “buy-in to the

important concepts of supporting equity and justice as a framework for teaching”. In his words they were “allowed to just believe in whatever framework they wanted, and those that held the most traditional, often got the better grades and more accolades”.

Jake also expressed frustration that most of his peers seemed to only want to teach certain types of students or teach in environments similar to where they grew up. From his perspective, his program reinforced this desire by not challenging students to teach and think critically about the concept of teaching to all students. In addition, he felt that his program’s lack of ability to work in urban settings and provide critical reflective praxis on race only enhanced other individual’s inability to engage in teaching students from multiple backgrounds. He shared that his program was really “good about making sure we understood it” but there was no impact or willingness for his cohort to have to make connections between themselves and the systems that upheld and operated oppression, racism, white supremacy, and whiteness.

Sally too shared sentiments that her program on the surface would talk about race, but never really engaged her or her peers to think critically as educators. Sally shared, “we learned a lot about different teaching frameworks, and that was helpful but people could choose whatever which may have not valued thinking about race”. Sally felt that she was really well prepared to understand the depth of her content, and felt she was really well prepared to teach in “homogenous white schools”. However, Sally never mentioned that her program prepared her to engage constructs of race or about whiteness in mostly white spaces.

Toward the end of our conversations, Sally became critical of her program’s lack of approach to challenge future educators to be able to dismantle systems of oppression through education praxis. After a few minutes talking about her experiences in general, Sally began to reflect on a critical aspect missing from her preparation. She stated, that there was inconsistency

from faculty as to the importance of addressing and working with systemic oppression like whiteness. She shared, “if we learned about addressing or challenging whiteness or any oppression it was more indirect. They never were like hey this is what you say, do, or how you name it”. For Sally, everything related to social justice seemed like her program was operating with check box. When I asked her to describe what she meant, she explained, the faculty in her program tried to address all of things they needed to address in standards, but some things seemed less significant and did not get the time and attention she felt were needed to adequately prepare her for what she now faced in her job. She continued to explain

There was one professor, he taught science methods, and I loved him. He was the person that gave me the Freire book, he talked about challenging the education system but still was not always specific in giving us skills or ideas on what to do

Sally then came to the realization that her program, nestled in a community that had significant racial diversity, had not prepared her to work with the schools her university was intended to serve. Sally sat for a moment and shared, “I think I never had any direct teaching about what to do or how to do it in the community nearby, which is interesting to me, specifically because of where my university is located”. Sally’s indication that she lacked skills was also resonated by the other participants in the study.

The person who had the greatest reaction to her miseducation as it started to become part of her realization during the time we spent together was Laura. Laura reached a turning point in our conversations and became more critical and reflective of her experience at MAU during her preparation to become a teacher. Prior to her critical moment in the middle of her second interview, she was passive in responding as to her ability to engage on race, and while acknowledging a lack of experience talking about whiteness, she at times used this as an excuse

for her experiences. However, that changed during our final conversations. Laura's reflection on her experience was positive when it came to content preparation and development of skills related to general pedagogical strategies. When asked about thinking about teaching as an anti-racist practice, Laura stated she was not at all prepared to engage in anti-racist teaching strategies.

Laura first began responding to this question like most questions, by the end of the exchange five minutes later, I could tell she clearly felt that she was not adequately prepared. Her frustration signaled that she felt somewhat cheated during her time at MAU even though MAU had a strong and positive national reputation for preparing teachers. Laura shared,

I think it is one of those things, you go they do a lecture, have small group discussions, you leave, I never felt like anyone talked antiracism or whiteness, no one brought it up ever, if it was in a chapter or discussion it was like a statement that was letting us know we need to be able to work with diverse students

As Laura ended her statement I could tell she was starting to feel frustrated, but then I heard the frustration continue to build when I asked if she was given skills to address whiteness or even bias. Her response was a clear and resounding "no, no they did not". So then I decided to push a bit more and see whether or not she felt it was important. Not only did Laura's response describe it as essential, but then she began to unpack feelings of frustration regarding her first three years in her program. Laura stated,

It is so important, what I have learned in my Masters program and with this study I could continue to grow, it is relevant issues, and it is something we are going to deal with. We are not even exposed to and it can have a great impact on our career, I feel like there is such a focus on, just pointless classes, that readings you forget in four months that meant

nothing, and the classes are not practical, what you learned was not exposed to you in a way where you could be like ‘time out lets give examples of this concept’. I honestly feel like the first three years of my undergrad was a waste and the last year is where I learned everything, I could have skipped everything and I would have been as capable as I am now.

Laura’s critique is not just about learning about whiteness, but teaching in general. She felt like there was very little connection of the content and practical elements she learned in the first three years to what she would later apply in her fourth year during student teaching. Most of what she learned she learned in practice while student teaching and in a specific course on equity and justice.

Gloria, who attended the same institution as Laura, also demonstrated components of miseducation. Gloria was the most satisfied with her experience, however, her actions and the way she engaged on certain topics, conflicted her personal responses related to being well prepared to challenge whiteness. Specifically, Gloria’s inability to unpack and challenge her understanding of what was discussed by the guest lecturer on the concept of the n-word, created a sense of miseducation, and a failure of her program to contextualize that conversation for all of the individuals in the room. In addition, Gloria’s story about her experience as a first generation student also indicated her program lacked critical components in teaching their teacher candidates to understand intersectionality. Gloria was allowed to operate in a framework that ignored her intersecting identities, and even if the conversation occurred challenging her concept, the learning never happened, as she viewed herself as “winning the argument”.

All of these stories and experiences lead to a summarized understanding, that these programs did not adequately address concepts related to identity, intersectionality, whiteness,

systemic oppression, and providing tools and skills for disrupting hegemonic practices. In addition, even if there were small assignments, a section of a course, or even a course on “diversity”, they failed to measure the impact of their teaching on these concepts, because the participants walked away with the perception their program did not prepare them to engage on this topic. All of the participants shared that when they were evaluated with a summative assessment, the assessment never specifically talked about identity or constructs of race. Rather, it used global language that was never contextualized to address the specificity of all of the intersectional identities of the learners or the educators. Furthermore, because all of the mentor teachers working with the participants during their student teaching and the university faculty overseeing the student teaching experienced identified as white, they too had normalized whiteness and failed to ever engage on the topic of race, whiteness, or white supremacy in the context of the classroom and educational environment.

Summary

In this chapter I discussed through aspects of portraiture the five major themes that emerged from this study. The five themes include: a) disrupting whiteness is a choice; b) the lingering impact of learned color evasive, race neutral, and post racialized practices; c) the possessiveness of white immunity, the nature of individualism, and difficulty naming and owning systemic whiteness; d) the fragility of being thought of as incomplete and loss of status; e) the miseducation of pre-service teachers on race, whiteness and white supremacy. These five themes begin to expose the challenges faced by white pre-service teachers in addressing their own possessiveness of whiteness, the perpetuation of whiteness in the education system, and how teacher education programs further problematize the ability to address issues of white supremacy and whiteness as educators.

Chapter Five includes a review of the five themes and the relationship of those five themes contextualized with related literature. I will discuss implications impacting teacher education to address fragility, white immunity, and strategies related to being able to disrupt both individual and systemic whiteness in the education system. In addition, I will discuss potential areas for future research that include examining the concept of vulnerability as a praxis for engaging whiteness and the need to unpack and address the systemic nature of whiteness in education. Finally, I provide a brief self-portrait as a reflection of my experience in this project.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to enhance understanding of how whiteness shaped the lens and perspectives of pre-service teachers and how they navigated disrupting and perpetuating whiteness. This chapter includes a critical discussion of the five thematic refrains that emerged from the seven participants' related to the three primary research questions guiding this study:

a). What role does white fragility play in a white pre-service teacher's willingness to engage in whiteness? b). What factors are associated with willingness to disrupt or perpetuate whiteness for white pre-service teachers? c). How has their teacher preparation program enhanced their ability to engage in challenging whiteness in education?

I began by examining and discussing the thematic refrains that emerged from this study in context with the literature. I then discuss how these findings related to three primary research questions. Third, implications and recommendations for current and future white educators to decolonize their understanding of the educational experience, practices of teacher preparation programs and policy implications are made based on the findings of this study. In addition, I discuss future research related to whiteness. I conclude this chapter by providing a personal reflective portrait of my own experience and growth related to this experience.

The five thematic refrains for this study are: a) disrupting whiteness is a choice; b) the lingering impact of learned color evasive, race neutral, and post racialized practices; c) the possessiveness of white immunity, the nature of individualism, and difficulty naming and owning systemic whiteness; d) the fragility of being thought of as incomplete and loss of status; e) the miseducation of pre-service teachers on race, whiteness and white supremacy. The following section will review the discussion of these thematic refrains and their contextualization with the literature.

Thematic Refrains Contextualized with Literature

At the beginning and at several points throughout my conversation with each participant, I asked, can you in your own terms define what whiteness means to you? I did this to better understand the evolution of understanding, if any for each participant related to whiteness and their own situated experience with whiteness. The first time I asked this question, each participant stared at me, and stumbled in their response. Some talked about whiteness being related to memes that reflect silly cultural habits of white people, while others meandered through talking about whiteness indirectly. Feagin (2013), discussed how in several studies white people in general use positive stereotypes to define themselves. However, my participants showed a sense of self-denigration when talking about being white, but their examples and perceptions were for the most part social and politically benign, as opposed to the often deficit oriented perception that white people place on People of Color (Feagin, 2013; Gillborn, 2010; Harper, 2010; Matias & Lou, 2015).

Nonetheless, my participants found it difficult to define and name whiteness on a systemic level. Throughout our time together, their language adjusted and by the final interview, they were able to talk about whiteness in the context of possessiveness (Lipsitz, 2006) and property (Harris, 1993) while acknowledging the cultural and political implications of systemic whiteness. Given the challenges and struggles to identify, define, and name whiteness, they demonstrated whiteness as “a nimble form of oppression” (Cabrera, 2019, p. 16). In addition, their actions and responses confirmed the sole purpose of whiteness was to create structures of survival (Brandehoff & Silverstein, 2016; Matias & Mackey, 2016; Nayak, 2007) with the notion of attempting to obfuscate and bewilder those to think that race is not a factor and whiteness is normalized.

Therefore, with the understanding that whiteness serves to sustain and perpetuate itself, I began to wonder how these seven white people who have grown up in a cultured system where whiteness is normalized would be able to actively disrupt and challenge the system in their chosen profession as teachers. After analyzing the data five thematic refrains emerged that demonstrate the complexities of being both someone who perpetuated and challenged whiteness almost in concert. The next section discussed how the first theme, the concept of challenging whiteness as a choice, is contextualized in the literature.

Challenging whiteness is a choice

Leonardo (2009) theorized whiteness often manifests as an unwillingness to name, challenge, and disrupt cultural, political, and social practices that normalize being white perpetuate practices of white supremacy. The concept of willingness stemmed from previous research in which participants from those studies engaged in dialogue, discussion, and reflection or demonstrated behaviors and actions that challenged whiteness actively or with little aversion (Cabrera, 2009; Cabrera, 2012; Matias & Mackey, 2016).

Similar to Cabrera's (2009) study, the participants in this study found that willingness came after being aware. However, a few of the participants took this further, and described willingness more of a cycle. For example, Jake talked about that there needed to be a willingness by someone to examine their lived experience. He also shared it was important to enhance self-awareness of whiteness that seemingly goes unnoticed. Jake was critical of his mentor teacher by sharing that she would have difficulty with challenging whiteness because she rarely practiced self-reflection and had from his viewpoint little awareness of her own investment in whiteness. Ella furthered Jake's point, "I think, it can be a choice but also a point of ignorance, I think you can choose whether or not to engage in something that day". The participants were articulating

what Thompson and Tyagi (1996) described in their own autobiographies as a racialized awakening. The moment in which a white person begins to become cognizant of both being white and their stake in maintaining whiteness.

Green and Dantley (2013) discussed there are several stages to one's ability to work through whiteness which begins with the nature of unawareness as unconsciousness. While each participant could identify the moments in which they felt they were unaware, most had begun to strengthen their skillset in being able to identify and become conscious of their racialized experience. Green and Dantley (2013), identified that it is possible for someone to be conscious but still be incompetent as to how they navigate through disrupting their own relationship with whiteness let alone systemic whiteness. Depending on the circumstance and situation, each participants presented stories and instances that reflected vacillation between remaining conscious and being unconscious of their whiteness and largely remained ignorant as to how to disrupt the whiteness on a systemic level. Despite all seven participants at some point sharing that there must be a choice and willingness to challenge whiteness, each admitted still remaining somewhat unconscious of their whiteness in certain circumstances, largely due to the fact that their lived experiences have largely been normalized (Cabrera, 2019). This sentiment was largely echoed by Megan who shared that there needed to be starting place and willingness to engage in one's own consciousness, but at the end of the day, she felt at this point it was her responsibility to engage. She shared, one could simply just not be willing in a given day, because it was too difficult, limited time, or because it just was not part of the consciousness in a day.

The participants' of this study challenged Green and Dantley's (2013) findings to a certain degree because each shared moments of their life where now they believed because of their education, experience, and exposure that it was their choice to remain unaware or

unknowing. They explained and recognized that their level of understanding, or as Ella shared, the “choice to be ignorant”, was her choice to not continue to develop a deeper understanding. She also shared as an educator, there needed to be both the willingness to constantly evolve and educate one’s self, but also willingness to constantly engage in practices of challenging whiteness. Gloria shared Ella’s sentiment providing a clear understanding that because she had the education, and has learned about herself, about historical and current realities related to white supremacy, racism, and whiteness it was her job to not stop continuing to challenge her framework that biases toward operating in whiteness. Given each of the participants landing on some resolve that it was their responsibility to be willing, and that they had to, as Gloria shared “be better”, the concept of willingness is an appropriate descriptor for disruption and perpetuation. They took responsibility even if it was out of ignorance, as their ignorance as identified by Green and Dantley (2013) was born or a product of as Jake shared “the unwilling nature to not be self-reflective and self-critical”. In other words, at least on the surface or from a broad philosophical point of view, they were doing what Matias and Mackey suggested in that they were taking ownership and responsibility for their “emotional responses to learning about race, racism, white supremacy, and whiteness” (p. 37).

The lingering impact of learned color evasive, race neutral, and post racialized practice

Despite the participants consistent articulation that it was a choice to disrupt whiteness and it was their responsibility to be willing to engage and challenge whiteness, certain aspects of their lived experience impacted their willingness to challenge whiteness. Each participant identified that naming whiteness, recognizing whiteness, and being able to articulate how they recognized their role in systems of perpetuation were at times not, as Ella shared, “visible” to them. This largely was due to the fact that each participant grew up in an education system

committed to color evasive strategies where naming and talking about race had been eliminated from education (Leonardo, 2007; Rodriguez, 2015) and in their personal life they had been taught post racial ideologies.

Color evasion stems from laws and educational systems that both justify and attempt to maintain that all are equal ignoring constructs of race and the minoritization of People of Color, while simultaneously justifying and upholding the dominance of white supremacy (Annamma et al., 2017). Several studies have identified behavior and actions in which white people avoid race, claim race neutrality, and advance ideologies consistent with advancing concepts of white supremacy (Crenshaw, 1998; Diggles, 2014; Hagerman, 2016; Lewis, 2001; McCoy, Winkle-Wagner, & Luedke, 2015; Neville, Lilly, Duran, Lee, & Browne, 2000). Each of my participants actively shared that they were responsible for addressing race, and each acknowledged they in fact do acknowledge and recognize the construct and cultural aspects of racial identity. Thus, their actions and behaviors in instances that express race neutrality in decisions or failure to acknowledge race or “see” race as part of the lived reality are evidence of Annamma, Jackson, and Morrison’s (2017) theorization of color evasive ideology.

As discussed in Chapter Four and explored in-depth in each portrait, each participant was impacted by messages and behaviors masking whiteness with normalized experiences. These experiences shaped their viewpoint and enhanced their willingness to operationalize post racial ideologies. These ideologies challenged their abilities to critically examine race as a social construct which enabled the persistence and possessive nature of sustaining and advancing whiteness (Crenshaw, 2002; Delgado & Stefancic, 2012; Gillborn, 2005; Solorzano & Yosso, 2002, 2002). Most participants referenced the election of President Obama as something that was celebrated and thought of an advancement of progress related to race. However, Obama’s

election often simply confirmed and upheld beliefs that race was not a factor and advanced color evasive ideologies (Bonilla-Silva, 2014). Each of the participants either grew up in communities and homes that were racially homogenous or even if living in racially diverse environments the concepts, constructs, and deconstruction of being white was avoided. Kwegyir Aggrey (2007) had similar findings in that participants not only had homogenous upbringings but their experience in these homogenous environments led to having difficulty in deconstructing their whiteness.

The most complicated and pervasive act of growing up in color evasive ideologies came when they talked about teaching. Each named moments where they shared it was difficult to track whiteness or think about race as a factor. The most interesting discussion was with Karen, she discussed a conflicted need to continue post racial ideologies. Karen shared that she framed her teaching and approach to education as follows:

I think the goal of progressive and modern society is to you know eliminate institutional racism, and that is something that you know like I just said, what I tried to do actively, by combatting it or to combat it, is to act like it does not matter”.

However, when Karen spoke about what it meant to treat institutional racism like it did not matter, she shared that she did not think about race and treated her students equally. She placed little value on their racial identity, how that identity impacted their experience, or how her identity impacted their experience. Her actions and beliefs are a prime example of how color evasion action is a conscious but evasive action, and is responsible for perpetuation of whiteness and white supremacy (Annamma et al., 2017).

Race neutral policies in teaching, and at the universities and colleges were also supportive of reinforcing the concepts of not addressing race or whiteness. Gillborn (2005)

discussed that education policy is developed and designed for supporting white supremacy whilst upholding aspects of race neutrality and color evasion. Each participant struggled with being able to name and identify aspects of whiteness in their programs. Karen frequently found herself saying that, “in this day and age, shouldn’t we be able to move beyond race”, thus coming to the conclusion that if we are able to just in our minds move beyond race systemic whiteness and white supremacy will dissipate. Similarly other participants shared that very rarely did they think about race, especially in spaces where all or most of the students identified as white. Rieger (2015) discussed in a self-reflective discussion, that the ability to challenge and disrupt whiteness is significantly impaired when there is little importance on the impact of being white and deconstruction of what that means in the racialized context of the United States. Both Ella and Jake commented on the overt pervasive normalization of whiteness in teaching, and the fact that it was so normalized for them they had to work very hard to even begin to deconstruct and name. They were future educators both actively and passively operating from a framework of color-evasion and post racial ideologies which allowed for them to perpetuate hidden norms (Annamma et al., 2017) while avoiding and obfuscating the complexities of their experiences as a white people advancing through a system designed for them and recreating the system within the educational project. In other words they were continuing the colonizing nature of learning through the educational project in the United States that was vested in maintaining, upholding, and normalizing whiteness.

Individualism and the possessiveness of white immunity

Cabrera (2019) described instances in which white people were inoculated or had immunity to racially oppressive experiences due to systemic racism and white supremacy. The participants in this study shared experiences in which they identified aspects of white immunity

in their experiences in daily life and as soon to be educators. Furthermore, each participant shared difficulty in naming whiteness and the nature in which they were willing to separate themselves as individuals from systemic racism and systemic whiteness both in the classroom and their daily lives. Seemingly their white immunity compounded with the operationalization of whiteness through possession (Lipsitz, 2006) and property (Annamma, 2015; Harris, 1993) added to the complexity of their experience in efforts to be disruptors.

In each conversation, participants shared stories relating the complexity of their experiences veiled in understanding that they had, in their words, “privilege”. However, in each instance the way they navigated their “privilege” only furthered Cabrera’s (2019) theorization of immunity in that they experienced and expected a “baseline standard for human interaction” (p. 13). For example, Jake discussed not having to think about race or the need to really challenge racial status quo if he did not choose to do so. Sally, similarly recognized that she held privileges of being white and thus did not experience negative treatment compared to her Colleagues, Peers, and Students of Color. Ella, furthered the inoculation of negative experiences based on being white by sharing, “I have a lot of privilege, and I am able to command and talk in space” and be heard and taken at “face value”.

Each participant had on some level come to terms with their immunity, and that ownership and deconstruction led to a furthered understanding of being white (Helms, 1996). Megan for example discussed the more she understood her privilege, the more she recognized the currency of whiteness and what it meant to be white in the context of the United States. Jake repeatedly discussed the importance of the ability to “relinquish the privileges of racism” (Helms, 1996, p. 157). Consistent with the theorization of white identity and despite demonstrating their ownership and understanding of their immunity, they all demonstrated

previous and current experiences of working through understanding being white and whiteness in a non-linear fashion (Helms, 1996, 1999; Jupp & Lensmire, 2016; Miville et al., 2005; Olitsky, 2015). Understanding their whiteness was contextual and dependent on a multitude of factors.

Most specifically, their regressions in understanding whiteness or where they often limited their understanding of disrupting whiteness stemmed from the belief that the perpetuation of whiteness occurred at the individual level. DeAngelo (2019), discussed that often white people, as an act of fragility, frame racism or whiteness as acts related to intention or of an individual with the intent of doing harm. A common thread in all of their narratives occurred in their inability to articulate whiteness and racism beyond the nature of actions on a person. DeAngelo shared, that white people will work to distance themselves from being associated with racism, and by only thinking of racism and whiteness as individualized acts absolved them from being linked to systemic ills. Green and Sonn (2006) similarly found participants often engaged in anti-racist behaviors or practices on an individual level, but systemically could not see themselves or acknowledge how they themselves were part of the greater whole related to racial injustice.

This manifested in the way they discussed themselves as educators as well. Most of them shared a sentiment that if they were doing no harm as long, they treated their students equally and fairly, and did not say anything racially offensive they should not be considered as part of problem. Essentially taking the color evasive viewpoints discussed in the previous section and reinforcing those beliefs based on the concept that racism and whiteness are products of intentional acts of harm. Participants responses related to disrupting whiteness at first always came from challenging someone who said something deemed “racially insensitive” or who as Diangelo (2019) discussed was intending to cause harm.

Similar to their viewpoint on how whiteness or racism occurs, they viewed disruption of whiteness as an individual challenging intentional harmful behaviors of another individual or group. For example Laura shared that she would address student behavior so they “understand that not one single person is going to be the same, and that is okay. I want my students to be able to feel safe in my class and talk about any issues they might be facing”. Others took a similar perspective by addressing potential behavior or actions. Aveling (2002) noted a similar finding, in that participants of their study believed if they treated students through a framework of individuality and equality, the participants were doing their due diligence to avoid being labeled as racist. Karen similarly shared:

I have not done anything I guess that is harmful, I mean I try not to do any of those things or hold stigmas, or intentionally perpetuate anything, but I mean um, it might be based on the people who share saying race, who perpetuate things historically you know, but me myself personally I would say no, just because you share traits with a certain group of people does not mean you are responsible for their actions

Applebaum (2010) theorized this concept heavily in the epistemology of complicity, where white students were found to think that being good absolved them from further action. Thompson (2003) argued that white people needed to move beyond doing kind acts and inappropriately placing themselves as anti-racist while not taking accountability to do the work by critically engaging the systems they are part of perpetuating. This finding further expands Cabrera’s (2019) theorization of white immunity in that not only were the participants experiencing inoculation from negative consequences based on racial identity, but also they expected to be inoculated and absolved from their whiteness by simply being nice to People of Color or doing what they perceived as no harm. Freire (2000) argued that in order to be an actor against

oppression one must see how they are an intricate part of the system and structures engaging on varying degrees in both liberation and oppression.

Each participant at some point named their ability to address systemic whiteness through their own lessons, but limited their perceived scope of influence to their personal actions and how they managed their learning environment in the classroom. Sally, Gloria, and Megan all talked about choosing text books that challenged the normalization of whiteness. Jake and Ella shared instances in which they tried to challenge perceptions about People of Color that history and science had framed from a deficit viewpoint.

The participants projected their own sense of being individuals with very little connection to their racial identity onto their students regardless of their students' racial identity. This became evident in the way they discussed how they interpreted the InTASC element of individualized instruction and teaching to each learner (Council for Chief State School Officers, 2013). Each of them shared they embraced this as a foundational element to their pedagogical framework, however; the manner in which they failed to cognitively engage the identities of race or the intersection of race with other identities was apparent. Ella shared, "I am not sure if I thought about race when I planned lessons, but most of my students were white". White pre-service teachers have been found to project fear, guilt, shame, and other areas associated with whiteness and white immunity on to students of color (Matias & Mackey, 2016). The participants in my study seemed to not only project fear and guilt, but also projected their own inability to connect race and the intersection of race with their identities onto their students, thus not thinking about instruction, power, and learning dynamics with race as a factor. This is consistent with Matias' (2013) work in which she discussed even the most well intentioned white people wishing to challenge racial injustice caused significant harm by not being able to identify and challenge

systemic whiteness. Furthermore, Matias articulated that despite, culturally relevant strategies, white educators needed to be able to recognize how their whiteness as an educator and as a human on a personal and systemic level impacted their ability to teach effectively

Finally, their white immunity clearly impacted the manner in which they addressed systemic whiteness and whiteness in general. The participants were invoking their sense of white immunity from being part of the hegemonic system of whiteness and using their white immunity at times to justify inaction. What they described independently indicated that changing the dynamic of racial oppression and whiteness had no significant barring on them or their livelihood. The reasons given as to why they were not willing to disrupt whiteness ranged from lack of time, to lack of awareness or skill, to not wanting to acknowledge the power of racial dynamics. In each instance and story there was a common factor, they could walk away and nothing would change for them (Cabrera, 2019). Furthermore, their action or lack of action, silencing the naming and disruption of whiteness, only furthered the normative nature of whiteness and created greater opportunity for their own possessiveness and investment (Crenshaw, 1997). Each named that challenging whiteness might result in potential loss of student teaching placement or a job, upsetting students and or their parents, or making things seem political. Thus, their ability to keep their job or be successful in student teaching, hinged on their decisions to possess and invest in whiteness, because in doing so they were continuing their immunity from negative consequences of racial oppression.

The fragility of being thought of as incomplete

The intersection between white immunity and fragility was fascinating to observe and document. In each case, the participants, because of their perceived commitment to social justice, shared or demonstrated through behaviors and actions a fear of being challenged by the nature of

being seen as anything less than someone that enacted social justice. Therefore often there was an internal struggle between being complicit and perpetuating whiteness, and their want to challenge whiteness and be an agent of change. Their white immunity and need to distance from systemic whiteness is also a form of fragility, in that they were operating from a standpoint of not wanting to be viewed as “racist” (Cabrera, 2019). The fragility I noted came from what Thompson (2003) discussed as being “uncomfortable with the implications of acknowledging white racism” (p. 8) and seeing themselves as active agents of perpetuating whiteness. The implications and conjuring of fragility stemming from rejecting the notion of being part of a larger group, emanated from a “limited understanding of racism” (DiAngelo, 2011, p. 61) and their lack of willingness to recognize how they fit in a greater system discussed in the previous section.

After all, each participant in this study ranged from 22 to 24 years of age, had just recently completed a college degree, and for most of them they were beginning to enter a profession in which they were to become leaders of a classroom. While each of them cognitively understood that professional growth and development was part of their chosen profession, it was difficult for them to think of themselves as incomplete in certain areas of their professional mindset. They were actively incongruent with their belief that they needed to be willing to continue to grow and challenge whiteness. In particular, each of them had reinforced experiences where they had been taught to navigate, perpetuate, uphold whiteness while maintain positive status by being a “good white person” (Thompson, 2003). Thompson (2003) articulated several statements, beliefs, or actions that white people use to place themselves in a category distancing themselves from being considered as racist. I heard several of Thompson’s articulations of being a good white person, such as Karen “I don’t say the N-word or anything”, to Sally “I have

worked really hard at this”, and Gloria “I am not someone who thinks about using race against someone”.

In addition, each of them had a story connected to wanting to advance change and support anti-racist work. In some regard, who they were or who they had become in their journey had given credence to their willingness to call themselves champions for social justice. Each participant had been labeled, given accolades, and been acknowledged at some part as “woke”, or more formally a degree which was interpreted as the end of learning on a given subject. Thus each person demonstrated fragility related to understanding and being labeled that they were not complete, or still had a ways to go, or in Sally’s words “I am far from being a racist”.

For most of them it began early in life as they received certain messages that were both covertly and overtly steeped in whiteness ideology. For example, Laura shared what she later called a misunderstanding, but referred to white communities and schools as “good”. Ella and I had a similar discussion, in that her teachers labeled certain communities as good. Johnson and Shapiro (2003) found similar aspects of how white people have been indoctrinated to associate mostly or all white schools, communities, work environments as good. Diangelo (2011) expressed that the loss of People of Color in communities has been normalized by white people, and thus becomes a point that builds to fragility when the normalized lived experience is acknowledged and challenged.

In addition, as discussed in the previous section, most operated from an individualized frame. When asked how they thought of themselves as part of the system supporting racism, most responded at first with a sense of absolution and distancing themselves from racist acts. They also saw their individual acts of befriending Black people like Sally did, or challenging parents on racist ideals like Jake, or as Megan, Karen, and Gloria modified and diversified

choices created a sense of activism that gave left them feeling as if they were doing their part and could be absolved of additional effort or action.

Three of the participants were able to cognitively see themselves as both actors against oppression but also part of the system and both actively and passively upholding the system of oppression. The other four, distanced themselves from being part of the system, and believed they were not actively causing oppression, but not actively working against it. The fragility began to surface when we talked about the specificity and instances in which they began to recognize their actions as active or passive. All seven participants had difficulty naming recent instances in which they were active or passive in upholding racial oppression and whiteness. When we talked about why they had difficulty naming, they deflected or responded they had not thought about it from that perspective. Diangelo (2019) discussed that when thinking about one's self in the context of being someone who is racist or as engaging in practices of whiteness is a "deep moral blow—a kind of character assassination" (p. 71).

Thus if you combine experiences that have been validated as supporters of antiracism, their lived experiences mostly growing up in communities that did not value People of Color or acknowledge the loss of the voices of People of Color, coupled with internalized individualism and meritocracy, it results in a strong cocktail of fragility around issues of whiteness. In each instance participants wanted to see themselves as good, and thought about racism and whiteness as operating in this binary (Diangelo, 2019). When they operated in a binary they found themselves in a state of distancing, and forgetting all the things that allowed for them to receive accolades from the faculty that recommended them for this study.

When shifting the paradigm in our inquiry to thinking about the active and passive nature of upholding whiteness as a continuum participants became more open, and recognized they had

opportunities for growth. They began to increasingly acknowledge the possibility of them being active and passive in perpetuating whiteness, as the threat of being put in the same category as someone shouting racial slurs dissipated. Finding opportunities to remove their fragility enabled them to begin “working through whiteness not only became aware of their racial privileges, but they also developed the agency to struggle against it with varying degrees of dedication and involvement” (Cabrera, 2012, p. 390). As Matias (2013) discussed being able to address their whiteness head on and working through their fragility connected with being part of the system, and being comfortable with being in progress assisted in their ability to begin framing how to disrupt whiteness as educators.

The miseducation of pre-service teachers on race, whiteness and white supremacy

The education project in the United States has developed as system for of utilizing, enhancing, perpetuating, maintaining, and normalizing whiteness as both culture and practice (Leonardo, 2002). In reflecting on their educational experiences the participants felt frustrated and angry regarding their miseducation related to their own whiteness and constructs of race. Laura reflected that she never really discussed race, racism, whiteness in school and it was not something that was part of her schooling. She felt frustrated and shared, “racism needs to be talked about. . . students need to be exposed to such a discussion at a young age, so they can grow up with a different mindset”. Jake had a similar feeling and shared that due to growing up in a homogenous experience, his ability to engage or challenge his whiteness was significantly impacted. He reflected “it was not something I thought about, it was not something I that I even knew I needed to do”. Previous studies on white pre-service teachers and white teachers found that due to their lack of experience talking about race challenged their ability to engage their

learners about constructs associated with race (Cho & DeCastro-Ambrosetti, 2005; Jackson, Bryan, & Larkin, 2016; Pollock, Bocala, Deckman, & Dickstein-Staub, 2016).

Therefore, it was left to their teacher preparation programs to create critical discourse, challenge, and engage them on the constructs of whiteness. However, excluding Gloria who added an urban education minor, the concepts of race or whiteness were rarely if ever discussed in their preparation programs, and even in the rare instances when it was discussed it was not done from a critical perspective. Often participants were taught to, as Jake shared, “think about other cultures when developing lessons” or as Sally indicated “be aware of the individual learners”. However, if race was ever discussed it was often from a perspective of, as Megan recalled “a checklist conversation” that did not seem to reflect that it mattered much.

Similar to the participants thoughts in the study related to growing up in spaces where People of Color were absent, the preparation programs of each of these participants made it seem like discussing race or acknowledging the constructs of race and whiteness only needed to be done when People of Color were present. This was exemplified by Karen when she shared that her program did not talk about race because the direct community that her institution served had mostly all white people living in rural areas. Even though Gloria’s program had an urban education minor option, this simply reinforced the dynamic that race and whiteness only needed to be addressed when People of Color were present, as race was not a major topic in other courses or in other parts of the program. This aspect was verified by Laura who attended the same institution and shared that she was ill prepared to engage on the topics of race, systemic racism, and whiteness. Despite race being the top issue identified by Deans across the country as something that needed to and they perceived to be an integral part of teacher preparation (Jennings, 2007), race was clearly not a topic being discussed to the level of Matias’ (Matias,

2013) recommends in order to challenge whiteness. In fact it was Laura that suggested it was not until she began working on her Masters coupled with conversations with me that began to give her the ability to deconstruct her whiteness and recognize how it interacted with the constructs of her ability to teach to all learners.

In a study of policy and practice Milner and Laughter (2015) found that despite the well intentioned nature of teacher preparation programs, they were not preparing teachers with the ability to engage critically on race, poverty or the intersections of race and poverty. The participants shared that in their methods courses they were taught to teach to all, but did these courses rarely provide specific skills or practices outside of the large concept of differentiation to engage all learners. One aspect highlighted by each participant, was that they were taught to learn about their learners as humans and get to know them as individuals. However, there was no discussion of identity, specifically how to engage in understanding the racial identity of their learners. The concept of individual differentiation is promoted both in national accreditation standards for teacher preparation programs (CAEP Board of Directors, 2013) and in standards for good teaching practice (Council for Chief State School Officers, 2013). Gilborn (2005) discussed how these policies operationalize whiteness, as the policies impact the manner that educators talk about differentiation and individualized education because they are done from a general perspective mostly focusing on other things and not race.

An additional aspect that challenged individualized instruction and differentiation as a policy and the way the participants shared how they learned about it, confounded the how racism and whiteness operate at an individual frame. Each of the participants when talking about how they disrupted whiteness, named specifically the concept of individualized differentiation as their mechanism that would most likely challenge whiteness. When you couple the framework of

operationalizing oppression from an individual frame and compound that with a frame of someone who has not done significant work to understand their whiteness, the challenges of perpetuating whiteness will continue.

For example, this was exemplified when talking with Jake. He identified that he addressed his power and whiteness in his class when he could. He gave the example of working with two Black students and how he worked with them individually. Jake's attempt to challenge his own whiteness and the systemic whiteness in his practice was flawed because he had not worked enough to engage himself in the practice of deconstructing his whiteness, thus not be sure of how to work with his two students when they would not do their assignments or had "behavioral issues". In addition, Jake, like the others, only discussed addressing whiteness at the individual level and when People of Color were present. Karen similarly shared at the end of our conversations that she felt she needed to learn more about her Students of Color and her impact on them. Again, this is a step in understanding how she operationalized whiteness and how that operationalization gets interpreted by her Students of Color, and this is a step. However, it is on the individual level and perpetuates the framework that whiteness and race are only to be understood when People of Color are present and can only be impacted at the individual level.

The participants often struggled with the concept of intersectionality. In particular, it was interesting to note that while their programs each prepared them to as Sally shared, "meet the needs of the individual learner", and as Megan discussed "teach to all students", not one participant discussed the concept of intersectionality. Davis Patton (2016) theorized that institutions of higher education not simply fail to engage the intersection of race, poverty, and privilege, but also directly enact systems and structures perpetuating these forces. Davis Patton furthered her argument by sharing "the systemic devaluing of People of Color in higher

education is unjust and contributes to a dominant narrative in which stereotypes are promulgated absent redress” (p. 326).

Thus as the programs talked about oppression on the surface, but never managed to address the intersection of identities, it left each the participants unable to articulate a baseline understanding for intersectionality and the power and privilege associated with their complex and layered identities. Thus, each participant in praxis, was left with focusing on limited aspects of identity, and often not framing race as important. Megan shared in our discussion “I do not want to be known as just the anti-racist teacher”. In her mind, she felt if she was doing anti-racist pedagogy, other aspects of her teaching would not be acknowledged. Similarly, participants like Karen and Sally who both worked with economically disenfranchised populations, were unable to clearly articulate the intersection of race and other identities and its impact. Ella, Megan, and Laura all shared their programs addressed concepts of identities and oppression like a check list, thus leaving them with feelings that aspects of identity was not important nor was their preparation in understanding of these identities related. In the case of Gloria, there was some focus on race and poverty, however in talking with Gloria she often framed the two as identical aspects of lived experience, meaning that to be Black was to be poor.

Jake began to attempt to disrupt whiteness as property, but it was not based on what he learned in his program, but his own pursuit of trying to address representation. Davis Patton (2016) discussed the notion of challenging whiteness in STEM fields by challenging representation and the property of whiteness. Jake shared feeling semi successful on his approach, however he lacked the full ability to integrate his ideas and thoughts due to the challenges he received from his mentor teacher and her unwillingness to let him teach what he considered to be “out of the box teaching strategies”. Jake indicated that he learned about some

of these strategies from his program, in particular in his methods course. However, he felt that the preparation of strategies that aligned with anti-racist and anti-whiteness pedagogies were often mired in general practices that only perpetuated dominant narratives. Overwhelmingly, the participants left their programs with an inability truly address the dominant narratives that Davis Patton discussed as largely influencing higher education and pk-12 schools.

The miseducation of these seven participants is layered complex and riddled with semi coordinated experiences that attempted to undo their learned whiteness in the constructs of the education project. In reflecting on my time with each of them, one particular instance comes to mind that exemplifies the miseducation of the seven folks. In my conversations with Gloria, there would be moments where she demonstrated a commitment, skill, and ability to challenge and disrupt her own and systemic whiteness. However, there were other moments that demonstrated resistance, fragility, and a lack of time working through her own experience in perpetuating whiteness. Often white pre service teachers have difficulty working through their own whiteness which contributes to their miseducation of their own ability to challenge and disrupt whiteness as teachers (Matias, 2013b; Matias & Mackey, 2016b).

Gloria's interpretation of a discussion described in Chapter Four regarding the n-word was problematic on so many levels, but also singled a clear opportunity missed by her teacher preparation program. Gloria shared there was no follow-up discussion and no other dialogue on this particular topic in the rest of her program or leading up to that day. Her program left her without the ability to critically interpret and think about race, and instead she was left with her own upbringing and lens which had been consumed by whiteness to make a decision about her use of that word. In essence she was given permission by one African American scholar to use that word, and now in possession of that privilege she believed she was granted immunity from

repercussions that might occur or harm that she might cause. In Fall of 2018 a professor at Augsburg University was suspended for using the N-word while reading the same James Baldwin book that provided the quote that started this chapter *The Fire Next Time* (Flaherty, 2019). Despite the professor's indication that his use was through academic freedom, scholars have challenged the usage of the word directly given the impact, harm, and the usage of the word as a means to dehumanize people.

Often in education the centering of the voices, the experiences, and the bodies of People of Color is an afterthought. Asim (2008) discussed at length the problematic history of Mark Twain's *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* and the 215 uses of the N-word. Specifically, he discussed the merits and challenges of using the word in the context of the book and the issues surrounding it. Interestingly, Asim noted that often Black and African American communities challenge the use of the book at all, and cite the NAACP's Pennsylvania Branch challenging of the book as hate speech. Kendi (2016) also provided a historical journey of the usage of the word and the legacy it has left on the American society. Gloria's choice to continue to use the word in an academic context demonstrated that she was left with using her whiteness to guide her decision making as she relied on one person bestowing her with a little bit of knowledge and understanding, and was fully fine with the consequence, ramifications, and harm caused by her choice.

Finally, there was no dialogue, no challenge, and no formal discussion or evaluation on the constructs of race, whiteness, or white supremacy. Even in a program where the expressed focus seemed to be on teaching Students of Color, there was not an unpacking or evaluation by the institutions to determine whether or not their soon to be teachers would be causing any harm to their students. In my conversations with the participants, we talked about the messages they

learned from their programs, and the messages they learned reflected their school experience. Megan shared, “I am evaluated on these things, and these are things that if I do well at I will continue, the rest does not matter”. Teacher evaluations have largely been impacted by *Race to the Top*, and thus have standardized what is being evaluated across districts providing greater focus on certain aspects of teaching (Aguilar & Richerme, 2014). In examining strengths of teacher education evaluation, these evaluations ought to include items of skill, disposition, and knowledge that are contextual to the environment and students (Darling Hammond, 2012). Nonetheless, each of the participants shared that at some point during student teaching they needed to focus on how they were evaluated. Thus, by not having evaluation criteria on the deconstruction of their own whiteness, their ability to address systemic whiteness, or pedagogical strategies that challenge whiteness, the programs have placed the priority of understanding these critical elements to engaging future students, like Students of Color in our education system, at the periphery.

Summary of the Study

The purpose of this study was to gain a deeper understanding of how white pre-service teachers engaged with their whiteness and what impacted their choice to challenge and disrupt whiteness. The participants of the study were recommended by faculty mentors, and came from five different Universities and Colleges throughout the United States. I utilized Critical Race Theory, Critical whiteness Studies to frame the context of the study and Portraiture as the method for sharing the experiences of each of the seven participants. I conducted three individual interviews and two written reflections with each of the seven participants. My interactions with participants began in July of 2018 and concluded in October of 2018. Each of the interviews were conducted using Zoom and recorded. I personally transcribed each of the transcripts, sent

them to each participant for accuracy, and then conducted analysis of the transcripts and written reflections. I developed introductory portraits for each participant, and then a thematic discussion of the findings. The next section reflects how this study and the findings addressed the three research questions guiding the study: a). What role does white fragility play in a white pre-service teacher's willingness to engage whiteness? b). What factors are associated with willingness to disrupt or perpetuate whiteness for white pre-service teachers? c). How has their teacher preparation program enhanced their ability to engage in challenging whiteness in education?

What role does white fragility play in a white pre-service teacher's willingness to engage whiteness?

From a critical standpoint, each participant wanted to engage with their whiteness, each wanted to take action to liberate themselves from their own whiteness while challenging it in teaching. Fragility was an initial factor when they began engaging being white, their white immunity, and their whiteness in their formative experiences. Regardless of their formative experiences, fragility was still a reoccurring factor even after they made the distinction that the willingness to engage and disrupt whiteness was a choice. Each participant in their own words, articulated their fragility was something at a given time impacted their ability to engage in their own development. It was critical for each of them to work through their initial feelings of fragility, however most described different types of fragility that manifested inhibiting their ability to engage whiteness.

More specifically, at each decision point, aspects of fragility were cited as a factor that contributed to a decision to challenge whiteness. While the initial aspect of fragility related to their ability to be introspective, the fragility they experienced most recently related to aspects of

fear. The fear related to not wanting to be vulnerable, not wanting to say something or do something that contradicted their commitment to antiracism, fear of losing their job or status as being a student teacher, or the fear of being viewed as wrong or incomplete.

For example, the participants described aspects of fear of losing status as something that constantly weighed on their commitment to challenge whiteness. Some articulated that during student teaching, in certain circumstances they were unwilling to challenge whiteness when it might result in negative ramifications related to their placement or their ability to finish their degree. Megan described it as if she was unsure how her mentor teacher would react, whether or not her principal would support her efforts, and ultimately this was part of her decision making process. Each participant cited that during student teaching it was unclear whether or not disruptive practices would be accepted, and if it resulted in negative consequences for them, they would stop and revert back to more, as Jake stated, “traditional practices of teaching”. They described the nature of their student teaching experience, feeling a lack of ownership and being a guest in someone else’s space. Given their program’s lack of overt commitment to disrupting whiteness and their perceived normalization of whiteness in schools, they felt like to challenge the structures and practices might impact their ability to keep their status as a welcomed guest.

In addition to fear of loss of student teaching status, there was also a response of fragility related to the implications of being associated with white supremacists or overt racists. This was closest to their initial feelings of fragility that they shared when being first engaged with challenging their whiteness and white immunity. However, the fear now manifested and came from a different place in that it was more associated with the potential of being thought of as a non-ally while still holding a residual to being placed in the same category as an active white supremacist. Often it was the dichotomy of the binary of either being thought of as a racist or

not. Laura described it as either “being a racist” verses being someone “who was a good person”, that kept her from further exploring their association with systemic whiteness. Most often in my conversations, the stories they shared were experiences that occurred several years prior, and all had difficulty naming specific examples where they felt they perpetuated whiteness in the present. Jake shared “I feel like, like, I am just not seeing these things because maybe I do not want to”. Ella reflected a similar feeling, “I just don’t know, it is hard because I am so enveloped in my own whiteness”. They both acknowledged feeling like they had contributed to perpetuating whiteness, but either did not want to talk about current actions or failed to notice them out of a space of fear for being called out. Jake shared that it was important for People of Color to see him as supportive, and Ella shared similar feelings. When we discussed what would happen if they were to be seen as counterproductive to antiracist activism, they both described it as devastating because it challenged who they saw themselves as and who they wanted to be.

Finally, their fragility at times manifested around ideologies associated with color evasive and post racial ideologies. This was most significant with Karen, Sally, and Gloria, as they each described challenges to engaging in challenging whiteness when their covert and overt viewpoints espoused in color evasion or post racial beliefs were threatened. Sally and Gloria both shared experiences in which they failed to acknowledge race as a factor, and felt in doing so, for reasons that were unexplained, threatened their ideal values of post racial ideology. It was as if they had pursued racial equity and they believed naming it or discussing it in a direct form made them seem less aware or progressive. Karen on the other hand, firmly espoused post racial ideology, and utilized color evasive strategies to uphold the framework, especially during our discussion about Affirmative Action. Even though she stated that her reaction was more significant than she felt about the subject, it demonstrated that she believed that it was not

appropriate to question what she had achieved or earned by acknowledging race as a factor for her accomplishments or status. She shared that it was difficult for her to discuss these things, and her refusal to engage in hearing viewpoints that differed from her own, represented her unwillingness to engage.

Each participant shared stories indicating they were still struggling on some level with their own fragility, which ultimately impacted their ability to disrupt and challenge whiteness. Most often, their fragility manifested in their fear of losing status as a student teacher, fear of being viewed as pushing political ideology, or fear of making a mistake and thus losing credibility as an advocate for justice.

What factors are associated with willingness to disrupt or perpetuate whiteness for white pre-service teachers?

Several factors were associated with the participants' willingness to engage in actively disrupting whiteness, but most of the factors found in the study involved creating barriers and impacting their willingness to not engage whiteness. Often the concept of willingness to disrupt centered on individual actions and curricular choice. For example, Megan and Gloria both discussed using certain texts and materials to teach about race and racism to their class. Megan also found books that centered experiences and lives of People of Color to be important. Having access to books and curricular materials resulted in ease of challenging certain aspects of whiteness.

Additionally, each of the participants shared that they felt compelled to challenge student behavior that reflected attitudes of intolerance or racial bias. However some noted that they felt ill-equipped in challenging covert actions, language, and behavior. The willingness to engage whiteness became dependent on the participant once the topic was removed from individual

actions to thinking about whiteness as cultural, political, and social. Each of the participants varied a bit on whether or not it was the teacher's role to actively disrupt and challenge whiteness. From one extreme, Karen believed that disrupting whiteness directly was enforcing a particular belief on her students. While Jake and Ella felt that disrupting and challenging whiteness was one of the purposes of education, and the teacher ought to be actively engaged. The other participants fell mostly on the side of it was the role of the teacher, but often struggled to fully embrace disruption due to the connection of antiracism with political ideology.

Jake was the only person who did not talk about a teacher's need to be politically neutral. The other's shared that it was difficult in the current climate to engage in practices that overtly challenged whiteness given the potential for being viewed as non-neutral politically. Megan shared, "I will do what I can, but I need to present the content from a neutral point of view". Ella had similar feelings, while she wanted to challenge whiteness, she believed the role of a teacher was to provide information and allow students to create their own understanding and meaning. There seemed to be confusion related to content neutrality and challenging hegemonic and normative whiteness as educators. Believing the scope of influence of a teacher was related to content and challenging individual behaviors, led to a confusion about how to challenge and disrupt systemic and hegemonic whiteness. Thus, this created a barrier and often left the participants unwilling to engage in disrupting whiteness outside of the scope of certain curricular choices and addressing behavior.

Finally, the participants were all encumbered by their inability to identify and have the tools to disrupt systemic whiteness. For example, Karen shared, "I am only one teacher", while Sally said "I can do things in my classroom but I am not sure about beyond". In particular each described having very little control during student teaching, but even when they thought about

their classrooms as full time teachers, they were unable to fathom how they would continuously disrupt all aspects of whiteness in the education system. Most of them struggled naming acts, cultural implications, structures, political dynamics, and behaviors that upheld whiteness. In addition, they were limited with the tools and skills for being activists as educators. Very rarely did anyone, outside of Jake, discuss being an activist or engaging the educational system from an activist perspective. For each of them, they described some sense of just trying to make it through student teaching and get a job, and this often, from their perspectives, inhibited their willingness to disrupt whiteness. As Megan shared, “I didn’t really have the time” to think about challenging whiteness at each turn, each day, in each lesson. Laura shared a similar sentiment, as they were asked to do so many things while balancing the learning of all students, and making sure they were meeting the standards, that also utilizing a critical frame to deconstruct all of the whiteness felt “overwhelming”.

How has their teacher preparation program enhanced their ability to engage in challenging whiteness in education?

Each participant described and shared experiences that contributed to their miseducation related to challenging and disrupting whiteness. All of the participants attended Historically white Institutions, which situated the experience of whiteness at the center of their educational experiences. For their entire lives being white had been normalized, and for the most part, throughout their time attending their teacher preparation program, whiteness was everywhere. The participants as a collective shared stories of being taught by predominately white faculty, with frameworks that normalized the white experience. In addition, they shared faculty rarely or failed to engage critically on race, and allowed for them to continue to operate without thinking about the construct of race and racial identity. There were some exceptions, but those exceptions

typically came when there was a Faculty of Color teaching a course, the course was about urban environments, or the concept of diversity was somewhat discussed.

All but Karen described a feeling of dissatisfaction and a sense of frustration with the lack of attention to identity, race, racism, and whiteness in their teacher preparation program. At best, the experiences included some discussion of race and instruction on how to teach to different learners. However, the intersection of race and other identities was lost and never addressed as an aspect to consider when thinking about the whole student. At the very worst, the programs perpetuated color evasive ideologies by only engaging in topics of whiteness, race, or racism when Children of Color were present as part of the discussion. In addition, participants like Megan and Laura both indicated that they felt like anything associated with diversity was simply “checking off of a box” to make sure it was mentioned. Sally shared puzzlement as to how her university was located near a community with racial diversity, yet race was never really discussed. Furthermore, Sally shared that she felt ill-equipped and ill prepared to teach in an urban setting, which happens to be located only 10 minutes from where she completed her teacher preparation program.

Finally, the importance of learning about identity, race, and whiteness were lost on the participants as it never seemed as something that was important because there was no evaluative criteria related to their knowledge, skill, or disposition. They each shared that they were prepared to demonstrate some level of ability to be culturally sensitive, but in their evaluations, not one participant was able to describe how that was actually evaluated, nor was there any reflection of discussion about that particular criterion. Furthermore, during student teaching all were placed with white mentor teachers and had white supervisors, thus the framing of conversations on diversity were often constructed through a framework that normalized whiteness in the

educational context. They reflected that they lacked the specific skills to challenge whiteness and this became evident when they talked about their student teaching experience. It also manifested in the way they talked about teaching as neutral. This learned behavior and philosophical stance came directly from their programs, and resulted in their unwillingness to engage out of fear of being political in their teaching.

In addition to normalizing whiteness through a-political teaching efforts, Megan, Jake, Sally, Gloria, and Ella described instances in which there was some incongruence between their program's articulation of best practices and what they were allowed to do in the classroom while student teaching. Jake, for example, shared that he had a lot of ideas and was interested in critical pedagogy, however the district he was placed in seemed to share no value in challenging whiteness. Jake stated, "even when I learned certain practices that might challenge the status quo, I could not do them in my placement, because the school just did not believe in it". Jake was articulating a clear incongruence between the philosophical and practical preparation framework of his program, and the stable normalized experience expected in a pk-12 environment. Ella, Megan, Sally, and Gloria all shared similar sentiments, that they got the impression that even though they were taught "cutting edge practices" the schools wanted them to teach a certain way, and if they did not, they felt their placement would be jeopardized. Thus, the incongruence between field experience and the reality of the school environment compared with their preparation, left them feeling more inclined to normalize behaviors, cultures, and practices such as whiteness as a mechanism for fitting in and survival.

Theoretical discussion

This study focused on the concept of disruption as praxis for future educators while also discussing whiteness as a disease (Matias, 2016) that manifests through practices that are

identified as “racist”. In the findings sections, I discussed the miseducation of participants and their lack of preparation to be disruptive and address the systemic issues related to whiteness, and often related feeling and rewarded for upholding whiteness by replicating the system and practices of whiteness. To further the theoretical discussion, I first examine the theorization of the disruptive process by examining how this research relates to Milner’s (2008) disruptive praxis, and then discuss the strengths and limitations of theorizing whiteness as a disease.

Theorizing disruption

Milner (2008) theorized a disruptive framework guiding teacher preparation to actively engage in the disruption of whiteness. As identified in this study, the participants lacked skills to name and disrupt whiteness, and never really saw themselves with the ability to make a significant impact and create change to disrupt whiteness. There is no doubt that the participants brought their own colonized framework which reinforced whiteness as a dominant cultural lens in how they viewed learning, privileged knowledge, and often manifested beliefs that framed People of Color from a deficit perspective. Whiteness is normalized, it is cultural, and education as a system is responsible for the reproduction and maintenance of the continued investment in whiteness (Leonardo, 2002, 2009; Matias, et. al., 2014; Wilder, 2014). The participants in this study told stories that indicated that their programs utilized veiled attempts to engage on issues of race and whiteness, and did not facilitate decolonization in their thinking or challenge the manner in which they engaged their own racial identity.

Sleeter (2017) discussed that often teacher preparation programs not only upheld the normalization of whiteness but also reinforced practices through using color-evasive and race-neutral practices. The participants often framed teaching and learning from a race-neutral perspective, and their learned behaviors from youth were reinforced and normalized further in

how they viewed education as a neutral praxis, particularly as it related to race and whiteness. In addition, when they discussed what knowledge was, how learning occurred, and what they valued about learning, it often reflected valuing traditions and practices of cultural whiteness. Milner acknowledged the notion of whiteness as evident in policies and practices in teacher education, and developed a theory of disruption. Milner's (2008) theory for disruptive movement aims to create experiences for faculty and future educators that "expose self-consumed interests that do not have equity at the center" (p. 339). Milner explained,

disruptive movement theory in teacher education can possess dual roles: (a) to serve as a tool in explaining processes and developments of racialized and equity-centered movements and (b) to assist social-justice-oriented individuals in organizing to actually do something to change racist systems, policies, and practices (p. 339).

Milner's theory proposes the use of five tenets to guide teacher education programs that navigate through aspects of interest convergence to begin to create disruptive practices dismantling whiteness. The five tenets indicate that movements: 1) requires a convergence of interest of those committed to social justice; 2) recognize the context of the community shape the disruption; 3) are "proactive, reactive, and predictive"; 4) are not focused on moving individual or personal interest; 5) and require long-term commitment and sustainability (p. 340).

If teacher education programs were to utilize Milner's theory, would that be enough to begin to engage in disruptive practices that challenged and truly disrupted the manner in which whiteness is a central aspect of the educational experience? Sleeter (2017) stated that white educators operate with a lens of whiteness, and even though some implement culturally responsive practices, those practices were not enough "to disrupt deficit theorizing" (p. 157) of Students of Color. The participants in this study were similar in that even when they tried to

challenge whiteness, they often reverted to the comforts of their colonized mind frame of whiteness.

The question remains, is Milner's theory enough to disrupt the colonization of the educational system by cultural and political investments of whiteness? Leonardo (2009) theorized that through actions of whiteness there is increased value on dominant ideas, ideologies, and attitudes. These dominant ideas and values replicate and create a cultural of normalcy, which value those in positions of system, political and economic power, which in the United States has been leveraged through whiteness (Lipsitz, 2006). While Milner's (2008) theory of disruptive praxis begins to build a framework, it does not seem to address the intricacies of the investment of whiteness that is pervasive throughout the education system (Wilder, 2014).

Based on the findings of this project, I recommend an additional tenet which centers efforts of praxis that engage in the decolonization of the learning experiences, and challenge the notions of how educators, students, and the overall system view what it means to be and demonstrate knowledge. This tenet also acknowledges and begins to frame what participants had difficulty in recognizing, the systemic nature of whiteness that has been heavily normalized in the United States (DiAngelo, 2011; Yoon, 2012). As identified in this study, participants could not begin to navigate or dismantle systemic whiteness, because they lacked the ability to acknowledge or recognize the ingrained nature of whiteness in their experiences. In an effort to begin to create a movement of disruption, educators and those that prepare future educators, ought to have the ability and framework for unlearning what they know about education and what it means to demonstrate knowledge. If whiteness is part of the cultural, political, economic, and educational frameworks, it then requires a deeper examination of the elements contributing

to the entire system of education to begin to disrupt and dismantle whiteness. By adding this additional tenet it focuses the movement of disruption by challenging and naming the values that are regulated by cultural whiteness that have become practiced and celebrated in the educational project in the United States.

Strengths and limitations of whiteness as a disease

Whiteness is complex and is normalized by both systemic and individual actions, behaviors, and beliefs. The theorization of whiteness ought to be equally complex in recognizing the ever evolving and intertwined cycle of system and individual practices that exist in creating, maintaining, and perpetuating whiteness. Whiteness has been heavily theorized through the construct of property which frames the manner in which legal, political, and cultural practices have legitimized structures supporting white supremacy (Harris, 1996), while simultaneously establishing practices that require constant necessity to invest and maintain this system through individual actions supported by personal gain and survival (Lipsitz, 2006).

Framing whiteness as a disease (Matias, 2006) or framing it as an addiction (Cabrera, 2019) is helpful in that it frames whiteness as complex, messy, difficult to understand, and recognizes that whiteness operates as a poison to our society. However, it can be limiting in that it also places the understanding of whiteness along with the treatment/disruption on the individual level (disease), or that can never be dismantled only treated (addiction). Instead the theorizing should be framed that whiteness operates on the individual level with both properties of disease and addiction in that takes individual action and intervention to change practices, while simultaneously naming and addressing the legal and practiced systems that also contribute to the perpetuation of whiteness. Simply “curing” or “treating” the individual will not be sufficient in providing long term disruption to the systemic nature in which whiteness operates.

As discussed by the participants in this study, each shared stories in which they tried on an individual level to challenge whiteness, but often did not have the desired impact due to the systemic nature of whiteness existing in their organizations. Thinking or framing whiteness as a disease is helpful in beginning to unpack the complexity at the individual level; however, is limiting in the long term process because it fails to address the nuanced nature in which whiteness exists in the systemic frame which also is responsible for the perpetuation and reproduction of practices that uphold whiteness.

Implications for praxis: Preparing white teachers to engage whiteness

The findings of this study can inform future and current educators, teacher preparation programs in the way they engage on issues of race and whiteness, and policy makers related to the construction of standards and benchmarks guiding preparation and relationships between pk-12 and higher education institutions preparing teachers. This project highlighted the historical and current manner in which whiteness has influenced, is maintained, and is normalized through the educational experience. Current and future educators have a responsibility for decolonizing their own learning and as a result of this study I have two recommendations to aid in the praxis of current and future educators to consider in disrupting whiteness.

This study has implications for future and faculty preparing future teachers should take note and consider three main recommendations resulting from this study which include addressing faculty development related to whiteness, racial identity and intersectionality work of teacher candidates, and development of skills and awareness related to addressing systemic whiteness in educational settings. The participants in this study highlighted a significant miseducation related to whiteness, and often described situations in which their programs not only upheld whiteness but allowed for the reproduction of whiteness to occur via the manner in

which the future educators were prepared to engage their future students. Finally, the findings shed light on potential policy implications related to the development of standards, frameworks, and assessments related to preparing teachers. In addition, there was an incongruence between pk-12 and teacher preparation programs that stemmed beyond whiteness, that calls for a more coherent and complete pk-20 system.

Recommendations for current and future educators

All seven of the participants in this study and the in-service teachers with whom they worked during their student teaching experience were responsible for sustaining whiteness in the educational project. Current and future educators, in an effort to disrupt whiteness, must take the necessary steps to decolonize their educational praxis and their presuppositions of what learning is and looks like. As stated in Chapter Two of this project, the educational project is historically grounded as a system and practice for creating a cultural that normalizes and values practices of whiteness. Furthermore, in formal educational environments, constructs of whiteness are valued and supported through expression of how achievement and knowledge are both assessed and demonstrated.

Current and future educators must take the step to unpack their own colonized learning by deconstructing what they believe and value as indicators of how learning occurs and knowledge is demonstrated. Further, this decolonization ought to include critical exploration of values related to learning practices and the education system. For example, two participants in this study discussed how they could “let students write like they speak” only because they were teaching in an early grade. The participants did not value the dialect of the student, but found it was appropriate given the student’s grade level. To deconstruct this colonized learning, the educators need to begin to ask themselves why the dialect and writing of the student is not

valued as an appropriate mechanism for expression and communication of thoughts and ideas. This is merely one example of how whiteness has privileged certain ways of expression and communication of thoughts over others. It is often justified by stating that this is how formal learning ought to be demonstrated. However, I would contend that by decolonizing what we believe to be formal learning, and center the experiences and voices of racially minoritized students, we begin to understand that learning, expression, and knowledge are demonstrated in many different and creative ways. The decolonizing process takes a great deal of introspection and unlearning how the educators came to understand what it means to be learned and how one expresses what it means to be learned. The journey, however, does not stop with the individual, as this often was a barrier for the participants in the study as well.

Often the participants minimized their ability to make an impact, and thus relegated their work to minimal disruption because, as Karen reiterated, she is “only one teacher and not able to change the world.” Thus, educators and future educators must begin to recognize the scope of influence they have, and begin to identify how they can make systemic change in their buildings, districts, and communities by using Milners (2008) framework for disruption. By beginning to decolonize their own experiences, and sharing these experiences with those with whom they work, they can begin to change the culture of their buildings and communities. Through identifying the system and influence policy and practices through their commitment to decolonizing the educational project in their own communities, their ability to make change will be greater than what they anticipated.

As discussed throughout this project and highlighted by the experiences of the seven participants, whiteness is rooted in all aspects of the system of education. The complexity and layered nature in which whiteness operates is difficult to constantly challenge in particular when

educators themselves have only known and experienced the educational project through a lens of whiteness. Thus, the act of disruption and decolonization is difficult, challenging, exhausting, and never ending, and the work engaging whiteness on both a systems and individual level takes time, energy, and collaborative support. There is not a singular answer to dismantling whiteness, but rather a complex and consistent effort of both individual(s) and group work to begin to unravel systemic whiteness that is supported through individual and normalized actions, behaviors, and beliefs.

Recommendations for teacher preparation programs

The findings of this study and discussion with the participants resulted in the three primary recommendations for faculty preparing future teachers. Given a majority of faculty teaching teacher candidates identify as white, the profession is largely responsible for upholding whiteness, thus not having regular practice interrogating whiteness, is evident in the manner that race only became as Ella shared “something to discuss” when People of Color were present or part of the framing of the school environment. Faculty and leadership of teacher preparation programs need to create space and opportunity for engagement and deconstruction of whiteness. Whiteness operates in historically and predominately white spaces, and faculty ought to begin to address the implications of how whiteness impacts their curriculum, their actions, and their behaviors. In addition this personal and departmental work ought to inform the manner in which faculty engage with students, the policies they create, and overall willingness to frame this work as support for a systematized framework supporting equity and justice.

The second recommendation for faculty is the need to integrate identity development, specifically the concept of intersectionality and the power and privilege associated with being white layered with other identities as part of curriculum for preparation. In addition, the concept

of race and whiteness should be points of discussion and assessment throughout multiple aspects of the program. The concept of race, whiteness, white immunity, and color evasion all need to be part of the framework in order to address post racial ideologies held by many white students. The participants had a difficult time engaging in discussing what it meant to be white let alone identifying and challenging whiteness. Thus, creating curricular components that both discuss and critically unpack the constructs of race, but also assess the teacher candidate's ability to engage in dialogues on race is a critical next step in addressing whiteness. Creating dispositional assessments or knowledge and skill based assessments linked to whiteness affirm a more coherent commitment to disrupting and engaging whiteness. Also, the programs need to begin to unpack and address teaching as a socially just practice, thus challenging the notion of a-political teaching.

Finally, faculty should identify and engage in building capacity of teacher candidates to address systemic issues and strategies for engaging in disruption of systemic whiteness. The participants had difficulty naming systemic whiteness, and thus spending engaging in practice in naming actions and behaviors that uphold political, cultural, economic, and other areas of systemic whiteness is crucial to overall ability in engage the disruption of whiteness beyond individual actions and behaviors.

Policy implications

Challenging whiteness in the political framework of education is imperative to the long-term destabilization and disruption of white supremacy on the educational project. The political frame of whiteness, as discussed in this study, impacted the participants ability to engage and disrupt whiteness as follows: the influence of standards that are often race neutral both in development, promulgation, and practice; the tools often used and promoted by state education

agencies for evaluating in service and pre-service teachers; a lack of time and resources to adequately address whiteness embodied in curricular aspects; and the philosophical and practical disconnect between higher education and the p-12 environment.

This study adds additional depth of understanding related to the miseducation of pre-service white teachers related to race and whiteness. The findings ought to influence and enhance discussion of how policy makers develop standards guiding professional preparation and teacher education moving forward. Given most standards do not articulate the constructs of race or whiteness, often teacher preparation institutions leave these elements with a sense of implementation seeming less important than other aspects of teaching. Standards development ought to center voices and experiences of People of Color and challenge practices and concepts that perpetuate whiteness in the way they get interpreted, promulgated, and practiced.

Additionally, participants in this study shared that there were no significant assessment, in particular during their student teaching experience that framed the importance of understanding the constructs of race and whiteness. The tools that are used and supported by state education agencies discuss cultural competence and relevant teaching, but do not detail practices or begin to address the power dynamics involved between a teacher and students. Developing instruments and assessments that engage disrupting whiteness both allow the institution to recognize their teacher candidate's ability to engage in practices that challenge whiteness, but also place an important emphasis on the ability to challenge whiteness, which is currently missing.

Finally, the participants spoke of a disconnect between what they learned as quality practice, what they were given the ability to do, and what was reinforced while student teaching in the pk-12 classroom. Policy makers, state education agencies, and critical leaders in pk-12 and

higher education need to begin to start framing a system approach to thinking about the education project. Framing the system from a perspective of a pk-20 environment, begins to eliminate the barriers and territorial challenges that exist, and will shape the manner in which research and best practice influence the classroom environment, and as it relates to this study, the willingness to disrupt whiteness.

Portraiture and whiteness research

An aim and intention of this study and this project was to challenge traditional viewpoints of research. Education as a project, as a system, and in its function is a colonizing experience and research as it has been practiced often expects and accepts projects and practices vetted by those that come from dominant ideological frameworks. Patel (2016) argued that decolonizing research challenges the norms, structures, and culture that often uphold and embrace social reproduction of knowledge and the way certain knowledge and practices are privileged. Portraiture at its essence challenges the very notion of a traditional dissertation format, and while I, for the sake of this project, chose to maintain some of the elements of the tradition, I also engaged the platform of portraiture to freely challenge how one writes about findings, literature, and the lives of participants.

It was through my deep connection with portraiture that I began to understand that the method not only challenges most qualitative formats of research, but also is an incredibly powerful tool for interrogating, deconstructing, and challenging whiteness. Lightfoot (1997) discussed that portraiture, when effective, illuminates and breathes an artistic life into researched work, thus providing a unique canvas of expression to delve deeply in the layered and complex lives of those being studied. As discussed in this project and in other research on whiteness, the nature in which whiteness is upheld, perpetuated, protected, and maintained occurs at both the

individual and systemic/societal level. The normalization of whiteness needs to be interrogated, dissected, and explored in a rich and vibrant manner that is accessible to all readers so that the continued work to disrupt whiteness can occur. Portraiture provides a scholar researcher to capture the layered complex manner in which one not only learns whiteness, but reinforces it, supports it, practices it, and is mystified by it all in one canvas.

Critical whiteness Studies lacks consistent methodological approaches (Corces-Zimmerman, 2017) and works to engage in supporting methods for understanding and interrogating whiteness. Based on my experience with this project, I believe portraiture serves a researcher with a unique and intentional process for dissecting the individual level and system level responsible for maintain and normalizing whiteness. Future research of whiteness ought to include aspects of portraiture to begin to build a deeper understanding and ability to more commonly frame the manner in which whiteness has wrapped its arms and entangled itself in all aspects of our lived experiences in the United States.

Future Research

This study examined how pre-service teachers engaged in whiteness, specifically by addressing gaps in literature related to enhancing understanding of factors impacting willingness to disrupt or perpetuate whiteness in practice. After reviewing the findings, potential areas of future research emerged giving way to the potential of future studies.

This particular study had findings that related to the concept of vulnerability, however the study did not specifically focus on the factor of vulnerability and the impact related to willingness to engage whiteness. A future study examining both vulnerability and fragility in relation to creating a willingness to engage whiteness is a next step in understanding of how to enhance white pre-service teacher's ability and willingness to challenge whiteness. Also, during

the study, I found that white faculty, according to participants, largely did not engage in enhancing practices that supported disruption of whiteness. Studying how white faculty chose to teach about race and whiteness, and identifying their own fragility around being white, is another step in furthering the understanding of the miseducation of white pre-service teachers. Finally, it was clear that the participants did not have an understanding of systemic whiteness or how to engage systemic whiteness. Thus, a study that focuses on strategies for engaging, identifying, and disrupting systemic whiteness in the context of teaching should be considered.

Limitations and Strengths

In Chapter One, I discussed the implications of this study would inform future preparation of white pre-service teachers. Given the methodology, these findings are not able to be generalized and only reflect the voices and experiences of the seven participants completing the study. In addition, another limitation is that each of these participants had identified significant impact by their mentor teacher. All of the mentor teachers in this study were white, and thus, it would further understanding if whiteness was normalized in the pk-12 environment when the mentor was a Person of Color. The final limitation is related to method. I intended to conduct the study using portraiture as the method for discussing findings. Given that seven of the eight participants remained in the study, using portraiture in a more traditional sense was not an option due to length restrictions, and thus I was forced place the portraits in Appendix A, and use a more traditional findings section discussing key themes which limited the depth of analysis for each of the individual participants.

The strength of the study is found in the stories and intricate layers in which each participant shared their complex lived experience. These stories give greater detail into the investment and possessiveness of whiteness that is so very evident in each of their stories. These

experiences significantly shape how each participant experienced their preparation and viewed themselves as educators. The challenges they faced in challenging or disrupting whiteness were often rooted in their experiences from their formative years.

Working Through My Own Fragility, Immunity, and whiteness: A Self Portrait

There is irony, as my random shuffle now skips to the next song, and the song *Non-Stop* blares through my red and black earbuds. The music reflects part of the journey, as at one point I felt like I was writing volumes each day, attempting to create descriptive portraits portraying the complexity and layers of each of the participants and their experiences. Writing is not easy for me, so the vulnerability of this exercise became a daily practice, and a constant act of challenging and enhancing my skill. While the writing was only part of the journey, it was a significant part of the experience because of the nature of the study, the intimacy I created with the data, and the approach I took to sharing the participants' experiences. Often after a day of working on this project I would write in a journal, both as a mechanism for enhancing my ability to write in the framework of portraiture, but also to serve as a different way in thinking through the discussions that ultimately became data for this project. Here is a brief sample that was written during early September 2018, during a time where I was heavily involved in conducting and transcribing interviews.

Tonight I put the kids to bed at 7pm, they both went down relatively well, for a change. After having a few moments of adult interaction with Christina, we divided and concurred picking up all the toys, the kid's dinner, and all of the other things that go along with having two children under three at home all day. Christina and I finally were able to have dinner ourselves at 8:15pm. We did not eat with the kids tonight because it was just too much, as Thomas is teething and Scarlett is experiencing all of the emotions of a toddler in the span of 45 minutes

since I arrived home from a day at work. After a quick dinner, finishing of the dishes, and some discussion of tomorrow's plan, I moved into my new makeshift office, our dining room, to work for the rest of the night. I spent the past two months doing work in various parts of our house, but this space feels better, more private and conducive for my tasks moving forward. Tonight I began transcribing Laura's second interview, which took place a week ago. During the transcription, I began to notice a squeak in my transcription pedal. The squeak at times sounded like one of my two children had woken prematurely from their slumber. Much to my delight, the pedal noise was more a reflection of the gentle love of transcribing 65 minutes worth of interviews every day. The noise also served as reminder of how much work I have in front of me and the labor of transcription process. As I watched and listened to my interview with Laura, I realized that she began to show emotion which I had not noticed from her before at the time of the interview. It was as if she was having a moment where she realized that her experience, her awareness of self, and all that she understood was being challenged. I am interested in exploring this with her more, and I am hopeful that she will reflect on this during her second writing reflective process. It is late, and I need to go to bed, I imagine my youngest will be up in five hours.

Over the course of this project, these experiences became the norm, and as I moved closer to the writing and analysis phase, the time away from family became more significant. I share this because, I think my learning did not just include my expansion of understanding of this topic, but it helped me realize through absence how much I enjoyed being a parent and a partner. The moments I shared with my family became few, but they became significant, and that was helpful during the times when I felt stuck or that this project would never see the light of day.

At times I felt a sense, similar to the participants, of being overwhelmed with the sheer magnitude and the never-ending task of critically engaging spaces that had been developed and often are responsible for reproducing whiteness. I had to remind myself, I had the immunity to move in and out of that frustration, and that I needed to be more willing to regularly engage, regardless of how I felt. The most salient connection between myself and the participants related to their feelings of fragility which left them unwilling to disrupt whiteness involved the concept related to the fear of loss of employment and status. I fully recognized that I have my job due to my currency as a white man, and that I am allowed and privileged to say things in spaces that others cannot. I took this privilege, and like Jake worked on attempting to spend this currency in spaces where my voice could influence political, structural, and cultural practices, in particular working with white people to begin to dismantle whiteness.

Unfortunately, in one particular instance that occurred around the time that I wrote the journal entry mentioned previously, I experienced a situation that was similar to what participants described they feared would happen if they challenged whiteness. It was a warm afternoon, and during a conversation I began to challenge cultural behaviors and practices of leadership in an organization that I believed were upholding and normalizing whiteness. In addition, the cultural practices were not only evident by covert actions and practices, but the implications began to create overt behaviors and harm that were evidenced by the lack of safety, trust, and support felt by Students and Faculty of Color. As I began to talk through the areas of concern, the individual responded with fragility, and much like in other studies (DiAngelo, 2019), the individual projected their feelings and guilt on to me.

After the meeting ended, I realized that I had harmed a much needed working relationship, but at the time I believed that naming and beginning a process for interrogating

whiteness was needed. Since the meeting, I have suffered the loss of status in certain spaces, and in some instances have been on the receiving end of covert retaliation. Worsening the situation, nothing has improved, I have failed to disrupt whiteness. I had to start over, and think of new strategies to engage in disrupting whiteness in that particular space. Every day since that discussion, I wrestled with my skills, abilities, and the manner in which I approached challenging whiteness from a cultural and organizational stand point. My situation, while difficult, still does not compare to the constant minoritization and marginalization experienced by People of Color and the manner in which they have had to navigate the academe with the hope of not facing negative consequences, harm, trauma, and dehumanizing experiences as described in the work edited by Gutierrez y Muhs, Niemann, Gonzalez, and Harris (2012). Nonetheless there has been subtle indications from high ranking leaders in the organization for me to “move on” and “fix” the relationship. However, there has not been a complimentary discussion as to how the pervasive and toxic whiteness needs to be addressed. Thus, another reflection of the stabilization of whiteness in organization of higher education.

Despite this one instance, I have grown as a scholar, practioner, and educator because of my time with this project. It is my hope that this work along with the other scholars that challenge and research whiteness, continue to deepen our understanding and ability to critically interrogate and unravel the practices, policies, cultural beliefs, and other aspects of life that normalize whiteness.

I am uplifted by each participants’ willingness to engage in the process and what they learned from participating in this project. Sally shared “I learned a lot about myself”, and Ella shared “Maybe that I am not as fierce as I thought”. Each person had a takeaway that at the very least, impacted how they perceived, understood, and challenged their whiteness and how they

plan to interact with systems and structures that uphold political, social, and cultural whiteness moving forward. Even though, some struggled with the concept, as Gloria shared, of “losing privilege”, she later declared that even though her privilege would be gone “it is for the betterment of all”. Each expressed a commitment to doing the work in some capacity, and I like to think that while it was only expressed directly by Jake they each approached challenging hegemonic whiteness as a duty.

Each person showcased their internal struggle with living up to this duty, and naming factors that regularly challenged their ability to address whiteness in the practice of teaching. This journey of being white and challenging whiteness is much like Plato’s *Allegory of the Cave*. It is difficult to stare at whiteness, own it, and work to dismantle it, but it is the responsibility of white people to begin to do the work, even though the comforts of whiteness are alluring. Thus, I must constantly commit to being uncomfortable, being a disruptor and agitator, while using my voice, scholarship, and educational practice to engage white people to interrogate and disrupt whiteness, because much like my writing has been throughout this project, the work needs to be *Non-Stop*.

REFERENCES

- Aguilar, C. E., & Richerme, L. K. (2014). What is everyone saying about teacher evaluation? Framing the intended and inadvertent causes and consequences of race to the top. *Arts Education Policy Review, 115*(4), 110–120.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/10632913.2014.947908>
- Alexander, M. (2012). *The new Jim Crow: Mass incarceration in the age of colorblindness*. Retrieved from <http://public.eblib.com/choice/publicfullrecord.aspx?p=517122>
- Althusser, L. (1971). *Lenin and philosophy, and other essays*. New York, NY: Monthly Review Press.
- Ambrosio, J. (2014). Teaching the psychosocial subject: white students and racial privilege. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education, 27*(10), 1376–1394.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/09518398.2013.840402>
- Andersen, M. (2003). Whitewashing race: A critical perspective on whiteness. In A. W. Doane & E. Bonilla-Silva (Eds.), *White out: The continuing significance of racism* (pp. 21–34). New York, NY: Taylor and Francis.
- Annamma, S. A. (2015). Whiteness as property: Innocence and ability in teacher education. *The Urban Review, 47*(2), 293–316. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11256-014-0293-6>
- Annamma, S. A., Jackson, D. D., & Morrison, D. (2017). Conceptualizing color-evasiveness: using dis/ability critical race theory to expand a color-blind racial ideology in education and society. *Race Ethnicity and Education, 20*(2), 147–162.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13613324.2016.1248837>

- Apfelbaum, E. P., Sommers, S. R., & Norton, M. I. (2008). Seeing race and seeming racist? Evaluating strategic colorblindness in social interaction. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 95(4), 918–932. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0011990>
- Apple, M. W., & Gillborn, D. (2009). Is racism in education an accident? *Educational Policy*, 23(4), 651–659. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0895904809334371>
- Applebaum, B. (2010). *Being white, being good: White complicity, white moral responsibility, and social justice pedagogy*. Lanham, Md: Lexington Books.
- Asim, J. (2008). *The n word: Who can say it, who shouldn't, and why*. Retrieved from <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&scope=site&db=nlebk&db=nlabk&AN=1626366>
- Austin, A. W. (2007). *From concentration camp to campus: Japanese American students and World War II*. Urbana [etc.: University of Illinois Press.
- Aveling, N. (2002). Student teachers' resistance to exploring racism: Reflections on “doing” border pedagogy. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacher Education*, 30(2), 119–130. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13598660220135630>
- Baldwin, J. (1993). *The fire next time*. New York: Vintage International.
- Bazeley, P. (2013). *Qualitative data analysis: practical strategies*. London: SAGE.
- Bell, D. A. (1992). *Faces at the bottom of the well: the permanence of racism*. New York, NY: Basic Books.
- Berchini, C. (2014). *Teachers constructing and being constructed by prevailing discourses and practices of whiteness in their curriculum, classroom, and school community: a critical inquiry of three first-year English teachers*. Retrieved from [183](http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?url_ver=Z39.88-</p></div><div data-bbox=)

2004&rft_val_fmt=info:ofi/fmt:kev:mtx:dissertation&res_dat=xri:pqm&rft_dat=xri:pqdis
s:3630576

Beyer, L. (2001). The value of critical perspectives in teacher education. *Journal of Teacher Education, 52*(2), 151–163.

Blauner, B. (2001). *Still the big news: racial oppression in America* (Rev. and expanded ed). Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

Bonilla-Silva, E. (2014). *Racism without racists: color-blind racism and the persistence of racial inequality in America* (Fourth edition). Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.

Bonilla-Silva, E., & Forman, T. A. (2000). “I am not a racist but ...”: mapping white college students’ racial ideology in the USA. *Discourse & Society, 11*(1), 50–85.

Brandehoff, R., & Silverstein, L. (2016). Feeling white: Whiteness, emotionality, and education. *Multicultural Perspectives, 18*(4), 239–243.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/15210960.2016.1228354>

Cabrera, N. L. (2014). “But I’m oppressed too”: white male college students framing racial emotions as facts and recreating racism. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education, 27*(6), 768–784. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09518398.2014.901574>

Cabrera, N.L. (2009). *Invisible racism: Male, Hegemonic Whiteness in Higher Education*.

University of California Los Angeles. Retrieved from

http://www.academia.edu/download/46403084/Cabrera_Dissertation.pdf

Cabrera, N. L. (2012). Working through whiteness: White, male college students challenging racism. *The Review of Higher Education, 35*(3), 375–401.

<https://doi.org/10.1353/rhe.2012.0020>

- Cabrera, N. L. (2019). *White guys on campus: racism, white immunity, and the myth of “post-racial” higher education*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press.
- Cabrera, N. L. (2014). Exposing whiteness in higher education: White male college students minimizing racism, claiming victimization, and recreating white supremacy. *Race Ethnicity and Education*, 17(1), 30–55. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13613324.2012.725040>
- CAEP Board of Directors. (2013). Council for the accreditation of educator preparation accreditation standards. *Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation*. Retrieved from http://www.gapsc.com/EducatorPreparation/Downloads/Georgia%20Standards_2016.pdf
- Carter, R. T., Helms, J. E., & Juby, H. L. (2004). The Relationship between racism and racial identity for white Americans: A profile analysis. *Journal of Multicultural Counseling and Development*, 32(1), 2.
- Chapman, T. K. (2007). Interrogating classroom relationships and events: Using portraiture and critical race theory in education research. *Educational Researcher*, 36(3), 156–162. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189X07301437>
- Cho, G., & DeCastro-Ambrosetti, D. (2005). Is ignorance bliss? Pre-Service teachers’ attitudes toward multicultural education. *The High School Journal*, 89(2), 24–28.
- Chubbuck, S. M. (2004). Whiteness enacted, whiteness disrupted: The complexity of personal congruence. *American Educational Research Journal*, 41(2), 301–333.
- Churchill, W. (2002). *Struggle for the land: Native North American resistance to genocide, ecocide, and colonization*. San Francisco: City Lights.
- Clandinin, D. J. (2013). *Engaging in narrative inquiry*. Walnut Creek, California: Left Coast Press, Inc.

- Clandinin, D. J., & Connelly, F. M. (2000). *Narrative inquiry: experience and story in qualitative research*. San Francisco, Calif: Jossey-Bass.
- Coates, R. D. (2011). *Covert racism theories, institutions, and experiences*. Leiden: BRILL.
Retrieved from <http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/ej.9789004203655.i-461>
- Cochran-Smith, M. (2000). Blind vision: Unlearning racism in teacher education. *Harvard Educational Review*, 70(2), 157–190.
- Connelly, F. M., & Clandinin, D. J. (1990). Stories of experience and narrative inquiry. *Educational Researcher*, 13.
- Cooley, D. B. (2013). *Academic achievement: How it is perceived by the insiders in a school labeled as failing under no child left behind*. University of Pennsylvania.
- Corbin, J. M., & Strauss, A. L. (2015). *Basics of qualitative research: techniques and procedures for developing grounded theory* (Fourth edition). Los Angeles: SAGE.
- Corbin, J., & Morse, J. M. (2003). The unstructured interactive interview: Issues of reciprocity and risks when dealing with sensitive topics. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 9(3), 335–354.
- Corces-Zimmerman, C. (2017). Counter-whiteness methodology: Challenging whiteness through research. Presented at the Association for the Study of Higher Education, Houston, TX.
- Council for Chief State School Officers. (2013). *Interstate teacher assessment and support InTASC model core teaching standards and learning progressions for teachers 1.0: A Resource for ongoing teacher development*. Washington, DC: Council for Chief State School Officers.
- Crenshaw, C. (1997). Resisting whiteness' rhetorical silence. *Western Journal of Communication*, 61(3), 253–278. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10570319709374577>

- Crenshaw, C. (1998). Colorblind rhetoric. *Southern Communication Journal*, 63(3), 244–256.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/10417949809373097>
- Crenshaw, K. W. (2002). Critical race studies: The first decade: Critical reflections, or “A foot in the closing door.” *UCLA Law Review*, 49, 1343–1859.
- Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research design: qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (4th ed). Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications.
- Cummings, A. D. P. (2014). A furious kinship: Critical race theory and the hip-hop nation. In R. Delgado & J. Stefancic (Eds.), *Critical race theory: The cutting edge* (pp. 107–119). Temple University Press.
- Curry, T. J. (2015). Back to the woodshop: Black education, imperial pedagogy, and post-racial mythology under the reign of Obama. *Teacher’s College Record*, 117, 27–52.
- Data: race and ethnicity in U.S. schools. (2014). *Education Week*, 33(31).
- Davis Jr, T. J. (2017). The politics of race and educational disparities in Delaware’s public schools. *Education and Urban Society*, 49(2), 135–162.
- Delgado, R., & Stefancic, J. (2012). *Critical race theory* (2. ed.). New York, NY [u.a.]: New York Univ. Press.
- DiAngelo, R. (2011). White fragility. *International Journal of Critical Pedagogy*, 3.
- DiAngelo, R. (2019). *White fragility: why it’s so hard for white people to talk about racism*. Place of publication not identified: PENGUIN Books.
- DiAngelo, R. (2010). Why can’t we all just be individuals?: Countering the discourse of individualism in anti-racist education. *InterActions: UCLA Journal of Education and Information Studies*, 6(1).

- DiAngelo, R. (2011). White fragility. *The International Journal of Critical Pedagogy*, 3(3), 54–70.
- Diggles, K. (2014). Addressing racial awareness and color-blindness in higher education. *New Directions for Teaching and Learning*, 2014(140), 31–44.
- Dixson, A. D., & Rousseau, C. K. (2005). And we are still not saved: critical race theory in education ten years later. *Race Ethnicity and Education*, 8(1), 7–27.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/1361332052000340971>
- Dize, C. B. (2011). *Contemporary racial attitudes as predictive of Whites' responses to discrimination against Blacks* (Dissertation). Columbia University.
- Du Bois, W. E. B. (1994). *The souls of Black folk*. New York: Dover.
- Dunbar-Ortiz, R. (2014). *An indigenous peoples' history of the United States*. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Duncan-Andrade, J. (2009). Note to educators: Hope required when growing roses in concrete. *Harvard Educational Review*, 79(2), 181–194.
- Feagin, J. R. (2013). *The white racial frame: centuries of racial framing and counter-framing* (2nd ed). New York: Routledge.
- Feagin, J. R., & McKinney, K. D. (2005). *The many costs of racism*. Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Frankenberg, R. (1993). *White women, race matters: the social construction of whiteness*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Fredrickson, G. M. (2002). *Racism: a short history*. Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press.
- Freire, P. (2000). *Pedagogy of the oppressed* (30th anniversary ed). New York: Continuum.

- Gallagher, C. (2003). Playing the white ethnic card: Using ethnic identity to deny contemporary racism. In A. W. Doane & E. Bonilla-Silva (Eds.), *White out: The continuing significance of racism* (pp. 145–158). New York, NY: Taylor and Francis.
- Gillborn, D. (2005). Education policy as an act of white supremacy: whiteness, critical race theory and education reform. *Journal of Education Policy*, 20(4), 485–505.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/02680930500132346>
- Gillborn, D. (2008). *Racism and education: coincidence or conspiracy?* London ; New York: Routledge.
- Gillborn, D. (2010). The colour of numbers: surveys, statistics and deficit-thinking about race and class. *Journal of Education Policy*, 25(2), 253–276.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/02680930903460740>
- Gliner, J. A., Morgan, G. A., & Leech, N. L. (2017). *Research methods in applied settings: an integrated approach to design and analysis* (Third edition). New York ; London: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group.
- Goodman, A. H., Moses, Y. T., & Jones, J. L. (2012). *Race: are we so different?* Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Gramsci, A. (1985). *Selections from the prison notebooks of Antonio Gramsci* (8. pr). New York: International Publ.
- Green, M. J., & Sonn, C. C. (2006). Problematizing the discourses of the dominant: Whiteness and reconciliation. *Journal of Community & Applied Social Psychology*, 16(5), 379–395.
<https://doi.org/10.1002/casp.882>

- Green, T. L., & Dantley, M. E. (2013). The great white hope? Examining the white privilege and epistemology of an urban high school principal. *Journal of Cases in Educational Leadership, 16*(2), 82–92. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1555458913487038>
- Gross, A. J. (2014). The caucasian cloak: Mexican americans and the politics of whiteness in the twentieth-century southwest. In R. Delgado & Stefancic (Eds.), *Critical Race Theory: The Cutting Edge* (pp. 154–166).
- Guba, E. G. (Ed.). (1990). *The Paradigm dialog*. Newbury Park, Calif: Sage Publications.
- Guglielmo, T. (2003). Rethinking whiteness historiography: The case of Italians in Chicago, 1890-1945. In A. W. Doane & E. Bonilla-Silva (Eds.), *White Out: The Continuing Significance of Racism* (pp. 49–62). New York, NY: Taylor and Francis.
- Gutiérrez y Muhs, G., Niemann, Y. F., Gonzalez, C. G., & Harris, A. P. (Eds.). (2012). *Presumed incompetent: the intersections of race and class for women in academia*. Boulder, Colo: University Press of Colorado.
- Hagerman, M. A. (2016). Reproducing and reworking colorblind racial ideology acknowledging children’s agency in the white habitus. *Sociology of Race and Ethnicity, 2*(1), 58–71.
- Harper, S. R. (2010). An anti-deficit achievement framework for research on students of color in STEM. *New Directions for Institutional Research, 2010*(148), 63–74. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ir.362>
- Harris, C. I. (1993). Whiteness as property. *Harvard Law Review, 106*(8), 1707–1791.
- Hayes, C., & Fasching-Varner, K. J. (2015). Racism 2.0 and the death of social and cultural foundations of education: a critical conversation. *The Journal of Educational Foundations, 28*(1–4), 103.

- Hayes, C., & Juarez, B. (2012). There is no culturally responsive teaching spoken here: A critical race perspective. *Democracy and Education*, 20(1), 1.
- Helms, J. E. (1996). Toward a methodology for measuring and assessing racial as distinguished from ethnic identity. Retrieved from <http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/burosbookmulticultural/8/>
- Helms, J. E. (1999). Another meta-analysis of the white racial identity attitude scale's Cronbach alphas: implications for validity. *Measurement and Evaluation in Counseling and Development [H.W. Wilson - EDUC]*, 32(3), 122.
- Helms, J. E. (2008). *A race is a nice thing to have: a guide to being a white person or understanding the white persons in your life*. Hanover, Mass.: Microtraining Associates.
- Hendry, P. M. (2009). Narrative as inquiry. *The Journal of Educational Research*, 103(2), 72–80. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00220670903323354>
- Hikido, A., & Murray, S. B. (2016). Whitened rainbows: how white college students protect whiteness through diversity discourses. *Race Ethnicity and Education*, 19(2), 389–411. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13613324.2015.1025736>
- hooks, b. (2003). *Teaching community: a pedagogy of hope*. New York: Routledge.
- hooks, b. (1996). *Killing rage: ending racism* (1st paperback ed). New York: Henry Holt.
- Howard, P. S. S. (2004). White privilege: For or against? A discussion of ostensibly antiracist discourses in critical whiteness studies. *Race, Gender, & Class*, 11(4), 63–75.
- Huber, L. P. (2008). Building critical race methodologies in educational research: A research note on critical race testimonio. *FIU L. Rev.*, 4, 159.

- Jackson, R., Sweeney, K., & Welcher, A. (2014). It just happens: Colorblind ideology and undergraduate explanations of racial interaction on campus. *Education, Citizenship and Social Justice*, 1746197914542553.
- Jackson, T. O., Bryan, M. L., & Larkin, M. L. (2016). An analysis of a white preservice teacher's reflections on race and young children within an urban School Context. *Urban Education*, 51(1), 60–81.
- Jayakumar, U. M., & Adamian, A. S. (2017). The fifth frame of colorblind ideology: Maintaining the comforts of colorblindness in the context of white fragility. *Sociological Perspectives*, 60(5), 912–936. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0731121417721910>
- Jennings, T. (2007). Addressing diversity in US teacher preparation programs: A survey of elementary and secondary programs' priorities and challenges from across the United States of America. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 23(8), 1258–1271. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2006.05.004>
- Johnson, H. B., & Shapiro, T. M. (2003). Good neighborhoods, good schools: Race and the “Good Choices” of white families. In A. W. Doane & E. Bonilla-Silva (Eds.), *White Out: The Continuing Significance of Racism* (pp. 173–187). New York: Routledge.
- Johnson, P. J., & Aboud, F. E. (2013). Modifying ethnic attitudes in young children: The impact of communicator race and message strength. *International Journal of Behavioral Development*, 37(3), 182–191. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0165025412466522>
- Jupp, J. C., & Lensmire, T. J. (2016). Second-wave white teacher identity studies: toward complexity and reflexivity in the racial conscientization of white teachers. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 29(8), 985–988. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09518398.2016.1189621>

- Kendi, I. X. (2016). *Stamped from the beginning: the definitive history of racist ideas in America*. New York: Nation Books.
- Kim, J.-H. (2016). *Understanding narrative inquiry: the crafting and analysis of stories as research*. Los Angeles: SAGE.
- Kim, J.-H., & Latta, M. M. (2009). Narrative inquiry: Seeking relations as modes of interactions. *The Journal of Educational Research*, 103(2), 69–71.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/00220670903323164>
- Kincheloe, J. L., & McLaren, P. (2011). Rethinking critical theory and qualitative research. In K. Hayes, S. Steinberg, & K. Tobin (Eds.), *Key works in critical pedagogy. Bold visions in educational research* (Vol. 32, pp. 285–326). Sense Publishers.
- King, J. C. (1981). *The biology of race* (Rev. ed.). Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Kivel, P. (2002). *Uprooting racism: How white people can work for racial justice* (Rev. ed). Gabriola Island, B.C: New Society Publishers.
- Kwegyir Aggrey, L. (2007). *Pre-service teachers' perspectives on race. The impact of key experiences* (Dissertation). University of Iowa, Iowa City, IA.
- Ladson-Billings, G. (2006). From the achievement gap to the education debt: Understanding achievement in US schools. *Educational Researcher*, 35(7), 3–12.
- Ladson-Billings, G. (1999). Preparing teachers for diverse student populations: A critical race theory perspective. *Review of Research in Education*, 24, 211.
<https://doi.org/10.2307/1167271>
- Ladson-Billings, G., & Tate, W. F. (1995). Toward a critical race theory of education. *Teachers College Record*, 97(1), 47.

- Ladson-Billings, G. (1995). But that's just good teaching! The case for culturally relevant pedagogy. *Theory into Practice*, 34(3), 159–165.
- Ladson-Billings, Gloria. (2014). Culturally relevant pedagogy 2.0: a.k.a. the Remix. *Harvard Educational Review*, 84(1), 74–85.
- Lauen, D. L., & Gaddis, S. M. (2012). Shining a light or fumbling in the dark? The effects of NCLB's subgroup-specific accountability on student achievement. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 34(2), 185–208.
<https://doi.org/10.3102/0162373711429989>
- Lawrence, S. M., & Tatum, B. D. (1999). White racial identity and anti-racist education: A catalyst for change. Beyond heroes and holidays: A practical guide to K-12 anti-racist, multicultural education and staff development. *Early Childhood Equity Alliance*, 1–12.
- Lawrence-Lightfoot, S. (2005). Reflections on Portraiture: A dialogue between art and science. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 11(1), 3–15. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1077800404270955>
- Lawrence-Lightfoot, S., & Davis, J. H. (1997). *The art and science of portraiture* (1st ed). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Leary, J. D. (2005). *Post traumatic slave syndrome: America's legacy of enduring injury and healing*. Milwaukie, Oregon: Uptone Press.
- Ledesma, M. C., & Calderón, D. (2015). Critical race theory in education: A review of past literature and a look to the future. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 21(3), 206–222.
- Lee, J., & Reeves, T. (2012). Revisiting the impact of NCLB high-stakes School accountability, capacity, and resources: State NAEP 1990-2009 reading and math achievement gaps and trends. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 34(2), 209–231.
<https://doi.org/10.3102/0162373711431604>

- Leonardo, Z. (2002). The souls of white folk: Critical pedagogy, whiteness studies, and globalization discourse. *Race Ethnicity and Education*, 5(1), 29–50.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13613320120117180>
- Leonardo, Z. (2004a). Critical Social Theory and Transformative Knowledge: The Functions of Criticism in Quality Education. *Educational Researcher*, 33(6), 11–18.
- Leonardo, Z. (2004b). The Color of Supremacy: Beyond the discourse of ‘white privilege.’ *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 36(2), 137–152.
- Leonardo, Z. (2007). The war on schools: NCLB, nation creation and the educational construction of whiteness. *Race Ethnicity and Education*, 10(3), 261–278.
- Leonardo, Z. (2009). *Race, whiteness, and education*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Lewis, A. E. (2001). There is no “race” in the schoolyard: Color-blind ideology in an (almost) all-white school. *American Educational Research Journal*, 38(4), 781–811.
- Lewis, A. E. (2004). What group?" Studying whites and whiteness in the era of "color-blindness. *Sociological Theory*, 22(4), 623–646.
- Lipsitz, G. (2006). *The possessive investment in whiteness: how white people profit from identity politics* (Rev. and expanded ed). Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- Lopez, G. R. (2003). The (racially neutral) politics of education: A critical race theory Perspective. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 39(1), 68–94.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0013161X02239761>
- Lopez, I. F. H. (1994). The social construction of race: Some observations on illusion, fabrication, and choice. *Harv CR-CLL Rev.*, 29, 1.

- Love, B. J. (2004). Brown plus 50 counter-storytelling: A critical race theory analysis of the “Majoritarian Achievement Gap” Story. *Equity & Excellence in Education*, 37(3), 227–246. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10665680490491597>
- Lynd, S. (1966). The compromise of 1787. *Political Science Quarterly*, 81(2), 225. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2147971>
- Lynn, M., & Parker, L. (2006). Critical race studies in education: Examining a decade of research on U.S. schools. *The Urban Review*, 38(4), 257–290.
- Matias, C. E. (2013a). Check yo’self before you wreck yo’self and our kids: Counterstories from culturally responsive white teachers? . . . to culturally responsive. *Interdisciplinary Journal of Teaching and Learning*, 3(2), 68–81.
- Matias, C. E. (2013b). On the “flip” side: a teacher educator of color unveiling the dangerous minds of white teacher candidates. *Teacher Education Quarterly*, 40(2), 53.
- Matias, C. E. (2016). *Feeling white: whiteness, emotionality, and education*.
- Matias, C. E., & Lou, D. D. (2015). Tending to the heart of communities of color: Towards critical race teacher activism. *Urban Education*, 50(5), 601.
- Matias, C. E., & Mackey, J. (2016). Breakin’ down whiteness in antiracist teaching: Introducing critical whiteness pedagogy. *The Urban Review*, 48(1), 32–50. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11256-015-0344-7>
- Matias, C. E., Viesca, K. M., Garrison-Wade, D. F., Tandon, M., & Galindo, R. (2014). "What is critical whiteness doing in OUR nice field like critical race theory?" Applying CRT and CwS to understand the white imaginations of white teacher candidates. *Equity & Excellence in Education*, 47(3), 289–304. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10665684.2014.933692>

- Maxwell, L. A. (2014). 60 years after brown, school diversity more complex than ever. *Education Week*, 33(31), 18–19.
- McCoy, D. L., Winkle-Wagner, R., & Luedke, C. L. (2015). Colorblind mentoring? Exploring white faculty mentoring of students of color. *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education*, 8(4), 225–242.
- McGuire, K. (2016). Am I special? Rethinking notions of exceptionalism in Black male success narratives. In B. L. McGowen, R. T. Palmer, J. L. Wood, & D. F. Hibbler Jr. (Eds.), *Black men in the academy: Narratives of resiliency, achievement, and success* (pp. 107–126). New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Mensah, F. M., & Jackson, I. (2018). Whiteness as property in science teacher education. *Teachers College Record*, 120(1), 38.
- Milner, H. R., & Laughter, J. C. (2015). But good intentions are not enough: Preparing teachers to center race and poverty. *The Urban Review*, 47(2), 341–363.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s11256-014-0295-4>
- Milner, H. R. (2008). Critical race theory and interest convergence as analytic tools in teacher education policies and practices. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 59(4), 332–346.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0022487108321884>
- Miville, M. L., Darlington, P., Whitlock, B., & Mulligan, T. (2005). Integrating identities: The relationships of racial, gender, and ego identities among white college students. *Journal of College Student Development*, 46(2), 157–175. <https://doi.org/10.1353/csd.2005.0020>
- Murguia, E., & Forman, T. (2003). Shades of whiteness: The Mexican American experience in relation to anglos and Blacks. In A. W. Doane & E. Bonilla-Silva (Eds.), *White out: The continuing significance of racism* (pp. 63–79). New York, NY: Taylor and Francis.

- Museus, S. D., & Jayakumar, U. M. (Eds.). (2012). *Creating campus cultures: fostering success among racially diverse student populations*. New York: Routledge.
- Nayak, A. (2007). Critical whiteness studies. *Sociology Compass*, 1(2), 737–755.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1751-9020.2007.00045.x>
- Neville, H. A., Lilly, R. L., Duran, G., Lee, R. M., & Browne, L. (2000). Construction and initial validation of the color-blind racial attitudes scale (CoBRAS). *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 47(1), 59–70. <https://doi.org/10.1037//0022-0167.47.1.59>
- Nolas, S.-M. (2011). Pragmatics of pluralistic qualitative research. In N. Frost (Ed.), *Qualitative research methods in psychology: Combining core approaches* (pp. 121–144). New York, NY: McGraw Hill Open University Press.
- NPR, Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, & Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health. (2017). *Discrimination in America: Experiences and views of white Americans* (pp. 1–62).
- Ohline, H. A. (1971). Republicanism and slavery: Origins of the three-fifths clause in the United States Constitution. *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 28(4), 563.
<https://doi.org/10.2307/1922187>
- Olitsky, S. (2015). Beyond “Acting White”: Affirming academic identities by establishing symbolic boundaries through talk. *Urban Education*, 50(8), 961–988.
- Omi, M., & Winant, H. (2015). *Racial formation in the United States*. Retrieved from <http://public.eblib.com/choice/publicfullrecord.aspx?p=1715791>
- Osei-Kofi, N., Lui, J., & Torres, L. E. (2013). Practices of whiteness: racialization in college admissions viewbooks. *Race Ethnicity and Education*, 16(3), 386–405.

- Park, J. J., & Liu, A. (2014). Interest convergence or divergence?: A critical race analysis of Asian Americans, meritocracy, and critical mass in the affirmative action debate. *The Journal of Higher Education*, 85(1), 36–64. <https://doi.org/10.1353/jhe.2014.0001>
- Patel, L. (2016). *Decolonizing educational research: from ownership to answerability*. New York: Routledge.
- Patterson, R. S. (2015). *Trumping the race card: a national agenda - moving beyond race and racism*. iUniverse Com.
- Patton, L. D. (2016). Disrupting postsecondary prose: Toward a critical race theory of higher education. *Urban Education*, 51(3), 315–342.
- Perry, P. (2001). White means never having to say you're ethnic: White youth and the construction of "Cultureless" identities. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, 30(1), 56–91. <https://doi.org/10.1177/089124101030001002>
- Philip, T. M., & Benin, S. Y. (2014). Programs of teacher education as mediators of White teacher identity. *Teaching Education*, 25(1), 1–23.
- Pollock, M., Bocala, C., Deckman, S. L., & Dickstein-Staub, S. (2016). Caricature and hyperbole in preservice teacher professional development for diversity. *Urban Education*, 51(6), 629–658.
- Prendergast, C., & Shor, I. (2005). When whiteness is visible: The stories we tell about whiteness. *Rhetoric Review*, 24(4), 377–385.
- Rieger, A. (2015). Making sense of white identity development: The implications for teacher education. *Multicultural Learning and Teaching*, 10(2). <https://doi.org/10.1515/mlt-2015-0009>

- Riessman, C. K. (2008). *Narrative methods for the human sciences*. Los Angeles: Sage Publications.
- Rocco, T. S., & Plakhotnik, M. S. (2009). Literature reviews, conceptual frameworks, and theoretical frameworks: Terms, functions, and distinctions. *Human Resource Development Review*, 8(1), 120–130. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1534484309332617>
- Rodriguez, A. J. (2015). What about a dimension of engagement, equity, and diversity practices? A critique of the next generation science standards: What about a dimension of engagement, equity, and diversity practices? *Journal of Research in Science Teaching*, 52(7), 1031–1051. <https://doi.org/10.1002/tea.21232>
- Roediger, D. R. (2006). *Working toward whiteness: how America's immigrants became white ; the strange journey from Ellis Island to the suburbs*. New York, NY: Basic Books.
- Roediger, D. R. (2010). *How race survived US history: from settlement and slavery to the Obama phenomenon*. London ; New York: Verso.
- Roediger, D. R. (2014). *Seizing freedom: slave emancipation and liberty for all*. London: Verso.
- Samson, F. L. (2013). Multiple group threat and malleable white attitudes towards academic merit. *Du Bois Review: Social Science Research on Race*, 10(01), 233–260. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1742058X1300012X>
- Schulz, S., & Fane, J. (2015). A healthy dose of race? White students' and teachers' unintentional brushes with whiteness. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education*, 40(40). <https://doi.org/10.14221/ajte.2015v40n11.8>
- Shuster, K. (2018). *Teaching hard history: American slavery* (pp. 1–48). Southern Poverty Law Center.

- Silvestri, T. J., & Richardson, T. Q. (2001). White racial identity statuses and NEO personality constructs: An exploratory analysis. *Journal of Counseling & Development, 79*(1), 68–76.
- Sleeter, C. E. (2001). Preparing teachers for culturally diverse schools research and the overwhelming presence of whiteness. *Journal of Teacher Education, 52*(2), 94–106.
- Sleeter, C. E. (2011). Becoming white: reinterpreting a family story by putting race back into the picture. *Race Ethnicity and Education, 14*(4), 421–433.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13613324.2010.547850>
- Sleeter, C. E. (2017). Critical race theory and the whiteness of teacher education. *Urban Education, 52*(2), 155–169.
- Smedley, A. (1993). *Race in North America: Origin and evolution of a worldview*. Boulder: Westview Press.
- Smith, B. A. (2014). White students' understanding of race: An exploration of how white university students, raised in a predominately white state, experience whiteness. *University of Maine*. Retrieved from <http://digitalcommons.library.umaine.edu/etd/2134/>
- Smith, R. M. (1997). *Civic ideals*. New Haven [u.a.]: Yale Univ. Press.
- Smith-Maddox, R., & Solórzano, D. G. (2002). Using critical race theory, Paulo Freire's problem-posing method, and case study research to confront race and racism in education. *Qualitative Inquiry, 8*(1), 66–84.
- Snyder, T.D., and Dillow, S.A. (2013). Digest of education statistics 2012 (NCES 2014-015). National Center for Education Statistics, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education. Washington, DC.

- Solomona, R. P., Portelli, J. P., Daniel, B., & Campbell, A. (2005). The discourse of denial: how white teacher candidates construct race, racism and 'white privilege.' *Race Ethnicity and Education*, 8(2), 147–169. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13613320500110519>
- Solorzano, D. G., & Bernal, D. D. (2001). Examining transformational resistance through a critical race and LatCrit theory framework Chicana and Chicano students in an urban context. *Urban Education*, 36(3), 308–342.
- Solorzano, D. G., & Yosso, T. J. (2002). Critical race methodology: Counter-storytelling as an analytical framework for education research. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 8(1), 23–44.
- Solorzano, D.G., & Yosso, T. J. (2002). Critical race methodology: Counter-Storytelling as an analytical framework for education research. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 8(1), 23–44.
- Span, C. (2015). Post-slavery? post-segregation? post racial?: A history of the impact of slavery segregation, and racism on the education of African Americans. *National Society for the Study of Education*, 114(2), 53–74.
- State of the Union. (2010, January 27). *State of the Union coverage*. MSNBC.
- Steyn, M., & Conway, D. (2010). Introduction: Intersecting whiteness, interdisciplinary debates. *Ethnicities*, 10(3), 283–291. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1468796810372309>
- Sue, D. W., Capodilupo, C. M., Torino, G. C., Bucceri, J. M., Holder, A. M. B., Nadal, K. L., & Esquilin, M. (2007). Racial microaggressions in everyday life: Implications for clinical practice. *American Psychologist*, 62(4), 271–286. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.62.4.271>
- Swim, J. K., & Miller, D. L. (1999). White guilt: Its antecedents and consequences for attitudes toward affirmative action. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 25(4), 500–514.

- Terkel, S. (1993). *Race: how Blacks and whites think and feel about the American obsession* (1st Anchor Books ed). New York: Anchor Books.
- Thompson, A. (2003). Tiffany, friend of people of color: White investments in antiracism. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 16(1), 7–29.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/0951839032000033509>
- Thompson, B. W., & Tyagi, S. (Eds.). (1996). *Names we call home: autobiography on racial identity*. New York: Routledge.
- Timar, T., & Maxwell-Jolly, J. (Eds.). (2012). *Narrowing the achievement gap: perspectives and strategies for challenging times*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard Education Press.
- Unzueta, M. M., & Lowery, B. S. (2008). Defining racism safely: The role of self-image maintenance on white Americans' conceptions of racism. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 44(6), 1491–1497. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jesp.2008.07.011>
- U.S. Government Accountability Office. (2016). *Better use of information could help agencies identify disparities and address racial discrimination* (No. GAO-16-345) (pp. 1–108). Washington, DC.
- Warren, C. A., Douglas, T. M. O., & Howard, T. C. (2016). In their own words: Erasing deficits and exploring what works to improve K–12 and Postsecondary Black male school achievement. *Teachers College Record*, 118(6), 1–4.
- Weilbacher, G. (2012). Standardization and whiteness: One and the same? A response to “There Is No Culturally Responsive Teaching Spoken Here.” *Democracy and Education*, 20(2), 15.
- Wilder, C. S. (2014). *Ebony and ivy: race, slavery, and the troubled history of America's universities*.

- Yeung, J. G., Spanierman, L. B., & Landrum-Brown, J. (2013). Being white in a multicultural society. *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education*, 6(1), 17–32.
- Yoon, I. H. (2012). The paradoxical nature of whiteness-at-work in the daily life of schools and teacher communities. *Race Ethnicity and Education*, 15(5), 587–613.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13613324.2011.624506>
- Young, K. S. (2016). How student teachers (don't) talk about race: An intersectional analysis. *Race Ethnicity and Education*, 19(1), 67–29.

APPENDIX A: PARTICIPANT PORTRAITS

Karen: The A-Typical

I sat and waited for our initial meeting to begin. I was feeling nervous. After all this was only my second interview, and I was still trying to navigate the intricate balance of keeping a dialogic discussion on whiteness while simultaneously attempting to build credibility in order for the participants to feel comfortable talking about a difficult subject. My earbuds pressed firmly in my ear canal as the notification chime signaled that Karen had arrived to the meeting.

I sat nervously staring at the blank framed screen on my computer where her face would soon appear. In the other framed box, I saw my face staring back. My Detroit Tigers baseball cap was a bit off centered, and my red *Freire your mind* T-shirt was a bit wrinkled. I began to think about whether or not my wardrobe choice was the image I wanted to communicate for the interview process. I wondered if maybe I was too relaxed or if my shirt would create some sort of resonance or reaction. As I went into my mind for a moment, Karen's face suddenly appeared on my screen next to mine. Her blonde hair was tightly pulled back against her head in a single pony tail. She sat in front of a window with light cascading through a decorative window cover. After spending a few seconds staring at the decorative cover, I introduced myself with a little too much enthusiasm. She smiled back and we began chatting about her day. I was still somewhat distracted by the decorative window cover as I was trying to figure out what word was written all over the cloth. Finally, it occurred to me that scrawled in straight lines throughout the cover was the word Roma, and outlining the frame was the word Italy. The importance and significance of this was lost on me at the time, but it would become clear throughout our discussions that this artifact was not simply a nice souvenir from a study abroad experience, but it served as possibly a subconscious reminder to see the world outside of her own lived context. We continued with

some small talk about her day which led to her talking about her interest in the study. Karen shared that she was interested in being a participant because she felt like it was building off a study she conducted while as an undergraduate student.

During her time at Upper Midwest State University (UMSU), she developed a survey gathering information on how and from what perspective history was being taught in high school. She found that for the most part, history was being taught from a Eurocentric perspective. As we continued our discussion, I began to get the sense that Karen was both trying to gauge how this process would work for her, and she herself was attempting to build credibility as someone that recognized issues of whiteness in the education system.

Karen's demeanor never really shifted throughout any of the interviews. She always was very happy, confident in her responses even when she was not able to recall a situation, and positioned herself in a strong and honest manner. She openly answered questions, and was very honest about her position, thoughts, and upbringing. However, from time to time, her shortness in response or her succinct answers meant that I would need to ask several follow-up questions, or reframe a questions to get a more detailed response.

Understanding the Bubble

Karen, a 22 year old white woman originally from the Midwest now lives in a community in the Northwest region of the United States where she is employed in her first year as a high school teacher. She grew up in a relatively wealthy suburb outside of a small but growing urban community. She explained that she “grew up in a stable family”, where her mother worked her way up as a Judge, and her father was a stay at home dad. Although the community she grew up in was affluent, she discussed that because they were a single income large family, they were not as economically comfortable as her friends. Karen attended a medium sized public institution of

higher education located in the same state where she lived her entire life. Even though the University was in a completely different region of the state, the feel of the bubble and insulation of similar looking people with similar cultural backgrounds was consistent with her upbringing.

Growing up, Karen's mother was a significant influence on how she framed the world for herself as a white woman. She stated "I grew up in a household where my mom was a judge and the breadwinner, so I was like yeah I am going to do well in school, there is no choice". You could tell when she told stories of her mother, it was more than just a close mother daughter relationship, her face lit up and it was noticeable that her mother had a significant impact on the way she viewed the world. At several points in our conversations, Karen discussed the concept of a bubble, and being able to maneuver outside of one's bubble. It was then, when I began to realize her use of the term bubble and the potential significance of the Roma window cover. The window cover seemed to represent an experience in which she saw the world outside of her bubble. She shared that recently she had been having conversations with her boyfriend, where they talked about a cultural bubble that insulated them from viewpoints and lived experiences that varied from their own. In talking about her experience and the concept of living in or growing up in a bubble, she used the words safety often to discuss what being in the bubble was like.

Karen often described being part of an insular community, one that was homogenous and congruent with both her identities and consistent with the way she saw and experienced the world. It was not just her community that seemed to be part of a bubble, but also it was also the manner in which her parents created a smaller bubble for her and her siblings. It was not as if they were restrictive, but the worldview, perspectives, and dynamics were insulated to normalize family behavior, thoughts, and ideas. Karen countered the thought at one point by saying, "I am

loud and will tell people what I think”, but almost in the same breath she stated that she understood that conversations needed to remain polite and the importance of polite conversations. She would later discuss the concept of polite conversation around “difficult subjects” like race and racism, creating a sense that there was a need to maintain a sense of rapport and not overly upset the person or group of people she is talking with.

Interestingly, Karen also projected that she felt others, regardless of race or cultural dynamic, had similar experiences living in a bubble. For example, when talking about the mostly white students that she taught during her student teaching experience she said “it is not the kids fault, but you know people settle with people or areas where they are more comfortable and settling near people that have the same culture as you create this bubble for each of the communities”. Her ideology and viewpoint that there was choice in where people lived and whether they could create a bubble led to another interesting understanding of her awareness of certain systemic barriers with integration and segregation, and significantly impacted her view on race, racism, and whiteness. I was fascinated by Karen’s matter of fact approach to our conversations and confidence in talking about how her bubble was created and maintained. The concept of individual choice started to become apparent at this point in our dialogue, as Karen often suggested an invocation of individualization over systemization. This also was one of the consistent aspects of her viewpoint related to her mother’s success as both a parent and as a working professional

Karen watched her mother advance her career from working as a Court Referee to a County Judge. She experienced her parents socially and economically climb through what she perceived as hard work.

Karen’s viewpoint on herself matched what her mother modeled, she shared

I am very much a type A personality, like kind of like that hyper organized, like very much getting things like done early in a very specific way, and I like I like things my way type thing, but I generally like fun and upbeat person. I just kinda like to, I go with the flow but I adapt pretty easily to different situations and I like it it's kinda contradictory because I like things to be a very structured and the way that they are everything in my life at the same time if something changes I can very easily like switch when I think that structure needs to be.

I could see Karen wrestle with her identity as a structured, organized, and type A person, but also pushing against that with a relatively new perspective to be spontaneous and go outside of her bubble. This is similar to the way in which she thought about life decisions and how she navigated different situations.

For example, after graduation, she got a job working as a teacher well over 2,000 miles west from where she grew up. She did not see herself moving far from her family and friends, but there was a bit of a calling for her to push herself to experience life outside of her bubble. In several points throughout our conversations, Karen vacillated between reflecting this person who was working to challenge herself, her bias, her belief structures, and move outside of the bubble, and in other moments where she quickly fell back into either projecting her own lived experience on others or into a framework of understanding that she had operated with throughout her life. This reoccurring theme of a bubble is significant and reflected in our conversations of race, racism, whiteness, and identity. It became one of the major themes for her throughout our discussion. It was almost as if when she was cognizant or aware of her attempt to move outside a bubble framework, she did and challenged herself. It was the moments when she was either

not aware or the topic was significant enough that she struggled with thinking beyond her own lived experience.

Striving to be a good white person

Karen leaned into the camera, thought for a moment and shared “I see myself as a young person who believes that they have an open and accepting mind when it comes to race and differences, but at the same time I have a very non-diverse background”. However, it is important to note that Karen’s upbringing of individualism significantly played a role in both how she viewed racism and whiteness, but also the manner and effect one person could have in disrupting racial oppression and whiteness. Karen acknowledge her lack of experiences with People of Color, as it was evident in both her life in her hometown and at University. However, despite her limited experiences with People of Color, she also was able to talk openly about her privilege and what Cabrera (2018) refers to as white immunity. She openly criticized the notion of having discussions in high school on issues of racism and white privilege with a room full of white kids and white teachers. This however, became somewhat of a constant theme during Karen’s discussions with me. The absence of racial diversity or even the appearance of racial diversity, meant that race was not an issue for discussion.

For example in several instances, Karen reflected that race was not something of concern or discussed regularly in her upbringing or at University largely due to the absence or seemingly physical absence of People of Color. Karen smiled and thought for a second, as she began to respond to a question about what she thought of her experiences in her life where she overheard or participated in conversations on issues of race or racism. She first began slowly articulating a thought and then her pace quickened as she begin to reflect on feeling disadvantaged in her inability to relate to People of Color. Karen stated, “I had a very whitewashed upbringing”

which “led to challenges and difficulties in relation to understanding of issues around race”. I paused for a moment, and asked her to clarify, she sat up and looked into the camera and without hesitation described that very rarely was race something that she thought about, talked about, or even discussed. In describing conversations with her friends from her youth she said, “when I talk with my peers about race, it mostly centers around challenges we face in related to diverse situations”.

Karen and her friends, who were also part of her bubble, centered their own experiences when talking about race rather than examining or centering the experiences of People of Color. Karen attributed the centering of their own challenges mostly on the lack of racial diversity and with her and her friends lack of “exposure” to People of Color. When talking about her formative experiences in elementary school, Karen shared

as a kid it is just something I never really thought about, like elementary and middle school like in a class with mostly white kids, most of my friends were white, I had a couple Black and Hispanic friends like I never I mean like as a kid you don't really like see that and did not really care about really it but it never was something I thought about.

Karen indicated that as a child that she did not really “see” or “care” about race, which was mostly due to the concept of racial difference not being part of her reality. In our discussions it was evident that Karen often operated from a post racial perspective which was formed during her adolescent and formative years growing up in her bubble. As I sat thinking about her statements, I asked her to think critically about how she saw herself as a younger person and trace her experience to how she thinks about her viewpoints in the present. Karen sat firmly in her chair and stared to the left, with confidence and very little hesitation she stated, “I thought I was this like [a] righteous liberal you know outspoken teenager, who you know

understood the world”. Karen’s viewpoint of being outspoken and “liberal” has not shifted as she now sits talking with me as a 22 year old adult serving as a teacher to young high school students. However, she then expressed a constant challenge of working to move beyond her bubble which I interpreted as an indication of her attempting to acknowledge her racialized experience as a white woman.

Not having direct conversations about race was significant in shaping Karen’s sense of race, her sense as a racialized human, and the way she thought about issues of racial oppression. At one point early in our discussions, I asked her to talk about how her family talked about oppression, specifically racial oppression. She shared,

My whole life I was taught to be accepting and most people around me were accepting of differences. I had never really seen or interacted with someone that is really verbally really being really racist in any capacity. It is just not like, we were taught and we learned about it, we learned about racism as an abstract concept because where we lived it did not affect my life . . . it just was not something that we saw, you know, I again grew up in a very liberal open minded household.

It was during this discussion, I imagined Karen’s household, with three other siblings a mother whose profession was as a member of the Judiciary in the County Court system and the conversations that occurred. Her parents expressed tolerance, justice, and to see people as equal. However, at the same time what also was interpreted was a sense of color evasion and white immunity that was indirectly expressed. Karen also learned from her mom’s work in the court system or at least what she interpreted to be the lived experiences of those that were a significant part of what she perceived as her mother’s case load.

There was also a sense of deficit orientation that came from Karen when she spoke about People of Color, Families of Color, and Kids of Color. Karen shared that often it was Kids of Color that were mostly impacted by her mother's work, and thus the deficit oriented discussions around Families of Color started to make sense, as she often only saw "Black kids" from a perspective of being economically disadvantaged or having a harder family experience. I could see conversations occurring about difference, and dialogue on racism being about individual actions and behaviors toward others. While at the same time values consistent with whiteness being reinforced and a shaping of Black and Brown families as being "broken" and disadvantaged. In talking about her mom's work Karen said, "she always worked on like custody, family law, abuse, and neglect for juveniles so her whole career field is around you know mostly you know kids and Families of Color because just demographically that's where you find those issues unfortunately." Given Karen's response to questions about her youth and her experience with her family, it was clear that her parents were promoting what they thought was equality and fair treatment for all, but mostly veiled in color evasive dialogue. Karen shared a story that confirmed how her family talked about race and confronted racism by talking about an instance where her mom addressed a family member that held values that reflected those consistent with white supremacy.

Karen witnessed the conversation her mother had with relative, and her mom saying that we do not believe "these things" that were shared and that everyone is equal was a significant moment for Karen. It was clear, that she saw racism and whiteness, and even white supremacy as individual acts. While she cognitively could talk about oppression on a systemic level, her language and discussion on racism and white supremacy danced along the lines of individual actions. As long as she was not saying "mean things" or physically harming the pursuit of

someone else's happiness she was not participating or in her words "seeing" her connection to the racialized experience in the United States, and on an even more specific level, her connection to whiteness.

Karen viewed herself as someone that was not part of racial injustice or upholding whiteness. She thought of racism as something that occurred because individuals or groups of individuals acted in a manner that said or used physical force to intimidate or harm someone else on the basis of race. Of course she recognized the connection to historical hate and bigotry, however saw those belief systems as mere individuals upholding beliefs of superiority and bias. In our final conversation, I was interested in understanding how she saw herself as part of upholding racism, whiteness, and white supremacy. In discussion of responsibility for upholding whiteness, Karen acknowledged that "white people are responsible for upholding institutional oppression, whiteness, etc at the core", but then gives herself space to not be placed in the same space as those that uphold oppression and whiteness. She then moved to a statement that places responsibility of racism on everyone

Then again, it is not all white people that are responsible. . .people get this idea that is white people against Black people, or white people against Hispanic people, and that only white people can be racist. . .but at the same time those people [People of Color] that are marginalized by racism also hold a little bit of the responsibility for institutional racism. Karen's rationalization of how racism is structured and how racial oppression and whiteness is upheld in her privileges the individual actions. These actions that she spoke of are often those of hate and associated with white supremacy, or actions of intolerance rather than actions of systemic behaviors or patterns that support the institutions and structures reinforcing whiteness.

As we discussed the topic further, Karen was able to articulate and name how whiteness functions and is upheld. She understood that she probably had done things in the past that upheld whiteness, but could not think of anything that she did specifically. In our conversations she would say things in a manner that would indicate she treated everyone fairly and did not think of People of Color from a pejorative perspective, thus treating every person from a neutral standpoint of equality. She positioned herself as a “good person” and from her perspective “good people” are not those that act in any manner that is related to upholding whiteness.

Her pursuit of upholding her ideals of liberalism and being a strong woman also shades her viewpoint in how she sees white immunity and privilege, and the actions of “certain” white people. When talking about oppression, racism, whiteness, and white supremacy, Karen began to distance herself from individuals that she thought to be perpetuating racial oppression. She stated, “I feel bad for what my race has caused, and I just want to apologize to people, like I am sorry we have behaved this way”. On a cognitive level, Karen was able to put herself in with how white folks have been part of constructing a system of racial oppression. However, she was clear in each instance that she was not part of racial oppression and rather would have her viewpoint that race should not matter as a way to solve racism and whiteness. I started to see Karen have some internal disagreement, though her body language and posture never showcased internal struggle. In one moment she was taking responsibility for racism, whiteness, white supremacy, and then in an instant later she was deflecting and distancing herself.

One of the most significant repetitive themes related to Karen’s understanding of systemic oppression and whiteness as property began to significantly surface during the second interview. The conversation began about her understanding of privilege and white immunity,

and how she experiences or understands how her privilege/immunity shaped her experiences.

Karen stated,

I feel like a lot of people in this day and age who are white, feel like they have to constantly apologize for their white privilege, and I feel like the African Americans who are very active and you know in having the whole check your privilege type thing, I don't think anyone is looking for an apology.

In the first interview I noticed Karen use the language similar to “this day in age” or making comments that she and her peers had moved beyond race being an “issue”. This refrain was consistent in our conversations, in particular, it came often in comments of disbelief that issues of race and whiteness were still occurring in the United States. As stated previously her lack of experience engaging with People of Color and the practices of color neutrality and color evasiveness built a framework of not being aware of how she was experiencing a racialized lived experience in the United States. In order to contextualize this, I opened a dialogue about Affirmative Action, and it provided a very insightful exchange as to how Karen compartmentalizes her viewpoint on both acts of individual racism and systemic racism and whiteness.

I sat looking at Karen digesting our conversation, and while I had not prepared to talk directly about Affirmative Action, the topic happened to be something that was being discussed heavily during the week that particular interview took place. I felt like I needed a topic that would allow me to get into understanding how Karen saw systemic oppression, her role, and from my experience how many “well intentioned” white people tend to get stuck on Affirmative Action and other potential non-neutral race practices. I began talking, trying to think of how to ask the question, and then the words tumbled from my mouth, “what are your thoughts on

Affirmative Action” I asked without much poise. Within seconds Karen’s response came back at me with a little tinge of something in her voice. “I think it is a load of crap honestly”, I looked at her trying not to show a physical response. She continued

If we are trying to make higher education more accessible and more equitable and more diverse, like I understand the want for that, but to me it is like race should not be a factor at all. I do not think should be a bubble or a form that asks race on an application. If we are just saying we need to take race out of it, people who have had disadvantages because of race or have the same background academically as other people, like why are we even making the distinction, well looking at an application, you can tell by looking at someone’s name you can tell what race is. If we are trying to go with the whole it is what you bring to the table, then why is it a factor? It is almost like you are still punishing students for being white, [for example] Mary is not going to get into UofM or Harvard even though she has the grades, SAT scores, and she did all the things she needs to do because she is a successful person, and she does not get in, but someone that has less or the same qualifications gets a little push because of their race, that is not fair for anyone, and that says race does matter, and I know the goal is to say race does not matter but the opposite happens.

I sat staring at her when she finished, and was trying to process her statement in entirety. It was not until I went back to watch the interview again, I realized that Karen’s commitment to race neutrality, color evasion, and race neutral ideology come from a sense of neoliberal values and whiteness as property.

I looked at her for a moment and asked, “how did you think you formed your understanding of affirmative action and your opinion on the topic?” Karen began to talk, stopped and then said,

Just a lot of cynicism, when I was in those later years of high school, from my peers, a lot of people were discouraged applying for things, because even though had done really well and worked really hard, they were cynical and worried that we were not going to do the things they want to do because they are white.

She then began to back off the topic a bit by saying that she was not as passionate as she was coming across but she just had an opinion. However, this was one of the very few topics outside of talking about teaching where Karen showed a bit of emotion. It was like I was watching her both defend her neoliberal and race neutral values while at the same time protecting the property of whiteness. Her semi-retreat also provided a glimpse of Karen’s continued efforts to be seen as a “good white person”, who was not racist but also did not think that race was something that “in this day and age” should be recognized as an aspect of someone’s lived experience.

Disrupting whiteness is not the role of an educator

Karen attended UMSU, a medium sized public institution located in the northern region of a state in the Midwest of the United States. At UMSU she majored in Social Studies and French for secondary teacher education. Similar to Karen’s upbringing, her experience at UMSU was very homogenous. Karen used the bubble analogy in talking about her time at the UMSU, as it was insulated from other cultures, especially in her teacher preparation program. In talking about her experience, she stated that all the students in her student teaching seminar were white and mostly women. She then said that she did not have any Faculty of Color in her educator preparation program experience. In fact she said, “I worked at the on campus Starbucks

and I made a lot of coffee, I interacted with one or two African American professors or Asian professors, I never had them as my professor, I made their coffee”.

Karen did indicate that a few courses began to push her beyond her bubble and cause her to think differently. Both of her primary content areas, French and Social Studies had aspects in which she learned about cultures, racism, colonization, and challenging dominant narratives. These experiences were limited, but they challenged Karen to view things differently from her upbringing, and pushed her a bit from her bubble. In talking about her experience in the program, she began to shift in her chair and get excited. I noticed this was the second time in which her demeanor changed.

The first was when we discussed Affirmative Action and her tonation became a little defensive, this time however she spoke excitedly. It was very clear she was passionate about the areas in which she teaches, and thought very highly of the content and subject matter. Karen shared, “race and racism were talked about . . .as it plays a big factor sometimes”. However, when Karen talked about her courses specifically related to educator preparation, she stated,

It [race, racism, whiteness] was not ignored, but at the same time it was not the main focus when we discussed diversity, this was just due to our location. My professors and classmates knew that for the most part we would be dealing much more economic diversity in our classroom rather than racial diversity as far as students.

Karen’s learned understanding of when race was important to talk about was reinforced in her teacher preparation program, or at least those were the messages that were received. When she finished her statement, I asked for clarification about why race was only relevant if People of Color were physically present?

She shifted slightly and said that she recognized the importance of race however it was more important that they be prepared to work with students from varied socioeconomic backgrounds due to where she was living at the time. What was not being said, was that they discussed economic disenfranchisement, and given the rural location of her university, most of the students they had contact with in her program were white students from a range of economic backgrounds. In addition to the content being general as it relates to working with students from various backgrounds, the feedback and evaluative instruments used to evaluate Karen's performance were more focused on "being able to teach to all students", but did not engage or assess her understanding of issues of whiteness or racism in the teaching context.

Karen indicated that during her preparation she was prepared and taught to "teach to all learners". Thus the focus of the lessons should gauge the student's interests, backgrounds, and make sure to make the content connect to the learners lived experience. Karen admitted, that now that she is teaching in a more racially and culturally different community compared to her student teaching experience, she really did not know what to expect or what to do to meet her students' varying needs based on racial and cultural identities. In a later discussion she stated, "you know it is not like we had anything in my education courses that were explicit in challenging whiteness or racism, but rather show different perspectives and encourage in acceptance in teaching practice". Karen then sat back and qualified her statements saying that it was probably not intentional that race was not a significant part of her preparation, but rather the program had other things they wanted to focus on.

As an educator, Karen said that her experiences helped her focus on the individual child. When talking about teaching, Karen's face would often light up. She knew she was a novice teacher, but it was clear she cared about and for her students. She reflected "I really just think

about my kids when I am teaching. . . and I think about their situations and what they are dealing with at home. . . I went through all the classes and checked who was on IEP, who is McKinney Vento status, which is pretty big in our area. . . and what languages are spoken at home”. I asked Karen to talk a little more about working with her Latinx students, and she shared that was an area where she had to really work on and think about in engaging students who were English Learners (EL). Karen said,

I have a lot of students, even surprisingly in French class where English is their second language and parents at home don't speak English. That is something I have to think about like when I was making my syllabus for this year. I have to use more concise or simple language and have parents sign it and give it back to me, and I have that power of being a native English speaker I don't have to think about the language barrier. Which is kind of difficult, like with some of students like, I really have to go through and explain things with them. They are all brilliant students, you know they are all driven to take a third language cause they could just take the heritage Spanish classes and get their credits. They don't have to take a language they don't know, which is a really cool program the Spanish heritage program it gets them to focus on, it gets them to focus on writing, they can speak it and hear it but can't always write it, so they focus on grammar mechanics.

Karen's discussion of meeting her students on an individual level is consistent with how she views oppression, racism, and whiteness. She did mention that her limited experience with working with cultures and races different from her own during her preparation limited her ability to understand how to connect with her students, and was something she was actively working on addressing. In addition, her connection to whiteness and her racialized experience as a white

person is also somewhat constantly challenging her in how she views her role as a disruptor of whiteness.

Karen does not see how she as one single teacher is able to really make much of impact on challenging whiteness and racism systemically. When talking about disruption, she had a difficult time articulating what it meant to her outside of treating everyone fairly, and challenging “racist comments” from students. Karen’s neoliberal viewpoints and need to use color evasive and race neutral practice guide how she frames and thinks about working on issues of whiteness. Specifically, she said

I feel like I have a mindset that I just don’t care, like really try to think about and be sensitive to cultural aspects. . . I don’t want to be one of those people because it sounds so pretentious when people say it, but I don’t see race, you know, which I feel like, I hate it when people say it, it is something that I try to do. . . I just try to hold everyone to the same exact standard and expectation. . . no matter what race they are

Not acknowledging race in her classroom challenges her ability to disrupt whiteness. Karen also challenges the notion that it is a teacher’s role to be a disruptor of whiteness.

Karen recognizes that in how she frames the content she teaches, there is some ability to challenge whiteness. Karen got really excited to share an experience in which she, in teaching French, teaches about colonization. She stated that she did not want her students to think that French was only spoken in Paris at a café, but rather in multiple countries. She recognized the importance of engaging her students and challenging them to “see beyond their bubble”.

However, Karen resides in the narrative that it is not the teacher’s job to disrupt whiteness. She stated “It is not a teacher’s job do that, like you can do whatever you want

outside of the teacher role, but as a teacher your job is not to make students or like, let me think”, she paused for a minute thinking about what to say next. She continued,

The best way to have the teacher do that disruption, is kind of emulate it and channel it into your students. It is not your job to make your students do or say anything, it is your job to present the information and have them draw their own conclusions.

Karen somewhat uses a Freirian approach that views the teacher as part of the learning just like the students, however, she does not see it as her role to purposeful disrupt or challenge oppression, which contradicts liberatory teaching practices. Nor does she always consider the power dynamics consistent with Freirian philosophies, in fact interestingly she often said she would love to someday be that teacher that captivates the minds of her students by lecturing the entire class. She found one of her faculty that most influential on her had that pedagogical approach, and she became enamored with his ability to engage learners in that manner.

Karen and her vulnerability

My time with Karen was interesting. It was fascinating to watch her engage her own understanding of what it meant to be a white teacher, but often provide a refrain on not spending much time thinking about race because racial diversity was often not present in her life. Karen recognized the importance of challenging racism and whiteness, but often referred to these topics and the types of conversation as not polite talk. She said “it is like the tough stuff but not the polite dinner conversations type thing, it is tough but it is so important for them to learn”. However she was challenged by finding the time to “fit it in” if it was not part of the curriculum, and to balance not overstepping what she perceived her role as a teacher to be, the provider of content. It was difficult to engage Karen in critically reflecting on how she was part of the system of upholding whiteness, and even though she thinks it is something she probably does,

she at the end of the day does not see herself as someone who perpetuates whiteness. She said, “no, I mean me personally absolutely not, what have I done, I have not done anything. . . that is harmful. . . I do not do anything to intentionally perpetuate”.

Not being able to cognitively engage with her own connection to whiteness is part of what holds Karen back from being someone that can fully engage challenging whiteness. When we finished our conversation she did share, that she thinks for the first time she recognizes the importance of hearing from People of Color and how she might have impacted their learning. As she sat on that statement for a moment, and then added,

I have my 15 year old Black or Hispanic students and how do they feel this portrays into their education, and now I am thinking about, in one of those off topic random days, and be like I want to talk about this, and get that other perspective and I want to get that perspective.

While Karen struggles with moving beyond the individual frame and somewhat relying on People of Color to help her learn how to disrupt whiteness, her indication of wanting to hear how she impacts People of Color was a reflection not expressed at any point of our discussion. Karen’s new insight found as part of this study, seems to be a turning point for her as she continues her journey in unpacking how she not only experiences the world as a white person, but how her presence as a white teacher with authority impacts her Students of Color. It is unclear if Karen will embark on this part of her journey, but I can ascertain that it will be a rich opportunity for her both as an educator and as someone that wishes to be there for her students.

Ella: The Fearless

It was a hot and humid Friday in the middle of August, and I was sitting in my office waiting for Ella to log into Zoom to begin our discussion. Our conversations took place between

the middle of August and the middle of September in 2018. Ella was enjoying a summer after earning her Baccalaureate degree in history for secondary education at a private institution located in the Midwest called Liberal Arts College (LAC). After college, she moved in with her parents, who live in a suburb of a large urban city. Her hometown is located in a state adjacent to where she went to college.

My conversations with Ella were fast paced, and felt dialogic. Her answers were often short which created space for a multitude of follow-up questions and additional dialogue. During our conversations Ella would sit on the floor of her childhood bedroom and she would crochet. At one point in our second conversation, I asked her about this, and she said that it helped her think, be reflective, and allowed her to do something with her hands. She was not making anything in particular during our dialogues, but rather finding a way to channel her energy and aid her with gathering her thoughts.

At the beginning of our first conversation Ella shared that she was taking a year off, which is why she moved back home, and was going to be joining AmeriCorps in October. She also acknowledged the privilege that she had with being able to move back in with her parents but also to be able to take a year after completing her undergraduate degree by doing work in the AmeriCorps. As we talked it was clear that Ella was unsure of what would be next for her following her time with AmeriCorps. She fully acknowledged that maybe teaching was the profession for her, but she also knew that she could take her time in making a decision and letting her path unfold in due time.

The oldest of 12

At the time of our first meeting Ella was 22 years old, and had just recently moved back home with her parents while she waited to embark on her journey with AmeriCorps. Ella

identified as a white cisgender woman. When I first met Ella, I had asked her to tell me something important about herself and what made her uniquely her. She smiled and said, “well I am the oldest of 12 which has its perks sometimes”. Ella would later share that she loved being an older sister even though there are challenges, however she also felt responsible for advocating and “looking out for” her younger siblings.

As we began to talk, I got the sense that Ella tried really hard to be authentic, to be real, to be forthcoming, and to remain true to her values. I think part of the reason why she chose to crochet during our discussions was because she used it as a method to consciously or unconsciously remain centered, and at times allow herself to be open and talk freely. Similar to her life journey, I got the sense that she was talking and thinking at the same time, which resulted in a limited filter, which I found helpful. All of my assumptions became reality when Ella very concisely shared, “I value honesty, friendship, and I value and hope that people are passionate about things they believe in”.

Throughout our time together Ella did her best to remain true to what she claimed to believe in and remain congruent with her values of honesty and passion. Although this did come to question a few times in our discussions, as I think Ella was trying to uphold her status as an ally and advocate for issues of social justice. Ella held these mantles very close, and they were part of her core throughout her time at LAC. For example, I had asked her to talk about how she lived her values. She sat for a moment, and her crocheting rhythm never slowed but remained steady, and she let out an “Oh Wow!, huh, let me think, wow, okay”. As she began to search in her brain for a response, she sat not looking at me but at her hands rhythmic movement. She then shared,

I think something really encapsulates everything I am saying as most of experiences with intercultural life at LAC, especially with the LGBT and Feminist student organizations I was really involved in. I worked with a group of people to bring awareness to people regarding larger societal problems, for example we did a clothesline project which was a way for victims of sexual abuse and sexual assault to visibly share their experiences in a very public way, you know to help bring voice to their experience.

It was in this example, I began to understand that Ella was a very involved student during undergrad, and had been part of several advocacy groups. Her experiences in these organizations would clearly shape how she came to understand issues of whiteness and were significant to her formative learning about challenging oppression.

After talking about some of her activism and commitments to “advocacy” in college, we spent time talking about her journey to that point of being someone who supported a multitude of justice oriented issues. Ella shared that she had not always been as open or aware of injustice and oppression. Although Ella often saw herself as the spokesperson for her siblings in her household, and someone that her siblings could go to for advice and for support, she was not able to transition these personal characteristics for advocacy until later in high school.

We began to talk about Ella’s experiences growing up and what experiences shaped her framework and understanding of life. She said, that thinking about examples of realizing she was white or what that meant to her are difficult because her family never really directly talked about race, politics, or issues. She said that she did not have to think about what it meant to be white, and it never really was something she thought much of until her junior year of high school. She then reflected on the messages at home included being inundated with FoxNews as that is what her mom would watch in the morning while they got ready for school. Ella’s

assessment that her family did not talk about politics was somewhat contradicted as certain political messages and perspective were readily being discussed and consumed in her household. These perspectives and viewpoints were viewpoints that aligned with whiteness norming the lived experiences of white people, and would later come tumbling out of Ella's mouth as she engaged with a friend about systemic racism.

As we continued our discussion of her upbringing Ella shared that her experience was very sheltered. She said, "we moved from the city when I was young to a very white suburb. We never really talked about being white or the benefits from being white, and we never talked about racial tension either". Ella had a difficult time remembering any specific messaging around race growing up, but assumed there were covert messages she learned. In our second discussion Ella shared that she recently had a very tense conversation with her father that led me to believe discussion on race or negative viewpoints regarding People of Color were shared when she was young, but they mostly reflected normalizing whiteness and this was probably not recognized at the time by Ella due to her lack of awareness while growing up.

Ella got quiet for a moment, I could tell she was thinking about whether or not share a particular recent event. Her hands moved at the same pace the entire time, and then she began to speak.

So um, yeah, hmm, my dad, my dad is awful in a lot of ways, so my sister recently started seeing a boy who is Black. Well, I guess he kept her out until 1130, and my parents wanted her home at 1030. My parents were upset, and my dad started screaming about how awful this boy is even though he has never met him, and the just dropped the N-word, and I was like okay, what does that have to do with her staying out late, and I was like why would you say that

Ella was both serving as a support for her younger sister, but also found that she needed to address her Father's behavior. She said that when she was younger she would have never addressed it and just let it go, which indicates this was not totally abnormal even if the messages were more covert during her youth.

It started with a car ride

Ella recognized that she had been influenced by the messages she received as a kid, and credits one of her closest friends for challenging her and providing her with the space to do introspective work. According to a story shared by Ella, it all began with a car ride to school. Ella shared as she got older she started to become more aware, but basically knew she “was white and some people were not, and did not really see the difference”. She then quickly stated, “I was really ignorant and quite oblivious”. Even in middle school she received messages that at the time to her seemed benign but now she recognizes “how messed up they were”.

Ella continued to explain that teachers would use coded language to talk about kids that lived in different parts of her town. The town was quite segregated and there were four quadrants that were “literally separated by the railroad tracks”. Ella seemingly frustrated with her upbringing stated, “the teachers would talk about how kids from the southwest side were so well behaved, and the kids from the other parts [mostly Children of Color] need to act like that. She remember that while she was in middle school she saw that she was being treated different, but used a color evasive framework at the time, and assumed that her positive treatment was attributed to being “well behaved”.

Things began to change late in sophomore early junior year of high school. As she began to expand her understanding of the world and listened more carefully to news and current events. However it all came to a point of significance when she began riding to and from school with a

friend of her. Ella reflected, “I was unaware until then as to how race really impacted people”. Ella said that she and her friend would listen to the news, and her friend “who was way liberal”, began to explain things to her. Ella shared that her friend gave her space to think and reflect but challenged her as well. There was one particular instance that really resonated with Ella that began to shift the way she thought about race, being white, and whiteness.

On their way to school one morning, there was a news segment about a 17 year old African American that was shot by police. Ella said that she clearly remembered the conversation, as it was one of those “moments” that change how you see the world. As they were listening to the radio Ella said to her friend, “oh that man deserved it”. Ella said that her friend was shocked but kept her calm, and asked Ella to “explain how a 17 year old kid deserved to get shot multiple times when he was unarmed and did nothing wrong”. At the moment Ella shared she had to sit on that feeling and think about that and she began to personalize what her friend said. She realized that she was invoking prejudice and she did not fully understand something she clearly thought she did. This began to open up an opportunity for Ella to explore her racialization, and specifically understand systemic issues like police violence toward Black men.

Ella reflected that it was that moment that opened her perspective to more clearly understand her lived experience was different and that she needed to spend more time consciously being aware of racial inequality. Ella began to do some introspection and learned about racial inequity, police brutality, and started paying attention more to other issues of oppression as well. For Ella, her friend was her sounding board, her person that would both support her in journey but also hold her accountable for saying or doing something that was inconsistent with her newly found value and appreciation for social justice.

Ella left home for college, with a new sense and commitment to issues of social justice as she embarked on her want to make an impact on the world. She chose to study history and education in an effort to someday be able to teach high school history. While Ella learned a lot from the formal part of her education at LAC, she grew more as an advocate and ally through her involvement with advocacy based student organizations. It was through her experiences with her advocacy organizations and in her courses that she began to track her and understand her white immunity and white privilege. Ella shared, “I began to realize I had privilege or had certain benefits of being white, it was during my freshman year of college in one of my education courses that I had to write a case study on my family background”. Ella continued to reflect that for her it was easy because she had information about her family and her relatives. She was able to easily find how they came to the United States from Ireland and Germany. She began to talk about the currency of whiteness, as she acknowledged her ancestors were able to “assimilate into this country much easier”.

In addition to her family having an investment in whiteness, an additional aspect of her reality of being white began to sink in. She began to share about the person who presented immediately after her. Ella said that the woman had difficulty with the assignment because she was not able to trace her family heritage because it had been destroyed as her ancestors were “brought here on slave ships”. It was difficult for Ella in the moment, as she came to the realization, “because I am white I am able to trace my family history, I was not stopped from doing that or prohibited, I nor my ancestors did not have to and were not colonized and oppressed”.

Ella then began to realize the importance of listening, hearing stories of people who were different from her, and being present while others were sharing their truth. Through time and by

being involved in multiple projects, activities, and moments like the one during her first year of college, Ella began to build a framework for what she felt was a place of support for individuals with minoritized identities. Ella learned to be more open, and to truly hear people. During her time at LAC she would attend meetings, and she worked on her skills of listening and being present. She reflected that it was her job to “sit and listen, listen to people’s experiences, and hear how they are treated as a person. As a white person, in spaces where People of Color are sharing, it is my job to listen and hear what people are saying”.

Ella shared that she recognized she had to constantly work, and be open to learning and challenging her bias and experiences rooted in whiteness. It is interesting to note that both of the major learning points, came from learning from others. More specifically, in college both of her stories that shaped her ability to deepen her understanding of what it meant to be white came from and at the expense of People of Color. Her journey in whiteness and social justice began in high school with being challenged by a white person, however her more recent exploration into deepening her understanding of race did not come from exploring herself but rather exploring her life based on other people’s challenges. As we talked about fragility and moments when she felt resistance to shifting her viewpoint or resistance to challenging her whiteness, she said that she felt movement when it was explained in facts and statistics that challenged her reality and truth. For example, Ella was moved to begin exploring and challenging her long held beliefs in high school when her friend presented information by stating “these are the facts, these are the stats”. Ella said that she needed the space and ability to talk and process with someone as it never occurred for her growing up with her parents. Similarly, it was in her talk back sessions in college, when People of Color were sharing their truths or to Ella they presented facts based on

their lived experiences. Through these experiences, Ella used this as a jumping point and a place for exploring her own work with whiteness.

Ella acknowledged that her learning most recently came through listening to and at the expense of People of Color. It was through her peer's absence of possessed whiteness that Ella began to understand her possession and cultivation of whiteness. For Ella, her understanding of race, being white, and whiteness all came through being exposed to an experience of a Person of Color or in a space where People of Color were more present. In addition, her understanding of being white were often related to meme culture and stereotypes. For example when asked about when she notices that she is white, she shared that it was either in a room or group with multiple People of Color or when she fits a meme cultured stereotype like having an affinity for drinking pumpkin spiced lattes.

Ella's understanding of being white and whiteness was further explained through her understanding and recognition of privilege. In our conversations, Ella recognized that even though she had awareness of her privileges, there are moments historically in present where she upholds whiteness. Ella explained, "I definitely uphold it in some sense, yeah, I recognize that I am very comfortable in my skin, in public spaces and navigating different spaces, I am normally with people who are also white. So I definitely am part of the supporting the status quo". As we began to talk about moments or specifics when she felt that she upheld whiteness or where she was challenged by someone for being "racist". Ella scanned through her memory, and said that nothing recently comes to mind, but she was able to name several instances that occurred in her formative learning experiences in becoming aware. She said that she was sure there were "things that [she] had done" in recent that would be part of upholding structural racial oppression, but was not able to identify it at the time of our conversation.

After some additional reflection, Ella did note that when she did get “called out” recently it was generally for “little microaggressions” where she would be asked by someone to “go back and rethink that”. I asked her to clarify, and she said that while she could not think of a specific instance, she could think that it was mostly to word choice or how she vocalized her opinion on something. As our conversations continued, I wondered if Ella’s drive to be seen as an ally to People of Color was shading her reflection or forthrightness about recalling recent instances. Ella admitted that she saw herself as educated and wanted to be seen that way by others, and so it might at times be difficult when she has been challenged because it calls out her credibility or ability to serve as a support. As she reflected further she did say that she often takes the feedback to heart and it leads to growth for her and enhances her learning.

It was very clear, that Ella had been at several college facilitated diversity, multicultural, and social justice trainings. Her language and reflection of her experience mirrored what I often have heard on college campuses during student trainings on social justice. She recognized that she had work to do, but also wanted to make sure it was known she was putting in the “work” to be more conscious and aware. Her depth of understanding how to talk about both systemic oppression and microaggressions reflected a foundation that had been cultivated through formal training at a University campus. As we talked about her time in open dialogues and trainings, she shared that it was difficult because she wanted to be right, and to also be seen as right. She indicated that at times she found it difficult to admit that she was wrong, but she understood that was part of the learning and growth process.

As I processed her statement about understanding that she needed to be open to growth, Ella sat patiently staring at her hands moving back and forth with her crochet work. I asked her when she experienced moments when she felt her fragility the most. Ella still staring at her

hands shared, “my fragility in situations comes out most when I feel ignorant in a situation”. She further explained that when she felt like she did not understand, she noticed she would become defensive even if she knew that she was “digging into” a position that was “totally challengeable”. Then Ella said something that caught my attention that made me connect other conversations about relying on others to aid her in growth. She stated, I am no longer going to benefit from something if people are willing to call me out” because by being called out she recognized she could change and work through whatever privilege or immunity she was utilizing in the moment.

I asked Ella why she felt that it was more helpful to learn from others and have other’s challenge her rather than do some of the work on her own. She clarified that she does the work to be introspective and to challenge her own assumptions, but then shared that when she doesn’t know something it often first gets addressed or is pointed out by someone else. She then shared,

we are basically, I don’t want to say taught, but we are basically taught to listen stereotypes and generalizations, and if there is not someone that is picking that a part for you and fighting you, and challenging how you were taught to think, you know. Like, if someone is not there to challenge and help you see how things are portrayed in the media and challenge your assumptions, then you will always be, you will always just go along with what you think you know.

Ella believed that white people do what they need to do to uphold, protect, and defend whiteness because it is so normalized.

Whiteness is everywhere but there is so little time

One of the very few times her hands stopped moving throughout any of our discussions, was when we began to talk about why she chose teaching. She sat for a moment and stared off

and smiled, and then began to move her hands again picking up the rhythm that had become so familiar. She explained, “since I am a social studies teacher, I think that I kind of have this grand notion to do education for change. I want people to learn things and take what they learn to make a positive impact on themselves and their community”. Ella had learned so much from her educational experiences, and recognized the system and structure of education to be a place of change, of transformation, and place where she could impact others like she had been impacted. After another moments pause she continued, “I want to give students the facts, and then give them the space and opportunities to think for themselves as to how they want to create change for the world”.

Ella believed at the core of her work as a future teacher, that she could inspire change, and provide opportunities for her students to engage in critical processes to challenge assumptions and shape the world around them for the better. Her altruistic framework for teaching was learned from her own experience and given her commitments to social justice, it made sense that she felt that she could transform others through the profession.

When Ella spoke of her preparation program, she spoke relatively positive about the courses and the content. She felt that she was prepared very well to understand the depths of social studies and had enough knowledge to be able to lead her students on a journey to exploring civics, government, history, geography, and economics from an interdisciplinary perspective.

Ella in reflecting on her own education, shared that she was part of a system that upheld whiteness and rarely every challenged the status quo. She reflected, “growing up, the most my teachers ever talked about race or racial inequality was when they talked about slavery”. She felt disappointed in her experience and it was frustrating to her. Ella continued to explain, “we never

talked about disenfranchisement and the lasting effects on People of Color based on actions from the United States government”. Her frustration at this point was very evident. As we both sat for a moment and let her words linger and her frustration sit, she then began to speak again. Ella exclaimed, “I am mind blown and baffled that we talked about it so little when race is such a critical part of daily life”.

Ella was starting to get at the core of whiteness, in her conscious she recognized that her educational experience, the education project that had been created and that she was an actor in, was actively upholding whiteness. Her frustration drove some of her philosophy on making sure to engage students on critical issues, and to challenge the status quo. However, she cited that there were challenges that she recognized she was going to face as a teacher, should she choose to continue in the profession. Ella’s preparation program was limited in engaging her with skills, knowledge, and assisting in deepening her understanding as to how she would challenge whiteness as an educator.

In her first year at LAC Ella took a course that focused on education and culture. Despite the course not really focusing on race or even more specifically whiteness, Ella found the course to be incredibly relevant and useful. She shared, “it was stressed to us that we need to understand the different cultures and backgrounds that our students come from. We also needed to be able to diversify our content so we are not just teaching to or about one culture”. Ella in a later reflection shared that she felt disappointed at times with the level of engagement from her peers on critical issues and topics like race. From her perspective, the conversations lacked depth and she felt like that many of her peers never really engaged on their own privilege or working through their own bias.

Ella felt that her engagement with her advocacy organizations gave her a more solid framework when compared to her education courses, and therefore she was able to get more out of the courses when she used her experiences and learning in her organization work when it came to issues of oppression. When we began to talk about specifics related to addressing issues of racism, whiteness, and white supremacy, Ella was unable to identify specifics that she learned or think of instances in which her program provided in-depth dialogue on these issues. As we spoke, I could tell she was trying to come up with an example, but she was not able to, and this caused her to share that maybe she herself was somewhat responsible. Ella felt as if during conversations on privilege or race she might have tuned out because she already felt like she had a deep understanding. Her statement reflected the concept of having arrived, which contradicted her refrains throughout our discussion that she recognized the constant need to grow and learn. As she was sharing with me, I could not help but think that maybe Ella's lack of engagement might have been some aspect of not wanting to be vulnerable with her classmates and potentially make a mistake. She had so often shared that she did not want to make mistakes or be perceived as unknowing, and in a space where she felt her peers were already disengaged and where she had a reputation for being outspoken and an activist for justice, it would be challenging for her to "mess up" or look like she was unaware.

When Ella began to sum up her experience at LAC in their teacher education program, she landed back on how the faculty emphasized teaching to each learner and being nimble with lesson planning in order to diversify the lessons. I asked Ella if she could be more specific and give an example of what specifically she learned or how they framed the conversations. She searched in her brain for a moment and then said

so like for example, you had to diversify the lessons so that students with any identity could see themselves. Like if you are teaching English then make sure your students could see themselves in the text. With history, students should not just see themselves as victims, but finding people throughout history with different identities who did something amazing, and emphasizing those stories. Like with Trail of Tears, which was a mass slaughter, you don't want to have Native Americans only see themselves as victims even though the history is pretty crappy. I feel like that is the one thing my program really emphasized most

When talking about other specific details, Ella had difficulty recalling what she had learned. Ella talked about pedagogical approaches and teaching theories, but had difficulty identifying any of them. Again, Ella took responsibility for not being able to recall as she owned that at times she somewhat disengaged or had a lot of other things going on.

As Ella began to reflect more on her preparation, she started to feel more comfortable and confident in her preparation. She shared that they seemed to have more discussions on race than she originally recalled. However, when talking about feeling prepared, Ella stopped short and became a bit more critical. She shared that she really did not have much experience working in urban schools or with Students of Color. Ella was interested in addressing oppression and her perceived understanding of how disproportionate opportunities are in urban schools compared to suburban schools. However, she seemed unsure if she would be successful teaching in an urban school or a school that was predominately comprised of Students of Color. As she thought of how to explain her feelings, her hands continued to methodically crochet. She finally responded and said,

I don't know because I never taught or really had any experience in a school district that did not have proper funding...it seems like most of the stories you hear come from schools where students are mostly People of Color and teachers complain a lot about behavior, so I am not sure if that is the teacher's bias but the teachers just say how awful it is to be there. I would definitely say I am not prepared you know, I just don't have the experience to teach in that environment.

Despite having several discussions on having your students reflected in the lessons and in the content, and teaching to all cultures, Ella felt unsure of her skills and her abilities to go into a school that was not a suburban school with mostly white kids. It took a lot for her to admit that, because she sat there for a moment, and she had stopped crocheting. I think the question caught her off-guard a bit, as it was not typical for her to admit that she did not feel confident, especially because she had spoken so passionately about wanting to change the world through teaching. This was one area where maybe she felt like her education and experiences had failed her a bit.

I thought it was interesting that Ella felt uncomfortable or not able to teach in an environment where she felt uncomfortable. Her lack of comfort came mostly from a lack of experience and knowledge, but nonetheless it existed. It was not that she was not open to going into a school space that was not something she was familiar with, she in fact was more open to it than I expected. When talking about being open to working in a school that was predominately Students of Color, she said she felt like she wished she had the experience while in her program.

As Ella began to talk through her revelation regarding her lack of experience with Students of Color in the teaching context. She started to get into the topic of whether or not challenging whiteness was something that was a choice. Ella felt like it was both a choice but it also was necessary for the person not to have ignorance or lack of awareness. For example, Ella

was willing to work in a school that was different from what she had experienced, but felt that she would not be able to fully engage in disrupting whiteness because of her lack of experience and knowledge. She shared,

I think you can choose to engage or not on any given day on any given instance, but I feel as a teacher, there are things that I do not know or instances where I feel like I lack the knowledge so there is a point of ignorance that will inhibit my ability to challenge the status quo.

Ella felt this applied to content, awareness of privilege, and all other aspects needed for challenging whiteness.

Often when Ella talked about challenging whiteness, in particular in the context of teaching, it came from two perspectives. The first was related to content and addressing whiteness in the content. For example, as she spoke about adjusting the lessons to reflect all students and culture, and make sure to not teach from a deficit standpoint. She explained that she used current events as a way to talk about institutional racism. The other way in which she talked about addressing whiteness, was when someone held a belief or said something that was offensive. She felt that this was important as well, but she recognized that she needed to be aware of not challenging beliefs but behaviors.

As Ella began to talk about addressing student behaviors she started to talk through some of the challenges she felt she faced while student teaching. Ella explained that the biggest barrier she faced, especially during student teaching was time. For her, time, or lack thereof, was often the reason for not addressing whiteness or not challenging whiteness. She shared,

the biggest barrier I have to disrupting is lack of time and I am short on time because I have to follow the state standards and work toward preparing my students for the test. .

.often the standards and the content on the test are often things that are from a whiteness perspective

This was not the first time Ella mentioned her frustration with history being primarily taught from a white and about a white people's perspective. As she reflected more on her challenges with time, it seemed that she was talking about time in two different ways. First, there was not enough time in the sense that she did not have enough time in the week or the day to fit in perspectives or items that varied from the components needed to be learned for the test. Additionally, she felt time was also challenging as she did not have the time to change the lessons she could because of all the other things she was managing.

Ella gave a really good example of how this occurred both with not have time to fit additional content in that varied from the approved curriculum, but also in her preparation not having the time to think of perspectives that were outside of white western frameworks. Ella told a story about how she was teaching about immigration in the 1880s and 1890s. She only drew upon experiences from white Europeans and looking back she said that she drew on those experiences too much. She shared that she felt like she missed the opportunity to juxtapose patterns, reasons, and movement of people with today. In a moment of honesty and vulnerability, Ella shared that this was also due to her being white. She felt like sometimes being white, and only understanding the white experience was a big barrier for her. When she felt rushed or did not have time, she defaulted to what was normalized for her, and that is whiteness.

Be bold be fearless

It was unclear at the end of our time together whether Ella would go back to teaching after completing her time with AmeriCorps. She felt like it was possible to end up back in the classroom, but was open to whatever came her way. Ella's response was not surprising as she

thought of herself as a fearless person, and open to change and challenge. However, her time talking with me, forced her to be more honest with herself. As we closed our discussion she shared,

I definitely learned that I am not as fearless as I thought, and I am definitely scared of repercussions. . . like I need to look at myself and better understand why am I not talking about these things, you need to be brazen if you are going to change the system.

As she thought about how to become bolder, and gain confidence to be as fearless as she thought she was, she realized that she needed more education and deeper understanding of all aspects of teaching to truly disrupt whiteness. Ella felt like taking more time to do some additional work, would also enhance her awareness so that she was more adept to naming whiteness regularly without falling back into her “default mode”.

She then mused that it would have been helpful if she had more formal feedback or any feedback at all related to how she challenged whiteness or institutional racism. She felt like that conversations with her mentor teacher and university supervisor were general and never really specifically addressed how she might have normalized whiteness. She shared that there was an instance in which some students became frustrated with each other and the conversation turned toxic. She said that she tried to remain neutral, as the conversation on race began to pit into a political debate, but it was difficult for her to remain neutral. She said it would have been nice if she got feedback as to how to continue to address it from an anti-racist viewpoint while still being neutral. I asked her why neutrality was important, and she sat and thought for a minute, and shared that she did not want students to feel like she was judging them, and that if they were going to learn they needed to feel supported especially if the conversation was on things that had ideological aspects to them.

As she continued to talk, I thought how is it one could be fearless, bold, and disruptive while remaining neutral. When I asked her, she said “that is a great point, you know as a teacher my role is to provide facts, information, and let students come to their own conclusions”, she then thought for a moment, and added “but at the same time, given that I want to challenge whiteness I know that I need to find a way to do that. Maybe being neutral, I don’t know, maybe being neutral is not the right way”. She clearly was struggling with not pushing a belief structure while at the same time creating learning experiences that opened students up to understanding life beyond their own lived experience. She then added, “I guess this is what I mean, I need more education on specifics to feel more confident in creating change”. Ella found that as someone that wanted to be an agent of change, and to create the change in the complex environment of the educational project which is steeped in whiteness, it is going to take a fearless pursuit of self, her content, and skills to not just engage students but all of the structures involved in the system of education.

Gloria: The Conflicted Activist

As I waited for Gloria to sign on to Zoom for our first interview, I smiled to myself as this was our second attempt at trying to meet for our first discussion. Our originally scheduled conversation had to be rescheduled. A week prior, we connected for about five minutes before we came to the conclusion that we would need to reschedule. Gloria was on vacation and thought she would have time to talk, however quickly realized that she was not able to be fully engaged and also had limited time to devote to our conversation. While I waited hoping that this conversation would go better, little did I know that the unexpected nature of Gloria would continue throughout our time together.

In each of our discussions and in her reflections Gloria was always very honest, at least with what she was thinking in her head at the time of our conversations. There clearly were moments, when she was telling me something that did not quite align, but in her mind that is how she saw it, how she felt, and it was her truth regardless if it was an incomplete understanding of a particular situation. Her forthcoming nature was refreshing, but it also caused a bit of confusion, as at times it felt like I was talking with two people, not because there was contradiction so much as it was that she, unbeknownst to her, wrestled with a lot of learned behaviors from her youth.

We began meeting in mid-August of 2018 and concluded our last discussion in mid-September of 2018. There was more time in-between our second and third conversation due to the fact that Gloria had just accepted a full time teaching position and was trying to ramp up for her first job post initial teacher preparation and earning her Baccalaureate degree.

When Gloria appeared on the screen, she began right off the top by apologizing several times for not being able to talk when we originally scheduled our first conversation. I later learned that she was living at home with her parents after graduating from Mid-Atlantic University (MAU) with a degree in Elementary Education and a minor in Urban Education.

The unseen portion of the iceberg

Gloria grew up in a small Mid-Atlantic state and has lived her entire life in that state. At the time of our conversations she was 22 years old and identified as both white and as a woman. Gloria grew up relatively close with most of her extended family living within 15 minutes of each other. Gloria's parents are still together, and family is very important to her and the rest of her family. Although she has very strong connections with her mother's side of the family, she does not feel as close with her father's side of the family. The connection with her mom's side is very influential and has shaped her perspectives and the way in which she navigates the world.

Gloria really appreciated what she learned from her parents and saw them as great examples for her. Gloria shared that despite her parents being “amazing”, they also demonstrated behaviors that were not always aligned with how Gloria viewed the world. Gloria indicated that her family, in particular her parents were and still are significantly influential. During our first conversation, we began talking about her experiences growing up, and at first her statements were very positive about her parents in particular about her mom. After answering a series of questions, Gloria started to move through her house and put me on hold. The camera went blank and I thought, “oh no” we are going to have reschedule again. She then after a few moments reappeared in a car parked outside of her parent’s house.

She said that her mother was listening, and she did not want to say anything that would be too upsetting for her mom. At the same time she also wanted to be able to be honest and truthful. I asked if there was anything she shared that was not accurate, she said no, everything she said was accurate, but there were things that she knew her mom would not understand or might get offended if she were to share certain aspects of her experiences with her parents. Gloria began to share, “we always take something of our parents with us, like whether we want to or not, my parents are pretty great people, and I am proud to take things from them, but like I also have some of the bad parts too”. Gloria wanted to be able to explore and talk about both the good and the bad, but knew that she needed to be in a space to be able to talk freely.

Once in the car, Gloria began to share a bit more about her family and her experiences, and she opened up a bit more. She shared that while she thought highly of her parents, they did often frame People of Color in particular Black and African American folks from a deficit perspective. She shared, “my mom likes to think that she is not racist” but often talks about Black people in particular negatively like “they are not as capable or they are lazy”. While

growing up, Gloria recalled receiving a lot of overt and covert messages. For example, Gloria shared a story about her neighbors. One day her mom was talking and said “I can’t believe it, our Black neighbor just married a white man”, and then her mom furthered the statement by saying well I guess it makes sense because “she talks white”.

Gloria looked at ease sharing this story, there was not frustration or judgement but it just kind of was matter of fact for her. She then began to share a story about how her father had issues with interracial relationships. Gloria reflected, “my old pastor at my church had a daughter and she only dated Black guys. I remember my dad being purely disgusted by it, and like even making comments to her in front of her partner about how it was a sin”.

Gloria’s dad grew up in a very rural part of the country, and as Gloria explained it was very white, very racist. She claimed her dad had come a long way, but clearly held on to some of the beliefs that he was taught growing up. She shared that he was pleasant and nice to people, but he held certain beliefs that you could see were still in his head and through his behaviors resonated outward. Gloria and her family are not that close with her father’s side, and it is large in part due to some of the beliefs they held. Gloria exclaimed, “they were just sick people with backwards beliefs”. Her family in recent years had not connected much with her dad’s family, and Gloria said that the last time she remembers having an experience was her first or second year of high school. Her father’s brother came to visit, and Gloria was going to homecoming. She smiled when talking about her date and how excited she was. She shared,

My friend, my date for the night, who happens to be black was my date and he was coming to take pictures at my house before the dance. My mom was like, “he cant come here”. He could not come because my uncle was over and my mom said that my uncle

would say or do something and he will disown you as a niece. It was horrible that I had to hide my friend and he can't come to my house to take a picture because like my uncle. Gloria's frustration mostly came from not being able to have her date over, not that her friend would be in danger or would have things said to him that were harmful and hostile. Her mom also was operating from a place that seemed to want to avoid conflict and instead of addressing the actions and behavior of her dad's brother.

Gloria then backtracked a bit and said that her dad's side of the family "talked about People of Color differently than my parents". It was interesting that Gloria felt the need to draw the distinction between overt and covert messaging, even though she recognized the harm of the covert messages she received while younger. When I asked how these experiences shaped her, again she said there were some things that she got from her parents, but she also stated that she, much like her dad was more progressive and aware than her own family.

Although Gloria felt she was more aware of racial injustice and had moved beyond some of her familial prejudices, she did share instances growing up that looking back she now realizes that she was embodying her learned behaviors. For example, while in high school she recalled "a lot of the guys at my school who were black, and they would always like hit on me and sending messages and I remember straight out telling them oh I can't even like talk to you because like you're Black". Gloria recalled that she felt this way because she did not want her father to react the way he did to others, but most of all she had learned that it was just not okay for her as a white woman to date a Black man. Gloria realized that she often "acted the way her parents did" and it was not until she began to openly challenge her perspectives, learn from others, and deconstruct the harmful perspectives she learned growing up that she began to see herself change.

Gloria indicated that her shift also came from somewhat of a competitive spirit, and thriving in situations in which she was able to argue. When she began to notice oppression and comprehend a different perspective from her what she learned growing up, she began to argue with her parents and others, and those arguments led to her learning more and gaining a deeper understanding. She said it began, “when I was younger, and I would argue with my dad, and started to develop a need and want to be right, I got satisfaction from that. . . I started thriving off that and just ran with it”.

Even though Gloria felt like she had moved far beyond where her parents were as related to their comprehension or lack thereof as it related to whiteness and white supremacy, she still had difficulty at times recognizing it in herself. It was her drive to want to be right, to not be seen as wrong that even when relaying a story from high school that clouded her viewpoint of a situation, and led to her landing on the “right side” of a particular story. For example, she shared a story of how she had been bullied by two “Black girls” in high school. The students were suspended and later expelled, which she did not realize until graduation.

Gloria shared, “people told me that they did not like me because I was a little white girl, they thought I was better, and they thought I was rich. . . my teachers told me I needed to be stronger, it was really hard when people have satisfaction seeing you broken”. I later asked Gloria if she minded being more specific about her experience. From her perspective her actions and behaviors were benign, innocent, and she had a difficult time understanding why she was “targeted with so much aggression”, even though she openly told Black men at the school she could not date them because they were Black. She shared, “we were in class and I liked asking questions, and that is how it started, I asked a question and they did not like that, the two Black

girls, they started making fun of me. Then one day they began chasing me in the hallway and clapping in my face, it was scary”.

Gloria shrugged off the experience a bit and said “well, that was my high school experience”, but clearly this experience left an impression as she spoke it about once in our first conversation, revisited it again, and then spoke about it more after I asked for her to clarify some details. Gloria said that the experience did not influence her willingness to be supportive of racial equity, however I can’t help but think that this experience layered with her parents’ messages about People of Color growing up has created some sense of deficit framing that might be difficult for her to always track, unpack, and work through in her efforts to disrupt whiteness.

“Thank God I am white”

Gloria’s experiences growing up shaded the way she interacted, understood, and talked about race. Even though she had spent time in college working in an Urban Education program and was committed to challenging racial oppression, at times I noticed that there were moments where it seemed as if her experiences and the bottom half of her iceberg were showing clearly. As I shared Gloria’s openness and willingness to share her thoughts and reflections were refreshing, which allowed for us to have very open conversations about her experience or at least her experiences based on what she remembered through her own lens.

As we began to explore how she saw herself and her experiences around whiteness, her areas of growth began to take shape. I was really interested in understanding how she noticed herself as a white person, where she recognized whiteness, and how she might be active in engaging or perpetuating whiteness. Gloria shared that she did not really think about race much growing up, and she really never thought about being white until there were People of Color

present. When I asked her when she noticed being white the most, Gloria thought for a moment and did not say much at first. She then shared,

whenever I go into the city, like whether it is to the movie theatre or to dinner, like when I have to drive through a certain area where everyone is Black. I see them sitting on their stoops and I see them walking around in a way, and the way they interact, and I just like, I get these really ugly thoughts in my head

Gloria was open about having bias and trying to challenge the thoughts in her head.

She then sat back for a moment and said,

thank God I am white, because of the way some of these people live, and I know that it has to do with things that happened a long time ago, but they are just like stuck. . . when I go into the city it is like oh my gosh, I will think in my head thank God I have class, thank God I don't act like that, thank God I am not surrounded by that, thank God I do not have to live like that, I just see so many stereotypical things in one area in one drive.

Her statement I found a bit perplexing, and was full of both understanding privilege but also coming from a place of white immunity. I think on some level Gloria was coming from a place of sadness that the system had been so disenfranchising, but her language and statement came across as pity and in some regard othering.

I recognized with Gloria, that I was getting caught up on her language, and I think in her mind, she thought she was being honest and forthcoming, but her language told a deeper story. For example, in her reflection on going into the city, she said "I see them walking around, and I see the way they interact", and in reading it back and listening to the statements fall from her mouth, I heard echoes of the famous Ross Perot utterance when he was addressing the NAACP and the line "you people".

At one point in our dialogues Gloria had critically reflected about her mother and the way that her mom acted surprised or said things in a manner that would show she was surprised that “Black people could be successful”. However, Gloria in some regard was doing the same thing, but only allowing herself to “see race” in poor Black communities, where the stereotypes she talked about learning were visible.

Gloria often would acknowledge, recognize, or name her privilege or immunity to racism due to being white, however in certain circumstances she also wanted to make it known that she too had to overcome challenges. For example, Gloria as a first generation college student faced challenges that some of her peers did not experience. In one of her classes, Gloria found herself feeling frustrated as one of her peers, who identified as Latina, was talking about being a first generation college student and was naming challenges that she felt her white peers would not understand. Gloria felt defensive and the need to share that she too was a first generation college student and first gen status was not determined by racial identity.

In her interaction with her peer, Gloria reflected on the situation attempting to share that her experience was difficult as well. She said,

I explained to her that just because I am white, it does not mean I do not face the same trials as her. I let her know that I was also the first in my family to go to college and was working two jobs to help pay for my education. I wanted her to know that just because a person is white, it doesn't mean they can't experience the same struggles as a person of another race. It seems to me that no matter what our race, we all have bias and concepts we struggle with as humans

Gloria attempted to mitigate the intersection of her identity of being white and being a first generation college student, which ignored that her peer was navigating the university as both a

Woman of Color and a first generation student which layered additional challenges. In the same reflection Gloria wrote, “I mean I know that I obviously, as a white person, I have a natural unfair advantage over my peers who are Black, Native American, Middle Eastern, and Latino”. However, in a given circumstance Gloria was not able to understand that her white immunity precluded her from experiencing the same experiences as her peer even though they shared some intersecting identities.

This was not the first instance in our discussion where Gloria in one moment would acknowledge her white immunity and then in the next seem to absolve her possessive need for whiteness to another layer of her identity. Often it was done when talking about the intersection of class and race, as she seemed to hold value that it was socioeconomic status or class identity that was more of determining factor compared to race. There is no denying that Gloria may have faced challenges due to some of her other subordinate identities, however, she had a difficult time grasping and talking about the concept of intersectionality, which was evident in relaying stories that factored race as integral part of the complex lived experience.

The N-Word and being part but not part of the system

In each of my conversations with participants, I like to understand how they recognize their role as part of a larger system of the whole. In my conversations leading up to the part of the conversation where we talked about her role in systemic oppression and whiteness, she had indicated very much that racism and white supremacy were enacted through acts of intolerance and bias. Gloria very much saw herself as being nonjudgmental and even prided herself on “not having bias”. When I asked her to explain what she meant by that, she explained that she took a quiz in one of her education courses that indicated that she had the least or did not have any bias.

Puzzled by this, as she in our conversation said “it seems to me that no matter our race, we all have bias and concepts we struggle with as humans”. Then again later she admitted to having to fight “voices in her head”. She shared, “well I feel like I am definitely good at checking them”. I asked her to provide an example of what she meant by this, and she shared a story that occurred early in the day. Gloria said,

I walked into Duncan and I am wearing shorts, they are gym shorts but they are not that short. There was a man when I walked in, and he made it various obvious that he was trying to look at my butt, he literally almost put his head to the floor. In my head I said, I have not seen someone do that in a really long time, he was an older gentleman and was Black. In my head I was like “oh my god this Black man”, but then I was like why in my head did identify him as Black

This recount by Gloria indicated a lot interpretations on her part regarding the person and their intent, feeling like she herself was being objectified, “seeing” race, but questioning why she saw race, among many other layers to her story. When she relayed her story about the man from Duncan, it aided in my understanding as to how her understanding of her “score of non bias” in her college quiz was a thing of progress.

I asked her to talk more about what she learned from the bias quiz. She shared my result was that I didn’t really have bias. Like everyone had bias but mine did not show anything, like I did not prefer or show preference toward white or Black, it just showed I was in the middle. I was surprised though, and I was like what does this about me?”

Gloria shared that her professor was not able to really talk with her about her results or talk about the findings. However, she had shown in our conversations that although she acknowledged race

as a factor for oppression, she was trying to become race neutral or color evasive. I asked her if she thought maybe the result was due to her trying to “not see race”, and she thought maybe it had but she was not sure.

As we continued to move from bias to oppression and systems, we began to talk beyond her operating or working through her biases. Gloria shared that she did not see herself as necessarily as a part of upholding whiteness and systemic racial oppression. She said “I think I am between like neutral and fighting against it, but definitely getting closer to fighting against it”. She admitted that she had difficulty when in conversations people would say that all white people were racist or responsible for racial oppression. She shared, “I get really mad when people say that. I don’t like the generalizations of like a whole group of people. We don’t know every single white person in the world right?”

Then interestingly she made it a point to clarify that there is a difference between saying all white people are racist, and all white people are responsible for upholding whiteness and systemic racial oppression. She shared, “I would say, a large majority are [responsible]”. She acknowledged white people in general do uphold whiteness, but then again began to reframe her statement that white people with other minoritized identities are not because they are working against oppression or face challenges themselves. She explained “but then there are other people that have something else, like for example maybe they are transgender, and they are going above and beyond, they had their identity attacked and they were white”. It was as if a white person had a moment of struggle or challenge, or held an identity that was minoritized that absolved them of their white immunity and connections to whiteness.

Even though Gloria shared that she was moving toward be an activist challenging whiteness, she did recognize that there were times where she felt like she upheld whiteness. I

asked her to share about when she felt why that occurred and when it happened most often. She looked at the camera, smiled, and thought for a moment. I let the question hang, as I was interested in gaining an understanding of her reflection. We have covered quite a bit at this point, and she had in moments demonstrated a great deal of reflection, and then in other instances found opportunities to distance herself from some of the accountability of perpetuating whiteness. She began to respond and then stopped, she took one more second, and started again. Gloria shared, “I think when I am not on my guard, when I am not being conscious. I know I still have interactions where I will make some of my comments and say like, “oh they were Black, or something like that, I am not perfect yet, I have not perfected myself you know, and I know I will never be perfect, but I do feel like I come a far and long way”. It is hard to say if Gloria was lacking in reflection about even some of the things she shared with me that seemed to be upholding beliefs that were structured in supporting whiteness, or if she felt like her progress and work negated some of those actions and beliefs. It almost seemed that she was operating in more of a binary when it came to being one who challenged whiteness. While cognitively she acknowledged she upheld whiteness in some regard, she was unwilling deeply investigate how in her everyday life her actions and beliefs were part of whiteness.

Gloria shared that her more “progressive ideology” in particular when it came to race, and challenging her family members, has caused problems. In her tight knit family, there are some family members who she now has difficulty sharing a connection. From her perspective, she had sacrificed these relationships, ones that she at the beginning of our dialogue explained were a crucial part of her lived experience, for the sake of racial progress and disruption of the status quo. I think for her, she felt like if she was willing to challenge ideologies that upheld whiteness, then in some regard that work also may have negated some of the more covert and

overt practices, beliefs, and ideals that were still part of her actively and passively upholding the status quo.

What happened next in our conversation, took me somewhat by surprise, and again changed both the dynamic and approach of the last bit of our dialogue, but also changed the way I chose to write about Gloria. As Gloria was talking about how she felt like she made progress, she began to give an example of something that was happening in her new job at school. She began to recount a story about how her principal had asked who was willing to go into the city and work with the parents of students in the school. Gloria felt proud that she was one of three people that volunteered to go do the work. She then began to recount a story about how her principal was talking about a new reading curriculum they had purchased. She shared some of the books had difficult subjects and the principal gave the teachers an out to not talk about some of the more controversial, with one of the subjects being race and racism. Then it happened, something I never would have expected to occur during the process of my interviews as I thought there is no way, regardless of how comfortable someone felt, would they feel so comfortable to say certain things. Gloria continued to share that she was surprised that people would not want to talk about these books. She felt like it was not that big of deal and it was important to address the issues like racism.

I asked her to clarify what the principal said, and she shared “well like if we did not feel comfortable saying any of the words that refer to race or talk about race we don’t have to, we can like skip over them”. I sat for a moment and was like okay, but then she continued, and said that some of the books might use the word “N*****”, and she actually said the word. She said they were given permission to skip over the word or not say them, but she felt that it was not necessary. Hearing the N-word come from her mouth in our conversation and the manner in

which it rolled off her tongue I found surprising and bit jarring. It took me some time to regroup and I found myself sticking with the interview protocol for about 10 minutes and not asking many follow-up questions. I felt myself disengage a bit because I was trying to understand what happened. I knew that I needed to have a conversation about this but also gain an understanding from her as to why she felt it was okay. I also thought it was interesting that she said the word and felt okay to do so, but in our first interview when talking about her father's language she used the phrase "R-word" and not the actual word when talking about individuals with varying cognitive abilities.

After 10 minutes had passed and we had more conversation, I asked her why she felt like using that word was okay, and what she felt gave her permission, as that word has such a horrible legacy in use by white people. Gloria seemed a bit surprised by me asking this follow-up question, and she sat for a moment. She then responded,

I learned it from a guest speaker one of my professor had come talk with us. He was an African American Doctor, a very accomplished psychologist, and he studied trauma. He was very open with us and was like it is just a word, and he said it was important for us as teachers to use it, to not be afraid to use it, not to feel like we are stepping on toes, he said it does more damage to tip toe and pretend like it is not there. We need to just dive in and say it, and be like hey this something happened in history.

I was not sure if she had meant the speaker had framed the usage of the word was just a historical word and they as teachers needed to disempower the word. I felt like the failure to recognize the present day connection to oppression and the language that is still used to otherize, minoritize, demonize, and dehumanize Black and African American people is on so many levels problematic. Particularly, a white person saying the word, even if it is written in a book, there

are so many different ways to talk about it without using it or saying especially in front of students. Gloria was so matter of fact about why it was okay, and that it was something she learned from someone whom she saw as an expert on issues related to the Black experience. As I replayed this portion of our discussion in my head, and I noticed how easily the word came flying out of her mouth. Clearly she felt like in the context and in the moment given the situation she had been given license to use it, but it was not just the use of it, it was the ease that it was used that I had a difficult time processing.

Gloria and I continued our dialogue about what she learned, as I felt compelled to talk more about it and gain further understanding. I asked her if she felt like she could use it in front of her current students, who identified as Black and African American, or if it would have been different if I were Black as the researcher in this study? I also asked how she would respond to a parent that might be frustrated with her use of the word? Gloria's response was focused on relationships with her students and toward the end she seemed to recognize that it might impact the relationship and how people see her. She said

I do believe that I would be comfortable using that word with a Black person. Since I've been in my new position I have joined the team that does outreach to inner-city families and parent engagement. I've also become a part of my school's PBS team where we have analyzed data that shows that Black children are the only children in our school's system that have been documented with write up's. Such a small population of my school is Black, so I brought it to the attention of my teammates that this isn't right and had the conversation with them about recognizing their biases and think about how they are responding to and interacting with each child on a daily basis and how their race and economic status may be playing a part in those interactions. Both my principal and

vice principal are Black and I felt very comfortable having these conversations in front of them and with them about race, bias, and racism. I would be comfortable using this word in a room full of Students of Color after spending time with them on the history of the word and how and why it was used. I would also inquire about their feelings on the word, how it makes them feel and how they've heard it used. I of course would need to have a great relationship with my students and have built a comfortable environment where they feel safe. I think the way I use the word can impact my students so I must be careful, but I do think it's an important conversation to have if it's appropriate to the context of a situation or the curriculum. We can't pretend like the word doesn't exist or like it doesn't have an impact on people. Obviously there could be potential harm in using the word, offending a child or making them feel uncomfortable around me or their peers, it could change my relationship with them, and that's why I feel I need to know my students, where they stand, where they come from, what their background is, before going forward with any conversation about race or the use of the N word.

At the end of her statement she did not use it again, instead she choice to abbreviate the word, which might have been in part to the fact that I never used it and she was mirroring my language as she probably noticed my discomfort and the fact that I shared a different philosophical viewpoint on the power of language and that particular word. Nonetheless, Gloria was able to justify to herself that she was disrupting the status quo by challenging the notion that she should not use the word. I had to wonder if it was her privilege that was shaping her understanding, her want to be right and because she learned it she felt justified and right, or just a lack of awareness related to the damage that hearing that word coming from a white person's mouth regardless of context could be for both her Students of Color and her white students.

Teaching the future

Gloria claimed to have a yearning for learning, experiences, and a love to work with children. She described herself as “kinda kid obsessed” coupled with a curiosity and interest in being involved in learning, which propelled her into the field of education and wanting to become a teacher. She chose MAU because it was relatively close to home, and she could come home on the weekends, where she was able to maintain a similar social life that she became accustomed to while in high school. Gloria reflected, “I would go home on the weekends and babysit instead of staying on campus doing like the whole party scene”, as she began babysitting for several families while in high school and was happy to have that continue throughout college. Going to college near home, coming home often, and remaining close with her parents and extended family fit with her statements in our earlier conversations about being family centered.

Her choice of MAU was helpful because it allowed her to keep the connections to her family and attend family functions, while at the same time attending a university with a Nationally Accredited and well respected teacher education program. Gloria found herself to be at home at MAU as it related to MAU’s preparation program. The blend of coursework and field, felt like it was of quality in preparing her for her soon to be reality. I asked her why she chose to get an Urban Education minor as part of her preparation, and she shared that the initial reasoning was from a selfish perspective. She shared, “my friend was doing it, since we are both also focusing on English as Second Language (ESL) it was only an additional two classes to get an Urban Ed. Minor and it looked good to having a minor”.

Despite her initial intentions to make herself more marketable and choosing a minor that seemed to be an easy addition because of only two additional courses, she quickly realized that her experience would change her career and life. In reflecting on her time at MAU, Gloria talked

about loving her experience in the program and learning so much about education and herself that she could not imagine being a successful teacher without those experiences. Specifically Gloria mentioned “I just learned so much, these classes were so different than any of the other ones I had taken, and I loved the open conversation”. She connected with the dialogic nature of the courses and began to understand education as a liberatory experience.

In addition to finding herself in these courses and discovering a different approach to teaching and learning, Gloria also found herself being called to serve students in urban districts. Her face began to light up when talking about working in urban schools and in particular working with the kids. She reflected,

I heard it was going to be hard and it is a tough thing to commit to, and I heard it becomes your life, but it is really cool to see what is possible with these kids when they are given the chance to show what they can do and you get out of the way and remove the things in their way, you know these kids may have experienced trauma and poverty, but that does not mean they are not capable of learning and doing the same things as a the white kids in a suburban school

Gloria’s reflection indicated a hint of having preconceived understandings and deficit orientations to kids in urban schools. Her perspective was based on what she learned in her program from talking with teachers, guest speakers, and specialists that focused on teaching in urban schools. Gloria attempted to reconcile her own understanding of the lived experience with what she was learning, which was still difficult because it was not something she personally experienced. In addition, it seemed at times her own white immunity got in the way of her being able to fully comprehend aspects of what she was walking into as a teacher or student teacher in these spaces. I asked her to clarify a bit about her usage of the term capable, and she shared that

while at one point she might have had that perspective, she meant it more from a perspective of what she heard from her peers.

Some of her peers would make comments that she felt were a place of disregarding the abilities of children going to school in urban settings, and she said that her peer's negative viewpoints pushed her even more to wanting to be a teacher in an urban setting. Gloria started to talk more about her experiences with her peers in teacher education and shared that seeing them respond from a place of whiteness made her think about her own whiteness. She said, "I wanted to believe I was never racist like some of them were coming of, but I knew deep down that was not true, and I had a lot of things that I did or said throughout my life that I know was racist". Hearing her peers speak so negatively was one of those moments for her that began to aid in a significant moment of change and deeper personal reflection. Through this experience, she began to understand how she might have and still does sound like them. She thought it was important to start looking inward, and said, "I made myself more aware of my thoughts, feelings, and the way I treated People of Color. I know I have to work harder and become more educated on all of this and myself so I can be the best for my future students".

Gloria began to recognize the importance of understanding what it meant to be white and challenging her white peers as part of her commitment. She said, "I see myself as an important part of the conversation since I am a white person who is a future educator, it is my job". As we talked about what she meant, she shared that at one point she had a critical dialogue with a peer of hers in her teacher education program. Her peer had shared that they had felt that kids in urban schools had parents that did not care about their children the way white parents do. Gloria said, "I tried to explain to her that it was not true, you know, I was like first not every Black or

white person's parents are the same and just because it appeared that way in one instance does not mean they do not care". Gloria sat for a moment and then continued,

I am not sure that I explained it well, but I tried to explain the parent was doing the best they could, and then I said think about how it might look from the parent's perspective to only get calls about your child's behavior and the call is coming from all white teachers Gloria had entered that place she goes sometimes where she was trying to be right and wanted her peer to see her perspective, but also because she could not let this person walk away from making some pretty "horrible assumptions based on race".

Gloria was referencing a moment during a class where two of her white peers began negatively about the behavior of African American children. She thought to herself that they are doing what she learned happened, that there was disproportionate negative attention given to behavior of Black children in schools. Gloria's peer was falling into what she herself experienced and what they had learned in their program, and Gloria felt like she could not let it go and it needed to be addressed. Gloria shared that she felt the need to say something for two main reasons, the first is because two of her friends were in the class and they were the only Students of Color in the classroom, and she felt the need to say something. She also felt the need to say something because it was the right thing to do and the person needed to be challenged.

In reflecting back, Gloria attributed most of the reason why she felt the need to say something was due to the personal relationship. She implied that she would like to think that she would have said something if her friends were not in the classroom with her at the time, but she is not sure. She openly admitted that often the common denominator when she becomes vocal or challenges someone is because of the relational aspect or if there is someone that is directly affected by the situation that has been part of the experience.

I asked Gloria if she was walking with or talking for her friends, and she said that she felt like she is walking with them, and began to reflect on seeing the damage of white saviors in spaces like urban education environments. She shared that she saw so many white teachers going into classrooms trying to act like saviors, but not actually doing work with their students. During her time at MAU Gloria had two experiences in urban settings but her student teaching experience was in historically and predominately white school district located in a wealthy suburb. She shared that it was through her field experiences including student teaching that she was able to experience all facets of teaching including working with students from multiple backgrounds. She spoke highly of her experiences in urban environments as they had the most profound impact. Gloria smiled when talking about her time in these placements, “I think I am most grateful for my experience in the inner city school, I think that really put things in perspective for me”.

Again she continued to circle back on how Kids of Color are disproportionately disciplined and experience “harsher treatment”. She shared, it really put things in perspective for me, like some behaviors that I saw and how they were deal with inappropriately and also gave me the possibility of how they could be dealt with, like I began to take on a philosophy of only focusing on the positive and it is doing wonders. I can see that these kids in other environments have been told no or talked down to, or told that they do bad things. I really believe in a strong management style with healthy and positive reinforcement, it is key. I would have never thought that or said that two years ago because I just did not know, but now I have seen enough and feel prepared and ready.

Gloria seemed to be thriving in her new job and it had a lot to do with her experiences in her urban education program. While there might be aspects she regularly misses and is not aware of, she is confident in her skill set to make her students her priority and do whatever it takes to make sure they get the best possible opportunity to learn. Gloria shared that had she not taken the urban education program she would not be where she is now, and probably would be definitely more responsible for upholding and perpetuating whiteness.

As we spoke Gloria saw her role in disrupting whiteness was at the student level, and creating space for her students to engage on issues of race and racism while at the same time making sure her lessons reflected the students' identities. In thinking about how she approaches this and what she learned she shared,

it is important to have difficult and uncomfortable conversations with my students because the steps we take as teachers impact our future, our students they are the future, and unless they get a quality education especially on the topics of whiteness and racism, the problems we have today will racism, bias, and ultimately whiteness will persist

She felt the most effective way to work against and disrupt whiteness was to work directly with her students and engage them in practices, which included addressing issues of bias that occurred between her students. She also felt that she needed to be better at challenging her peers, and now that she was working and not a student teacher, she felt like her voice mattered in challenging whiteness. She felt like she had to make the choice to be willing regularly to engage in practices that challenged whiteness. In thinking about this she said in a reflective manner "I am doing this, I am challenging this because it is just the right thing to do, if I as a teacher want to make a difference in our future, should I not give every child the opportunity?". She felt that challenging whiteness would remove barriers and create opportunity for all kids to learn. Even though she

felt strongly about challenging whiteness, she struggled with naming how she would remove barriers for her students and challenge systemic whiteness.

When she attempted to unpack whiteness it was often done from personal viewpoints or individual beliefs, rather than thinking of it as a systemic. She could name it as systemic, but had difficulty in naming systems or practices outside of individual intolerance and belief structures that were part of upholding and perpetuating whiteness. As we began to wrap up our discussion, she shared that even though she needs to work on finding and naming whiteness more on a system level, she was prepared to challenge whenever she was able. She said, “I am definitely going to step on some toes, and piss some people off, and definitely make people uncomfortable, but I think we need to do it, it is what is right for our kids, for our future.

The dichotomy of being white and challenging whiteness

I spent several days trying begin the process of Gloria’s portrait. Out of all of the participants in this study, each of them being unique, Gloria was a puzzle to me in a way that I had not expected. The moment that I thought I began to grasp the essence of her character and being, something would change, a comment would be made, she would do something, or reflect on an experience that would twist by adding another complicated layer. I then began to realize as I sifted through our notes, watched and listened to our conversations, that Gloria was not so much different than all my other participants, but the layering of her personality was more dichotomized. Gloria in moments would flash an understanding and depth to challenging and disrupting whiteness in a manner that was brazen and full of confidence. In other moments she would share a story that would reflect the significance of her formative experience and how deep both her experiences and her family’s impression impacted her entire being.

Gloria demonstrated a want to shed the overt messages and covert practices that shaped her view and upheld her engagement in possessing and perpetuating whiteness. However, the moments of learned whiteness were such a part of her essence and while coupling that with her feisty will to be “right” hindered her ability to be reflective of her own actions and behaviors. This is not meant to be a slight or judgmental, but rather, a reflection of the complexity of how one, and in this case Gloria, has journeyed through 22 years now wishing to engage in disruption of whiteness. Gloria wants to stand on the “right side” of the fight, but without a true opportunity to reflect on her own being, biases, and true nature that she operates on a regularly bases. Without truly engaging herself from a critical viewpoint and deconstructing the significant impact of her learned experiences from her youth regarding race, she will continue to be challenged in disrupting whiteness.

Gloria demonstrated that she is willing to do the work, and hopefully this process will have started her down a path of critical self-reflection. At the end our last conversation she shared, “I learned a lot about my inner thoughts and feelings, and the importance of talking them out. I liked being able to say them out loud and asking questions, it helped me kind of analyze myself, take myself a part and see where I need to grow”. This may not have been the first time Gloria was presented with the opportunity to be self-critical and reflective, however in her program during her required equity courses, she seemed more interested in having her viewpoint heard rather than being reflective. Gloria shared that she recognized how important it is to be self-reflective especially as a teacher, and that is something she hoped would continue. She acknowledged that this can help her challenge oppressive practice and assist her in effort to “be better for [her] students” in hopes to help them grow, learn, and succeed.

Jake: The Reflective

Jake was the only person identifying as a man who responded to the intake survey. Prior to meeting with him, I was curious as to his interest in the study and why he was the only person identifying as a man that completed the intake survey. It became very clear throughout our time together that Jake was driven to not only work on his own issues of whiteness, but also enhance and deepen his understanding of how to disrupt and challenge whiteness. While Jake and I come from different socioeconomic backgrounds and live in different regions of the United States, we also had many similarities and experiences growing up that led to a life committed to equity and justice work. I often felt that our conversations were less like an interview but more of a philosophical and epistemological discussion one might witness at an academic conference or during a course on whiteness.

When I first saw Jake, I was struck by his appearance. His beard was thick and he sat in a dark office chair. He had a very peaceful and calm presence, and appeared ready to engage in our conversation regardless of the topic. Each of our three meetings occurred in the morning at around 9:30 or so his time and were often the way he would start his day. It was noticeable that he had recently woken up as I was often greeted with several yawns as we would make small talk before getting into questions.

Growing up Jake lived in the same state where he went to college, and has lived in the same area his entire life, as his college is not far from his hometown. At 23 years of age during our conversations, I found Jake's understanding of complex situations to be advanced for his age. He was thoughtful, and I could tell he had spent a lot of time contemplating his own positioning in life. Jake was one of two children growing up in a home where his parents were still married. Jake looked up to his sister, as she was a few years older and in the process of working on her

Ph.D. He admitted that being part of this study gave them another area to further connect and bond. The bonding and connection to his sister is important for him, and it became clear, as he explained over our time together, that they supported each other in efforts to challenge and disrupt oppressive behaviors and actions.

When responding to questions Jake would often tilt his chair to the left, face away from the camera just slightly while looking up in the air as if he were searching for the thoughts in the cosmos. His thoughts somewhat disjointed at times took some time to come together, but made sense at the end of the statements. While answering he would softly rock in the office chair providing a rhythmic staccato to join in his very deliberate vocal cadence. Each of interviews would begin with some light discussion and then transition into questions and discussion on our topic for the day. His written responses were articulate and grounded in a theoretical framework consistent with the teachings of Freire and DuBois.

A Sense of Duty

Jake grew up in one of the suburbs of a major metropolitan city located in the Mountain West region of the United States. Jake identifies as a white man who has accumulated wealth both through whiteness and his familial connections with capitalist concepts. Jake describes his early years as growing up in a “very typical white suburban household, with heterosexual parents, white parents, white family members, very homogenous”. He was somewhat of an open book, and took time and care to articulate the thoughts swirling in his head. Often after asking him a question, he would pause for a moment, gather his thoughts, and share his honest truths. While watching him find the words in his mind, I could feel and sense that he made a concentrated effort to be honest and transparent about his thoughts, feelings, and experiences.

For example, Jake spoke frequently in our time together about his relationship with his parents, most specifically his relationship with his father. Jake's relationship seemed complicated as he expressed admiration for his parents, but also challenged some of their viewpoints and stagnation on issues of social justice. However, it was from his parents where Jake picked up a notion that significantly impacted his viewpoint and framework. In one of those moments where Jake took a long pause, I had asked him about his parents and their influence on him. He stopped for a moment, and then explained "They were duty driven, and wanted to do good things". A common refrain throughout the rest of our discussion was a commitment to duty. His commitment to this sense of duty came directly from his parents. As we were talking he at one point interjected and said, "it was how my parents raised me kind of duty driven in general not without like the context of discussion of race at all". He was sure to point out that they wanted him to have a sense of ownership of life and he needed to be mindful of others. He was also quick to point out that minoritized identities never were part of their conversations on commitment to duty or reason to serve.

I found this statement was an insight to Jake both in capturing how he got a sense of duty that drove him, but also an example of his critical lens. He was able to admire his parents for providing him with what he would call a sense of duty, while at the same time, explaining what that sense of duty seemed to lack. For Jake, it was if duty was not a choice but part of how he viewed the world. He described it as working at,

making the world a better place or however you want to phrase it. It is not really super thought out, it is more, born out of like, I am not sure how to explain it, it just feels like a very heavy topic all the time. It does not feel like there is much of a choice not to be driven by duty, it is an obligation.

Jake then explained that it was this sense of duty and a combination of circumstances that drove him into the field of teaching in the first place.

Growing up, Jake asserted that while his parents were not overly “conservative”, they presented viewpoints that perpetuated dominated narratives on issues of race that aligned with upholding whiteness. When I asked Jake how he began to shift in how he viewed race, racism, and whiteness, he responded with an answer that I did not expect. While he admittedly upheld beliefs and values aligned with whiteness into college, he felt that he was open to and able to engage critically on trauma and harm because of experiences he had in his youth. Jake shared the following in a manner in which he carefully constructed his thoughts and recognizing the vulnerability needed to share.

I think the first thing for me and this is kind of like, (long pause) I think the meaningful stuff that happened that made me be like that, was, I kind of like realized, the very, like bland sterile life of, (long pause) that I grew up in and trained to accept in a way, was really like poisonous for me. So it was not just realizing it, I realized some things did not seem right, but it was not like, well basically what happened there was some very abusive situations that ended up happening. I never like talked about, because of that culture we raise kids in never talk about, and it was like out of solidarity, to feel like it was like to be used, or harmed, or oppressed, so I was like how could I not support politics or viewpoints that did not want those things to happen to people.

His words expressed an experience with trauma, but his expression demeanor and dialogue did not shift much. I could see that he was still working through his lived experience and was still attempting to find words and express the level of detail he was willing to share about what he went through. However, this experience he had, he felt like helped him be able to align with

others who felt trauma, and for the context of our discussion he focused his responses on being an ally for those that have experienced trauma and oppression due to racism, whiteness, and white supremacy.

I could feel the weight of the discussion become heavy, and he seemed ready to let that statement hang for some time, so we moved on mostly because he seemed like he did not want to get into details, but I still let the moment sit with us in the air. Hearing his words ring in my head about experiencing abuse, and I began to connect how he used that experience to compliment and drive his sense of duty to connect with disrupting whiteness and oppression. I later asked him if he would mind talking more about his experience. I was not surprised when Jake said he was open to talking more, because he had been open about most of his experiences growing up. It helped that , in early discussions, described himself as very much cerebral and not spending a lot of time in the emotional aspect, which is why he liked science so much. Even though he seemed to be able to disconnect himself enough to talk with the appearance of little emotion, it was clear the experience had shaped the way he viewed life and how he saw both personal and systemic harm and oppression.

Due to this experience and going to therapy to assist with processing it, Jake felt like he was given the necessary skill to be critically self-reflective. At several points in our talks, he shared that he felt being self-reflective was important as an educator and as a white person challenging whiteness. Jake said that his time in therapy helped him to be honest and forthcoming. He shared, “I think my intentions are fairly clear all the time, and self-awareness from that experience has helped, so I think that is kind of why, it is the personal work of being a mindful person”. He then added that he also has always been skeptical of institutions and

challenged authority, which seemed to stem from and connect to his treatment as a child and the power dynamics involved in the situation.

Spending privilege and the challenges of naming whiteness

“Where I grew up there were not many people of color in that region, so there was kind of like passive racism, just based solely on that, just the suburban gentrification kind of stuff”. Jake recognized that his experiences growing up shaped how he participated in and was part of systemic racial oppression and whiteness. He spoke of times in grade school, where he participated in actions and behaviors that were forms of subtle racism and definitely was part of upholding whiteness. As he got older, and started to understand his sense of duty and work through some self-actualization, he began to work through and continues to work through what it means to be a white man in the United States.

Over the course of his 23 years, Jake has begun to struggle with and confront both his whiteness and the concepts of capitalism. In our conversations Jake often linked both capitalism and whiteness as interdependent with one another. Early in the process Jake articulated that he felt both capitalism and whiteness have created a sense of “logic that objectified People of Color and women, and relegated them to being bought, sold, and used like property”.

This statement was profound both at the time, and reflecting on my time talking with Jake. It was clear at times Jake felt somewhat tormented by the fact that he could not escape his privilege as a white man, and seem to carry a sense of duty to do the “right” thing. Jake often discussed the concept of giving up his privilege or working to spend his privilege. Very early in our initial discussion, Jake discussed wrestling with how to make social change, disrupt whiteness, and challenge himself to use his privilege for good. While talking he took a long pause, and thought for what seemed like several seconds. He leaned back and rocked slowly in

his chair. He then in a slow and careful cadence stated, “If I have that social capital in general I might as spend it for others that do not have as much. It seems selfish and immoral to not do that in some way”.

During our final meeting, Jake had provided examples of what he thought spending his privilege meant to him. During our conversation, I was searching for words to summarize the framework he used to define it in this context. As we began the conversation, I paused for a minute, and said “I know you have used this concept often in our discussions, but I am curious as to what you mean by spending your privilege”? He looked at me and smiled, he thought for a moment and then shared “I think it means, like using that social standing that was gained through social position, [gained] randomly but not out of my own effort, and using it in a way that is helpful I guess”. Jake later explained further, that he felt initially his focus was on economically leveling and spending of privilege. He added “I am not interested in just making money” but rather using his status to advance others. He did not comment or discuss the privilege associated with having this framework. He then thought for a moment after a long pause, and stated that related to whiteness spending his whiteness would be where he would address and confront someone being overtly racist and support a Person/People of Color impacted by that by creating a positive space. He then sat for a minute and said on a regular basis he goes through the day and in specific when interacting with a Person or People of Color, he brings a framework where he believes he is the worst white person. He clarified that it was not others that say this to him, but rather part of his own conscience, it seemed like framing himself this way kept him cognizant of his own racialization and the power associated with his identity of being white.

I was struck by his definition and comments because they were at the individual level, and much of Jake’s philosophical understanding operated on a systems level. However, I should

not have been surprised in the moment, because looking back, much of the way he explained or provided examples of addressing whiteness occurred at the individual level. Often he would relay a story where he was addressing comments from a family member or someone in a classroom. While Jake was willing and open to “spending” his privilege and whiteness, he was still reliant often on safety in numbers. For example, when addressing family members or bringing up issues that supported racial justice, he often made sure that his sister was present to support and provide validation for his point of view. While recounting instances where he failed to challenge a family member on an issues related to race, he said that he did not address it because of respect or a sense of “filial piety”. However, when his sister was present, they both felt that two against five, six, or seven seemed more workable.

As he was reflecting after answering a question, I took a moment to ask how he felt in non-familial situations, and how he spends or addresses whiteness in those contexts? He looked at me, and then paused, he then explained that often his response is in the context to People of Color in the room or those that have been impacted by mostly overt actions and behaviors. Jake’s comments often reflected more of his own “checking” of his behaviors, reactions, and bias in an effort to not further the situation or values supporting whiteness. It was almost as if his self-reflective nature turned his thoughts inward and resulted in being cautious as to not be “racist” or do something that would be perceived as with bias by a Person of Color. I then asked him to tell me a story that would provide insight to how he acted, he again asserted that he felt his role was to support People of Color by creating space and being there as an ally and support. He then spoke of an instance in which his current girlfriend, a Woman of Color, had been in a situation where “racists and bias behaviors” occurred, and he saw his role was to support her and not place his voice over hers in addressing the behavior and actions. In our conversations, he

tended to use this experience of supporting his girlfriend to provide a framework for how he would support other People of Color in situations.

Jake reflected on the way he addressed situations involving racism, whiteness, and while he utilized a sense of duty to make sure the situations were addressed, he often lacked confidence in how to say certain things or what specifically to do in situations. I could see that he struggled with not wanting to abuse or use his power as a white man to “take over” a situation or to inappropriately address a situation, but at the same time he knew he needed to react in some manner. Early in our discussions Jake reflected the he needed to understand the “really deep scar tissue [created by] white people and power, and how they can . . .harm People of Color and put them in a subordinate position”. Jake’s awareness of power dynamics was pervasive and in action in most of his stories and interactions on issues of race, racism, and whiteness. Whether it was in the classroom as a teacher, with his girlfriend, or at home with his parents, he had a consciousness of the power dynamics involved in each of the situations. However, while he was able to acknowledge the power dynamics, it often left him with a void of understanding of how to appropriately navigate the circumstances of an instant or a moment. As at times he would share experiences of what on the surface appeared to be inaction or over compensation to the power dynamics.

In addition to Jake’s unease with his power in racial situations and how to work through power dynamics, he also discussed frequently not wanting to appear or become a “self-appointed ally”. He later clarified that he recognized his need to listen and be respectful and honor the voices of those that have been harmed or oppressed by whiteness. As I was listening to Jake, I often heard him talk about the manifestations of whiteness and racism, but was curious as to how he saw himself as both an actor/supporter and one who disrupts/challenges whiteness. Jake

leaned over, and began typing on his computer, he then stopped and held his hands up and drew a triangle with his fingers as he began to speak.

You know there is a big triangle graphic, there is socially acceptable racism, at the top is extremely unacceptable racism, but they all kind of support each other. What I meant is the varying degrees of white it is like being the guy with the confederate flag on your truck and just being really racist or are you the person that is subtle about it and supports its but in a more acceptable manner. . . I think I am more at the bottom, I guess”.

He sat for a moment as I let his reflection sit in the room. I asked him why he felt this way, why he saw himself more as someone that occasionally upholds racism but tries to work against it. He then shared again, that he falls into a self-appointed allyship sometimes, and needs to be better on monitoring his behavior.

We then began to talk a bit more about how his journey led him to being someone who was more apt to challenging racism, whiteness, and white supremacy. He shared that he heard racial slurs and jokes growing up. He never thought it was okay but also did not challenge the behavior. However growing up and even into his late high school and early college years, he supported or upheld whiteness through supporting a Eurocentric curriculum, policies supporting anti-immigration, and never really understood the arguments against cultural appropriation. He then shared, he really started to engage in self-actualization through a process of political radicalization. He found his awareness on the previously mentioned issues increased and his positions changed. Jake asserted that he recognized the importance of being present to engage and “really hear and listen to experiences” of oppression such as those related to police brutality and mass incarceration. He started to recognize that white people used their power in voting in elections out of fear to protect power and used policies and systems to hold People of Color

down. It was not a singular moment for Jake, but rather a building of moments that ultimately culminated in an awakening to the reality of oppression that exists on a daily basis. After living through the building of moments that awakened his reflective nature, Jake seemed to turn to his sense of duty, which then resulted in him working to find opportunities to challenge oppressive behaviors and actions.

Theory to Practice, the challenges of working in a historically white school

It was Jake's sense of duty and other random experiences that led him into the field of education. A lover of science and someone who wanted to share and expand this love of the content with learners in grades six through twelve, Jake somewhat fell into becoming a teacher. In Jake's words, "I was going to do something like to embody the sense of duty, and then I made a bunch of non-decisions, but I knew I wanted to do something that embodied the sense of duty . . . that is how I ended up in teaching". Jake acknowledged that giving back and picking a career and profession that focused on creating change and educating the future was something that could speak to his commitment to duty.

As an undergraduate student at a research one institution in the Mountain West region, known for this study as Mountain West University (MWU). Jake thought that by attending MWU his values would be supported as the institution has somewhat of a reputation for being "liberal". Despite being at an institution that had framework somewhat grounded in social justice, Jake found that most of the faculty and overly white student population reinforced and upheld whiteness. Jake relayed instances in which his faculty challenged whiteness, but recalled it was mostly faculty that were Doctoral Students of Color or Faculty of Color that seemed to introduce critical theories on race and challenge whiteness in the way they taught.

Specifically as it related to his preparation program, Jake felt that white faculty, who made up a majority of those teaching the courses would perpetuate whiteness by not addressing systemic issues or talking about race. Sitting in his chair rocking slowly Jake began to share a consistent theme he had noticed throughout his time at MWU.

I think there is a lot of like really, really cringe worthy laden conservatism in some of the more Socratic discussions we had. It is hard to give those ideas any weight because they like, they to me do not make sense, you know. It is so centered on one single culture, or one time in one place, and you are one of many groups that exist in that culture, and you think of whatever betters yourself is best for everybody else. I am not sure how others could have those ideas, be teachers, and want to help people.

Jake's description of what he experienced was consistent in his reflection of his peers in his teacher education program. He described mostly white students holding ideals and values that were consistent with whiteness and unless it was Faculty of Color teaching the course, those values would not be challenged in the discussion.

Jake also expressed frustration with his peers who wanted to be teachers, but seem to only want to teach certain types of students or not make the connections to systemic oppression, racism, white supremacy, and whiteness and the impacts on teaching, learning, and the education system. He was very critical of his peers, and I sensed that not only was he holding judgement on their ability to serve students and create change, but he himself had experienced other forms of judgement in his program. I asked him if thought what they were sharing in class would be harmful and why, and he sat for a moment to think through his response. After a moment he stated, "they seem unaware of their biases. . . not noticing and perpetuating all of this is a consequence of having moderately racist teachers growing up themselves and never really

questioned it". Jake relayed that he heard many of his peers share stories that reflected their desire to teach or how they approached teaching came from teachers they had growing up, who often as described by him upheld viewpoints that supported dominant narratives.

Despite his frustrations with some of his experiences, he did indicate that he was able to take courses that were useful in deepening his understanding of race and racism. However, in reflection Jake discussed feeling even though he had learned the historical aspects of education and inequality, there was not much discussion of power and the dynamics of power related to maintaining the status quo perpetuating whiteness. Upon realizing this, he became self-reflective in our discussion, and started to talk about how he still was processing how he himself engages in upholding whiteness.

Even though I'm talking about whiteness in the interviews, it still feels as though I don't know what I'm talking about: as if because I don't know the p.o.c. perspective, I don't know what being white means either. This conversation has made me more introspective about the ways that I wield whiteness poorly and the ways that I save it as currency when I could be using it as a tool and spending it where it could have a positive effect.

After our time together, it was common for Jake to move into these deep introspective moments where he would circle back to his refrains of spending his currency in a manner that more positively impacted People of Color and how he needs to better understand the perspective of People of Color. It was evident that Jake spends a lot of time trying to reconcile his actions and behaviors with his values and his hope to be an anti-racist.

When we began talking about how Jake responded while teaching and if he was able to disrupt and challenge whiteness, he once again became self-critical, recognizing that he could have done more in the moment. He shared that while teaching lessons, he really never brought

up race as a topic in of itself. However, he felt if direct issues relating to race were brought up while teaching he was sensitive in ensuring Students of Color were being heard and validated. Jake then said when there were instances that might have involved race, he feared bringing it up or naming it because he did not want to mishandle or make a mistake. In other instances Jake described working with two Women of Color that were students in one of his classes. He shared that the students had behavior issues and he had tried to be sensitive to their needs, not be overly punitive, and be cognizant of the power dynamics. He shared “I would try to deconstruct my power as a white teacher by being a little more lenient toward Students of Color”.

In his mind and in philosophical dialogue Jake was comfortable naming whiteness and challenging whiteness. However in practice his ability and action spoke differently. He had the knowledge, recognized systemic oppression and the historical legacies and current practices upholding whiteness and white supremacy. Jake even was able to articulate a commitment to addressing systems of oppression, specifically whiteness. For example, he shared that “it is not so much about willingness as it is about habit”. This statement I found to be profound, as he was challenging the notion of willingness, as if willingness was a forgone conclusion, or in other words being a person committed to duty the willingness was to be open, engage in reflection, the action components were part of being human.

So, the question started to fill my head as to what was stopping Jake and holding him back from being an educator that challenged whiteness. The picture began to come into focus as I started to piece together aspects of his story. Jake lacked the tools, conversational practice, and ability to address whiteness in a structural and systemic sense. Jake’s stories and discussion of disrupting and challenging whiteness were on a personal or individual level. There were even

moments where he seemed to not engage because he felt ill equipped in the personal discussions or was intimidated by the power dynamics.

Jake shared several instances in which he did not know what to do, or he questioned his actions and use of or lack of use of power was doing more harm than good. In particular he was hesitant and constantly questioned himself in how to best support his Students of Color. He attributed this largely due to both the lack of experience working with Students of Color in pre-student teaching field experiences and the lack of specificity in preparation related to working through whiteness and power dynamics in the context of teaching. As it related to working with Students of Color he shared

I was never really, I obviously was taught to treat everyone equal and never accept anything than the best. I found myself in a lot of double binds in that, you know am I like being too demanding, is this conversation hurtful or is this way I am holding them accountable too much or pushing my power. You know if I am not doing that am I just complacent in assuming they are not capable of doing the standards, I never knew where to do that, and there was never a discussion on that kind of stuff.

In reflecting on his preparation, Jake shared that they were prepared to see their students as individuals, but spent little time on connecting the racial identities to systemic issues or power. Jake found his preparation equipped him for certain situations but he felt as though the program was setting those that wished to engage in disruptive anti-racist practices for failure. Jake's critique was interesting, he stated, "If teacher education programs want to actually embody the type of teaching they idealize, they have to be willing to put some of it into practice too". I asked him to elaborate and share more specifically what he meant. He said that during teaching to truly disrupt he

would have to disregard a lot of power dynamics with superiors in the school in which I was student teaching and in the School of Education at MWU to do more radical pedagogy that didn't fit neatly into the edTPA-type lessons. It overall sometimes felt like there was a nominal passion to break cycles of inequality in the school of education and less so in the actual school.

Jake clearly had a lot of thought regarding his experience during student teaching and his time with his mentor teacher who was supporting his experience.

Jake described his mentor teacher as a white woman in her mid 40s. Jake, often somewhat stoic in our talks, bristled a bit when talking about his experience with his mentor teacher. He shared that while she was what the system would describe as a "good teacher", she rarely took risks and lacked self-reflection on her whiteness. Jake shared that when he attempted to implement some of the strategies to engage his students that would begin to break down structures and support anti-racist teaching practices, he felt little to no support from his mentor. Jake admitted that he struggled with time management and getting through lessons, which may have added to their tension. In the middle of our second interview we began talking about how he normalized whiteness during his student teaching. Still slowly rocking in his chair he said, "I think I normalized whiteness by not being able to come up with a new system. I mean it was hard for me to do, because I would have been challenged by my mentor". It was as if Jake's lack of being able to gain trust from his mentor impacted his ability to fully take over the class and implement some of his ideas and thoughts.

During our final discussion I asked Jake to imagine what would happen if he and his mentor worked to dismantle whiteness in teaching. Jake shared that their discussions on race seemed relatively "surface" and "introductory". He thought further for a moment and shared

“she upholds the system”, in order to really make the change he stated that he had no power in the situation given his role as a student as he feared that he would not pass the student teaching experience. He then stated “she would have to be willing to change the grading systems or something along those lines”. In this statement he was referring both to how he was being evaluated but also how the students in the class were being evaluated.

Jake shared that as we was finishing his student teaching experience, he noticed the student teachers in his cohort that did well or were getting a lot of praise were those that seem to be duplicating the systems in the schools. He shared these systems, structures, and practices “fit” the dynamics that upheld whiteness. Those, like him, that tried to advance more “radical” pedagogical strategies were challenged and in order to survive were forced to adopt the practices of their mentor or of the school where they were conducting their student teaching experience. As he started to just do the basics and follow his mentor’s script, his feedback became more positive and he was affirmed for his teaching.

Jake shared the only time he really was able to disrupt the entire class dynamic was during a period of time where his mentor was absent. He shared,

I did lessons that had a social piece to them, you know like how I did a lesson on how astrophysics is a very sexist and misogynistic institution and looking at, like looking at the first part where we classified stars and things of that nature, right, just like normal, and then and that was an activity where you go to each table and solve a puzzle to get a whole picture of what that looks like, and then we looked at data about how these are the women in these college careers.

Jake said that when he did construct lessons that were different, not only did he add social aspects, he also “scaffolded the technical language with supports so that the language acquisition

didn't have a prerequisite of speaking a certain brand of English at home". When sharing this collection of stories I could see Jake show passion toward teaching and engaging students on the subject of science. He said that he, "felt a duty to give examples of scientists who aren't white or tell stories of scientists who made discoveries in spite of systems of racism or sexism. . . I wanted to make science accessible for all students". He shared that it was important for the students to see themselves in the content and be part of learning, but this process was difficult because this was not how the students were being taught and he did not have as much freedom to do this due to the required standards the students needed to pass science exams and his requirements for student teaching.

When Jake and I spoke about his evaluation or the formative feedback he received, he said that rarely was the concept of race or whiteness discussed. He noted the disconnect between some of the discussions he had in his teacher preparation courses at MWU about historical issues of race, and the fact that his evaluations and formal discussions lacked specific indicators as to how he was challenging these systems in practice. He said while "there was a criteria of like is accepting of different backgrounds or something like that, but it is really weakly worded and it was not at all a radical ideal. Like, if you don't accept people of different backgrounds why would you be a teacher".

It is my responsibility and my responsibility to engage

"I think it is my responsibility to disrupt racism and whiteness". Jake has made a commitment to challenging hegemonic practices that uphold cultural norming of whiteness and racist behaviors and attitudes. Very early in our discussions Jake shared that he has made the decision to leave the field of education. He did indicate that someday he may return, but once he completed student teaching he realized that there were too many barriers existing for him to be a

successful teacher. In talking about his choice to no longer pursue the profession of teaching, Jake described experiences where he felt like he was just teaching a curriculum that was part of dominant narratives and there was little support for practices that he considered to be radical pedagogy that would engage students. Ultimately, it was his commitment to duty and the lack of ability to reach students to embrace that sense of duty given the confines of the system that led him to removing himself from the field.

In reflecting on my discussions and time with Jake, I found it interesting that he was so committed to challenging hegemonic practices, but in moments when he could, he struggled to clearly engage in practices that dismantled or disrupted whiteness. He claimed to have a race conscious approach to teaching, but felt he was not allowed to be explicit because of the power dynamics that existed between he and his mentor. In the moments where he was able to do this, he shifted the curriculum and the way he was teaching, and the students rejected his attempts because as he put it “the wanted their workbooks because that is what they knew”. Jake fell back into using practices that were supported by his mentor. He was at a point where he just wanted to make it through student teaching, survive, and not fail.

Finally, Jake seemed to philosophically be able to name systemic whiteness, however was not able to reference many examples in seeing them in his daily experiences or recognizing them when he was teaching. His major concern with challenging whiteness was ensuring that he himself was not exploiting his power and checking his own influence on Students of Color. This was both positive in the sense that he was able to make the content he was teaching adapted to all students, but at the same time it left him questioning himself and in some cases responding in a manner that lowered expectations for Students of Color. Ultimately, Jake is still processing and moving through some of his experiences that occurred in his youth, as a result he is constantly

reflecting on how to utilize his power, privilege, and capital in a manner that does not harm others.

Megan: The Servant Leader

Prior to my first interview with Megan, I knew she was still somewhat in vacation mode, as we began our discussions in late July and she was enjoying not being in school and not working. Megan indicated she was excited to be part of the study, but also had some late summer vacationing and wanted to make sure she we could work around her schedule. Her initial reaction to learning she was selected to be part of the study was, “that is great news!!”, so I had the sense she had a lot to talk about and would be very engaging throughout our three dialogues. I knew that as the summer began to come to a close, the possibility of nervousness, anxiety, excitement, and all the other emotions that come for a teacher starting their first year in a school would begin to take hold.

I glanced at Megan’s file before signing on for our first discussion. I noted that Megan was 23 and identified both as white and a woman. During our first discussion Megan would discuss how both of those identities have become salient over the past four years, but it was her identified as a Christian that was the most salient for her. In her words, “I am very much about church”. I also saw Megan had graduated in December of 2017, having been prepared as an elementary educator with a focus on working with kids with varying needs and abilities as a Special Education teacher.

As I first signed on to Zoom for our first meeting, Megan was already waiting for me. My initial impression is that she was prompt, organized, and a punctual person, but also seemed relaxed. I got the sense that while she was normally a person that was constantly on the move, going from one task to the next, the summer break was a welcomed experience as she seemed at

peace. This was a different feeling than our last interview which occurred a week after school started in September of 2018. While still wearing a smile and portraying her upbeat personality that was consistent throughout our time together, she seemed a bit more stressed and fatigued. She admitted, “if I could just move into my room, I would”, meaning she had spent so much time at school, she might as well just take up residence in her classroom. She was prepping her room while also attending professional developments, and recently had welcomed students back to schools. Her life of summer and all that comes with that, had ended, and she was clearly in “teaching mode”, as she called.

Megan sat prepared and ready, her hair short and tightly curled around her face. She was smiling, and I noticed a bit of nervousness, but none-the-less she was ready to go. During our discussions, Megan was very much to the point, she rarely circled around a question or a response, and while it was evident while answering questions there were moments where she was realizing an insight to her inner being she may have not previously considered, very rarely did she stumble or respond from a space of defensiveness. Her honesty was refreshing, and we were able to talk with candor. At one point, she had indicated she felt comfortable talking with me and despite the fact we were talking about difficult topics, there was a sense of comfort in her expression.

Camp: A place for more than just spiritual growth

Megan comes from a family of public servants and those committed to supporting people. Her mother is a special education teacher and her father is a social worker. From a young age, she was “surrounded by the idea of how do we serve the underdog, how do we support them”. Coupled with Megan’s faith, which she views as also part of serving others, it is no surprise that Megan chose the field of education as her professional calling. Megan’s family had a significant

impact on her upbringing, as she cited her mother as being “a very influential person”, and the type of person that was central for setting norms for how her family operated. As we would later discuss, there were several instances where Megan started to track that her mom held values or made statements that differed from her own. Despite these differences, Megan and her family were and are still close. Megan is the youngest of two children and also shared that she was relatively close with her brother. Interestingly, Megan not only followed in the footsteps of her parents, but also her brother as she chose to attend Upper Midwest State University (UMSU).

Megan grew up in a small community located geographically in the middle of a state located in the Midwest region of the United States. Her hometown was not very racially diverse as there were only 3% of the population that identified as People of Color. Megan recounted infrequent interactions with People of Color and individuals with different cultural backgrounds from her own. At one point in our first discussion she was telling a story about an interaction at school, she scoffed and said “you know, I grew up in a non-diverse town”. Megan, as an adult and recent college graduate, is aware of the lack of interactions with People of Color, however it took her sometime to recognize that life was different outside of her lived experience.

As an avid fan of musicals and theatre, Megan and her mother would often travel to the “city” to go to the theatre. It was during these visits that she began to not only notice differences, but start to understand some of the perspectives that might have shaped her experiences growing up. During one of our conversations, we got a bit sidetracked talking about the musical *Hamilton*. Megan’s face lit up, and she got excited because plays, musicals, and theatre in general were a passion for her. She exclaimed, “I hear people talking about spending a lot of money going to like a sporting event, and I would gladly spend the same kind of money on a musical or play, it is money well spent”. Megan’s excitement during the time talking about

musicals, was mirrored when she spoke about church, and the way it influences all aspects of her life.

Church, the community, the experience, the message, and what it brings are all things that inspire and shape Megan in the way she interacts with the world. Interestingly, despite how often we talked about church, she did not mention the concept or notion of religion in the terms of a formal structure of beliefs. Megan's commitment and expressed faith was significant for her personally, but she did not necessarily frame it from the context of religion, even though much of her formation was done through formalities of church. For example, part of the reason after graduation she chose to stay close to UMSU, was because she found a church while in college that assisted in creating a sense of belonging for her. .

Megan's commitment to her faith is also about a commitment and comfort through a shared community. Finding a church, and feeling at home was part of what made her college experience exceptional. The importance of finding a church made sense to Megan as she sought out community, similar to the community she found at a church camp she attended while in high school and later worked at during the summers in-between semesters at UMSU. In fact, it was this camp that became a significant and transitional experience for her as she began to not only expand and shape her commitment to Christianity but also utilized as a foundational building block for a commitment to social justice. Megan explained the camp at some point while she was in high school began focusing on anti-racism and activism all grounded in faith and Christianity.

When first talking about camp, Megan sat smiled and her voice raised in pitch excitedly sharing "honestly it is the camp that I worked at, it instilled so much for me, I started working there right out of high school, I had to learn how to exist on my own in a hurry, and that was

formative”. The friends, relationships, and coming together with a shared commitment to something bigger allowed for Megan to grow as a human and also discover herself outside of the shadow of her parents and family.

Megan found that her experiences as both a camper and then later working at the camp shaped how she saw the world and she honed her sense of leadership. Megan’s enthusiasm is not by accident, as she recognized the importance of being enthusiastic while leading. Whether it be for a project, for an idea, for a process, Megan explained “I believe that the enthusiasm of a group never rises above its leader”. Her expressive interest in sharing her experiences of camp, her commitment to working with children with varying needs and abilities, her commitment to social justice, and her faith were all demonstrated through a significant amount of enthusiasm. In each area, she had hoped that her enthusiasm will lead to others sharing in similar feelings, reactions, and actions.

Serving without being the savior: Megan, whiteness, and white immunity

Megan’s camp experience was formative in her understanding of herself and made a significant impact in how she began to deconstruct her racialized experience as a white woman. However, from Megan’s perspective, there was a great deal of fragility that she had to work through to get to where she is today, even though she also acknowledges that she still has a long way to go. Megan shared one of her biggest hurdles in addition to her fragility came from not having the language to talk about and fully comprehend racism, whiteness, and white supremacy. Megan stated, “I think the biggest thing is having the language, and the vocabulary to talk about it, and be able to say, yes I know the difference to know what it means to be prejudice and racist and I know what institutional power looks like”.

Megan's enthusiasm and demeanor shifted during an early conversation when we began to talk about her upbringing. She began to unpack the complexity of the influence of her mother on her formative years. As she shared her mother was influential, she then in mid-sentence laughed and said "she is not as aware of somethings". Megan then smiled and said that she wanted to share a side story,

My sister in law is Chinese. She immigrated here when she was five, and so I have this lens of social justice and antiracism, and I said it is great we have [her] culture in our family. My mom said, I see her as white, and I was like you are not doing her any favors as seeing her as white, you are minimizing her culture and experience, and my mom said no that is not what I am doing. She just did not see it the way I did.

Megan laughed to herself as then continued, "Outside of that, she is well intentioned and is an awesome person, a lot of my drive and passion I literally followed in her footsteps I gained a lot of inspiration from her. I learned how to follow your passion and stand up for yourself from her". It is clear that Megan has reservations about her mother, and recognizes the complexity of the dynamics around race that she has learned, but she also felt the need to defend her mom and some regard excuse her viewpoint.

In our conversations, Megan was also critical of her mother recognizing that she instilled some significant foundational beliefs that took her time to work through as a young adult. For example, Megan shared a story of attending a musical in a large city as a young child.

I remember, the first time we saw Sound of Music, at the Fox theatre we sat in the back row, because they were the cheap seats. When we left she would hold my hand so tight, as we would down the sidewalk toward our car, and I was like what is the deal? She was like "cities are not safe", and I was like oh okay cities are not safe. I was from a small

town and I just assumed what she said was true, cities are not safe. This was a reoccurring thing, you know every time we would go to [the city], for example when we saw Fiddler on the Roof, she would do the same thing, walk fast, not make eye contact with anyone. There were a bunch of homeless people around and I would say if not all most were people of color.

After Megan shared this story, she sat for a minute and explained that this was something that made an impression on her.

She explained that during one summer at camp during one of the anti-racist sessions, she started to realize that she built up an association specifically around Black men that came from her experiences as a child with her mom. Megan got quiet for a moment, and then shared, I had a notion and understanding that Black men were dangerous, and “I see this comes from how my mom acted around Black men”

Megan shared another experience in which her mom’s viewpoint was tinged with bias. This time, the comment was a little more direct. While visiting colleges around the state, Megan shared that her mom really wanted her to attend a smaller institution. Megan explained,

I was looking at several schools in the state. We visited Eastern [State University] and I was like this is amazing. The campus is not in a great neighborhood, but I was like it was awesome. We also visited a few private colleges like, and both of these places were tiny and I was not about that. We debriefed it as a family and my mom said, I really like the smaller college more so than Eastern. I was like, Eastern is a huge teaching institution, why do you like them more, the small school has such a tiny program. She said well, “there are a lot more white faces there”.

Megan clearly was frustrated by her mother's comments saying that she felt her mom was coming from a deficit oriented perspective.

Megan recognized the issues with what her mother said at a younger age and again when sharing her story about her college visit. She reflected and shared that she often thought, "what is wrong with mom here, this clearly is not right". Particularly because Megan had attended was already a few summers into her camp experiences which had a focus on anti-racism. She reflected,

I mean mom would never come out and say Black people are not as good, in fact she would deny it with a lot of conviction. She has a lot of underlying prejudices. They seem to come through in the way she interacts with people of color

As stated previously, Megan knew these underlying prejudices shaped how she interacted with her racialized experience, understood whiteness, protected whiteness, and ultimately shaped how she engaged with others.

Megan shared, it was her journey at camp that truly allowed for her to take ownership of her whiteness, and begin to embrace a commitment to social justice. Megan shared "it is not white people's fault, but we are responsible". Megan often used this refrain that was a critical part of how she viewed her work related to whiteness and white supremacy. This particular refrain came from messages she learned at camp, and was a significant take away for her. I think it also helped address how she could both act as someone who challenged behaviors but also be able to talk about how her mom could both be great and have underlying prejudices, and not connect her some of her values and behaviors that upheld whiteness with her being a "good person".

It was after her first interview Megan shared this statement, and from time to time she would come back it as we spoke about our connections to systems and structures. I asked her to clarify more specifically, and she shared, “it is not my fault but I am responsible, so it is not white people’s fault per se but we are responsible for making it better because we are the people in a position of power”. It was at this moment, where I realized that the theme of her feeling like it was her responsibility is at the heart of what drives her commitment to social justice.

Megan’s refrain came from her first anti-racism experience at her camp. When the camp made the transition to working to attract more People of Color, and be a more welcome space. The leadership made a decision to take both an inward look at how the organization functioned, but also knew the work needed to be inclusive of those that participated in the camp. Megan described her first year, reflecting that she experienced a significant amount fragility. She shared in how she gained a deeper understanding from year to year. Megan said,

You know, during my first anti-racism training, I was like this is awful, everyone hates me because I am white and how could they do this to me. We got the same training every summer, and by the second year, I was like yeah I got this down.

Megan’s transition of fragility to a deeper understanding came through the repeated mantra of “it was not my fault, but I am responsible”. After listening to Megan’s stories about camp, it became clear that she was experiencing a low risk scaffolding to approaching anti-racist work. Although, I must admit I was still puzzled as to how they could connect the concept of recognizing power and implications of upholding whiteness, but still shed the aspects of being “at fault”.

In an effort to gauge a more clear understanding of Megan's interpretation and feelings on what the difference is, I asked Megan if she felt that all white people were racist and responsible for maintaining whiteness. Megan started her response

I think it goes back to our discussion on white guilt, which does not help anyone, so it is not my fault part, means I never owned slaves, I am not racist, I have never intentionally tried to hurt people of color in any way. I am however responsible for making a change in the system that exists even though I never did anything to create it, and my inaction perpetuates the system of racial oppression.

Megan's expressed immunity to "being racist" because of not doing intentional harm, was interesting. When I pressed her a bit on this, she did not respond in a manner of defensiveness, her response was with sincere candor

All white people are prejudice that does not mean all white people are racist or are at fault for causing whiteness. So prejudice is, I have these preconceived notions based on when I look at them and see the color of their skin or I see their height or weight I and I assume I know something about them, but when I act on it in a way that is using my power as a white person or as a cisgender person in order to in some way make them feel like they are less or actively do something to make them feel like they are less. That is where the isms come in, like being racist or sexist or what would it be for the sexual orientation piece, whatever that is, but um yeah so I guess everyone can have their own opinions and preconceived notions and we struggle with I am never going to get rid of those. I can never look at a Person of Color and not have my brain automatically think things, what I think might change over time based on my experiences with different people, but our brains automatically make these connections and that is how we make

sense out of our experiences in the world. So having a prejudice can be a good or a bad thing, like I can have a prejudice and be preferential to People of Color, I can have a prejudice and be preferential to white people, when you act on it, that is when it becomes problematic like using your power as a member of the dominant group to harm the other group that it becomes racist.

Megan continued to share how she framed her commitment to social justice explaining that it is imperative to be actively involved in addressing oppression both systematically and on an individual level. However, there were contradictions in how she explained her responsibility for white supremacy with the continued rationalization of distancing herself from being labeled as a racist.

Megan, in most of our conversations, would provide a story to give an example of her thoughts and how she had moments of clarity in her experience at camp. Given her camp's mission to do outreach often they would send people to do work throughout the region which meant sometimes they travelled in state and sometimes out of state. Megan shared,

We did a camp in Flint, Michigan, and I am sure you know what is going on there, we were at a Lutheran Church. It was like the first summer after the water crisis started, it is crazy that it is still happening. We always do water day at camp, and we fill up water balloons and play water games and stuff like that and a friend of mine was like what are you doing about water day while at camp? And I was like what do you mean about what are we doing about water day? And she was like oh they do not have any water right now, and I was like YEEEEAAAAH I did not think of that.

After telling the story she smiled, and reflected that she could not believe it was not even part of her understanding of the lived experience of the people living in Flint. It was Megan's attempt to

say, she was responsible for doing something about the issue and not causing more harm, but she herself was not responsible for the water crisis.

Megan shared that it took her time to get to the point where she was at during the time of the interview. She said that “my awareness of whiteness did not really develop until began surrounding people that did not look like me”. It was through these experiences, she began to realize that differences existed and challenge how she had “normalized” whiteness and her experience. Most of her interactions came through her experiences either working at camp or as a camper herself, given both her p-12 and college experience seemed to more or less reinforce and uphold the normalizing of whiteness.

In Megan’s experiences doing service work for her church and working at camp, she began to recognize how she was connected to the larger systems of oppression. Megan briefly touched on how it is important for white people to not do the work from a savior perspective. However, at times there was still a framing of Communities of Color from a deficit perspective, as they were seen as places that needed help. When I brought up the white savior aspect, she looked at me and with somewhat of a sarcastic tone and shared, “I am the white person coming in to save the day, all of you People of Color should be so happy I am here to help, and it becomes about us, and how great we are for helping other people.” Her voice indicated she had seen this occur in her life, and after more dialogue she shared her mother sometimes operated in this manner, which she exclaimed in frustration. She then continued from her previous statement that instead we need to be better and care about the person enough to want to help them to sustain their own communities or whatever”

The politics of race and serving her students

Megan's journey as an educator began when she saw both her mother and father impact other people's lives through their work. She knew she wanted to be part of a profession that served others and made an impact. Her focus became clearer during her sophomore year of high school. She said, "I had a summer job where I worked with at risk students, and um, and specifically, I worked with a kid with a learning disability in writing". As I listened to her tell begin the story, her face glowed and she started to get emotional. It was clear her experience during that year made a profound impact on her. She continued, "he was the smartest kid ever in math, and I was like 'oh my gosh', you probably have lived your whole life thinking you are stupid and stuff, and probably being told that by your peers and teachers".

Not only was working with this student important in her coming to the realization that she wanted to be a Special Education teacher, but also it gave her the firsthand experience and understanding that all kids can learn and ought to have the opportunity to learn. She exclaimed, "I believe all students can learn which is a big part of the special education teacher thing. There is a mentality from some people that students with varying abilities have just plateaued". Megan seemed frustrated by the common reaction she described. She continued "I mean, maybe they are not making enormous gains, but they are learning and is our job to make the learning relevant to the learner".

UMSU was responsible for enhancing Megan's commitment to a foundational philosophy that all children are able to learn. Through her program's coursework and field experiences prior to student teaching, the seed that was planted during her sophomore year of high school blossomed into a grounded framework impacting her pedagogical practice. Megan felt that her program strongly prepared her to work with children with varying abilities, however

she was relatively critical of her program's ability to prepare her to work with children from various racial and ethnic backgrounds.

Megan reflected on one particular moment during her experience at UMSU that indicated how the program allowed for whiteness to be upheld and also did not really challenge future educators to engage critically on the topic of race. During one of her courses Megan spoke about how her class was discussing what seemed to be a proposed scholarship program for potential future African American male teachers. She shared, "my program did not give me or my peers the academic language or other concepts to engage on issues around race". Even in the form of feedback and assessments working with students, Megan indicated there was not discussion of race, challenging whiteness, or formal items examining race consciousness in teaching practice. Megan shared outside of the discussion about the scholarship, there was an activity that was intended to enhance cultural competence. Megan felt that the experience "felt something more like we could check it off, like we did our cultural responsive day", and it was not significant or memorable. After sharing her frustration with how cultural competence was somewhat of an afterthought, I asked her to share more about how she experienced the scholarship discussion activity in her class.

She sat for a minute and then said "people got so upset during the conversation and they did not just have the vocabulary to talk about". In addition to the vocabulary, it seemed that from her perspective many of her peers got defensive and there was very little intervention from the faculty on the defensiveness aspects of the conversation. Megan shared, "one of my friends said, it is important because representation matters", but everyone in the class seemed to be frustrated with this response. She then characterized her peers by saying that their arguments reflected a stance of "what do you mean by representation matters? We are awesome too and

they can see us and they should be happy”. Megan seemed a bit frustrated with this interaction and the fact it never got resolved in her program. It was hard for her to believe that people would be able to have these beliefs and successfully complete a teacher education program.

Megan struggled at times with the positioning of dialogue on race, racism, and whiteness, and the situation about the scholarship was no different in that she seemed to think that inaction on the part of the faculty was more about being politically neutral. In several instances in our discussions Megan questioned why topics of race have become political or politically charged. She challenged that it made no sense that anti-racism was only aligned with being “liberal” or anti-conservative. She asked “how is doing the right thing political”?

Megan shared that she often struggled with how to talk about topics, such as whiteness and racism, or even bring up a topic like race which seem to her very politically charged. I could tell she was feeling frustrated when she shared,

I know these conversations are important to have, I am still unsure the best way to approach the topics without making my lessons a matter of “I know your parents say x and I am here to tell you different, the last thing I want to do is turn children against their parents or even worse turn their parents against me

It was evident there was a sense of fear of challenging whiteness in all white communities particularly as a novice teacher or during student teaching. Megan expressed a sense of fear in not wanting to ruffle the ever important relational dynamic between teacher and parent. To add on that, as stated previously, she did not want to be known as the anti-racist teacher or that to be the only thing she was known for. Clearly her commitment to social justice was being challenged here and she was frustrated, but ultimately decided to work through comfort in not being overly disruptive, as that would have created too much friction. Megan also feared, both

in student teaching as she was a guest and now as a new teacher, having a Principal that might not be supportive of anti-racist strategies. Megan thought for a moment looked off, as I could tell her enthusiasm was waning as she was going down this path of discussion. She shared,

I do not think that is not a hill I am willing to die on in my first year. I am in my probationary period in my first five year, so I would be really worried about my administration not being behind me, like not getting my contract renewed, so I think that is something I would be more apt to push when my five years is up.

Interestingly, I brought this statement up with her during our final conversation, and it seemed Megan had done some reflecting on the statement and her feelings about being frustrated that race, whiteness, and racism were so politically charged.

This time, Megan in a more upbeat and manner reflecting the enthusiasm I came to expect from her stated with smile, “I was honestly surprised about my own thoughts that came up”. She laughed then continued by asking “Why are we doing this, why are we making this a political? It should not be where liberal equates with antiracist”. She then thought about the communities she was teaching in and had recently found employment in, and explained that it should not matter if the community where she was working was more conservative or not. She felt that she should be prepared to engage. She then questioned whether or not she had the appropriate preparation to be able to properly disrupt, as she had mentioned previously that her program did not really provide her skills necessary to disrupt and challenge systemic whiteness. Most, if not all of what she learned came from her experiences at her summer camp. As this part of our conversation was coming to a close, she smiled for a second and said that her fears of not having a supportive administration was not relevant to her new job. By the time we had our last discussion she had just completed the beginning preparation for the new school year, and felt that

her principal would be supportive of her engaging her students using anti-racist teaching pedagogies, if she chose to do so.

It was the last part of her statement that took me back a bit. Megan had, in several instances, stated her commitment to social justice. However, in the same conversation just minutes later, she added she did not want to be known as the anti-racist teacher. So I asked her, what is it about willingness and what makes the moment or the situation correct. She first, stated that it was more than just willingness but awareness. For example, she was explaining her reading series for this year, and stated that her theme of courage. Megan was intentional about picking books that had lead characters that demonstrated courage, or the books gave insight to her students about courage. She then stated, it just so happens that several of the books had lead Characters of Color, although it was not intentional. Megan owned that she did not purposefully set out to select books that would challenge the normalization of whiteness, but her theme did that for her. She said, that yes she has to be willing to engage, but first she has to be aware, and being aware sometimes is hard. It was not until our conversations that she began to realize that her books would be disrupting and challenging perspectives on whiteness.

I was interested in engaging Megan more about why she did not want to be known as the teacher who talks only about race. She thought for a moment and did say that she felt it was a teacher's job to challenge whiteness, but there were so many areas for a teacher to address, it could not be a singular identity. Megan also added that "if I am not constantly disrupting [whiteness], it is in turn normalizing and perpetuating whiteness". It was as if Megan was cognizant of what she believed and thought ought to occur, but the system of whiteness and the normalized expectations of her mostly white teaching core, community, principals, students, and

even her own perspective were at times getting in the way of being a disruptor of whiteness as an educator.

Megan shared that as a teacher she had very little experience in actually disrupting whiteness or challenging systemic whiteness during student teaching, so in her words she was often upholding whiteness because she was not constantly addressing the system and structural issues. However, in one instance she was intentional about having her students thinking about culture. Megan began to describe one of the units she created during student teaching. Megan said, “I did my Native American unit, I intentionally wanted to examine the context of the subject from the perspective of Native Americans and not have the primary focus be on the colonist”. In order to do that she used the popular diversity/intercultural training process known as *Bafa Bafa*. Megan said she did this “to help the students learn and understand what is culture and how cultures differ”. Megan was very intentional in this process, and even discussed the importance of using as many texts as she could find that were true to the perspective of Indigenous Americans and not filtered through the lens of colonist. Megan felt it was important for her students to understand the harm colonists created and at the same time wanted to get her students to begin to recognize and appreciate cultures that differed from their own. I could tell she was proud of this unit, and she smiled and talked about how good it felt to teach something so important and to engage students in such a critical manner. She realized how important it was to engage students in learning about culture, colonization, Indigenous Americans, and about themselves. She stated “it was the most out there thing I did” and it was probably the most disruptive practice. Megan indicated that she was nervous because she was a guest as a student teacher and if it did not go well, or if it came across as her pushing values and ideals, she was not sure what could have happened.

Megan conflicted

Megan's vocalization and commitment to social justice is evident in our conversation, but Megan is conflicted between her values grounded in social justice and aspects of whiteness that make it difficult for her to fully embrace that value. For example, in one instance Megan will talk about challenging the system, acknowledge that failure to act is upholding whiteness. Then in another instance she acknowledged feeling pressure of not "pushing" perspectives because that may cause someone to feel uncomfortable and potentially challenge the relationship dynamics with students, parents, or her administration. This inner conflict and challenge to congruence played out as Megan shared a story of a conversation with a friend that occurred in between her second and third conversation with me. Megan and her friend were talking about her participation in this study, and Megan had initially stated what she shared with me, that it was her responsibility as an educator to challenge whiteness and white supremacy.

Megan's friend had a different perspective. Megan shared, "my friend was like that is not your job, you can't do that, then you are just pushing your ideas on your kids, that is their parents job". She described her reaction, "I sat there for a minute and then responded, what if their parents are teaching them to be actively racist and stuff, and that is not great, and I need to correct that". Megan then shared that her friend retorted, "no that is literally not your job", and Megan said it was at that point she started to feel frustrated. Megan responded, "so we are in a classroom and a white kid starts calling a student across the room the n-word because that is what his parents say, that is okay, you do not think I have role in challenging that?". Megan's friend responded, "well they are just breaking the rules and you fall back on that, it is a school rule, but you can't tell him what to do, think, or believe".

After recounting the story, Megan paused for a moment. Slowly she began to speak,

I mean I can see that to a certain extent, but I feel like there has to be some role for us you know, we cannot just only intervene if it is breaking a school rule, or some other gross injustice, so I guess, it really made me think I mean obviously I cannot push my views on kids that is not what I am here to do, but to a certain extent I am.

It was clear Megan was internalizing the conversation and recognizing the conflict with her values and her training at camp. This is where her formal educator preparation's lack of focus on issues of race, whiteness, and white supremacy seemed to support the perpetuation of whiteness. Without teasing out a teachers role, and not using disruptive practices themselves they role modeled what Megan always knew to be the reality of the education system, remain neutral and uphold the status quo.

Early on in our discussions Megan framed that she felt cheated by both her primary education experience and her college experience as never was white supremacy, racism, or whiteness formally addressed or addressed in an intentional and thoughtful manner. Megan had never really had the opportunity to engage outside of camp, as a learner on the matter nor had she had the ability to watch someone role modeled how to engage as a disruptor of whiteness. In addition to Megan's challenge, she still struggled moving beyond individual actions and intention of action as the major actors of perpetuating whiteness. To make this point Megan shared, "it gets back to how whiteness has been normalized, and I believe that treating people equal and everyone having equal opportunities despite their skin color is right and it is my job to help that". Then Megan began to question

Where do you draw the line between like passing on your political views to a person, and be like all I can do is to teach you what is in the curriculum? I think it comes back to the way you present it and how you integrate it I guess"

Megan's uncertainty and wavering I think surprised her a bit, as she had presented early in our discussions a very confident person in how she operated and believed herself to be. She then began to realize that in action, it was more difficult and this started to become a barrier for her. Megan felt that because there was a perception of whiteness and white supremacy had been politicized and challenging values, systems, and structures upholding whiteness might be viewed by parents, other teachers, or even administrators as pushing a liberal agenda. She explained that she feels that she needs a curricular piece to fall back on and point to, and that makes it less "political" and more about the content.

As we concluded our conversation, Megan sat for a moment as it was clear she was in thought and had quite a bit going on inside her head. She stated that all of this made her think of when Jesus was praying in the garden and asks his disciples to stay away and watch over him and they cannot fall asleep and they do. . . it was there intention to stay awake, and much like this, we all have the best intention and be willing to make the choice to fight against racism, but as Jesus said the flesh is so weak, and the follow through and our actions may not be what we had hoped, there are just so many factors it makes it difficult

Megan's realization that it will be difficult to constantly do the work was interesting to watch occur as she seemed to weigh the options and choices she was going to make as a teacher. Both in disrupting and challenging individual actions of students and or other teachers to making structural decisions about curriculum, testing, and other aspects that uphold whiteness. As we concluded our conversation Megan indicated that she now recognizes her power and needs to be more aware of her day to day choices and to be more cognizant in questioning "the way we just always do it".

Sally: The Supporter

Sally's interview spanned almost two full months as we first met in late July and finalized our discussion in late September of 2018. On the day of Sally's first interview, I was in my office and it was nearing the end of a long hot summer day. I was not sure how the interview would go, nor was I totally sure the recording of the interview would work properly, as it was the first time I was using Zoom like this. I was curious to meet Sally as we had a one week email exchange that was a bit peculiar. Sally was one of the first people to complete the interest survey, and the first person to be interviewed.

However, her participation in the study almost did not happen. During the one week period from our initial email discussion to her interview, it appeared that she was a bit nervous to participate in the study, and I interpreted her nerves as disinterest. At one point, she had sent an email that said "I guess I don't ...I'm nervous about like "identifying with my Whiteness" haha". I misread her statement of "I don't" as a statement that she no longer wanted to be in the study. When I responded to her email, she quickly clarified that she was excited about the study but was very nervous. She then concluded her email by stating despite her nervousness she was "ready to be educated" about both whiteness and how whiteness impacts her teaching.

For each of our interviews Sally was at her home and her comfort with the conversation increased with each of our meetings as she grew more confident with herself, and more comfortable talking with me. Our first discussion was filled with nervous laughter, very fast talking, and answers that were at times difficult to follow. Our final conversation it was clear that Sally was more focused, although still a very fast talker, her responses were clearer and she was not showing as much nerves. Interestingly, she was more personally relaxed at the beginning of our time together as she was in the middle of her summer vacation and had not yet

started teaching. During our final conversation in late September, she was exhausted from being in the classroom each day and being a month into the new school year. At one point in our first conversation I asked Sally if she was nervous, because she seemed very unsure of herself and her body language did not feel relaxed. I too was a bit nervous as it was my first interview and I was trying to find a connection point for both of us. My hope was to have her slow down a bit with her rushed and rapid cadence, which would allow for me to also find my footing in asking questions and truly hearing what she was saying. I really wanted to be intentionally present, and I found it difficult at times to follow her response because her speech pattern was so fast and often she would start a thought and never finish. When I asked if she was nervous, she laughed and then replied, “um yep, and it is making talk really fast”. It was at this point, I knew I needed to work to build credibility with her and make sure she felt comfortable with answering questions. During one of later conversations I asked how she was feeling and her response was more precise and direct “I feel really good about this, it is clear you are learning with us and I know I can just be myself”.

Relationships form a framework

Sally identified as a white woman and at the time of our first discussion she was 24 years old and entering her first full year of teaching. She grew up 25 miles from a small urban community in a state located in the Midwest, and went to college in the same region of the state. Sally described herself as “having a bleeding heart” and someone that truly loves kids and wants to make a difference in their lives. While Sally had not always wanted to be a teacher, she knew that this was the place where she could be most effective in doing work that was fulfilling for her. In describing herself Sally shared,

I am a white, I identify as a cis gender woman, I mean my sexual orientation, uh. . . I would say I am straight, that is a scale but whatever, I definitely have lived a middle class life, and I am Christian, you know I am the majority and have the upper hand.

She had an understanding of her identities and to a certain extent the intersection of those identities.

In particular she grounded her philosophy for life in the way she treated others from what she considered a Christian perspective, in particular to how it relates to the areas where she has privilege. In a moment where she has previously felt rushed and she was nervous talking about her identities, stumbling a bit over language, she began to slow a bit and speak more clearly and focused. She explained,

My Christian identity comes into play with my tolerance, like where I believe my religion be, even though some may preach it to be against certain things. . . I just look at it as I need to be loving because the God I know is loving, so I should be to, to everyone.

This was the first time Sally mentioned the concept of how her faith and what she has learned from Church had shaped her in a way that challenged some of the things she learned growing up that may have shared contradictory messages related to bias, intolerance, and racism. Sally recognized that at times Christianity was used by some to frame a belief system of hate and judgment, but to her it was about expressing love and being open to difference.

While she was able to interpret and use her faith to shape her worldview she discussed briefly how her parents may have provided contradictory messages to how she currently operates in the world. When Sally reflected on growing up, she indicated she was an only child, and had a pretty decent relationship with her parents. Though we did not spend much time talking about her parents or how they influenced her, Sally did say at one point that she really did not want to

“throw her parents under the bus” for things they said or did either recently or while she was growing up. I asked her to clarify a bit what she meant, and she shared a story about an instance where she was dating an African American man and her mom had something that was offensive. Sally explained that she talked with her mom about her comments and “things have gotten better but it just seems like there are things that are you know still there under the surface”. Sally in a nervous laugh then explained away her parents’ reactions both while growing up and how they reacted to her recent experiences dating African American Men, by saying “they grew up in a different time period when it was more okay to say or believe certain things”. Her voice then trailed off nervously into a two sentences that began and then ended in the middle without saying anything as I think she was not sure what to say next.

Several instances in our conversations Sally mentioned she had a history of dating African American men and is in a current relationship with an African American man. She began to open up a bit about her experiences. When Sally would bring up that she had dated or was dating an African American man it was as if she was trying to make a point or point out her experience to demonstrate some aspect of credibility or understanding because she had friends or was dating a Person of Color. I asked her if there was a significance to her in the context of our conversations as it relates to her dating experience. Her cat then walked in front of the camera and stared at me for a moment, we both laughed and it seemed to lift her nerves a bit as it was genuine laughter rather than nervous laughter. Sally took a deep breath and talked about how dating African American men has helped her become more aware of racism. She shared “it is a significant factor in my understanding of racism, you know, people make it a thing, they make it a thing that I date Black guys, I feel like that is a different form or piece of racism too. I guess it is not the main part though, but it is a major part of how I learned about racism” She paused for

a minute, and I could tell she was thinking, and then in a rapid fire cadence she talked about how she felt like she gets comments for dating Black men and then the men she has dated also get comments for being someone that dates white girls. She then stopped and thought for a minute and said, “I think that this will be part of my experience moving forward and it seems like that I someone I love or marry will be African American”. After a moment of trying to explain herself more, she then landed on a profound and significant thought for her in shaping her lived experience. Sally shared “it has shaped me so much, and as I started to realize who I was attracted to growing up, and it is now part of my experience, I should invest time in understanding”.

Being racially conscious and aware was not just something that impacted Sally as a teacher who has taken up teaching in an urban setting, but also because she recognizes that she is emotionally invested in a relationship with a person whose lived experience is vastly different from hers. Sally talked about how growing up she did not have much interaction with People of Color even though she grew up near and in between two communities that were largely populated with People of Color. These two communities were both less than 30 minutes away from where she lived and were considered “urban environments”. Sally now lives in one of these communities and works in the public school system. She indicated the first time she ever really understood that she was white was when there was a Person of Color in her classroom. The student was Guatemalan, and this was the first time Sally began to unpack her perceptions of how young people see race. She said, “I once referred to him as the brown one, and my parents hushed me and were like oh my gosh. I guess as a young kid race is not really that big of a deal”. This would not be the last time Sally’s perspective of how young kids think about race is brought up in our conversation, but in the context of our discussion at the time, she was quick to

point out that her not being around People of Color gave her a sense of not needing to think about racial differences or her racialized experience.

White people can't dance

In first talking about Sally's concept of being white and whiteness, her responses seemed to be focused either on understanding what being white was not by articulating a lack of culture or talking about an inability to dance. She said laughing, "you know when I am out and I am trying to dance, and I am like I am so white". At first I admit I was puzzled as to what her dancing or lack of skill had to do with how she saw herself as white. However, it became clearer, through further discussion, that it was the absence of perceived culture and the presence of People of Color that created a sense of what it meant to be white.

Sally furthered her point on this by saying being white has a lack of certainty, but it is a mix of cultures from multiple ethnic regions. Sally continued, "it is not that we really celebrated or took pride in being white like you would being Black". Sally often seemed to miss the notion of cultural dominance in talking about whiteness. She even pushed away from owning being white and attempted to distance herself from upholding whiteness culturally. She said,

To me when I think of cultural whiteness, I usually think of oh hey they have an American flag and are obsessed with that or even a confederate flag. I think it is definitely more negative images, like those that support trump, believe in the American Dream or are like pro America, and are like we don't like other countries, that is what I think of when I think of whiteness

As she finished her response, again her cat crossed in the screen easing her nerves a bit. She trailed off as she tried to move the cat. I then asked when does she see her whiteness then or when does she notice being white. Again, her response reflected that she did not notice being

white in all white spaces, but noticed it most when she was one of few or the only white person in space.

For example, Sally mentioned that when she would go to certain neighborhoods or part of the city where she now teaches, I realize I am the only white person, or when I would go to parties and be the only white person, I felt that I was white. It was the absence of racial diversity that gave her permission to not construct or deconstruct what being white meant. However, in situations where she was with People of Color, she had to start unpacking what it meant to be white and the impact of her own racial identity. Sometimes this deconstruction resulted in feeling victimized. As she was talking through a situation, her cadence picked up, and she talked a bit in circles stating

I was talking to him [her current boyfriend], and a Black girl came by, and she made a comment about me being white. That was a time I felt racism toward me, I mean I know it is not the same, but I felt so white, I just wanted to crawl out of my skin. She called me snowflake or snow bunny or something like that, and I just felt really white

It was interesting to listen to Sally process the story, and put herself quickly in the category of the victim. Several times in our conversation as described here her feeling of being white came either when her race was being mentioned or when she was in a space largely inhabited by People of Color. Sally was focused mostly on how she was being treated in the moment rather than how her presence might have impacted others. For example, when discussing an instance at a party where she was the only white person, she said “I felt really white at first, and I was really nervous because my parents taught to me react that way, but then it was cool because I was treated as the same”.

In the moment and in reflection Sally's focus was more on herself and how others were treating her. Contrast to her feeling about "tolerance and love", Sally was more focused on how others were able to make her feel safe and welcomed. Sally seemed to struggle at times with her connection to being white and how being white has impacted others, and instead of reflecting on how being white might impact People of Color, her thoughts and actions were more about how she was being treated. It even came out when we were talking about how she feels her boyfriend is different from some of the people that come from his neighborhood. Sally said, "I have met some Black people that are like I do not like white people unless I get a chance to talk to them and they show me they are not racist, and I am thankful he is not like that". It was important that he accepted her, and she explained that he felt at times she was more "woke" than some of his friends who were Black. While Sally deflected his comments a bit and spoke from a humble place, it was important that she shared how comfortable he makes her feel and that she is not like other white people.

I try hard

It is true to say Sally's journey in working through whiteness has surpassed her parents' journey, and she is constantly trying to find ways to better understand the world around her. At the time of our first interview she had just begun reading Freire's work *The Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, and while she found it a bit difficult, she was learning from it, especially as it related to her pedagogical praxis. Although it seemed sometimes Sally's biggest challenge was her own self and at times her anxiety around being labeled as racist or not supportive to People of Color, in particular people that were close to her in her life that were Black.

For Sally there was a sense of fragility, not just simply for not willing to take ownership of her part of the system, but more or less it seemed that she did not want to lose credibility in a

community where she wanted to fit. Most of her friends were Black, she worked in a school that served primarily Black and African American students, and she was dating a Black man. To her, being labeled a racist, or making mistakes was not an option and this inhibited her ability to ever feel relaxed or open herself enough to be vulnerable to learn. All of her learning was safe, her points of challenge were in spaces where she would not lose much credibility with those that she cared for, because at the end of the day she valued those relationships and did not want to lose them.

I started to realize this sentiment become a more consistent refrain when I asked Sally to talk a bit about how she was a part systemic oppression as a white person. She thought for a minute, and started to speak and then back track her sentence, and then speak again. At first, like other times it was difficult to follow, but I then recalled how nervous she was to participate in the study because she did not want to, in my words, be exposed for her part in perpetuating whiteness. Sally indicated, when she someone called her racist, her initial instinct is to be offended, because she tries really hard to understand and change. She shared that it is difficult for her thought because she does not understand why she would be put in the same category as an active white supremacist, as she tries really hard not to perpetuate racial oppression. It is not that she was looking to be absolved from her actions, but rather not simply being put in the same category as a “racist” compared to someone who actively promotes hate. She rebuffed to being labeled a racist, it was not something she wanted to be associated with, and she had a difficult time understanding how People of Color might mistrust her without knowing her. She shared a story of an African American man she worked with that was honest with her about how he felt about white people. Sally shared, “I had an African American co-worker that was like I do not

like white people and that they are racist, and I was like that is pretty harsh. . . it is upsetting you know and I struggle with that”

Sally struggled with being labeled something that she felt she had worked so hard to shed. Being labeled as a racist by someone that does not know you, nor are they aware of your work is what caused a sting for Sally. In her reaction by both shutting down a bit and feeling hurt, Sally allowed her nervousness and fragility around whiteness to take hold and only see interactions around racism, whiteness, and white supremacy on a personal level. In our conversations, she owned this feeling, but also recognized that she works hard at trying not to react that way. When talking about systems and oppression, Sally seems to theoretically understand, but in the moment has difficulty connecting the reactions toward her by a Person of Color and how the reaction is result of experiences with system oppression and difficult interactions with white people in general. For example, Sally recognized she was part of the system that upholds whiteness, but in the same discussion she had felt frustrated that she was part of that system. Her frustration was not a frustration that could be categorized as a frustrated with the system, but frustrated that she was being put in a place with other white folks for upholding whiteness. As she began to explain how she felt about her connection to systemic whiteness, she leaned her head back on her couch, as her cat perched over her left shoulder listening intently to her quick fired response. The cat watched as her hands spun in the air, and Sally looked everywhere but directly at the camera in her computer. She began “That is big question, wow” and took a deep breath, and then went through a rapid fire response. She continued “I am reading this Freire book right, and I am like oh my gosh I am part of the system, and it makes me sick, it makes me sick that I am part of this”.

Her reaction was genuine, and it was almost as if reading Freire's words inspired her to think differently from her previous framework. Sally recognized she operated as the oppressor as a white teacher and started to process how her physical presence in a school of Children of Color is problematic. She shared, "I get frustrated with the lack of representation, I guess as the oppressor it is frustrating, the fact that I am part of the system. It irritates me that I am part of it, and it was written into the laws". It was evident at this point in our discussion, Sally's heart was in a place of wanting to be an anti-racist, and her lived experience was one where she was able to build connections with certain People of Color and create connections to support them. Despite all of this, I was starting to recognize Sally was missing formal dialogue on whiteness, what it meant to be white, and how to frame her work as an anti-racist teacher in efforts to not only disrupt whiteness, but recognize her impact on the children she was so passionate about serving.

Underprepared, making mistakes, and growing: Teaching as a white person

Sally attended a regional state university, Northeast Regional University (NRU), located approximately 25 miles from where she grew up. Sally described the university as a good place to go to school and learn, but it was not very ethnically and racially diverse. Oddly, Sally shared that the University is located in the outskirts of a relatively small community that was almost half African American and half white. Sally, smiled and said "yeah, my school was not like that, there were almost all white women in my program".

In reflecting on her experience at NRU, Sally said she felt the program was good, and prepared her to work with kids. She was surprised given the location and proximity to urban schools, that she did not have many experiences in the schools or discussion about how to teach in an urban environment. Sally went into the profession because of her drive to make a difference, and so she was disappointed that she feels a bit underprepared to teach the students

she wants to teach. She shared, “I want to make a difference, I love kids and this is how I can make the best difference”.

Sally’s preparation was quality, in that she was prepared with enough content preparation to pass state tests, feel confident with her knowledge of content, and teach in “homogenous white schools”. In addition her program at NRU assisted with enhancing her love for all children and gave her skills to reach each learner. She learned to focus on the learning of the student, take time and learn about each learner, and try to find teach strategies to support the whole learner.

Sally, however was critical of her program in its approach in challenging future educators to be able to dismantle systems of oppression through education praxis. After a few minutes talking about her experiences in general, Sally began to reflect on a critical aspect missing from her preparation. She paused for a moment, and started to talk wildly with her hands, and she began to share there was inconsistency from faculty as to the importance of addressing and working with systemic oppression like whiteness. She stated, “if we learned about addressing or challenging whiteness or any oppression it was more indirect. They never were like hey this is what you say, do, or how you name it”. For Sally, everything seemed like a check box, meaning her faculty in her program were trying to address all of things they needed to address, but some things seemed less significant and did not get the time and attention she felt were needed to adequately prepare her for what she now faces in her job. She continued to explain

There was one professor, he taught science methods, and I loved him. He was the person that gave me the Freire book, he talked about challenging the education system but still was not always specific in giving us skills or ideas on what to do

Sally then came to the realization that her program, nestled in a community that had significant racial diversity, and there was evidence of whiteness in all aspects of the schools, had not

prepared her to work with the schools her university was intended to serve. Sally sat for a moment and shared, “I think I never had any direct teaching about what to do or how to do it in the community nearby, which is interesting to me, specifically because of where my university is located”.

Sally’s insight seemed to stop her in her tracks, as she began to relay information of how she felt that she could have used more time in an urban classroom, and that it was odd that she only had the experiences she did because she sought them out through requests. Again, Sally’s connection of needing to be prepared to challenge whiteness comes in a time when People of Color are a significant part of the population that she was working with, rather than thinking it was important in general to address and challenge whiteness in all communities.

After a moment of silent thinking, Sally began to reflect on how the program at NRU worked to address cultural difference, and it was from the perspective of working with English Learners. Sally articulated that this was a common class that all students were required to take. She reflected “we did have a class that I think was an English Language Learners class. The professor was from Germany and she taught us about different dialects”. Sally then told a story about how the professor would often talk about African American dialects. Sally explained, “she would talk a lot about the African American Dialect, and how as teachers, and I am thankful for this because kindergarten teachers don’t have to really worry about it, because in my grades students can write how they think and talk”. Sally continued, “she would tell us that we would need to embrace different writing styles, but once they get older you need to teach there are difference between the proper way to write and not”. Sally then in an agitated voice said, “it can be frustrating, there is school writing and this where I think the system is oppressive because they choose whiteness”.

Sally's ability to articulate how the system has been designed to advantage and give advantage to dialect and naming it as whiteness, was the first time in our conversation where she started to talk about being part of the system and recognizing it at the same time. Sally then said, she appreciated how her professor framed how to address the system. Sally said her professor explained to them that, "we need to explain there is mainstream English or media English and that it might not be right or fair, but they need to be aware of reality". Essentially what Sally was articulating and acknowledging is the code shifting required for English Learners and Students of Color required to be successful in school, which their "white peers" did not have to navigate.

In thinking about her class, Sally reflected that this was one of the few times where they talked about race and whiteness even though it was not directly named as such. She shared, "it really challenged some ideas I think people held, it was really cool to just talk about this stuff, I really liked her because she was challenging the system but some of my classmates thought it was a bit crazy". When talking about her classmates in her program Sally would often do so in a manner of frustration, saying it was difficult for her to understand how they could get through and become teachers and not even show they cared about addressing racism. Her frustration came to a head when talking about how her peers would talk about where they wanted to teach or why, which was a common topic in each of her classes. She began to speak fast with a lot of emotion

It really frustrates me because they want to go teach in Hicksville USA because that is where they are from, and it is like they do not even want to be around diverse people. . . I feel like they just do not want to take the opportunity to experience something different and have a perception about Kids of Color like "oh those kids are bad". They look at me because I want to teach in an urban school and are like "oh you poor thing"

After a moment she then reflected and added that she wished her program would address ideas, thoughts, and behaviors of those kinds of teachers and forced them to think differently.

Both in her student teaching placement which was in a school with a high African American population, and in her recent place of employment Sally feels that she has had to create her own learning opportunities. Sally shared, “we were not really taught how to interact with Students of Color, nor did we really discuss differences”. The learning curve for Sally has been steep, but she feels like she learns more every day, and loves her students which is why she keeps coming back. Sally reflected, “I have only really prepared myself by student teaching in an urban area and choosing to teach where I am now employed, but I am teaching myself”. Throughout our time together, Sally talked about not always have the right thing to say, not always recognizing the best way to work with her students, and trying to modify instruction without teaching from a deficit point of view. At times though Sally operated from a framework of fragility in that she had difficulty tracking her own whiteness or defensiveness in a situation.

Her responses, reflections, and reactions to situations was layered and never simply a form of perpetuating whiteness or disrupting whiteness. For example, Sally shared a story that occurred during her student teaching experience. She was having a rough day with a young African American boy. She explained that he was behaving that day in a disrespectful manner and it “was happening all day”. In the situation, Sally gave the young child a time out while they were playing outside. During the time out, the child was still behaving in a manner that she identified as disrespectful. Sally elaborated further,

“while talking with him outside, someone down the stree shared a story where she was outside and talking with a young African American boy. She said they were having quite the discussion and someone walking by must have saw or heard me and called my

principal saying they saw a white teacher screaming at a young Black student and it could be heard from blocks away. I was not yelling that loud, so that is inaccurate. They must have been able to see me and decided to call the school, and made it a racial thing saying it was a white teacher. It does not matter to me if he was white or Black, he was being disrespectful, and I was trying to work through the situation, but I do try to check my privilege in situations like that, I don't know"

In this particular example, Sally showed her fragility and failed to recognize the racialized implications of the situation. Even in her conversation with me, there was an air of defensiveness, as she was adamant that she was not harming the student or yelling, but was being inappropriately held accountable because she was a white woman who appeared to be yelling at an African American child.

Sally did not provide much reflection on the perception, or even potentially on how she was treating the student. Much like the instances when she was approached by an African American woman and called a snowflake, Sally quickly became the victim in the situation instead of recognizing her connection. In our conversations, this obviously was not the first time where Sally took a perspective of not acknowledging how race and whiteness were factored into the situation.

Throughout our conversations, Sally often would in some regard challenge adults who claimed to not "see race" or use color evasive strategies to discredit or not acknowledge the lived experiences of People of Color. However, Sally in her explanation of this situation was doing the same thing. Sally's color evasiveness manifested in other ways as well, as she claimed to approach teaching by treating everyone the same and not seeing race. Sally stated, "I try to be so PC and I try to approach it that way, hmm, I am not sure how to explain it, this is frustrating, I

think it is important to see students as the same so I am not treating them differently”. Sally’s attempts at equality was resulting in color evasive practices, evidenced in several situations. Sally tried to rationalize her framework by claiming that her kids in her class come with “colorblindness”. Sally reflected, “you know my kids they, I think you know racism is taught and they are colorblind you know, they love all people they do not see color”.

I paused for a moment and pushed back on Sally a bit and asked how she knew they did not “see color” as for some of her kids in particular her Students of Color, have a racialized lived experience that is visible and understood from a very young age. It was as if she was trying to find moments to justify her color evasiveness. When in fact her stories of her “kids not seeing race” were later contradicted when talking about an instance during student teaching where one of the students shared, “it would be nice to have more Black teachers”. I asked her if the students wanted more Black teachers in the school, how is it possible that they do not “see race” or have experiences based on their racialized identities? She paused for a minute, blushed, and said,

That is a good point. I remember in my psychology class they showed little kids, all races, picking a white doll because they thought it was prettier. I guess, I guess I think of my kids in a way that they love everyone. . . I don’t know maybe it means they accept us. It was almost as if Sally was confusing a young child’s ability to place trust in a white teacher or in the way a young child attempts to befriend someone different from them, as the child not having a lived experience impacted by their racial identity.

Sally did explain that in her teaching she is committed to reaching every child in her classroom. In talking about her approach she stated, “I live by a cheesy motto in making everyone feel like they are somebody, that they are valued, I feel like this is important for where

I teach because my students do not feel like they are valued, you know by society”. It was easy for Sally to think about her interactions with students on a one on one basis, and to reach them individually. However, she still struggled with connecting their experiences to larger systemic whiteness and how she might contribute to upholding the structures in their lives. When talking about how she interprets the role of a teacher in challenging whiteness, she stated that she felt it was important. Her examples however were with challenging racist values and language, for example when a fellow student used a racial slur, she thought it was important to call them out and challenge them. However, Sally said that she really struggled to challenge the status quo directly, and at times even has difficulty challenging overtly racist behaviors because she gets nervous and does not want to say the wrong thing. In addition, Sally also found it difficult while student teaching to challenge much because of her status and the power dynamics. She shared that she would have difficulty with addressing whiteness when it came from someone that supervised, managed, or had more seniority over her.

When we began to talk about how she saw herself as someone who upholds whiteness in teaching, I saw a bit of reflection and vulnerability I had not yet seen from her. Her response was scattered but she addressed power dynamics, curriculum, the materials and manner in which students are taught to normalize whiteness for example through literature. Sally began by first trying to justify and challenge the cultural aspects of whiteness present in a classroom. She reflected, “I think that the culture that I am expected to set in a classroom is part of whiteness, and on one hand I agree with some of the things and I others I do not agree with”. She then started to talk about the power dynamics in particular for her as a white teacher in a school with mostly Students of Color. She shared, “I am the teacher and you are supposed to respect me right? Well I think that is a dictatorship, is that a whiteness thing, is that how school should be. .

.”. Sally’s introspection did not go much further, and she moved on to discussing how she felt the curriculum is not really designed for her kids. She spoke of her perceived reality where she felt many of her students who are not reading at the appropriate age range, and how she felt like the need to lower standards and expectations. She then challenged herself on that notion recognizing that she did not want to approach her students with a deficit perspective, yet in her practice she knew she was doing that regularly.

Sally then began to reflect on her time teaching as a student teacher and the expectations to have students reading at a certain level at the beginning of year, but as she shared many of her students did not know all their letters when they came to school, so reading seemed like a challenging and lofty goal. She said, “it is just hard, because you have students who are all over the place and many don’t even know their letters but yet they should be coming in reading at a certain level”. Sally’s attribution to kids not being able to read showed that she placed some blame on the students’ parents. She said “it is hard because their parents are not reading to them so they are not developmentally ready”. Sally’s reflection was interesting because she was naming a symptom of whiteness but instead she stopped short and simply stated it was the parents not reading to the students which was causing the issue. She did not go any deeper as to why the parents might not be able to read to their children, and her assumptions failed to examine access to reading materials and books along with other factors that might impact a child’s reading skills and a parent/guardians interactions. Again, Sally was clearly seeing race and at this point was intersecting race with economic status, but failing to make a connection to the long term systemic challenges for kids growing up in poor urban communities and the challenges systemically faced by parents. At times it seemed that her individualized narratives, meaning her approach to each individual learner, was also shading her inability to recognize

cognitively the larger systems and the connections between her students and the oppressive systems that are stifling urban communities.

Knowing she needed to continue to learn and grow if she wanted to teach in her community. She decided to move near the school where she got a job after student teaching. She realized that it was important to be in the community and part of the community if she wanted to be teaching there. Sally shared that it was difficult because many of the teachers, more specifically the white teachers do not live in the same community where they worked. She questioned how they could begin to understand their students if they were not fully immersed and committed to being part of the community.

Complicated, layered, and learning

Sally recognized the importance of growth and self-learning, but for her that comes in a space where she does not have to be seen as “not safe” or be held accountable for making mistakes. Sally is making strides to continue to educate herself through reading new books about oppression, and taking stock of her new community where she lives and works. Cognitively and in her actions Sally believed she is working toward social justice, however at the end of our conversation she had some pretty strong thoughts that shaped how I interpreted and read her responses in preparing to write this portrait. In reflecting on what she learned through this experience specifically reflecting on her own process as a teacher, Sally was very critical and opened up in a vulnerable way that might lend to challenging her self-perception as a “good white person”. She sat pensive for a second staring at the camera in her computer. Then she began to work through a series of thoughts and feelings. She shared,

I feel like, I feel like I don't really do anything you know. This experience kind of affirmed a few things for me that I do and I am on the right path, but I need to be better,

more open, and learn more. Once we started talking about what disrupting whiteness looks like, I feel like I need to do more and in some case I need start actually doing. I mean I am always learning, and I know I try really hard, but there is just so much more that needs to be done. You know, I am doing a few things, but I know I am not noticing what I should be, I am not looking into things that I should, I need to be better and I want to do that, I want to start doing it. You know, this is really important, especially where I work, but it is hard because you get bogged down by the testing, by the curriculum, and it just puts challenging whiteness on the backside if you are already not always using that lens.

Sally's reflection in some regard still attempted to absolve her from her actions, thoughts, and reactions. However, she stated that she knew she needed to keep learning about her bias, and tracking her own reactions to certain things that occur, and continue to reflect on while recognizing her racialized experience as a white person shades how she experiences and interprets the world.

Sally recognized that her action on challenging and disrupting whiteness as this point is a choice. She explained that because she knew that whiteness existed and felt like she was committed to the disruption of whiteness, that at this point failure to continue to act or challenge her own actions was her responsibility and her choice to live inaction and perpetuation. Sally shared, "I do not like the system, and I know it needs to be challenged, it is my job to challenge it and when I do not that is by choice at this point because I know it is bad, you know".

Laura: The Inclusive Educator

Laura was one of the last participants to begin the study. We first began meeting via Zoom in late August of 2018 and concluded our third meeting a month later in September. Laura

had a little more time on her hands compared to some of the other participants as she had just completed her undergraduate program and was now enrolled in a graduate program at the same institution where she completed her initial teacher preparation. She was not searching for a job, but rather trying to continue to build her understanding of how to teach students and grow as a practitioner. Laura was 21 years of age at the time the study began, and identified as a white woman.

I anxiously awaited for the chime to indicate Laura had arrived to our first Zoom meeting. I sat waiting in my kitchen with my two year old daughter's paintings tacked to the wall behind me clearly visible in my webcam. Laura was prepared as an elementary teacher but her focus was early childhood, and she recently was returning back to college in a Masters in Special Education program. I wondered if she would notice my daughters drawing, and I found myself getting self-conscious, but then calmed myself as this process was intended for shared vulnerability between my participants and me. How could I expect them to talk about life without giving some glimpses into my own being as we not only engaged in my questions but went on a journey together talking about complex topics that are often difficult for white people.

The computer chimed and Laura appeared before me, much like she would do in all three of our interviews. She was sitting on her childhood twin bed. She had returned to live at home with her parents over the summer and would stay there while she worked toward her Masters degree in Autism and Severe Disabilities. For each of our discussions she would sit facing directly at the camera, while never fully being able to relax. Laura at times showed extreme vulnerability and came to tears at times in our discussions, but her body language remained unsure. I do not think it was unsure of me or the process, but given some of her responses, it was as if she unsure of herself. She clearly had a passion for teaching, for being an educator, and for

kids, but there were moments where she did not seem confident in how she felt about her racialized identity as a white person, whiteness, or how to disrupt whiteness.

The city and suburbs

Laura grew up on the East Coast of the United States, and while she went to college in a different state, it was not that far from where she lived. During her primary years of school, Laura lived in a large suburban community. In talking about the town where she lived the first 12 years of her life, she said “there is a lot of diversity there, it is not huge houses or anything, there is not a poor area, but you have the in-between, and I feel like there was mixture in my school of people with different backgrounds”. While it was not considered a city or large urban environment, Laura felt the diversity of people she grew up with to be significant. However, as she reflected on her experience in understanding race and her own racialized experience she said that she did not really notice race. Laura reflected, “There were a lot of Indians, African Americans, and I feel like growing up, I honestly as a child did not really notice, it was not, I just saw so many people, it was normal to me”.

Her language use when talking about her experiences at a younger age was interesting. At times it seemed that she associated the ability see race as a pejorative or from a deficit. For example, when talking about a good friend of hers whose family came to the United States from India, she said “he was Indian, and I didn’t see anything wrong with that you know?”. I was trying to understand why she felt the need to share that to her there was nothing wrong with the fact that her best friend growing up looked different from her and whose family had different cultural backgrounds. Instead of celebrating this, she nervously said I didn’t see anything wrong with it. Not as if she would have, but it almost seemed there was more to Laura’s story with her

family and impressions she received from others that sent her messages that there was something that might actually be wrong with her having friends who were different from her.

Laura continued to explain, “I had friends from different races, and it was not like I could not go over to their houses or cant hangout with them, they [her parents] were supportive. However, the thing is they knew some of the areas were not the nicest so that was one thing”. Laura then recalled an instance where her mother would make comments from time to time about some of the Indian families at her school. Her mom was very involved in the PTA and Laura described how her mom would make comments generalizing Indian families and their delinquency to make payments for activities. Laura then quickly added that this was just part of her mom’s experience.

At one point I asked Laura to talk a bit about her family, and she shared that she was a first generation college student. She shared that her father had worked incredibly hard throughout his, as he came from an economically disadvantaged background. Her father worked as a firefighter. According to Laura, he had worked hard and worked his way in securing financial success in his profession. She shared part of his drive was to make life better for his family, and this resulted in their family being able to move from where she grew up to a more rural suburban area. Even though the move meant a “nicer” community, her father still had to commute to work. She shared that he sacrificed for his family, and was willing to make the trip daily to give his family a more comfortable life.

Her parents were proud of her commitment to school and learning, but given that neither of them attended college, they did not know much about the college experience. She said they pushed a strong work ethic in everything that she did, and that became part of who she was as an

adult. However, the emphasis of a strong work ethic also resulted in valuing concepts consistent with meritocracy.

Laura was proud of her father, his hard work, and his commitment to his family. She shared that from her perspective and from what she learned, he had very little handed to him, and his hard work payed by creating opportunities to advance in his profession. Laura did not talk about racial dynamics or the support her father may received due to his currency as a white man. However in reflecting on her own experience she acknowledged that advantages existed for her that might not be available for others. However, at times, in describing her thoughts or sharing stories about People of Color there seemed to be language that had tinges of deficit oriented perspectives. As we talked about systemic challenges faced by People of Color and access Laura stated, “you do have to apply yourself in a way, um, but if you come from a good background it is obviously easier to get a good job after without maybe even going to college”. Laura’s implication of “good background” being associated with being white was more than likely a poor word choice, however it shows a sense of not clearly being able to articulate her thoughts and understanding of systemic oppression. Moreover, that language is problematic because it implies subconsciously that there might be a sense of good equals white, and People of Color come from a less desirable background, which is deficit oriented.

After being pushed a bit on her word choice, Laura clarified her statement giving the impression that she felt it was just poor word choice and a benign statement. On the contrary, as I reflected on our time, I started to notice a pattern with Laura around language, and it seemed that the nuances on topics regarding race seemed to stem from possibly the way her family talked about race. The values related to positive behavior or being good connected more often to being white and the values associated with bad or not good being connected to People of Color

was not simply a slip in word choice, but rather a moment when her subconscious and learned understanding took over and she relied on what she was taught. For example in an instance when we were talking about how her family supported her as a first generation college student, she said that her parents talked with from an early age about going to college and getting a good job. As she was talking, I heard echoes consistent with my own upbringing as the message at first sounded familiar. Go to a good school, get a good job, that after all was the purpose of going to college. Going to college meant getting an education to enhance access to gainful employment. However, our conversation then turned a bit, and again her statements were veiled with learned deficit perspectives of People of Color in particular this time toward Black and Latinx folks.

Laura began talking about messages she received about college and stated, “you have to go to a good school, you have to graduate, and you have to get a good job, I feel like with every traditional white family that is what parents say, and I feel like people from Black and Hispanic backgrounds their family values are different especially with the school I student taught in, there is just a lot of low income in that area”. She paused for a moment realizing what she said and then continued

I mean there are white families like that too, but a lot of the families are missing a mom or a dad, or the parents work all day, they are not focused on school, that is not their priority, they are thinking of putting food on the table or having to take care of a brother or sister and there are just factors about surviving, I feel like they [students] given the opportunity to think about their future compared to people that come from a white background

I could tell that Laura did not see the harm in her statement. In her mind Laura's statement was benign, a simple critique of how Families of Color have stress and more societal ills compared to white families, and thus education does not seem to be priority. However, her statement indicates a misunderstanding of the nuance and complexity of racial identity and the deficit oriented narratives associated with People of Color often perpetuated by whiteness. Our conversation demonstrated how deeply engrained her learned bias framed her understanding of her perceived differences between People of Color and white people. Even though Laura could articulate an understanding of systemic oppression, and even in her statement she tried to highlight what she saw as a systemic issue. It instead reflected a learned understanding that not only did People of Color have more systemic challenges, but in her words she saw "traditional white families" as positive or good.

As we continued our conversation on this particular topic, Laura began to explain a key element to her framing of her own racialization. She stated, that as she neared high school, her family moved to a smaller much less racially diverse community. When I asked how that change impacted her and the motivation her parents had for the move? She gave an intriguing response that provided a clearer understanding of her perspective related to how she thought Black and Hispanic families operated. Laura shared that her father worked hard, he had lived in the city and moved his family to a large suburb. Then when he could afford he moved his family to a "better" community to give her a better quality of life. Thus, she was left with the impression that white communities are positive and have less barriers. There was no acknowledgement that the largely historically white communities present less barriers for white people, but still present significant barriers for People of Color.

Finding her vulnerability

Laura stumbled into showing her bias without always recognizing what she was saying or how her words created an indication that she is not fully aware of how she upholds whiteness. Often when we would begin a conversation, I would ask a question about sharing a story or an instance where she had experienced privilege or felt like she shutdown in a conversation. Most of the time, the responses were at least from the three or four years ago and often came from a place attempting to distance herself from that particular time in her life of being one who was perceived as ignorant or unknowing.

She was aware that she needed to understand more, but did not want to be put in a category of being someone who was upholding racism, whiteness, and white supremacy. Laura saw herself as a good person, someone who cared for others, and as she indicated her rationale for going into the profession of teaching, was that she wanted to help others. In the first two interviews it seemed that she was not ready to be honest with me or even herself. However, there was a watershed moment for Laura in-between her second and third interview. While writing a written reflection, something happened, and Laura started to tap more into her vulnerability. She was reflecting on a moment in her second interview where she began to get teary eyed. During the second interview we were talking about how she viewed herself upholding whiteness. I noticed at the time, she began to fidget as she spoke. She slowly brought one leg up to her chest, and responded “I don’t think all white people are racist or uphold whiteness, um I guess if we ignore inequalities and race, then we are in a way pretending it does not exist, and is I guess somewhat racist, right?” She continued to talk, but I could tell she was trying to get through the moment without showing too much vulnerability. In her head thoughts

and contradictions were circling around as words fell out of her mouth that did not completely reflect her thoughts. In her written reflection she opened up and said,

This was eye-opening and I almost started crying just because I would never want to treat others poorly based on the color of their skin. However, based on the definition I gave I indeed am a racist, which is hard to say and admit. Am I carrying torches and want to get rid of different races, of course not. But, at the same time I am not currently involved in any program or do any extra-curricular stuff to help put an end to racism and the white construct of America. I felt that doing these interviews and reflections is taking me one step further to understanding racism, race, and whiteness.

Laura's openness and vulnerability were significant at this point, as she began to take a step back and look deep into herself, it opened her up to seeing herself and the growth that deep down she knew she needed. She started to realize that she was part of the very thing she was trying so hard to separate herself from. It is possible that the whole time she might have known there was a disconnect, but it was when she was trying to define and articulate how racism occurs, that she started to see herself as part of the fabric that perpetuates the systems and structures. Not only did she recognize it, but she came to realization that she needed to admit it in order to be able to move forward and begin to disrupt and deconstruct whiteness.

In our final conversation, I asked Laura to talk more about this moment. She sat for a moment, and smiled shyly. She then stated,

You don't want to see the negative aspects of who you are and what makes you, you, especially being from a white background. Like many times you were going to be like I don't have white privilege or I do not possess whiteness, and just coming to terms with the fact that I do, and I am in a way racist toward others, it is just sad, it is sad to hear

Laura's moment continued as her disposition shifted a bit. It seemed as if this moment had struck somewhat of a chord with her, not only with some self-realization, but also with how her entire education experience had occurred. She would talk about being frustrated with her k-12 education, and then later with her time at her University, Mid-Atlantic University (MAU).

As I reflected on my time with Laura after we finished all our discussions, I started to realize that this was real, that moment led to a significant change for how she approached questions. Her honesty, transparency, and vulnerability all became present. Prior to that moment, Laura would often give responses but not be able to articulate instances, or share something recent. She had difficulty naming systemic racism, pointing out how she experienced whiteness, or how she herself was part of upholding whiteness. For example, there were eight questions where she responded with not being able to provide an example, or not having something to share. That changed, even when she was not able to provide an example, it was at this point she realized that she needed to do more and be better. She recognized that whiteness was existing in the spaces we were discussing but she did not have the tools or skills to name it let alone disrupt it.

Our third conversation became critical, for the both of us. It was our time to truly explore Laura's experience and get at both what she experienced in her life that led to this point, but also for her as a jumping point to begin to start to deconstruct her racialized experience and the manner in which she was part of upholding whiteness. Laura's entrance into being critical and self-reflective carried through as we began to unpack her experiences being prepared to teach and her experience as a student teacher. Laura reflected on the process

I felt like doing these interviews and reflections is taking me one step further to understanding myself, race, racism, my place in racism, whiteness, and my place in

whiteness. Especially going into the field of teaching I think it's critical for future educators to have this type of experience

Laura still should have challenges, make statements that were problematic, but it seemed that her comments from about teaching, her preparation now came from a more reflective and critical viewpoint.

A lot to learn but a place to start

Laura reached a turning point in our conversations and became more critical and reflective of her experience at MAU during her preparation to become a teacher. Prior to her critical moment, she was passive in responding as to her ability to engage on race, and while acknowledging a lack of experience talking about whiteness, she at times seem to use this as an excuse for her experiences. However, that changed during our final conversation. Laura's reflection on her experience was positive when it came to content preparation and development of skills related to general pedagogical strategies. However, when asked about thinking about teaching as an anti-racist practice, Laura stated she was not at all prepared to engage in anti-racist teaching strategies.

Laura first began responding to this question like most questions, by the end of the exchange five minutes later, I could tell she clearly felt that she was not adequately prepared. Her frustration signaled that she felt somewhat cheated during her time at MAU, and MAU has a very positive and strong reputation for preparing teachers. Laura began,

I think it is one of those things, you go they do a lecture, have small group discussions, you leave, I never felt like anyone talked antiracism or whiteness, no one brought it up ever, if it was in a chapter or discussion it was like a statement that was letting us know we need to be able to work with diverse students

As Laura ended her statement I could tell she was starting to feel frustrated, but then I heard the frustration continue to build when I asked if she was given skills to address whiteness or even bias. Her response was a clear and resounding “no, no they did not”. So then I decided to push a bit more and see whether or not she felt it was important. Not only did Laura’s response describe it as essential, but then she began to unpack feelings of frustration regarding her first three years in her program. Laura stated,

It is so important, what I have learned in my Masters program and with this study I could continue to grow, it is relevant issues, and it is something we are going to deal with. We are not even exposed to and it can have a great impact on our career, I feel like there is such a focus on, just pointless classes, that readings you forget in four months that meant nothing, and the classes are not practical, what you learned was not exposed to you in a way where you could be like “time out lets give examples of this concept”. I honestly feel like the first three years of my undergrad was a waste and the last year is where I learned everything, I could have skipped everything and I would have been as capable as I am now

Laura’s critique is not just about learning about whiteness, but teaching in general. She felt like there was very little connection of the content and practical elements she learned in the first three years to what she would later apply in her fourth year during student teaching. Most of what she learned she learned in practice while student teaching and in a specific course on equity and justice.

It was during her time during student teaching that Laura solidified her teaching framework and belief that “all children deserve the right and opportunity to learn”. She did say that in the first three years, each of her courses helped build that philosophy but it was during her

equity and justice class and then in student teaching that she began to really understand the importance and need to support each individual learner. It was during her placements that she began to embrace how each learner is unique and has their own story. Laura reflected, “I learned so much from my placement, and I feel personally like every student is capable of learning and they all have their potential”. She later stated that it was her job to help her students realize their potential and give them the opportunities while removing barriers to aid in fulfilling their potential.

While Laura’s current career trajectory has her focusing more on working with children with varying abilities, in particular students with autism. Laura has developed practices and a framework for teaching that attempts to eliminate restrictions, barriers, and focuses on the needs of each student. Laura shared that while this is taught as important for working with students with Autism, it is just as important with other populations of learners. Laura reflected, “every student is different, and you have to look at it like that, you are never going to have one student who is like any other student”. Laura then sat forward in her bed, and said “that is my job”. She felt it was her job to learn about the learner, to get to know their story, and to see them for who they are and the potential of what they could be.

Laura’s time building the philosophy and enacting in practice came through trial and error. /during student teaching and now working in her special education placement for her Masters degree has shaped how she understands working with learners and families. As we were talking about her current situation, she shared, “Well, you know, I work in a very low socioeconomic community right now, and I have four students. Three of them are Black. It is my job regardless of their circumstance to get them on track, whatever that means for them”. In a similar comment to one made earlier in our discussion regarding Families of Color not

focusing on education, Laura added more to that statement began to unpack the intersections of both race and class. She explained that she recognized that students in her current school had less access to resources, and at home they probably had less access to books and other learning materials. Her thoughts shifted this time as it was less of a deficit oriented statement. She continued, “the parents care, they care because they put their trust in me to do my job, and they may not have the resources to support their kids but they care”.

The shift in a span of two weeks was interesting to note. Laura was more reflective, and seemingly more aware of the complexity of life. She still at times in our third conversation associated poor with being Black, however it was less frequent and she often would adjust her statements or correct herself a bit. As I noticed her starting to recognize the intersectionality of race and class, I asked about her understanding. She stated that she really never thought about how both race and class differ or were the same. She then a bit sheepishly stated, “I never really thought about it too be honest, I never thought about that, I know it is terrible, but I just, I do not know. That is why this experience and my current graduate program have been so helpful”.

As Laura’s reflection on her own challenges faded for a moment, we turned to talking about her environment both in student teaching and in her current placement. Laura shared that looking back now she started to notice that some of the teachers would say or do things that from her perspective perpetuated whiteness. I asked Laura to share a story about what she was talking about. She began to share, “I remember a moment, and I did not recognize it at the time, where I felt like they [the teachers] would just stereotype a kid and like be like oh wow, their family just does not care, or they believed the kid would not do the work, you know”. She continued to reflect that during her student teaching she was less likely to notice it while it was occurring which was the first layer of challenge for her, but even if she did she felt as if she did not have

the confidence to say anything. She now feels a bit more confident, but still feels like she needs some of the skills to address whiteness.

Laura then made a really interesting statement, and on some level I could see she was even talking about herself. Throughout our time, when she was timid or not wanting to fully expose herself to being critically conscious, she would label an instance or thought and label it as “some people say”, “some people believe”, or “some people do”. In those moments the questions were about her and her experience, it was as if she was trying to find a mechanism to distance herself from her actions that she consciously or subconsciously knew was problematic. Laura began to share, “you know, sometimes, I feel like some people do not consider race or think about race while at the same time they make assumptions about the person based on the color of their skin, and they look at the behaviors and only see negative”. Again, this question was about Laura and while she was talking about her experience with others, it was clear that she was also including herself in that statement. For example, when she was talking about others and not including herself, she came across more definitive and from a place of challenge to their belief. When she was making statements that seemed to also include parts of her own experience, she was less assertive and less willing to be critical in challenging the action. She would certainly cast the example as something that needed to be addressed but her approach was totally different in how she explained the situation.

Nonetheless, Laura’s statement is telling. It was her experience, as she witnessed teachers display a lack of race consciousness, white immunity, and color evasion. These experiences occurred for her as a K-12 student, in her experience in higher education, and her experiences in the schools as a student teacher. She found herself at times also doing this as evident in how she talked about race in our discussion. She was describing the unwillingness

people have to recognize the racialized lived experience while at the same time placing pejorative, negative, and deficit orientations around People of Color.

Laura held a strong belief that each teacher at some point had a reason they chose to go into teaching, and she could not imagine that many had reasons that were not at the core to help kids. She stated, “I think there is a reason why everyone starts teaching, I feel like along the way, teachers take the easier way out, whatever gets them through the day. . . teaching is a really difficult job”. Laura had observed in her time in the field during her preparation, that many teachers were getting burned out, the profession had multiple challenges, and most of all the level of accountability compared to support for teachers is constantly diminishing. Laura shared that she felt it would be easy to fall into a rut, to just do what you need to do to keep your job, and survive, and forget why you began in the first place.

As we continued our conversation, I asked her directly if she felt that challenging whiteness and the status quo was in fact a choice. Laura’s response indicated she felt that it was a choice, but unfortunately all of the other challenges a teacher faces might make making the choice to be someone who challenges whiteness difficult. In thinking about her own experience, Laura reflected

It is a person’s choice to make equity a priority in their classroom. I think that is why you do not see it everywhere. Either people do not know, or they just can’t, or they do not think it is a priority. I think that is why you do not see it everywhere today. I guess, I guess, that first you have to understand and be able to recognize what you are doing is problematic. So to be honest, had I not had my equity class and this conversation with you I probably would have been another teacher that was not exposed to any of it. Then I

think, is it a person's fault if they are unaware or unexposed? It is very important to first understand what it is and then you can begin to make a choice.

Laura's viewpoint was somewhat creating an out for teachers that did not have adequate preparation or have the ability to be critically observant of their praxis as educators. However, Laura's framework seems to ignore or as Cabrera (2018) theorizes, her viewpoint reflects a sense of immunity to the racialized experience by both not having to acknowledge and to claim a lack of awareness.

Laura shared that once her awareness began to be enhanced, she started to realize how prevalent whiteness was in the education system. She shared that through her student teaching experience and working with the one faculty member that actively engaged in dialogue on anti-racist teaching, she recognized that changes could be made and whiteness could be disrupted.

Laura thinking about her experience reflected,

I learned that you can move away from text books, I mean you can follow the curriculum but you can plan lessons that are fundamental for all of your kids to understand, and include other authors that might be more current or relevant. Like just because your school might give you a bunch of white others does not mean you cannot challenge that by using books about Kids of Color or by a Black or Hispanic author.

I then asked Laura what stops her from doing this regularly, and what challenges her. She thought for a moment and began to share themes related to both fragility and white immunity. She first talked about how as a new teacher and especially in student teaching she had no power and did not want to put herself in a position to not pass student teaching. As a student teacher it was not even her classroom, so her ability to control the environment and lessons was limited. So, as in her case, being placed with a teacher that did not work to disrupt whiteness, whiteness

was normalized. Laura then, said “well it is my job to follow the curriculum you know, because the state makes it that way, and that is what I am required to do”. She then shifted and said, that she knew she could make changes to the lessons but it was difficult to always being thinking about how to challenge whiteness as she knew there would things she missed.

Laura also expressed fear of parents, particularly white parents. She said “it worries me you know, there are going to be parents that you piss off because they don’t want their children to be exposed to such talks, and I think that makes it hard and I am not really sure how to deal with that”. This was not the first time Laura mentioned being nervous about working with parents, this became somewhat of a repetitive refrain for her throughout our conversations. She understood the influence parents had, in particular when working with such young children. Again, this helped me understand Laura a bit more as she in some regard projected her own experience with her parents’ influence on her experience. In a later conversation Laura opened up about working with parents.

As we were talking, she moved slightly and then looked off to the side. She had been sitting cross legged for quite some time and brought her left leg up to her chest and hugged her knee. She said, “the one thing that really scares me is parents. . . and going into my first year I feel like they are going to see me and be like oh this young girl, and they could take advantage of me or undermine”. I asked her if she felt prepared or where she felt like she had opportunities to work with parents, and she said she really had not. Her experience in how to work with parents came while student teaching, but even after completing that experience, she was not sure what to do. Laura reflected that she felt like, and it did not just apply to parents, that she needed more exposure to concrete language and skills to work to address whiteness, as she still felt like she was going to “miss things” and that it was her responsibility even though she did not have the

skills to address whiteness. Laura shared, “I just want to make the world a better place and it is my role as a teacher to do this”.

Gaining confidence and accepting responsibility

Throughout my time talking with Laura, she at times recognized her role and her responsibility in engaging and dismantling on whiteness. In other instances however, she excused herself and others due to a lack of skill and at times awareness. As our time together wound down, she shared, that she now feels like she has a little more confidence to address whiteness, however still recognized that she needed to spend some time doing some self-work. She explained that she was starting to notice and recognize things she did not prior to our conversations, and she was getting angry with the lack of equity and justice in schooling. She recognized that she needed to do something with that anger. She shared that she felt more able to address structural whiteness for example curriculum issues such as texts to the way that her Students of Color have been disproportionately experienced negative behavioral treatment from teachers. Laura shared, “I just feel that a lot of teachers did not take the time to understand and were stricter with our Students of Color”.

Laura recognized that she did not do anything to challenge at the time due to her discomfort, lack of awareness, and feeling like she was not able to challenge authority due to her role as a student teacher. While she was sharing this, Laura shared that at the time she knew these things she was seeing and experiencing felt “off” but she was not sure how to name or challenge them. When she was able to challenge whiteness, it was with a concrete curricular piece where students were more engaged with a cartoon that being shown to depict and explain slavery. Laura said the cartoon made slavery feel like a joke, and the kids in her class did not seem to understand the gravity. It was at that moment, she addressed it with the teacher because

she was able to use a direct reaction from the students laughing at slavery. Again, she did not have the ability to name what was occurring, but she said that it did not feel right. She addressed the student behavior and also had a conversation with the teacher about how that video was inappropriate. She felt nervous, but it helped her to use concrete examples.

Laura later shared that she did not like that she was only able to address whiteness when it was so blatant. She recognized the need to engage with a deeper understanding of how she also is part of the problem and upholds and perpetuates whiteness. At the end of our time together Laura shared that she “was really nervous at the beginning because she was unsure of how to explain how she felt or how I would react to her”. Laura then stated, “in just our short time in talking I have been able to notice more and feel more comfortable talking about race, and in general being challenged”. Laura reflected further that she felt that her next hurdle was to allow herself to be more vulnerable and open to talking about things she felt were uncomfortable. She recognized the importance of this work as a teacher, and she acknowledged that if she truly wanted to change the world as a teacher, she needed to be able to do the crucial work in engaging whiteness and engaging herself.

APPENDIX B

Research Purpose: To understand how whiteness shapes the lens and perspectives of white pre-service teachers and what experiences in their preparation has challenged or upheld values related to whiteness.

Research Questions:

1. What role does white fragility play in white pre-service teacher’s willingness to engage in whiteness?
2. What factors are associated with willingness to disrupt or perpetuate whiteness for white pre-service teachers?
3. How has their teacher preparation program enhanced their ability to engage in challenging whiteness in education?

Overarching Research Purpose: the research aims to understand how whiteness shapes the lens and perspectives of pre-service teachers and what experiences in their preparation has challenged or upheld values related to perpetuating whiteness?					
Research Question	Relationship to Overarching Question	CRT/CWS alignment	Narrative Inquiry alignment	Interview question theme	Story Topics
What role does white fragility play in white pre-service teacher’s willingness to engage in whiteness?	Provides a narrow focus on aspects of fragility and the participants willingness to engage with their whiteness.	Examines concepts of fragility and challenges notions of dominant perspectives by creating dialogue on engaging whiteness.	Use of stories assist to understand experiences and thoughts of how participants have or have not been able to engage with their own whiteness.	<p>Interview 1 <i>Personal stories on self and race;</i> <i>Engaging on race;</i> <i>Exploring fragility</i></p> <p>Interview 2 <i>Engaging with students and centering race</i></p> <p>Interview 3 <i>Fragility and perpetuating whiteness;</i></p>	Story Topic 1 General feelings and thoughts on race, racism, and being white in the United States

				<i>Moving past fragility and disrupting whiteness</i>	
What factors are associated with willingness to disrupt or perpetuate whiteness for white pre-service teachers?	Provides insight to when participants choose to disrupt whiteness and what factors are present when that choice is made.	In both CRT and CwS there is a notion of working toward social justice which means disrupting dominant and hegemonic practices.	The use of narrative in this case provides an opportunity for the participants to talk about their experiences with challenging whiteness or disrupting whiteness directly.	<p>Interview 1 <i>Personal stories on self and race;</i> <i>Engaging on race;</i> <i>Exploring fragility</i></p> <p>Interview 2 <i>Engaging with students and centering race</i></p> <p>Interview 3 <i>Fragility and perpetuating whiteness;</i> <i>Moving past fragility and disrupting whiteness</i></p>	<p>Story Topic 1 General feelings and thoughts on race, racism, and being white in the United States;</p> <p>Story Topic 2 What is the role of a teacher/educator in addressing systemic racism and whiteness?</p>
How has their experience in teacher preparation program enhanced their ability to engage in challenging whiteness in education?	This question focuses on how the experiences of the preparation program has shaped the lens of the participant.	In challenging hegemonic practices it is important to name and recognize that we have learned experiences that shape our realities. This question	The stories related to their experience in preparation will assist in developing an understanding of how these experiences exposed the participant to challenging or	<p>Interview 2 <i>Engaging with students and centering race;</i> <i>Lessons learned from teacher preparation</i></p> <p>Interview 3 <i>Examining how teacher</i></p>	Story Topic 3 What has been your experience in discussing race, racism, and whiteness in your teacher education program

		aims to deconstruct how preparation programs are and are not assisting in challenging whiteness or are contributing to the miseducation of white educators.	perpetuating whiteness in the context of teaching.	<i>preparation impacted experiences</i>	
--	--	-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	----------------------------------------------------	-----------------------------------------	--

Interview 1 (45-75 minute)

This is a semi-structured interview containing questions that will be asked to all participants. While I intend to ask the questions as written, my hope is to create a dialogic process in which the participant and I engage in more discussion than a question answer. Additionally, I will be asking questions to clarify responses to the initial story and in our discussion.

Purpose: Setting a context and exploring personal narratives on race

Theme: Personal stories on self and race (Research questions 1 and 2)

Tell me something important about yourself?

What is a memory you have of being white? How did your parents talk about race?

Why did you choose this memory?

How does your lived experience shape how you view yourself in a racial context?

Theme: Engaging on race (Research question 1 and 2)

Talk about your experiences growing up as it relates how you participated or did not participate in conversations on race?

Tell me a story as to how you were taught to engage on issues of race?

Discuss your experiences in how you came to understand your white identity?

What about your own identity as a white person is important to you, tell me about a time when being white was present?

Theme: Exploring fragility (research question 1 and 2)

Describe experiences you have when the topic of racism comes up, what happens, how do you react?

What do you feel causes you to react this way? How do you feel in the situation? What would cause you to feel or react differently?

Can you think of a moment when you reacted different from the situation above? What was different? How did it feel? What did you do differently?

Describe an experience when you have been challenged on your white privilege? How did you respond? What did it feel like? How did this experience shape your learning about yourself, about racism, about whiteness?

When you think of the word whiteness, what do you think of? How does it apply?

What makes you not want to engage in discussion on race, racism, and whiteness? What makes you not want to engage?

Interview Story 1

Pre interview story is an opportunity for you to discuss three main topics and then a free write. For each topic, please make sure to provide detail and description of all aspects in the question prompts. You must provide a response for each of the questions, but there is no required word limit. For each response please try to be detailed and discuss who or was not present during your reflections. How did your reactions and comments impact others, whose experiences and thoughts impacted you the most.

Topic 1: General feelings and thoughts on race, racism, and being white in the United States. (Question 1 and 2)

How do you see yourself as part of the discussion? What does it mean to be white? Describe two experiences in which you discussed race with peers of the same race and with peers whose racial identity differed from yours. How did you engage? Reflect on the differences.

Topic 2: What is the role of a teacher/educator in addressing systemic racism and whiteness? (Question 2)

Describe how you would address issues of race as a teacher or if you would not address issues of race, discuss why? What helped you construct how you feel about this? Reflect on your experiences that might have shaped this perspective. How did your teachers growing up engage in issues on race? How might have their discussions shaped your thoughts?

Topic 3- What has been your experience in discussing race, racism, and whiteness in your teacher education program (Question 3)

Please reflect on your experience in discussing race, racism, or whiteness in your program. Have you ever been asked to think about what being white means? In what context was the discussions of race, racism, and whiteness, how did the discussion shape your thoughts? How did you react to the conversations?

Free Write: Please write no less than 250 words about this experience in completing the reflections? How did you feel while you were reflecting? What are you thinking about now? What questions do you have for the researcher about this project? What is unclear to you? Write about anything that you want as it relates to the questions above.

Interview 2 (45-75 minutes)

This is a semi-structured interview containing questions that will be asked to all participants. While I intend to ask the questions as written, my hope is to create a dialogic process in which the participant and I engage in more discussion than a question answer. Additionally, I will be asking questions to clarify responses to the initial story and in our discussion.

Purpose: To begin connecting personal narratives to teaching narratives on issues of race, racism, and whiteness

Follow-up Questions from previous interview and story

How are you feeling so far about this experience?

Theme: Engaging with students and centering race (Research Questions 1, 2, 3)

Please describe your teaching philosophy and your approach to teaching?

Please talk about a unit you planned this past semester? What was the topic? Tell me about the students in the classroom? How did race shape the choices you made in planning? How did it shape the way you engaged with and assessed your students? Did you think about race in your planning? Reflecting back would you have done anything different, and why?

What does it mean to teach to all students? Talk about a time when you centered students of color in your teaching?

What value, if any, do you think there is in being conscious of race, racism, and whiteness in the context of teaching and learning? Discuss what makes you think this? Share an experience that shaped this perspective?

Can you share an experience in which you had to discuss/present on a topic that involved racism? How did you feel? What were things that challenged you? What helped you feel comfortable?

Theme: Lessons learned from teacher preparation (Research Question 3)

Describe how your learning experiences in your program enabled you to teach to all students? What was missing from these experiences?

When discussing race and racism in the context of teaching how do you react?

Describe what you have learned in your education program about racism and your identity as a white person? How did these experiences shape how your view of yourself, your role as a teacher?

Describe a moment when you felt uncomfortable in your program? Why did you feel this way? What did you learn from that experience?

Interview Story 2

Topic 1. More detailed experiences and thoughts on race, racism, and being white in the United States. (digging a little deeper) (Question 1 and 2)

Describe and reflect on an experience in which your whiteness was challenged how did you react? How did you engage or not engage in deconstructing your whiteness? How did you feel when you were challenged? Talk about how it felt during our two interviews when we discussed your whiteness and racism? How has this conversation impacted your thoughts?

Topic 2: What is the role of a teacher/educator in addressing systemic racism and whiteness? (Question 2)

Describe and reflect on an experience in your student teaching experience in which you had the opportunity to engage on whiteness, race, or racism. How and why did you engage or not? How did it feel to not engage or to engage? Looking back would you handle it any different? Why? Explore how you would prioritize addressing issues of whiteness, racism, and white supremacy as a teacher?

Topic 3: What has been your experience in discussing race, racism, and whiteness in your teacher education program (Question 3)

Reflect critically on your experience. Please discuss how you were prepared to engage in teaching content? Was race or racism ever part of your methodological discussions? Please discuss about whether or not you had a race conscious approach to student teaching this past semester? What resulted in your experience being shaped this way? How do you feel you have been prepared to engage with students of color? Would your approach be different in teaching Students of Color? Why or why not?

Topic 4: Free Write in 250 words, see below for assistance for what to write about if you need prompts.

Interview 3 (45-75 minutes)

This is a semi structured interview with some questions being consistent and others that were derived from previous discussions or reflection/stories of the participants. My hope with this interview is to have a dialogue and for the interview to framed more as a discussion. Below are the questions that will start and frame the discussion.

Purpose: To engage specifically on the topics of disruption/perpetuation and fragility

Follow-up questions from interview 2 and story 2.

Theme: Fragility and perpetuating whiteness (Question 1 and 2)

Talk about a time when you feel like you perpetuated whiteness or racism? What did it feel like? What would you do differently?

What does it look like to perpetuate whiteness in teaching? Can you describe a time when you feel like you perpetuated whiteness?

In reflection can you share experiences in which you feel like you unknowingly perpetuated whiteness? Why do you feel you missed it?

Theme: Moving past fragility and disrupting whiteness (Question 1 and 2)

What do you feel it means to disrupt whiteness in teaching? What does it mean to teach using anti-racist pedagogical practices? Where did you learn about this?

Share an experience in which you feel like you had an opportunity to disrupt whiteness or racism, how did you respond? How did you feel during this response? Did you experience any moments of fragility? How did you move past this? If you did not, do you feel you could have been more productive in your disruption?

Share an experience when you feel like you an enacted in anti-racist teaching practices or practices that disrupted whiteness?

Describe your feelings and what might lead to feeling this way?

Theme: Examining how teacher preparation impacted experiences (Question 3)

What experiences did you have with Faculty of Color in your program? Did your experiences differ from White faculty? How did you feel when you had a course taught by a Faculty of Color? What did you learn in this course?

What is the role of a teacher in disrupting whiteness? What did you learn in your program about disrupting whiteness and/or antiracist teaching practices? How do these experience shape your perspective as a future educator?

Discuss moments in which you feel your program perpetuated constructs of whiteness. How did this shape your experience? Can you describe an experience in which you feel your faculty or aspects of your program disrupted whiteness? How did you respond, how did it shape your experience?

Describe experiences you had in which your professors placed people with minoritized identities at the center of learning, what did that look and feel like?

Discuss what practices you feel are most helpful in disrupting whiteness? Discuss what you learned in your preparation that helped you disrupt whiteness in the teaching profession.

APPENDIX C

SAMPLE EMAIL TO COLLEAGUE

Dear (Name),

As you know I am working on my dissertation and I am studying how whiteness shapes the lens and perspectives of white pre-service teachers and what experiences in their preparation has challenged or upheld values related to whiteness. In an effort to recruit students for this study, I am wondering if you can connect me with someone at your institution that might know of students who meet the following criteria:

- Recently completed or is in the process of completing student teaching
- Participated in learning experiences OR completed projects on race/racism

Once I have the contact information for the person, I will reach out to them via email. Any participation in the study will not be directly connected to your institution and their participation will be confidential.

I look forward to hearing from you. If you have questions regarding the study or further clarification of the criteria please contact me directly via email at tbell3@gmail.com or via phone at 616 560 7292.

With gratitude,

Thomn

SAMPLE EMAIL TO INSTITUTION CONTACT

Dear (NAME),

My name is Thomn Bell and I am a Doctoral Candidate at Colorado State University. I received your contact information from _____, as they felt you were someone who has knowledge of recent student teachers that have had experiences on the subject of race and racism.

I am in the process of recruiting participants for a study that aims to better understand how white student teacher engage with whiteness. I am seeking four to 10 participants from various institutions to be involved in the study.

Is it possible for you to provide me with the contact information for any individuals from your program that meet the following criteria:

- Recently completed or is in the process of completing student teaching
- Participated in learning experiences OR completed projects on race/racism

The following email will be sent to any potential participants for the study. Should you have any questions or would like to discuss the study or criteria for participant selection further, please contact me via email at tbell3@gmail.com or phone at (616) 560-7292.

My name is Thomas Bell, and I am a Doctoral Candidate at Colorado State University working on a research project on how white student teachers engage with their whiteness. I received your contact information from (institutional contact), as you were identified as a potential participant for this study.

I am currently seeking four to ten recent student teachers as participants for this study. As a participant in the study you will be asked to participate in three web conference interviews lasting between 45 to 75 minutes and two reflective journals. Participation will be based on your schedule but overall should not take more than 6 hours of your time spread out over the course of 2 to 3 months. During the interviews and journal reflections you will be asked to discuss and talk about your lived experience regarding race, racism, and whiteness.

Your participation along with the participation of others in this study will be anonymous and confidential. Participation in the study is voluntary and at any time you can request to no longer participate in the study. In an effort to keep your participation confidential, you will be asked to develop a pseudonym for this study, and all responses and data stored regarding your experiences will be connected to the pseudonym and not your name.

If you are interested in participating in this study, please complete the following survey (it should take approximately 3 minutes):

http://umflint.ut1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_5ngeEs4tgM8UNnf/

Completing the survey does not necessarily mean you will be selected as participant for the study, it also only serves as an indicator of your interest but does not commit you to participating in the study. Once the survey has been completed, I will contact you to review any questions and discuss your status as a participant in the study. Should you have any questions regarding the study or want to talk further about your participation, please feel free to contact me via phone at (616) 560-7292 or via email at tbell3@gmail.com

With gratitude,

Thomn Bell

SAMPLE EMAIL TO PARTICIPANT

Dear (NAME):

My name is Thomas Bell, and I am a Doctoral Candidate at Colorado State University working on a research project on how white student teachers engage with their whiteness. I received your contact information from (institutional contact), as you were identified as a potential participant for this study.

I am currently seeking four to ten recent student teachers as participants for this study. As a participant in the study you will be asked to participate in three web conference interviews lasting between 45 to 75 minutes and two reflective journals. Participation will be based on your schedule but overall should not take more than 6 hours of your time spread out over the course of 2 to 3 months. During the interviews and journal reflections you will be asked to discuss and talk about your lived experience regarding race, racism, and whiteness.

Your participation along with the participation of others in this study will be anonymous and confidential. Participation in the study is voluntary and at any time you can request to no longer participate in the study. In an effort to keep your participation confidential, you will be asked to develop a pseudonym for this study, and all responses and data stored regarding your experiences will be connected to the pseudonym and not your name.

If you are interested in participating in this study, please complete the following survey (it should take approximately 3 minutes):

http://umflint.ut1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_5ngeEs4tgM8UNnf/

Completing the survey does not necessarily mean you will be selected as participant for the study, it also only serves as an indicator of your interest but does not commit you to participating in the study. Once the survey has been completed, I will contact you to review any questions and discuss your status as a participant in the study. Should you have any questions regarding the study or want to talk further about your participation, please feel free to contact me via phone at (616) 560-7292 or via email at tbell3@gmail.com

With gratitude,

Thomn Bell

APPENDIX D

Intake Survey

Start of Block: Please answer each question to the best of your ability. Should you have questions, please contact Thomn Bell at tbell3@gmail.com. Once all surveys are completed up to ten participants will be selected to participate in the study. You will be notified by Thomn Bell via email regarding your status of participation in the study. It is important to note that you can choose to no longer be part of the study at any point. If you are selected for the study, Thomn Bell will schedule a formal phone conversation to discuss the study and discuss your consent to participate in the study.

Q1 What is your First and Last Name?

Q2 For the purposes of the study, you will be given a pseudonym for confidentiality, do you have a desired name you would like to be called in any of the publications related to the findings of this study?

Q3 What is your preferred Email? Please note, this will only be used for correspondent related to this study and once the study is completed this information will be deleted.

Q4 What is your preferred phone number?

Q5 How do you identify racially?

Q6 What is your gender identity?

Q7 What is your age?

Q8 Where did you graduate high school? (please provide city and state)

Q9 What is your College Major (select all that apply)

Mathematics (1)

Social Studies (2)

English (3)

Integrated Science (4)

Music (5)

Spanish (6)

French (7)

Q10 What is the city, state, and zip of your student teaching placement

Q11 What is the name of the district hosting your student teaching experience?

Q12 School hosting your student teaching experience?

Q13 What grade level will you be working with for your student teaching placement? (please select all that apply)

PreK (1)

Kindergarten (2)

1st Grade (3)

2nd Grade (4)

3rd Grade (5)

4th Grade (6)

5th Grade (7)

6th Grade (8)

7th Grade (9)

8th Grade (10)

9th Grade (11)

10th Grade (12)

11th Grade (13)

12th Grade (14)

Other (please specify) (15) _____



Q14 What is the percentage of Students of Color you interact with during a typical day in your placement?

- More than 90% (1)
- Between 70%-90% (2)
- Between 50%-70% (3)
- Between 30% -50% (4)
- Between 10%-30% (5)
- Less than 10% (6)

End of Block: Informed Consent

APPENDIX E

Informed Consent Sample Consent to Participate in a Research Study Colorado State University

TITLE OF STUDY: Portraits of whiteness: Examining fragility and the practices that perpetuate and disrupt whiteness among white student teachers

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: VINCENT BASILE, *PHD. ASSISTANT PROFESSOR, SCHOOL OF EDUCATION*

CO-PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: *Thomas Bell, Doctoral Candidate, School of Education, tbell3@gmail.com*

WHY AM I BEING INVITED TO TAKE PART IN THIS RESEARCH? You are currently enrolled in or have recently just completed a teacher education program and participated in a student teaching experience.

WHO IS DOING THE STUDY? Dr. Vincent Basile, the Principal Investigator, and Thomas Bell the Co-Principal Investigator bring a collective expertise in working on issues of race, racism, and whiteness in higher education.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY? The purpose of this research study is to build a deeper understanding of how whiteness shapes the lens and perspectives of pre-service teachers and what experiences in their preparation has challenged or upheld values related to whiteness.

WHERE IS THE STUDY GOING TO TAKE PLACE AND HOW LONG WILL IT LAST? If you agree to participate in this study, your participation will approximately last from July until October 2018 and will consist of participation in a brief online questionnaire, three interviews conducted using Zoom and two written reflections consisting of four to six questions each. During the study you may expect the following study procedures to be followed: The interviews and reflections will center on your experiences around issues of race, racism and whiteness, in particular as it relates to your preparation and in student teaching.

We will ask you to review transcriptions of your interview. We may ask you to clarify, expand on ideas, or explore more questions during the transcription review process

The anticipated length for the interview will be approximately 45 to 75 minutes.

During each of the interviews and writing reflection processes, you will be asked a series of open-ended questions, which will be recorded. Please know that these recordings will be erased and destroyed one year after the research project is finished. The recording of this interview is key in order to capture the accuracy and details of your stories. If you wish to NOT be recorded you may submit written answers to the interview questions, with the condition that the PI may contact you for further clarification and questioning.

ARE THERE REASONS WHY I SHOULD NOT TAKE PART IN THIS STUDY? This study will examine aspects of whiteness and allow for you to talk about the construction of your racial identity. For some, this topic is at times difficult to discuss.

WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS?

While participating in this study there are minimal risks to you. It is possible that you may feel uncomfortable discussing your experiences related to your being white. You have the option of not answering or skipping

any questions during the interview process. It is not possible to identify all potential risks in research procedures, but the researcher(s) have taken reasonable safeguards to minimize any known and potential, but unknown, risks.

ARE THERE ANY BENEFITS FROM TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY? If you decide to participate in this study there may be no direct benefit to you. A benefit is defined as a “desired outcome or advantage. It is hoped that the information gained in this study will benefit society by providing valuable information on how to improve the profession of education and educator preparation programs.

DO I HAVE TO TAKE PART IN THE STUDY? Your participation in this research is voluntary. If you decide to participate in the study, you may withdraw your consent and stop participating at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. You are free to not answer any questions or withdraw at any time. Your decision will not change any present or future relationships with Colorado State University. We will use the information collected only to that point.

Confidentiality

We will keep private all research records that identify you, to the extent allowed by law. All information collected about you during the course of this study will be kept confidential to the extent permitted by law. We may decide to present what we find to others, or publish our results in scientific journals or at scientific conferences. Information that identifies you personally will not be released without your written permission. The only exceptions to this are if we are asked to share the research files for audit purposes with the CSU Institutional Review Board ethics committee, if necessary. In addition, for funded studies, the CSU financial management team may also request an audit of research expenditures. For financial audits, only the fact that you participated would be shared, not any research data.

To ensure confidentiality your name will be changed to a pseudonym. The participant, to ensure accurate presentation, will check all transcripts. Thomas Bell will be the only person to have access to study records, which will be kept password protected on his personal computer. In addition, any audio/video recorded and interview notes and non-written materials will be stored by Thomas Bell in a secure and encrypted folder on his personal computer. All materials will be kept for a maximum of 3 years and then destroyed. Any handwritten notes or non-electronic artifacts will be destroyed once they are converted to electronic files.

IF YOU HAVE QUESTIONS?

Before you decide whether to accept this invitation to take part in the study, please ask any questions that might come to mind now. Later, if you have questions about the study, you can contact the investigator, Thomas Bell at tbell3@gmail.com or at (616) 560-7292. If you have any questions about your rights as a volunteer in this research, contact the CSU IRB at: RICRO_IRB@mail.colostate.edu; 970-491-1553. We will give you a copy of this consent form to take with you.

Your signature acknowledges that you have read the information stated and willingly sign this consent form. Your signature also acknowledges that you have received, on the date signed, a copy of this document containing 3 pages.

Signature of person agreeing to take part in the study

Date

Printed name of person agreeing to take part in the study

____ Thomas Bell _____
Name of person providing information to participant

____ July 22, 2018 _____
Date

Signature of Research Staff